THE FATE OF AZUMA;

Or, The South African Millionaire.

CHAPTER VIII.—(Continued).

Now her mother rejoiced that she had done so, since she had done so much better for herself. Lady Glaucourt had not hesitated to tell the world that her daughter had refused Sir Herbert Gresham; she did not hesitate to tell Mr. Danvers the same thing.

Yet, for all that, the week her lover had accepted to stay at Glaycroft, glided into three weeks, nearly a month, and it was not a time of unalloyed happiness. There were moments when it seemed to Judith that she could not go on. It was wonderful that at every turn some little phrase, some little incident brought back that event to her mind, and seemed to paralyze her energy to go on, while there were moments when even her lover became aware that there was a veil of reserve between him and her which would have to be torn down if they were to be really happy as he hoped they would be, for, notwithstanding, that he had knocked about the world, he had preserved something idyllic and old-fashioned in his ideas of married life, with which her beauty was more in keeping than her manner. Once when they had been in the garden in the evening, by moonlight, he had stood suddenly still and said:

"I sometimes wonder, Judith, whether you really care for me as much as you will ever care for anyone. I want you to be sincere with me. Did you . . . did you care for Gresham?"

Her heart stood still. Had she cared for Gresham? It seemed to her that she had cared so much, that she had forgotten that it was caring. It had simply seemed part of her life, a state, not a mood; and, because she wanted to speak the truth when she could, not to lay up future reproach in little heaps all around her, but to have only one dunghill of trouble stored away in the backyard of her life, she told what she believed to be the truth, what was the truth as a matter of fact.

"I think I cared for him very much at one time—but—but when he proposed to me, I mean—I felt that I could never marry him—never."

"And you don't feel the same about me?"

It is wonderful how people can torture us when they don't know what is in our mind.

"No, dear, I want to marry you very much." She laid her hand upon his arm very softly.

This at least was true, and his content returned.

And there were times when notwithstanding the tacit reserve between mother and daughter, both were given over to a gnawing anxiety neither would have acknowledged, the anxiety as to whether, at the last moment he should hear.

Both the women wished that the wedding could have taken place at once, hurriedly, in the night even, before he left Glaycourt, before he could see anyone, speak to anyone. Instead, he spoke of going home for a week, to tell his people, of running to Paris for a fortnight to try and get a couple of months' leave for the honeymoon, and when he spoke of doing that, the hearts of both women seemed to die within them. If he went, would he ever return? Both were aware that they were living on the edge of a volcano.

And often on those hot nights, Judith, unable to sleep, would get up from the bed, and go and kneel by the window, the inward need for spaces or air around her thoughts inspiring the physical need for cool breezes. And holding her head in her two hands, she would ask herself what was going to happen—what was going to happen, for it seemed to her as if all this could not go on, as if something must happen, as if, if the bolt did not come from the blue, then it would come because she would go mad and tell him . . .

Sometimes she felt as if she must scream out.

And then in the morning, with the gladness of a bright day, her serenity would be restored her, and the sight of her own beauty in the glass bring calm, and a return of that strange philosophy which had taken the place of religion in her soul.

After all, what more could he want than her beauty, her grace, her position? She had not appealed to him to marry her, she was not marrying him for his money, why, what man was worthy of more than she had to give? She sufficed. She sufficed.

And the days glided by, the inward devastating feverishness hidden by a hundred occupations of pleasure, rides through cool glades in the cool of the afternoon, dripping sweetness from the hedgerows, teuf teufs in his automobile, drives, garden parties at the houses of country neighbors, flower shows, a fete champetre in her own home, all the things that had seemed wearisome other years, and which had often made her persuade her mother to go to Homburg, eagerly sought now because they helped to cheat time, prevented tete-a-tetes with her fiance. Congratulations every day, and all day presents pouring in, preparations for the trousseau, talks with her father about their plans, choice of the bridesmaids, and the bridesmaids' presents and gifts, daily gifts from him letters to write, all the pleasant toil which accompanies the linking of two lives together, even in humble spheres, but which, where the linking is that of two members of the aristocracy of a country, and accompanied by wealth, rises to the importance of an historic event almost, like conferring the freedom of a city, or the signing of a charter.

