

PITCHERY-BIDGERY.

The Turning of the Long, Long Lane.

BY MONSIEUR DEMOULIN.

The light here was also equal to that without, for the sky-light was very wide. The floor was sunken in the deck of the ship. He looked around to see where he might first search for the treasure. Suddenly his eye caught eight of something which drove away every other thought.

At one end was a seat, and there, propped up against the wall, was a skeleton in a sitting posture. Around it was a belt with a sword attached. The figure had partly twisted itself around, but its head and shoulders were so propped up against the wall that it could not fall.

Brandon advanced, filled with a thousand emotions. One hand was lying down in front. He lifted it. There was a gold ring on the bony finger. He took it off. In the dim light he saw, out in bold relief on this seal ring, the crest of his family—a Phoenix.

It was his ancestor himself who was before him. Here he had calmly taken his seat when the ship was setting slowly down into the embrace of the waters. Here he had taken his seat, calmly and sternly, awaiting his death—perhaps with a feeling of grim triumph that he could thus elude his foes. This was the man, and this the hand, which had written the message that had drawn the descendant here.

Such were the thoughts that passed through Brandon's mind. He put the ring on his own finger and turned away. His ancestor had summoned him hither, and here he was. Where was the treasure that was promised?

Brandon's intransigence now rose to a fever. Only one thought filled his mind. All around the cabin were little rooms, into each of which he looked. The doors had all fallen away. Yet he saw nothing in any of them. He stood for a moment in deep thought. Where could he look? Could he venture down into the dark hold and explore? How could he hope to find anything there, amidst the ruins of that interior where guns and obelisks lay, perhaps all mingled together where they had fallen? It would need a longer time to find than he had at first supposed. Yet would he falter? No! Rather than give up he would pass years here, still he had dismembered the whole ship and strewed every particle of her piecemeal over the bottom of the sea. Yet he had hoped to solve the whole mystery. It was not now, and now since he saw no sign of anything like treasure, he was for a while at a loss what to do.

His ancestor had summoned him, and he had come. Where was the treasure? Where? Why could not that figure arise and show him?

Such were his thoughts. Yet these thoughts, the result of excitement that was now a frenzy, soon gave rise to others that were calmer.

He reflected that perhaps some other feeling than that he had at first imagined must have inspired that grim old Englishman when he took his seat there and chose to drown on that seat rather than move away. Some other feeling, and what feeling? Some feeling which must have been the strongest of his heart. What was that? The one which the Spaniards seized the ship after all? Had they recovered the spoil, and punished in this way the plunderer of their galleons, by binding him here to the chair, scuttling the ship and sending him down to the bottom of the sea?

The idea of the possibility of this made Brandon sick with anxiety. He pulled the chair away, put it on one side, and began to examine the wooden wall by running his hand along it. There was nothing whatever perceptible. The wall was on the side farthest from the stern, and almost smooth. He pushed it, and it moved, and he had been carefully managed so as to guard against any abrupt descent among rocks at the bottom of the sea, this sudden fall might end Brandon's career forever. As it was he only sank quickly, but without accident, until his breast was on a level with the cabin floor.

In a moment the truth flashed upon him. He had been standing on a trap door which opened from the cabin floor into the hold of the ship. Over this trap door old Ralph Brandon had seated and bound himself. Was it to guard the treasure? Was it that he might await his descent, and thus solemnly indicate to him the place where he must look?

And now the fever of Brandon's conflicting hope and fear grew more intense than it had ever yet been through all this day of days. He stooped down, and as he stooped, a gleam of light shone from his eyes, and he saw the very touch of which sent a thrill sharp and sudden through every fibre of his being. They were metallic bars. He rose up again overcome. He hardly dared to take one up so as to what it might be. For the actual sight would realize hope or destroy it forever.

Once more he stooped down. In a sort of fury he grasped a bar in each hand and raised it up to the light. Down under the sea the action of water had not destroyed the color of those bars which he held up in the dim light that came through the waters. The dull yellow of those rough ingots seemed to gleam with dazzling brightness before his bewildered eyes, and filled his whole soul with a torrent of rapture and triumph.

His emotions overcame him. The bars of gold fell down from his trembling hands. He sank back and leaned against the wall. But what was it that lay under his feet? What were all these bars? Were they all gold? Was this indeed all the plunder of the Spanish treasure ships—the wealth which might purchase a kingdom—the treasure equal to an empire's revenue—the gold and jewels in countless store.

