

FREEDOM AT LAST

History of a Man Who Lived in Misery and Torture

CHAPTER XVII.—(Cont'd)

And against the light green of the meadow-lands, and the darker blue of the thick forest trees, the many colors of pennons, the glint of sunlight upon arms, gave the animation of the scene an added quality of picturesqueness. How "decorative" it all was! how vivid and complete a picture! And yet how stern and sinister in meaning.

The soldiers were silent as they leaned out over the pent-house.

The squires left the works and descended to the bailey. Huber remained on the wall. From where he stood he could see all over the castle. Such of the garrison as were not on guard or employed in active preparation straggled slowly over the grass towards the chapel door. Some of the serfs followed, the man-at-arms could easily distinguish their characteristic dress.

He turned curiously pale beneath his bronze. Then his eyes turned towards the noble tower Outfang-thef, and presently fixed themselves on an iron door, between two buttresses, which was nearly below the level of the yard, and must be reached by a few old mildewed steps.

His eyes remained fixed upon the archway of the door, and his face became full of a great gloom and horror.

The sentinels passed and re-passed him as he stared down below with set pale features. At length he turned and entered one of the hoards. The angle of the side hid him from view of the men upon the walls.

There Huber knelt down and prayed for the serf who had saved his life on Wilfrith Mere, and now lay deep down behind that iron door.

The strong man beat his breast and bowed his head. He bowed still lower with his hands crossed upon his breast.

For to this rugged and lonely worshipper also, the message was coming that all men are brothers.

And so farewell to Huber.

In a dark place, under the ground, full of filth and rats, Hyla lay dying in the crucet hus. It is not necessary to say how they had used him.

He was not unconscious, though now and again the brain would fly from the poor maimed body, but the swoon never lasted long.

In the long and awful night, in that black tomb, with no noise but the pattering of the rats, what did he think of?

I think there were two great emotions in his heart. He prayed very earnestly to God, that he might die and be at peace, and he cried a great deal that he could not say good-bye to Gruach. The unmarried cannot know how bitterly a man wants his wife in trouble. Hyla kept sobbing and moaning her name all night.

The second day, though he never knew a day had gone down there, they had but little time to torture him, and after half an hour of unbearable agony he was left alone in silence. No one but an enormously strong man could have lived for half as long.

Still in his brain there was no thought of martyrdom, and none of the exaltation that it might have given. Although he prayed, and believed indeed that God heard him, his imaginative faculties were not now acute enough to help him to any ghostly comfort. Continually he whimpered for Gruach, until at length he sank into a last stupor.

At last, at the end of the afternoon, his two torturers came and unbound the maimed thing they had made.

"It is the end now, Hyla," said one of them, "very soon and it will be over. They are all a-waiting and my Lord Roger Bigot of Norwich has given us an hour's truce, while we kill you, you dog!"

They untied the thongs, and lifted him from the cruel stones. One of them gave him a horn of wine, so that he might have a little strength. It revived him somewhat, and they half led, half carried him up the stairs. Up and on they went,

until the lantern, which was carried by a soldier in front of them, began to pale before rich lights of sunset, which poured in at the loop-holes in the stairway wall.

They were climbing up Outfang-thef.

The fresh air of evening played about them. After the stench of the oublicette, it was like heaven to Hyla.

They passed up and up, among the chirping birds, until a little ill-fitting wooden door, through the chinks of which the light poured like water, showed their labor was at an end. The serf's spirits rose enormously. At last! At last! Death was at hand. At this moment of supreme excitement, he nerved himself to be a man. The occasion altered his whole demeanor. Almost by a miracle his submissive attitude dropped from him. His dull eyes flashed, his broken body became almost straight. The heavy, vacuous expression fled from his face never to return, and his nostrils curved in disdain, and with pride at this thing he had done.

It was better to be hanged on a tower like this than on the tree at the castle gate, he thought as he little door opened.

