

THE STORY OF A GREAT SECRET.

Millions of Mischiefs.

By HEADON HILL.

Author of "By a Hair's Breadth," "The Duke Decides," "A Race with Ruin," Etc., Etc.
"And some that smile have in their hearts, I fear, millions of mischief."
Julius Caesar, Act IV., Scene i.

(Continued.)

I could quite understand that he spoke truth in that, for the suborning of the wardens at the prison suggested careful organization, in the preliminaries of which the principal would not have appeared. Nor was I meditating any such attempt as he hinted at, for the simple reason that without friends and without money my recapture would have been only a matter of hours. No, my policy seemed to be to appear to accede to his demands in the hope that during the fortnight's grace I might discover the missing link in the evidence necessary to secure my pardon. That he would be a difficult man to deceive as to my ultimate intentions I foresaw, but I had this in my favor, that he believed me guilty, and would not, if I played my cards well, suspect me of employing my comparative liberty to upset the verdict of the jury.

But the question which pressed me most closely was whether a fortnight, during which I should doubtless be under close surveillance, would be sufficient for my purpose. Since my arrest I had always longed for a month of absolute freedom to pursue independent inquiries, and now not only would the time be curtailed by one half, but I should be virtually in Herzog's custody. The question called for a review of the situation, to ascertain if I could extract a ray of hope therefrom.

In all truth it was but the merest glimmer. As I have stated, the alleged crime for which I had been condemned was the murder by poison of my mother and my sister, Clara. The widow and daughter of a country clergyman, they had lived in a modest way in a cottage near Brockenhurst in the New Forest, to which I had been a visitor as often as my military duties as captain in the artillery would allow. One of the principal points made against me at the trial was that their deaths had occurred, at intervals of six months, during these visits, and that I was the only one who would benefit pecuniarily.

With the nurse and the doctor I had been present at the death-beds of both my dear ones—my mother's first and a little later my sister's—and it was on three disjointed words that Clara had whispered in my ear that I had built my slender hopes. Raising herself with her last effort, she had mustered strength to breathe the unmeaning words: "Man, mask, Roger." On being accused, I had mentioned this strange saying to my solicitor, who had been able to make nothing of it except that she may

have alluded to a masked man whose name was Roger. In this I had agreed with him, but I had always thought that he had made no real effort to trace out the mysterious "Roger." In fact, my solicitor, like all the world save one, was, I knew, after my first interview with him, convinced of my guilt.

Could I, in a fortnight, and with the basilisk eye of my unfathomable liberator on me, run this unknown Roger to ground? Well, as the alternative was to go back to Winchester and be hanged on Thursday, I would at least make the attempt.

Draining my glass, I flung the stump of my cigar into the empty grate and met Herzog's mocking gaze. I struggled not to quail under it, for I had to live up to my reputation if I was to live at all. "A desperate wretch he had called me and a desperate wretch he must continue to think me while I searched for a rift in the clouds.

"Well, my noble captain; I can see that you have decided to cheat the gallows by the paradoxical method of deserving them twice over. Is it not so?" he said.

"I appear to have no option in the matter," I replied, affecting the sullen resignation that under the circumstances would have been natural to the villain he deemed me.

"Fshaw! I knew all along that you being what you are, would take the sensible view, and and there is this consolation—that if you are caught after crime number two you can only be hanged once," he chuckled. "And now, my friend, that is the last word I shall say to harrow you. He went on in a pleasant tone: "A little harshness was necessary to show you the futility of trying to gammon me with pleas of innocence, but having accepted the situation you shall be treated with all courtesy during our association—so long as you are true to the compact. Only so long as that mind. But it will be your own fault if you do not find me a cheerful and resourceful comrade, with bowels of compassion enough to take a sporting interest in your ultimate escape."

Every word this man spoke filled me with loathing and disgust. I was not sure that I did not dislike his oily overtures for amity more than his hostile sneers. "Let us come to business," I said. "Who is this that I am to kill? He should be a person of some importance to warrant such elaborate preparations."

Herzog took a sip from his glass and eyed me as though to discover if I was ripe for the disclosure. "Yes, he would be considered impor-

tant," was my custodian's reply: "though from your point of view that should make no difference. High-born and highly-placed flesh is as susceptible to knife or bullet as that of a street-hawker. The individual to whom you have to turn your attention is the Right Honourable George Augustus, Earl of Alphington.

"My Heaven!" I cried aghast. "The Prime Minister?"

"No less," said Herzog, watching me warily—so warily that it was time to play-act a little, and I did it with such clumsy craft as I possessed.

"The head of the cursed Government that spurned the jury's recommendation to mercy?" I hissed. "Herzog, do I care a jot for them. But give me the means to slay this infernal tyrant, and I will blot him out as if he were a mad dog. Lead me to him as soon as you like and you will not find me fail. Where is my Lord Alphington?"

"For a moment I feared that I had overdone it, so fiercely penetrating grew Herzog's stare. But no: he drew a long breath of relief and poured himself out a fresh drink.

"To-night Lord Alphington is in London," he said, when he had refreshed himself. "But in a day or two he goes to a mansion near Freshwater in the Isle of Wight, which he has taken for the recess— at Totland Bay, to be precise. We also shall become denizens of the Isle of Wight to-morrow, my friend in the character of harmless summer visitors."

Once more, at the very outset of my intercourse with this remarkable man, I needed all the restraint I could muster. My true Janet, the girl of my heart, and the only being in the wide world who believed in me, was staying at Totland Bay. But I succeeded in conjuring up a malignant laugh as I repeated the phrase. "Harmless summer visitors!"

