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THE WITCH OF CRAGENSTONE (Continued from page two) ranging the straw beds for the night. Josiah Taunston approached and, addressing the man with the air of one who had important information, said, "Dost know, good host, whom thou hath at thy board?"



"Mean thou the tall man with bent head an' lame leg? Who is he, master?" the man asked curiously. "Tis a certain Ezekiel Mason, who hath come to us from loyal Puritans at Honeyoke, ten miles below Sterndorf, having the proper password and bearing letters of introduction from them to us. The man, it seemeth, hath invented a famous lock that none but he can understand. Once on a door 'twill baffle all human skill to get the thing asunder. He hath shown it to the council, who did so approve of it that they did purchase it at once for our jail door, putting the newcomer in charge of the jail over Matthew Allen, who for such events of importance as are happening at present, prithe, is too old."

"As the innkeeper's face expressed interest, Josiah continued with his narrative: "The letters state that this Ezekiel Mason is proficient in the art of building scaffolds for hanging an' hath skill in planting a stake and arranging dry fagots around it to secure a quick burning. They also make mention of the fact that in the several executions yonder below on the south side the mountain, from whence he comes, all were under his direction, and assert that each affair was conducted with order an' dispatch."

"By my faith, methought the stranger had a menacing look an' a cruel, relentless manner," answered the innkeeper, with a shrug. "At the first when he appeared, dust covered an' mud stained, the village lads loitering 'f the hallway sprang away and ran out of doors in fear of him. But happen he'll serve the councilmen for their purposes right suitably," he added. Taunston strode toward him angrily. "Call not this Ezekiel Mason a cruel man," he cried, "or a fearsome one, but rather with low voice an' reverent manner assert that he is a holy man, chosen by the Lord to do his work. I give thee good day, John."

Taunston walked off with rapid strides, then halted abruptly. "Thou hadst best come an' settle his reckoning, for I am here to take this good man to the prison."

The innkeeper, laying down a large bundle of straw that he held in his arms, shouted an order to a passing horse boy, then hurriedly followed Taunston into the house.

CHAPTER XXVII. THE next day and the next were eventful ones in the history of the quiet little village of Cragenstone. People stopped in the midst of their busy preparations for the witnessing of the awful event now drawing so near to walk to the prison to see the great new lock hanging from an iron band across the door and to gaze with wonder and curiosity at the tall, lame man who strode up and down before the building that confined Margaret Mayland, muttering savagely and uttering curses under his breath. Small boys and idlers hung about him, following him whither he went, and on the last day watched with pale, awe-stricken faces the planting of the stake, the piling of the fagots at the foot and all the gruesome preparations for the consuming by fire of the condemned woman.

At last all was in readiness, and the darkness of the night that came before the day set for the execution settled black and dense over the mountain. The village folk, with the idea of rising promptly at the first approach of the sun, so that they and their children might be dressed and on the scene at the first possible moment, had gone to rest early, so that at 9 o'clock not a light gleamed from the windows of a single house or cabin, not a wayfarer seemed to be on the roadways, and there was an intense stillness on the mountain.

At the jail old Matthew Allen lay stretched on a wooden bench just inside the huge door, sleeping heavily, although supposed to be awake, alert, on guard, and his prisoner, alone in her narrow cell, her dress of black clinging in several folds about her slender figure, knelt on the hard floor beside her pallet, her head bowed in her hands. The glimmer from a candle on a stand near at hand fell on her bright hair and bowed head, showing her attitude to be one of hopeless resignation as she knelt there immovable, to all appearances unconscious.

Soon the sharp noise of the opening and shutting of the great door rang through the quiet prison and the heavy, halting footsteps of Ezekiel Mason were heard as he came down the corridor, making his last round to see that all was safe. Reaching Margaret's cell, he paused, and as the rasping sound of a key being turned in the rusty lock of the iron door of her cell fell on her ears the prisoner instinctively bowed her head lower. Then the door was thrown back on its hinges, and for a few seconds there was no sound. "Margaret Mayland."

"Is it time?" she asked dully. "Hast mine hour come?" "Margaret."