They came out upon the platform in the full blaze of the setting sun. Far, far below, the smiling woods lay happily, and the rooks called to each other round the tree-tops. The river wound its way into the fen like a silver ribbon. Peace and sweetness lay over all the land.

Hyla turned his weary head and took one last look at this beautiful sunset England.

A great cheering came from below as the execution party came out on the battlements, a fierce roar of execration.

While they were fitting his neck with the rope, Hyla looked down. The castle was spread below him like a map, very vivid in the bright light. Hundreds of tiny white faces were turned towards him. Outside the walls he saw a great camp with tents and huts, among which fires were just being lit to cook the evening meal.

At last, on the edge of the coping they let him kneel down for prayer. Lord Fulke had not yet sounded the signal, down in the courtyard, when they should swing him out.

He did not pray, but looked out over the lovely countryside with keen brave eyes. Freedom was very, very near. Freedom at last! The soldiers could not understand his rapt face, it frightened them. As he gazed, his eye fell on a round tower at the far end of the defences. Down the side of the tower a man was descending by means of a rope. Although at this distance he appeared quite small, something in the dress or perhaps in the color of the hair proclaimed it to be Lewin. The executioners saw him also.

"God!" said one of them. "There goes our minter to Roger. The black hound!"

He bent over the edge of the abyss and shouted frantically to the crowd below, but he could convey no meaning to them. The little moving figure on the wall had disappeared by now, but a group of men standing at the moat-side showed that he was expected.

Hyla saw all this with little interest. He was perfectly calm, and all his pain had left him. Already he was at peace.

A keen blast from a trumpet sounded in the courtyard below, and came snarling up to them.

There was a sudden movement, and then the two hosts of the besiegers and besieged saw a black swinging figure sharply outlined against the ruddy evening sky.

Justice had been done. But may we not suppose that one death notes of the earthly horn swelled and grew in the poor serf's ears pulsing louder and more gloriously triumphant, until he knew them for the silver trumpets of the Heralds of Heaven coming to welcome him?

THE END.

ONE THEORY.

"I wonder why the doctor always wants you to stick out your tongue."

"Probably to cut short a lot of gab, my dear."

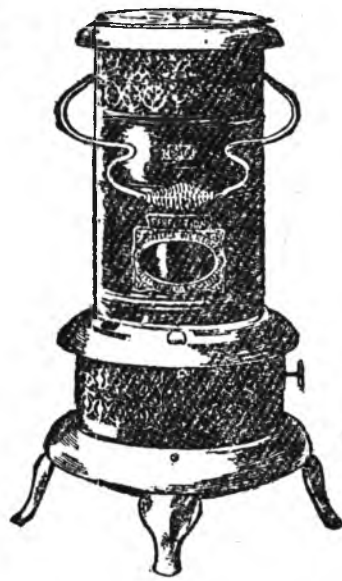
On the Farm

GETTING COWS IN SHAPE.

Every cow ought to be given a vacation of six to eight weeks before freshening. After she is thoroughly dry her feed should be of the best in quality and sufficient in quantity to enable her to lay on flesh. Here is where most dairymen make their greatest mistake. They do not consider that a dry cow needs much feed since she has only herself to keep. At no time during the lactation period will it pay better to feed a cow well than while she is dry. The flesh she gains while dry will cost for feed from six to ten cents per pound depending on the season. After freshening she will milk off this extra flesh in butter fat at from 25 to 30 cents per pound, giving you a profit of from 300 to 500 per cent. on the cost of the extra feed it took to put this flesh on her. A mighty good investment, yet how few dairymen feed the dry cow much above a maintenance ration unless she herself gets it from good pasture. In view of this I say feed her very liberally after she is dry. Corn, oats and bran, equal parts, make a good feed and all of these grains are available to nearly every dairymen. During the winter months a few pounds of such a mixture in addition to silage and clover hay, if you have both, will put a cow in fine condition. If she is on good grass a little of the above grain mixture will likewise help to put her in most excellent condition. Two weeks before freshening it might be wise to reduce the amount of corn meal and increase the bran. Say what you will about the cost of bran, it is the safest feed to give a cow about to freshen. At this period attention is necessary every day. Watch the udder develop; see that the cow lacks nothing to make her comfortable and gain in strength so that she can make up a fine udder. In winter the feeding of a little oil meal is almost necessary a few days before freshening. Begin with one-fourth pound per day and increase by one-fourth pound per day up to one or one and a half pounds per day. Things will move along better by so doing, the after-birth will be expelled quickly, and the cow will regain her strength in a short time after. After calving milk little and often, one quart from each teat every two hours will keep the cow in better shape than milking her out completely in one operation. I consider milking a cow clean immediately after calving a dangerous

