

FREEDOM AT LAST

History of a Man Who Lived in
Misery and Torture

CHAPTER IV—(Cont'd)

The men closed round Pierce. There seemed no hesitation in their movements. It was felt by every one that he must die. Despite his frantic struggles, they unbuckled his belt and dagger. Cerdic pulled down the neck of his tunic and laid bare the flesh beneath. Hyla unsheathed the dagger, trembling with joy as his enemy lay beneath him.

It was as easy as killing a cat, and they took the body and sank it in mid-stream. Then they stood upon the landing-stage speechless, huddled close together—torn by exultation and fear.

In a moment a sudden flash of lightning, which leapt across the great arch of heaven, showed a group of kneeling forms, silent, with bended heads.

Soon they were stealing up the hill again, but not before Gurth had delivered himself of a grim, though practical pleasantry. "I'll have the devil's fish," he said, and with that he slung them over his shoulder, for they were threaded upon a string.

The jongleur in the hall played upon his cithara, and sang them Serentes, Lays, and songs of battle. Between each song he rested his fiddle upon the floor and drank a draught of mead, till his lips and chin were all purple with the mulberry juice. Then he would say that he would give them a little something which dealt with the great surquedry and outrecuidance of a certain baron, how, being in his cups, this man was minded to go up in fight against a rock. So, faithwith, the hero got him up on his destrier and ran full tilt against the rock. "Then," the jongleur would conclude in quite the approved modern music-hall style, "the sword was all besprent with what remained." Vulgar wit then was own brother to coarse wit to-day, and a vulgar fool in the twelfth century differed but little from a vulgar fool in the nineteenth.

A broad grin sat solid upon the faces of the soldiers. When the jongleur began to sing little catches in couplets, plucking the strings of his cithara while for accompaniment, they nudged each other with delight at each coarse suggestion. They were exactly like a group of little foolish boys in the fourth form of a public school, just initiated into the newness of cheap wit, whispering ancient rhymes to each other.

They were children, these men-at-arms. They had the cruelty of wolves—or children, the light-heartedness of children. Imagine what Society would be if children of fourteen were as strong and powerful as their elders. If you can conceive that, you can get a little nearer to the men-at-arms.

But as the grotesque little man munched and chattered, his teeth flashing white in his purple-stained jaws, like some ape, the more powerful brains at the high table had no excuse for their laughter.

The night wore on, and they drank deep, till more than one head lay low. Geoffroi filled his cup again and again, but each potation left him clearer in brain, affecting him not at all. At last he rose to seek his couch.

"I have no mind to sleep for a while," Geoffroi said, "the night is hot. Bring a torch," he said to a serf, and then turning to the jongleur, "Come with me, Sir Jester, to my bed-side, and relate to me some merry tales till I fall upon sleep, for I am like to wake long this night."

Preceded by the flickering of the torch, and followed by the minstrel, he left the hall. They descended the steps in red light and deepest shadow, and came out into the courtyard which was very still. Every one was asleep save one lean dog, who, hearing footsteps, padded up, and thrust his cold nose into Geoffroi's hand. He fondled the creature, standing still for a moment, sending a keen eye round the big empty space, as who should find some enemy lurking there. The two others waited his pleasure.

"Come, come," he said at length in curiously detached tones, extremely and noticeably unlike his usual quick incisiveness, "we will get to bed."

He turned towards Outfangthef. They had taken some three paces

towards the tower, when a lightning flash of dazzling brilliancy leapt right over the sky from pole to pole and showed the whole scene as bright as in the day. Geoffroi stopped suddenly as did the others, expecting a great peal of thunder. Suddenly the Baron began to shiver and bend. He wheeled round tottering, and caught the minstrel by the shoulder. The little man squeaked like a rat in the jaws of a dog.

"Hist!" said Geoffroi, "what do you hear? What do you hear, man?"

"Nothing, my lord," said the jongleur in deep amazement.

"Listen, jongleur. What do you hear now?" said he.

"My lord, I can hear nothing," answered the little man.

