

The Fair Captives

OR THE SECRET CABINET

CHAPTER IV.

This suspicion may perhaps have crossed Mr. Dysart's mind, because he frowns heavily as the woman approaches.

"You are singularly prompt," he says, with a lowering glance and a sneer, that passes her by, as she takes no notice of it, but stands staring at him with a stolidity that has something of defiance in it.

"Mrs. Grunch," turning to Vera, "my housekeeper. She will see to your wants. Grunch, take these young ladies away. There, go!" seeing she is about to speak, "Don't worry me with questions. I am positively done to death already by this terrible invasion. Got. And be careful not to slam the door behind you. My nerves, with a shudder, are all unstrung to the last pitch."

Thus unceremoniously dismissed, Miss Dysart follows the housekeeper from the room. Griselda having left her after the first "go." Through the huge dark hall and up the wide moulded staircase they follow their guide, noting as they do so the decay that marks everything around.

As for Mrs. Grunch herself, it is impossible to view her with any sort of kindly feeling. A more forbidding old woman both in manner and feature it would be difficult to produce. Stalking on before them with never a word to one of the other, they event stair and again, at a turn in the empty galleries, catch a glimpse of her unpleasant face.

A hard-featured woman—gaunt, bony, with a scowling brow and thin lips and lank grey hair, that she is taller than most strikes them, as also the strange fancy that once she must have been beautiful. But she is aged now, and angular, and altogether loveless, with the memories of past fears and loves and hatreds printed savagely upon her brow, and with all that, a strong vitality that belies her age.

She flings wide a door for the girls to enter, and then abruptly departs without offering them word or glance. They are thankful to be thus alone, and involuntarily stand and gaze at each other. Vera is very pale, and her breath is coming rather fitfully from between her parted lips.

"He looks as if he were in a bad way," she says at last, speaking with a heavy sigh, and going nearer to Griselda as if unconsciously seeking a closer companionship. "Did you ever see such a face? Don't you think he is dying?"

"Who can tell?" says Griselda, whose unchangeable takes a different form from that of her sisters; that past violent indignation bears fruit still. "I might think it, perhaps, but for his eyes. They—she stutters—" they look as if they couldn't die. What terrible eyes they are! and what a vile old man altogether! Good heavens! how did he dare so to insult us! I told you, Vera, with rising excitement—"I warned you, that our coming here would be only for evil."

"Don't, Griselda! Don't, darling," says Miss Dysart in a frightened tone. She is, indeed, trembling in every limb, and as she speaks she puts out her hand and catches Griselda's, and holds it in a tight, nervous clasp—"I don't like that woman," she says in a low tone.

"Who could?" asks Griselda. "A very proper attendant on such a master, say I."

"Oh, Griselda, what will be the end of it?" says Miss Dysart, a touch of despair in her voice. She sinks into a chair, still holding Griselda's hand as if unable to let it go, and looks fearfully around her at the bare, ugly hideously furnished apartment.

There is indeed something so poverty-stricken, so mean about the whole look of the apartment that her heart sickens within her. Everything is bald, bare, comfortless. Yet, through the discomfort, one is compelled to see that once the now dingy bedroom was handsome and well appointed. The chipped and broken washing-stand is of marble, and the jug and basin—the former now cracked and lipless—are of china, expensive in their day, and of an extravagant value in ours.

The paintings of the room alone would have shown any one that at least at one period of its existence the room had hardly known the word of poverty. The very ceiling was painted—little "spid" running riot every limb, and the roses, the lilies, the carnations, the cupidus so clothed upon by the smoky grey of centuries as to be very much more decently habited than the original artist intended.

now! Cheer up, do. After all they can't eat us, and you have me always, you know."

She seems to think this a balm not to be equalled.

"Uncle Gregory is a Tartar, I confess, worse than father. But, so far as Mrs. Housekeeper is concerned, I feel myself a match for her anyway."

"How old she looks, yet how strong," says Vera. "Griselda, have you noticed that every one here is old? Oh!" with a quick sob, "don't think I like old people; they are so hard, so cruel, they never understand. At all events, what I mean is, I don't like too much of them; not altogether. And the man who opened the door, did you notice him? And the coachman, and Gregory himself, all—are old."

