

Under an Afric Sun

CHAPTER X.—Continued.

"Where is your master?" said Redgrave sternly.

"In bed, ill," replied the man.

"What does he say?" asked Digby hoarsely.

"That Ramon is in bed ill."

"It is a lie!" roared Digby. "He is not here. Redgrave, get horses; we must follow and hunt him down."

"What is this noise!" said a familiar voice; and Ramon, looking painfully sorrowful and ill, came into the open hall.

"Ah, Redgrave!—My dear Digby, what is this? Some one has attacked you?"

"No," said the young man. "Yes," he added fiercely. "An enemy—a cowardly, treacherous enemy struck at my life, but failed. Struck at my life, so as to separate me from the woman I love. Do you hear? you Spanish dog!—from the woman I love, and who loves me. Now, answer, if you value your life—where is Helen?"

"Helen? Why do you ask me?"

"Because I can see through your cursed plot. Now, sir, once more, if you value your life, speak the truth. Where is Helen?"

"Is the young squire mad, Redgrave?" said Ramon coldly.

"Let me answer, Redgrave.— Yes, sir, mad—mad against you. Once more, if you value your life, where is Helen?"

"Oh, yes," said Ramon mockingly, "I value my life."

"Then where is she?"

"The squire thinks I have taken her away!"

"Don't madden me, Ramon. I am a quiet, easy-going fellow, but dangerous when roused. Where is she?"

"I do not know."

"You lie, hound!" cried Digby; and, weak as he was, he sprung at the Spaniard and caught him by the throat.

The moment before, Ramon was calm and smooth and soft of word; but, as he felt Digby's hands at his throat, he flashed out into a rage that was almost volcanic.

He struggled, but vainly, weak as his aggressor was, for he too seemed to be suffering from some injury which turned him faint.

But his words were fierce and strong, and his eyes glistened as he cried menacingly: "Ah, then, the squire is jealous. He feels pangs, and fierce with rage, does he, because the pretty child is not here?"

"Will you cease this before I strangle you!" cried Digby savagely. "Where is Helen?"

"Fool! idiot! dog!" hissed out the Spaniard, delivering each word as if it were a deadly blow. "Don't ask me. Go and ask your cunning, false friend. Ask Fraser, when you can find him. He has taken her away."

"What? It is not true. It is another of your cowardly tricks to throw us off the scent."

"Indeed? Then, where is Fraser?"

"Murdered, for aught I know, as you tried to murder me," cried Digby fiercely, but with a horrible suspicion gaining upon him fast.

"You are a boy—a weak boy," snarled Ramon. "Your friend, where is he? Ah, it is always the friend who deceives."

"Ramon, for Heaven's sake, the truth," cried Redgrave. "My child! my child!"

"Gone with this idiot's false friend.— There, go both of you.— I tell you I am ill.— Pedro, your arm."

He reeled, and would have fallen, but for his servant's quick action; and as he was lowered fainting to the matting-covered floor, Digby saw that his head had evidently received some severe injury.

CHAPTER XI.

"I cannot understand it," said Redgrave wearily. "I was out the greater part of yesterday; and when I returned Helen had disappeared."

"But you heard what he said, Mr. Redgrave.— Fraser—gone. Oh, it seems impossible!"

Redgrave sank wearily upon a stone, and let the cool wind which came fiercely from the north blow upon his heated brow.

"You don't speak, sir," cried Digby, passionately.

"What can I say, sir? Tell me about yourself. What did you mean by charging Senator Ramon with an attempt to murder you?"

Digby impatiently explained.

"It is strange," said Redgrave; "but I cannot think he would go so far as that."

"Never mind whether he could or would," cried Digby. "Helen—we must find Helen. Is that man deceiving us?"

Redgrave shook his head. "You saw the condition he was in. There was no deceit in that."

"Could he have taken her away? Is she hidden in some place he owns?"

"No; it is too improbable. These are not the days of abductions, young man.— Could Helen have deceived me?" he muttered.

