

FREEDOM AT LAST

History of a Man Who Lived in
Misery and Torture

CHAPTER V. (Cont'd)

The forest became silent again, until he heard feet crackling on the leaves and twigs, and looking up saw a radiant vision approaching him. A tall, dark girl, lithe as a willow, was coming through the wood.

Lewin sprang up from the little lawn and went down the path to meet her, holding out his hands.

"Ah, Gundruda!" he said, "I have waited your coming. How fair you are this beautiful morning!"

"Go away," she said, with a flash of pearls. "That is what you say to every girl."

"Of course, Gundruda mine. I love all women! my heart is as large as an abbey."

"Then your fine speeches lose all their value, minter. But I have a message."

He dropped his banter at once. "Yes! yes!" he said eagerly.

"My lord goeth after a boar this afternoon with Sir Fulke, and my Lady Alice will be by the well in the orchard when they have gone."

"Good," said he, "there will I be also. Are Richard and Brian going hunting?"

"No; they will be hard at work with all the thews and men-at-arms fortifying the castle. Oh, Lewin, there is such a do-to! Last night as ever was, came a messenger to say Roger Bigot is coming to Hilgay to kill us all."

A shrill note of alarm had come into her voice, for she had seen war before, and knew something of the unbridled cruelty that walked with conquerors.

Suddenly the mellow notes of a lute in all their proud sweetness came floating through the wood.

Geoffroi was starting out to the hunt.

The two people in the wood went back to the castle by devious ways. They found that Lord Geoffroi with a few attendants had already left the castle and entered the forest.

The castle-works were humming with activity. The weapon smiths were forging and fitting arrow heads, and making quarrels and bolts. The carpenters were building hoards, or wooden pent houses which should be run out on the top of the curtains. The crenels, which grinned between the roof and the machicolade at the top of Outfangthef, were cleared of all obstructions. A trebuchet for slinging stones—invented in Flanders, and very effective at short range—was being fitted together on the roof of the Barbican. Hammers were tapping, metal rang on metal, the saws groaned, and a great din of preparation pervaded everything.

In one corner of the bailey a man was cutting lead into strips so that it could be more easily made molten and poured upon besiegers. In another a group were hoisting pitch barrels on to the walls with a pulley and tackle.

In and out of the great gateway rough carts were rattling every moment, full of apples and wheat from the farmhouses round.

A row of patient oxen were stabled in a pen. In the field by the castle side, the swine shrieked horribly as a serf killed them relentlessly, and in the kitchens the women boiled, dried, and salted before glowing wood fires.

Long before dawn, scouts on swift horses had been posting along the Norwich road, and messages had been sent to all the vills proper to fulfil their pledge of service.

The weapon smiths were grumbling because they were short of hands for the heavier parts of their labor. Five or six of the most reliable serfs could not be found anywhere. Some one had seen them going into the forest, and it was supposed that they were acting as beaters for Geoffroi. Every one grumbled at the Baron. It was thought that this was no time for amusements. A boar would keep, herons would last till the world's end, deer would get them young every year till the world stopped. Every hour Roger Bigot came slowly nearer, and the men of Hilgay wanted the comfort of a master mind to direct and reassure them at a time like this.

The two squires fussed and raved, and stormed till the sweat stood in great drops upon them, but they could not get half the work out of

the men that Geoffroi, or even Fulke, were able to. They had no personality and were ineffective, lacking that most potent and most powerful of human things. But every one did his best, nevertheless, and by "noon-meat" work had distinctly advanced, and already the castle began to wear something of an aspect of war.

In a country lane on a hot summer afternoon, on Sunday, we say that a "Sabbath peace" is over all the land. The wind in the trees seems whispering litanies, and the soft voices of the wood-pigeons sound like psalms, the woods are a' orisons, and the fields at prayer. As evening comes gently on, the feeling becomes intensified, though there is nothing but the chance lull-lone of a distant bell to help it. The evening is not really more peaceful and gracious on the day of rest. The rooks wing home with mellow voices indeed, and the plover calls sweetly down the wind for his mate, but these are ordinary sounds. You may hear them on week days. The peace is in our own hearts, subjective and holy, informed by our own thoughts.