"Say mouldy, and be done with it," says Griselda gloomily. "Why, the very house reeks of must; I shouldn't wonder if a crime had been committed in it, it looks so dark, so forbidding; a house of evil repute."

"Oh, don't, Griselda, don't!" cries Miss Dysart, with a nervous glance over her shoulder, and a perceptible start, as at this moment a knock comes to the door.

"Will you be pleased to come downstairs or to have your tea here?" demands the harsh voice of the housekeeper from the threshold.

"Here" is on Vera's lips, but Griselda the bold circumvents her. "Downstairs," she says coldly, "when we get some hot water, and when you send a maid to help us to unpack our trunks."

"There are no maids in this house," replies Mrs. Grunch, sullenly. "You must attend to each other, or let me help you."

"No maids!" says Griselda. "None," briefly. "And my room? Or—is this mine, or Miss Dysart's?"

"Both yours and Miss Dysart's; sorry if it ain't big enough," with a derisive glance round the huge bare chamber.

"You mean, we are to have but one room between us?"

"Just that, miss. Neither more nor less. And good enough, too, for those as—"

Leave the room," says Griselda with sudden sharp intonation, so unexpected, so striking, that the woman, after a surprised stare, turns and withdraws.

It seems to Vera, as never flowers bloomed before, casting with every breeze their scented breaths upon the air. Such a delicious, old-fashioned spot! A very world of sweetness. That it should belong to Gregory Dysart, that it should touch or affect that cold and sordid nature in any way, seems to Vera inexplicable. Rather it would seem to her that such good things as flowers would fade away and shrivel up and die beneath the glance of those wicked scorching eyes.

How Mr. Dysart regards them, and what lessons they teach him, there is nothing to show; but every evening, when the sun has gone down, and the air is yet warm with the memory of it, the old man emerges from his den, and slowly now, and now with quickening footsteps, walks from delft to flower, his face so unmarredly in his pallor, bent towards each delicate blossom.

The deaf old coachman is, they discover, gardener as well, in name, the real work being done by the young man, called Bob, who has grown up at Greycroft from boy to man, and who still works on there at the original wage, though he has long ceased to give only a boy's labor—not without grumblings, however, and much discontent.

To-day has arisen in an unwanted splendor. Even through the eternal shadows that encompass the garden, and past the thick yew hedge, the hot beams of the sun are stealing. A day for gods and goddesses, cries Griselda, springing suddenly to her feet, and dashing far from her on the green sward the dusty volume she had purloined from the musty library about an hour ago.

That liberty, too, had failed them; no book that could fetch even a meagre price, has there a home. It has been well weeded out, and the marketable portion it is sold. "Away with such fudge as that," says Vera, with such judicious as that, for a walk, Vera, into those green woods yonder; see how temptingly cool they look."

"Uncle Gregory said something, didn't he, about our not leaving the garden?" says Vera with hesitation, with a mischievous laugh. "I never heard things like that, and I don't know a fig for Uncle Gregory! An old fossil like that shouldn't dare preach to a lovely young creature like me."

"To not make acquaintances with your neighbors," says he; "that is all of his doctrine, and I have taken to heart. I say, Vera, come. Do, now. Here, I'll pull that book out of your hands if you don't."

"Oh, don't don't," laughing. "To tell you the truth, it isn't so much to me as to you, and I don't care to displease to exertion on his hot day that keeps me chained to this spot. There, go, if you will; but don't stay away too long."

"Perhaps I'll never come back. The spirit of adventure is full upon me, and who knows what demons inhabit that unknown world? So, fare thee well, sweet, my love! and when you see me, expect me! I shall press a sentimental kiss upon her brow, averring that a "brow" is the only applicable part of her for such a solemn occasion, and runs lightly down towards the hedge.

Half-way there, however, she looks back. Vera, if I shouldn't be back in time for the sunset chop, out mine too. If you don't, some horrid thought tells me we shall have a rechauffe to-morrow."

