

FREEDOM AT LAST

History of a Man Who Lived in
Misery and Torture

CHAPTER XVI.—(Cont'd)

The appearance of the courtyard had quite altered by this time. Sloping scaffolds of wood, connected by plank galleries, ran up to the walls and made it possible to instantly concentrate a large force of men upon any given point which should be attacked.

The fantastic arms of the mangonels and trebuchets, and other slinging instruments rose grimly above the battlements. A great crane upon the top of a tower, slung up piles of rocks and barrels of Greek fire, with steady industry. Shields of wood covered with damp hides and pierced with loopholes, frowned on the top of the battlements towards the outside world.

Great heaps of a sort of hand grenade, made of wicker work and full of a foul concoction of sulphur and pitch, were arranged at intervals, and iron braziers, standing on tripod legs, were dotted here and there, so that the soldiers could at once obtain a light for a pitch barrel or grenade.

A large copper gong with a wooden club to beat it was being fitted to a stand of ashwood. The harsh reverberations of this horrid instrument could be heard above the din of any fight, and made a better signal than trumpets.

With a great clatter a soldier rode into the courtyard. His horse was foam-flecked, his furniture and arms all powdered grey with dust. He swore with horrid oaths that he had one great overpowering desire, and that not to be denied. It was beer he said that he wanted, and would have before he spoke a single word. He bellowed for beer. When they brought it him, in a crowd, for he was a scout with news from the Norwich road, he gurgled his content and shouted his news.

Lord Roger had pressed on with great speed, and was now close at hand. Probably as evening fell that day, certainly during that night, his force would camp round the walls. They took him away to Fulke's chamber, where that worthy, who had been up all night, was snatching a little sleep. They thronged round him clamoring for more news.

Then there came a burst of distant cheering, an explosion of fierce cries at the gates, and a little mob of men-at-arms rushed into the bailey, followed by half a dozen sentinels with pikes in their hands.

In the middle of the crowd a man stood bound, dressed in a leathern jacket, and the soldiers were beating him over the head with the shafts of their pikes. His face ran with blood and there was an awful stare of horror in his eyes.

So Hyla came back to Hilgay. At the gate of the castle they had halted him, with many oaths, and turned his head towards a tree, from one of whose branches hung the naked swollen corpse of Elgifu.

They held Hyla and buffeted him, while the soldiers from all parts of the castle works ran towards the courtyard.

They came running down the slanting bridges leading from the walls, and their feet made a noise like thunder on the echoing boards. The cooks came out of the kitchens, the serfs from the stables, until there was a great bawling, shouting crowd, struggling and fighting to get a look at the captive.

None were louder in their menace than the serfs.

Some zealous soul, inspired by uncontrollable excitement, feeling the curious need of personal action that often comes to an excitable nature laboring under a sudden nerve stress, got him to the chamber at the foot of Outfangthef and fell to pulling lustily at the castle bell.

Suddenly, with the swiftness of a mechanical trick, a deep stillness of voice and gesture fell upon the tumult. It was as though some wizard had made his spell and turned them all to stone. Every eye turned towards Outfangthef and a lane opened among the people. Fulke was seen coming down the steps, and behind him was his sister, the Lady Alice de la Bourne.

The lady stayed on her coign at the head of the stairway, palpitating, and he came slowly down towards the prisoner. In a second they were face to face.

Twice Fulke put his hand to the pommel of his dagger, and twice

he let it fall away. He said nothing, but his sinister eyes looked steadily at Hyla till the serf dropped his head before the gaze of his victim's son, so hard, bitter, and cruel it was.

At last Fulke turned to the soldiers: "Take him to the guard-room," he said, "and keep him in safety there until I send you word. As for the rest of you, get you back to work, for there is not a moment to lose. Let the portcullis fall and heave the drawbridge up, keep station all of you. I promise you a merry sight with that"—he pointed to Hyla—"ere long. He will cry meulpee with his heart's black blood."

He saw the two squires and Lewin among the crowd, and nodded that they should come to him. Then, turning, he went with them into the tower, to his own room again.

To be frank, there was very little drama in that meeting. One might have expected drama, Romance would certainly require it, but Fulke was not the nature to rise to the occasion. He lacked temperament. He would have better pleased his men if he had made more display.

When the Baron reached his room he proceeded to discuss the method of Hyla's execution with his friends.

He wanted, he said, to make a very public thing of it, indeed he was quite determined to hang him from the very top of Outfangthef. At the same time that was far too easy a death.

They turned their four evil brains to the question of torture, a grim conclave, and, curiously enough, it was the keenest and most refined intelligence which invented the worst atrocities. Lewin proposed things more horrible than Fulke could ever have thought of. They applauded him for his very serviceable knowledge of anatomy. The pain of Hyla, it was eventually settled, was to last till he could bear no more, and he should hang from the Tower at the end. With that decision made they fell drinking, for Hyla was not to suffer until after the mid-day meal.

The two men chosen to inflict the torture were two swarthy foreign scoundrels from Mirebeau, men who knew no earthly scruple. About two in the afternoon a little procession started to the guard-house.

