# The Gypsy's Sacrifice

OR

## A SECRET REVEALED

CHAPTER XL.

One afternoon, rather more than two years later, Irene returned from ger ride, for she rode every day now. The day had been clear and bright, and the sharp, keen air had painted a delicate rose upon her lily-check, and imparted a sparkle to her eyes, which two years ago they had not known.

She dropped lightly from the saddle, took her horse's nose in both hands and gave him his customary kiss, and then entered the hall.

A huge fire was burning in the great fireplace and on the leopard skins in front of it stood the afternoon tea. In a low arm-chair sat the countess. The dark hair was white now, and the once proud and haughty face greatly changed. She was dressed in black—not satin or silk, but plain merino. Her only ornament was a small locket of black onyx; it contained a piece of Madge's hair—strange irony of circumstances! The gypsy girl's hair resting as a sacred relic on the bosom of the Countess of Landon!

Irene went quietly across the hall, and bending over her chair reverently kissed the sad, deeply-lined face.

"Have I been too long, dear?" she said. She called her "madam" no longer. "It was such a delightful afternoon, and the horse and I enjoyed the ride so much that I nearly forgot the time and that you might be waiting."

"No, no, dear, you are not late," said the countess; not in the cold tone in which she used to speak, but with an almost deprecating gentleness. "I am glad you enjoyed it. Did you meet anyone?".

"Yes," replied Irene, taking off her gloves and seating herself at the table, "Lord and Lady Balfarras, and the postman."

She took some letters from her habit pocket, and laid them beside the countess' cup. The countess took them up with a sudden, eager wistfulness, looked at the handwriting, then laid them down again with a sigh.

"No letter!" she said in a low voice. Irene's face was bent over the teacups as she responded.

"No, dear. But—but you did not expect one just now. You know that he said that he might not be able to write that he was going into the wilds, where there would be no means of sending a letter."

"Yes," said the countess, "but that was months ago."

"Three months and four days," murmured Irene, as if to herself.

"There has been time for a letter. During all the time he has been away—nearly two years—he has never failed to write—until now!"

"Yes," said Irene softly, "and that from Royce who used to hate letter writing!"

"He hates it just as much now, but he writes that I may know he has forgiven me, and still loves me!"

"Hush, dear," said Irene. "As if there were any chance of Royce ceasing to love you! And don't be unhappy or anxious about his silence, dear. Depend upon it he is away hunting lions and tigers somewhere in the heart of Africa where one would be as likely to meet with a postoffice as—as a bonnet shop," and she laughed softly. "What tremendous adventures he must have had, and what stories he will tell us! That sounds rather queer, doesn't it? But I mean true stories, when he comes home."

"When he comes home!" echoed the countess with a sigh. "It is time he came now, Irene. The estate, the people, want a master's presence and guiding hand. It is time he came and took his place in the county."

"Yes," said Irene, dreamily, then she roused herself. "He will get a tremendous reception when he does come back," she said cheerfully. "Lord Balfarras says that the government is delighted with the way in which Royce conducted the negotiations with the Zulus and managed the Cape Town business, and that they will offer him an office when he returns to England. I don't know whether Royce would care to take it, but it is nice that they should pay him honor. Lord Balfarras says that all the county is proud of him. The county newspaper reprinted the account from the Times, and everybody is talking about him."

The countess bent her head. Was she thinking of the day she had told Royce that he had brought shame and disgrace upon the old name?

"Royce will never be a politician," she said. "He will settle down among his own people and be satisfied with the duties of a country gentleman."

"Yes! Dear Royce! I think I can see him riding to the meet, or trudging through the turnips with his gun. Couldn't we import a herd of buffaloes or a tiger or two for him, dear? I am afraid he'll find pheasants and partridges rather tame after the big game he has been hunting lately. We must do all we can to keep him contented, mustn't we?"

The countess glanced at her as if about to speak, and if she had spoken, she would have said:

"You will not find it difficult to content him," but she remained silent.

"Will you have some more tea, dear?" said Irene. Then she got up and crossed the hall to the conservatory, reappearing after a few minutes with a bunch of white blossoms.

"I shall not be long," she said, looking over her shoulder as she moved to the door. The countess inclined her head, but did not ask where Irene was going.

In less than half an hour she came back without the flowers, and with a subdued and graver look on her lovely face.

"And now it is time to dress, I suppose?" she said. "Let me help upstairs, dear."

The countess reached for her stick—she suffered from rheumatism, caught the night of the fire—and put her hand on Irene's arm.

"How quiet it is!" she said, not complainingly. "I often think you should go away, Irene; that this dull life must be bad for you, who are so young!"

