

The Castles of Illies

BY ARTHUR HENRY VESSEY
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CHAPTER V.—Continued.

"Like the others, you think I have forfeited the right to one word of sympathy."

"More than all the others, I should think," she answered calmly, without hesitation.

"Yes," I said, wearily, "you have placed a placard on my back, as they boys in school, on the cap the school-masters used to wear for the word 'Dunce,' on the placard you have written the word 'Coward.' And yet I am not quite a coward. Do you refuse to see that I am one of those men whose fate has been to be tried to the uttermost? Forgive me; I am appealing to your sympathy after all. You resent that. It is quite natural. It is a moment of weakness."

"Again I pushed back my chair. She regarded me half curiously.

Perhaps she noticed I was haggard and pale. Perhaps in spite of herself, she was a little more sympathetic.

"Oh, I suppose," she said, very gently, "that there is something to be said in the defense of everyone. By and by I may feel less bitter toward you, Mr. Hadden. I shall remember that you did not spare yourself—that you might not have told me—her voice fell to a whisper—'everything'."

"Thank you for saying so much. If there were any reparation I would make it. You should know that."

"Reparation!" Her eyes flashed. "How can you speak of reparation?"

"And is there no atonement possible, even for the most wretched?"

She looked down at me almost sternly, for she had risen at the question. Then, as if a great weight had been drawn from her face, I saw the gentle pity of womanhood reflected there. A strange sweetness came into her voice as she spoke slowly, almost unwillingly. It was a rarest of rare things, comfort she was bringing to me. She was suggesting a way of hope after all.

"Because of your life has been lost to the world. I leave out the personal loss to which I am alluding, because of your weakness, to call it by the most charitable name, the world is the poorer for one strong soul."

"Yes," I said, humbly, "yes."

"But it," she spoke more eagerly, "if through your life were saved for the world—if it were to be a life for a life—"

A moment I stared at her, uncomprehending. She had suggested a way of escape so romantic that to one living in this twentieth century it may seem absurd. But the very audacity of the suggestion appealed to me.

"Yes," I cried, passionately, "I understand. It is to be a life for a life! In some way, no matter how, I am to save a life for the life that has been lost through me."

"At least that should restore your self-respect," she assented almost coldly. She wished me to understand that whatever I might or might not do was no concern of hers. But I was not to be discouraged.

"And if I am so fortunate as to accomplish this"—I held her eyes steadily—"will you, I should like to know, rather, will the world, your world, remember that? Shall I then stand on the same plane as other men in your respect?"

"I vouch nothing for the world, and certainly not," she added, laughingly, "for myself."

I felt an emotion that was very near that of triumph. It is extraordinary how in the most sacred of moments the passion to conquer, to subdue, obtrudes itself. Henceforth, whether this woman would have it or no, there was a bond between us. She had suggested a way of escape. I accepted it with passionate gratitude. I swore to myself, as I stood before her, that I would not rest until I had accomplished the sacred task she had set me. I answered with a boldness that surprised even myself:

"From this day my one object in life shall be to make the reparation you have suggested. But when that is done you will remember that I saw her hand tremble as she lightly touched her hair. It was not so much embarrassment that brought the slow blush to her cheek as anger. She turned from me without a word. I watched her disappear with a strange exultation."

step. It is true that the divine madness too soon passes; the reaction comes; one is restored sharply to the normal pole by the rude awakening that comes with failure or with self-consciousness. But sometimes consequences are already set in motion and it is too late to draw back; there is nothing for it but to be borne onward with the tide.

"So it was with me. I might return to America—take up the threads of life where I had left them—laugh at the newspaper accounts of the tragedy—deny them, or at least live them down. If I did that, I should know exactly what would happen to me. I could count upon just how much happiness would come to my life, how much interest routine and duty would yield me.

But my imagination had been set adrift. A world of chivalry and romance beckoned to me alluringly. And if I trod the mazes of that fairy world, there would be none to ridicule me. I would be none to know that I had set out to find it. If it proved to be only a world of dreams and fantasy, I should at least have had the delicious excitement of seeking it, of playing 'make-believe'—the most fascinating of all games."



It Was the Woman Again.

changing game, after all is said, for boy or man.