"She moved, appeared to listen, then lifted her face and looked about her wildly, but saw only the stern jailer, Ezekiel Mason. "Who mocks me?" she cried pitifully. "Who imitates his voice?" The man stepped over the threshold and with a quick motion removed his slouched hat, turned down his broad coat collar and, supporting the trembling woman to her feet, said with deep emotion: "Margaret, oh, my love!" "Godfrey!" She wound her arms about his neck, clinging to him wildly. "And is it thou? In my dazed state methought 'twas the cruel jailer!" Thank God, I see thee once more before I die. Oh, God be praised that thou still dost love me, Godfrey, kiss me and then go, for they will surely take thee!" Tears were shining in his eyes. "Kiss thee! Ah, I will kiss thee," he replied. "But not so fast, sweet love, in bidding me begone, for when I go thou goest with me."

She raised bewildered, frightened eyes to his. "Already Elisabeth and our trusty Gaston, disguised as Puritans, mounted and holding two horses under cover of the trees, are waiting for us at the crossroads. As Ezekiel Mason I have the password that will let us through the guard, and as Godfrey La Fabienne," he said triumphantly, "I will carry my sweet Margaret safely through the enemy's lines!" He laughed a low, jubilant laugh, delightfully pressing her to his heart. "But the old jailer, Matthew Allen? Surely he will hear thee?" "Nay, sweet," he hastened to reassure her. "Give old Matthew not a care, for a notion slipped into his wine at supper tonight doth cause him to sleep heavily. As I passed just now I kicked him with my foot, and so unconscious of it was that he did not even turn."

He lifted the candle so that its gleam fell on her face. "Thou hast sorrowed, mine own. Thy pale, drawn face doth tell its own tale of suffering."

"Godfrey"—tears filled her eyes and her lips trembled—"methought thou didst desert me and put me from thy heart."

At the recollection of her suffering uncontrollable sobs broke from her in great gasps, and she wept bitterly. With an exclamation, La Fabienne drew her closer to him. "And did I not bid thee trust me?" he asked reproachfully. "Why, sweet, I had thy promise. I suspected that night under the trees yonder at the farm when we were last together and the soldiers came up the roadway that maybe thy sneaking cousin Josiah had laid a trap for me, but, feeling certain I could circumvent him, I cared not to frighten thee. Later at the Sign of the Red Heart I found good proof of his perfidy, learning from the officer in command that I, with thee, was to be arrested the next morning. By heaven, Margaret, behind an iron grating I could not save thee—could not lie there like a wild thing, a caged lion, unable to rescue thee from thy cousin's awful intriguing. Sweet, for a time the blow was so heavy that I was near bereft of my senses."

He drew a sharp breath. "The situation that confronted me was so desperate that I fairly sickened. Then I gathered courage, knowing that thou hadst no one but me, and I resolved to escape that night and take what was our one chance, the path through the forest to Sterndorf, where methought, once there, with bribes of land and gold to hire fellows to ride back with me, kill the guards, storm this rotten prison and rescue thee. For two days, desperate, beside myself with a desire to advance, thinking always of thy suffering, I feverishly cut and pushed my way through the dense and gloomy forest, fearful to lie down at night on account of the wild beasts that come from their lairs at nightfall and too eager to get on to rest. Darnie, but 'twas a time to make the stoutest heart grow faint!"

"On the third morning, when I had drained the last drop from my flask and was in great distress that I might have lost my bearings, methought I heard the sound of a human voice shrieking in great agony. Drawing my sword, I ran in the direction of the noise and came suddenly upon a man struggling for his life in the close embrace of a mountain bear. So intent was the animal upon its prey that it did not notice my approach. With one well aimed thrust I ran it through the heart, and the beast sank with a convulsive motion to the ground.