She runs through one of the openings in the hedge, crosses the gravel path, and mounting the parapet, looks over to examine the other side of the wall on which she stands, after which she comments, "I don't know how little she slips into a convenient hole in it, and then the other into a hole lower down, and so on and on, until the six feet of all are conquered and she reaches the ferns, and finds nothing but a lovely wood."

With a merry heart she plunges into the dark, sweetly scented home of the giant trees, with a green, soft pathway under her feet, and, though she knows it not, her world before her.

It is an entrancing hour. Nay, it gets to hours; and all so full of life and warmth and beauty that she forgets to count time; so that it is only when she has gone a long, long way into the heart of this exquisite wood, and when the sun has travelled very low down in the heavens and many miles lie between her and Greycroft that she wakes to the fact that her hands were not formed to carry earth to get back to Vera.

She has stopped short in the middle of a broad green space encompassed by high hills, though with an opening towards the west, when this uncomfortable conviction grows clear to her. She is not of the nervous order, however, and keeping a good heart looks hopefully around her.

Her hope has reason. Far away over there in the distance, stands a figure lightly lines against the massive trunk of a sycamore, that most unmistakably declares her presence. His back is turned to her, and she is bending over something, and so far as she can judge this remote from him, his clothing is considerably the worse for wear. It looks soiled, dusty, and she is sure, at all events, that he wears leggings. A gamekeeper, perhaps, or a well-served, or other of that sort. At all things the sight is welcome as the early dew.

will take her back to Greycroft as speedily as possible. Standing upon a mound near her, she places her hands to her pretty face, and, with a simple eloquence that cannot be denied, exclaims, "Hi!" to him, at the top of her fresh young voice.

No answer. Whether the breeze has played traitor, or whether the bending figure is of so gross material as to be deaf to this brilliant appeal, who can say? At all events, he never stirs or lifts himself from his task, whatever it may be. Nothing daunted, Griselda returns to the attack.

"Hi!" cries she again, with sharper, freer intonation. And still no answer comes of it. The bending figure refuses to straighten his back, and things remain as before. It is really too bad. Getting down from her mound she clambers up on a higher bank, and once more sends out her voice upon the world:

"Hi, my good man!" This does it. As if compelled to acknowledge man upsets himself, looks vacantly round him—at every point but the right one first, and at last sees Griselda. The effect produced is not only instantaneous but marvellous. Down goes his rod, his cast, his choicest fly—an admirable orange grouse— and he comes steaming towards her at about twenty knots an hour.

His eyes, ever since they first lit upon Griselda, have seemed to grow to her, and now, as he draws nearer she too sees and recognizes him. The knowledge thus gained so surprises her that she very nearly falls off her high bank, and then grows very confused. It is none other than the young man who had helped to restore the carriage to its legitimate position.

(To be continued.)

Note.—The following article has been widely published and is one of the most remarkable illustrations of the value of careful marshalling and analysis of facts in presenting a subject to the public.

LEVELERS. The Mission of Whiskey, Tobacco and Coffee.

The Creator made all things, we believe. If so, He must have made these. We know what He made food and water, for, and air and sunshine, but why Whiskey, Tobacco and Coffee? They are here sure enough and each performing its work.

There must be some great plan behind it all; the thoughtful man seeks to understand something of that plan and thereby to judge these articles for their true worth.

Let us not say "bad" or "good" without taking testimony. There are times and conditions when it certainly seems to the casual observer that these stimulant narcotics are real blessings.

Right there is the ambush that conceals a "killing" enemy. One can slip into the habit of either whiskey, tobacco or coffee easy enough, but to "untangle" is often a fearful struggle.

It seems plain that there are circumstances when the narcotic effect of these poisons is for the moment beneficial; but the fearful argument against them is that seldom ever does one find a steady user of either whiskey, coffee or tobacco free from disease of some kind.

Certainly powerful elements in their effect on the human race. It is a matter of daily history testified to by literally millions of people, that Whiskey, Tobacco and Coffee are smiling, promising, beguiling friends on the start, but always false as hell itself in the end. Once they get firm hold enough to show their strength, they insist upon governing and drive the victim steadily towards ill health in some form; if permitted to continue to rule, they will ruin set in until physical and mental ruin sets in.