I had come to Europe secretly, desiring the hope that just such an adventure would come to me as had happened to-night. The 33 years of my life had been passed in an atmosphere usually dead and prosaic.

When I had left the university, I swiftly had become a secretary of a multi-millionaire who lived in an obscure town of the middle West. I had trudge the dreary and stupid circle of business routine, my eyes bent sullenly to earth. Success had come, or what world calls success—money and a measure of respect that is given to one with a substantial bank account. But that is not life.

And then one day I awoke. I realized with a start that life was slipping away from me; and with the hours the golden aspirations and delights that make life worth while. I was simply a machine, rather a cog in the huge machine of business. I rebelled. In one day I broke the shackles that bound me. I was free. My life was at last my very own. I could do with it what I pleased. I could go where I wished.

And so I had come to Europe. I had hugged to my breast the common but pathetic delusion that across the seas I should find something—just what I did not know—something that would make life more joyous, give to it charm and interest.

I had searched diligently for the magic talisman in strange cities, and of course I had not found it. The blue flower is not to be plucked so easily. Instead of happiness and diversion, disgrace and misery had come. Should I return home, men, imbibed, averting the eyes? Or should I save myself of the way of escape which this woman had lightly suggested?

And if I chose to consider it a quest, a challenge, there was none, not even she, to forbid, though she, of all the people in the world, would be the last to consider it such. And if fortune

aid me, as it did most adventuresome souls, I would seek her out, though I searched the wide world for her. And then, perhaps—

I crushed in my hand the programme of music that lay on the table. Pah! It was the woman, then, that gave to this fantastic mission its vague thrill; not the idea of the mission itself, but the woman whose fate I had wronged, and who hated me, that called. She sat in the list; in her hands was the laurel wreath; for her I would endure the shock of battle.

I sat quietly, still staring out into the night. The lights of green and red and blue had burned away long ago. The lake, packed in its cradle of shaggy mountains, stirred gently under the moon. The terrace was almost deserted, and still I lingered. Disillusionment must come too soon, and with the morrow inevitable defeat.

Suddenly I became ill at ease. I turned slowly in my seat. I looked furtively about me. It was as if I had spoken a secret thought aloud, and one were listening, watching.

I was watched, and with a curious intensity that was almost savage. A woman was seated at the window of the writing room. She held rigidly in both hands the English journal in which my photograph had appeared.

Our eyes met. I gazed at her standing perfectly still. It was not embarrassment or anger that held me; it was rather wonder. For on the face of this woman was the same intent, curious surprise that had astonished me so much earlier in the evening, when I first met Mrs. Brett and her daughter.

A measure of surprise is natural enough, when the original of a photograph unexpectedly appears before one. But I knew that this fact alone did not explain the strained look of

her. Again her light laughter pursued me.

"Fardon, monsieur," she called, still mockingly.

I turned and looked silently at my torments.

Mischancefully she pointed at a jeweled finger to a placard on the wall.

"Gests are forbidden to carry away the papers from the reading room," I read.

To assume a tragic mien at this delirious bit of badinage would have been absurd. I could not help laughing. But I answered with a few piques:

"Hotel proprietors are forbidden to annoy guests with offensive photographs in the hotel reading rooms! That is a new rule I shall have placed upon the walls of my room."

"She clapped her hands delightedly. "A beautiful and much-needed rule," she murmured, her eyes sparkling. Then she came toward me a few steps, and I saw that she was holding a figure in the full light. Her eyes no longer mocked; they beseeched.

"Forgive me. It was cruel to laugh. But when I catch you, like a naughty child, stealing the papers, I shall figure in the full light. Her eyes no longer mocked; they beseeched.

"On the contrary, madam, I should thank you. It was my first laugh for weeks."

"Monsieur!" She came a step still nearer the door, standing still, still staring as she moved. She looked at me pitifully.

But her sympathy was too easily awakened to be convincing. I understood that she was, in fact, determined to speak to me when I first entered the room.

"Madam," I said, cynically, "it is you who are breaking a rule now—a rule of society."

"For example?" she demanded, her eyes darkening.

"It is forbidden to show sympathy to one who has been unfortunate."

She sighed, but she smiled. Evidently she had expected from me a banality to the effect that society does not sanction a woman's speaking to a strange man.

"But that was a gesture of contempt—the canon of a newspaper! Who believes that?"