Lewin's interest in the proceedings was already over. He did not join them. He had suggested various tortures, it was a mental exercise which amused him, but that was all. Nothing would have induced him to watch his own horrible brutalities being inflicted on the victim.

He threaded his way among the pens of lowing cattle and the litter of war material to a tower in the forework, and presently, as the long afternoon waned lazily away, his quick eyes caught sight of a clump of spears, a mile away, on the edge of the wood.

By half the night was over. Hilgay was invested. All round the walls camp-fires glowed in the dark, and snatches of song in chorus could be heard, or a trumpet blaring orders. Now and again the guards upon the battlements would hear the thunder of a horse's hoofs, as some officer or galloper went down the village street, and a few random arrows went singing after him.

Every one anxiously awaited the day.

CHAPTER XVII.

Huber, the man-at-arms, went slowly round the battlements as the sun rose. He was in full panoply of war time. A steel cap was on his head, and he wore a supple coat of leathern thongs laced together, and made stronger by thin plates of steel at the shoulder and upper part of the arms.

He had a long shield on his left arm, a cavalry shield notched at the top for a lance. He was inspecting the defences, and he carried this great shield to protect himself from any chance shaft from the enemy, for he made a conspicuous mark every now and again against the sky line.

The two squires followed him, well content to learn of such a veteran. He was pure soldier; nothing escaped him. He saw that each archer, with his huge painted longbow, had his bracer and shooting glove ready. He found three sharp-

shooters had only one small piece of wax among them, and sent for more, cursing them for improvident fools.

When he came to an arbalestrier his eye brightened at the sight of the weapon—by far the deadliest of that day, despite the praises of the English yew—which he loved. He tested the strong double cords with the moulinet, inspected the squat thick quarrels which lay in large leather quivers, hung to the masonry by pegs, and saw that each steel-lined groove was clean and shining.

The man's eyes gleamed with satisfaction as he went his rounds. "Look you, sir," he said to Brian de Burgh, "we are well set up in this fortalice. Never a thing is lacking! Nary castle from here to London is so well found." He pointed to a pile of brassarts, the arm-guards used by the archers, which lay by a trough full of long steel-headed arrows, with bristles of goose and pigeon feathers.

"This is a powerful good creature in attack," he continued, pointing to a heap of lime. "A little water and a dipper to fling the mess with, and a burneth out a man's eyes within the hour."

A serf came clambering up the wooden scaffolds, which led to the walls. He carried seven or eight long ash wands. At the end of each hung a long pennon of linen. He gave them to Huber.

"What are these, Huber?" said young Richard Ferrville, as the soldier took them.

"It is a plan I saw at Arques," he answered, "Tete-Rouge was head bowyer there. Ma foi, and he could shoot you a good shoot! At Arques, sir, as you may know, strong winds blow from the sea on one side, though 'tis miles inland, and on the other the wind cometh down the valley from Envermeau. Now but a little breeze will send an arrow from the mark. A man who can shoot a good shoot from tower or wall must ever watch the wind. Now Tete-Rouge was a shipman once, and watched wind in the manner of use. But he could not train his men to judge a quarter-wind as he was able. So he raised pennons like these. 'Tis but a ribbon and every breeze moveth it, so the long-bow-men may shoot the straighter."

As he spoke the archers were fixing the thin poles in staples, which had been prepared for them.

"Holla!" cried Brian de Burgh, "the flag goes up." Even as he spoke a distant flourish of tuckets came down the morning wind. They leant out over the crenellets and strained their eyes down the hill fenwards.

A flag hung from a tall pole, which stood before a white pavilion.

"A banneret!" said Huber. "He has grown in roods and perches of late. Can you read it for me, Master Richard?"

The squire made a funnel of his hands and gazed at the flag. "A moline cross, if I see aright," he said, "but it does not matter. Roger's flag eke his coat-armor, are what he has a mind to use, not what he useth by any right of birth."

"Canst see what they are doing out by the carts—by the edge of the orchard?"

"Yes, sir. They be working on the mantelets, and anon they will wheel them up to protect those who would raise a palisade on the moat's edge. But come, Master Richard, we must be on the rounds. Much must be looked to. Now look you, Sir Brian, in a siege the hoards are your defender's chief stand-by. Now we are going into each one, for it is in those defences that we must trust in time of attack. When your hoards are breached, then your castle is like to fall."

He spoke with the technical assurance of a veteran—a sergeant-major respectfully imparting his own riper knowledge to a brace of subalterns.

The "hoards" were wooden structures, little pent-house forts, run out from the curtains, standing on great beams which fitted into holes in the masonry. From behind the breastwork of thick wood the archers could shoot with a freedom—this way and that—which was denied them by the long oblique openings in the wall itself. They commanded all points.

The group walked out along the narrow gangway, which stretched out over the black moat below, and entered the temporary fort of wood. It was built for the accommodation of four or five men, sharpshooters, who were practically safe from everything but heavy artillery fire from mangonel and catapult.