A man under that spell (and "under the spell" is correct), of any one of these drugs, frequently assures himself and his friends, "Why I can leave off any time I want to. I did quit for a week just to show I was a slave when one gets to the stage. He wiggled through a weak fighting every day to break the spell, was finally whipped, and began his slavery all over again.

evolve from lower planes to higher, a sturdy, steady and dignified advance toward more perfect things in both the Physical and Spiritual world. The ponderous tread of evolutionary development is fixed by the Infinite and will not be quickened out of natural law by any of man's methods.

Therefore we see many illustrations showing how nature checks too rapid advance. Illinois raises phenomenal crops of corn for two or three years. If she continued to do so every year her farmers would advance in wealth far beyond those of other sections or countries. No Nature interposes a bar every three or four years and brings on a "bad year."

Here we see the leveling influence at work. A man is prosperous in his business for a number of years and grows rich. Then Nature sets the "leveling" influence at work on him. Some of his investments lose, he becomes luxurious and lazy. Perhaps it is whiskey, tobacco, coffee, women, gambling, or some other form. The intent and purpose is to level him. Keep him from evolving too far ahead of the masses.

A nation becomes prosperous and great like ancient Rome. If no leveling influence set in she would dominate the world perhaps for all time. But Nature sets her army of "levelers" at work. Luxury, over-eating and drinking, licentiousness, self-indulgence, extravagance, indulgence of all kinds, then comes the wreck. Sure, Sure, Sure.

The law of the unit is the law of the mass. Man goes through the same process. Weakness (in childhood), gradual growth of strength, energy, thrift, probity, prosperity, wealth, comfort, ease, relaxation, waste, debauchery, dissipation, and the wreck follows. The "levelers" are in the bushes along the pathway of every successful man and woman and they bag the majority.

Only now and then can a man stand out against these "levelers" and hold his fortune, fame and health to the end. So the Creator has us for Whiskey, Tobacco and Coffee to level down the successful ones and those who show signs of being successful, and keep them from the race, so that the great "field" (the masses) may not be left too far behind.

And yet we must admit that some all-wise Creator has placed it in the power of man to stand upright, steady amid any and all himself. I decline to exchange my birthright for a mess of pottage.

"I will not deaden my senses, weaken my grip on affairs and keep myself cheap, common and behind in fortune and fame by drugging with whiskey, tobacco and coffee. Life is too short. It is hard enough to win the good things, without any sort of handicap, so a man is certainly a "fool trader" when he trades strength, health, money, and the good things that come with power, for the half-sleep condition of the "drugged" with the certainty of sickness and disease ahead."

It is a matter each individual must decide for himself. He can be a leader and semi-god if he will, or he can go along through life a drugged, a cheap, a "heaver of wood or carrier of water."

Certain it is that while the Great Father of us all does not seem to "mind" if some of his children are foolish and stupid, he seems to select out (perhaps those he intends for some special work) and allows them to be thrashed and castigated most fearfully by these "levelers."

If a man tries fighting with these levelers awhile, and gets a few slaps as a hint, he had better take the hint or a good solid blow will follow. When a man tries to live upright, clean, thrifty, sober, and undrugged, manifesting as near as he knows what the Creator intends he should, his happiness, health and peace seem to come to him. Does it? Yes.

This article was written to set people thinking, to rouse the "God within" for every highly organized man and woman has times when they feel a something calling from within for them to press to the front and "be about the Father's business." Don't mistake it; the spark of the Infinite is there and it pays in every way, health, happiness, peace, and even worldly prosperity, to break off the habits and strip clean for the work set out for us.

It has been the business of the writer to provide a practical and easy way for people to break away from the coffee habit and be assured of a return to health and all of the good things that brings, provided the slaves are not gone too far, and even then the cases where the body has been rebuilt on a basis of strength and health run into the thousands.

It is an easy and comfortable step to stop coffee instantly by having the ill-made Postum Food Coffee served rich and hot with good cream, for the color and flavor is there, but none of the caffeine or other nerve destroying elements of ordinary coffee.

