A MAN'S REVENGE;

OR, THE CONVICT'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER XXVII.—(Continued).

Her own grew pink, whether from emotion or excitement he could not tell. He could only hope that she was less indifferent to him than before, now that Duncan had forsaken her. For he felt sure, although he knew nothing definite, that Duncan's disappearance meant her freedom. Besides his eyes had been opened effectually at the hotel.

She toyed nervously with her fan, as she replied in so low a tone that he could hardly hear.

"Presently—in the aviary will be the safest place."

He leaned back with a smile. So she would see him alone, in a safe spot. safe from interruption! He knew that, by her own wish, the aviary, a beautiful palm house filled with numerous birds, was never entered after dusk. She was fond of her pets and wished them to be left in peace after retiring for the night. Therefore in giving him rendezvous there she placed herself entirely in his hands. She wished for no interruption. She must guess what would happen. His heart leapt for joy. She loved him after all!

In spite of the patience that had characterized him so many years he found it hard to wait until she gave the signal for the tete-a-tete, by withdrawing from her guests with the excuse that her neuralgia had returned.

Lady Larkin followed her from the room. The cousins had had no opportunity of exchanging confidences and, now the moment for such had passed, Eileen would gladly have avoided any conversation with Duncan's sister, whose half expressed disapproval of her treatment of Sunbeam had greatly displeased her.

"Has Duncan really gone? He said nothing to me, and if so what does it mean, Eileen?" asked Adele.

"That his affairs do not concern me, I suppose," said Eileen with a little smile.

Adele's face grew solemn.

"How can that be? You are everything to Duncan, and therefore, although you acted impulsively with regard to Sunbeam, there is no reason why he should join Lord and Lady Cruse so openly. Of course he is in a way responsible for the girl; I know he must feel that, but——"

"But she is more to him than you think, Adele. I will tell you what he left for me to tell. He and I are no longer engaged. To you, only, I will own that he has grossly insulted me by putting this girl, Sunbeam, before me. He has chosen her—But they both will taste of publicity and disgrace nevertheless. I mean to carry this prosecution through if only to expose her—and him—I mean to——"

"But you love him!" whispered Adele, her face full of horror. "And of course he loves you. This is mere folly, jealousy even, because he is quixotic enough to think it his duty to save Sunbeam from the disgrace hanging over her. Surely you are exaggerating matters. My dear Eileen, think of it. You have known him all your life."

"And known, or rather guessed, that he never loved me. You have done your best for me, I own, but it is no good. Duncan loves that girl, he means to marry her. I congratulate you on the connection."

Adele grew pale. She liked Sunbeam and still believed in her innocence. But at the same time she was sufficiently woman of the world to resent Duncan's forsaking Eileen for a girl of such doubtful parentage. She looked anxiously at Eileen's scorn on her quivering lips.

"I cannot believe it," she murmured at the same time recalling her past fears on the subject. "It is your fancy—it cannot be."

Eileen tossed her head.

"It is true. He chose her and left me. If he were to return and beg me to marry him I would never consent to do so. Besides I—I fancy we should not have been happy together. It is a good thing this has happened after all. I have done my best to keep him, but failure has met me on every side. However, his bride will not be the worse for a term of imprisonment, since he seeks an alliance with such a family."

She turned away quickly, anxious to end the conversation and also to hide the tears she could no longer keep back. Duncan had left her, and she had given him up in a moment of baffled rage when jealousy had blinded her self control, but for all that she still loved him, and knew that no other man could ever fill his place in her heart.

She guessed why Lord St. Aubin had looked so elated since his return, and fully realized that he would propose to her again. And although she did not love him she meant to say yes, to accept him at once and to stop all tongues from guessing at the true story of Duncan's disappearance, from knowing that she had been put aside for Sunbeam.

She entered the aviary as self-possessed as though she had no such thing as a heart, and smiled at St. Aubin.

"Well," she exclaimed, "and you could not persuade them to return? They are still resolved to do their best for Sunbeam, I suppose?"