A few moments of respite were needed in order to overcome the tremendous conflict of feeling which raged within his breast. There came more he stooped down. His outstretched hand fell over all this space which thus was piled up with treasure.

It was about four feet square. The ingot lay in the center. Around the sides were boxes. One of these he took out. It was made of thick oak plank, and was about

ten inches long and eight wide. The rusty nails gave but little resistance, and the iron bands which once bound them peeled off at a touch. He opened the box.

Inside was a casket. He took out the casket. It was filled with jewels. His work was ended. No more search, no more fear. He bound the casket tightly to the end of the signal line added to it a bar of gold and clambered to the deck.

He cast off the weight that was at his waist, which he also fastened to the line, and let it go. Freed from the weight he rose buoyantly to the top of the water.

The boat pulled rapidly toward him and took him in. As he removed his helmet he saw Frank's eyes fixed on his in mute inquiry. His eyes were athen, his lips bloodless.

Louis smiled. "Heavens!" cried Frank, "can it be?" "Pull up the signal-line and see for your self," was the answer.

And, as Frank pulled Louis uttered a cry which made him look up. "Good God! what a time I must have been sunn." "Time!" said Frank. "Don't say time—it was eternity."

CHAPTER XXIV. BEATRICE'S JOURNAL. September 1, 1848—Paolo Langhetti used to say that it was useful to keep a diary; not one from day to day for each day's events are generally trivial, and therefore not worthy of record; but rather a statement in full of more important events in one's life, which may be turned to in later years. I had begun this sixteen months ago, when I first came here. How full would have been my melancholy record this time!

Where shall I begin? Of course, with my arrival here, for this is the time when we separated. There is no need for me to put down in writing the events that took place when he was with me. Not a word that he ever spoke, not a look that he ever gave, has escaped my memory. This much I may set down here.

At first the shadow of the African forest fell deeply and darkly upon me. Am I stronger than other women, or weaker? I know not. Yet I can calm while my heart is breaking. Yes, I am at once stronger and weaker; so weak that my heart breaks, so strong that I can hide it.

I will begin from the time of my arrival here. I came knowing well who the man was and what he was whom I had for my father. I came with every word of that despairing voyager ringing in my ears that cry from the distant Venetian, "Dear Despard lay down to die. How shall I see my mother thrills through me? I am nothing to him. I am one of the hateful brood of murderers. A thug was my father—and my mother who? And who am I, and what?"

At least my soul is not his though I am his daughter. My soul is myself, and life on earth cannot last forever. Hereafter I may stand where that man can never approach. I had of my father ever the first sight which I could of my father, who before I saw him had become to me as abhorrent as a demon! I came up in the coach to the door of the Hall and looked out. On the broad piazza were two men; one was sitting, and the other standing.

The one who was standing was somewhat elderly, with a broad, fat face, which expressed nothing in particular but vulgar good nature. He was dressed in black and looked like a serious butler, or perhaps still more like some of the Dissenting ministers whom I have seen. He stood with his hands in his pockets, looking at me with a vacant smile.

The other man was younger, not over thirty. He was thin, and looked pale from dissipation. His face was covered with spots, his eyes were gray, his eyelashes white. He was smoking a very large pipe, and a tumbler of some kind of drink stood on the stone pavement at his feet. He stared at me between the puffs of his pipe, and neither moved nor spoke.

If I had not already tasted the bitterness of despair I should have tasted it as I saw these men. Something told me that they were my father and brother. My very soul sickened at the sight—the memory of Despard's words came back, and if I had been possible to have felt any tender natural affection for them, this recollection would have destroyed it.

"I wish to see Mr. Potts," said I coldly. My father started at me. "I'm Mr. Potts," he answered. "I am your father," said I; "I have just arrived from China."

By this time the driver had opened the door, and I got out and walked up to the piazza. "Johnnie," exclaimed my father, "what the devil is the meaning of this?" "Get it done," said I, "I returned John with a puff of smoke."

"Didn't you say she was drowned off the African coast?" "I saw so in the newspapers."

"Didn't you tell me about the Falcon rescued from the pirates, and then getting wrecked?" "Yes, but then there was a girl that escaped."

"Oh ho!" said my father, with a long whistle. "I didn't know that." "I turned and looked at me hastily, but in deep perplexity. "So you're the girl, are you?" he said at last.

