

LOCK OF RED HAIR.

CHAPTER V.—CONTINUED.

Scarcely had Lucy laid her head upon the pillow, before she was transported to the most delightful dreamland. For some time everything was blissful content; but suddenly the sky became clouded, and she found herself toiling alone up a steep hill the rain descending in torrents, every hill the thunder crashing overhead, and the thunder crashing overhead, and presently there came a terrific clap, and she sprang up in bed awake, and trembling in every limb.

As she did so, a most appalling shriek came upon the quiet night. Great Heaven, what did it proceed? Paralyzed when she remained quite still for a moment, and then she heard a rushing sound pass her room and a door softly opened in the distance. Again and again the awful shrieks filled the house.

"Heavens, it is Mrs. Richmond!" Lucy cried. "I am coming—I am coming—dear!"—and, without a thought of the danger she might encounter, she opened the door and rushed into the young girl's room.

"What is it, dear?" asked Lucy, taking her in her arms and soothing her like a child. "You are safe and nothing; you have been dreaming."

"Oh, Lucy, hide me, hide me! I shall be seen if I see it again." "See what, dear?" faltered Lucy. "I don't know," gasped Mrs. Richmond, "I have fallen asleep, and I don't know where my feet are; and when I opened my eyes it stood there at the end of the bed glaring at me! Oh, don't leave me, for Heaven's sake don't leave me!"

"My dearest, I would not leave you for the world. I am only going to ring the bell to wake Mrs. Mitchell."

"Yes, yes; let us have her here too, in case she may come again; pray Heaven she may not!"

"Was it a man then, dear?" asked Lucy, remembering the sound she had heard in the passage.

"Oh, yes," replied Mrs. Richmond, still shuddering and hiding her face on Lucy's shoulder—"a man with a horrible white face! And, oh, Lucy, his fearful face! It hung down on each side of his head like a curtain of blood! The light of it did haunt me as long as I live. Oh, why did Edgar leave me?" she moaned. "Send for him—send for him at once—say, I shall go mad without him!"

"Yes, dear, I will, the first thing in the morning; but you must try to compose yourself now, for all our sakes, if not for your own."

By this time Mrs. Mitchell was with them. She also had heard the shrieks; but she slept much farther off. Her motherly, homely presence quieted Mrs. Richmond to some extent, and she was able to talk more calmly and reasonably about the subject of her terror.

Mrs. Richmond persisted that it was no dream; she distinctly felt the hand upon her foot before she saw the figure. Lucy then told of the rushing sound she had heard, and expressed her opinion that somebody must have made an entry into the house for the purpose of robbery.

"Of course it is known," she added, "that there are only women here now!" "Ah, child, you say that to comfort me; but I am certain that was no living presence that was in the room to-night!"

Finding they could not argue her out of the belief that her horrible visitor was supernatural, Lucy was persuaded by Mrs. Mitchell to go to her room and dress.

"But why, my dear, and why? Why, dear, do you lie down in the bed and do the same. Why, you look quite pale and worn out!"

The housekeeper could not have used a stronger argument than this last to quiet Mrs. Richmond, who, in the midst of her terror and suffering, still retained her selfishness.

"Poor child, I have frightened her! Lie down, dear, and I will try to be quiet for your sake."

"And I'll sit in this arm-chair and keep watch over you both," added Mrs. Mitchell.

Strangely enough, in less than a quarter of an hour they were all three soundly asleep, completely exhausted by the excitement they had gone through.

When Mrs. Mitchell, who was the first to awake, looked at the clock, she found it was eight.

"Why, gracious me," she said to herself, "we have been asleep for four hours; that ought to do missus good! Poor soul! I wonder what that was a warning of in the night! I hope nothing has happened to master; but I doubt me. I won't disturb 'em; but I'll go and send off for the Doctor now, and make them a cup of tea. Bless her pretty face," she added, looking at Lucy, "she's like a sunbeam in the house! She'll make a good man happy some day, or I'm much mistaken."

They were still sleeping when Mrs. Mitchell returned to the room, bearing in her hand a tray with two cups of tea. A slight noise she made in setting it down awakened Mrs. Richmond, and immediately after Lucy opened her eyes.

"Why, I have surely been asleep!" exclaimed Mrs. Richmond, in amazement. "That you have, ma'am, for nearly five hours; it must have done you a world of good."

"Well, I certainly don't feel so bad as I should have expected to; but then, you know, I have not slept so many consecutive hours for weeks."

"Now, you drink this cup of tea, and I'll put the room tidy. Doctor Maurice will be here before we know where we are."

Ten minutes later, he was ushered in, looking flushed with the hurry he had made. He remained with Mrs. Richmond some little time, and then descended to the drawing-room, leaving Mrs. Mitchell with her.

"Oh, Doctor Maurice," cried Lucy, who was anxiously awaiting him, "I am so thankful to see you! We have had such an awful night!"

"Yes, indeed, you must have had!" he said kindly. "I was quite grieved to hear such a dreadful account from the servant; it must have shocked you terribly! I cannot say I am altogether surprised," he continued. "She was in a dreadfully nervous condition when I left last night. I did not want to frighten you unnecessarily; but I was really alarmed, and intended coming this morning instead of in the afternoon."