"The man, exhausted and bleeding from many wounds, fell at its side, unconscious of his close proximity to his dead foe and dead to everything about him. Sweet I stanch'd his wounds and from a brook near by brought cool water and bathed his head, so that his wandering wits returned. But the man had received a blow on the heart and so many broken bones that he could not live. I saw that he was sinking rapidly, so, kneeling at his side, asked him his name, offering to deliver any messages he might wish to leave. To make a long tale short, sweet Margaret, as we have not much time for tarrying, the prostrate man was a famous Puritan from parts distant from here, by name Ezekiel Mason, and was on his way to Cragenstone to sell his invention of a prison lock; also to conduct the affairs of this execution. When he had told me that much and given me the password he expired. Hastily searching his clothing and a packet he carried, I found bread and wine, which I ate and drank ravingly; also the lock he wished to sell and letters of introduction to the elders and councilmen from prominent men of his belief. Margaret, the man's face had not relaxed in death ere it bed occurred to me to don his clothing, stain my face and beard with the juice of leaves and berries, as Ezekiel Mason was dark and swarthy, and return to Cragenstone representing myself to be this man. By the Lord, 'twas a serious undertaking, but with what success all was accomplished thou dost know tonight."

"God's mercy!" she exclaimed softly, trembling in his embrace. "Thine adventures were desperate and terrible, but praise him that the man fell in my way; otherwise I fear we had been lost."

Just then a light sound as of a foot-fall under the window was heard. Both sprang apart, listening with pale faces. La Fabienne, donning his hat, pulled up his coat collar, carefully closed the door upon Margaret and gave a careful, searching glance in all directions, but all now was quiet. No sounds reached his ears save the whinnying of an impatient horse not far distant down the roadway. So, after convincing himself that no intruder was about, he re-entered the prison, going at once to Margaret's cell.

"All is well," he hastened to assure her. "The wind is rising, and the sound no doubt was but the creaking of a loose grating. Gads, the villagers sleep soundly tonight that they may get good rest for tomorrow's gala day. But we do tarry here too long. Here's a Puritan bonnet—'twill disguise thee, Margaret—and throw this cloak over thy shoulders. In passing through the guard thou must droop thy head and appear languishing, as thou art supposed to be a maid suddenly taken ill of the pest of measles now prevalent about here, whom we are anxious to take to her home at Sterndorf. As friends of Ezekiel Mason he hath permission to see thee and thy relatives safely out of the village."

Sir Godfrey laughed grimly. "By our lady, 'tis a gruesome joke, sweet, but thy face looks downcast. Thou wert ever one to enjoy a spice of danger. What gloom hangs over thee?" His glance expressed great tenderness as he clumsily tied the gray bonnet strings.

"Tis the awful fear of my cousin that still lies heavy on my heart," she replied, hurriedly fastening on her shawl. "Maybe he hath suspected thee, Godfrey, and may entrap us yet."

"Nay, love, put by such fearsome misgivings." La Fabienne laughed lightly. "Farewell, in all this village no man rests so securely in the trustiness of the new jailer, no man hath such confidence in the stern Puritan, Ezekiel Mason, as thy kinsman Josiah. So throw fear of him from thee, Margaret. No man will molest us."

Taking her hand, he led her to a small door at the back of the prison that was opened by the slipping back of some heavy bolts, and he stepped out on to the ground. As the cool night wind blew on her face and the broad expanse of country stretched out before her, with freedom so close at hand, Margaret, trembling and terribly excited, drew back. Her lover held her hand strongly in his own. Still she hesitated, afraid almost to venture forth.

"Margaret, my love, take courage," he urged. "Art thou never coming through the doorway?" At his words she seemed to grow braver and, raising her head with a movement that indicated sudden resolution, said firmly: "I am coming now, dear rescuer, over the threshold—ever will we bleed, Godfrey—of hope, liberty, love and life!"

La Fabienne retaining her hand in his strong clasp, they ran swiftly down the dark pathway under the protecting shadows of the trees. A short time later Josiah Taunston, sleeping the uneasy, fitful sleep of the guilty, was disturbed by the sound of horses' feet going down the mountain road. Raising himself in bed on his elbow, he listened intently. "Halt! Who goeth there?" The cry of the sentinel was brought to his straining ears by the light wind. "Friends."