But Digby caught what he said. "No," he cried proudly, "she is incapable of deceit."

In an instant his hands were grasped tightly and Redgrave was gazing almost affectionately in his eyes. "God bless you for that, my boy!" he cried in a choking voice.— "God bless you for that!"

Digby returned the frank warm pressure; and from that moment it seemed as if they worked together with renewed spirit and as one.

"I cannot think that Fraser would fight against me or play a deceptive part," cried Digby warmly, after a long discussion which followed a vain search for news.

"It is hard to doubt one you believe to be a friend," said Redgrave. "But there is no doubt of one thing."

"And that is?"

"Fraser loved my child."

"Oh! Impossible!" Digby's ejaculation was full of wonderment and doubt.

"Was she not sufficiently beautiful and true and good?"

"Don't talk like that, as if she were no more."

"I noticed it from the first," continued Redgrave. "I saw how he was struck by her; and in my trouble with Ramon's advances, I found myself thinking how much happier she would be with the quiet, grave, middle-aged student, and I hoped that she would return his affection."

"And I, sir?" cried Digby resentfully.

"Ah, yes. I saw that you loved her too; but I looked upon you as the hot changeable lover of a day attracted by the first pretty face he saw. But Helen chose you."

"And Fraser—did he ever?"

"Speak to me? No. I watched him carefully, as a man would who had his daughter's happiness at stake; but he seemed to think that his chances were hopeless, and to acquiesce in your position. I do not think Helen ever suspected his love."

"She could not. I never dreamed of such a thing."

"No," said Redgrave sadly; "when one is young, one is selfish and blind to all but self. You both were blind."

"Then all this points to the fact that Fraser has been playing a double part against us all; and that, by some cunning jugglery, he has persuaded Helen to listen to him—to accompany him— No; I'll never believe that. My old friend has fallen a victim to the fate I escaped. No, Mr. Redgrave, I can't believe that."

Inquiries were made in every direction, especially down in the port; but no vessel had touched there; not even a fishing-boat had left the little place; and it was blowing so hard off-shore that no boat would have dared to approach or leave from that side of the island.

"Let's go back to Ramon's; I am sure we shall learn something there," cried Digby at last. "That scoundrel is at the bottom of it all, I'm sure."

They went straight to the Spaniard's house to meet the English doctor of the place, about to leave.

"Bad, sir—very bad. Quite insensible. Concussion of the brain from a fall or from some blow. The case is serious, I'm afraid."

Redgrave and Digby exchanged looks.

"Do not have him disturbed. I shall be here again in a couple of hours," said the doctor; and he walked briskly away.

"No deceit here," said Redgrave.

"No; but question his man Pedro. Promise him any bribe so that we may get at the truth."

"We are on the wrong scent," said Redgrave, dismally, as they walked away. "Pedro knows nothing, I am sure."

Digby did not feel convinced; but he could do no more, and he followed Redgrave to the desolate home, sick and weary, and his injuries from his fall forcing him to keep his bed for the next three days, and submit to the doctor's ministering. At the end of those three days, during which time Redgrave had scoured the island in every direction, Digby was able to leave his bed, while the news of the doctor as he tended Ramon was of the darkest hue.

"He may recover; I can say no more," was the only reply Digby could obtain.

It was on the fourth morning that, with the gentleness of one who bore for him a real affection, sorrowful and haggard-looking, Redgrave helped Digby to a seat in front of that once pleasant villa, where he could breathe the sweet, pure sea air, and at the same time be sheltered from the fierce rays of the sun once more shining in all its glory, for the gale had blown over, and the sea softly rippled in the gentle breeze.

"No news—no news!" groaned Digby, as he lay back with his head resting upon his pillow, his host had placed at the back of his chair. And I used to think this place a perfect heaven!"

That day had nearly passed, and after being within doors during the hottest time, Digby was again seated beneath the tree, gazing sadly out to sea, and asking himself how long it would be ere he recovered his strength.

