

IN GOLDEN BONDS.

CHAPTER XXX—AND LAST

The heartless cruelty of Mr. Rayner in allowing his poor submissive wife to live in a room such as he would not for the world have kept horse, or dog, or even violin in shocked and repelled me, and wrung from me the cry—

"The villain!"

"Hush!" said she. "He may be listening to us now."

"I don't care!" cried I passionately. "I am glad if he hears—if he hears me say that this morning I hoped he would escape, but that now I hope they will find him, for they cannot possibly punish him as he deserves. Oh, Mrs. Rayner, and I—I sleeping up in the turret to be out of the damp! How you must have hated me!"

"I did once, I own," she whispered, sinking into a chair and taking the hands I stretched out towards her. "But it was foolish of me, for you did not know—how could you know?"

"But why did you stay? Why did you say nothing about it? And why were you not glad to go up-stairs, instead of begging as you did to remain here?"

"Because," she whispered, her nervous agitation coming back again, "I knew that while I remained down here they would not kill me outright; they would not let me die down here and introduce doctors and strangers to examine into the cause of my death into this room. I knew that a change of room was my death-warrant; and it would have been, but for the accident which happened to Sarah on the very night when, but for you, I should have been sleeping upstairs ready to her hand."

I staggered back, suddenly remembering the message Mr. Rayner had in his letter told me to give Sarah. It was this—"Tell Sarah not to forget the work she has to do in my absence." And I remember also the grim way in which she had received it. Could he have meant that?

Mrs. Rayner continued—

"He hates violence; all was to have been over by his return, and he free to marry you."

"But he couldn't. I was engaged to Laurence, Mrs. Rayner."

"She gave a little bitter smile."

"And do you think that, with Laurence away and Mr. Rayner here, you could have understood him? In spite of his soft manners, he has a will that acts like a spell. I tell you," said she, twisting my fingers nervously, "though you say he is in America, and Laurence reads I shall never be in his power again, his influence is strong upon me even now. There is no peace, no freedom for me as long as he lives."

"Mrs. Rayner," said I suddenly, "may I ask you if what Mr. Rayner told me when I first came is true—that you were rich and he poor, and that he lived on your money?"

"No, it is not true. I had a little money when he first married me; which he ran through with at once."

"And is it true you once wrote books, and had a little boy whose death made a great change in you?" said I slowly, watching her face.

"No; I never had any child but Mona and Haidee."

"Then what did he—"

"What did he tell you so for? He delights in making up fantastic tales of that sort, and often in making me bear witness to the truth of his inventions; it is part of his wild humour. When he went away to carry out a robbery, he would let me know what he was going to do—just to torture me."

The dead calmness with which she told me all this was maddening to me.

"Why did you bear it? Why didn't you rebel, or run away and tell a policeman?"

"If Sarah had killed me, and you had married Mr. Rayner," she answered slowly, staring straight at me, "you would have understood why."

And the power this man exercised over every one who came much in his way became in a moment clear to me, when I saw by what different means he had on the one hand cowed his wife and the fiery Sarah, and on the other gained a strong influence over such different women as Mrs. Reade and myself. But the revelation was more than I could bear. I said faintly—

"May I go to my room, Mrs. Rayner? I—I am not well."

And she herself led me very slowly—for I was indeed weak and ill, half with the pain of my arm and half with misery and disgust—to my bed in the turret-room.

Before the end of the day I heard that Mrs. Saunders had disappeared without any warning or any application for payment of services, as soon as Sarah had been taken off to the lunatic asylum. She had spared us any pang of self-reproach on her account, however, by taking with her Mrs. Rayner's watch, and also the cook's, which had been left in the rooms of their respective owners.

"She doesn't expect to see Mr. Rayner again then," I whispered to Mrs. Rayner, who came to my bedside to tell me the news, "or she would never dare to do that."