And underneath it all, like some devouring monster creeping beneath the long grass, and making an almost imperceptible, though ominous sound, denoting its presence, the feeling as if, while she built up an edifice of strength, with cornices and turrets, ramparts, and terraces of delight, something within was crumbling away which had been its mainstay, and that soon the proud heaven-challenging steeples would totter to the ground.

And there were several, if not many, who made inward comments as they read the announcement of the engagement, and little snips of detail obtained from the servants by society papers, evidencing that preparations were to be on a large scale, and advancing rapidly.

"The lace which will be worn by Lady Judith Roach on her wedding gown has been made in Ireland."

"The bridegroom has presented his future bride with the famous Clorion ruby, which it was said Agnes Sorel sent to the Duke of Bedford as a bribe to induce him to leave Paris, at the time of her ascendency over Charles the Seventh, and which was the subject of a famous lawsuit between the Duc de Neveuille and the Earl of Croleigh, in 1647."

"The Earl of Croleigh has given his nephew the beautiful castle of Chililashie on the banks of the Tweed." Etc., etc.

And as these items brought her name before the eyes of this one and that, though she knew it not, they were accompanied by the rumblings of distant thunder of disaster, the faint utterings of the earthquake which was so soon to engulf her.

Madame Dufour was glad, but she asked herself, over the dictionary to which she was occasionally obliged to refer of late, because she had forgotten French, as she corrected the exercises of her pupils:

"Est-ce-possible?"

While Sir Hubert wondered what kind of man Danvers could be, who still married her, although he must know, for she would of course have told her fiance, even as she had told him, Hubert Gresham. And for the first time he asked himself whether this was what he ought to have done. He wrote a very friendly letter, and sent her a beautiful present.

And Hugh Glover, over a cup of coffee, which he was drinking in bed, with a bailiff sitting in the next room, leaned back on his pillow, and said:

"Good Heavens!"

And there were others who, while they did not positively know, suspected a good deal, and proclaimed viciously that it was a wonderful piece of good luck, or that they hoped he knew what he was doing.

Mrs. Lorraine merely said:

"Poor Hugh."

Yes, it certainly seemed as if there was an end of Hugh.

And presently the end came so swiftly, so unerringly, pointing its rapier at the very heart of things, that it seemed to Judith that she could feel the point of the blade of fate entering her soul.

It was the end of August now, and Danvers, while loth to leave his lady love, impressed upon her that the sooner he went the sooner he would return. He noted her ghastly pallor, when he told her that the day after to-morrow he must go home, if only for a few days, and put it down to the fact that she really cared for him.

"Why can't we just be married here quietly in the village church, and go back to your work in Paris without any fuss?"

She knew, while she asked the question, that it could not be, that the fact of her urging this would be counted against her in the future, that terrible future which she knew, as if she had seen the moving finger write it, was holding something in store for her, something which she would not have the courage to face or to bear, but which she felt instinctively would not be out of proportion with her ill-luck, and with the justice of fate, which we acknowledge when we commune with our soul, even when we have made an arrangement with that soul to inveigh against her.

She was unlucky, and there is such a thing as ill-luck, there is no doubt about it, if the guerdons of this world are to be reckoned as the ultimate rewards and final endings to life. There is ill-luck, apart from the reaping of our own whirlwind, apart from the results of our own folly, apart from the mocking successes of foolish ambitions, apart from purity and endeavor, and the sanity which men call goodness; the patience which men have nicknamed philosophy, there is ill-luck—ill-luck, the turning to salt sea fruit with one what with another becomes a blossoming rod, and most of all Judith was unlucky, in that she had early been surrounded by "des verreux." There are people whose whole lives seem to be thrown amongst the "verreux," little wonder if they are tainted. "Qui s'assemble se ressemble" is true, but also there is the resemblance made by the evil one, gradually moulding the weaker character to its own in order to "rassembler" with it, till at last it knows no other natures but the cramped or vicious ones. It had been Judith's misfortune to know no really good woman well, and the one good influence near her at all was her father's, and in London she rarely saw him. She had told herself once with intelligent intuition, that she was always much better in the country where she saw much of her father, and felt his influence, but he was not by any means a man of strong character, although so many men are counted strong because they do not indulge in vices. It had never been the fashion of the Glaucourts, nor their instinct to drink and swear and gamble and flirt. As a matter of fact they were a little dull, a character of goodness, which has done a good deal of harm to the cause of righteousness.