"I have drunken too deep," said the Baron; "surely I am most devilishly drunk, for I can hear, I can hear"—he leant in the manner of a man listening—"I can hear now as I speak to you, voices as of a great company of men praying—listen! their voices are praying deeply."

"Lord, look you to this," whispered the serf, terror-stricken.

The dog, perhaps because he felt the three men were going in fear, or perhaps from some deeper and more hidden reason which men do not yet understand, crouched low on the ground and hid his head between his paws, whining.

"My lord," said the jongleur with more confidence, "the night is late, and I have known many sounds appear like human voices in the night. A cow loweth or a beetle boometh in the orchard flowers."

"What it may be I do not know," answered he, "but I know that it is no ox a-lowing or fly upon the wing. I am not mocked. There is something wrong with the night."

"The more reason, Sir Geoffroi, that I should divert you with tales and jests. These fearful nights of strange lights in the sky and noises from the fen lands need some light business to fill the mind. To bed, my lord!"

"Come then," said Geoffroi. "God shield us, it is very hot," and as he turned, the sweat stood in great drops upon his brow.

At the exact moment the little party entered the door of Outfangthef, the serfs, far down in the fen, rose from their knees, and began to steal swiftly and noiselessly up the hill.

The Baron's sleeping chamber was an octagonal stone room with a groined roof. A faldestol, the great-grandfather of our won armchair, spread with cushions, stood by a tall candlestick. The bed boasted curtains and a roof, though its occupant lay upon nothing more luxurious than straw. On a low table near the faldestol were some vessels of glass and silver. Arms hung upon the walls, and a litter of shavings on the floor showed the Baron had been carving at some time during the day. On the perch by the bed head sat Geoffroi's favorite hawk, now sunk in motionless and sinister sleep.

Taken as a whole, the apartment was extremely comfortable and even luxurious in its appearance. To reconstruct it now-a-days would cost the modern aesthete an enormous sum of money.

The serf knelt at the threshold and delivered the torch to the jongleur, who lit the candle from it. Then Geoffroi shut the door, and removing his tunic and short cicak, flung himself on the bed.

"Sit there," he said to the man, pointing to the faldestol. "There is wine upon the table if you are thirsty." Then he added with a change of manner, "You are well found in fairy tales and sic like. What means the noise I have heard to-night?"

"They say, my lord, that souls that cannot rest may be heard singing and wailing in the fen, calling on each other in reproach."

"The pot upbraiding the kettle for the soot on't! Well, well, that sweet morat is bad for a man, I think. Better stick to wine. The honey makes the brain mad."

"There is poison in many flowers," said the jongleur, "and what like a bee's belly well enough may be bad for a man. It was the drink in you, my lord, for I heard no sound."

"I will sleep now," Geoffroi said after a pause.

The minstrel rose to go, bowing a farewell.

"No," said Geoffroi; "stay there, make your bed in that faldestol to-night. I do not care to be alone. And, mark well! that if you hear any untoward noise, or should you hear the sound of men's voices praying, rouse me at once."

He turned his face towards the wall, and before long his deep breathing showed that sleep had come to him.

The candle began to burn very low and to flicker. The jongleur saw enormous purple shadows leap at each other across the room, and play, fantastic, about the bed. He rose and peered out of a narrow unglazed window in the thickness of the wall. The hot air from the room passed by his cheeks as it made its way outside. There was no lightning now, and the sky was beginning to be full of a colorless and clear light, which showed that dawn was about to begin. Far, far away in some distant steading, the jongleur heard the crowing of a cock.

As he watched, the daylight began to flow and flood out of the East, and close to the window he heard a thin, reedy chirp from a starling just half awake.

He turned round towards the room, thinking he heard a stir. He saw the elderly man on the bed risen up upon his elbow. His right hand pointed towards the opposite wall, at a space over the table. With a horrid fear thumping in his heart and sanding his throat, the minstrel saw that Geoffroi's eyes were open in an extremity of terror, and his nostrils were caught up and drawn like a man in a fit.

"My lord! my lord!" he quavered at him.

There was no sign that Geoffroi heard him, except for a quivering of his pointing, rigid finger. The minstrel took up a vessel of glass from the table, and flung it on the floor.

