

THE GOLDEN KEY

Or "The Adventures of Ledgard."

By the Author of "What He Cost Her."

CHAPTER XI.—Cont'd.

"My dear friend!" Da Souza exclaimed, depositing his silk hat upon the table, "it is a very excellent joke of yours. You see, we have entered into the spirit of it—oh, yes, we have done so, indeed! We have taken a little drive before breakfast, but we have returned. You know, of course, that we would not dream of leaving you in such a manner. Do you not think, my dear friend, that the joke was carried now far enough? The ladies are hungry; will you send word to the lodge-keeper that he may open the gate?"

Trent helped himself to coffee, and leaned back in his chair, stirring it thoughtfully.

"You are right, Da Souza," he said. "It is an excellent joke. The cream of it is, too, that I am in earnest; neither you nor any of those ladies whom I see out there will sit at my table again."

"You are not in earnest! You do not mean it!"

"I can assure you," Trent replied grinning, "that I do!"

"But do you mean," Da Souza spluttered, "that we are to go like this—to be turned out—the laughing-stock of your servants, after we have come back, too, all the way?—oh, it is nonsense! It's not to be endured!"

"You can go to the devil!" Trent answered coolly. "There is not one of you whom I care a fig to see again. You thought that I was ruined, and you scudded like rats from a sinking ship. Well, I found you out, and a jolly good thing too. All I have to say is now, be off, and the quicker the better!"

Then Da Souza cringed no longer, and there shot from his black eyes the venomous twinkle of the serpent whose fangs are out. He leaned over the table, and dropped his voice.

"I speak," he said, "for my wife, my daughter, and myself, and I assure you that we decline to go!"

CHAPTER XII.

Trent rose up with flashing eyes. Da Souza shrank back from his outstretched hands. The two men stood facing one another. Da Souza was afraid, but the ugly look of determination remained upon his white face. Trent felt dimly that there was something which must be explained between them. There had been hints of this sort before from Da Souza. It was time the whole thing was cleared up. The lion was ready to throw aside the jackal.

"I give you thirty seconds," he said, "to clear out. If you haven't come to your senses then, you'll be sorry for it."

"Thirty seconds is not long enough," Da Souza answered, "for me to tell you why I decline to go. Better listen to me quietly, my friend. It will be best for you. Afterwards you will admit it."

"Go ahead," Trent said. "I'm anxious to hear what you've got to say. Only look here! I'm a bit short-tempered this morning, and I shouldn't advise you to play with your words."

"This is no play at all," Da Souza remarked, with a sneer. "I ask you to remember, my friend, our first meeting."

Trent nodded.

"Never likely to forget it," he answered.

"I came down from Elmina to deal with you," Da Souza continued. "I had made money trading in Ashanti for palm-oil and mahogany. I had money to invest—and you needed it. You had land, a concession to work gold-mines, and build a road to the coast. It was speculative, but we did business. I came with you to England. I found more money."

"You made your fortune," Trent said drily. "I had to have the money and you ground a share out of me which is worth a quarter of a million to you!"

"Perhaps it is," Da Souza answered, perhaps it is not. Perhaps it is worth nothing at all. Perhaps, instead of being a millionaire, you yourself are a swindler and an adventurer!"

"If you don't speak out in half a moment," Trent said in a low tone, "I'll twist the tongue out of your head."

"I am speaking out," Da Souza answered. "It is an ugly thing to have to say, but you must control yourself."

The little black eyes were like the eyes of a snake. He was showing his teeth. He forgot to be afraid.

"You had a partner," he said. "The concession was made out to him together with yourself."

"He died," Trent answered shortly. "I took over the lot by arrangement."

"A very nice arrangement," Da Souza drawled with a devilish smile. "He is old and weak. You were with him up at Bekwando where there are no white men—no one to watch you. You gave him brandy to drink—you watch the fever come, and you write on the concession if one should die all goes to the survivor. And you gave him brandy in the bush where the fever is, and—behold you return alone! When people know this they will say, 'Oh, yes, it is the way millionaires are made.'"