On the contrary the most powerful rebuilding elements furnished by Nature are in Postum and they quickly set about repairing the damage. Seldom is it more than 2 days after the change is made before the old stomach or bowel troubles or complaints of kidneys, heart, nerves or nerves show unmistakable evidence of getting better and ten days time changes things wonderfully. Literally millions of brain-working Americans to-day use Postum, having found the value and common sense in the change.

GEN. KOUROPATKIN'S REPORT

The Russian Losses Were Nearly 70,000 Men.

12,000 KILLED. The St. Petersburg correspondent of the London Daily Telegraph says that the general staff has received from Gen. Kouropatkin a report showing that the total number of Russian wounded taken over by the Red Cross and kindred departments since the beginning of the battle to Oct. 18 was 55,868. The number of killed is unknown exactly, because many men are missing, but the total is estimated to have been 12,000.

7,000 WOUNDED DIE. A despatch from Rome says: Of 35,000 Russian wounded that have been brought to Mukden 7,000 have died.

MANY OFFICERS KILLED. A despatch from St. Petersburg says: The War Office has received a list of the losses of Gen. Ekka's 71st Division of the Fifth Siberian Corps, and Gen. Morazza's First Division of Lieut.-Gen. Dembowski's Corps. Each lost half a dozen officers. The official lists of officers killed and wounded Oct. 11 and Oct. 13 totals 172, including Major-Gen. Rabinsky, and 17 field officers. The wounded are in proportion of one to six. The list for the heaviest day's fighting is still unreported, and doubtless will exceed the losses at Liao-Yang, when 500 officers were killed or wounded. The losses among the men are not yet reported, but they are thought to approximate not much over 20,000.

PASSED INTO NORTH SEA. A despatch from Frederikshaven, Denmark, says: During Thursday night the Russian Baltic fleet weighed anchor and passed into the North Sea.

EVERY MAN SHOT. A despatch from Mukden says: Every man of the two hundred Cossacks commanded by Capt. Tourgenieff, who on Tuesday night reconnoitred the Japanese left flank, was wounded, and every horse except Capt. Tourgenieff's was hit by the bullets from the Japanese machine guns. Tourgenieff, though mortally wounded, carried off one man behind his saddle, while others managed to creep back to camp. But as already noted, not one man was killed on the part of the Russian wounded falling into the hands of the Japanese, the Russians being convinced that they tortured their prisoners.

FORCES FACE TO FACE. A despatch from Mukden says: The big battle has practically worn itself out, leaving the two armies facing each other, with the Sha River as the dividing line. On the left the Russians are in a good position on a high hill overlooking the Sha River, which they have held since Oct. 16th, despite an almost continuous bombardment and frequent infantry attacks. On the right the Russians are using mortars in an endeavor to dislodge the Japanese from a small hill in the last plain. Owing to the floods, it would be necessary to use pontoons in crossing the Sha River, which has not been bridged.

RODE THROUGH JAP LINES. A despatch from St. Petersburg says: The suspension of operations below Mukden continues. It is hinted in military circles that the next development should be looked for eastward, but whether on the part of the Japanese or Russians is not revealed.

A despatch from Gen. Sakharoff, dated Thursday night, reports that all was quiet along the front on Wednesday, and that in spite of the soggy condition of the country roads, which are described as seas of mud, the Russian scouts continue to show great enterprise in examining the Japanese positions. A detachment of two hundred Cossacks Tuesday night reconnoitred the Japanese left flank southward from the railroad where it crosses the Schill River through the villages of Haitantsai, Tadousamp, and Arin, the latter fifteen miles west of the railroad. The Japanese sentries fired and retired as the Cossacks rode rapidly along the line, but near Sandepu the Cossacks unexpectedly ran into a good sized Japanese force with machine guns. The latter opened a murderous fire on the Russians, killing many horses, and mortally wounded Capt. Torbenoff, but all the Cossacks succeeded in getting away. No one was killed on the field.

No statement is made as to what is thus reported on the Russian left. The reports that Generals Renenkampff and Myendorff are wounded are denied. The former's chief of staff, Col. Kossisky, was wounded.