"Halt, friends! Advance one with the countersign!" A silence for a moment, then the clattering noise of horses' hoofs pounding the ground, at first loud, then growing fainter, until the sounds passed out of his hearing. With a sigh of relief Taunston fell back upon his pillow muttering: "Ha, they ride away! 'Tis some good Puritan, perchance, going down the mountain to meet friends coming up the roadway. Strange how the suspicion hath ever beset my mind that Margaret Mayland's lover would return to rescue her. Ho, ho! Let him come tomorrow night with a great army. I challenge him! The man he called a coward doth challenge him, lovesick laggard that he is, to rescue his lady tomorrow night!"

His harsh, exultant laughter, grating and discordant, rang out through the dark bedchamber as, his mind now at ease, he settled himself more comfortably upon his pillow, prepared to sleep until the dawn.

THE END.

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Hockins' Old Stand. P. J. HURLEY Kent-st. Lindsay. BEXLEY COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS. Council meeting was held at the Township Hall, in Victoria Road on March 12th. All members present, Reeve Fielding in the chair. Correspondence was read from the Clerk of Eldon, and Carden, re the lock-up at Victoria Road. Applications from Trustees of W S Section No. 9, to have one-half the Cement Co's Property detached from S Section No. 8, and attached to No. 9, and from Trustees of Section No. 3, to have Lots 4, 5 and 6 in 2 Con., and lot 6, con. 2, detached from S. Section No. 8, and attached to S Section No. 8, were received.

The Council was addressed by Solicitor G. Hopkins, in behalf of Section No. 8. The applications were discussed from 10.30 a. m. till 12 o'clock. Council adjourned 1 hour to dinner. Resumed proceedings at 1 p. m. The following motions were passed: Council adjourned to meet at Cobouck on the 30th day of May and to hold the Court of Revision, of Eaven Lake Portland Cement Co., sufficient to be one quarter the value of the whole 9 acres, be detached from S Section No. 8 and attached to W S Section No. 9. Black-Bowins, that Lots 5 and 6, in the 2nd Con. be detached from S Section No. 8 and attached to S Section No. 3. Alton-Black, that Mr. Isaac Trip be Pathmaster in place of W. H. Deatour, and be paid \$8 for underbrushing done on Junction Road. Speeches were made by Mr. Hawkins, the Reeve of Eldon, and Mr. Thompson, the Reeve of Carden, in to the lock-up.

Black-Bowins, that as Carden has made no grant and no assurance of doing so, W. G. Peel, the contractor, be paid \$35 for the work he has done on the lock-up which he has offered to accept to close the contract. Contract having been cancelled for above reason, The Auditor's Report was received and adopted. Council adjourned to meet at Cobouck on the 30th day of May and to hold the Court of Revision.

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Grand Trunk Railway Time Table. ARRIVALS: 60 From Toronto, 5.00 a.m.; 19 From Peterboro, 8.00 a.m.; 32 From Haliburton, 8.55 a.m.; 1 From Port Hope, 9.10 a.m.; 0 From Cobouck, 10.10 a.m.; 2 From Toronto, 10.50 a.m.; 25 From Port Hope, 2.05 p.m.; 2 From B. & O. Jct., 5.45 p.m.; 23 From Port Hope, 6.23 p.m.; 54 From Whitby, 7.30 p.m.; 24 From Toronto, 8.05 p.m.; 56 From Whitby, 8.45 p.m.; 18 From Toronto, 9.40 p.m.; 1 From Belleville, 9.45 p.m. DEPARTURES: 34 For Port Hope, 6.00 a.m.; 51 For Toronto, 6.30 a.m.; 0 For Belleville, 7.20 a.m.; 21 For Toronto, 9.15 a.m.; 2 For Port Hope, 10.53 a.m.; 3 For B. & O. Jct., 11.00 a.m.; 25 For Whitby, 11.05 a.m.; 27 For Toronto, 12.05 p.m.; 33 For Haliburton, 2.40 p.m.; 23 For Toronto, 6.25 p.m.; 31 For Cobouck, 6.35 p.m.; 19 For Peterboro, 9.45 a.m.; 18 For Toronto, 8.05 a.m.