"Go away and leave you!" said Irene with a laugh. "How dare you propose such a thing! I am not dear; there is always something to do, and the time passes——" she was going to say "quickly enough," but she faltered. "Don't talk of my going away, till—till Royce comes back," she continued cheerfully. "I shall go and leave you two together for—oh, quite a long time! Perhaps I shall go to Africa, and see how I get on with the lions and tigers," and she laughef again.

The countess said nothing and they moved slowly across the hall. At the foot of the stairs she stopped, and leaning upon her stick looked round.

"Do you think he will be pleased with what we have done— the rebuilding?" she said. It seemed as if never for a moment could she cease thinking of him.

"I am sure he will," replied Irene confidently; "for one thing Royce was never difficult to please, and for another I think it has all been done so nicely. In a year or two, when the ivy has grown, no one will be able to tell the new part from the old."

The countess sighed and nodded.

"That is what I want," she said. "Perhaps he will not come back for years——" Her voice broke for a moment, then she went on more cheerfully. "But we won't look forward so dismally, my dear. Yes, you ought to go away out of the sound of my croaking.

Irene laughed.

"You see I should miss it so dreadfully," she said. "An as to Royce not coming back for years—" She stopped for she had heard a step just outside the hall door.

For a second she stood, her face white, her heart beating. Then she smiled at her own fancy. That could not be Royce's step. Doubtless at that moment he was traveling across an African veldt, and had something else to think about than "the old folks at home."

But even as she moved away the handle of the door turned, and a stalwart figure stood outlined against the sky.

The countess dropped her stick and held out her arms.

"Royce! Royce!" she cried, and the next moment had fallen on his breast.

Irene became very pale for a moment; then the blood came back to her cheek, and in far too unconcerned a voice to be natural she said:

"Why, yes, it is Royce!"

He couldn't shake hands with her for a moment; then he took his mother in his arms and seized and held Irene's hand.

"Did you think it was my ghost?" he said. "Why didn't I write? Well, I made up my mind to come all in a moment, and crossed by the mail steamer; so I've brought myself instead of a letter!"

"Let me look at you, Royce!" said the countess, wiping the tears from her eyes almost impatiently, as she let them wander over him with the hunger of a mother's love.

He looked thinner, older, graver, though his eyes were bright and full of joy. His face resembled the village blacksmith's, inasmuch as it was "like the tan"; and he held himself as a man does whose muscles are knitted into steel by plain living and hard work.

Irene after one glance stood with downcast eyes during the inspection, but it is probable that she took in all the details in that one glance.

"You are taller—or is it because you are thinner? You are thinner! You have not been well, Royce!" exclaimed the countess.

He laughed as he took off his traveling cloak, with his arm still round her, went to the fire.

"Nothing to speak of, mother. I had a little mishap with a lion, which I didn't think worth bothering you with, and it laid me on my back for a few weeks; but one doesn't run to fatness in Africa, you know. Oh, how glad I am to get back!" and he looked round with a sigh of happiness and quiet joy.

As he did so the butler, followed by the rest of the servants, came crowding up at the back of the hall.

"It is his lordship!" he said. "I said it was your voice my lord. Welcome home, Master—I beg pardon, my lord!"

Royce shook hands with him and nodded pleasantly to the rest.

"Thank you," he said. "I am as glad to see you all as you are to see me! Get some of the old wine on the table in the servants' hall after dinner, and I'll come down and drink a glass with you, and exchange news. Let the men come up from the stables."

"And I will come too!" said the countess eagerly, as if she could not spare him for even half an hour. "Irene, give him some tea."

"Yes, and the top brick off the chimney," said Irene, trying to speak lightly. "Prepare to be made a good deal of, Royce, for at least the next month."

He put the countess in her chair, and threw himself down on the rug at her feet.

"All right," he said, laughingly. "I can stand any amount of petting; it will be such a thorough change after roughing it in the Dark Continent."

"You must tell us everything!" said the countess with her hand upon his close-cropped head.

"Of course! And I'll begin tonight, but after dinner. I couldn't tell you how I am looking forward to the ceremony; and I hope you won't have beefsteak, mother, for one gets tired even of beefsteak after living on it for two years. Ah, there's the dressing bell! Do you know I used sometimes to dream that I heard it, and wake up with a start, but it was only the bells on the oxen of the wagon."

"Come up with me!" said the countess. "Where are your things, Royce?"

"Left 'em at the station," he said. Then he added in a graver tone, "I wanted to walk. Come along, we'll all go together."

But Irene lingered behind, and sat for quite five minutes before the fire, looking into the glowing wood. He had come back at last; she had known his step. He had come back! Well—it was time for her to go; tomorrow she would leave the Towers to pay one of the many long-promised visits, and stay away a long, long time!

It was a quiet but very happy dinner. Royce did all the talking, the two women scarcely taking their eyes off his bronzed face; and the butler and footmen listening with all their ears, and for the first time in the records of Monk Towers passing the wrong things, and otherwise neglecting their duties.

