# A Knight-Errant of Rhodesia.

IN TWO NSTALMENTS-PART II.

### CHAPTER I.

A man of middle-age, sick unto death. lying on a rough bed in a rough hut; a young man seated beside him, with his elbow on his knee, his forhead resting on his hand, his eyes on the ground.

The young man was tall, straight-limbed handsome of feature, with dark, closelycurling bair, and dark eyes, set under prominent brows, eyes that had the keen look of the man accustomed to an open-air life, to scan miles of veldt, and discern what others farely see at all, or to pierce the close undergrowth of brush for signs of life that would escape the sight of that would escape the sight of ordinary mortals.

He wore the picturesque uniform of the Rhodesian Horse, and on the table by him lay the slashed and furred bat, tamiliar by this time to most English people.

Without, the veldt lay dark and lonely, and scattered about in the vicinity of the hut were half-a dozen mushroom-like dwellings, wherein might be seen the dusky forms of a few natives, probably the following of the man who lay dying.

His eyes, glassy and scintillating with fever, sought the young man's face; there was agonized entreaty in them, in the drawn and wan countenance turned to wards that of his companion.

It was a life decision he was seeking from Wilmot Carew, a strange and bewildering step he was requiring him to take, and one involving not only his own future, but that of another necessarily bound up with it.

'Think !' the dying man said, after what seemed to him an eternity of waiting, "think what it will be to her! There is not a creature here in this waste of land to leave her with. She has no one in England, no English relatives; only Dutch relations on her mother's side. Oh! Wilmot, my only hope in this world, let me die in peace, knowing my chil i will be safe.'

He stopped, exhausted, and Captain Carew dropped his hand, and bent over his

The tie between them was a very sacred one; many a time bad the elder man stood between Wilmot and moral ship wreck; the influence of his old tutor in the far-away days of English boyhood and early youth, had kept him from many a temptation, from many a sin.

For years Carew had lost sight of Bernard Leslie, and now had stumbled on him by chance in the wilds of South Africa, only to find him sick unto death!

An entiusiastic naturalist, he had come out on an expedition of research, bringing with him his daughter, a child of fourteen, because he had no one with whom to leave

And now he lay dying, the terrible thought of his child's helplessness torturing | and let her weep in the shelter of his arms,

To him it had seemed like the hand of God, this sending of Wilmot Carew to his

And Carew's soft, musical voice was yet softer than its wont, as he said gently-

'I will do what you wish. I will make the child my wife, so that I can provide for her in safety, and see that she never wants. But if, later, she should not wish to ratify the tie which binds her to me, she shall be free to do as she pleases.'

'Ah, she will not want to leave you! the elder man said, with a faint smile. 'Call her in, Wilmot. I am a clergyman, I can marry you; you can take down all the circumstances in writing, and I will sign it; there might be dispute, and it may help.' Carew bent his head and rose, paused a

moment, then said in a low voice-'Will you tell her? And call me when

che knows P The sick man assented, and Carew went into the outer section of the but, where in the doorway stood a tall, slim girl.

Involuntarily almost the man drew a sharp breath, and bent his eyes down. She was a child, her hair, of sunny chestnut hue, flowed yet loose over her

She were a frock not yet reaching to her ankles; the face she turned so eagerly towards her father's friend, was that of a child, despite the pathetic and wistful sorrow that dimmed the beautiful dark eyes, and drooped the corners of the sensitive

A lovely child, who would grow to be a beautiful woman, but a child still, and to connect thoughts of marriage with her, even though it be but a ceremony in order to in this extremely irregular marriage which give her protection, seemed to the man

something like sacrilege. she sprang towards her father's friend. Is

'Go to him, my child,' Carew said gently. He has something very serious to say | day. to you.'

'He will die ?' she said, with anguished

'I fear there is no hope,' Carew answered. 'You will try not to give way. You will remember that he must be quiet?'

'Yes,' she said slowly. The resolute lips closed.

Child as she was, she had a power of self-control not often found in one so

Then she went into the next room, and Carew could hear the low murmur of

VOICES. For a few minutes, during which he veldt and torturing himself as to the way in which Vimera Leslie would take the fiat which married her to a man she had never seen till a day or two ago.