He stopped, out of breath, for the veins were standing out upon his

forehead, and he remembered what the English doctor at Cape Coast Castle had told him. So he was silent for a moment, wiping the perspiration away and struggling against the fear which was turning the blood to ice in his veins. For Trent's face was not pleasant to look upon.

"Anything else?" Da Souza pulled himself together. "Yes," he said; "what I have said is as nothing. It is scandalous, and it would make talk, but it is nothing. There is something else."

"Well?"

"You had a partner whom you deserted."

"It is a lie! I carried him on my back for twenty hours with a pack of yelling niggers behind. We were lost, and I myself was nigh upon a dead man. Who would have cumbered himself with a corpse? Curse you and your vile hints, you mongrel, you hanger-on, you scurrilous beast! Out, and spread your stories, before my fingers get on your throat! Out!"

Da Souza slunk away before the fire in Trent's eyes, but he had no idea of going. He stood in safety near the door, and as he leaned forward, speaking now in a hoarse whisper, he reminded Trent momentarily of one of those hideous fetish gods in the sacred grove at Bekwando.

"Your partner was no corpse when you left him," he hissed out. "You were a fool and a bungler not to make sure of it. The natives from Bekwando found him, and carried him bound to the King, and your English explorer, Captain Francis, rescued him. He's alive now!"

Trent stood for a moment like a man turned to stone. Alive! Monty alive! The impossibility of the thing came like a flash of relief to him. The man was surely on the threshold of death when he had left him, and the age of miracles was past.

"You're talking like a fool, Da Souza. Do you mean to take me in with an old woman's story like that?"

"There's no old woman's story about what I've told you," Da Souza snarled. "The man's alive and I can prove it a dozen times over. You were a fool and a bungler."

Trent thought of the night when he had crept back into the bush and had found no trace of Monty, and gradually there rose up before him a lurid possibility Da Souza's story was true. The very thought of it worked like madness in his brains. When he spoke he strove hard to steady his voice, and even to himself it sounded like the voice of one speaking a long way off.

"Supposing that this were true," he said, "what is he doing all this time? Why does he not come and claim his share?"

Da Souza hesitated. He would have liked to have invented another reason, but it was not safe. The truth was best.

"He is half-witted, and has lost his memory. He is working now at one of the Basle mission-places near Attra."

"And why have you not told me this before?"

Da Souza shrugged his shoulders. "It was not necessary," he said. "Our interests were the same, it was better for you not to know."

"He remembers nothing, then?"

Da Souza hesitated. "Oom Sam," he said, "my half-brother, keeps an eye on him. Sometimes he gets restless, he talks, but what matter? He has no money. Soon he must die. He is getting an old man!"

"I shall send for him," Trent said slowly. "He shall have his share!"

It was the one fear which had kept Da Souza silent. The muscles of his face twitched, and his finger-nails were buried in the flesh of his fat, white hands. Side by side he had worked with Trent for years without being able to form any certain estimate of the man or his character. Many a time he had asked himself what Trent would do if he knew—only the fear of his complete ignorance of the man had kept him silent all these years. Now the crisis had come! He had spoken! It might mean ruin.

"Send for him?" Da Souza said.

"Why? His memory has gone—save for occasional fits of passion in which he raves at you. What would people say?—that you tried to kill him with brandy, that the clause in the concession was a direct incentive for you to get rid of him, and you left him in the bush only a few miles from Buckomari to be seized by the natives. Besides, how can you pay him half? I know pretty well how you stand. On paper, beyond doubt you are a millionaire; but what if all claims were suddenly presented against you to be paid in sovereigns? I tell you this, my friend, Mr. Scarlett Trent, and I am a man of experience and I know. Today in the City it is true that you could raise a million pounds in cash, but let me whisper a word, one little word, and you would be hard pressed to raise a thousand. It is true there is the Syndicate, that great scheme of yours yesterday from which you were so careful to exclude me—you are to get great monies from them in cash. Bah! don't you see that Monty's existence breaks up that Syndicate—smashes it into tiny atoms, for you have sold what was not yours to sell, and they do not pay for that, eh? They call it fraud!"

