The Last Shot

BY

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19

SYNOPSIS.

At their home on the frontier between the Browns and Grays Marta Galland and her mother, entertaining Colonel Westerling of the Grays, see Captain Lanstron of the Browns injured by a fall in his aeroplane. Ten years later. Westerling, nominal vice but real chief of staff, re-enforces South La Tir and meditates on war. He calls on Marta, who is visiting in the Gray capital. She tells him of her teaching children the follies of war and martial patriotism, and begs him to prevent war while he is chief of staff. On the march with the 63d of the Browns Private Stransky, anarchist, is placed under arrest. Colonel Lanstron begs him off. Lanstron calls on Marta at her home. He talks with Feller, the gardener. Marta tells Lanstron that she believes Feller to be a spy. Lanstron confesses it is true. Lanstron shows Marta a telephone which Feller has concealed in a secret passage under the tower for use to benefit the Browns in war emergencies. Lanstron declares his love for Marta. Westerling and the Gray premier plan to use a trivial international affair to foment warlike patriotism in army and people and strike before declaring war. Partow, Brown chief of staff, and Lanstron, made vice, discuss the trouble, and the Brown defenses. Partow reveals his plans to Lanstron. The Gray army crosses the border line and attacks. The Browns check them. Artillery, infantry, aeroplanes and dirigibles engage. Stransky, rising to make the anarchist speech of his life, draws the Gray artillery fire. Nicked by a shrapnel splinter he goes Berserk and fights—"all a man." Marta has her first glimpse of war in its modern, cold, scientific, murderous brutality. The Browns fall back to the Galland house. Stransky forages. Marta sees a night attack. The Grays attack in force. Feller leaves his secret telephone and goes back to his guns. Hand to hand fighting. The Browns fall back again. Marta asks Lanstron over the phone to appeal to Partow to stop the fighting. Vandalism in the Galland house.

CHAPTER XIII—Continued.

Then a staff-officer appeared in the doorway. When he saw a woman enter the room he frowned. He had ridden from the town, which was empty of women, a fact that he regarded as a blessing. If she had been a maid servant he would have kept on his cap. Seeing that she was not, he removed it and found himself in want of words as their eyes met after she had made a gesture to the broken glass on the floor and the lacerated table top, which said too plainly:

"Do you admire your work?"

The fact that he was well groomed and freshly shaven did not in any wise dissipate in her feminine mind his connection with this destruction. He had never seen anything like the smile which went with the gesture. Her eyes were two continuing and challenging flames. Her chin was held high and steady, and the pallor of exhaustion, with the blackness of her hair and eyes, made her strangely commanding. He understood that she was not waiting for him to speak, but to go.

"I did not know that there was a woman here!" he said.

"And I did not know that officers of the Grays were accustomed to enter private houses without invitations!" she replied.

"This is a little different," he began.

She interrupted him.

"But the law of the Grays is that homes should be left undisturbed, isn't it? At least, it is the law of civilization. I believe you profess, too, to protect property, do you not?"

"Why, yes!" he agreed. He wished that he could get a little respite from the steady fire of her eyes. It was embarrassing and as confusing as the white light of an impracticable logic.

"In that case, please place a guard around our house lest some more of your soldiers get out of control," she went on.

"I can do that, yes," he said. "But we are to make this a staff headquarters and must start at once to put the house in readiness."

"General Westerling's headquarters?" she inquired.

He parried the question with a frown. Staff-officers never give information. They receive information and transmit orders.

"I know General Westerling. You will tell him that my mother, Mrs. Galland, and our maid and myself are very tired from the entertainment he has given us, unasked, and we need sleep to-night. So you will leave us until morning and that door, sir, is the one out into the grounds."

The staff-officer bowed and went out by that door, glad to get away from Marta's eyes. His inspection of the premises with a view to plans for staff accommodation could wait. Westerling would not be here for two days at least.

"Whew! What energy she has!" he thought. "I never had anybody make me feel so contemptibly unlike a gentleman in my life."