In reality this was the least part of her She had been very simply brought up,

and to her marriage meant very little. It was strange and bewildering, and presented Wilmot Carew in a new light to her, but that was all.

When she came out to him once more there were dark rings under ber eyes, ber lips were quivering painfully, but her gaze met his with all a child's frankness, and she put her little hands in his with all a chil 1's pathetic trust.

'Father says' she told him, steadying her voice, 'that I am to do everything you wish-that you are going to take care of me. It is so kind,' her voice broke a little. 'I will try to do all you say, and not be a trouble to you.'

Wordless, voiceless, the man bent and kissed her torehead—a kiss no less tender, pure, reverent than her brother might have given.

Then he took her hand, and they went together to the bedside of the dying man. With a last effort, Bernard Leslie spoke the words that gave these two to each other; but only one of the twain realized what was being vowed, to the other it was all a

When Wilmot put the ring on her finger -it was one he wore himself, and he had hand-Vimera looked at it curiously, and back. slender, delicate hand, hers was in com- out of action. parison a fairy's.

But all her thoughts were with her father, and when her brief ceremony was over.she knelt beside him, hungering for the few words that came from his lips.

The death dews were already on his brow, the dimming eyes wandered from the tall man to the kneeling child, but they saw nothing, and the long drawn breath

Bernard Leslie's spirit had passed away.

Wilmot Carew buried his old friend there on the veldt. With his own hands he dug the grave,

and with voice that many a time faltered he read the service, the Kaffl: servants looking on curiously, while Vimera and the Christian Zalu woman, who attended on her. were the only mourners.

When it was all over, and they had returned to the hut, the strain was relaxed, and the child broke down, and sobbed bit-

Deeply moved, Carew drew her to him, not striving to comfort her with words.

What could he say, indeed, in face of this loss, this sense of loneliness which

must oppress her ? What substitute could he possibly be for the father to whom she had been child and companion from her earliest years ?

Strange thoughts came to the man as he held the tragile form, and only by gentle carass on her bowed head, strove to give what consolation he might. It was a solemn charge that he had un-

dertaken, and what if he fell short of the requirements it laid on him? He had led a rough, a wild sort of life,

none too straight in some respects, but always remembering that he was a Carew and an English gentleman.

For years he had not seen his people. He had been a wild and wayward son, and had angered and grieved his parents, who, indeed, had not known how to treat the boy, and had, in a manner driven him from home.

And now, behold, it was to him, wild Will Carew, to whom was given the most sacred charge that cau be entrusted to a

A young child, growing to girlhood, to be moulded, and trained and educated, standing to him in a relationship that must be for years nominal, except in so far as it gave him authority to order her life.

Nor was Carew sure that such a marriage might not be overridden; in any case, if Vimera's Dutch relations got hold of her it might be difficult to prove; they were on English ground, true-the Lim popo flowed between them and the Transvaal-but there were many things lacking might render it invalid.

However, Will Carew was not the man 'Father! the child said breathlessly, and | to shirk responsibilities once he had underhim much of the happy-go-lucky spirit

may reckon He will; isn't as if it was for myself.'

Perhaps it was his soothing touch-his gentle sympathy-in conjunction with her own self control, that quieted the poor child at last; and when be sat down and drew her to his knee, and let her rest her pretty head on his shoulder, she was quite still for many minutes.

Then she whispered-'I'm so sorry; I oughtn't to have been such a trouble to you! I won't again.' 'My child, you musn't talk like that,' ent. Kiss me, and go !'

trust me as you would a friend-a brother, pressed her lips to his. Never be afraid of being a 'trouble,' as you callit. I can't ever hope to supply the place of the father you have lost; but I can and will do my utmost to make your signed to Ria, and the woman came forlive happily.'

She gave him a quick, grateful look, but made no other answer; and, after a min ute, Carew went on-

'We shall have to be on our way with sunrise. You must get all the sleep you can, so you had best go to rest now. Will you promise me to try all you can !'

'Yes,' the child said meekly, and immediately she rose and put up her face for his gentle kiss. 'Father said I was to obey you as I did him,' she added talteringly; and then she went to the small chamberit it could be dignified by that namewhere she slept.