FIGHTING AT PORT ARTHUR. A despatch from Chefoo says: A gun which left Liaoti Promontory on Wednesday was driven by a gale and arrived here Thursday night, bringing 100 coolies who left Port Arthur because they feared injury

from Japanese shells. The coolies say that on Oct. 13 there was fierce fighting for several hours on the slopes of Rihlung Mountain between comparatively small forces during which the Japanese lost 300 killed or wounded. The coolies were unable to give details of the fighting, but apparently it was the result of one of the numerous sorties made by the Russians against the Japanese, who were attempting to advance from their trenches.

Japanese wounded say that the soldiers in the trenches suffer severely from the cold, although the Japanese army is now almost completely supplied with winter outfits. It is said that the Port Arthur garrison is frantic for news of the operations of Gen. Kouropatkin, from whom the defenders expect relief.

The news that the Baltic fleet has sailed for the Pacific was announced to the garrison, and greatly encouraged the Russians. The Japanese at Taku Mountain have dropped a ceaseless storm of shells on the Chinese town and many rifle bullets also fell in the place. The Chinamen adds that the fighting was very severe, and that the Japanese loss was considerable.

It is asserted that the Russian force at Port Arthur now numbers 5,000 men, excluding the militia, which is not engaged in the fighting, but in guard duty. Winter clothing is very scarce at Port Arthur, shoes particularly. The Russian soldiers are wearing Chinese shoes, and some of them are unable to obtain even these, and wrap rags about their feet. The garrison is greatly worn out by the long months of exhausting, anxious labor and fighting. The town is full of wounded. Flour is plentiful, and the slaughter of horses, mules and donkeys continues.

The Japanese have completed immense preparations for the winter, and Port Arthur, and have therein supplies sufficient to last them until Spring. Similar preparations have been made at New Chwang, and therefore the Japanese expect the release of 60 transports next month.

NET RESULT OF BATTLE. A despatch from London says: The complete repulse of the Russian attack and the gain of about 15 miles of ground seem to be the net result of the Battle of the Sha River to the Japanese, who have again failed, as at Liao-Yang, to follow up their victory with a crushing blow. Opinions differ, however, as to whether the Russian situation indicates a lull or the end of the battle, none of the despatches enabling a definite assertion.

A correspondent with Gen. Oku, in an undated despatch, says that owing to the slow pace of the advance, the Japanese failed to cut off the Russian retreat, which was conducted with great skill. The cavalry on the Japanese left crossed the Hun River, thus preventing Russian flank movement. They captured batteries and did excellent work. The Japanese centre and right armies held their line throughout, working forward together excellently. The whole Japanese force now holds a line that is practically the same as at the beginning of the battle, but fifteen miles further north. The armies are now resting, and probably will not move for several days.

A correspondent with the Russian centre telegraphs that the Japanese are apparently satisfied with having stopped the Russian advance, and have brought their own lines to the Sha River.

The Standard's correspondent with Gen. Kuroki says that decisive defeats have seriously weakened the morale of the Russian troops. It was evident in the latter phases of the fighting that they were increasingly reluctant to stand up against the Japanese infantry. It will be some time before they can make good their terrible losses. The Japanese losses are small in comparison. The Japanese failed to capture many prisoners, but the victory was none the less decisive. It will secure the numerical superiority of the Japanese army for an indefinite period.

Another correspondent ascribes the loss of Japanese guns on Oct. 16 to over-confidence. Five battalions and three batteries went too far east and were attacked by 12 battalions of Russians.

The Russians who tried to outflank the Japanese right, and who for days were rumored to have been cut off, escaped their threatened destruction, but seem to have suffered severely. Field-Marshal Oyama simply reports that they were driven off and retreated. The Standard's correspondent with Gen. Kuroki declares, however, that the Russians were almost annihilated. They were crossing the Taitsze River on a pontoon bridge, when they were overpowered by a regiment of Japanese cavalry, whose machine guns swept the bridge from end to end. This is the first time in the war that machine guns were used, with decisive results.

The position of the Japanese left is thus described in an official despatch from the Japanese headquarters in the field, sent to Tokio Tuesday afternoon: "The enemy has stopped immediately in front of our positions, at a distance of from 600 to 1,000 metres, and is fortifying his positions."

Many a good man has been made to realize the hardness of the world by stepping off a moving car backward.