And, persuaded by me, Mrs. Rayner now relieved of any dread on Sarah's account, returned to the front spare-room, which, however disagreeable the remembrance of Sarah's mad attempt on her life might be, was at any rate healthier than the dungeon in the left wing. There was really nothing to keep the poor lady at the Alders now, as I told Laurence by letter that evening all that Gordon had said to me in the store-room, and the idea had gained ground that Mr. Rayner had gone to America. But she insisted upon remaining until I was well enough to be moved, an event which I had myself retarded by rashly leaving my room three times since I had been told to keep my bed.

Next day, which was Saturday, Laurence wrote to say that he had himself searched the store-room and Mr. Rayner's study, but found no trace of Gordon beyond a pair of handcuffs placed neatly in the middle of the store room on the top of a pyramid of biscuit tins and pickle-jars, with a sheet of paper saying that the late wearer begged to return them with thanks to the police, who might perhaps succeed in making them stay longer on the wrist of a simpler rogue than his obedient servant, F. Gordon.

Those days that I spent in bed were a miserable time for all of us. The suspense we were all in—never sure whether Mr. Rayner was in America or whether he might be really close to us all the time. The bits of news brought us from hour to hour by the awe-stricken Jane—first that there was a large reward offered for his capture; then rumours, which always proves to be false, of his having been caught; then complaints of the number of people who came just to

look at the outside of the house that the ugly stories were being told about! For the facts fell far short of the accounts which were freely circulated—of there being a cellar full of human bones, supposed to be the remains of Mr. Rayner's victims, under the Alders; that the household consisted entirely of women whom he had married at one time or another; and so forth.

Meanwhile the fog still hung about the place, and Nap, the retriever howled every night. When Monday came, I, anxious to be declared convalescent as soon as possible, and to be able to avail myself of Mrs. Rayner's invitation to stay at the vicarage, persuaded Doctor Lowe to let me go downstairs. It was about twelve o'clock when I left my room, and I had made my way as far as the corridor below, when I became aware of an unusual commotion on the ground floor, doors being opened and shut, the sobbing of a woman, excited whisperings between Jane and the cook, and then a heavy tramp, tramp of men's feet through the hall and along the passage to Mr. Rayner's study.

I went to the top of the back staircase, descended a few steps, and looked over. The gardener and Sam were carrying between them a door, on which something was lying covered by a sheet. The cook opened the study door, and they took it in. A horrible dread filled my mind and kept me powerless for a few moments. Then I ran along the corridor, down the front staircase, and met little Haidee with awe on her childish face.

"Oh, Miss Christie," she whispered, clutching my arm in terror, "they've found papa!"

Jane ran forward and caught me as I tottered in the child's clasp. Before I had recovered sufficiently to go to Mrs. Rayner in the drawing-room, Laurence and Mrs. Rayner arrived, having heard the ghastly news already. They took us over to the vicarage at once, and I never returned to the Alders again.

In the evening Laurence told me all about the discovery. The gardener, who had done little work for the last three days beyond keeping the gate locked and driving away with a whip the boys who would swarm over when they got a chance, "just to have a look at the place," had been attracted that morning by the shrill cries of Mona, who, now more neglected than ever, spent all day in the garden in spite of the fog. He ran to the pond, where she was nearly always to be found, and whence her cries came, fearing she had fallen in. But he found her standing in the mud on the edge of it, screaming, "Come out, come out!" and clutching with a stick at an object in the water. It was the body of her father, entangled among the reeds.

The down-trodden grasses and rushes at that corner of the pond nearest to the stile which joined the path through the plantation to the path through the field beyond told the story of how he must have missed his way coming through the plantation in the dense fog of Wednesday night, on his way back from the Hall to the Alders, slipped into the pond, and been drowned out there in the fog and darkness, while his dog Nap, hearing his cry for help, had tried in vain, by howling and barking, to draw attention to his master's need.

It was an awful thing that night to lay awake in my strange room at the Vicarage, and picture to myself the dead Mr. Rayner lying at the Alders, the sole occupant, with the exception of the woman hired to watch by him, of the big dreary house where he, with his love of fun and laughter had seemed to me to be the one ray of brightness.