The man looked after her and sighed. He wished he might keep her with him,

but that would be impossible. A captain of Irregular Horse, in a yet unsettled State, liable to be ordered here or there as requirements arose, and in a rough, uncultured society!

No; he must send her to England-or possibly to Cape Town-tor education, but preferably right away from any chance of her Dutch relations getting hold of her.

## CHAPTER II.

It was yet dark when the light sleep of Wilmot Carew was disturbed by a sound which would never have awakened one less used to the exigencies of a soldier's life. It was a stealthy footfall out on the

Instantly Carew was on his feet, his rifle in his hand, his revolver in his belt, and he

stole to the door way. In that moment there was a rush, ac companied by wild cries and shricks from the Kaffir 'boys,' who fled precipitately

towards the bush at some little distance. Carew sprang forth, to find himself surrounded by a dozen natives, brandishing spears and knives, and uttering hideous

Three of them bit the dust as they rush ed up to the tall soldier The sharp crack of rifles, as shot after

tashioned it from gold mined with his own | shot, made the others besitate and half fall wondered vaguely how she should keep it | Carew took advantage of the moment-

> The others fled, leaving their dead comhis revolver for a last shot, one of the fly-

into the soldier's side. With a final effort Wilmot fired. The native flung up his arms and fell, shot through the heart, and Carew staggered back, pressing his hand to his side, and came slower, slower, till it ceased with a deep groan, sank helpless to the

The noise had, of course, roused Vimer: | a dear companion.

and the Zolu woman. The child would have run to Wilmot's side, in the instinctive impulse to help, but the woman held her fast.

She knew that Carew would rather have shot the girl than let these natives know she was in the hut. But she berself watched, and when Carew

fell she rushed out. Vimera sprang to his side, and knelt by

him in a sort of tearless agony. He was conscious, but unable to do more at first than turn his eyes to the child's tace as she bent over him. Then to the woman-

'My flask-quick-I must live till-I've -told you,' he gasped.

Vimers sped into the hut and fetched the brandy flask, and when she had moistened his lips, he whispered to the Zulu

'My-death-blow, stop the bleeding a

In silence the woman unfastened his tunic, and taking from it the roll of bandage she should find in a pocket, wound it tightly round his body, dressed the wound as we las she could. 'Me know,' she said. 'Me been in war

-me see medicine man in hospital.' Vimera, white as death, but brave and controlled, helped her with hands whose trembling she stilled

The stricken man's eyes sought her face, and an irrepressible anguish the cry broke from him-

'On, God! To leave her-slone! To die-now! My child-your hand-so. Give me the brandy. I must have-strength moment.

He drank some of the spirit, and it re vived him, giving him a fictitious strength. 'Listen, child,' he said, speaking slowly, with sheer strength of will keeping himself conscious, 'and obey me to the letter. I have made my will; you will have everything though it isn't much. There's gold in my belt here—take that—now—and the

With hands that trembled pititully she took the belt as she was bidden; but her self control was nearly spent. After all, she was but a child.

The tears were streaming down her face and her voice was choked with sobs as she prayed him not to leave her.

He must live; this was not sdeath. She would get help. But he shook his head.

taken them, and his roving life had given low faint voice, that seemed to tear the inquiry, found the child's story corroborchild's heart. 'You must go at once dear | sted which takes no undue heed for the evil with Ris. She can be trusted; your father said so. Take the ponies; get to 'I'll do my best, God helping me,' he Johannesburg. Go to the English Consul Mis: Leelie-or Mrs. Carew-had shown said in his heart. 'For this child's sake I he will tell you how to get to England-'

> break my heart. I-I am your wife! I will stay !' 'Hush, my child!' the man said tenderly. 'Remember, you promised to obey me. I command you to leave me; you can do me no good. A have given you all instructions in those papers how to reach

Johannesburg in case of anything happen-

ing to me. Carry them out to the letter.

I shall die easier, dear, if you are obedi-

His eyes were dim, his consciousness

was going fast. With his last remnant of strength, he ward and led the child away; and, as she did so, Wilmot Carew uttered one long sigh, and lay there, silent and motionless,

#### CHAPTER III.

on the veldt.