"I must find them—I must find them," he groaned. And then he started up, tottered, holding on by the back of the chair, dizzy with excitement, for unmistakably that was Fraser's voice he heard; and directly after the gate was opened, and Helen entered with him, leaning affectionately upon his arm.

The moment they were inside the gate, Helen darted into the house; and from where he sat, Digby could hear Redgrave's cry of joy, and realize as well as if he had seen it that the sobbing girl had thrown herself into her father's arms.

"My darling," said Fraser softly as he took off his hat and stood gazing toward the house. Then, with a bitter sigh, he turned away, and caught sight of the pale drawn face of Digby standing motionless in the shadow beneath the tree.

"Ah, my dear old Tom!" he cried; and his whole manner changed, as he literally ran at him. "What is it—Hurt?"

"Keep back!" cried Digby, in a suffocating voice. "You mean, despicable traitor!"

"What—Oh, I see," said Fraser, generally; and then a mocking look came into his face as he added slyly: "Don't take on about it, Tom. We can't all win."

Digby was too weak to reply; he merely darted a bitter look at his friend and sank helpless, and with his brain swimming, in the chair. He was conscious of voices and of seeing figures come as it were through a mist. Then, as he struggled back to himself, it was to find that Helen was leaning over him with her arms about his neck.

"You?" he panted. "I don't—I don't understand."

"Have you not told him, Fraser, my dear fellow?" cried Redgrave.

"I? No. Poor boy; he was too cross. No; too upset.— There, Tom, my dear lad," he cried, going down on one knee and taking his friend's hand, "don't let's play at cross-purposes."

"I—I—don't understand," said Digby hoarsely.

"Soon explain, my dear lad, I was very suspicious of Ramon, as you know, though you snubbed me; and after the last pressing way in which he proposed that we should visit the head of the

barranco, I felt sure there was something on the way. 'It is a plan to get rid of us for the time,' I said. And after turning the matter over in my mind, I thought I would let him think we were going, and see us start, and then step back and watch."

"Yes?" said Digby eagerly.

"Well, I started early, and left a line for you to follow; and of course I let you go on while I dropped into the bushes and watched—you first, then our friend."

"Quick! you torture me," cried Digby.

"That ought not to be torture," said Fraser quietly, as he glanced at where Helen hung to her injured lover.

"Well, there is little to tell. I saw you go; and an hour after, when I was beginning to grow suspicious of myself and my doubts, I saw Ramon come out, and I followed him right up to here."

"Here he came as with a message imploring help for you, old fellow. You had fallen from one of the rocks down by the seashore and wanted brandy and bandages."

"The scoundrel!"

"Yes; the scoundrel was very sorry our host here was out—so he said, but glad to escort poor little Helen down to her wounded lover. She followed blindly, thinking only of you; and when she reached the spot, you were not lying there, but a boat was ready, to sail somewhere or another, Ramon only knows."

"And then, Tom," cried Helen, who had been listening excitedly, "Mr. Fraser came up as he was trying to drag me into the boat."

"Come," cried Fraser, laughing; "that isn't fair. Let me tell my own story. You'll knock all the gilding off. I don't have a chance every day to play knight-errant."

"Go on, for pity's sake," cried Digby.

"All right. He dragged her on board, pushed off; and I thought I was too late, but a wave checked him, and I rushed into the water and got hold of the side. Then he raised the boat-hook and struck me. Well, that naturally made me feel savage. My hand went to my belt; and somehow, I hardly know how, I gave him a topper with my geological hammer; and the next thing I saw clearly was Ramon crawling out of the sea, while I was trying to manage the boat, for a fierce puff of wind came down the barranco and nearly capsize us. That's all."

"No, no; that can't be all," cried Digby, excitedly.

"Well, not quite. The squall increased to a gale. It was impossible to land; we were blown right out to sea—ocean, I mean—and later being nearly swamped about a hundred thousand times, we managed to get under the lee of Palma, right across yonder; Miss Helen here behaving like a heroine; and there we stayed with some friends of Mr. Redgrave till the weather lulled, and then we sailed back. There—that is all."

