

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.)

"Thank you, Miss Chilmark. I could wish for no smarter aide," said Herzog, whipping round and covering the bridge again. "To my surprise there was another flash and report from his revolver, followed by a howl of rage and pain. "All right, Belcher; a flesh wound in the calf won't do you any harm," he shouted. "That is only a reminder not to play any more hanky-panky in the way of towing those beauties of yours overboard to scramble over the stern and steal a march on me. If it occurs again I shall make it a capital offence for you as well as for them, and shoot to kill you."

With which he slipped three fresh cartridges into the smoking cylinder, and turned his broad smiling face on me. "I am taming him by degrees," he chuckled. "But I fear that I shall have to alter my plans and take the risk of going ashore at Totland with you. A voyage to Barcelona, under the strained conditions subsisting between our good Belcher and myself would not be a pleasure trip."

"But," said I, "if Arthur has been recaptured, and has told his story mentioning you as 'Doctor Barrabbes' you would be recognized as his late companion and arrested, would you not?"

"That, my dear young lady, is the fact, that I must run," replied Herzog cheerfully. "I regard it as a serious one than travelling to Spain with the truculent gentleman who is now binding up his leg on the bridge, and who would certainly murder me unless I could do without sleep for ten days. We should be off Totland in an hour now, and I do not believe that Captain Rivington will have been molested so early. It is not as though he were at our old lodgings, remember. He is a recluse where he will take a lot of finding. No, I prefer the risk of going ashore, and of dropping quietly off to more congenial haunts till such time as there is less chance of Herzog, the Government agent, being identified with the Doctor Barrabbes of what will probably be a big line in modern history."

His words were cheering, not only on Arthur's account, but because I could not help feeling interested in the strange man who had so unexpectedly dropped from the skies to befriended me in the last state of my "forlorn hope." He was so secretive, with all his air of frank geniality, that I could not divine whether he had really entered into the plot against Lord Alphonso with the intention of working it out to the bit-

ter end. When I am puzzled about this I always remember that speech of his:

"I do not admit that the Prime Minister was ever in any real danger at all."

And that is the view I prefer to take—that Herzog, with the iron heel of Sir Gideon Marske on him, did as he was bid in the matter of arranging Arthur's escape from prison. But that he did it in the hope that before the desperate venture was ended, he would find some means of turning the tables on his master, or at least freeing himself from his yoke.

I looked at his strong face, with the humorous twist to a mouth that suggested possibilities of cruelty and tenderness at the same time. I was clutching the railings, so heavily was the steamer pitching now, but the stout elderly gentleman, fingering his pistol, with one keen eye for the bridge and a milder one for me, balanced himself on the heaving deck with no apparent effort. He had lit and smoked some half-dozen cigars since we occupied what he had called our entrenchment.

"Have you no relatives to miss you if you leave England?" a sudden impulse prompted me to ask.

Just then something on the bridge, which I could not see, made him steady his revolver for a moment, but, whatever the emergency, it passed, and he flung at me a look of quite fatherly kindness.

"No," he replied. "I have no one to mind, whatever happens. I had once—a young wife, of whom I was more than fond, Miss Chilmark. It was to save her life by sending her to Madeira that I committed the theft—no need to mince words—which brought me into bondage under Sir Gideon Marske. My wife died, and I became the unwilling slave of a man more infamous than any of those who have used place and power for their own ends."

That was the first and last of Herzog's confidences to me, but it is perhaps sufficient to explain why I refuse to regard him as the human monster whom Arthur has portrayed in the earlier pages of his narrative. For the sake of the strenuous aid he rendered me I try to persuade myself that he went into the affair of Lord Alphonso because he guessed that his employers had made an initial blunder in assuming Arthur's guilt, and that instead of closing the conspiracy with a political assassination, he might be able to forge from it a weapon for his own emancipation.

All this time the gale had been in-

creasing, but it was not till we had passed Yarmouth and come into the straight stretch ending in the Needles and the open sea that we felt its full force. And once through the narrow gut, where Cliff Castle on the mainland jut out towards each other the seas were running high. A minute later I was drenched to the skin by a shower of spray, and Herzog voiced the fear that had already seized me. He pointed to Totland pier, foam-besieged and deserted, across a mile of angry water. Away to the right, on the dreaded Shingle Bank, the breakers were leaping with thunderous roar.

"I am afraid we are done," he said. "A boat would scarcely live in that sea, even if my pistol could induce a brace of these ruffians to man it."

"You must induce them; I am not afraid to go in a boat," I cried desperately, for the sight of the little tree-embowered village on the cliffs, round which all my hopes and fears centered, maddened me. I could pick out quite clearly the vacant house in which Arthur had sought refuge—one of several stone-built residences above the lifeboat station.

In my agitation I had stepped out beyond the shelter of the deck-house and joined Herzog on the sloping deck, clutching his arm to save myself from falling. I had not seen Belcher for hours, but now, as I looked up at the bridge he turned his evil face aft to us and shouted maliciously:

"How about going ashore now? You'll have to shoot the whole crowd, for I'll never get 'em to lower a boat in this sea."

Herzog turned to me, his great broad face working with an emotion that I like to think of as pity. "The skipper speaks a true word for once," he said sadly. "But, if you so decide, I am quite willing to give the Nightshade's crew the choice between suicide by drowning or bullet."

"What would happen if we do not attempt to land?" I asked in despair.

Herzog shot a glance at the surges boiling on the Shingles. "It will be a perilous operation," he replied, "but I can make him turn back to Yarmouth and land us there, where the roadstead is sheltered. Of course there would be the loss of valuable time, but it would be better than getting drowned or the other alternative of being taken to Barcelona."