The crash roused the Baron. His arm dropped and his face relaxed, and, with a little groan, he fell face down in a swoon. The minstrel hopped about the room in an agony of indecision. Then he took the jug of wine, the only liquid he could find, and, turning the Baron on his back, he flung it in his face.

Geoffroi sat up with a sudden shout, all dripping crimson. He held out his red-stained hand. "What is this? What is this?" he cried in a high, unnatural voice. "This is blood on my hand!"

"No, my lord, it is wine," said the jongleur; "you fell into a deep swoon, and it was thus I roused you."

"Did you see him?" said Geoffroi. "Oh, did you see him by the wall? It was Pierce, a soldier of mine. His throat was cut and all bloody, and he made mouths like a man whose throat is slit in war." "My lord, you are disordered," said the jongleur. "You ate pork at supper, a wonderful bad thing at night."

Geoffroi said never a word, but fell trembling upon his knees.

CHAPTER V.

How fresh the morning air was in the wood! A million yellow spears flashed through the thick leaves and stabbed the undergrowth with gold. A delicious smell of leaves and forest beasts scented the cool breezes, and birds of all colors sang hymns to the sun.

An early summer morning in a great wood! In all life there is nothing so mysteriously delightful. Where the leaves of the oaks and elms and beeches were so thick that they turned the spaces below into fragrant purple dusk, what soft bright-eyed creatures might lie hid! In the hot open glades brilliant little snakes lay shining, and green bronze lizards, like toy dragons, slept in armor. The fat singing bees that shouldered their way through the bracken wore broad gold bands round their fur, and had thin vibrating wings of pearl. They were like jewels with voices.

Upon a piece of smooth grass, nibbled quite short by rabbits, which sloped down to a brook of brown and amber water, sat Lewin, the minter. His fine clear-cut face harmonized with all the beauty around, and he drank in the air as if it had been wine. There was a soft look in his eyes as of a man dreaming of lovely things. His face is worth a little scrutiny. The glorious masses of dark-red hair gave it an aureola, the long straight nose showed enormous force of character, but the curve of the lips was delicate and refined, and seemed to oppose a weakness. There was something dreamy, treacherous and artistic in his countenance.

SHREDDED

Keeps the Brain Clear and Keen,
Because it Promotes Health.

To serve—heat in oven, pour hot milk over it and salt to taste. Sold by all grocers, 13c. a carton; two for 25c.

WHEAT

For an hour Lewin had come into the wood to forget his scheming and ambitions and to be happy in the sunlight. He plucked blades of grass idly and threw them into the brook. Once he looked up, feeling that something was watching him, and saw mild eyes regarding him from the thicket. It was a young fawn which had come to drink in the brook, and saw him with gentle surprise. He gave a hunting halloo, and immediately the wood all round was alive with noise and flying forms. Part of a herd of deer had been closing round his resting-place, and were leaping away in wild terror at his shout. (To be continued.)

FOR A KING'S FUNERAL.

Some of the Items for Court Mourning When George I. Died.

One of the English magazines publishes an itemized account of the mourning bills when George I. died. The total cost of the carpets, hangings, cloth for mourning, uniforms of warders, yeomen of the guard, chapel children and the making of the same was about \$35,000.

One of these items is a tailor's charge of more than \$5 for making "a black coat for the Ratkiller." There were some attempts at economy, for there is a charge of £50 by one Thomas Hawgood, embroiderer, "for taking off the bullion badges from the laced coats and putting them on the mourning coats of 100 yeomen of the guard and forty warders of the Tower of London."

Among other things provided were 140 pairs of large black leather gloves for the yeomen of the guards and the warders of the Tower, ten pairs of black kid and twenty pairs of lambskin gloves for the children of the chapel, 140 pairs of large black rolling stockings for the yeomen of the guard and the warders of the Tower and black leather waistbelts and mourning hilted swords for them; cost, £116 7s. 6d. The glass sconces in St. James's Palace were taken down and the branches and borders of the chandeliers were all lacquered black.