"No; that is not all," cried Helen, flushing. "He has said nothing hardly about his gallantry in defending me from the man, nor about his brave true chivalry all through our perilous trip. 'You ought to be proud'—She paused, and took Digby's hand between hers as she looked blushing in his eyes.— 'We ought to be proud to have so true a friend.'"

"Horace, old man," whispered Digby, as he held out his hand, "can you?"

"Can I?" cried the other, warmly grasping the extended hand.

An hour later, when they two were alone, and after all further explanations had been given, Fraser said softly, his face nearly hidden by the cloud from his cigar: "Yes, old man, why should I deny it? Who could help loving so sweet and pure a woman? I love her too well ever to let her think otherwise of me than as her true and chivalrous friend. The rest, is our secret, Tom." And after a pause: "She loves you every thought is yours; and as for me, I have but one wish—to see her happy.— There; you see I can take your hand."

There is little more to tell. Ramon did not die; but he was still anything but the same man, when the Redgraves returned to England, with an escort.—Redgrave pere having found means to pay off his indebtedness to the Spaniard, not a very large amount—when he had successfully parted with his interests in an island of which he had long been weary. How he obtained the money he did not say. Digby suspected that it came from Fraser; but the latter would not confess.

The other matter was a year later, and there were no cards.

THE END.

PROF. HUXLEY.

Favored Tobacco, and Disappointed an Audience of Reformers.

At a debate on smoking among the members of a certain British association many speakers denounced and others advocated the practice. Prof. Huxley said: "For 40 years of my life tobacco has been a deadly poison to me. Loud cheers from the anti-tobaccoists. In my youth, as a medical student, I tried to smoke. In vain! At every fresh attempt my insidious foetereached me prostrate on the floor. Repeated cheers. I entered the navy. Again I tried to smoke, and again met with defeat. I hated tobacco. I could almost have lent my support to any institution that had for its object the putting of tobacco smokers to death. Vociferous applause. A few years ago I was in Britany with some friends. We went to an inn. They began to smoke. They looked very happy, and outside it was very wet and dismal. I thought I would try a cigar. Murmurs. I did so. Great expectations. I smoked that cigar—it was delicious. Grogans. From that moment I was a changed man, and now I feel that smoking in moderation in a comfortable and laudable practice, and is productive of good. Dismay and confusion of the anti-tobaccoist. Roars of laughter from the smokers. There is no more harm in a pipe than there is in a cup of tea. You may poison yourself by drinking too much green tea, and kill yourself by eating too many beefsteaks. For my own part, I consider tobacco in moderation, a sweetener and equalizer of the temper." Total rout of the anti-tobaccoists and complete triumph of the smokers.

AGRICULTURAL

THE FARMER'S BOY.

The sun went down behind yon hill,
across the dreary moor;
Weary and lame, a boy there came up
to a farmer's door.

"Will you tell me if any there be that
will give me employ
To plough and sow, reap and mow, and
be a farmer's boy."

Chorus—
"And to be a farmer's boy, to be a
farmer's boy,
To plough and sow, reap and mow,
and be a farmer's boy."

"My father's dead, my mother's left
with her five children small,
And what is worst for my mother still,
I'm the largest of them all;
Tho' little I be, I fear no work, if you
will me employ

To plough and sow, reap and mow, and
be a farmer's boy."

Chorus—
"And if that you won't me employ, one
favor let me ask,
Will you shelter me till the break of
day from this cold and wintry
blast?

At break of day I'll trudge along else-
where to seek employ.
To plough and sow, reap and mow, and
be a farmer's boy."

Chorus—
"O pray, try the lad," the farmer cried,
"no further let him seek,"
"O yes, dear father," the daughter
cried, whilst tears ran down her
cheek.