In the very air of the castle there was a tremulous expectation of war. Lady Alice, in her chamber, far away from the tumult, knew it. Little Gertrude, in the orchard, felt in her blood that the day was not ordinary; the very dogs sought wistfully to understand the excitement that pervaded everything.

A deep silence fell upon them all. Then they heard it again, no hunting mot or tuneful call of peace, but a long, keen, threatening note of alarm!

The thundering of a horse's feet growing nearer and nearer throbbed in the air. The sound seemed a great way off. Some one shouted some quick orders. The pins were pulled from the portcullis chains, so that upon releasing a handle it would fall at once. That was all they could do for the moment. They heard that the horseman was coming on at a most furious gallop. The sound came from the great main drive of the forest. Quick conjectures flew about among them all.

"God's head! surely Roger is ten days away."

"So the scouts have said. He moveth very slowly. Oswald saw it with his own eyes."

"We shall know before one should tell to twenty, listen!"

The news-bringer, whoever he might be, was close at hand, and with startling effect he sent before him another keen vibratory note of his invisible horn. It seemed to come right up to the very castle gate, and to break in metallic sound at the feet of those standing near.

In a moment more they saw him turn out from among the interlacing forest trees, and come furiously down the turf towards them.

"It's Kenulf, the forester," shouted two or three voices at once. "Surely some one rides after him."

The rider was now close upon them, and vainly trying to pull in his horse. The animal was maddened by the goring of his spurs—long single spikes in the fashion of that time—and would not stop. So, with a shrill shout of warning and an incredible echoing and thunder of noise, he galloped over the drawbridge, under the vaulted archway of the gate tower, and only pulled up when he was in the bailey itself, and confronted with the great rock of the keep.

For a moment he could not speak in his exhaustion, but by his white face and haunted eyes they saw that he had some terrible news.

"My Lord Geoffroi is dead, gentlemen," said he. "He has been murdered. I came upon him standing by the three trees in Monkshood. He had an arrow right through his mouth, nailed to a tree was he, and the grass all sprent with him. Gentlemen, I came into the glade half-an-hour after I had seen my lord well and alive. He rode fiercely ahead of us after the boar, towards Monkshood. My lord loves to ride alone, and Sir Fulke followed but slowly, and set a peregrin at a heron on the way. But I pressed on faster, so that as Lord Geoffroi killed the boar, and when he had made the first cuts, I should do the rest. God help us all! I did come into the glade half a mile away from where the three

trces stand. My eyes go far and they are very keen. There was a man, I could see, standing still, but as I blew a call he went swiftly into the underwood. Then came I to the trees and saw my lord standing dead. Sir Fulke and the train came up soon after, and they are bringing It home. Make you ready. Cwaeth he to me, that you were to make proper mourning. Haste! haste! for soon they will be near, and there is scant of time withouten great haste. Take me to my lady, for I would tell her."

"No," said a girl, who was standing by, very hastily, "I will prepare her first," and with that Gundruda, with a face full of wonder, slipped away to the postern which led to the orchard.

So this was how the first tidings of Hyla's vengeance came to the castle.

Now the killing of Geoffroi de la Bourne happened in this way.

As one might imagine, there was no sleep for the serfs on the night before the attempt. From the time when they had stolen up the hill after the murder of Pierce to the coming of dawn was but short. They spent it round the dead fire among the noises of the night.

A great exultation was born in the heart of each man. Hyla showed them his blood-stained hands, with vulgar merriment at the sight, rejoicing in the deed. They were all animated with the lust of slaughter. Wild hopes began to slide in and out of their minds. One could hardly expect anything fine—in externals—from these rough boorish men. Although their purpose was noble, and the feelings that animated them had much that owed its existence to a love for their fellow, a protest of essential human nature against oppression and foul wrongs, yet their talk was coarse and brutal about it all. This must be chronicled in order to present a proper explanation of them, but if it is understood it will be forgiven. No doubt the canons of romance would call for another kind of picture. No doubt it was horrible of Hyla to call up a sleeping puppy and make it lick Pierce's blood from his hands, but this story is written to make Hyla explicit, and Hyla was not refined.

