

A Cat's Paw

Or, The Maid of the Mill

CHAPTER XXIX.

It is only due to observe that John Vandeleur was one of those gentlemen who, if they intended going up in a balloon, would take care to have it warmed, aired, and made thoroughly comfortable.

He was, indeed, well used to travelling on the Continent, and knew better than most people with how little extra forethought and trouble it is possible for those who have plenty of money to carry with them all the luxuries of home. He employed a foreign servant, too—a perfect treasure, who suffered nobody to rob his master but himself. A servant to whom he need only say, "We start to-morrow at five for Constantinople," and everything would be ready at daylight, including, perhaps, a Sultan's firman waiting at the first post he should reach on the Turkish frontier. To whom, as on the present occasion, he had but to observe, "Auguste, dinner in half-an-hour! Covers for four!" and Auguste would reply, "Milor" (he persisted in calling his master "Milor") "shall be served to the minute!" taking care at the same time, even in a greasy German hotel, that the dinner should be as well put on the table, if not as well cooked, the wine as carefully selected, as at Okavok, or the Clarence, or the Cafe de Paris itself. When the two guests were ushered by this invaluable domestic into the sitting-room occupied by their host and hostess, these were ready to receive them. Vandeleur, gentlemanlike and hospitable, as if in his own house, Norah, pale and beautiful, in a high transparent dress that set off the symmetry of her neck and shoulders to perfection, her only ornaments a heavy gold bracelet at her wrist, a heavy gold locket on a black velvet round her neck, and a white rose in her dark chestnut hair.

The husband was laughing gaily; the wife looked tranquil and composed. How could the arrivals guess that there had been another scene ten minutes ago—that the smiling gentleman extending his hand so cordially to the two young men, had been swearing brutally at the delicate lady to whom they made their bow, accusing her of flirting with the one and valuing the society of the other, as being a dear friend to her lover—hers, a married woman—but a lover whom he would take care to good care she should never see again! All this, with strange mutterings, furious gestures, and averted eyes that never looked a moment in her face.

Well, he was pleasant enough now. "Was, Mr. Burton will you take in my wife? Let me see, which of you two fellows is the eldest? Never mind. Dolly, you will come with me. I can't give you a decent dinner, but the wine is not bad, and after our bustling walk to-day we shall appreciate it. I thought Norah would have fainted, she looked so knocked up when she came in."

Mrs. Vandeleur smiled rather contemptuously, and the party sat down, waited on by Auguste and a benevolent German servant, who appeared to resist with difficulty his desire to join in the conversation.

They talked about England of course. English people always do talk as if they were within ten miles of Charing Cross. Burton endeavored to interest Mrs. Vandeleur in his own anticipations of the London season, and she tried to listen as if her thoughts were not far away. Dolly reverted to old times, to the Rectory, to Ripley Water, to the parlour at Archer's, and her eye brightened, while the color came faintly to her cheek. "He liked that country," he said, "he liked that neighborhood, he admired the scenery, he enjoyed the climate, he thought Okavok the nicest place he had ever seen."

"I wish you could persuade Mrs. Vandeleur of all that," said the host, who seemed, contrary to his usual habit, inclined to grow quarrelsome and argumentative. "It's a devilish odd thing—though when you're as old as I am you'll both have seen a thousand instances of it—that no woman ever likes to live at her husband's place. It's either too high or too low, or the trees are too near the house, or there's standing water within half a mile that makes it unhealthy. They never are any neighbors. It's dull in the summer and cold in the winter. Or, suppose all these objections are got over, it's sure to be too damp for her constitution in the spring."

"I like Okavok very much," observed Mrs. Vandeleur, quietly, "and as for the climate not agreeing with me, I was brought up within two miles of it, as you know."

"Oh, you're a rotten wife, of course," was his answer, with so unpleasant a smile that it could not escape the observation of his guests. "It's lucky you to like the place though, for we go straight back there to-morrow. I can tell you."

