

THE STORY OF A GREAT SECRET.

# Millions of Mischief.

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 1.

(Continued.)

Eleven o'clock passed without the signal being made, and I began to fear that the third alternative provided for in Belcher's instructions would become operative. If the lantern were not waved at all by midnight he was to take it as equivalent to the six waves and steam away, thenceforward having sole control of my fate. How that control would be exercised did not bear thinking of.

And then suddenly, as my watch told me that it was twenty minutes to twelve, I thought that I detected a flicker of light, as of a match being struck among the trees. I waited breathlessly, knowing that the supreme crisis had come, yet undecided, in my ignorance of who was lighting the lantern, whether I wanted the three flashes or six. If it was Roger Marske out there among the trees, I should be in bad case either way, and Roger Marske it must be for certain.

Intense silence had reigned on deck for the last hour, showing that Belcher and the crew were watching for the signal, but now a hoarse cry from above showed that the sailors' eyes were as sharp as mine. The flicker grew into a steady flame, which, carried by unseen hands, advanced to the water's edge and advanced.

Once. From right to left.

Twice. From left to right.

Thrice. From right to left again.

Ah me! Would there be a fourth and a fifth and a sixth? Would that horrid pendulum go on or cease? My beating heart and aching eyes waited for the answer—a lifetime, it seemed, but in reality only for the second that it took the wielder of the lantern to blow it out.

For at the third wave the signal ceased and I knew that he who was to "make terms" with me was coming aboard. Almost simultaneously Belcher's hoarse order to lower a boat was heard, and a minute later the splash of oars told that Sir Gideon's instructions were being obeyed. Then the boat shot into view and pulled across the moonlit creek straight for the clump of trees. I gave my eyes no rest when it disappeared into the shadows of the shore, for I think that in the course of my life I have never gazed so eagerly and yet so fearfully as when I watched for that boat's return.

It came at last, gliding from the darkness into the shimmering ripple of the tideway, and I saw at once, when she was still a hundred yards

off, that she contained a man in addition to the two rowers. He was sitting in the stern, but, with the light behind him, it was impossible to recognize his features at that distance. I could understand that Belcher overhead was peering as eagerly as I, since he had not been enlightened in his instructions as to the visitor's identity.

And then, as the boat approached the steamer and rounded-to to come alongside, my suspense was ended and my bewilderment increased. The man in the stern was not Roger Marske at all. A moonbeam fell full on his face and showed him to be that terrible Herzog, who, with such deadly intent, and contrived Arthur's escape from prison.

CHAPTER XXX.

Herzog Faces Both Ways.

The advent of Herzog was utterly inexplicable to me. What could there be in common between the ruthless conspirator who desired the death of the Prime Minister and a member of Lord Alphonso's Cabinet? Yet I had seen it written, if not by Sir Gideon Marske himself, at any rate with his knowledge, that the person who would join the ship in that lonely arm of the sea would do so with his approval, charged with the business of making terms with me. Which surely must point to collusion between Sir Gideon and Herzog.

In such a tangled maze speculation was idle, and I listened intently for the reception of Herzog by Captain Belcher. It was of supreme interest to learn whether the two men who held my fate in the balance were previously acquainted with each other. Much might depend on that.

The boat rasped along the steamer's side, and I heard the "flop" of the rope accommodation ladder as it was flung down for the newcomer to climb on board. There followed the plethoric breathing of a stout man exerting himself, and a moment later Captain Belcher's husky tones reached me in the exclamation—

"By golly, then you ain't the cove I took you for. I expected the old boy's son—Mr. Roger Marske."

"I come as Mr. Roger Marske's substitute. He has been unfortunately detained, but I have full powers to treat with the lady," came Herzog's reply, plainly heard in the still night air. And then, as they moved away from the side, the conversation tailed off into unintelligible murmurs, to become almost immediately audible again as host and guest descended the companion into the cuddy. I was sorry to have missed the gap

in their talk, for they seemed to have struck a point of difference already.

"I can't do it," Belcher was saying. "You're so jolly late that the tide has ebbed too far for me to take her out till morning. Besides, I'm tired of waiting, and want a drink. Here, Antonio, you black swab, bring glasses."

"I shall be delighted to join you, captain, but if you cannot get away to the open sea tonight, I must insist on your weighing anchor and dropping down into the next creek," came the answer in the voice I remembered hearing on the promenade at Totland on the day when Arthur revealed himself to me in Herzog's company.

"Insist is a word I ain't in the habit of listening to on my own ship," growled Belcher.

"My dear sir—my dear friend, if you will allow me to call you so—we are both in the same swim, and I can assure you that it is necessary to our mutual interests that the ship should move. It only round the next bend, for tonight," said Herzog suavely but firmly. "I do not want to have to rub it in that I am representing Mr. Roger Marske—with full powers mind you."

There was a pause, during which I could imagine the disputants looking into each other's eyes for the mastery, and then came the surly submission from Belcher: "It's gospel true, what I'm telling you about the tide, but I'll anchor up and try and work her into the next creek. Like as not she'll ground on the mud."

I heard the captain ascend the ladder to the deck, and I was listening to his orders to the crew, when I became conscious of a faint drumming on the door of my cabin. "Miss Chilmark," came a cautiously muffled summons through the panel.