"I am your daughter," I answered. "I saw him look at John, who winked in return." He walked up and down for a few minutes, and at last stopped and looked at me again. "It's all very well," said he at last, "but how do you find that you are the party? Have you any proof of this?"

"No." "You have nothing but your own statement?" "No." "And you may be an impostor. Mind you, I'm a magistrate—and you had better be careful."

"You can do what you choose," said I coldly. "No I can't. In this country a man can't do what he chooses." "I was silent."

"John looked at me lazily, still smoking, and for some time said nothing. "I suppose," said he at last, "you've got to put it through. You began it you know. You would send for her. I never saw the use of it."

"But do you think this is the party?" "Oh, I dare say. It don't make any difference any way. Nobody would take the trouble to come to you with a sham story."

"That's a fact," said my father. "So I don't see but you've got to take her." "Well," said my father, "if you think so, why all right."

"I don't think anything of the kind," returned John, snappishly. "I only think that she's the party you sent for." "Oh, well, it's all the same," said my father, who then turned to me again.

"If you're the girl," he said, "you can get in. Hunt up Mrs. Compton, and she'll take charge of you."

Compton! At the mention of that name a shudder passed through me. She had been in the family of the murdered man, and had ever since lived with his murderer. I went in without a word, prepared for the worst, and expecting to see some evil faced woman, a fit companion for the pair outside.

A servant was passing along. "Where is Mrs. Compton?" I asked. "Some where or other, I suppose," growled the man, and went on.

I waited there for nearly half an hour, during which time no notice was taken of me. I heard my father and John walk down the piazza steps and go away. They had evidently forgotten all about me. At last a man came toward the door who did not look like a servant. He was dressed in a black. He was a slender, pale shambling man, with thin, light hair, and a fierce eye and a weary face. He did not look like one who would insult me, so I asked him where I could find Mrs. Compton.

"He started as I spoke and looked at me in wonder, yet respectfully. "I have just come from China," said I, "and my father told me to find Mrs. Compton."

He looked at me for some time without speaking a word. I began to think that he was insolent. "So you are Mr. Potts's daughter," said he at last, in a thin, weak voice. "I—I didn't know that you had come—I knew that he was expecting you—but I heard you were lost at sea—Mrs. Compton—yes—oh yes—I'll show you where you can find Mrs. Compton."

He was embarrassed, yet not unkind. There was wonder in his face, as though he was surprised at my appearance. Perhaps it was because he found me so unlike my father. He walked toward the great stairs, from time to time turning his head to look at me, and accompanied by a footman and after going to the third story we came to a room. "That's the place," said he.

He then turned, without replying to my thanks, and left me. I knocked at the door. After some delay it was opened, and I went in. A thin, pale woman was there. Her hair was perfectly white. Her face was marked by the traces of great grief and suffering, yet overpowered by an expression of surpassing gentleness and sweetness. She looked like one of those women who live lives of devotion for others, who suffer out of spirit of self sacrifice, and count their own comfort and happiness as nothing in comparison with the distress of others. My heart warmed toward her at the first glance. I saw that this could not be altogether corrupt since she was here.

"Do not look at me so," said I, "dear Mrs. Compton. You are timid. Do not be afraid of me. I am incapable of inspiring fear. I pressed her hand. Let us say nothing more now about the place. We each seem to know what it is. Since I find one like you living here it will not seem altogether a place of despair."

"Oh, dear child, what words are these? You speak as if you knew all." "I know much," said I, "and I have suffered much." "Ah, my nearest you are too young and too beautiful to suffer. An agony of sorrow came over her face. Then I saw upon it an expression which I have often marked since, a strange, longing desire to say something, which that excessive and ever present terror of hers made her incapable of uttering. Some secret thought was in her whole face, but her faltering tongue was paralyzed and could not divulge it.

She turned away with a deep sigh. I looked at her with much interest. She was not the woman I expected to find. Her face and voice won my heart. She was certainly one to be trusted. But still there was this mystery about her.

Nothing could exceed her kindness and tenderness. She arranged my bed, and she did everything that could be done to give it an air of comfort. It was very luxuriously furnished chamber. All the house was lordly in its style and arrangements.

