

The Gypsy's Sacrifice

OR
A SECRET REVEALED

CHAPTER XXII.

Madge went down the stairs on Royce's arm, her heart beating fast, her face pale. Two footmen stood at the bottom of the stairs like sentinels, and one of them advanced to the drawing-room door and opened it, with head bent respectfully.

They passed in, and for a moment Madge saw nothing; a mist seemed to swim before her eyes, through which the room in all its luxury and subdued grandeur came dimly.

Then she saw the countess, a tall, upright figure in gray satin, with jewels sparkling on her bosom and on her fingers.

Beside her stood Seymour in evening dress, with a barely suppressed sneer of contempt on his thin lips; but as his pale eyes wandered over Madge a momentary expression of surprise and admiration shone in them.

The countess came forward and held out her hand.

"How do you do?" she said. She did not kiss her or say that she was glad to see her; and to Madge the jeweled hand felt like ice.

"Did you have a pleasant journey? You are looking well."

Royce said "yes." Seymour held out his hand to Madge, and bowed over hers; then extending it to Royce as if they had never had a difference in their life; and Royce shook it and nodded.

"Won't you come near to the fire, Madge?" said Seymour with a slight hesitation before her name, as if he had half intended to call her Mrs. Landon.

Madge sank into the seat he drew up for her. She had not spoken a word as yet. The countess sat opposite her and looked at her. She saw that she was more beautiful than ever she, the countess, had thought, that she was dressed in good and modest taste, that the evening dress seemed to have grown upon her; that no one could see her without being struck by the loveliness of her face, the grace of her form; but all the while, as she looked at her, she was saying:

"A gypsy, a gypsy; a common girl, a vagabond!"

She could find no word to say to her. She could not ask after Madge's mother—or father—or any of her relations. The mere thought of them sent a shudder through the countess and made her hot. And she was her daughter-in-law, her son's wife!

Royce and Seymour stood talking together, in the forced and unnatural manner in which men talk who, though closely related, dislike and distrust each other; but Royce glanced now and again at the two women, and his heart ached for his beautiful Madge. He knew what she was suffering.

"I suppose you have been traveling a great deal?"

Madge looked up, and the countess felt a spasm of unwilling admiration stealing through her as the dark, pure eyes with their timidly sad expression met her own proudly cold ones.

"No, madam," said Madge. "We have not traveled much. We have only been in London."

Another silence. The countess noticed the "madam," and the clear bell-like voice; but neither the tone of respect nor the sweetness of the tone in which it was uttered softened her heart.

"Royce has coached her," she thought bitterly.

"London is very empty just now, I suppose," she said.

"Oh, no, it is quite full! The crowd was so great that sometimes Jack and I could scarcely make our way along the streets."

"Jack?"

"I—I mean Royce."

"I did not know."

"It is the name he gave me—"

She stopped.

"Pray call your husband what you please," said the countess with a fine blending of courtesy and contempt, which passed over Madge like a cold wind.

But her eyes drooped meekly. This was her first lesson, and she would not forget it.

"Did you like London?" asked the countess.

"I thought it was wonderful. I had never been there before. But I should not like to live there; it is too big and too noisy; one feels as if one were quite alone there."

"You had never been to London?"

"No," said Madge. "Our people—"

She stopped the blood rushed to her face, the room swam before her. The countess drew herself up and turned away from her, palpably, to the men.

"Is it not dinner time, Seymour?" she said.

"Yes, madam," he replied, looking at his watch; "but we are waiting for Irene, I imagine."

"She had a headache and went to lie down," said the countess. Madge remembered Irene, started slightly at the sound of her name. She looked around the room. She had not only never seen such a place, but had never read of one. The vaulted ceiling,

picked out with olive and gold; the painted walls, the pictures, the marble statuettes, the great marble and ormolu fireplace; the Venetian mirrors and rich silk hangings, all filled her with a sense of wonder which oppressed her.

Then she glanced at the countess and sighed. She seemed to Madge to belong to a different species to herself. She had seen ladies as they drove past the string of caravans on the road, and had sometimes spoken to them—asked them to permit her to tell their fortunes—at race meetings; but never until now did she understand the vast difference between them and herself. And she had married the son of one of the proudest and haughtiest of these "gentry."

Her heart sank; she longed for Royce—no longer Jack, alas!—to come near to her and encourage her with a word or a smile, or a pressure of the hand. A sense of loneliness fell upon her like a chilly cloud. The vaulted ceiling with its painted flowers and birds seemed to be crushing down upon her.

And then the door opened—a figure in white stood for a moment at the opening, and glided toward her.

It was Irene, all in white, with a pale orchid mauve in her golden hair.

To Madge she appeared like a vision, ethereal; her feet seemed scarcely to touch the ground; her loveliness was so spirituelle that, in her state of confusion and bewilderment, Madge would not have been surprised if she had seen the slim, graceful figure float ceilingward.

