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GREENMANTLE

BY JOHN BUCHAN.

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CHAPTER VI.—(Cont'd.)

The winter evening closed in, and I saw that we had come out of the hills and were in a flat country. Sometimes a big sweep of river showed, and, looking out at one station, I saw a funny church with a thing like an onion on the top of its spire. It might almost have been a mosque, judging from the pictures I remembered of mosques. I wished to heaven I had given geography more attention in my time.

Presently we stopped, and Stumm led the way out. The train must have been specially halted for him, for it was a one-horse little place whose name I could not make out. The stationmaster was waiting, bowing and saluting, and outside was a motor-car with big headlights. Next minute we were sliding through dark woods where the snow lay far deeper than in the north. There was a mild frost in the air, and the tires slipped and skidded at the corners.

We hadn't far to go. We climbed a little hill and on the top of it stopped at the door of a big black castle. It looked enormous in the winter night, with not a light showing anywhere on its front. The door was opened by an old fellow who took a long time about it and got well cursed for his slowness. Inside the place was very noble and ancient. Stumm switched on the electric light, and there was a great hall with black tarnished portraits of men and women in old-fashioned clothes, and mighty horns of deer on the walls.

There seemed to be superfluity of servants. The old fellow said that food was ready, and without more ado we went into the dining-room—another vast chamber with rough stone walls above the panelling—and found some cold meats on a table beside a big fire. The servant presently brought in a ham omelette, and on that and the cold stuff we dined. I remember there was nothing to drink but water. It puzzled me how Stumm kept his great body going on the very moderate amount of food he ate. He was the type you expect to swill beer by the bucket and put away a pie at a sitting.

When we had finished, he rang for the old man and told him that we should be in the study for the rest of the evening. "You can lock up and go to bed when you like," he said, "but see you have coffee ready at seven sharp in the morning."

Ever since I entered that house I had the uncomfortable feeling of being in a prison. Here was I alone in this great place with a fellow who could, and would, wring my neck if he wanted. Berlin and all the rest of it had seemed comparatively open country; I had felt that I could move freely and at the worst make a bolt for it. But here I was trapped, and I had to tell myself every minute that I was there as a friend and colleague. The fact is, I was afraid of Stumm, and I don't mind admitting it. He was a new thing in my experience and I didn't like it. If only he had drunk and guzzled a bit I should have been happier.

We went up a staircase to a room at the end of a long corridor. Stumm locked the door behind him and laid the key on a table. That room took my breath away, it was so unexpected. In place of the grim bareness of downstairs here was a place all luxury and color and light. It was very large, but low in the ceiling, and the walls were full of little recesses with statues in them. A thick grey carpet of velvet pile covered the floor, and the chairs were low and soft and upholstered like a lady's boudoir. A pleasant fire burned on the hearth and there was a flavor of scent in the air, something like incense or burnt sandalwood. A French clock on the mantelpiece told me that it was ten minutes past eight. Everywhere on little tables and in cabinets was a profusion of nicknacks, and there was some beautiful embroidery framed on screens. At first sight you would have said it was a woman's drawing-room.

But it wasn't. I soon saw the difference. There had never been a woman's hand in that place. It was the room of a man who had a fashion for frippery, who had a perverted taste for soft delicate things. It was the complement to his bluff brutality. I began to see the queer other side to my host, that evil side which gossip had spoken of as not unknown in the German army. The room seemed a horribly unwholesome place, and I was more than ever afraid of Stumm.

The hearthrug was a wonderful old Persian thing, all faint greens and pinks. As he stood on it he looked uncommonly like a bull in a china-shop. He seemed to bask in the comfort of it, and sniffed like a satisfied animal. Then he sat down at an escritoire, unlocked a drawer and took out some papers.

"We will now settle your business, friend Brandt," he said. "You will go to Egypt and there take your orders from one whose name and address are in this envelope. This card," and he lifted a square piece of grey pasteboard with a big stamp at the corner and some code words stencilled on it, "will be your passport. You will show it to the man you seek. Keep it jealously, and never use it save under orders or in the last necessity. It is your badge as an accredited agent of the German Crown."

I took the card and the envelope and put them in my pocket-book.

"Where do I go after Egypt?" I asked.

"That remains to be seen. Probably you will go to the Blue Nile. Riza, the man you will meet, will direct you. Egypt is a nest of our agents who work peacefully under the nose of the English Secret Service."

"I am willing," I said. "But how do I reach Egypt?"