He paused, out of breath, and Trent

remained silent; he knew very well that he was face to face with a great crisis. Of all things this was the most fatal which could have happened to him. Monty alive! He remembered the old man's passionate cry for life, for pleasure, to taste once more, for however short a time, the joys of wealth. Monty alive, penniless, half-witted, the servant of a few ill-paid missionaries, toiling all day for a living, perhaps fishing with the natives, or digging, a slave still, without hope or understanding, with the end of his days well in view! Surely it were better to risk all things, to have him back at any cost? Then a thought more terrible yet than any rose up before him like a spectre, there was a sudden catch at his heart-strings, he was cold with fear. What would she think of the man who deserted his partner, an old man, while life was yet in him, and safety close at hand? Was it possible that he could ever escape the everlasting stigma of cowardice—ay, and before him in great red letters he saw written in the air that fatal clause in the agreement, to which she and all others would point with bitter scorn, indubitable, overwhelming evidence against him. He gasped for breath and walked restlessly up and down the room. Other thoughts came crowding in upon him. He was conscious of a new element in himself. The last few years had left their mark upon him. With the handling of great sums of money and the acquisition of wealth had grown something of the financier's fever. He had become a power, solidly and steadfastly he had hewn his way into a little circle whose fascination had begun to tell in his blood. Was he to fall without a struggle from amongst the high places, to be stripped of his wealth, shunned as a man who was morally, if not in fact, a murderer, to be looked upon with never-ending scorn by the woman whose picture for years had been a religion to him, and whose appearance only a few hours ago had been the most inspiring thing which had entered into his life? He looked across the lawn into the pine grove with steadfast eyes and knitted brows, and Da Souza watched him, ghostly and nervous. At least he must have time to decide!

"If you send for him," Da Souza said slowly, "you will be absolutely ruined. It will be a triumph for those whom you have made jealous, who have measured their wits with yours and gone under. Oh! but the newspapers will enjoy it—that is very certain. Our latest millionaire, his rise and fall! Cannot you see it in the placards? And for what? To give wealth to an old man long past the enjoyment of it—ay, imbecile already! You will not be a madman, Trent?"

Trent winced perceptibly. Da Souza saw it and rejoiced. There was another awkward silence. Trent lit a cigar and puffed furiously at it.

"I will think it over, at least," he said in a low tone. "Bring back your wife and daughter, and leave me alone for a while."

"I knew," Da Souza murmured, "that my friend would be reasonable."

"And the young ladies?"

"Send them to—"

"I will send them back to where they came from," Da Souza interrupted blandly.

(To be continued.)

THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT OFFERS SUGGESTIONS FOR FRUIT PRESERVING.

In an advice circulated throughout Canada, the Fruit Branch Dept. at Ottawa suggests as being best for preserving purposes, certain brands of peaches: St. Johns, Elbertas, Crawfords and Smocks, and for plums Bradshaws, Gages, Lombards, Reine Claude.

The advice is timely and to it may be added that many of the most successful makers of preserves have for years insisted on securing from their grocers the St. Lawrence Extra Granulated Sugar (Pure Cane).

It is well known that the slightest organic impurity in sugar will start fermentation in the jam, and St. Lawrence Sugar which tests over 90% pure has never failed the housewife. Grocers everywhere can fill orders for this sugar. The best way to buy it is in the original refinery sealed packages 2 or 5 lbs. cartons, 10, 20, 25, and 100 lbs. bags.

BURIED TREASURE IS SAFE.

Valuables Worth \$250,000 Escaped Ruins' Thieving.

A refugee Belgian professor, who buried his entire fortune consisting of \$250,000 worth of stocks, bonds, jewels, gold, and plate, in his garden at Malines, before he fled from that city, has just received word from the United States Consul at Malines that his property is safe and has been taken under the guardianship of the United States Government. The house was bombarded and later burned to the ground, but the buried treasure in the garden was not disturbed.

Some time after he reached London the professor went to the American Embassy, gave them a detailed plan of his house and garden, and told them where his treasure was hidden. The search was successfully carried out by the American Consul at Malines, and the property is now registered in his name, pending its release, from German trusteeship when the war is over.

