

Hollow Ash... Hall

BY MARGARET BLOUNT.

CHAPTER XVIII.

It was a beautiful morning—almost as mild as if it had been autumn, rather than a December day. The sun had advanced just high enough in the heavens to pour down his mildest and warmest beams, and the near village and the distant hills were bathed in the golden light, as of old, the fair Adina spread its beauty forth for Adam's admiring eyes.

It was a blessed day. The most careless heart could not drink in its beauty in a thankful mood; the fresh, sweet air brought a color to the most pallid cheek. It was hard to look out upon the glorious scene and realize that a world so lovely and so fair should be the home and haunt of all that was contemptible and base—that the serpent Slander and the gaunt Sinner, the demon of Murder, with his red right hand, could find a shadow over all this beauty and cause each heart that had loved it once, almost to curse its memory in after years.

And yet, even the singing of the little birds on that lovely winter's day seemed to say that this might be so—seemed to say that the little children sporting joyously in the village street might live to feel that blighting scorn which worldly spirits only understand; that those pleasant rustic homes, scattered like visible blessings here and there, might be the haunts of fiends in human form, and the burial place of the heart's best affections.

For the singing of the birds, in some strange way, seemed to speak that morning of one sorely tried and tempted in her earthly pilgrimage, but now at rest where no earthly malice could disturb her—of one whose sweet eyes would have gazed in calm contemplation on that lovely scene, had no false words ever kindled the flame of love within her breast, and then left it to go out in darkness, in bitterness, in tears and death!

Yet, on that lovely day, a deed apparently unthought of by the sylvan loveliness of the scene, was about to be done. On that day, the record of the past was to be rudely searched—the grave made to give up its secrets and its dead.

Having undertaken the task, Mr. Cowley was determined to accomplish it; and yet, he would have given worlds, as the hour drew nigh, that he had never meddled with the matter—never come to Hollow Ash Hall.

His nephew also seemed nervous and ill at ease. As for the ladies, they scarcely spoke, but sat huddled together over the drawing-room fire—all except Rose, and she was wandering off the house like an uneasy spirit, till at last they missed her entirely.

The morning was rapidly waning away, and at last Mr. Cowley rose from his easy-chair with the air of a man who had made up his mind beyond the power of a change.

"Come, Charles, let us get it over," he said, gravely.

They went out into the hall. Rose sat there, and by her side stood a tall and handsome gentleman, with a foreign air and appearance.

"Father," said the girl eagerly, come back into the library for a moment. "This gentleman knows the secret of the haunted house, and is about to tell it to you."

Mr. Cowley started, as well he might. "And who may this gentleman be?" he asked, somewhat stiffly.

"A friend of the Vernons," was the quick reply. "Let him tell you the story of the haunted house."

They went back into the library together, and this was the substance of the story which he told them of the dead girl, the ruined family, and the deserted house:

Marion Escourt had been a favored child from the very hour of her birth. True, her young mother died that she might live, but a sister of that mother, good and pure as she, took the infant to her heart, and cherished it for the sake of the dead. Marion's aunt was one of earth's saints, and under her loving care the child grew mild, and good and gentle—beloved by every one who knew her. Her father was an old man, and, being the possessor of great wealth, he chose to indulge his only loved child in every wish she expressed. He seemed but to live that his might please her; yet, strange to say, in spite of all this injudicious fondness, she was quite unspoiled.

A slight touch of haughtiness there might have been in her manner, but she was no more to blame for that than that her eyes were so large and dark, or her form so rosy-like and graceful. With the beauty of her mother, she had inherited the stately manner of her father, and though she moved among her friends with the stately dignity of a young princess, no one seemed disposed to quarrel with what she was so well, and was so sweetly tempered with modesty and gentleness, and all good gifts.

She passed on and added the arch expression of a smile to her other features, and then she was forced to smile at the remark of the old man, and she had heard

pleased every one. Her second cousin, George Vernon, a graceless, drinking and dicing Oxford student, won the treasure for which so many had longed in vain. Won it almost without an effort on his part—won it without knowing of its value, or knowing how to appreciate it.

When by the advice of a dear friend she knelt at her father's feet and told him of her love, the old man burst into a storm of anger, threatened her with the loss of home and friends; threatened her also with his own curse; but it was all in vain! She was his own child. She inherited all his pride and haughtiness, though these qualities had been kept in the background by the gentle teachings of her aunt; and when he attempted to thwart her dearest wishes so openly and determinedly, her pride and will were aroused, and her soul opposed in all its native fierceness to his own.