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They surveyed the scene before them in silence. The morning had risen clear, calm, and hot. For weeks the morning had been just as this was, and they had strolled along the battlements to catch the cool air and sharpen an early appetite. But on those other days the meadows beyond the moat, which ran to the forest edge, had been silent and empty, save for herds of swine and red peaceful cattle. Now but two hundred yards away, scarce more than that it seemed in the clear keen air of dawn, were the tents, the dying fires, the litter and stir, of a great hostile camp.

The lines of men, horses, and carts, stretched away right and left in a long curve, till Outfangthef hid them on one side, and the gateway towers, with their pointed roofs, upon the other.

They could hear the trumpets, the hammers of the carpenters, a confused shouting of orders, and the hum of active men, as the besiegers began to prepare the manifold engines of attack, which—perhaps before night fell—would be creeping slowly towards the walls of Hilgay.

That great low shed which lay upon the ground like a monstrous tortoise, would presently creep slowly towards them, foot by foot, until it reached the edge of the moat, and the men beneath it would build their great fence of logs and empty carts of rubbish into the sullen waters.

They could see men upon the sloping roofs, gradually sloping from a central ridge, men like great flies, nailing tanned hides over the beams. The sound of tapping hammers reached them from the work which should be protective of Greek fire and burning tar from above.
(To be continued.)

In the causes of infant mortality cholera morbus figures frequently, and it may be said that complaints of the bowels are great destroyers of child life. If all mothers would avail themselves of so effective a remedy as Dr. J. D. Kellogg's Dysentery Cordial many a little one could be saved. This Cordial can be given with safety to the smallest child, as there is no injurious substance in it.

IN A NICE COOL SEWER.

It was a hot evening following a regular old scorcher of a day and Casey and the family were sitting out on the front porch trying to keep cool.

"Sure, 't was an awful day in the kitchen," said Mrs. Casey.

"I have t' smile when I hear ye complain' about the heat, for as a matter iv fact ye don't know what heat is," said Casey.

"Oh, don't I know," said Mrs. Casey. "Sure I'd change places with you any day, for while I'm workin' over a hot cook stove all day I'm thinkin' iv the fine picnic you're havin' workin' down there in that nice cool sewer."

Pains Disappear Before It.—No one need suffer pain when they have available Dr. Thomas' Electric Oil. If not in the house when required it can be procured at the nearest store, as all merchants keep it for sale. Rheumatism and all bodily pains disappear when it is applied, and should the- at any time return, experience teaches the user of the Oil how to deal with them.

His Method.

The little girl who was visiting at a neighbor's house had gone out to look at the horses.

"Here's one of them," she said, "that has watery eyes and coughs and hangs his head just the way papa's horse did last summer."

"What did your papa do for his horse?" asked the owner of the animals.

"He sold him," was the innocent answer.

Rules for Dress.

Dress yourself fine where others are fine and plain where others are plain, but take care that your clothes are well made and fit you, for otherwise they will give you a very awkward air.—Lord Chesterfield.

The Object of Dispute.

"Were you a bull or a bear when you went into Wad street?"
"Neither. I was one of the fellows they were both after."—Exchange.



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THE CAMERA OBSCURA.

From It Was Evolved Our Modern Photographic Apparatus.

The camera was invented by an Italian named Baptista Porta, though it was not at first used for photographing. It was in reality merely a dark room, into which the light was admitted through a little round hole in one side. The rays of light coming from objects outside of this room entered it through this aperture and made a picture on the other side of the room glowing in all the beauty and color of nature itself, but rather indistinct and upside down.

This dark room was contrived by Porta about the middle of the sixteenth century. He improved it later by placing a glass lens in the aperture and outside a mirror which reflected the rays of light and reflected them through the lens so that the image upon the opposite wall within was made much brighter, more distinct and in a natural or erect position. This was really the first camera obscura, an invention which is enjoyed to the present day.

Now our modern photographic camera is merely a small camera obscura in its simplest form, carrying a lens at one end and a ground glass screen at the other. It is, however, often much more complicated in its construction.

It Wouldn't Sound Well.

An English north country paper frowns upon the known ambition of the mayor of its town to be made a knight for his distinguished services in receiving royalty and narrates for the benefit of the aspirant this anecdote: When Adam Black, the Edinburgh publisher, was sounded on the subject of receiving knighthood, he said: "Nae, nae; it wadna dec. You see," he added, "if a boy cam into ma' shop and said, 'A ha'peth o' slate pencil, Sir Adam,' it wadna sound weel."

A Meek Worm.

"You miserable worm!" cried an incensed wife. "If you was half a man you'd help me to turn the mangle!"
"I may be a worm," replied the spouse meekly, "but I ain't the sort that turns."—London Mail.

The Sweet Girl.

Belle—Nellie, dear, may I introduce you to my fiance? Nellie—Delighted to meet you, sir! All of your predecessors have been such bully fellows.

He that riseth late must trot all day and shall scarce overtake his business at night.—Franklin.

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