I heard next day that two passages, booked in the name of "Mr. and Mrs. Norris," had actually been taken by him on board a ship which left Liverpool for New York on the very Thursday when we were to have started on our journey "to Monaco." The tickets were found upon him and also the necklace, which proved to be a valuable ornament of rubies that had belonged to Mrs. Cunningham, which he had clasped around my neck on the night of his death, but which I had flung upon the floor. These were the only ones, of all the stolen jewels, which were ever recovered, with the exception of the diamond pendant, which I sent back to its owner, Lord Dilston. Upon the house being searched, the candle which had fallen from my hand when I first went into the cellar under the store room was found under the stagnant water there, and also the brown portmanteau, which was identified as the one belonging to Sir Jonas Mills; but the jewels, with the exception of one drop from an ear-ring, had disappeared.

I heard about Gordon, as he told me I should, through Carruthers, who long before the impression these events made died away, received a letter dated from New York, in which Gordon, in a very respectful manner, apologised for the inconvenience his sudden disappearance might have caused his master, who had, he could not doubt, by this time learned the reason of it through the London papers. Mr. Carruthers would find that the bills he had commissioned him to settle in Beaconsfield on that unfortunate Wednesday afternoon had been paid, and he begged to forward him the receipts; he had also left the silver-mounted flask to be repaired at Bell's and the hunting stock at Marsdon's. He had given up service for the present and taken to a different profession as he felt, if he was not taking a liberty in saying so, that it would be impossible for him to find in America a master who gave him in all respects so much satisfaction as Mr. Carruthers had done.

Nothing more has ever been heard of Gordon under that name; but some time afterwards a representative of the United States Congress, who was described as a rich West India merchant, made a great sensation by a very impressive speech upon some financial question; a rough sketch of him in a New York illustrated paper fell into the hands of Mr. Carruthers, who sent it to Laurence, and under the trimly cut moustache and hair parted very much to one side we fancied we recognised something like the clear-cut features and bland expression of our old friend Gordon.

I was married to Laurence before the trial of poor Tom Parkes and of the subordinate who had been caught removing the plate from the Hall. I had to give evidence, and I was so much distressed at having to do so that Tom, good-natured to the last, called out—

"Don't take on so, miss. Lor' bless you, you can't say any worse than they know I only a matter of form you know."

He took a stolid sort of glory in his iniquities, pleaded "Guilty" to the charges brought against him of taking an active part in all three robberies, and exulted especially in the neatness of the execution of the robbery at Denham Court, where the various articles stolen were being quietly abstracted

one by one at different times by Gordon for two or three days before the Tuesday, when they were finally carried off by Mr. Rayner, and taken by him and Tom to the Alders, where Sarah had received them, as I had seen.

As to what had become of the jewels afterwards, Tom professed himself as innocent as a child; but, whether this is true or not, nobody believed him. He was sentenced to fourteen years penal servitude, and did not hear the sentence with half so much concern as I.

Poor Mrs. Rayner never entirely shook off the gloomy reserve which had grown around her during those long years of her miserable marriage. Kind-hearted Sir Jonas Mills was among the very first to come forward to help her; and, by his generous assistance and that of other friends, she went to live abroad, taking Haidee with her, and Jane, who proved a most devoted servant and friend.

Laurence and I who were married before she left England, undertook the care of poor little savage Mona, who has grown into almost as nice a girl as her sister. And now I have one of my own too.

(THE END.)

GRAINS OF GOLD.

Never leave home with unkind words.

Earnestness alone makes life eternity.

The apple falls near the tree.

By the error of others the wise man corrects his own.

The man who can govern a woman can govern a nation.

It is easier to make all Europe agree than two women.

Every day is a little life, and our whole life, is but a day repeated.

Affect not little shifts and subterfuges to avoid the force of an argument.

There is nothing so strong and safe in an emergency of life as the simple truth.

A great name is like an eternal epitaph engraved by the admiration of men on the road of time.

Though an archer shoot not so high as he aims, yet the higher he takes his aim the higher he shoots.

When arguments press equally in matters indifferent, the safest method is to give up ourselves to neither.

Simplicity, of all things, is the hardest to be copied, and ease is only to be acquired with the greatest labor.