"For those that can labor it's hard to
want, and travel for employ
To plough and sow, reap and mow, and
be a farmer's boy."

Chorus—
In course of time he grew a man; the
good old farmer died,
And left the lad the farm he had, and
the daughter for his bride.
The boy that was, now farmer is, oft
smiles and thinks with joy
The lucky day he came that way to be
a farmer's boy.

APPLYING MANURE.

If one may judge correctly from expressions made at many farmers' institutes, no matter puzzles a majority of farmers more than the one of getting and holding good catches of grass and clover, says the Practical Farmer. A field is broken for corn or other spring crop, seeded directly to wheat, and is then in such condition that clover, or timothy and clover, is needed to restore it to a profitable condition for future tillage. But the patch of grass is often a failure, causing a break in the rotation and making it necessary to have too large an acreage of the farm in tilled crops. Nothing is more disheartening than such failure to get stands of grass when wanted. More cultivation only decreases the chance for successful seeding, and the land is not in shape for profitable crops. If stands of grass could be assured, the farmer, his plans would not be so often upset, and his profits would be larger. Unfortunately no assurance can be had, and the only thing to do is to make the chances great as possible.

I am confident that on most farms the true function of the manure made on the farm is to make a manurial crop grow. It should be used to start a crop that will add much more fertility to the soil than the manure contains. It should not be treated as a source of plant food for cash crops, unless the farmer has no other means of getting needed to insure heavy growths of grass and clover. There are occasional stock farms that furnish all the plant food, including humus, needed by the soil in the form of stable manure, but such farms are rare. Whenever catches of grass and rank growth are not reasonable certainties, the stable manure should be made to do the most possible to insure success in seeding down the land.

In what way can manure be made to do its best for grass? Certainly it is by being thoroughly mixed with the surface soil of the land intended for seeding. The first step in seeding is to prepare the ground early so that moisture will rise. Then topdress with manure, cultivating the surface till the manure is fined and mixed with the surface soil.

Many object to this way of handling manure. They agree that the unfertilized manure should go to supply the wants of the corn plant, which is a gross feeder, and that fertility is left in the soil for a succeeding grain crop. This is doubtless true, but the manure that is left by the corn is not where it can do the most good for the young grass. It needs the soluble plant food and the mulching that is gotten by top-dressing. If there were abundance of manure, the unfertilized should be applied to land intended for corn, but with a limited supply the needs of the clover and grass are of the greatest importance.

There is least waste and expense when manure is drawn direct from stable to field and this is an argument against saving a supply for top-dressing land that is being prepared for wheat and grass, but I write of the circumstances by those who are far from sure of good stands of grass. The added expense in saving a supply for top-dressing is richly repaid in the vigorous clover that is usually assured by surface manuring.

All over this country one sees straw-stacks and fodder. The latter is not shredded, as a rule, and when these conditions exist all this long stuff that is refused by stock should be kept in a sort of pit or basin by the barn, where leaching does not occur, and the mass thoroughly rots by midsummer. This affords material for top-dressing early plowed fields, intended for wheat. Where the long stuff is cut and all refuse passes through the stables for bedding, a cheap shed will serve to protect the manure from severe loss. The secret lies in the thorough tramping of the manure in the shed as it is evenly spread over the floor, from time to time. In such ways a supply of manure may be kept till such time as it can be made to make a manurial crop grow. Where the stock of manure is

insufficient in quantity to furnish one-fourth of the plant food, and the humus needed, it can be made to furnish many-fold its original amount of vegetable matter in the form of a clover sod, and the clover insures an available stock of mineral elements for succeeding crops.

TAKE CARE OF THE CHICKENS.