The next day I spent in my room, occupied with my own sad thoughts. At about three in the afternoon I saw him come up the avenue. My heart throbbled violently. My eyes were riveted upon that well-known face, how loved! how dear! In vain I tried to conjecture the reason why he should come. Was it to strike the first blow in his just, his implacable vengeance? I longed that I might receive that blow, anything that came from him would be sweet.

He stood a long time and then left. What passed I can not conjecture. But it had evidently been an agreeable visit to my father, for I heard him laughing uproariously on the piazza about something not long after he had gone.

I have not seen him since. For several weeks I scarcely moved from my room. I ate with Mrs. Compton. Her reserve was impenetrable. It was with pain, fear and trembling that she touched upon any thing connected with the affairs of the house or the family. I saw it and I trembled. She looked fearfully at me for a long time after.

At another time I asked her directly whether her husband was alive. She looked at me with deep interest and shook her head. I do not know what position she holds here. She is not housekeeper; none of the servants pay any attention to her whatever. There is an impudent head servant who manages the rest. I noticed that the man who showed me to her room when I first came treats her differently from the rest. Once or twice I saw them talking in one of the halls. There was a deep respect in his manner. What he does I have not yet found out. He has always shown great respect to me, though why I can not imagine. He has the same timidity of manner which marks Mrs. Compton. His name is Phillips.

I once asked Mrs. Compton who Phillips was, and what he did. She answered quickly that he was a kind of clerk to Mr. Potts, and helped him to keep his accounts.

"Has he been with him long?" I continued. "Yes, a considerable time," she said, but I saw that the subject distressed her, so I changed it.

For more than the three months I remained in my room, but at last, through utter despair, I longed to go out. The noble grounds were there, high hills from which the wide sea was visible—that sea which shall be associated with his memory till I die. A great longing came over me to look upon its wide expanse, and feed my soul with old and dear memories. There it would be, the same sea from which he so often saved me, over which he sailed till he laid down his noble life at my feet, and I gave back that life to him again.

I used to ascend a hill which was half a mile beyond the Hall within the grounds, and pass whole days there unmoored. No one that the house was in the habit of going to I thought so till after that. There for months I used to go. I would sit and look fixedly upon the blue water, and my imagination would carry me far away to the South, to that island on the African shore, where he once reclined in my arms, before the day when I learned that his touch was poison to him.

To that island where I afterward knelt by him as he lay senseless, slowly coming back to life, when I might but touch the hem of his garment it was bliss enough for one day. Ah, how often I have wailed his feet with my tears—poor, emaciated feet—and longed to kiss them with my lips, but I dared not. He lay unconscious. He never knew the anguish of my love.

Then I was less despairing. The air around was filled with the echo of his voice; I could shut my eyes, and bring him before me. My father turned up his eyes, inflamed by anger and strong drink, toward me. "One day the idea came into my mind to extend my ramble into the country outside, in order to get a wider view. I went

"I told you so," said John, who did not deign to look at me; "but you were determined." They then sat drinking in silence for some time.

"Sold!" said my father, suddenly, with an oath. John made no reply. "I thought the county would take to her. She's one of their own sort," my father muttered.

"If it weren't for you they might," said John; "but they ain't overfond of her dear father, yet respectfully."

"But I sent out the invites in her name." "No go anyhow." "I thought I'd get in with them all right away, hobnob with lords and baronets, and maybe get knighted on the spot."

"You old fool," he cried; "so that's what you're up to, is it? Sir John—ha, ha, ha. You'll never be made Sir John by parties, I'm afraid."

"Oh, don't you be too sure. I'm not proud. I'll try again the continued, after a while I'll do it. Why, she'll marry a lord, and then won't she be a lord's father-in-law! What do you say to that?"

"When did you get these notions in your blessed head?" asked John. "Oh, I've had them—it's not so much for myself, Johnnie, but for you. For if I'm a lord, you'll be a lord too."

"Lord Potts, Ha, ha, ha!" "No," said my father, with some appearance of exaltation, "not that; we'll take our title the way all lords do, from the estates. I'll be Lord Brandon, and when I die you'll get the title."

"It's the name of your little game. Well, you've played such good little games in your life that I've got nothing to say, except—'Go it!'" "She's the one that'll give me a lift."

"Well, she ought to be able to do something." "Blest if she don't look as if she thought herself Queen, said John, who had just then stood in the doorway, laughing. "No it isn't, it's the girl herself. I don't like the way she has of looking at me and through me."

"Why, that's the way with that kind. It's what the lords like." "I don't like it, then, and I tell you she's got to be looked at."