The premeditation of death is the premeditation of liberty; he who has learned to die has forgot to serve.

Commonly, physicians, like wine, are best when they are old; and lawyers, like bread when they are young and new.

Of all the gifts that nature can give us, the faculty of remaining silent, or of answering apropos, is perhaps the most useful.

That state of life is the most happy where superfluities are not required and where necessities are not wanting.

He that judges, without informing himself to the utmost that he is capable, cannot acquit himself of judging amiss.

The life of man consists not in seeing visions and dreaming dreams, but in active charity and willing service.

We must, if we are wise, make some calculations in our life, and say what we can spend now, and what we shall keep for the future.

There is but one philosophy, though there are a thousand schools, and its name is fortitude—to bear is to conquer our fate.

Mark this well, ye proud men of action! Ye are, after all, nothing but unconscious instruments of the men of thought.

When the mind has brought itself to attention it will be able to cope with difficulties and master them, and then it may go on soundly.

Ceasing to learn is beginning to die. Schooling is not only needed for girls and boys, but for men and women through every phase of life, if they would complete their career.

Cranks and Crooks.

A Wall street millionaire has received a begging letter asking for \$25,000 to establish a home for "decayed point-givers" on the financial situations.

An old bachelor died at East Alburg, Vt., the other day, and \$60,000 in bonds, notes and certificates were found in the linings of his clothes.

Mr. Bread says that Howard, the great philanthropist who crossed the seas to relieve the distressed, was a brute and a tyrant in his own family, and that his cruel treatment caused the death of his wife. The doctor is of the opinion that even the extraordinary benevolence of Howard was one of the symptoms of the disease in his brain.

A young man who was sent the other day by the Roxbury, Mass., court to the House of Correction for four months had on his person a diary, which indicated that by begging he had secured about \$2 50 or \$3 a day, and that he had been in the habit of having a "good time." Nearly every evening was marked as costing twenty-five cents for admission to a theatre, concert or skating rink.

The Bombay Gazette states that the Mahomedans of that Presidency do not believe the Soudan pretender to be the "Imam Mahdi," or true Mahdi, yet regard him as a "Musjid," or spiritual guide. The true Mahdi, they believe, will not appear till about the close of the present century as witness to the coming of Mahomet. They also, it is said, entertain the curious belief that he is destined to experience no fewer than thirteen defeats before victory finally crowns his arms.

If the Mexican periodical, *La Patria*, is a representative of the religious feeling that exists in that country, the missionaries who are now trying to convert the heathen should be recalled and shipped to Mexico, where they will find a more civilized country in which to promulgate their doctrines. A recent number of that periodical was unreligiously enough to contain several humorous as well as profane caricatures of the Lord, His apostles and His tormentors.

Wyatt Hare, of Nelson, Va., just dead, had some peculiarities, among them this one: He never bought a match. A fire, either open or banked, was kept up continually on the hearth. In this he trod in the footsteps of his father, and the fire upon that one hearth was a continuous fire for more than 100 years.

PERSONALS.

About Matthew Arnold—Duke of Buccleugh—Prince Leopold—Prince Albert, Victor—and Other Well Known People

Mr. De Lesseps often sleeps for twenty-four hours on a stretch, and then goes a whole week without a moment's dozing.

It is said that Mr. Mathew Arnold cleared six thousand dollars from the sweetness and light he distributed among the Yankees.

A list of 500 persons who sent crosses and reaths on the occasion of the funeral of the Duke of Albany is published in the London newspapers "by authority."

Mr. John Boyle O'Reilly, being under the ban of the English government, will not accompany Mrs. O'Reilly to Europe, where she proposes to spend the summer.

Governor Robinson, of Massachusetts, wants "fashionable drinking" attacked next and hopes the time will soon come when wine will cease to be a necessity at wedding entertainments.

A monument is to be erected in Paris to Berlioz, the eminent composer. The municipality have granted a site for the purpose on the Square Vintimille, at the corner of the Rue de Calais, in which he died.

The late Walter Francis Scott, fifth Duke of Buccleugh and seventh Duke of Queensbury, is said to have spent a million dollars in improving the harbor of Graston, two miles from Edinburgh.