CHAPTER III.

I Picked up a Lady.

That night as I lay awake in the bedroom which I shared with Herzog at the Southampton Hotel I was elated and depressed by turns at the prospect of having Janet near me during the coming ordeal. I dreaded dragging her into the horrible vortex in which I seethed, and yet it might be that she would be able to help me if I could only communicate with her unknown to Herzog. Without someone who was a free agent to aid me I did not see how I was even to attempt the solution of poor Clara's last mystic utter-

ance, and Janet was the only one to whom I could safely appeal without fear of being betrayed.

On the whole then I accepted it as a good omen that I was going to the one place where I might find an opportunity of enlisting her help if I finally decided to do so.

Looking back at those momentous days, I am struck by the singular apathy of my mental attitude towards the stupendous event of which I was the pivot. I had lost all sense of proportion. By the side of my own sad case the projected murder of the Prime Minister, under apparently powerful auspices, seemed a comparatively small matter. I was filled with a mild wonder whether Lord Alphonso's death had been planned by some secret society of anarchists—that was all. I was inclined to the former view, from the ease with which my escape had been arranged. It pointed to wire-pullers in high-places, who had sufficient influence to open the prison doors. But seeing that I did not mean to kill his lordship, I really didn't care much.

From my minor standpoint, Herzog was the only person that mattered, and when, towards morning, I woke from a fitful sleep and found him bending over me with a thoughtful frown, he seemed to matter more than ever.

"Do not be alarmed," he said. "I was only studying your features as an artist. In other words, I must disguise you before we set out upon our enterprise, and I see that your countenance is adaptable. Your moustache must come off, and then, with the addition of some false side whiskers, you will be unrecognisable. You will travel under the great protection of being in the company of the last man in the kingdom with whom you will be looked for."

After we had breakfasted, he effected such a change in my appearance that I should not have known myself, but his method was so simple that there was but little chance of detection. Shortly afterwards we left the hotel, I at his bidding preceding him by five minutes and waiting for him at the corner of the street. "Mr. Tennant," the name by which I had passed at the "Pilot's Rest," was to be discarded for ever, he told me as he rejoined me. Henceforth I was to be "Mr. Martin," an invalid in charge of his private medical man, which he himself was in future to be known as Doctor Barrabass. So were my tracks from Winchester to be obliterated.

After a visit to an outfitter's where I was supplied with several suits of clothes and other necessities, we made our way to the railway station and took tickets for Lymington. While waiting for the train I noticed that there was unwonted excitement round the bookstall. The clerk was selling papers as fast as he could hand them over, and non-purchasers were gleaming what information they could from the contents bills, on which was displayed in huge letters the legend, "Escape of the condemned murderer Rivington."

I shuddered, but Herzog went and bought a paper. "It is all right," he said, after glancing at it. "The police are on a hot scent after you to London. I did not spend a cou-

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ple of hours yesterday at Winchester for nothing."

"It is dreadful," I faltered. "You will get used to it—you must," he whispered significantly.

After a little while, when I found that nobody paid the least attention to me, I gained more confidence, and by the time we went on board the steamer at Lymington I had lost most of my self-consciousness.

It was a glorious summer day, and as the boat threaded the narrow channel of the river towards the broad Solent, even I could not but feel the joy of life. Away ahead of us, in the shimmering haze, rose the green hills of the Isle of Wight; to the right the sparkling tide danced gaily towards the Needles and the open sea; to the left, half-a-dozen white-winged yachts from Cowes raced for the Spit Buoy. The fresh salt air stung the face with its promise of health. Janet was somewhere there among those tree-girt villas now coming into view under the mighty down four miles away. All this, and yesterday at this hour I was in the condemned cell, in the eye of the law a felon, doomed to die forty-eight hours hence!

(To be continued.)

IN TELEGRAPHIC AND GENERAL NEWS THE TIMES LEADS.

HOW DID THE DOG KNOW?

Evidence of Another Case of Dog Telepathy.

How did "Trixie" know that her master lay bleeding and unconscious on the floor, while men crowded around to try to help him and the police ambulance was flying through the streets to his aid? She did know, although she was outside the building, and she cried and moaned until his sweetheart, pretty Miss Nellie Getty, was warned, too. So it was that when Surgeon McGillivray reached Edward Gormley's side he found Miss Getty weeping over him, holding his head in her lap, and Trixie licking his face.

Gormley lives with his mother. He is a driver for the Weicker-Cliff Storage Company. Trixie is his little pet dog, who used to ride everywhere with him on the big wagon. But since her master has become engaged to Miss Getty, Trixie has shown a decided preference for that young lady's society, and spends most of her time with her.

Saturday Miss Getty went out shopping, and Trixie accompanied her. They were crossing the alley on Sixteenth street, between Lawrence and Arapahoa streets, when the dog began to dance and whine, and called Miss Getty's attention to Gormley's wagon, which was standing in the alley. As she had just been wishing she could meet her fiance Miss Getty walked to the wagon to wait until he should come out of the store. She had waited but a moment when the dog showed signs of the utmost distress. She hung her head and whined and cried as if she had been whipped, and she kept up her moaning. In a few minutes a man opened the rear door of the store and asked Miss Getty, if she were waiting for the driver. He then told her that he had been injured, and was laid out on the floor inside.

Gormley's escape from sudden death had been marvellous. He was waiting for the freight elevator, and he looked into the shaft to see whether it was coming. It descended and caught his head. The slight railing broke or his head would have been sheared off as with a guillotine. The surgeon found him with a torn ear, a badly sprained neck, and bruised head.

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