Irene passed Royce and Seymour with a murmured "Royce!" and made straight for Madge.

Madge rose, as if compelled, and her handsome face flushed. She expected Irene to say, coldly, "How do you do? Have you had a pleasant journey?" But Irene took her hand and, bending forward, kissed her not on the brow, but on the red, pure lips; not a cold kiss, which means "I hate you," but a warm, girlish tender kiss that went straight to poor Madge's heart, and brought tears to her eyes.

"Oh, I am so sorry I am late!" said Irene, seating herself beside her, and still holding her hand.

"But I had a bad headache and went to lie down, and I fell asleep, and did not hear the bell. I am so sorry! for I meant to go down to the lodge and meet you. Will you forgive me dear Madge?"

Madge was speechless for a moment. The sweet voice rang in her ears, echoed in her heart, filling her with gratitude and love.

"I am sorry your head ached," she said in a low voice, tremulous with the feelings Irene's tenderness had called up. "Are you better now?"

"Quite," said Irene with a smile, but even as she answered Madge noticed that the lovely face was pale and looked worn, and that there were dark shadows under the eyes; that the smile was sad as well as tender.

"Quite; I am used to headaches"—lately, she was going to add, but checked herself. "And have you had a good time? How well Royce looks." She glanced at him; only just glanced. "I have so much to say to you—"

"Dinner is served, my lady."

Seymour came across the room to the two girls and offered his arm to Madge.

She did not know what he meant for a moment, then she rose and put her hand in his arm. He smiled covertly at her hesitation, but said courteously enough:

"I hope you have a good appetite, Madge. You should have after your long journey."

He led her into the dining-room, and put her in a seat; and the sense of bewilderment came rushing back upon her.

The room, with its oak panelling and pictures, its old tapestry hangings, loomed richly in the subdued light. The table glittered with cut-glass and silver-plate. In the centre, and in shining epergnes were choice flowers, which shone like colored gems against the white cloth, and filled the air with their fragrance.

There were three footmen in rich livery as well as the butler, and to Madge, they all seemed to be looking at her, watching for some mistake, some blunder on her part.

She looked down at her plate; noticed that there were two knives and forks, and three wine glasses at the side, and her heart sank. She knew that she must blunder, must do something wrong.

Seymour went to the bottom of the table, Royce sat opposite her, and Irene by her side. Seymour pronounced a long grace with a sanctified expression on his face, and in a kind of drawl, and dinner commenced.

Madge watched Irene before she ventured to take up her spoon for the soup, and when the footman brought round the hock said, "No, thank you," as Irene did. The things they brought her seemed endless, and she refused them one after the other

until Irene, who talked continuously, said:

"But you are eating nothing, Madge, dear. You must take some of these cutlets."

Madge might have responded, "You yourself, eat very little," for Irene seemed to have as little appetite as Madge; but she took the cutlet without a word.

She noticed that some of the things were eaten with a fork only, for no apparent reason, and that when she put her knife and fork down in her plate the footman instantly removed it. He seemed to her to be watching her every instant, as indeed he was; and she wondered how the rest could go on eating and talking as unconcernedly as if the servants were not present.

As she looked across at Royce her mind wandered back—it had not very far to wander, only a few days!—to the meals she and he had eaten around the camp-fire; and it seemed to her marvelous that he could ever have endured the roughness and wildness of his surroundings; and as she listened to his deep, musical voice as he talked to the countess, she asked herself if it could be possible that the aristocratic gentleman in evening dress, with the footman behind his chair, could really be Jack, the horse dealer of the gypsies; and whether she could be Madge Lee, who a week ago lived in a caravan and wore a red shawl, with Mother Katie and Lottie and Tony for companions?

And even at that moment the camp rose before her, and her heart ached with a wistful tenderness for them all! Did they miss her? Had Tony cried much? Had he forgotten her?

Meanwhile she listened to the talk going on round her. It was as strange to her as the great house, the magnificent rooms, the cut-glass, the plate, the noiseless servants.

She heard Jack—no, Royce—asking his mother about Lord and Lady Ballfarras, and Sir William and the Duchess of Kingford; and she realized how widely she was separated from all these people.

The dinner proceeded, and, marvelous to relate, she had made no great blunder as yet; but presently the footman put on the desert service; the plates were of rare Sevres. To each person was placed a finger-bowl of old English cut-glass, as rare and almost as precious as the Sevres.

Now Madge had declined all the wines excepting a glass of claret, and thinking that the water in the finger-glasses was for drinking, was about to take it in her hand, when Irene quickly, yet so softly, said:

"You are admiring these old glasses, dear? They are very, very old; I think they came from Holyrood Palace; and it is just possible Mary, Queen of Scots dipped her fingers in them as we do now," and she dipped her fingers in the scented water, and wiped them on her napkin.