After dinner they went into the servants' hall, and a cheer rose as the butler trotted to the table, and filling his glass bade them all fill theirs.

"His lordship's health!" he cried, crimson in the face and lifting his glass high.

A cheer rose—not the cheer that is bought with money and grudgingly rendered, but the spontaneous shout of affectionate welcome. Royce looked round and patted the countess' hand, for she was crying.

"I'm bad at speechifying," he said. "But I thank you with all my heart. It's good to know that so many friends are glad to see me, and I can tell you that if you've thought of me once or twice during the last two years I've often thought of all of you. I've come to stay with you."

"Thank God! Hurrah!" rose the hearty response.

"And I hope we shall still be friends as well as master and servant. Here's to your health, one and all of you, big and small, short and tall! We'll have a dance some evening, later on—eh. mother?"

He made Irene and the countess drink some of the wine, and shook hands with the butler and the coachman, and then took the two ladies away.

"Thank God he's back!" exclaimed John, the coachman. "That sort's too good to be wasted in Africa. We want 'em at home—eh, friends?"

The excitement had tired the countess, and very soon Royce gave her his arm upstairs.

"I'll come in and say good-night presently, mother," he said at the door.

Then he went downstairs two steps at a time, and caught Irene as she was coming up.

"Going without saying 'good-night?'" he said in a low voice, and with a rather grave smile.

"I—I am going to the countess," she said. "But I'll say good-night now and—and good-by."

"Good-by!" he echoed, his eyes fixed on his face.

"Yes," she said hurriedly, and with downcast eyes. "I—I have promised to go to the Balfarras'—oh, ever so long ago, and—and I shall start to-morrow quite early."

"Wouldn't do it if I went back to Africa, Irene?

"Yes, because you are running away from me," he said. "I know that."

He took her hand and drew her gently to the fire.

(To be Continued.)

### DIFFERENCE.

"Marriage and economy?" interrogated the benedict. "Why, man, before I married I was broke half the time."

"And what now?" asked the young bachelor, anxiously.

"Now I am broke all the time."

## FARM·FIELD AND GARDEN

### COLD STORAGE ON THE FARM.

Every grower of apples knows that just about picking time we are apt to have days, sometimes several days in succession, during which the thermometer registers too high for his peace of mind, and much too high for the material welfare of his apples, writes Mr. W. T. Flourney. The grower also knows that often after he has the apples packed, they may have to wait a few days, or perhaps only a few hours, for a car on which to load them. Even after being loaded on the car, there is often delay in getting them into the rooms of the cold storage houses, which are situated at a distance from the orchard. Only the packer and the storage men know how disastrous even a few hours of heat can be to apples headed up in a barrel, thus causing them to go into the storage house in really bad condition for storing.

With storage facilities on the farm all this trouble is obviated, and it is possible and practicable, too, to leave the apples on the trees until they are well colored and in prime condition for gathering. Then gather them and place them in barrels or boxes, without pressing, put them into the cool room, there to remain until they are brought out in the cooler weather, repacked and turned over to the consumer, or to the commission man, every barrel full and every apple good and firm and in condition to hold up in good shape until used. These apples, because of having been left on the trees until well matured, have the best flavor and the best of keeping qualities.

### STORAGE ECONOMICAL.

Storage on the farm also makes it possible to save the poorer grades of fruit until the weather is cooler, so that they may be marketed at a profit to the grower. It is possible to furnish this fruit to a class of nearby consumers, who could not afford to buy a better grade which has been shipped a long distance. We have seasons when the apple crop is light, and perhaps the quality is not as good as it should be, when the buyer or commission dealer does not come to buy our apples at packing time, but goes somewhere else where there is a better crop. When that happens, apples at packing time are too cheap to be profitable, and it is a question in my mind whether, in a year like this, it pays the grower to pack his fruit and ship to a distance to store. Then again, in years of great production, when there is fruit everywhere of good quality, there is a glut in the market at packing time. With the facilities of the modern cold storage at hand, the fruit can be safely held until the warm weather and other causes have cleared the market of this excess.

Even if the crop is sold to the commission dealer at packing time, the dealer can put his apples into this house cheaply and quickly, thus delaying the transporatation until cooler weather, or until he has a market ready to receive them. The fact that the apples can be packed when the rush is over and more efficient help can be obtained is no small item. Then it is of considerable moment that every barrel of these apples can be packed under the personal supervision of an experienced and conscientious man. There are many other advantages that might be mentioned, and while my experience is somewhat limited, it is in accordance to a very conservative line of reasoning, and not altogether theoretical.