That night she fled! The morning brought a letter from her, saying that she had chosen to share poverty with her lover, rather than enjoy wealth without him. At the same time she prayed her father not to cast her utterly from his heart, but to think of her in kindness and mercy, for the sake of the long and happy years they had left behind them forever.

Marion was by no means one to be discarded and forgotten where she had once been loved, and though at first her stern old father forbade all mention of her name and threatened to disinherit her at once, her memory, gentle, kind and loving as she had always been till that fatal night, gradually disarmed him, and by degrees they came to speak of her again around the home hearth, and to send many a loving wish and thought to follow her in her wanderings.

It may be that her father felt that he had driven her to desperation by his harshness, for as time softened the first sting of agony, he grew more kind and gentle, and often encouraged his faithful housekeeper to sit and talk for hours with him of her that had both loved so well. At that time, if she had returned, he would gladly have welcomed and forgiven her. But ah! as the poet says, "if only the dead could know at what hour

"To come back and be forgiven!"

They do not know, nor do the living, till the appointed time has gone by, and either the forgiveness or the time for receiving it has passed away. No tidings came directly from Marion—her father did not even know the exact place of her residence. A flying rumor reached him now and then, but all was uncertain and mysterious; and at last even this scanty information ceased, and her name was spoken softly and tenderly, as

"The household name of one whom God has taken."

Her father mourned for her silently, but sincerely; and all could see by the heading of the stately form and the silver threads that glistened in his jetty hair, how the estrangement, and silence, and separation were eating his very life away!

Her life should have been a happy gentleman who is supposed to be mixed up with the affairs of mortals, who must, I think, have laughed in his sleeve when chance sent a young widow to dwell in the vicinity of the newly married pair.

She was a woman of good birth and high family, though so reduced in circumstances as to be obliged to add to her scanty income by private tuition in the more genteel families around Banley. She was a fine classical scholar, an artist, an authoress, and, in addition, danced like a fairy, played and sung like an angel, and rode like the Die Vernons herself. Her tall, elegant figure, her deep mourning, the easy grace of her motions and the dignity of her manners had already moved George Vernon strangely, and though she was a brilliant rather than a beautiful woman, with her wondrous smile, her flashing eyes, her bewitching manners and easy grace, she placed him where she had so often placed his betters—at her feet!

The dusky gentleman of whom I have already alluded, having his implements upon the ground, lost no time in using them. Mr. Vernon and the governess met often, and it needed no spoken word to tell the enchantress all he was feeling. His words—his sighs—the long ardent glances of his handsome hazel eyes, told the story only too well, and smiling sometimes to herself at this new proof of her power of fascination, she gave him some slight encouragement from time to time. He did not love her, and yet, at last, he walked up and down his room at midnight, thinking, while she was sleeping quietly and would have laughed heartily at his employment had she known it. He was only doing what a thousand men have done before him—what a thousand more will do after him—singing himself at the feet of a woman who would lead him through a tempest of passion and leave him at last bankrupt of faith, of feeling and honesty, and all else that to the noble heart makes life at all worth living.

CHAPTER XIX.

And all this time what was Marion doing?

This house was even more lonely than it is now. There were few country seats around, and even with

their tenants, Mr. Vernon had little or no intimacy. People did not quite understand him or his position. There were rumors about that touched his character closely; and even Marion was supposed to be—not a lady, a relative and his wife—but a person of inferior birth; some even thought her a servant, who had consented to reside with him without troubling herself about the formal ceremony of marriage. He must have known that this was the general impression, and yet he never contradicted it in any way. So no one ever came to the Hall, and Marion wondered a little at the unsocial neighborhood and heard nothing for a long time of the dangerous intimacy her indifferent husband had formed.

At last the tale leaked out through the good offices of her own maid. She was shocked and indignant, but something impelled her to seek Mr. Vernon at once and know the truth. She went down into the study, where he was lounging in an easy chair, smoking a cigar, and thinking, probably, much less of Mrs. Vernon than of Mrs. Moore. He laid aside the cigar and she sat down beside him and began her hopeless task.