Yes, she was unlucky, and the "malheur" evidenced this, for there are girls who have been far more evilly disposed than Lady Judith, who yet have not had the misfortune to come across unscrupulous men.

There is no rule for life, no method in its accidents, its adventure, and the science of goodliving has no more control over shame, than the science of learning has over the race of the earth with the stars or the renascence of spring.

And because she was so unlucky, Judith had grown, as so many unlucky people do, superstitious, grown to note the days and hours and times of year that were propitious, the little foretelling incidents, which, if sometimes noted after the event, instead of before, still bore witness to the fact that there was something supernatural in its happening. She had noted that her lucky day was Friday, and because of the association of that day, imagined that it was perhaps because, as she expressed it, given over to the devil, that day of all others brought her luck. And this last Friday in August when Mr. Danvers informed her that he must leave on the following Sunday, if he was ever to come back and claim her for his own, it seemed as if there must be something in her superstition after all.

She was not dressed on that Friday morning when her maid came to ask her to go to her mother's room immediately.

"My dear, the best thing on earth for you has happened—the poor little thing is dead."

She handed the letter to Judith, who took it and opened it without understanding what she meant. It was written in Madame Dufour's pointed French handwriting, with "Private" marked everywhere, and it told how she had heard from Ces bonnes Soeurs, the nuns, where the child had been deposited, that it had died of a meningite. French children always seem to die of une meningite.

Judith seemed turned to stone, but her mother went on:

"Of course it's dreadfully sad, but just the best thing that could have happened; I really wondered what you would do. It would have been most disagreeable living in Paris under the circumstances. Why, if I remember, the convent is almost back to back with the Embassy, besides—" lowering her voice, "one never knows, no doubt the nuns are excellent people, but when they knew that you were living there, and the priests and all, don't you know . . ."

Lady Glaucourt could not believe her eyes. Judith had moved towards the window, and from her bed, her mother could see the tears falling, those big swollen tears which hurt so, which come tragically slowly, as if they are distilled from very pain.

"My dear Judith—" Lady Glaucourt put one foot out of bed, a very shapely foot, by the bye. She supposed that it certainly was her business to go and put her arm around Judith. She had never imagined that she gave the child a thought.

"Oh, don't—don't, mother, can't you understand?"

"My dear, you ought to be very thankful; I'm sure it was the very best thing that could have happened. And you mustn't cry—think of your eyes."

Ever since Judith had been a baby she had said "think of your eyes" every time she cried. It had not been often.

But Judith was not thinking of her eyes. She seemed to see that little pathetic, lonely form, stretched out, the form of that pretty, pretty baby, which she had held for one brief moment in her arms, and then relinquished it for ever, deserted, it seemed to her. Had they been kind to it? And now, did it know, did it know?"

When Judith went down to breakfast, the relief which had succeeded the one moment of feeling, had brought something more natural and less constrained into her manner than there had been since her engagement, and Danvers told himself that she was shy, although she pretended that she wasn't, and that the shyness was beginning to wear off. Breakfast passed off with more than usual gaiety, and Judith seemed as unconcerned as her mother was or her father, in the supreme unconsciousness of the fact that a grandchild of his had lived and died. Lord Glaucourt was in the best of spirits this morning.

He had heard from his son that he would be with them the next night. They had tried to get him before, but he had been staying with some friends, with the family of a charming girl, as a matter of fact, whom he wanted to marry principally because she was different from his mother and sister. He didn't think he was likely to be taken with Danvers. He hadn't much faith in what his sister called "a charming man." But his father had insisted that he should come, and make his acquaintance before he left them on Sunday, so he was going to run down for the shortest time possible.

It was difficult for Lady Judith to decide whether she was always correct in her pandering to superstition, when on Saturday, returning from an expedition with her fiance her brother advanced to meet her from beneath the copper beaches on the lawn, followed by another man, a man who seemed to step out of the shadows to meet her, as if he were the denizen of some dreary corner of her life, which only he and she knew of and from which he only came forth after dark.

The man who followed her brother across the lawn was none other than Hugh Glover, the father of the little dead child.

CHAPTER IX.

All that followed, it seemed to Judith, when she saw Hugh Glover on the lawn of Glaycroft was what she expected. How did he dare? That was the question which it seemed to her she had asked aloud.