"This was the last I heard. Yet one thing was evident to me from their conversation. My father had some wild idea of effecting an entrance into society through me. He thought that after he was once recognized he might be able to influence to gain a title and found a family. I also might marry a lord. This was dreamed of being Lord Brandon, and one of the great nobles of the land. Amidst my saddest I almost smiled at this vain dream; but yet John's words affected me strongly—'You've played such good little games in your life that I've got nothing to say, except—'Go it!'"

"During those months Mrs. Compton's tender devotion to me never ceased. I respected her, and forbore to excite that painful fear to which she was subject. Once or twice I forgot myself and began speaking to her about a stranger position here. She stopped me with a look that was not to be permitted to see her to suffer!"

He looked at me in bewilderment. Surprise at hearing a kind word in this house of horrors. He set down his arm, still glaring at John. "During the frightful scene I stood rooted to the spot in horror. At last the sight of John's suffering roused me. I rushed forward, and, tearing the scarf from my neck, knelt down and reached out my hand to stanch the blood. 'Vijal! dress quick! Poor Vijal!' said I. 'Let me stop the blood. I can dress wounds. How you do suffer!'"

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to the gate. The porter came out and asked what I wanted. I told him. "You can't go out," said he rudely. "Why not?" "Oh, then, Mr. Potts's orders, that's enough, I think."

"He never said so to me," I replied, mildly. "That's no odds; he said to me, and he told me if you made any row to tell you that you were watched, and might just as well give up at once."

"Watched!" said I, wondering. "Yes—for fear you'd get skinned, and try and do something foolish. Old Potts is bound to keep you under his thumb."

I turned away. I did not care much. I felt more surprise than anything else to think that he would take the trouble to watch me. Whether he did or not was of little consequence. If I could only be where I had the sea before me it was enough.

That day, on going back to the hall, I saw John sitting on the piazza. A huge bull dog was lying at his feet. Just before I reached the steps a Malay servant came out of the house.

He was about the same age as John. I knew him to be a Malay when I first saw him up in the East. He was slight but very little and muscular, with dark glittering eyes and glistening white teeth. He never looked at me when I met him, but always with the air of a man without seeming to be aware of my existence.

The Malay was passing out when John called out to him. "Hi, there, Vijal!" Vijal looked carelessly at him.

"Here!" cried John, in the tone with which he would have addressed his dog. "Pick up my hat." "Vijal stopped carelessly. 'Pick up my hat, and hand it to me.' His hat had fallen down behind him. Vijal stood without moving, and regarded him with an evil smile.

"Don't you do you hear?" cried John. "Pick up my hat." "Vijal did not move. 'If you don't, I'll set the dog on you,' cried John, starting to his feet in a rage. Still Vijal remained motionless.

"Vijal!" cried John, furiously, pointing to the dog. "Vijal, seize him, sir." The dog sprang up, and at once leaped upon Vijal. Vijal warded off the assault with his arm. The dog seized it, and held on, as was his nature. Vijal did not utter a cry, but seizing the dog, he threw him on his side, and with his arm running blood, with his own teeth in the dog's throat.

John burst into a torrent of the most frightful curses. He ordered Vijal to let go of the dog. Vijal did not move; but while the dog's teeth were fixed in his arm, his own were still fixed as tenaciously in the throat of the dog.

John sprang forward and kicked him with frightful violence. He leaped on him and stamped on him. At last, Vijal drew a knife from his girdle and made a dash at John. This frightened John who fell back cursing. Vijal then raised his head.

The dog lay motionless. He was dead. "Here!" cried John, in the tone with which he would have addressed his dog. "Pick up my hat." "Vijal stopped carelessly. 'Pick up my hat, and hand it to me.' His hat had fallen down behind him. Vijal stood without moving, and regarded him with an evil smile.

"Don't you do you hear?" cried John. "Pick up my hat." "Vijal did not move. 'If you don't, I'll set the dog on you,' cried John, starting to his feet in a rage. Still Vijal remained motionless.

"Vijal!" cried John, furiously, pointing to the dog. "Vijal, seize him, sir." The dog sprang up, and at once leaped upon Vijal. Vijal warded off the assault with his arm. The dog seized it, and held on, as was his nature. Vijal did not utter a cry, but seizing the dog, he threw him on his side, and with his arm running blood, with his own teeth in the dog's throat.

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