Hopeless—how hopeless every woman must know. For all men, even the best and bravest, and gentlest, are cowardly in their dealings with women, and will evade a downright inquiry if it is in their power to do so. It happened, therefore, as a mere matter of course, that Mr. Vernon told his wife an absolute falsehood, and made her believe at last that she had been slandered, by the reports she had heard—highly colored ones, let us own.

She believed him.

But the next day both he and Mrs. Moore were missing.

The had fled to Australia together.

The shock drove Marion mad for the time. And in her frenzy she destroyed the life of her infant, which was born before she recovered.

(To be continued.)

TRAMP STEAMER'S CHANCE.

Trade Awaited Development from America's Inland Ports.

In Leslie's appears a most interesting article upon the possibilities of Chicago as a seaport. The author, W. D. Hulbert, sums up his argument by remarking that, when all is said and done, the facts remain that transportation by water is almost invariably cheaper than by land, and that at least a portion of a cargo—say from 1,500 to 2,000 tons—can be carried through the Welland and St. Lawrence canals without breaking bulk. The latter point is of vital importance, especially in shipments of fragile goods which will not bear much handling. The delays in passing the canals will be counterbalanced to some extent by the delays which now take place in New York custom house. It is even claimed that, because of the length of time required to get merchandise through the crowded warehouses of New York, goods from Europe can be delivered at the lake ports more promptly by way of the St. Lawrence than by the present routes. As to the comparatively small size of the steamers, that may prove to be in some cases a positive advantage, for it will enable them, like the Vergeland, to visit lesser European ports which now have no direct communication with America—cities too small to absorb the cargo of a larger steamer, or to furnish her with a load for her return trip. Even if the traffic should not be as satisfactory as desired in 1901, it may succeed the following year. Just now marine freight rates are very high, and there is a great demand for steamers, especially on the ocean, but this condition of things cannot last always. Sooner or later a change must come, and the cargo no longer will be seeking a ship, but the ship a cargo. And then the owners and masters of medium-sized steamers will turn their attention to this fresh water route, stretching from Montreal 1600 miles into the very heart of the North American continent.

Discovered a Useful Secret.

Like many other useful inventions, the art of bottling beer was discovered by mere accident. It is attributed to Alexander Nowell, head master of Woodbridge school, England, who was noted for his erudition, his piety and his penchant for angling. His portrait in the hall of Brasenose college, Oxford, represents him with his bible before him and his fishing rods on either side, and bears the inscription, Piscator Hominum. It appears that once while fishing, as his habit was at Hadham, he mislaid his bottle of ale in the long grass on the banks of the river Ash. Stumbling upon it some time afterward he found it, in the quaint words of Fuller, "not a bottle, but a gun, such the sound of it when opened, and this, as casualty is the mother of more inventions than industry, is believed the original of bottled ale in England." Nowell was presented to the living of Great Hadham in 1542, and the date of his discovery must be about 1530.

Tom Johnson Keeps His Word.

Mayor Tom L. Johnson of Cleveland recently redeemed a promise to his schoolgirl daughter by buying for her a \$1,000 automobile. Miss Johnson some time ago asked her father for one of the horseless vehicles and he agreed to get her one as soon as she could operate it. He forgot all about the matter until one afternoon recently, when, as he was walking home, his daughter came along in an auto at high speed. She stopped in front of her father and looked at him inquiringly. He nodded and next morning the young lady owned a handsome horseless vehicle.

TO HONOR A BANDIT.

BAD MAN WHO WAS THE TERROR OF KANSAS

And Who Sent Fifty-Two Men to His Private Graveyard to Have a Monument Erected to His Memory at Wichita—How He Died.

(Wichita Letter.)

One of the most noted cowboys and bandits who ever drew a gun on an enemy is it is said, to have a monument erected to him in West Wichita. He is Jack Ledford, who fell in West Wichita in 1871, while fighting a whole company of regular soldiers. Already Ledford's friends have raised \$300 for the monument, and soon work will be begun to erect a shaft on the very spot where Ledford fell.

During the civil war Ledford was a scout under Gen. Phil Sheridan. At Springfield, Mo., he got into a fight with some of the opposing side, and killed six without stopping to reload his revolver. Then he made for the Missouri river and under a heavy fire swam to the Kansas side. After that he quit scouting and turned outlaw. His headquarters were in the Arkansas river bottoms, near Wichita, and his field of operations along the line of the southern stage coach route, running from Fort Sill to Wichita. Once he held up a 40-wagon government train alone, and rifled the mail bags of thousands of dollars. He was the original lone bandit who has in late years thrived in the wilds of Arizona.