Yet Marta, returning to the hall, had to steady herself in a dizzy moment against the wall. Complete reaction had come. She craved sleep as if it were the one true, real thing in the world. She craved sleep for the clarity of mind that comes with the morning light, in the haziness of fleecy thought, as slumber drew its soft clouds around her, her last conscious visions were the pleasant ones rising from a background of horror; of Feller's smile when he went back to his antennæ for good; of Dellarme's smile as he was dying; of Stran...ky's smile as he gave him help; and of Kopp's as he uttered his farce-like cry of [illegible]

When Marta informed the officer—the same one who had rung the doorbell on his second visit—of the family's decision he appeared shocked at the idea of eviction that was implied. But, secretly pleased at the turn of events, he hastened to apologise for war's brutal necessities, and Marta's complaisance led him to consider himself something of a diplomatist. Yes, more than ever he was convinced of the wisdom of an invader ringing doorbells.

Meanwhile, the service-corps men had continued their work until now there was no vestige of war in the grounds that labor could obliterate; and masons had come to repair the walls of the house itself and plasterers to renew the broken ceilings.

All this Marta regarded in a kind of charmed wonder that an invader could be so considerate. Her manner with the officers in charge of preparations had the simplicity and ease which a woman of twenty-seven, who is not old-maidish because she is not afraid of a single future, may employ as a serene hostess. She frequently asked if there were good news.

"Yes," was the uniform reply. An unexpected setback here or resistance there, but progress, nevertheless. But she learned, too, that the first two days' fighting along the frontier had cost the Grays fifty thousand casualties.

"In order to make an omelet you must break eggs!" she remarked.

"Spoken like a true soldier—like a member of the staff!" was the reply.

In her constraint and detachment they realized her conscious appreciation of the fact that in earlier times her people had been for the Browns; but in her flashes of interest in the progress of the war, flashes from a woman's unmilitary mind, they judged that her heart was with the Grays. And why not? Was it not natural that a woman with more than her share of intellectual perception should be on the right side? From her associations it was not to be expected that she would make an outright declaration of apostasy. This would destroy the value and the attractiveness of her conversion. Reverence for the past, for a father who had fought for the Browns, against her own convictions, made her attitude appear singularly and delicately correct.

The war was a week old—a week which had developed other tangents and traps than La Tir—on the morning that the first installment of junior officers came to occupy the tables and desks. Where the family portraits had hung in the dining-room were now big maps dotted with brown and gray flags. Portable field cabinets with sectional maps on a large scale were arranged around the walls of the drawing-room. In what had been the lounging-room of the old days of Galland prosperity, the refrain of half a dozen telegraph instruments made medley with the clicking of typewriters. Cooks and helpers were busy in the kitchen; for the staff were to live like gentlemen; they were to have their morning baths, their comfortable beds, and

"Just Like Old Days, Isn't It?"

regular meals. No twinge of indigestion or of rheumatism from exposure was to interfere with the working of their precious intellectual processes. No detail of assistance would be lacking to save any bureaucratic head time and labor. The bedrooms were apportioned according to rank—that of the master awaited the master; the best servant's bedroom awaited Francois, his valet.

When Bouchard, the chief of intelligence, who fought the battle of wits and spies against Lanstron, came, two hours before Westerling was due, the last of the staff except Westerling and his personal aide had arrived. Bouchard, with his iron-gray hair, bushy eyebrows, strong, aquiline nose, and hawk-like eyes, his mouth hidden by a bristly mustache, was lean and saturnine, and he was loyal. No jealous thought entered his mind at having to serve a man younger than himself. He did not serve a personality; he served a chief of staff and a profession. The score of words which escaped him as he looked over the arrangements were all of directing criticism and hitting off sharply, as if he regretted that he had to waste breath in communicating even a thought.

"I tell nothing, but you tell me everything!" said Bouchard's hawk eyes. He was old-fashioned; he looked his part, which was one of the many points of difference between him and Lanstron as a chief of intelligence.

It lacked one minute to four when Hedworth Westerling, chief of staff in name as well as power now, alighted from the gray automobile that turned in at the Galland drive. His Excellency had not occupied his new headquarters as soon as he expected, but this could have no influence on results. If he had lost fifty thousand men on the first two days and two hundred thousand since the war had begun, should he allow this to disturb his well-being of body or mind? His well-being of body and mind meant the ultimate saving of lives.