"But why should her nerves have anything to do with it? Surely you don't suppose it was a ghost she saw?"

"Not I, indeed!" he returned, laughing. "I don't believe in them a bit; but I feel certain it was a case of spectral illusion. Her nerves were just in the highly-wrought condition that would induce an illusion of that kind. And what completely convinces me is the fact of the spectre having red hair. Between ourselves, I believe that unfortunate conversation of ours has been the cause of it all."

"You must forgive me for disagreeing with you," said Lucy. "I am firmly persuaded that a man did enter Mrs. Richmond's room in the night with the idea of robbing her, and that her shrieks so startled him that he rushed away without achieving his purpose; for I am quite sure, after her first scream, which awakened me, I heard some one brush past my door, and immediately after she went to sleep softly at the head of the stairs. I was so convinced of this that, had it been possible to leave her for an instant, I should have followed down-stairs."

write, but I don't like to do so. I advised her not to describe the spectre minutely, as it would be so very alarming to him. The fact is, I put it in that way, hoping that consideration for his feelings may prevent her dwelling too much on the subject herself."

Lucy no longer despaired, but agreed to go with pleasure. They then went down into the cellar; but, after carefully examining them, they could find no trace of any opening. Lucy, however, still held resolutely to her original impression that some one had passed her door in the night; and, finding it impossible to shake her conviction, Doctor Maurice dropped the subject, and crying, "Now let us get out of this gloomy place into the sunshine and air!" led the way up-stairs.

Lucy went to put on her hat and say good-bye to her friend before starting. Mrs. Richmond was busily writing; the housekeeper sitting working by her.

"Good-bye, dear," she said; "I hope you will enjoy your drive. Don't worry about me; Mrs. Mitchell will stay with me until you return. I don't like to see your cheeks so pale. I dare say I shall be down before you are home."

Directly they had gone, Mrs. Richmond said to her companion—

"I sent Miss Starr out on purpose, Mitchell. I wish to make a slight alteration in my will, and I would rather she did not know anything about it. Will you call Emily? I shall want both your signatures as witnesses."

The housemaid was accordingly called, and Mrs. Richmond took the will from out of her escritoire. After writing for a few minutes, she called the two women to witness the signing of her name; and, when they had both written theirs, the form was re-sealed and securely locked up again.

"There," she thought—"I feel easier, now that it is done. I am sure Edgar is too good to find fault, and it will be such a help to them!"

She finished her letter, and, giving it to Mrs. Mitchell with directions to send it to the post at once, went down to await the return of Doctor Maurice and Lucy.

Before they reached Fernhurst, Doctor Maurice again impressed on Lucy that Mrs. Richmond must not be left alone at night.

"And I shall stop the brandy-and-water," he said. "I must make a complete alteration in the treatment."

He would not stay to luncheon, though Mrs. Richmond pressed him to do so, saying he did not wish to wear out his welcome.

Lucy slept in her friend's room during the three succeeding nights; but nothing occurred to disturb them in any way; and, to her great delight, the invalid seemed to be decidedly improving.

"I am very glad," said Doctor Maurice, when he saw how well his patient was progressing. "Your complaint baffled me at first, I must confess; but now I feel sure I shall conquer it."

The fourth morning brought the following letter from Edgar—

"My dearest wife—I cannot tell you how much your letter, which I have only just received, alarmed and distressed me. I cannot bear to think of your sufferings, and shall return home immediately, although matters over here are far from satisfactory. You will probably receive this in the morning, and I shall follow it in person the same evening. The boat does not get in until rather late, I believe; and as I don't know which train I shall be able to catch, I cannot tell you the exact time to expect me. Any way, I cannot hope to be with you until twelve or one o'clock. Pray don't let any one sit up for me; I shall walk from the station, and can let myself in with my latch-key; then I will come straight to you. Good-bye, my dearest.

At night, when they went up-stairs, she again tried to induce her friend to let her remain with her.

"I will go directly I hear him coming, if you don't want him to find me here."

"No, my dear; I would much prefer you did not," Mrs. Richmond said somewhat testily. "Don't argue with me, child; I feel hot and restless as it is."

"Then I will say no more," replied Lucy sadly—"only I do not like going."

"Good night," said Mrs. Richmond; "Heaven bless you, and make you as happy as you deserve, my kind, unselfish little friend!"

Lucy, after kissing her warmly and wishing her good night, left the room.

"Now," she declared to herself, "I will not go to bed until Mr. Richmond arrives; I shall be sure to hear him if I listen; I will lie down outside my bed, but I will not close my eyes."

But, although Lucy struggled bravely against the almost overwhelming sensation of sleep that oppressed her by getting up and walking about the room whenever she found that she had almost succumbed to it, ultimately tired nature asserted itself; she gave in, and when daylight crept into the room, she lay upon her bed sleeping soundly.

She awoke suddenly, unrefreshed, with an uneasy sense of something wrong, to find Emily, the housemaid, standing by her bed. The first glance at the girl's soiled white face completely aroused her.