Ready with the Pistol.

Ledford always carried two revolvers with him, and could hit the mark every time. One of his favorite tricks was to take a revolver in each hand, and twirling them around, snap the hammer between the cartridges, all the while pointing the muzzle in the face of a friend. It was great sport for him, but a single slip of the finger would have put the bullet in his friend's head. Luckily he was sure of the trigger. Another feat was to shoot the nails out of the walls of saloons and allow the costly paintings to crash



HOW LEDFORD MADE LOVE.

on the floor. Shooting up the mirror or smashing lights were beneath his dignity.

South of Wichita in an unexplored region was the rendezvous of the Ledford bandits. After robbing stage coaches until they almost quit carrying money, Jack organized a band of horse thieves and acted as leader. The man who owned a valuable horse could not keep it long after Ledford's band learned where he stabled. The gang rode fine Kentucky-bred horses and lived on the fat of the land, as it were. The surrounding country was then in such a wild state that the gang felt perfectly safe in visiting Wichita whenever they chose. Horse stealing was not considered such a crime in those days.

Ledford's Love-Making.

At that time in Wichita a German doctor named Vigus owned the leading hotel. He was also the father of a pretty girl, named Agnes. She was a buxom lass, with a wealth of long brown hair, a full face, and sunny blue eyes. She fell in love with Ledford, "the bandit king," as he was pleased to style himself.

The Hotel Vigus was the scene of many gay revelries, the dancing lasting until daylight. Ledford was a star figure at these dances, and he made no attempt to conceal his love for the little German girl. Her father was furious, but it could not be stopped. One day the girl was by prearrangement standing in front of her father's hotel, when Ledford came riding down Douglas avenue like the wind. He drew near the platform, but did not stop. As he reached the girl he swung partially from his saddle, caught her around the waist and raised her into the saddle. For half an hour they galloped about town, she sitting on the great Kentucky horse in front of her sweetheart, the picture of contentment and happiness. After they had enjoyed themselves to their own notion he rode by again and sat her lightly on the platform. This was what he called buggy riding.

The old German objected to it, but his daughter insisted on standing near the sidewalk on certain days. Once when Ledford came riding down to his sweetheart he found her on the walk, but back of her was the father with a shotgun drawn and ready for action.

"If you take her, I shoot," he yelled. "Well, old man, you'll have to shoot." Ledford reached down and grabbed the girl from the arms of her father, as it were, and they took their ride as though nothing had occurred.

In a fight between a stage coach driver and Ledford in 1870 the latter was injured. He was taken to the rendezvous, and a doctor was kidnapped from Wichita, blindfolded, and taken in a roundabout way to the outlaw

PET FROG FED DYNAMITE.

Fatal Results Follow Children's Mistaking Explosive for Pasty.

An accident at Albany, Mo., in which three children, a pet frog, and some dynamite figured, resulted in one death, two persons seriously injured, and part of a dwelling demolished. The three children of George McCurry, a contractor, found some dynamite in the cellar of their home, and, thinking it was pasty, fed it to their pet frog. The pieces of dynamite resembled insects, and the frog ate them. A large tool chest fell on the frog and exploded the dynamite which had been eaten. A chisel pierced the temple of the youngest child and killed him. Another child and Mrs. McCurry were seriously hurt and part of the house wrecked.

MRS. BROWN DIES IN ITALY.

Wife of Justice of United States Supreme Court Passes Away.

General H. M. Duffield received a cablegram at Detroit from Justice H. B. Brown of the United States Supreme Court announcing the death of Mrs. Brown in Italy. The cablegram was dated at Riva. Mrs. Brown had been an invalid for some years, and the Justice sailed for Europe soon after the decision in the insular cases was handed down. Caroline Pitts was Mrs. Brown's maiden name, and she was a daughter of Samuel Pitts, well known in Detroit. Her age was 56. She is survived by a brother and three sisters—Thomas Pitts of Detroit, Mrs. H. M. Duffield of Detroit, Mrs. Thomas Cranage of Bay City, and Mrs. Daniel Goodwin of Chicago.

Noted Writer Is a Wreck.