The rush of fearful thought bewildered her, and she could not remember an hour later, how she had been able to greet her brother or extend her hand to the man she had never loved, and now hated. Why had he come? That was the thought which dominated. Why had he come?

She saw her brother so rarely, that she did not know that they were acquainted. As a matter of fact, till that week, they had hardly known each other. Hugh Glover had been invited by the people where Judith's brother was staying, and the young man, the son of the house, a brother officer of his, had told him some of Glover's troubles, calling them "a beastly shame" and young Lord Frewley had invited him to spend Saturday till Monday at Glaycroft, with absolutely no idea of the tragic character of the acquaintance concealed under Glover's uncompromising statement:

"I think I've met your sister."

That the man should have had the audacity to accept seemed extraordinary, even to himself, but Hugh Glover's affairs had reached a pitch when great strokes of audacity alone could save him, and even those had but a fighting chance. If his creditors would only not be "in such a hurry," he would say to his friends, "I'd pay the last farthing," nobody quite knew how, least of all himself. But the fact remained that his creditors, being like all others, always prone to cut their own throats, as well as their debtors', would not wait.

"What the deuce are you going to get by hurrying me so?" he asked one man. And the man was quite unable to answer, not even having the intelligence to see that his own lawyer was hurrying him on to his own destruction, for the sake of replenishing his purse.

Writs had become so plentiful that as he said, if he could only have afforded a new house, he could at least have been spared the expense of papering it, and bankruptcy notices he no longer noticed more than an advertisement for a new shoe polish, handed him in the street; while the word security, was like the humming music of an ugly tune, we can't get out of our heads.

At this juncture, all that saved his nerves from utter destruction, were Saturdays till Monday, spent in the country at the houses of a few friends who received him, and it had been with a certain elation, almost with a renewed faith in an intelligent fate, that he had jumped at Lord Frewley's suggestion.

"If you have nothing better to do, come to Glaycroft with me and stay over Sunday."

It was a long time since Hugh Glover had stayed in any house so reputedly respectable, or so magnificent. In his bachelor days he had gone everywhere, and it was his habit to ascribe his decadence to his marriage. He had married a woman for her money, who had no particular position in society, and who, after the birth and death of her child, had become an invalid. Gradually Hugh Glover had taken to going out alone to places where he would not have taken his wife, or rather it would perhaps be more correct to say, where she would not have gone, and where she would not have been invited. It had always amused his friends immensely when he talked of Mrs. Glover as "my kill-joy," instead of 'my wife."

Yes, perhaps in her way she had been a kill-joy, but then there had been so little to kill.

(To be continued.)

The United States provides more than half of the world's production of copper, for of 873,460 tons used in a recent year, 492,650 tons were produced by the U.S.A.

Farmer (to horse dealer)—No, I don't bear ye no malice. I only hope that when you're chased by a pack of ravening wolves you'll be drivin' that horse you sold me!"

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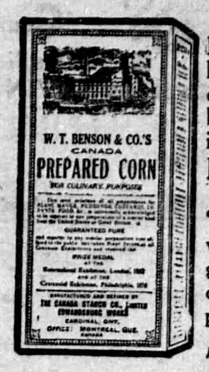

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AT ALL GROCERS
53

NAIL DRIVING AIDS AUSTRIA.

Trojan Horse Building and Citizens Pay for Helping.

An inhabitant of a neutral country, just returned from Vienna, brings the story of a new plan conceived by the authorities of the Austrian capital to raise money for war charities.

One of the prettiest spots of the city on the Danube is the Schwarzenberg Square. A huge wooden horse, not unlike the one used by the Greeks in the capture of Troy, is being erected there, and every loyal Viennese is invited to drive at least one nail into the body of this equine statue.

The right to prove one's patriotism by nail driving is taxed at 20 cents a nail, and as there is room for 300,000 nails the sum of $60,500 is expected to be realized.

Not Exactly.

"Isn't Jones a dreamer?"

"Well, not exactly. You see, his castles in the air generally include an heiress."

In the last three months of 1914 16,575,017 lb. of cocoa was exported from the United Kingdom, more than the total for the whole of the year 1913.

Much unnecessary talk manages to escape from a tiny mouth.

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