The young men looked at each other in consternation. Vandeleur's manner was so different from his usual easy good-humored courtesy, that they were puzzled. He was drinking a great deal of wine too, and seemed strangely impatient when Auguste neglected to fill his glass. Even after dinner was over he continued at table, and appeared in no hurry to order coffee. Norah, unwilling to remain, and afraid to go away, sat in utter discomfort, trying to fix her attention on the platitudes of Dandy Burton, who bestowed them liberally, satisfied he was kindling a lively interest in the breast of his

scorn, expostulation, then entreatingly, terror!

The two listeners sprang across the court, and stood for a moment spell-bound, beneath the windows of a brightly-lighted apartment on the second floor. The rooms below were very lofty, and it was not easy to hear what went on within an upper chamber so high above the ground.

Shadows passing rapidly to and fro traversed the wall opposite the broad open casement.

Hoarse, as with mad fury long suppressed, a whisper hissed down into the court—

"By h—ll, I will! I'll strangle you!"

Then a long, wild, ringing shriek, and dashing into the house for a rescue, Dolly, closely followed by his friend, came in collision, at the door with Mrs. Vandeleur in her night-dress, her hair down, her feet bare, her whole appearance denoting extremity of terror and dismay.

"Save me! save me!" screamed Norah, clinging to Dolly like a terrified child. "He'll kill me!—he's ravaging mad! Help him, somebody!" she added, beginning to sob as her courageous nature re-asserted itself. "Help him!—perhaps he'll kill himself!"

Even while she spoke they heard a rushing sound, followed by a dull dead bump on the paved surface of the court. Norah's strength failed her now. Already the hotel was alarmed. Lights were glancing, and servants running about in all directions. They covered Mrs. Vandeleur with a cloak, and carried her off unresisting, for she had fainted away.

"It's all over!" said Burton, as the hand lifted fell useless, and inert across Vandeleur's bruised and mangled body, lying in a pool of blood. "Stark naked, too!" he added, looking down at the ghastly mass. "And to jump from such a height! He must have been as mad as Pedlar!"

He must indeed! That poor terrified woman, now happily insensible, could have told them how her husband forced himself into her chamber, raving at her with a maniac's incoherent fury, tearing off article after article of clothing as he stormed; how he hunted her into the sitting-room, threatening her every moment with a horrible death; how she reached the door, in which the key, with its numerical attached, had been fortunately left on the outside, and turned it; how she fled; lastly, how to her dying day she would be haunted by the dire horror that this act of self-defence had caused him to leap through the window into the court-yard below!

It was well for Mrs. Vandeleur that she had a true friend like Egremont to stand by her in this sad crisis, of her life. Everything that could be done for her comfort was attended to by kind-hearted sympathizing Dolly, and it was only at her repeated entreaties and the considerations of propriety she strongly urged—for Norah never lost the habit of thinking for herself—that he consented to prosecute his journey with Burton next day, and left her to the charge of an English physician resident in the town.

The following paragraph appeared in Galignani within a week of the accident:—

"Deplorable Catastrophe at Heidelberg and Supposed Suicide of a Gentleman.—On Friday last, this romantic old town was startled by one of those awful calamities which occur at intervals to rouse us from the apathy of conventional life. An Englishman of high position, accompanied by his lady, and attended by several domestics, arrived in the early train from Frankfurt to take up his quarters at the Rheinische-Hof. After visiting the castle and other objects of interest in the neighborhood, he sat down to dinner with a few friends, who parted from him at an early hour, apparently in his usual health and spirits. About midnight the inmates of the hotel were alarmed by the screams of his lady, and it was found that the unfortunate gentleman had precipitated himself from an upper-floor window into the courtyard below. Dr. Druem of Heidelberg was promptly on the spot, but medical skill proved necessarily unavailing in so frightful a catastrophe. Continued ill-luck at the play-tables of Homburg is rumored to have been the cause of this rash act, and when we mention the name of the victim as John Vandeleur, Esq., of Okavok, in the county of—, we leave our readers to infer how enormous must have been the pecuniary losses that could thus drive the owner of a princely fortune into the commission of so awful and irrevocable a crime.