Isaac G. Reed, for many years well known as a newspaper and magazine writer in New York city, is in the insane pavilion in Bellevue hospital. His mind is shattered and his physical condition is such that he cannot live long. For many years Reed has lived on the bounty of Mrs. M. L. Cummings of Ellberton, N. J., who was known on the stage as Minnie Cummings. She says that much of her success was due to Reed's press work and gratitude caused her to maintain him in sanitariums for several years. Reed was born in Philadelphia and came of a wealthy and distinguished family. In addition to his newspaper and magazine work Reed wrote several books, including "Thirty Years in Gotham" and "Our American Aristocracy; or, Reminiscences of New York's Society."

Michigan Farmer Killed.

Peter Smith, the most prominent farmer in the Bainbridge district, fifteen miles northeast of St. Joseph, Mich., was assassinated at noon Thursday by an unknown man. Hundreds of farmers, incensed by the cowardly murder, are searching the woods in the vicinity and threaten to lynch the murderer when he is apprehended. Smith was driving through his field on top of a load of rye when the shot was fired. The assassin was concealed behind a stack of rye, and after Smith had driven past he rose up and fired at a distance of about twenty feet. The entire charge from the shotgun entered Smith's body beneath the shoulder blade and he toppled off the wagon and fell dead.

Increase in June Fallows.

Classified returns, as reported to R. G. Dun & Co. for the month of June, show fallows somewhat heavier than in the three preceding months and the same month in the two preceding years, but prior to 1899 last month's liabilities would have been considered extremely light. In manufacturing the total was \$1,518,817 larger than last year, but a few unusual disasters account for the difference. Depression in the cotton manufacture, due to over-production of goods from high-priced raw material, had almost passed away without bringing any serious failures, and the fact had been mentioned as remarkable in connection with earlier reports.

Shot While Asteop.

At Erwin, Miss., John Serio, aged 50 years, and his son Vincent were killed and Salvador Liberto was dangerously wounded. They all came from Cefala, Sicily. The three had been living near Glen Allen, but on account of some trouble, were ordered to leave by citizens. They went to Erwin, a few miles distant from Glen Allen, and decided to locate there. While they were asleep the three were shot. Serio and his son being killed outright. The Italians in the country are wrought up over the matter, but no further trouble is anticipated. Gov. Longino and the Italian consul at New Orleans were notified of the killing.

Mail Clerk Admits Theft.

James J. Callanan, formerly register clerk in the postoffice in Springfield, Mass., who left June 2, taking with him a number of registered letters, has given himself up to the authorities. He says that his conscience troubled him so that when he reached Liverpool he took the next steamer for home. He secured about \$700 from the packages he stole.

Coalminers Strike Is Off.

The machinists' strike, which was organized May 20 and which involved from 5,000 to 7,000 employes in Cincinnati, has practically been declared off. A secret mass meeting of strikers was held, at which a formal report was made that it had been found impossible to procure financial assistance from the headquarters in Washington. As the strike benefit fund is exhausted, the strikers were advised to return to work. Already about 800 have applied for reinstatement.

KENTUCKY THE HOME OF FENCIBLES.

Nowhere in the fued so common, so old, so persistent, so deadly, as in the Kentucky mountains. Nowhere else is there such organization, such division of enmity to the limit of kinship. About thirty-five years ago two boys were playing marbles in the road along the Cumberland river—down in the Kentucky mountains. One had a patch on his trousers. The other boy made fun of it, and the boy with the patch went home and told his father. Thirty years of local war was the result. The factions fought on after they had forgotten why they had fought at all. While organized warfare is now over, an occasional fight yet comes over the patch on those trousers and a man or two is killed. A county as big as Rhode Island is still bitterly divided on the subject.

The South Is Waking Up.

England in the sixteenth century felt the first decided movements on the same impulse that now throbs from Virginia to Texas. She went into the critical period a third rate, or, it is more accurate to say, a fourth-rate power; she came out an acknowledged leader among nations, with a primacy of strength and duration of which no one now hesitates to attribute in great part to the commercial ascendancy acquired through her immense manufacturing interests. Few will dispute the claim that when the subjects of Elizabeth ceased to send their fescues to be woven to Flanders and dyed in Florence they had worked out an achievement of better worth and more notable results than when they defeated Philip's armada.—Munton's Magazine.