"You will travel by Holland and London. Here is your route," and he took a paper from his pocket. "Your passports are ready and will be given you at the frontier."

This was a pretty kettle of fish. I was to be packed off to Cairo by sea, which would take weeks, and God knows how I would get from Egypt to Constantinople. I saw all my plans falling in pieces about my ears, and just when I thought they were shaping nicely.

Stumm must have interpreted the look on my face as fear.

"You have no cause to be afraid," he said. "We have passed the word to the English police to look out for a suspicious South African named Brandt, one of Maritz's rebels. It is not difficult to have that kind of hint conveyed to the proper quarter. But the description will not be yours. Your name will be Van der Linden, a respectable Java merchant going home to his plantations after a visit to his native shores. You had better get your *dossier* by heart, but I guarantee you will be asked no questions. We manage these things well in Germany."

I kept my eyes on the fire, while I did some savage thinking. I knew they would not let me out of their sight till they saw me in Holland, and, once there, there would be no possibility of getting back. When I left this house I would have no chance of giving them the slip. And yet I was well on my way to the East, the Danube could not be fifty miles off, and that way ran the road to Constantinople. It was a fairly desperate position. If I tried to get away Stumm would prevent me, and the odds were that I would go to join Peter in some infernal prison-camp.

Those moments were some of the worst I ever spent. I was absolutely and utterly baffled, like a rat in a trap. There seemed nothing for it but to go back to London and tell Sir Walter the game was up. And that was about as bitter as death.

He saw my face and laughed.

"Does your heart fail you, my little Dutchman? You funk the English? I will tell you one thing for your comfort. There is nothing in the world to be feared except me. Fail, and you have cause to shiver. Play me false and you had far better never have been born."

His ugly sneering face was close above mine. Then he put out his hands and gripped my shoulders as he had done the first afternoon.

I forget if I mentioned that part of the damage I got at Loos was a shrapnel bullet low down at the back of my neck. The wound had healed well enough, but I had pains there on a cold day. His fingers found the place and it hurt like hell.

There is a very narrow line between despair and black rage. I had about given up the game, but the sudden ache of my shoulder gave me purpose again. He must have seen the rage in my eyes, for his own became cruel.

"The weasel would like to bite," he cried. "But the poor weasel has found its master. Stand still, vermin. Smile, look pleasant, or I will make pulp of you. Do you dare to frown at me?"

I shut my teeth and said never a word. I was choking in my throat and could not have uttered a syllable if I had tried.

Then he let me go, grinning like an ape.

I stepped back a pace and gave him my left between the eyes.

For a second he did not realize what had happened, for I don't suppose any one had dared to lift a hand to him since he was a child. He blinked at me mildly. Then his face grew red as fire.

"God in Heaven," he said quietly. "I am going to kill you," and he flung himself on me like a mountain.

I was expecting him and dodged the attack. I was quite calm now, but pretty hopeless. The man had a gorilla's reach and could give me at least a couple of stone. He wasn't soft either, but looked as hard as granite. I was only just from hospital and absurdly out of training. He would certainly kill me if he could, and I saw nothing to prevent him.

My only chance was to keep him from getting to grips, for he could have squeezed in my ribs in two seconds. I fancied I was lighter on my legs than him, and I had a good eye. Black Monty at Kimberley had taught me to fight a bit, but there is no art on earth which can prevent a big man in a narrow space from sooner or later cornering a lesser one. That was the danger.

Backwards and forwards we padded on the soft carpet. He had no notion of guarding himself, and I got in a good few blows. Then I saw a queer thing. Every time I hit him he blinked and seemed to pause. I guessed the reason for that. He had gone through life keeping the crown of the causeway, and nobody had ever stood up to him. He wasn't a coward by a long chalk, but he was a bully, and had never been struck in his life. He was getting struck now in real earnest and he didn't like it. He had lost his bearings and was growing as mad as a hatter.

I kept half an eye on the clock. I was hopeful now, and was looking for the right kind of chance. The risk was that I might tire sooner than him and be at his mercy.

Then I learned a truth I have never forgotten. If you are fighting a man who means to kill you, he will be apt to down you unless you mean to kill him too. Stumm did not know any rules to this game, and I forgot to allow for that. Suddenly, when I was watching his eyes, he launched a mighty kick at my stomach. If he had got me, this yarn would have had an abrupt ending. But by the mercy of God I was moving sideways when he let out, and his heavy boot just grazed my left thigh.