This paragraph found its way into the London papers, and his old associates in clubs or such places of public resort talked about "poor Vandeleur" for a day or two, and forgot him. "Married, wasn't he?" and for the second time said the Club-woman. "Ah! he was always as mad as a hatter! Very pretty girl, was she? Clergyman's daughter somewhere near his own place, and thirty years younger than him! Ah! I wish she had jumped out of the window instead of him, and I'd been underneath to catch her!"

And this was Vandeleur's "Requiescat in pace!"

(To be continued.)

PORT ARTHUR DAMAGED

Thirty-Eight Russlans Killed and Over a Hundred Wounded.

TERRIBLE DESTRUCTION.

The Vin-Kow correspondent of the London Daily Mail says that the arrival of Russian officers who have arrived at New-Chwang from Port Arthur declare that much damage was done by Thursday's bombardment. They declare that 38 persons were killed and over a hundred wounded. A 12-inch shell, which exploded in the lower land fort, killed or wounded an officer and 12 men. The Russian fleet did not participate in the fighting. The battleship Retvizan was hit by three shells.

A despatch to the London Daily Telegraph from Tokio says that two Russian torpedo-boat destroyers were sunk in Thursday's engagement at Port Arthur, and that great damage was done to the docks, forts and arsenal, including the explosion of a powder magazine. It is reported that Dally was almost destroyed. The despatch adds that at a late council at military headquarters Sunday afternoon a report was received that a number of guns were observed to be dismounted during the attack on Port Arthur. The garrison was driven out of the docks. The European quarter was set on fire. Four Russian destroyers were put out of action inside the harbor, and were deserted by their crews.

The St. Petersburg correspondent of the Daily Telegraph says there are rumors that telegrams have been received later than those published, which describe Thursday's engagement as being more serious and the Russian losses greater than were at first believed.

A despatch to the London Standard from Chefoo says that a late post has brought accounts of the fearful panic at Port Arthur during the bombardment Thursday, which was of the fiercest kind. Shells struck an incoming train, completely destroying the engine, and killing the driver. Reports to reports that Port Arthur would be evacuated. Russian officials at Chefoo say they received advice Sunday that all was well there, and that Russia would never evacuate or surrender the place.

A despatch to the London Standard from Tien-Tsin states that the Russians admit that the last Japanese bombardment did extensive damage to the forts and the new town, including the destruction of the military headquarters. It is the opinion of experts that it would have been impossible for the Japanese ships to shell the new town from outside the harbor, and consequently they must have made their way inside the harbor. Reports to reports that Port Arthur would be evacuated.

It is evident from the despatches from every source that the bombardment of Port Arthur Thursday was much more effective than the official accounts state, but the reports of the evacuation of the place are not credited. They are probably due to the fact that the new town has been rendered impossible to live in, and has been abandoned.

PORT ARTHUR EVACUATED?

A Shanghai despatch to the London Daily Telegraph says that a telegram received from Tokio Sunday night states that the Russians have virtually evacuated Port Arthur, probably fearing that they would be cut off by the Japanese destroying the railway.

The correspondent of the London Chronicle at New-Chwang states that American refugees from Port Arthur say that Thursday's bombardment was so effective that the Japanese were able to shell the town, which is impossible as a place of residence. The forts are unable to return the Japanese fire.

A despatch to the London Express from Chefoo says that news from Chinese sources is to the effect that the Russians have withdrawn from Port Arthur, the evacuation occurring last Friday.

LAND FIGHT IMMINENT.

There is no real information of the movements of the Japanese from any source, but as the Seoul correspondent of the London Times points out, the practicable landing places are hardly yet free of ice. The sudden return of winter has increased the difficulties. The Japanese have no intention of marching their main army any further than necessary along the execrable Korean roads. The troops already landed are sufficient to secure a foot-hold in Corea and seize Ping-Yang.