Some of the interesting items given in the Queen are:

For sixty-four yards of black three-quarter wide taffeta for sixteen pair of trumpets and four pairs of kettle drum banners, and making them for the four troops of Horse Guards, £67 12s. For thirty-one yards of the same taffeta for nine pair of trumpets and one pair of kettle drum banners, and making them for the Royal Regiment of Horse Guards, £23 6s. And for embroidering a black coat on the back and breast with his Majesty's letters and crowns and on the arm with rats and wheat sheaf for the Ratkiller, £4 8s. 9d.

Anne Colthorpe, seamstress, for making thirty shirts, sixty pair of large sleeves, sixty plain bands, sixty pair of plain cuffs, and thirty pocket handkerchiefs for the ten children of the chapel, £4 9s. 1d.

For thirty-two yards of black cloth to cover the communion tables, pulpits, reading desks and cushions for French and Lutheran chapels at St. James's, £19 4s. For fourteen and a half yards of superfine black cloth for a carpet for the communion table, pulpit cloth and cushions, and to cover two benches, two Bibles and two common prayer books, and two long cushions for the Lord's seat.

John Bell and partner, mercers, for seven yards of black velvet for a bag for the Crown, and twelve yards of black Mantua silk, to cover the table and Crown at the Parliament House, £12 10s., and for fifty-five yards of white satin to cover a bolster, pillow and mattress, and eighty-five yards of white sarsenet for a pair of blankets for a white cloth bed at St. James's, £56 2s. 2d.

For two and a half yards of superfine purple ingrain cloth for a stool and cushion for the Queen, and three cushions for the eldest Princesses in the Lutheran chapel, £2 15s.

The milk of human kindness, it seems, often sours before it is distributed.

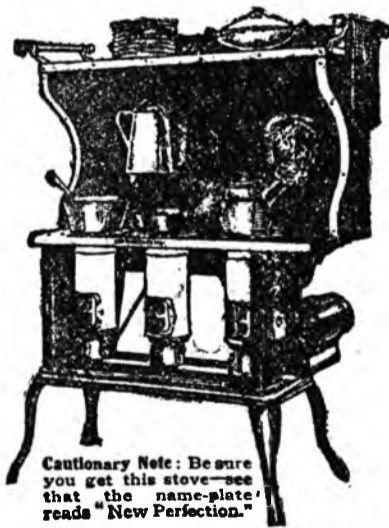
ANTICOR

AGENTS WANTED—Easy to sell—Good money-maker—Men or Women—Write to-day.
CANADIAN MERCHANDISE, LIMITED,
Hunter-Rose Building, Toronto.

Many Women who are Splendid Cooks

dread having to prepare an elaborate dinner because they are not sufficiently strong to stand over an intensely hot coal range. This is especially true in summer. Every woman takes pride in the table she sets, but often it is done at tremendous cost to her own vitality through the weakening effect of cooking on a coal range in a hot kitchen.

It is no longer necessary to wear yourself out preparing a fine dinner. Even in the heat of summer you can cook a large dinner without being worn out.



Cautionary Note: Be sure you get this stove—read the name-plate—reads "New Perfection."

New Perfection WICK BLUE FLAME Oil Cook-stove

Gives no outside heat, no smell, no smoke. It will cook the biggest dinner without heating the kitchen or the cook. It is immediately lighted and immediately extinguished. It can be changed from a slow to a quick fire by turning a handle. There's no drudgery connected with it, no coal to carry, no wood to chop. You don't have to wait fifteen or twenty minutes till its fire gets going. Apply a light and it's ready. By simply turning the wick up or down you get a slow or an intense heat on the bottom of the pot, pan, kettle or oven, and nowhere else. It has a Cabinet Top with shelf for keeping plates and food hot, drop shelves for coffee, teapot or saucepan, and even a rack for towels. It saves time, worry, health and temper. It does all a woman needs and more than she expects. Made with 1, 2, and 3 burners; the 2 and 3-burner sizes can be had with or without Cabinet.

Every dealer everywhere; if not at yours, write for Descriptive Circular to the nearest agency of the

The Queen City Oil Company, Limited,
Toronto.