"Just so. What is more they have already effected her release—on bail. She was at the hotel with them. They must have gone straight to a magistrate."

She clasped her hands.

"She was there! You saw her?" she murmured. "How did they do it! I thought that they could no nothing yet, and——"

"With influence and money one can work wonders. Lord Cruse and Sinclair saw Sir George Cade. They managed everything quickly. When I got to the hotel, Lady Cruse had fetched Miss Green and she was there—and—"

He hesitated, noting her sudden pallor, the flash of her dark eyes.

"Did you speak to her?"

"No. She was in another room."

His manner and the sudden drop in his voice awakened her latent jealousy and fear.

"Was she alone—then a kind of prisoner of state?" she queried with a nervous little laugh.

He looked away from her, for the pain in her face hurt him. He longed to kiss it all away. That she could care at all hurt him nearly as much. it damped his ardor.

Then, seeing that she waited for him to speak, he cleared his voice and murmured:—

"With—forgive me, Eileen—for gaoler, Sinclair—I saw them as I left. She was——"

He paused again. She had laid her hand upon his arm and held it so tight that he could have cried out with the pain. That she was conscious of the gesture was visible also. He realized that with a sinking heart.

"Go on," she whispered with stiff lips. "She was——"

"In his arms," he replied, with a strong feeling of reluctance.

A shiver shook her from head to foot and for a second silence fell between them.

Then she laughed again.

"So I suppose, Jim," she exclaimed "I sent him to her—I sent him to the thief. He went from me to her. For she had stolen him also."

He put his arm round her quivering body and drew her gently into his embrace.

"Eileen," he murmured, "I told you that some day you would come back to me. I did not know then that the day was so near, that my heaven was so close. Have you come, sweet, at last?"

She laid her head upon his breast.

"Can you take me—knowing how things are, that he—I will not tell you—I want no one to know but of course you guess——"

"I could horsewhip him now!" he exclaimed, a gleam of anger in his eyes. "If you ask me to I will. But for the rest, what does it matter? I have always wanted you, Eileen. None can love you as I can, none can worship you as I do—I do not ask for love now. That I will wait for. Give me the right to claim you before all the world. That is all I ask."

She looked up into his face. The love she had longed to read on Duncan's was written largely there. She knew she was his only world. And yet she felt cold and sore. Her wound still bled, and his love could never heal it for her.

"I will give you that," she whispered, "only I would like people to think Duncan left because of us. Also I want to make him sore—not by your horse-whipping, that would tell too much — but through her. That girl must not escape her punishment. The papers must proclaim her guilt, they shall both suffer, they owe me that. I claim your help."

He looked seriously into her eager eyes.

"But you surely would not harm the child. If she is innocent, and I believe she is, you would not——"

"She is not innocent," she retorted angrily, drawing herself up, and stamping her foot. "She is guilty. But even if she were not, surely she owes me something now. Duncan has left me for her. He must see that all will not be so easy for him as he thinks. Let the world know what she is, at all events. I do not ask you to do much, merely to interview reporters, to proclaim her guilt, to help me to carry this through. Then, when all is over, I will be yours."

"But, my dear, why not be mine without this trouble. Leave them alone, let justice take its own course, and snatch what happiness the gods may have left you, with me."

She shook her head impatiently.

"That or nothing, Jim. You help me to do what I want—to punish a man who has behaved badly to me—in my own way—and I'll marry you. You refuse, and I won't."

He sighed. After all she did not ask much. Only, to persecute a young friendless girl, instead of fighting an able man, seemed puerile to him, and even more. He did not like it. Besides what good could it do. Sooner or later things would right themselves.

He started at the thought. Sooner or later things would right themselves. So, after all, what did it matter if he gave the promise she asked?

"Yes. I will help you on those conditions," he said. "But——"

She held up a playful finger.

"No reservation, Jim. I am not an evil doer. I do not ask you to commit a crime."