"What is it?" I demanded, puzzled by the apparent desire for secrecy.

"Will you not open to me for a moment? There is a vital question to be settled between us before the captain returns. My name is Herzog—a friend of Captain Rivington, and therefore your friend also. I am here to extricate you from what I believe to be very grave peril."

A friend of Captain Rivington indeed—the man who held him in thrall for the commission of a crime that would have staggered the world! Was it not natural that I should regard his overtures as rank treachery, designed to entmesh me further in the toils of the Mar-

ske? Why, only a minute ago I had heard him claim to represent Roger Marske on board. I laughed bitterly as I answered, not even troubling to moderate my voice. "Truly a strange blend of friendships, when you are here as my friend and Captain Rivington's friend, and also on behalf of Roger Marske, who is the cause of my detention."

"For God's sake, not so loud," came the throaty appeal through the door. "I said that to hood-wink Belcher, Roger Marske lying unconscious in yonder clump of trees, stunned by a blow from my stick so that I might come on board alone."

"I cannot believe that, after what Captain Rivington told me of you," I replied firmly, reluctant though I was to reject the glimmer of hope that ran thrilling through my veins. Herzog's statement, I persuaded myself, was certainly false, but at any rate it had given me an exquisite sensation for the fraction of a second. Roger Marske's stunned and prevented from coming aboard. It was too good to be true, even if he had been laid low by this unscrupulous schemer.

And then Herzog sprang upon me a more powerful inducement. "Look here, Miss Chilmark, won't this move you?" came his appeal. "I have been in Roger Marske's flat in London to-day, and I there procured proofs, sure and incontestable, that he murdered Captain Rivington's mother and sister. There are reasons why I cannot present them to the authorities myself. I want to concert measures for doing so through you, and also for getting you off this very dangerous ship."

I could resist no longer. It might be all lies—all the cleverest perhaps because they tallied with the truth which I myself had learned—but where else could I look for help? I opened the cabin door just a little, and was confronted by the perspiring face of the man who had held Arthur's destiny, and now, it seemed, held mine, in his grasp. He looked as if he had suffered physical discomfort and exertion unusual to him, but his eyes fastened on me like searchlights. At that moment the engines throbbed and the steamer began to move.

"Good!" he ejaculated, turning to listen, and facing me again. "There would be no chance for us if the ship was in the creek and within hail when that fox comes to. Now I know that you have no cause to be prepossessed in my favour, but will you give me a concise account of what has happened to you since you left Totland to get evidence against Roger Marske? I want to fit it in with what I have discovered, so that I may know how to present the case. We have five minutes, probably, before the captain works the steamer into the next bend and returns to the cuddy."

He spoke rapidly and with intense earnestness, but how could I judge of the value to me of his excitement? He had carried out to the letter the programme laid down in the "sealed orders" handed by Sir Gideon to Belcher, and the chances were more in

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favour of his being in Sir Gideon's service than in Arthur's and mine. I regarded his story as a ruse, to obtain from me the measure of my discoveries before deciding how to deal with me.

"What is the nature of the evidence you procured in Roger Marske's flat—merely circumstantial or some material object?" I asked, willing to temporise in spite of my doubts of him.

My question provoked a sly look of real or pretended admiration. "Really you are a most wonderful young lady," he said. "A female mind that can discriminate between circumstantial and direct evidence is a jewel beyond price. It enhances my regret that I must decline to confide in you till you have confided in me. My personal safety depends upon what you have experienced and discovered since you encountered Sir Gideon Marske. I cannot speak till I am fully informed."

"Then, as I cannot trust you, you will not have to speak at all," I said.

(To be continued.)

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## MARITIME LADIES

Met Countess Grey and Attended Lady Laurier's Tea.

(Ottawa Free Press, Monday.)

Her Excellency the Countess Grey, the Honorary President of the National Council of Women of Canada, was president at the meeting of the National Council Executive. Mrs. Robert Thomson of St. John N. B., the president, occupied the chair.

Among the representatives present were Mrs. Gardner of Charlottetown, Mrs. Bulyea of Regina, Miss Fitzgibbons and Mrs. Willoughby Cummings of Toronto, Miss Hill of Toronto, representing Whitby, Mrs. Frost of Smith's Falls, Mrs. McGregor, Miss Carmichael and Mrs. McCall of New Glasgow, Mrs. Kirchoffer of Brandon, Mrs. Harry Ward of Port Hope, Lady Laurier and Lady Ritchie. Letters of regret at absence were read from Mrs. Mortimer Clark of Toronto, Mrs. Gibson and Mrs. Hoodless of Hamilton, Mrs. Boomer of London and Mrs. Bryce of Winnipeg, and also a letter from the Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia in acknowledgement of a resolution of sympathy in the loss of his wife, Lady Joly de Lotbiniere, vice president of the Council for British Columbia.

The reports on immigration were very interesting. Mrs. Asa Gordon was elected member for Canada on the International committee on the White Slave Traffic, and some shocking stories were told of the wiles and traps by which young girls are ensnared, and of the complete and wide-reaching organization by which this is done.

The next meeting will be held in Montreal during the first week of April and the annual meeting will be held in Charlottetown from June 25th to July 5th.

Luncheon was served by the ladies of the Ottawa Council and at the close of the session those present went down to Lady Laurier's tea.

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