Confidence was reflected in Westerling's bearing and in his smile of command as he passed through the staff rooms, Turcas and Bouchard in his train, with tacit approval of the arrangements. Finally, Turcas, now vice-chief of staff, and the other chiefs awaited his pleasure in the library, which was to be his sanctum. On the massive seventeenth-century desk lay a number of reports and suggestions. Westerling ran through them with accustomed swiftness of sifting and then turned to his personal aide.

"Tell Francois that I will have tea on the veranda."

From the fact that he took with him the papers that he had laid aside, subordinate generals, with the gift of unspoken directions which is a part of their profession, understood that he meant to go over the subjects requiring special attention while he had tea.

"Everything is going well—well!" he added.

"Well!" ran the unspoken communication of confidence through the staff. So well that His Excellency was calmly taking tea on the veranda! For the indefatigable Turcas the detail; for Westerling the front of Jove.

He had told Marta only two weeks ago that he should see her again if war came; and war had come. With the inviting prospect of a few holiday moments in which to continue the interview that had been abruptly concluded in a hotel reception-room, he started down the terrace steps. Above the second terrace he saw a crown of woman's hair—hair of jet abundance, shading a face that brought familiar completeness to the scene. Their glances met where the path ended at the second terrace flight; hers shot with a beam of restrained and questioning good humor that spoke at least a truce to the invader.

"You called sooner than I expected," she said in a note of equivocal pleasantry.

"Or I," he rejoined with a shade of triumph, the politest of triumph. He was a step above her, her head on a level with the pocket of his blouse. His square shoulders, commanding height, and military erectness were thus emphasized, as was her own feminine slightness.

"I want to thank you," she said. "As becomes a soldier, your forethought was expressed in action. It was the promptness of the men you sent to look after the garden which saved the uprooted plants before they were past recovery."

"I wished it for your sake and somewhat for my own sake to be the same that it was in the days when I used to call," he said graciously. "Tea was from four to five, do you remember? Will you join me? I have just ordered it."

A generous, pleasant conqueror, this! No one knew better than Westerling how to be one when he chose. He was something of an actor. Leaders of men of his type usually are.

"Why, yes. Very gladly!" she assented with no undue cordiality and no undue constraint, quite as if there were no war.

Neutrality could not be better impersonated, he thought, than in the even cleaving of her lips over the words. They seemed to say that a storm had come and gone and a new set of masters had taken the place of the old. As they approached the veranda Francois was placing the tea things.

"Just like the old days, isn't it?" he exclaimed with his first sip, convinced that the officers' commissary supplied excellent tea in the field.

"Yes, for the moment—if we forget the war!" she replied, and looked away, preoccupied, toward the landscape.

If we forget the war! She bore on the words rather grimly. The change that he had noted between the Marta of the hotel reception-room and the Marta of the moment was not altogether the work of ten years. It had developed since she was in the capital. In these three weeks war had been brought to her door. She had been under heavy fire. Yet this subject of the war was the one which he, as an invader, considered himself bound to avoid.

"We do forget it at tea, don't we?" he asked.

"At least we need not speak of it!" she replied.

"I am staying tonight. I was going to ask if you wouldn't remain on the veranda while I go over these papers. It—it would be very cozy and pleasant."

"Why, yes," she agreed with evident pleasure.

Turcas came, in answer to Westerling's ring. The orders and suggestions on the table seemed to be the product of this lath of a man, the vice-chief, but a lath of steel, not wood, who appeared a runner trained for a race of intellects in the scratch class. One by one, almost perfunctorily, Westerling gave his assent as he passed the papers to Turcas, while Turcas's dry voice, coming from between a narrow opening of the thin lips, gave his reasons with a rapid, firer's precision in answer to his chief's inquiries.

With each order somewhere along that frontier some unit of a great organism would respond. The reserves from this position would be transferred to that; such a position would be felt out before dark by a reconnoissance in force, however costly; the rapid-firers of the 19th Division would be transferred to the 30th; despite the 37th Brigade's losses, it would still form the advance; General So-and-So would be superseded after his failure of yesterday; Colonel So-and-So would take his place as acting major-general; more care must be exercised in recommendations for bronze crosses, lest their value so depreciate that officers and men would lack incentive to win them.