"And doing no good at all. Yes, make him go back to Yarmouth." I implored, realising that to reach Totland pier across that storm-tossed sea was impossible.

Herzog lost no time in transmit-

ting my wishes to Belcher, who, after a moment's sullen hesitation, repeated the order to the steersman. The steamer's bows were slowly rounded in a long curve, shipping tons of water as she turned broadside to the tempest, but there was either not sufficient sea-room to turn in the restricted fairway, or the captain bungled the manoeuvre, for before the vessel had completed a half circle we were in the breakers, and half a minute later the Nightshade struck bottom with a long, rending crash, ominous of her doom.

We were aground on the all-devouring Shingle Bank, a mile and a half from land, in a sea through which nothing but a lifeboat could win to us. And the Nightshade heeled over and bumped upon the pebbly bottom, while the leaping, hungry breakers spumed over the bulwarks and threatened to smash the worn-out tramp into matchwood long before a lifeboat could cover the distance.

Herzog's hand closed over my wrist and dragged me further from the side. "Let us try and reach the aft wheel-house," he roared in my ear. "We shall be safer there from being washed overboard—unless the whole house goes."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Roger Marske Arrives.

Herzog showed good judgment in selecting the wheel-house as a last refuge from the fury of the breakers. In taking the ground the steamer had partly slid over an outlying spur of the Shingle Bank, and had there become fixed, with the result that her stern was considerably higher out of the water than the bows. The forecastle, indeed, was actually submerged, while we were correspondingly elevated above the level of the tumultuous seas.

The noise of the wind and the waves, and the still more horrible "crunch" of the huge mass of shifting pebbles in which we were jammed made sustained conversation impossible, but partly in words and partly by gestures Herzog managed to convey to me that our one hope was the lifeboat, if the vessel could resist the tremendous buffeting of the breakers long enough. It seemed more likely that she would part in the middle, the forepart dropping off into deep water to sink like a stone, and the stern breaking into splinters.

The crew swarmed into the rigging of the foremast, except Belcher and the Irish mate, who remained on the bridge, apparently engaged in a violent altercation. For some minutes this lasted, and then the mate came down and, staggering to the deck-house, behind which I had stood all the morning, brought out a flag, which he hoisted on the main-mast, climbing into the rigging immediately afterwards.

Seeing himself deserted by O'Brien, Belcher stood at the bridge rail apparently hurling unheard curses after the retreating figure of his mate. Then he, too, descended to the deck, trailing his wounded leg down the bridge ladder, and clinging to the foot of it while he gazed apprehensively at Herzog, who stood in the door of the wheel-house as my side.

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My companion made a sign to the wretched man, at which he showed his teeth in a ghastly grin and literally hurled himself through the clouds of flying foam into the hood over the cuddy stairs. Herzog laughed grimly.

"The liquor!" he shouted in explanation. "Belcher was asking my leave to come aft of the bridge and get it. Wanted the mate to bring it to him. That was what the row was about."

(To be continued.)

HUSBAND GONE, WIFE IS DEAD.

Sad Sequel to a Life of Domestic Infelicity.

Halifax N. S., Jan. 23.—(Special).—The death occurred at Hubbard's Cove this forenoon of Flora Verner, wife of Dr. Thomas Verner of Toronto, who for the past twelve months has been a practising physician at Hubbard's Cove.

Incidents in connection with Mrs. Verner's death make a sad chapter in the history of domestic infelicity, the doctor having left the Cove on Thursday last in company with Bertha Jollymore, who was a servant in the family, and having informed his wife he was going to take the girl with him.

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A girl at St. Louis, U. S. A., not content with bringing an action against her sweetheart for breach of promise, is also suing her father, mother, sisters and brothers for conspiring to break off the engagement.

AN INDIAN MASSACRE.

The Yaqui Tribe in Mexico Kill Party of Americans.

Nogales, Ariz., Jan. 22.—H. L. Miller, and Charles E. Tolerton, who escaped in Thursday's Indian massacre in Sonora, Mexico, passed through here today with the bodies of Coy, McKenzie, Call and Steubinger, bound for Chicago.

It now appears that the party asked for an escort from the Mexican authorities at Hermosillo and an order to the military at La Colorado was issued. Upon reaching La Colorado the escort was requested, but the Mexican officials replied that there were so many in the party that an escort was unnecessary. Thereupon the party left for Camp Toledo and reached there without difficulty.

Alfred Garretson, wife and child, went over the same road last Wednesday or Thursday but are undoubtedly safe at their camp. Garretson is from Buffalo and is engaged in mining in the Sanuaropa district, Sonora. A Mr. Pelletier, mining engineer, recently employed by the Scarsa mining company, is with Garretson. All the mining men in the district where the massacre took place are coming in from camp and the country will undoubtedly be in a feverish state for some time to come.

It is stated on high authority that a month ago Governor Ysabel held an extended conference with a large number of Yaquis at San Miguel to see if all differences could not be adjusted, and the Yaquis said that they demanded all the land along the Yaqui river and wanted to vacate. Governor Ysabel replied that that was impossible and the conference came to an end.

Dr. Coy's body and head were mutilated, his head being smashed in with stones. His body was stripped of its clothing as were the other dead. The survivors escaped with their clothing only, all their money, tickets and papers being taken by the Indians.

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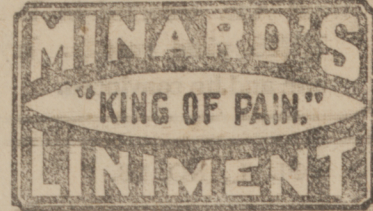
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