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practice. It induces milk fever and other udder complications. Give her warm water for a day or so after calving, and a good bran mash as soon as she will take it. Continue this for a few days after. Take the calf away within two days anyway. Watch the udder and begin increasing the feed very gradually if no bad symptoms appear. Don't be in a hurry to get her on full feed; take three weeks in which to do that. Feed a balanced ration. If you are in the race simply for production, make one-half her feed of grain; if for the most profit give her all the ensilage and clover or alfalfa hay she will eat and enough grain to bring you the greatest percentage of profit. — Experienced Dairymen.

ENGLISH ROYALTY.

Some Curious Facts About Present and Past Monarchs.

The king has officially no surname. The sovereign pays no rates or taxes. King George has never been ini-

tiated as a Freemason. No one proposes for the hand of a royal princess in marriage.

Royal warrant holders have to pay no tax for the use of the royal arms.

The queen never accompanies her husband to the establishment of a bachelor.

The king pays, from his privy purse, for both his special trains and his theatre tickets.

Finger-glasses are never placed on the dinner table when members of the royal family are present.

The king's motor cars carry no number, and his chauffeurs are not amenable for exceeding the speed limit.

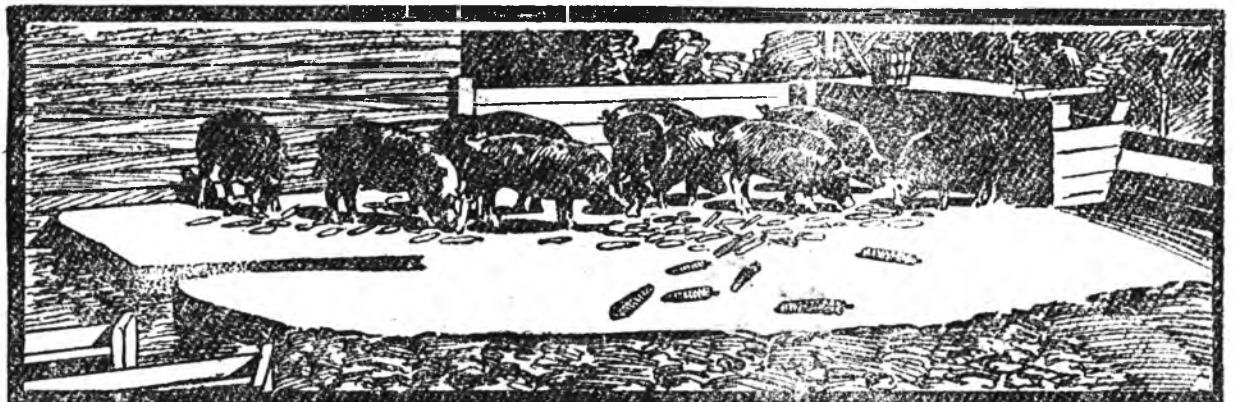
King George was the twelfth holder of the title of Duke of York and the eighteenth holder of the English title of Prince of Wales since its creation in 1310.

At the time of his accession, King Edward resigned his membership of all the clubs to which he belonged, but retained his right of vetoing any election to the Marlborough Club.

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