Queen Victoria is to be presented with the sacred flag blessed by El Mahdi which was captured at Tokar, and which is made of two pieces of coarse silk, one buff and the other red, with Arabic inscriptions on each side.

Prince Leopold had always a desire to be created Duke of York, but the Queen objected. The title of the Duke of Albany has been adopted five times in Scotland and four times in England, but has never passed to a second generation.

"A Lyceum dress lining," printed all over with portraits in miniature of Henry Irving and Miss Terry, and with scenes from *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Merchant of Venice*, is the latest Irving craze, which comes from an English Manchester print-works.

Mr. Froude has been out of health for some time past, and as soon as he has completed the revision of the proof sheets of the concluding volumes of his "Life of Mr. Carlyle," he will start on a voyage round the world. He proposes to pass some time both in America and in Australia.

Sir Michael Costa having sent a copy of his *Eli* and a fine Stilton cheese to Rossini, and receiving no reply from the author of *William Tell*, wrote and asked if the package had arrived. "Yes, dear Costa, it came to hand," answered Rossini. "*The Cheese was Magnificent.*"

President Grevy is credited with having recently beaten Vignaux, the French champion billiard player, in a match at the Elysee. The President, remarks the London *Truth*, is a good man with the cue, but if he really beat Vignaux, we must conclude that the skill of the latter is not confined to the board of green cloth. Louis XIV. made a man a Minister because he always allowed "Le Grand Monarque" to beat him at billiards.

The late Duke of Buccleugh and the Duke of Northumberland once found themselves in a carriage going northward with a commercial traveller. The conversation was general between the three. At Alnwick station the Duke of Northumberland got out, and was borne away in a showy equipage. "That must be a swell," said the commercial traveller. "Do you know who it is?" "The Duke of Northumberland," replied his Grace of Buccleugh. "And they say," exclaimed the traveller, "that our nobility is haughty. Why, he talked to two snobs like you and me as though we had been his pals!"

Changes from one profession into another are not unfrequent, remarks the London *World*, and with results of a very varied character. The late Dr. Bickersteth left his studentship in medicine for holy orders, and became Bishop of Ripon; the present Bishop of Lichfield quitted the army for the church militant; there are two Q. C.'s now in practice, the one Mr. R. B. Finlay, a doctor of medicine, and the other a parson, to wit, Mr. Marriott, M. P. From law to medicine, however, the change is unusual; nevertheless Mr. R. M. Routledge is a case in point. He is a barrister of over four years' standing, and an application which he has just made to the Medical Council to be exempted from the preliminary examination has, as a matter of course, been granted.

The report that Prince Albert Victor of Wales is to be raised to the peerage as the Duke of Dublin, says the *St. James' Gazette* requires confirmation, his Royal Highness's father being already Earl of Dublin by creation of her present Majesty in 1850. Such creation is not an absolute bar to a similar one. Substantially identical titles have before now been conferred on different persons, the grant of the existing earldom of Leicester in 1837, before that of 1784 had become extinct, being a case in point. The number of historical titles at the disposal of the sovereign just now is not excessive, especially if the choice be restricted as it has been in later times, to titles which have already been borne by princes of the blood. At present there is no Duke of York, no Duke of Gloucester, or of Aumerle. A few weeks will decide the question as to whether the dukedom of Albany and the earldom of Clarence be dormant or extinct. Prince Leopold was the first who ever bore the title of Earl of Clarence.

Winning Applause.

Fannie Horton, a once celebrated actress, won her first applause in a somewhat singular manner. During her performance in a particular scene she was loudly hissed, when, advancing to the footlights, she asked: "Which do you dislike—my playing or my person?" "The playing, the playing!" was the answer from all parts of the house. "Well," she returned, "that consoles me; for my playing may be bettered, but my person cannot alter!" The audience were so struck with the ingenuity of this retort that they immediately applauded as loudly as they had the moment before condemned her; and from that night she improved in her acting, and soon became a favorite with the public.—*Chambers' Journal.*

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