'Leonard is coming home today, my

The speaker, a bardsome and erect lady who bore her sixty years so lightly that she looked parely more than fity, ad Ireas ed a young girl who sat opposite to her at the breakfast table.

The girl was very lovely, tall. slender, and graceful, with a clear, soft skin, great wistful dark eyes, and hair of warm gold tints, coiled in artistic fashion about her head, and falling in light waves on the broad forehead.

Amply had Vimera Leslie fulfilled the promise of her childhood, and the wistful shadows that lurked in her eyes added to the infinite charm of the girl's personality.

Some one observed to her that 'her eyes always said something was missing out of her life.'

Perhaps this was true. Deep down in her heart was there not the sense of loss, of incompleteness ? She could not, herself, have said this was so; she was happy, she was loved by

these kinstolk of the man with whom she had gone through the ceremony of mar-She had at her command wealth, luxury

all that one could wish for; and yet there seemed something wanting.

'If he had lived,' was her thought, would be bave loved me now?' She herself had but a vague recollection

of Wilmot Carew. She had never, in truth, seen him clear. ly, for when he came to her father's little camp it was dark, and there was but a feeble light in the hut.

Yet in her heart Wilmot Carew livedas a dream-as a personality crowned with a hale of romance.

All the circumstances under which the man and the girl had met and had parted tended to make an indelible impression on there, for, though Carew had for a man a ary hesitation, and put three or four more the mind of a sensitive, impressionable child, and the manner of his death, the noble sacrifice, which she understood now panions on the veldt; but as Carew raised as she had never understood it when a child, lifted him to a pinnacle of worship ing wretches as he passed drove his knife | in her young heart.

The memory just tinged with sadness the brightness of her lite-no more-and up to now no question of love and marriage had come to clash with that memory.

She was very fond of her 'cousin' as she called Leonard Bertram, but did not connect him with any other tie than that of

Whether he regarded the matter in the same light was doubtful. Vimera looked up with a smile at the re terence to Leonard.

'How jolly, auntie,' she said. I have missed bim dreadfully. Mrs. Bertram glanced covertly at the lovely face, and checked a sigh.

She had rather, for her boys sake, that the sentiment were less openly and trankly 'I daresay he has missed you too, my

dear,' she said with an indulgent smile. But Vimera smiled. 'Oh!' she said; men have always so

much to do. They don't miss the home people like the home people miss them, do they P' 'It depeds on the sort of love, I think,

dear,' answered Mrs Bertram. And something in her tone sent a switt thrill through the girl-a sort of startled eeling, which was vague enough, and even passed at once, or she thought it did.

She made no direct reply to the observation, at any rate, but branched off to something else bearing on Leonard's return, and presently ran away to see to the decorations of his rooms with flowers. Once or twice during the day, however

her aunt's tone recurred to her, and she which had come to her that morning. If—was it possible? Oh, surely not!

Leoard was like her brother. She did not think she would like the relations changed.

It was all new and strange and vague, and Vimera put away the disquieting sug-

And yet it was very clear in her mind that should there be anything in her aunt's evident surmise, she (Vimera) would have to be guided by her wishes and Leonard's. him, said, with a smile-For to Mrs. Bertram and her son the

girl owed absolutely everything. On her arrival in England, six years ago the child, accompanied by her faithful Zulu attendant, had gone - as directed in the papers given to her by Captain Carew -to Rooksnest, and told to the kindly looking lady, who listened in smazement and almost with incredulity, the romantic story of her marriage.

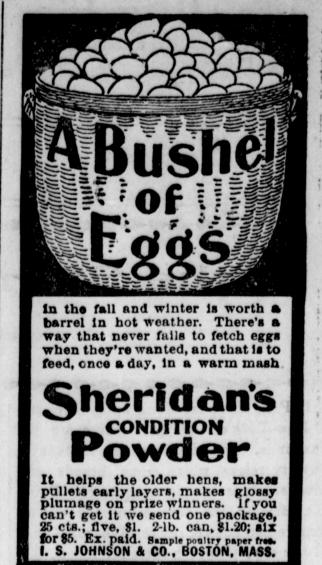
Strange as was the tale, it yet bore the impression of truth.