It was the place where most of the shrapnel had lodged, and for a second I was sick with pain and stumbled. Then I was on my feet again but with a new feeling in my blood. I had to smash Stumm or never sleep in my bed again.

I got a wonderful power from this new cold rage of mine. I felt I couldn't tire, and I danced round and dotted his face till it was streaming with blood. His bulky padded chest was no good to me, so I couldn't try for the mark.

He began to snort now and his breath came heavily. "You infernal cad," I said in good round English, "I'm going to knock the stuffing out of you," but he didn't know what I was saying.

Then at last he gave me my chance. He half tripped over a little table and his face stuck forward. I got him on the point of the chin, and put every ounce of weight I possessed behind the blow. He crumpled up in a heap and rolled over, upsetting a lamp and knocking a big China jar in two. His head, I remember, lay under the escritoire from which he had taken my passport.

I picked up the key and unlocked the door. In one of the gilded mirrors I smoothed my hair and tidied up my clothes. My anger had completely gone and I had no particular ill-will left against Stumm. He was a man of remarkable qualities, which would have brought him to the highest distinction in the Stone Age. But for all that he and his kind were back numbers.

I stepped out of the room, locked the door behind me, and started out on the second stage of my travels.

(To be continued.)

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ISSUE No. 21—'23.

Woman's Sphere

THE SILVER WEDDING.

Twenty or forty or sixty years old.
It comes to the same when the tale is all told!
Her eyes are the brightest,
Her kisses most sweet,
Her touch is the lightest,
Her waist the most neat—
Twenty or forty or sixty years old,
It comes to the same when the tale is all told!

Eyes blue or hazel, coy, winsome, or bold,
It comes to the same when the tale is all told!
She likes pretty dresses,
She likes to be shy,
She likes your caresses
When no one is by—
Twenty or forty or sixty years old,
It comes to the same when the tale is all told!

Hair brown or silver, black, auburn, or gold,
It comes to the same when the tale is all told!
Her love is your treasure,
Her beauty your pride,
Her will is your pleasure,
Her judgment your guide—
Twenty or forty or sixty years old,
It comes to the same when the tale is all told!

CANNING AND PRESERVING.

GOOSEBERRY CONSERVE requires four pints of gooseberries, three pints of sugar, one cupful of seeded raisins and one orange. Make a heavy syrup of the sugar and a little water, cooking until the syrup will spin a thread; add the gooseberries, raisins, the pulp and juice of the orange and the skin, finely chopped. Cook until thick, pour into hot glasses and seal.

CHERRY AND GOOSEBERRY PRESERVES: Use equal quantities of cherries (which have been pitted) and gooseberries and to each pound of fruit use three-quarters of a pound of sugar. Make a thick syrup by adding a small quantity of water to the sugar, cook the gooseberries in the syrup until they are clear, then add the cherries and cook twenty minutes longer.

CHERRY CONSERVE is made of the red sour cherries thus: Cook three and one-half pounds of cherries (pitted) for fifteen minutes, then add two and one-half pounds of sugar which has been heated in the oven, one-quarter pound of seeded raisins, and the juice and pulp of three oranges. Cook until the mixture is as thick as marmalade, pour into glasses and seal.

ASPARAGUS should be canned as soon as possible after gathering. If allowed to stand for more than a few hours after being cut, the delicate flavor is destroyed and it is more difficult to keep. The stalks should be cleaned and any hard portions removed. They may be canned whole or cut into half-inch pieces, depending upon the form in which the vegetable is to be served. Blanche the prepared asparagus in boiling water for three of four minutes, cold dip, then pack in jars, cover with water, and add one teaspoonful of salt to each quart jar. Then adjust covers loosely, place in a water-bath and boil two hours or in a steam pressure cooker (ten pounds pressure) for one-half hour. Remove and tighten the covers while they are hot.

WHEN RHUBARB IS CANNED by the cold-water process, the success of this method, it is claimed, depends not alone upon careful work in canning, but in the storage. The jars should be wrapped in paper in order to keep out the light, then placed on shelves in a dark, cool place and left undisturbed until used. The cold-water process of canning rhubarb consists in filling sterilized cans with the fresh fruit, cut in cubes, then pouring in fresh, cold water until every particle of air is excluded. The cans may then be sealed. For the filling process some housewives set the cans under the faucet, allowing the water to run in until its own weight expels all air bubbles, while others prefer to plunge the can in a pail of water for a short time. Whichever method is used, every crevice should be filled with water, with no room for the tiniest air-bubble.