Marta was having a look behind the scenes at the fountainhead of great events. Power! power! The absolute power of the soldier in the saddle, with premier and government and all the institutions of peace only a dim background for the processes of war! Opposite her was a man who could make and unmake not only generals but even the destinies of peoples. By every sign he enjoyed his power for its own sake. There must be a chief of the five millions, which were as a moving forest of destruction, and here was the chief, his strength reflected in the strong muscles of his short neck as he turned his head to listen to Turcas. Marta recalled the contrast between Westerling and Lanstron as they faced each other after the wreck of the aeroplane ten years ago; the iron invincibility of the elder's sturdy, mature figure and the alert, high-strung invincibility of the slighter figure of the younger man.

He had taken up a paper thoughtfully after Turcas withdrew, when he looked up to Marta in answer to a movement in her chair. She had bent forward in a pose that freed her figure from the chair-back in an outline of suppleness and firmness; her lips were parted, showing a faint line of the white of her teeth, and he caught her gazing at him in a kind of wondering admiration. But she dropped her eyelids instantly and said deliberately, less to him than to herself:

"You have the gift!"

No tea-table flattery that, he knew; only the reflection of a fact whose existence had been borne in on her by observation.

"The gift? How?" he inquired, speaking to the fringe of hair that half hid her lowered face.

She looked up, smiling brightly.

"You don't know what gift! Not the pianist's! Not the poet's! Why, of course, the supreme gift of command! The thing that made you chief of staff! And the war goes well for you, doesn't it?"

Delicious morsel, this, to a connoisseur in compliments! He tasted it with the same self-satisfied smile that he had her first prophecy. To her who had then voiced a secret he had shared with no one, as his chest swelled with a full breath, he bared another in the delight of the impression he had made on her.

"Yes, as you foresaw—as I planned!" he said. "Yes, I planned all, step by step, till I was chief of staff and ready I convinced the premier that it was time to strike and I chose the hour to strike; for Bodlapoo was only a convenient excuse for the last of all the steps."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

CHAPTER XIV.

Tea on the Veranda Again.

It was more irritating than ever for Mrs. Galland to keep pace with her daughter's inconsistencies. Here was Marta saying coolly:

"'Unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's!' We have our property, our home to protect. Perhaps the Grays have come to stay for good, so graciousness is our only weapon. We cannot fight a whole army single-handed."

"You have found that out, Marta!" said Mrs. Galland.

"We have four rooms in the baron's tower and a kitchen stove," Marta proceeded. "With Minna we can make ourselves very comfortable and leave the house to the staff."

"The Gallands in their gardener's quarters! The staff of the Grays in ours! Your father will turn in his grave!" Mrs. Galland exclaimed.

"But, mother, it is not quite agreeable to think of three women living in the same house with a score of strange men!" Marta persisted.

"I had not thought of that, Marta. Of course, it would be abominable!" agreed Mrs. Galland promptly capitulating where a point of propriety was involved.

WOMAN REFUSES OPERATION

Tells How She Was Saved by Taking Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound.

Louisville, Ky.—"I think if more suffering women would take Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound they would enjoy better health. I suffered from a female trouble, and the doctors decided I had a tumorous growth and would have to be operated upon, but I refused as I do not believe in operations. I had fainting spells, bloated, and could hardly stand the pain in my left side. My husband insisted that I try Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, and I am so thankful I did, for I am now a well woman. I sleep better, do all my housework and take long walks. I never fail to praise Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound for my good health."—Mrs. J. M. Resch, 1900 West Broadway, Louisville, Ky.

Since we guarantee that all testimonials which we publish are genuine, is it not fair to suppose that if Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound has the virtue to help these women it will help any other woman who is suffering in a like manner?

If you are ill do not drag along until an operation is necessary, but at once take Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound.

Write to Lydia E. Pinkham Medicine Co., (confidential) Lynn, Mass. Your letter will be opened, read and answered by a woman and held in strict confidence.