Cleopatra was the daughter of a brother and sister, and married her younger brother—the custom of the Ptolemies.

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Protect the Skunk.

The skunk stands among the most important animals that choose for their diet insects harmful to the farmer. It is the best-known enemy of army worm, including the common army worm, the wheat head army worm and the fall army worm, all of which are destructive to small grains, corn and grasses, and cause heavy losses every year to farmers, according to the United States department of agriculture's biologist.

Two kinds of tobacco worms, which also attack tomato and potato plants are eaten by the skunk in large numbers. These worms change their diet from tobacco to tomatoes with such adaptability that they have spread over wide areas in the United States. The skunk's eagerness for the worm is such that he will dig them out from the ground in great numbers in the late summer and destroy them.

The white grub is also dug for by the skunk and consumed by him, and the strawberry growers generally regard this animal with favor, even though in its eager search for the grubs it may uproot the plant or eat a few berries. The skunk also eats many mature May beetles and June bugs which hatch from the white grubs.

Skunks also destroy the hop grub, grasshoppers, cut-worms, crickets, sphinx moths, sweet potato beetles, Colorado potato beetles, field mice and rats. The animal is especially useful in destroying the rats and mice that commonly infest farm buildings. If a skunk takes up his residence near premises where these rats are abundant, it will remain there if not disturbed until practically all of the rodents are destroyed.

So useful an animal should be fully protected. With insects increasing with wonderful rapidity, the farmer and gardener is put to great expense and labor in fighting them, and any animal that will help the cultivators of the soil to fight their insect battles should be encouraged and protected. Many farmers are shortsighted enough to kill every skunk they can find, to obtain for the skin a price that seems high, but is nothing as compared with the good it does.

Protect Stock From Flies.

Relief from attacks by flies may be brought to live stock on the farm by the use of sprays. The following spray is suggested by F. L. Washburn, entomologist of the Minnesota college of agriculture.

Three parts of fish oil and one part kerosene. The spraying is best done with a knapsack sprayer, and it takes only two or three minutes to spray a

steer or horse. The spray appears to keep off all flies for two days.

The Split Log Drag.

The split log drag has contributed more toward the economic maintenance of public highways than any implement of modern usage. It does not require special acts of the legislature, bond issues or expensive educational campaigns to make it available as usually proceeds, construction work. A drag can be built or purchased for \$20 and easily operated by anyone who can drive a team.

Pruning Don'ts.

Don't prune with an ax.
Don't cut off the lower limbs.
Don't cut off the short spurs.
Don't leave stubs.
Don't use dull tools.

FOREIGN SCIENCE NOVELTIES.

Subject to government inspection 16,000 New Zealand farmers keep bees.

In some portions of Germany alcohol is being made from chicory root, which grows there very freely.

At the present rate of consumption, Great Britain's mines are estimated to hold enough coal to last about 175 years.

In an English boxmaking machine the nails (driven at an angle through two boards at once, are turned back to form a hook in the second board.

The engine of a motor driven street sprinkler in England also is used to operate one pump to fill its tank and another to help scatter the water.

A museum of the horse, presenting a complete history of that animal from the earliest known period to the present, has been established in Paris.

Though 2,000 miles from a railroad, Yakutsk, in the extreme north of Asia, maintains an electric light plant the year around.

That there is more food value in one acre of beets than in four of wheat is the contention of German agricultural scientists.

French scientists have demonstrated that the vapors of iodine and bromine pass through thin glass, even at ordinary temperatures.

Success has attended experiments in England with spinning a textile fibre from a form of sea weed* that grows plentifully in Australia.

A French engineer has invented a sand box for locomotives in which a stream of water carries the sand to the rails with a minimum waste.

Why She Was There.

Judge (of divorce court)—Aren't you attached to your husband?
Plaintiff—Certainly. I came here to be detached.

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with 'Crown Brand' Corn Syrup and the children's craving for sweets will be completely satisfied. Bread and 'Crown Brand' form a perfectly balanced food—rich in the elements that go to build up sturdy, healthy children.

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is so economical and so good, that it is little wonder that millions of pounds are eaten every year in the homes of Canada.

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