### LOOK UP ALL SIDES.

In an undertaking of this kind, the disadvantages should perhaps be more carefully considered than the advantages. It is always the thing we are not looking for that trips us. In the first place, the cost of the building varies under different circumstances. The first cost of a small plant is greater in proportion than it is in a large plant where the same processes and materials are used. This small plant is apt to be situated where it is not convenient to be used for other purposes than that of storing apples, thus leaving your building and machinery idle during the summer months Then again, the cost of maintaining and running a small plant of that kind on the farm must be carefully considered, for there is where the profit or loss of the venture is apt to appear. Expenses must be kept down to the minimum, for the stock of apples in the farm storage, which is run only during the apple season, cannot be handled profitably on as small a margin as can the very large stock of a dealer who has stored in a house of immense capacity, which is run all the year round, and which does not depend on storing apples alone. I handle my small force of men that I use on my farm. Among the number I have some who are very expert mechanics, as well as being expert in the handling and picking of apples.

By doing this I do not need the services of a special expert in the cold storage business I see that all apples are closed out early in the spring, in order that the work of handling the old crop may not interfere with the work needed in the production of the new crop and with the general orchard work. Many fruit farms are situated where a large supply of good cool water can be obtained. A scarcity of cool water is a decided disadvantage to the economical running of a cold storage plant. My house, as it now stands, has about 33,000 square feet insulated and piped ready for use. It holds about 3,300 barrels. Mine is the ammonia process, direct expansion, with forced ventilation. This forced ventilation will be found by all who use it to be very necessary in the preservation and handling of apples. The machinery used in a plant of this kind is so constructed that a man of ordinary intelligence, who can manage the machines in everyday use, can operate this after a few lessons from the manufacturer's experts. I find that I can maintain any desired temperature and my fruit has been preserved equal to the best that I have seen.

### CRIMINAL THOUGHTLESSNESS

#### It Is the Cause of Many Serious Accidents.

"I don't think it would hurt any one," is a common enough reply from persons who have caused mischief by thoughtlessness or carelessness. It is an "excuse which does not excuse," but is offered as often as accidents happen. Not long ago a Western factory put in a new set of boilers, of great power. When they were supposed to be completed an inspector from the insurance company went over them. He found that in a flange of the joint of the main steam-pipe above the boilers, bolts had been used which did not go far enough through the nuts for safety. He called the contractor's attention to the place and ordered it remedied.

The contractor bought a supply of longer bolts, gave them to a workman, and told him to take out the short bolts and put in the new ones.

It was a trying task. The space over the boilers was narrow and hard to work in, the heat was very great, and it was altogether an unpleasant place to work. But in two days, however, the workman reported that the bolts were in, and the inspector was sent for.

He looked at the flanges and found three or four threads of a bolt protruding from the end of each nut. At first glance everything appeared to be right. Looking more closely, however, he saw the marks of a saw across the end of each bolt. As it was not necessary that they should be cut off to a uniform length he was astonished that it had been done. He tried one with his fingers, and to his amazement unscrewed the stub-end of a bolt six or seven threads long.

The others were all the same. The workman, trusting that the inspector would merely glance at them, and not wanting to work in the cramped space, had sawed off the end of each of the new bolts at his bench and inserted it in the empty side of the nut. The joint was thus no stronger than before. The inspector, who happened to be a faithful and careful man, had detected the imposition. He called the contractor, and the latter called the workman.

"See here," he said. "See what you have done. That was ordered rebolted because it endangered the life of every man who works on these boilers and in this factory. Why did you try to slur the job?"

"Well, sir," was his excuse, "I didn't think it would hurt any. It looked strong enough to me, and as far as I could see it was just a formality about having the bolt stick out. I didn't mean any harm by it."

The contractor dismissed him. Within a short time the workman came to his former employer's office, bringing a copy of a newspaper. On the front page was the account of a horrible boiler explosion in a Massachusetts shoe factory, which had caused the death of scores of working men and women.

"Look at that, sir," he said. "Like enough some man slighted that boiler just as I did yours. I've been dreaming of that thing every night since it happened. I have been trying to think if anywhere there is another piece of my work which might cause such a wreck. It's awful! And probably it will never occur to the man who caused that, if any one did, that he was to blame."

The contractor talked with the workman a while and then put him back to work.

"Tom," he said, "it was careless inspecting that left the bad life-preservers aboard the Slocum, but there were thoughtless workmen who made them. Careless inspecting overlooked the fastened skylight over the Iroquois Theatre stage, and the bolted exits, but a thoughtless workman fastened them. You understand now what depends even on small things, and I am going to put you back at work. I'm not afraid you will shirk again."

### SIMILARITY.

"Thay call these 'dog days,'" remarked the man with the wilted collar and palmleaf fan.

"Any particular breed of dog?" spoke up the warm-weather wit.

"Yes, I should say 'greyhound.'"

"Why so?"

"They are so long."