"Nevertheless I am about to commit one now—a raid upon your lips," he exclaimed, with a contented laugh, as he seized her unresisting chin in his hands and bent his face to hers.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The sun shone brightly into Hetty's kitchen, and the canary in the window welcomed it with a song of delight. Hetty looked up at the bird reproachfully.

"How can you sing like that, you little flint-heart?" she asked. "Have you quite forgotten Sunbeam? This weather makes me miss her more, for it is her weather, when her hair shines like gold and her eyes dance like the sun rays pouring into your cage. But now, for all we know, she may be crying her eyes out. God knows what trouble she may be in, and I can't get to her to comfort her. Ah, if only Bill would come back and tell me where she is I'd go to her like a shot. But he's changed. His heart used to be soft once; now it's tough as leather."

Sighing heavily, she settled herself in her chair and picked up the morning paper. It had not yet been opened, for Bill had not returned since the night before. That did not trouble her. She was used to his ways, and knew that he had probably spent the night in Gentleman Dan's company. Also he had the pearls to dispose of. The sooner they disappeared, the easier she would feel.

The article she was in search of when she opened the paper soon caught her eye. She read it breathless. The heading was exciting enough: "Mysterious Disappearance of Lady Cruse's Pearls . . . Daring Burglary in Broad Daylight. . . ." Was Sunbeam mentioned? The words danced before her as she read: ". . . . The burglar himself has escaped, if he ever existed . . . His supposed accomplice, a young girl staying in the house, has been arrested."

With a loud cry Hetty dropped the paper and started up. The canary left off singing, and hopping to the side of his cage peered down inquisitively as his mistress paced the floor, her hands clasped over her capacious bosom, the tears rolling down her cheeks.

"I told Bill he'd get her punished instead of himself. Yes, I told him so. I little knew I spoke the truth," she sobbed. "But she hasn't betrayed him after all, spite of all. Oh, my precious lamb, my darling baby that I loved, to think you should come to this, just for all the world as though you really are Bill's flesh and blood."

She stopped before a small photograph of Sunbeam, and taking it up kissed it with quivering lips. The girl's sweet face smiled back reassuringly at her.

"Oh, deary me!" exclaimed Hetty, "of course you'll be shut up, sure as fate, my treasure. If they let you be arrested, of course they didn't care for you, so Sir Ralph can't have said anything—or if he did, it's made no difference. Oh, if only he was alive! What on earth made him roll over the cliff like that when he was going to be wanted? Oh, my lamb, how can I save you?"

Her eyes falling on the tell-tale paper, she started towards it with a low exclamation, and picked it up eagerly. For of course it contained the information she had thirsted for, the name of the place Sunbeam was in.

"Brackley Park," she read slowly, half aloud. "Wherever's that? They don't say, so I'll be bound they'll know at any station. Euston is nearest me; I'll get my things on and go. I'll go to her at once and tell them all about her, if necessary, even if Bill kills me for doing so afterwards. But I won't betray him. I know nothing about those pearls, curse them! I only wish they were back where they first came from, even though, through them, I know where to find my darling. Yes, I'll go to her. They can't blame me for having loved her, and they must see as she's been well cared for all the time. As for Bill, I daresay I shall be back before him, if they don't lock me up."

Having arrived at that decision, she went upstairs and prepared for her journey. Before leaving her room she unlocked a drawer, then a box within it, from which she took one or two small parcels. These she fetched in a hand-bag, with which she returned to the kitchen, and taking down the canary's cage, said:

"You shan't starve, you little rascal, for all I'm in a hurry to see Sunbeam, though Brackley Park may be scores of miles away. I'll tell Mrs. Grogan to look after you, and now I'm giving you double what you deserve to make up for the loneliness that's coming to you. Good-bye, sing again, and never trouble if you don't see both your mistresses again."

She turned into the street, locked the door, carried the key to the neighbor who generally took care of it for her in case Bill returned during her absence, and set off towards the busy thoroughfare with a quick walk.

But as each step took her further afield, her heart sank more and more, whilst the difficulties ahead cropped up again.