"I did not know."

"Are they not beautiful with the bloom on them?" she said.

"I want to show you the hot-houses, and the conservatories. Are you fond of flowers, Madge? But what a silly question. All women love flowers. I cut nearly all these myself. Mr. Thomas, that's the head gardener, was in a good humor this morning. Sometimes he is not, and then—"

She talked on, the kind of talk, which does not require anything more than a monosyllable in response, and so, as it were, covered and protected Madge in her shyness and ignorance.

Royce bent forward every now and then, and said a word or two, and smiled encouragingly and lovingly; but the countess sat with averted eyes, and Seymour watched his new sister-in-law with a smile which barely concealed a sneer; waiting an opportunity to embarrass and discomfort her.

He waited until there was a pause in the conversation and amid profound silence said, bending forward with a suave smile:

"Do you take any interest in missionary work—er—Madge?"

Madge looked up with a start, glanced at Royce almost appealingly, and then looked at Seymour timidly, the color coming and going on her beautiful face.

"Missionary work?" she repeated vaguely.

Royce bit his lip and came to her rescue. He saw that Seymour's intention was to humiliate Madge, and mortify him.

"No! Why should she?" he said, grimly, almost fiercely.

"Oh, why should she not? You do her an injustice, I am sure, my dear Royce. I was going to tell her about our mission at Timbuctoo. Perhaps you have heard of it—er—Madge?"

Irene could feel against her dress Madge's hand trembling. There was an intense silence, Royce's face growing dark and angry as he saw Madge's distress.

For a moment she was speechless, then she lifted her glorious eyes and poured their light upon her tormentor.

"Timbuctoo?" she said in a low voice which had thrilled Irene when she first heard it. "Timbuctoo is a town in Central Africa, close to the border of the Desert of Sahara, about eight miles north of the Niger."

She had learned it from one of the books she had treasured up in her caravan, and with that wonderful memory which accompanies perfect health repeated the paragraph word for word.

Seymour's face was a study. It turned red, and his mouth opened and shut. He did not know what to



WINTER SPRAYING.

The practice of spraying trees and shrubs when they are dormant is becoming widespread. It has been recognized that in this way many of the spores of fungi are killed before they can do harm by reproducing themselves in the fruit, leaves or the tree. Just what efficacy there is in winter spraying we do not yet know, but it is believed that much good results. Winter spraying is inclusive of that done at any time before the buds open, even late in March, while the buds are swelling. Even many people that are in doubt about the necessity of spraying trees when dormant, yet follow the practice, to be on the safe side. It is certain that if, as some have supposed, the spores of the apple scab fungus lives over in the bark of the tree or on rubbish on the ground, spraying will do good.

The man that is prepared to spray late in the winter is in a position to be prompt with the same work later; and it is promptness that is necessary. Some men do not spray till a few days after they should have completed the work, and the pests for which they sprayed get the upper hand and keep it. The first spraying of the apple should be while the tree is dormant. This is likely to check the apple scab. If this spraying is omitted, the first one should be given when the leaf buds are open and before the flower buds expand. This spraying should be with Bordeaux mixture for the scab. If the bud worm has been prevalent in the neighborhood, spray with Paris green as soon as the leaf tips appear in the buds. This treatment will also check the case-bearer. If the apple trees are affected by San Jose scale, then spray with whale oil soap—two pounds to a gallon of water, when trees are dormant, or use crude petroleum at the rate of 25 per cent. or kerosene in the proportion of one to five in water. Apply the soap or petroleum before the buds start.

DOES POULTRY PAY?

Poultry may be successfully raised on land that is both thin and hilly. The rental for such land is low. If the poultryman has a fifty-acre plot of which half is fertile, 25 acres may be devoted to breeding yards and the balance to the raising of grain with which to feed the flocks.

With a 50-acre farm, one-half devoted to poultry culture and the other to the raising of grain, a man can, with one hired assistant, clear more money in a year than he could had he worked a section of land for all it was worth. He can grow fowls—chickens, turkeys, ducks and geese—both for eggs and meat and with our rapidly growing population and the consequent increasing demand, there will never be a time when a young chicken will beg for a place in the market at from 25 to 30 cents. On the contrary, the market will beg for the fowls at prices from 25 to 50 per cent. higher.

Poultry is as sure a crop as any that may be grown on the farm. True, you may have cholera or some other troublesome disease, and your flock may be greatly reduced, but are not droughts and cyclones likely to play equally as much havoc with growing crops?

To the man who is interested in

say, for though Timbuctoo was often on his lips, he had not the least idea as to where it stood in Africa. And this "common gypsy girl" had turned his weapon of sarcasm upon him and beaten him! Royce stared from one to the other, then he leaned back and laughed; the laugh which had in the old time been so keen a delight to the countess and Irene.