IN SPLENDID FETTLE.

The Seoul correspondent of the London Times describes the Japanese troops who have already landed as being in splendid fettle. They are clothed in a light heavy uniform, but quite sufficient to stand the intense cold of the north. Besides, the main army carries a species of postern blanket coat, with goats' hair inside. The enthusiasm and confidence inspired by the navy's success is exhilarating to see.

ALL GONE TO THE FRONT.

A despatch to the London Times from Wei-Hai-Wai describes a visit to Chemulpo. On the previous night there was crowded with transports, but now there are barely a dozen vessels to be seen, of which eight are warships. Few soldiers are visible, but there are pyramids of supplies.

BOERS AS SCOUTS.

One hundred young Boers have offered to serve as scouts in the Russian army in gratitude for Russia's having sent medical comforts to the Boer army during the war in South Africa. Probably the offer will be

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Thirty-Eight Russlans Killed and Over a Hundred Wounded.

Letters received at Chefoo from Mukden state that the Russians are extensively fortifying the banks of the Yalu River. The Cossacks have had frequent skirmishes with the Japanese near Cholsan and Chong-Ju, Corea. Strong reinforcements are being sent to Antung, New-Chwang, Mukden, and Kirin. Apparently Russia intends to carry on a war of exhaustion keeping her fleets protected in the harbors, where they furnish unprofitable targets for bombardment.

HARBOR NOW OPEN.

The Cologne Gazette has a despatch from Tokio which says that the entrance to the harbor of Port Arthur is now free of obstruction.

ANOTHER BOMBARDMENT.

Admiral Alexief, under date of Thursday, telegraphs from Mukden to St. Petersburg as follows:—"The commandant at Port Arthur reports that at about 1 o'clock on Thursday morning the outlines of vessels, apparently torpedo boats, were distinguished at sea within the area of our searchlights. Our batteries opened fire on them. At 2.40 our torpedo boats put to sea, and about 4 o'clock came in contact with the enemy to the westward of the Liaotshan lighthouse. After firing several shells, the enemy retired southward in the direction of Shantung. Our torpedo boats returned to the harbor at 6 o'clock. They were again sent out to reconnoitre, and returned to the harbor, having ascertained that the enemy's squadron was approaching the sea within the area of our searchlights. They had fourteen ships. They fired the whole time from behind Liaotshan."

TO BLOCK THE RIVER.

Russian reinforcements to the number of 2,000 are reported to have arrived at New-Chwang. The Russians are planning to block the mouth of the Liao River with junks and torpedoes.

SCOUTS EXCHANGE SHOTS.

Russian and Japanese scouts exchanged shots on Wednesday north of Ping-Yang. The Russians retired after a few rounds had been fired. There were no casualties on either side.

FEMALE JAPANESE SPY.

A despatch to the London Morning Leader from Tien-Tsin says that a Japanese woman who left Port Arthur with a number of refugees stole private officials' charts and plans at Dally and Port Arthur, and conveyed them to Tokio.

BY WAY OF ARCTIC OCEAN.

According to the St. Petersburg correspondent of the Paris Temps the Russians contemplate attempting to take the Baltic squadron to the Far East by way of the Arctic Ocean. It is not proposed that the vessels shall start before midsummer, and as soon as the warm weather sets in ice-breakers of the Verak type will probably go to the White Sea to ascertain whether the north-east passage is available. It is believed in St. Petersburg that such a voyage is feasible, and if it proves so the fleet will certainly follow that route.

JAPAN'S NAVY.

The subject of the Japanese navy is discussed in the London Standard. The article states that the Japanese navy is rapidly increasing, and that the country is well equipped for a war with Russia.

CHINA'S NAVY.