Mrs. Bertram had often heard of Mr Leslie, though she had never met him. She recognized at once the handwriting | tended absence had had the effect of break 'I've got my death-blow,' he said, in a of her nephew Wilmot, and, after careful

The English consul at Johannesburg was communicated with, and replied that him all the papers in her possession, and 'But,' she broke in, 'I can't - I can't | that her statement about Captain Carew leave you all alone to die so! Oh! you had since been verified by two of the Katfir 'boys,' who had returned to Johannesburg and recounted how the Englishman was murdered, presumably with the intention of robbing him.

> Captain Carew was certainly dead. hie had not reported himself to his chief, and the story of his murder had reached headquarters in Rhodesia.

A party had been sent to trace the murderers, and also, if possible, to find the body of the comrade whom all had loved; leant in the doorway, looking out over the | Carew said tenderly. 'I want you to | Sobbing bitterly, the child bent and | but the search had proved vain.



Mrs. Bertram had at once acknowledged the obligion which her deep affection for her young kinsman laid on her.

Her heart went out to the forlorn child who had literally not a triend in the world nor, indeed, a penny to call her own.

For the means which Wilmot Carew had believed he possessed turned out to have tailed altogether. The shares which he held were of no

value at that time, and so Vimera was cast

on the care of his kinsfolk. Mrs. Bertram took ber right in to ber motherly heart, and Leonard, her son, then about one and twenty, hailed with delight the acquisition of a charming child to the

household. It had been necessary to bring the matter before a court of law to establish Vimera's right to the shares left her by Captain Carew, which might some day recover their value, and to ratify his appointment of Mrs. Bertram to be trustee and guardian to the friendless minor.

So the whole romance got into the papers, and formed the topic of conversation everywhere for quite a month.

Everyone about Rooksnest knew the girl's story, but she was always called Miss Leslie, that shadowy marriage of doubtful legal value being scarcely a reason for conferring the formidable 'Mrs Carew' on a child.

It was best forgotten, Mrs. Bertram held. The transaction might stand in the way

of the girl's future So Vimers owed all to her aunt, as she called Mrs. Bertram, who had even allowed the girl to retain her native attendant.

Ria was intelligent as well as devoted to her young mistress, and she was grateful tor the privilege of staying with her charge, though she found herself the object of great wonder and curiosity and of some aversion to the country folk around Rookenest.

This did not trouble her, however, She was with 'Missee Mera,' and was

And Vimera was happy, too; and, thinking of all she owed to those who had cared for her so lovingly, she felt that any sacrifice she might make would not be too great to repay them, if that were possible, for all they had done for her, even if to give herselt to Leonard were a sacrifice.

But why should it be?

had retired for the night.

# CHAPTER IV.

'Well, mother, do you think your experiment has answered?' said Leonard Bertram's fresh, boyish voice as he came into his mother's dressing room, when all

He was a fine specimen of the well bred young Englishman, the product of public experienced the wave of startled feeling school, university, and healthy country life, above the average young man in brain perhaps, but otherwise undistinguishable from a hundred of his class and education. Handsome, bright, straight as a die. Leonard was his mother's idol, and it was

> see her Leonard's wife. The young man put himself and his long limbs into a lounge chair near the window, while his mother, pausing beside

proof of how much she thought of Vimera

Leslie that she wished, above all things, to

'So you've come for your 'confab,' my boy. Your old babit since you used to come and make confidence as schoolboy! Well, I suppose you must have the old privelege, and get a cigarrete. Oh, I don't mind! The smoke will all go out of the window.'

He was not slow to avail himself of the permission, and speedily had a cigarette between his lips. Thus prepared, he again asked anxiously if the mater thought his somewhat ex-

ard laughing.

'You're a trump of a mother!' said Leon-

ing the too brotherly relations hithert isting between himself and Vimera. 'She didn't seem quite so -so-jolly to-day when I arrived,' the young man said a little discontentedly. 'I don't know what it was; there was a difference in her greet-

ing, somehow.' Mrs. Betram smiled. 'Oh, you toolish boy!' she said. 'How little you men know about us women sometimes! Would you have her rush to you

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