Early in the morning the conspirators took a meal together before setting out to play their various parts in this tragedy. Harl was already far away with the women. Gurth was to go down to the river and take the swiftest punt away from the landing-place and hide in the reeds upon the other side. A whistle would summon him when Hyla and Cerdic came down to the water ready for fight. Gurth was to sink the other punts, to make pursuit impossible for a time. Cerdic, Richard, and a third man called Aescwig were to lie in the wood to turn the boar, as well as they were able, towards the glade of Monkshood. They were lean, wiry men, swift of foot, and knew that they could do this. Cerdic had a swift dog concealed, for it was unlawful, which he used for poaching. It would help them. Hyla himself would lurk in the glade with his knife, waiting in the hope of his enemy.

After the first meal they slunk off to their posts with little outward emotion and but few words of parting. The clear cold light of the morning chilled them, and robbed the occasion of much of its excitement. But for all that went they doggedly towards their work.

For a certain distance Hyla went in company with the three beaters, but at a point they stopped, and he proceeded onwards alone.

When he had got far on upon his way to Monkshood he lay down deep in the fern to rest, and watched the sky between the delicate lace of the leaves.

He was wearing Pierce's dagger round his waist, and he took it out to see if it was sharp enough. The stains of blood still held to it in films of brown and purple, but its point was needle-like, and the edge bitter keen. He put it down by his side upon a great fern tuft over which countless ants were hurrying. It fell among the ants as a streak of lightning falls among a crowd of men. Then, like some uncouth spirit of the wood, some faun, one might have fancied, he fell into a long, dreamless sleep.

He was awakened suddenly, when the sun was already at its height, by the sweet fanfarade of distant horns. He glided away towards Monkshood swiftly and silently, a brown thing stealing through the undergrowth upon his malign errand. At last he came to the place he sought.

(To be continued.)

To sit on a jury is what it sometimes needs.

SHREDDED

**Builds Strong, Healthy,
Sturdy Youngsters.**

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

On the Farm

WHY NOT MORE SHEEP?

Before the days of the American tariff on sheep and wool, a flourishing business was done with sheep through the greater part of Eastern Canada. The breeder of pure-breds is still in the business, duties not interfering with his export trade; but on the farms of the mutton-producer, even the old sheep shed has disappeared; farmers themselves have forgotten the flavor of mutton chops, or leg of lamb, else surely there could be found a small flock somewhere back of the barns; and the children have to adopt a pig for pet, and wear factory-knit stockings and mittens. It was not always so.

It is not well that the sheep have gone from so many of our farms. They are splendid gleaners, at least eighty per cent. of the weeds in a pasture will be eradicated by sheep; very few weeds seeds, if any, escaping destruction. They get much in a pasture that all other stock refuse. In winter, they are splendid consumers of coarse roughages, as pea straw, stemmy clover, and barley and oat straw. They do not demand painstaking care, save at weaning time. Thus, they are a sort of inexpensive accessory, gathering up the loose waste ends, and converting them into a cash surplus.

The dispersion of farm flocks all over older Canada has an economic reason. Other reasons are frequently given, but they are inadequate. The cur dog is a nuisance; sheep surely will go through poorly built wire fences, if large flocks are maintained on small pastures; other stock prefer not to graze after sheep; but these reasons are insufficient. If sheep were paying relatively, as they did formerly, they would not have been thus abandoned. When sheep were in their zenith, dairying had scarcely appeared above the horizon, beef-making had so frequently and irregularly partial or total eclipse, that many men felt they could not rely upon it as their guiding star, and pork-production oscillated then as now. Now dairying is developed into a highly profitable, permanent industry; beefmaking has probably become more restricted, but is more reliably profitable; pork production has shifted from fat pork to bacon, increasing the profit and constancy of the trade. But no such improvement can be noted in mutton production. The business stands too much where it did in the long ago. Lambs dropped in the spring are retained all summer and sold in the fall or early winter, when they are not especially desired. There is not a sufficient profit in the business, handed after this fashion, to continue its prosecution. This is the quasi economic reason of the decline in popularity of sheep in Canada.