How could she release Sunbeam now by telling what had been kept for so long? That would have nothing to do with the pearls and the burglary, therefore it could alter nothing now Sunbeam was in the hands of the police.

Besides, without Sir Ralph and Bill to back her up, would her word be taken? Might not they all say the tale was a hoax? And even if Lady Cruse did believe her, what good would she do? For if Lady Cruse cared for Sunbeam ever so little, the girl would not have been arrested. Also, it was possible that Lady Cruse knew everything after all, and hated Sunbeam—was ashamed of her—would thank no one for repeating the tale.

She slackened her pace and looked fearfully around at the crowded pavements. She felt tired and bewildered, also full of despair. She had actually thought of betraying Bill, for that is what her intention amounted to, seen in broad daylight. She would have to mention him anyhow, and the hue and cry would sound for him at once, even if she kept back her knowledge of his visit to Brackley and his theft of the pearls.

She was an old fool to have thought of it. Luckily she had come back to her senses in time. She would go home and try to forget about Sunbeam, or when Bill came back ask him to save the child. How he was to do that she could not tell. But he was full of resource, and would find a way. He would not give himself up, of course; but then she did not wish him to.

She had reached the turning into Euston station, and paused, looking through the gateways with wondering eyes. The flow of vehicles coming and going through was ceaseless. She scanned the faces of the occupants stupidly. If only she could see some one who could help both of those she loved. She laughed at the thought. How could she expect help from any one—she, a convict's sister and a woman without acquaintances? The noise of the traffic was making her silly; the sooner she got out of it the better.

She turned away, not without a lurking wish to creep within and ask where Brackley Park was. But then some one might overhear her, and thus, even indirectly, find a clue to Bill. With that his guilt could not be doubted. How stupid she had been to imagine she could go there without betraying him

She sprang nervously back from the curb as a hansom jerked up and a young man jumped to the ground, exclaiming:—

"Why, Mrs. Green, I have found you at last!"

And before she could realize whether she was glad or sorry to meet him, her hands were clasped by Duncan Sinclair.

"Mr. Sinclair!" she gasped, remembering her wish for help with a little thrill of delight, though at the same time she also recalled her past suspicions of him and her subsequent deception towards him with regard to Sunbeam's disappearance. "Why, sir, who would have thought of our meeting here, and——"

"Who indeed!" echoed Sinclair. "And yet I've searched high and low for you."

Her eyes scanned his face eagerly. What did he mean? A sullenness chased the smile from her lips.

"Come, we can't talk here, and I've heaps to ask you. My time's my own, and I daresay you are in no hurry," continued Sinclair. "There's a quiet little hotel over there; come in and have something while we talk of old times, and——"

She drew back her face frigid.

"Indeed, I've plenty to do. Sunbeam at home expecting me, and——"

"Then I'll take you back in this hansom. What's the address?"

She hesitated, crimsoning painfully. His honest eyes pierced to her soul. She felt a sudden inexplicable shame for doubting him.

"I would rather not drive," she stammered. "I'm nervous of hansoms ever since I read of the Mystery of a Hansom Cab. I vowed I'd never ride in one, nor in a four-wheeler either," she added hurriedly, as she saw him glancing back as though in search of one.

A smile flickered across his face as he dismissed the hansom and took her arm imperiously.

'Miss Green, I assure you I'm neither detective nor rogue," he murmured in her astonished ear; "I'm merely your friend, and Sunbeam's."

Her heart leapt to her mouth, and tears moistened her eyes.

"But——" she stammered, allowing him to lead her unresistingly. "I must go home. I know you are very kind, and——"

"It is about Sunbeam I want to speak to you," he interrupted, his eyes resting kindly on her hot troubled face; "I come from her to you."

She gasped in astonishment. He come from Sunbeam? What could he mean? Sunbeam was at Brackley Hall with Lady Cruse; what had he to do with them?—unless Bill was right and he was a detective. Her knees shook violently beneath her, and she leaned heavily on his arm. The street with its grey walled houses and seething moving mass of humanity swam round bewilderingly. Nor could she recover thought nor senses until she found herself half reclining on a couch in a quiet room, with Sinclair holding a glass to her lips.