Many farmers have from fifty to a hundred head of chickens running around their barnyard and stables, scratching and trying to take care of themselves, which never have any special care, because they are regarded of little value. It is true that by scratching for themselves, and protecting themselves as best they can, they manage to keep the farmer's table supplied with eggs and chickens during the year, and at special seasons to furnish a surplus for the market. But all this seems of little account, because they do it all themselves without any care, and so it never enters in the farmer's calculation that chickens can be made the most profitable live stock that try to live upon his farm. They have, in his opinion, done all that can be expected of the fifty or one hundred chickens that have accumulated on his farm from year to year. (These are, indeed, often of the most indifferent kind of dunghill fowls, with an over-useless and are a perfect nuisance, besides being a dead loss of what they eat. Moreover, as they run at large at all times, they often destroy grain and garden truck, which, besides the annoyance is often a serious loss.)

The chickens must have the blame when it should fall on the careless household whom they are trying to serve.

Now, all this can be changed, and instead of all this annoyance and waste, with a doubtful profit, there can be a certain income of a hundred or more dollars each year, from these same chickens, or others better adapted to do the work at the same expense. This would certainly be no unwelcome income added to the spending money of the farmer's household. This is but a small estimate of the income from a flock of chickens no larger than is found on many farms, and kept with almost no profit. With a little time and a little care and, kept with an outlay in the beginning, arrangements may be made by which chickens may be kept with very little trouble and with much profit.

Instead of making it a necessity for them to pick around the stables and barnyard for an uncertain living and finding shelter where they can, in all kinds of weather, they should have a large yard somewhere near the barn for a range, and in this or connected with it there should be a warm chicken house for shelter. This house should be large enough to have a feeding room, roosting racks, and, separated from these, but of easy access, a room for nests and hatching.

The feeding room should have a covering on the floor of clean straw, better if some of it is cut to two or three inches in length; among this straw, when fed in the house, the feed should be scattered, to necessitate the exercise of scratching to find the grain. Every room should be kept clean, and the walls should be whitewashed, and lime with a little dilute carbolic acid should be scattered around the roosts. The yard, where the feeding should be done in mild weather, should be supplied with pure water and may include a grass plot for summer use, and access to the barnyard, where the chickens may be permitted to run when convenient. The feed here should be well scattered and should be varied; corn, wheat, barley and oats, with scraps from the table, and a couple of times a week ground bones and a meat from the butcher's. This arrangement may seem at first to involve a good deal of trouble, but that will be owing very much to the interest taken in the chickens, and what they are expected to do for you. If you once get in the habit of taking care of your chickens as you now take care of your other stock, you will be astonished how they will grow in your favor, and how much real money they will make for you. Of course, it must be understood that you have egg producing chickens and that a very small per cent. of them are males, and that these be kept from a free range, except in the early spring when you expect your hens to prepare for hatching. It is found best to kill or otherwise dispose of most of the cockerels before they are a year old.

SING AS THEY MARCH.

Russian Soldiers Resort to Music To Lighten their Dreary Journeys.

A correspondent from Russia writes: "In no civilized army, I believe, is the use of song to lighten toil so prevalent as among the Russians. "Shabbily and scantily attired, begrimed with dust and sweat in summer, bespattered and bedraggled with mud in autumn, clotted with snow in winter, with icicles lips and beards; at all times and in all weathers, along Russia's wretched roads and ways, one may meet her soldiers, briskly covering the ground, after long and forced marches' forlorn, and 'weary-looking objects, drab-colored spectacles, not attractive to the eye, but ever with the cheery song issuing from throats which swallow no better food than a thin soup cooked from refuse cabbage leaves, and 'chunks' of course black bread. "And that almost ceaseless song, plaintive though the air invariably are, seems not only to buoy their spirits up, but to raise them in the eyes of the spectator from overdriven hopeless slaves of an autocratic military system to cheery and willing endurers. "Hordes of Cossacks may be met, too, who have not stirred from the saddle for long, weary hours, and in their case, the never-flagging chorus is enlivened by tambourine accompaniments from perhaps one warrior out of each fifty."

HIGHEST INHABITED POINT.

The Buddhist Monastery, of Haine, in Tibet, is the loftiest inhabited point in the world. It is 17,000 feet above sea level.