"Bravo, Madge!" he said with grim exultation. "You've given my brother some information, eh, Seymour?"

"My dear Royce we are not all so ignorant as yourself. Every school-boy knows where Timbuctoo is."

"Every schoolgirl does not, any way," said Irene in her soft, sweet voice. "I did not, for instance."

"Come dear," said Irene. Seymour rose to open the door, but Royce strode before him, and as Irene passed him he bent his head and whispered:

"Thank you, Irene. Be kind to her."

Irene raised her eyes to his for a moment only, but said nothing, and the ladies passed out.

"Will you have some port, Royce?"

Royce stood looking down at the cloth for a moment, then he raised his head and looked full into Seymour's eyes.

"I want a word with you," he said, and he made a sign to the butler to leave the room. When the door had closed upon that grave and solemn functionary, Royce said sternly:

"Seymour, I want to ask you a question."

"Certainly, my dear Royce," said Seymour, filling his glass and eyeing him sideways.

"It is a very simple one, and it is this: Is it to be peace or war between us?"

(To be Continued.)

poultry we say by all means go into the poultry business. Select a suitable location, go a little slow the first year until you acquire a little experience, and then let people know that you are in the business by a judicious use of advertising space. Even if you are raising poultry for purely market uses, it will pay to make it known that from you strictly fresh eggs in any quantity, and the finest fowls may always be had. Then bear in mind that cleanliness is the life of poultry and strive to keep your place scrupulously clean. Perseverance and hard work only will be required to crown your efforts with success.

FEEDING ON THE FARM.

There is no better way of keeping land fertile than by feeding all crops upon it, because manure is fertility pretty quickly available, and we are less dependent upon the natural strength of the soil. More than this, the incorporation of manure with the soil furnishes both physical and chemical conditions that enable the plant to use some of the original soil elements; but we have a class of writers who assume that this is the only rational way, regardless of the fact that the Creator must have intended that people eat something besides meat and milk, and that grains, vegetables and fruits must be taken away from the farms producing them. If that be true it is a narrow view that is taken by anyone urging all to feed their farm-products for the sake of the land's fertility. Other ways of maintaining it are open to us. Half of the fertility of the crops now fed on the farm fails to get back to the land through the manure on account of careless methods. This is woeful waste, because the plant-food in it is so readily available; but it is mentioned to show that many a stockman is far more dependent upon the natural strength of his land for plant-food than another may wholly be by keeping his soil in good physical condition through sods and fertilizing crops without any feeding upon the farm. The method is unsafe in careless hands, and a good supply of manure is the best key for unlocking additional soil fertility, but the chief need of farmers to-day is to recognize the importance of good physical condition of the soil and to regard it rather than the amount of plant-food they may be putting into the ground or taking out of it.

BOYS ON THE FARM.

Lots of boys are driven from the farm by the treatment they receive there. You cannot work a boy from ten to fourteen hours a day, begrudging him a day off and depriving him of an opportunity to make a little money, and have a little fun on his own account, and then expect that he is going to stay on the farm. Boys are not built that way. But if you treat them right, encourage their originality and foster their development and the doing of things for themselves, the average boy is level-headed enough to realize the advantages offered by rural life. Some fathers make the mistake of trying to drive boys instead of working with them, or fail to recognize the rapidity with which a bright boy gains knowledge and experience between 12 and 20, and how quickly he may know more or have better judgment in some matters than his father. The parents are quite as often at fault as the boys in those cases when the complaint comes that the boys won't stay on the farm.

DAIRY NOTES.

Skim the milk before the cream is sour.

If the cream is excessively sour there will be a loss of butter fat.

When the cows have been long in milk, the churning becomes more difficult.

Working out the buttermilk and working in the salt are where the overworking is done.

All the cream should be stirred thoroughly every time fresh cream is added.

One cause of soft butter, especially in winter, is churning too long. The churn should always be stopped when the butter is in granular form.

Always churn as soon as there is cream enough and sufficient acidity develops. If cream is held beyond that, it will be injured.

Cream should not be allowed to get too warm while ripening. Keep it at about 60 degrees. If allowed to become too warm, the butter will come soft and white.

A PIGEON POST SERVICE.

The only regular pigeon post service is run between Los Angeles (in California) and the little town of Avalon, on Catalina Island, during the summer months. The celerity with which these messages are delivered, only be beaten by telephone or telegraph. The air line is fifty miles between the two places, and most of the pigeons accomplish the distance under the hour. A good revenue is earned yearly by the source. Small bills pasted about Avalon announce that "Private messages and business orders may be forwarded at any hour of the day, and in connection with the telephone, telegraph, and cable lines to any part of the world."

"Hilca, Brown! How's the cold?" "Very obstinate." "How's the wife?" "About the same."