She drank thirstily, then looked up at him with wonder-filled eyes.

(To be Continued.)

ILLNESS OF THE CZARINA

MELANCHOLIA AND COMPLETE NERVOUS BREAKDOWN.

Strain of Life at Russian Court Too Much for Her — Her Tastes are Domestic.

The Czarina has disappeared from public view for some time past, says the Russian correspondent for the New York Journal. At first it was intimated that she was suffering from the effects of a particularly stubborn case of influenza. But when her seclusion became prolonged it was found impossible to conceal any longer the real state of affairs, and it was reluctantly admitted that she was far too ill to take any part in the festivities of the St Petersburg season; that her malady, though not dangerous to life, was likely to prove of lengthy duration, and that it was mental rather than physical, consisting of pronounced melancholia and of a complete nervous breakdown.

When one recalls to mind all that the Empress has had to endure since she went to Russia as a bride, it is not astonishing that her nerves should have given way. Her alliance to the Czar was unpopular with the people in the first place. For it was known throughout Russia that she had entertained the strongest kind of scruples about abandoning the Protestant Church, in which she had been reared, for the orthodox Greek rite, and it was reported that her conversion was not sincere.

FOLLOWED BY ILL-LUCK.

Then, too, her marriage may be said to have coincided with the death of her father-in-law, and when she came to Russia as a bride it was to a land not of rejoicing but of mourning.

The tragedy which marred the festivities of the coronation at Moscow, casting the lives of thousands of poor people, was likewise a shock to her, and, moreover, served to associate her in the eyes of the Russians with misfortune and ill-luck.

The many disappointments which she suffered herself and to which she subjected the nation, before finally giving birth three years ago to an heir to the throne, were construed by the masses in her husband's dominion as a token of divine displeasure.

Her orderly German and English ideas—she had been to a great extent brought up by her grandmother, Queen Victoria of England—caused her to rebel against much that she found at the Russian court, which served to antagonize not only its members, but even the princes and princesses of the royal family against her.

Politically, too, she found herself in conflict not only with her husband's Ministers, but likewise with her relatives. For she encouraged him in all his progressive and liberal leanings, which were strongly disapproved by the various grand dukes and grand duchesses, most of them champions of reaction and of unimpaired autocracy.

And she has now the mortification of seeing that her policy has proved a failure, and that her political advice to her husband is popularly regarded as in a measure responsible for the chaotic conditions that have prevailed for the last two years in the dominions of the Czar.

FEARED ASSASSINATION.

Finally, there has been the perpetual and ever haunting dread of the assassination of her husband and of her little ones. She has seen her brother-in-law, Grand Duke Sergius, literally blown to pieces, scores of her husband's Ministers, court officials and trusted generals of his entourage laid low by assassins, while time and again would-be regicides have been found and captured among those of their retainers in whom she and the Emperor have reposed the greatest confidence, and upon whom they had bestowed the utmost favor and even affection.

All this is surely enough to shatter the nervous system of a keenly sensitive, high strung, warm hearted, and brilliant woman such as the Czarina, whose only moments of happiness have been when alone with her husband and children, and whose appearance at other times, especially at court functions and in public, has always been characterized by a look of mingled shyness and intense seriousness, indeed, approaching almost to mournfulness.

JUST WHAT THEY WANTED.

"Well, brothers," said the sombre-visaged man, rising in their midst, "this is my first attendance, but I am a Socialist almost by nature, and I think I can understand, from the previous speakers, what you want. In the first place, you want a realm where everyone has to be good by law."

"We do! we do!" cried half-a-dozen long-haired young men in turn-down collars.

The speaker continued: "Where food and clothing give no trouble, and money does not exist."

"That's it! That's what we want."

"Where everyone goes to worship on Sunday, and regular hours are kept, week in, week out."

"Yes, that's it!"

"Well, I myself have just come from such a place——"

"Where? What's it called?"

"It's a place called prison," he said, and resumed his seat.