"Emily, how you startled me! What is the matter?"

"I don't know, miss," replied Emily, in a low awed tone; "but Fanny and I are dreadfully frightened."

"What at? For Heaven's sake, tell me quickly!"

"Well, miss, we can't get missus to answer us, and we have been knocking at her door for the last five minutes; I wonder you didn't hear us!"

"But has not Mr. Richmond returned?" inquired Lucy anxiously.

"No, miss, for see, here is a letter in his hand-writing which has just arrived; that was my reason for disturbing missus so early."

"Let us go to her at once," cried Lucy; "perhaps she may be ill."

Russia's Aim. The aim of Russia in Central Asia is not so much to menace or to invade India as to get possession of a coast line on the Arabian Sea. For generations Russia has been striving for maritime egress. An immense empire without a single unrestricted connection with the ocean.

The exit from the Black Sea into the Mediterranean is commanded by Turkish batteries on the Bosphorus. This striving to carve for herself a pathway to a free ocean coast works in Russia with the might of a chained-up elementary power. And it increases in intensity in the same degree as the interior of the various parts of the Empire is made capable of production by railroads and Russian trade is looking for markets. As soon as Russia's Asiatic possessions are connected by railroad with her European system—and the day is not far distant—a highway to some southerly coast becomes a law of necessity, which no power can resist obeying in the long run.

This pressure to reach the ocean is the leading motive of all the events that have taken place in Central Asia. It characterizes the direction which the Russian advance must take, and it only needs a single glance at the chart to be convinced that all the expeditions up to this time have been carried out in accordance with a well-laid plan. (The territories still dividing Russia in Central Asia from the ocean are Afghanistan and Beloochistan, and through these lands Russia must eventually reach the ocean.)

This is the aim of Russia in Afghanistan at the present time. As for the question of Constantinople, Russia, in the event of a general war, may endeavor to get possession of the city and command the gateway to the Black Sea herself, or if she secures Turkey for an ally content herself with getting the unrestricted navigation of the straits for her war ships, as was the case in the days of the great Mahmood. It is reported that in the recent diplomatic intercourse between St. Petersburg and the Porte the Sultan is always referred to as the grandson of the great Mahmood, the friend of Russia, whose throne was saved by her, and hints have been broadly thrown out that under certain circumstances the Czar would guarantee Turkey a long lease of existence in return for favors received.

Turkey, it is true, bears resentment for the sufferings caused in the past by Russia, but to this Russia replies in a way that carries a certain amount of conviction. Why did you not stand by the treaty of "Unkar Skellessi"? This treaty was a secret compact between Mahmood and the Czar Nicholas, giving solely to Russia the freedom of the straits as a reward for her service in driving Ibrahim Pasha, the warlike son of Mehemet Ali, was threatening Constantinople. Russia has been compelled to do all she has done, the Sultan is told, because "your predecessors foolishly departed from the policy of the great Mahmood. Imitate his example, grant again that which he gave so willingly to cement his friendship with Russia, and trust to the power of the Czar to maintain your throne against all Europe."

A Bicyclist's Encounter with a Mountain Lion. Little riding is possible all through this section of Nevada, and, in order to complete the forty miles a day that I have rigorously imposed upon myself, I sometimes get up and pull out at daylight. It is scarce more than sunrise when, following the railroad through Five-mile canon, another rift through one of the many mountain chains that cross this part of Nevada in all directions under the general name of the Humboldt mountains, I meet with a startling adventure. I am trundling through the canon alongside the river, when, rounding the sharp curve of a projecting mountain, I see a tawny mountain-lion trotting leisurely along a head of me, not over a hundred yards in advance. He hasn't seen me yet; he is perfectly oblivious of the fact that he is in "the presence." A person of common-sense would simply have revealed his presence by a gentle sneeze, or a slight noise of any kind, when the lion would have immediately bolted back into the underbrush. But I lay no claim whatever to any of that rare virtue, and consequently acted about as foolishly as possible in the premises. I fancy some reader has already guessed that I slipped up behind the lion and pulled his tail; or mounted the bicycle and rode him down. I simply fired at him, and of course missed him, as a person naturally would at a hundred yards with a bull-dog revolver. The bullet must have singed him a little, though, for, ere I got my features into shape for the broad grin that I promised to treat myself with at seeing him wildly scold for the brush, he turns savagely round and comes bounding rapidly towards me, and at twenty paces crouches for a spring. Do I "grin" when I see him thus? Again, Nay. Laying his cat-like head almost on the ground, his round eyes flashing fire, and his tail waving to and fro, he looks savage and dangerous. Crouching behind the bicycle I fire at him again. Nine times out of ten a person will overshoot the mark with a revolver under such circumstances, and, being anxious to avoid this, I do the reverse, and fire too low. The ball strikes the ground just in front of his head, and throws the sand and gravel in his face, and perhaps in his wicked round eyes; for he shakes his head, and seems to recollect suddenly that he left something at home, and jumps up and makes off into the brush.

"Dying in poverty," mused a needy student, "is nothing; it is living in poverty that is hard on a fellow."

Isola, bicycle, tricycle, broken nose.