Russia has served notice on China that the latter must not send troops beyond the Great Wall, and that she must exercise her influence to restrain the Chinese bandits, who are partially under the control of Chinese officers, from interfering with the railroad and telegraph lines. A report just received at St. Petersburg through official military channels describes the Chinese forces marching northward as being an undisciplined and almost grotesque military organization showing an entire absence of equipment and training.

REVOLUTIONISTS BUSY.

Thousands of copies of a revolutionary manifesto appealing to citizens not to contribute to the war funds were distributed throughout St. Petersburg on Wednesday. Some were posted on walls until the police removed them. The manifesto also warns citizens not to support the Government because it brought about a war which will cost millions of roubles and ruin the country.

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LEADING MARKETS.

The Ruffing Prices in Live Stock and Broadstuffs.

BREADSTUFFS.

Toronto, March 15.—Wheat—The market is dull and easy, with buyers holding off till prices are more settled. No. 2 red and white are quoted at 94c to 95c west or east. No. 3 is quiet at 84c for No. 2 east. Spring is easier, 89c for No. 1. Manitoba wheat is about steady at \$1.03 for No. 1 hard, \$1.01 for No. 1 northern, 98c for No. 2 northern and 95c for No. 3 northern at Georgian Bay ports, and 9c more grinding in transit.

Flour—The market is dull and lower. Local exporters were quoting \$3.55 for cars of 90 cent. patents in their bags to-day, west or east. Holders were asking 25c or more in advance of that price. Choice brands are quoted 15c to 20c higher than those prices. Manitoba flour is steady. Sellers say their prices did not keep pace the advance in the prices of wheat, and that there is now no reason for following the recent decline. Cars of Hungarian patents are quoted at \$5.30, second patents at \$5, and strong bakers at \$4.90. Bags included, on the track Toronto.

Millfeed—Is in fair demand and steady at \$17.50 for cars of shorts and \$16 for bran in bulk middle millfeed is steady at \$21 for cars of shorts and \$20 for bran, sacks included. Toronto freights.

Barley—Is steady at 45c for No. 2, 44c for No. 3 and 43c for No. 3 west or east.

Buckwheat—Is firm at 52c for No. 2 west or east.

Rye—Is firm at 75c to 78c bid for No. 2 and 60c for west or east.

Corn—The market is steady for Canada and lower for American. Canada mixed is quoted at 38c and yellow at 39c f. o. b. cars west. American No. 2 yellow is quoted at 53c, No. 3 yellow at 52c, and No. 3 mixed at 51c in car lots on the track Toronto.

Oats—Are dull and lower. No. 1 white are quoted at 32c and No. 2 white at 33c east. No. 2 white are quoted at 32c high freights west, and 33c middle freights.

Outmeal—Is steady at \$1.50 for cars of bags and \$1.75 for barrels on the track Toronto, and 25c more for broken lots here, and 40c more for broken lots outside.

Peas—Are steady at 65c for No. 2 west and 66c east. Choice milling are quoted at 70c outside.

COUNTRY PRODUCE.

Butter—Quotations are unchanged. Creamery, prints 20c to 22c do so's 19c 20c Dairy, pound rolls, choice 15c 17c do large rolls 15c 16c do tubs, good to choice 12c 17c do medium 13c 14c do poor 10c 12c Cheese—The market here is quoted unchanged at 11c to 11½c for twins and 10½c to 11c for large.

Eggs—Arrivals of Ontario eggs are steadily increasing, and there are still stocks coming from Chicago. The result is an easier market. Early in the day dealers were asking 22c and 23c per dozen, but buyers held off, and prices dropped another cent to 21c at which price they were quoted at the close of the day.

Concentrate to oppose Total on the Yalu is melting fast. The muddy water makes operations most difficult.

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BUFFALO GRAIN MARKETS.

Buffalo, March 15.—Wheat—Nothing doing. Corn—Strong. No. 2 yellow, 55c; No. 2 white, 51c. Oats—Steady. No. 2 white, 49c; No. 2 mixed, 47c. Barley—Western, 60c to 65c asked in lots.