But there is money, more money, in sheep and lambs than ever before, if the methods of procedure were adapted to the present demands. What is wanted particularly is lamb, not mutton. The market wants Christmas lamb, Easter lamb, spring lamb, early summer lamb. This trade is almost as easily met, and is highly profitable. The producer must plan his crop for the market he wishes to suit. If for Christmas and the post-Christmas trade, they must be fall lambs for Easter, they must be January lambs, and so on. What nisses for January will sell later on almost as good a market. But always the lambs must be forced, and brought to market at from two to three months. At two months, the lambs can be brought to about forty pounds, and at three months sixty-five; the latter weight is getting rather heavy. For these fancy

markets, the lambs at from two to three months will bring from seven and a half to ten dollars. A spring lamb, kept all summer, and marketed in the fall at 90 to 100 pounds, for five or six cents a pound will bring no more.

It is true here, as elsewhere, that the wool produced by most sheep will pay for their keep. They are worth much as gleaners; they are worth much as a source of wool and meat supply to farms; they are a delight to have about the farmhouse, and they will pay, and pay well to those men who will adapt them to the market demands.—Farmer's Advocate.

CARBONIC ACID GAS.

Not so Deadly as People Have Been Led to Believe.

The danger of an excess of carbonic acid gas in the air, the property which makes an overcrowded, stuffy room so unpleasant, has been rebbed of all its terrors as the result of an experiment carried out at the London Hospital, says The Daily Mail's medical correspondent.

To eight perspiring, shirt-sleeved students, crowded in an airtight box five feet long, five feet wide and seven feet high, breathing their own expired air over and over again, at a temperature of 85 degrees Fahrenheit, is due the proof that carbonic acid gas, formerly considered such a deadly poison, can be breathed with impunity in doses forty times as large as the law allows.

In their hermitically sealed box the eight students experienced all the sensations of gradual suffocation for three-quarters of an hour, until the carbonic acid gas rose to four per cent. A stuffy theatre atmosphere might contain one-thirtieth of one per cent. Peering through the large glass windows in two walls of their prison, we could note their perspiring, flushed cheeks, quivering nostrils and general air of physical discomfort.

When the air temperature from their breathing and the radiations from their bodies drove the thermometer up to 88 degrees Fahrenheit (most people keep their rooms at about 68 degrees Fahrenheit), Professor Hill shouted: "Are you ready for the fans?" A chorus of "Yes" from the prisoners, and three electric fans were turned on from the outside. No fresh air was admitted, the fans simply stirring up the moist carbonic-acid-laden atmosphere.

The effect was little less than magical. The students immediately stood more erect, breathed more easily and deeply, and began once again to chat and joke with one another. On coming out none of the men showed any signs of the trying ordeal he had just gone through.

"This experiment," Professor Hill stated, "proves conclusively that the carbonic acid present in a stuffy, overcrowded and ill-ventilated room is not the cause of the unpleasant symptoms we formerly associated with these conditions. It is the moisture, high temperature and stagnation of the air which gives us the headaches and dullness."

ONLY ONE.

The lady of the house where they use a "party line" told the new maid to leave the door open so she could hear the 'phone, and to carefully repeat to her any messages she received.

When she returned she summoned the maid.

"Did you receive any message for me, Jane?" she inquired.

"Only one, ma'am."

"And what was that?"

"Why, I thought I heard th' bell ring, ma'am. an' I took down th' receiver, ma'am, and just then a voice said, 'Listenin' again, are ye, you old soop?' An' that's th' only message I got for you, ma'am."