Woman Royalties Made Army Officers.

For the first time in English history four royal women have been gazetted as colonels in chief of English regiments.

Heretofore several of them, including Queen Mary herself, have held German army titles, and Queen Victoria naturally was the head of the British army, but now Queen Mary has been appointed colonel in chief of the Eighteenth Hussars of historic fame, while the Queen Mother Alexandra is associated with the Nineteenth Hussars.

SAGE TEA AND SULPHUR DARKENS YOUR GRAY HAIR

Look Years Younger! Try Grandma's Recipe of Sage and Sulphur and Nobody Will Know.

Almost everyone knows that Sage Tea and Sulphur properly compounded, brings back the natural color and lustre to the hair when faded, streaked or gray; also ends dandruff, itching scalp and stops falling hair. Years ago the only way to get this mixture was to make it at home, which is mussy and troublesome.

Nowadays we simply ask at any drug store for "Wyeth's Sage and Sulphur Hair Remedy." You will get a large bottle for about 50 cents. Everybody uses this old, famous recipe, because no one can possibly tell that you darkened your hair, as it does it so naturally and evenly. You dampen a sponge or soft brush with it and draw this through your hair, taking one small strand at a time; by morning the gray hair disappears, and after another application or two, your hair becomes beautifully dark, thick and glossy and you look years younger. Adv.

Unnecessary Effort.

His Wife—This paper says an army of 100,000 men has wrecked a railroad in Belgium.

Railroad Magnate—What a waste of energy! A board of five directors could have done it just as thoroughly.—Life.

Important to Mothers

Examine carefully every bottle of CASTORIA, a safe and sure remedy for infants and children, and see that it

Bears the Signature of *Chas. H. Fletcher*

In Use For Over 30 Years.

Children Cry for Fletcher's Castoria

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"Is she blonde or brunette?"

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Warner's

Safe Rheumatic Remedy

has been prescribed with excellent results in cases of Lumbago, Sciatica, Gout, Rheumatism, Neuralgia and all Rheumatic affections.

In Rheumatism an important thing to avoid is Constipation. For this condition Warner's Safe Pills, used with Warner's Safe Rheumatic Remedy, according to directions, are splendid.

If you suffer from either do yourself the justice to try these Warner's Remedies, a better enjoyment of life awaits you.

At your druggists or direct postpaid on receipt of price.

Warner's Safe Rheumatic Remedy, $1.25
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WORLD MISSION OF CHIVALRY

Of Much Worth If Only to Create the Useful Romance of Action.

Chivalry served to draw out and develop those free, bold spirits whose talents could not have been evoked by the disputations of the schoolmen nor the mortifications of the religious zealots, says the Engineering Magazine. It created a romance of action to match the saint's moral paradise and evoked poetry and the arts to celebrate its charms. The love of the beautiful which it begot caused a hospitable reception to be given in Europe to the refinements brought from the East by the returning crusaders, which caused the first slight stirring of international trade.

The enthusiasm which the many-sided ideal of chivalry evoked with its galaxy of virtues, may be seen, in literature, in the unfolding of the themes of the simple Aryan folk tales, and the prose romances of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, into the sensuous beauty of Provencal poetry and the delicacy and pathos of Plutarch and Dante. Chivalry embellished with romance the lives of its half-legendary founders, Charlemagne, Siegfried and Arthur. It supplied the conception of virtue sung in Chaucer's Pilgrimage, Malory's "Morte D'Arthur" and Spenser's "Faerie Queene." In the world of action chivalry animated the crusades, dispensed justice throughout Europe for 400 years, purified court life and made much of the warfare of the middle ages peculiarly humane and noble. Its enthusiasm burned into brilliancy in such characters as Richard and Blondel, the Black Prince and his father, Tancred, Godfrey of Bouillon, Gaston de Foix, Bayard and Warwick, and in a thousand forgotten commanders of the Templars, the Knights of St. John and the Teutonic Knights.

Speed of Run of Stream.

A stream runs most rapidly one-fifth of the depth below the surface and its average speed is that of the current two-fifths of the depth above the bottom.