TO PRESERVE STRAWBERRIES, make a syrup of one-quarter of water and seven pounds of sugar and cook in an open kettle until a candy thermometer registers 266 deg. F. Add eight pounds of berries (washed and stemmed) and cook slowly, just at the boiling point. Stop the cooking when the thermometer registers 210 deg, pour into shallow pans to cool and skim while cooling. When cold pack into jars and allow to stand unsealed, but covered with a cloth, for four days. Put rubber and lid in position, not tight. If using a hot-water bath outfit, sterilize twenty minutes; if using a water-seal outfit, or a five pound steam-pressure outfit, or a pressure-cooker outfit, sterilize for fifteen minutes. Remove jars, tighten covers, invert to cool and test for leaks. Wrap jars with paper to prevent bleaching and store in a cool, dark place.

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THE HANDIEST THING IN MY HOME.

The handiest thing in my home was put in this winter by my husband and son. We already had the windmill and water piped to the house, and stored in a three-barrel storage tank placed in the room above the kitchen and had water at the sink.

But they added more pipe, running it under the floor behind the range. At one end of the range a pipe came up through the floor, extending up by the warming oven high enough so the wash boiler would slip under it. By turning a little wheel on an angle valve the boiler was filled without lifting a bit of water. At the other end of the range another pipe came up through the floor to the reservoir. A small hole was drilled in top of reservoir in such a way as not to interfere with the cover. The pipe extended over from the back with an angle valve to fill the reservoir.

The cost of fixtures and pipes was about $2.75, the men doing their own plumbing.

THE HORRID INK STAIN.

Ink stains are removed in various ways, depending upon the nature of the ink. Buttermilk or sour milk is excellent, changing the liquid as often as it becomes stained. Another method is to take a solution of peroxide of hydrogen, and soak the ink stains in this. Lemon and salt are also good for use on white material. Sometimes colored garments can be freed from ink stains by applying kerosene.

Indelible ink stains sometimes yield to a treatment of strong salt water, and then a washing with ammonia.

MAPLE ICE CREAM.

To make maple ice cream, use two eggs, two-thirds cup maple syrup, half cup of milk, one and one-half cups cream. Beat the yolks of the eggs until very light. Add the hot maple syrup and the milk and stir and cook over hot water until the mixture thickens. Then pour over the stiffly beaten whites of the eggs and cool. When cold, add the cream, pour into the freezer and freeze. A cup of nut meats makes a very delightful change.

YOUR WINTER FURS.

If you have only one or two pieces of fur to pack away, and have no provision for taking care of these, get a clean pasteboard suit box. You can get one of these in a good heavy quality at a store or a tailoring establishment for five or ten cents. Clean your furs. Lay into the box; sprinkle with powdered tobacco. Put the cover on the box and paste a strip of paper tightly over the opening. This will prevent any wandering insect crawling up under, and feeding on your valuables.

When you want to use the articles in the fall, all you have to do is to break the seal, shake out the furs, hang them in the open air for a little while, and they are ready for use.

He who knows not and knows not that he knows not is a fool. Shun him.

He who knows not and knows that he knows not is a simpleton. Teach him.

He who knows but knows not that he knows is asleep. Awake him.

But he who knows and knows that he knows is wise. Follow him.

Words Unnecessary.

"Is the boss in?" asked the visitor.

"The office boy, with his chair tilted back and his legs stretched out on a desk, made no reply.

"I asked if the boss was in," said the visitor.

The office boy glanced at him, but remained silent. "Didn't you hear me?" snapped the visitor.

"Of course I heard you," answered the boy, scornfully.

"Then why the dickens didn't you tell me if the boss's in?"

"Now, I ask you," retorted the boy, as he crossed his legs on the desk, "does it look like it?"

Minard's Liniment for Corns and Warts

Like Some Other Art.

"She's as pretty as a picture."

"Can't agree with you in that—but she has a fine frame."

Up in the Air.

Mrs. Newlywed—"Oh, Jack, you left the kitchen door open, and the draught has shut my cookery book so that now I haven't the faintest idea what it is I'm cooking."

The best way to be contented with your lot is to build a house on it.

There is more scope in marriage for the affectionate, brainless woman than for the self-confident, brainy one.—Dr. Josiah Oldfield.

Overlook a man's weakness, forget his mistakes, and speak to him of his good qualities. Then note how that man will strive with all his might to live up to the good opinion you have of him.

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