"All the world, apparently," I answered, amused at the vigor of her denial.

"Well, I for one, do not."

I regarded her, still cynical, and yet I was moved. Here was the first sympathy shown to me. I felt inclined to speak to her, to show her and insincere sympathy of an adventurer, who offered it for her own ends. She would demand its price presently. And yet I was not ungrateful for her interest in me for the price—well, is anything quite gratuitous? Whether the payment be in gold or gratitude or love or obedience—we all have our price.

And why do you not believe the account of this newspaper?"

"You are a race of warriors. One with such blood in one's veins does not play the coward. No!" She struck back together to emphasize her conviction.

"A race of warriors!" I repeated wonderingly.

"Has not every English gentleman the blood of warriors in his veins?" she asked, smiling.

"But I am an American," I said quietly.

"Impossible!" She looked at me, really bewildered now. "An American! But the ladies that you spoke to last night were not Americans?"

"And can an American not speak to Englishwomen?" I demanded coolly. That she should mention them at all annoyed me.

"Then you are not"—she twisted a bracelet on her arm, then looked at me—"if you are not even a relation?"

"I am not even a friend," I said, still more coldly. "Good night, madam."

"Good night, monsieur."

She sank into a fustian, as one who is too astounded to make even the physical effort of standing. For the first time since she had spoken she was not acting. As I walked toward the door she saw me, my foot, frowning in her perplexity.

CHAPTER VII.

Countess Sarahoff Wins and Loses.

The next morning, when I first awoke, I wondered vaguely why this day seemed to be so different from the long and dreary succession of yesterdays—why it promised eager hopes and eager interests to be fulfilled. Then I remembered, and my pulses beat faster. Yesterday I had despised; to-day I hoped.

A woman had come into my life—a goddess—Diana of the silver bow, with a bow in her hand and an arrow in the Alps; heights I could not see from my window in the blue distance, yet she had called, she had spoken to me. Then, disdainfully cruel, she had gone and she had come. But I was to pursue.

The very audacity of my resolution gave to it its charm. I was not to rest until I had accomplished my uncertain mission. This was by its very nature an incredibly difficult did not daunt me? But how was I to set about it? A life for a life. To save to the world a strong and buoyant soul for the strange, boyish soul that had been washed beyond all selfishness and my weakness. However romantic, it was a tangible enough ideal.

But was I to wander about, like a knight of medieval times, seeking to succor one in peril and distress—to rescue beautiful maidens from grim ogres and terrible dragons? I smiled at this absurd resemblance of my uncertain task to theirs.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Illinois State News

Recent Happenings of Interest in the Various Cities and Towns.

CARNEGIE TO AID AUGUSTANA.

Offers \$20,000. Provided the College Raises \$40,000 Additional.

Moline.—Andrew Carnegie has offered Augustana college \$20,000 to apply to its endowment fund, provided the college raises \$40,000 additional. Augustana synd. in behalf of the college, is raising \$250,000 for the endowment fund, to be completed by the close of the semi-centennial of the college in 1910.

The college received 20,000 money (\$5,291.61 in United States money) from Consul Oscar Ekman, Swedish philanthropist, the gift having been ordered on his deathbed.

GRAND JURY IS ANGRY.

Peoria Inquisitors Blame Governor for Failure.

Peoria.—Because, as they claim, Gov. Deneen did not lend the assistance they thought he should have done in furnishing them witnesses, the grand jury refused to return any indictments against the persons alleged to have been implicated in the blowing up of the school board safe and the theft of the Dougherty forged scrip.

The grand jury did not mention the name of Gov. Deneen in their final report, but did say: "We, the grand jury, have been hampered owing to the fact that we have not had proper assistance we were led to expect at the proper time."

After their discharge they explained that they meant the governor. The state's attorney and Chief of Police Wilson told them that Deputy Warden Simms of the Joliet penitentiary promised them to tell the whole story of the plotting of Dougherty and Eddie Tate in prison if Gov. Deneen wanted him to talk.

Simms was one of the last witnesses, but the jurors seemed to believe he might have told more, and were, consequently, angry at the governor and wanted to summon him before them, but this attempt was balked by the state's attorney.

PLAN TO GET CONVENTIONS.

Chicago Business Men Want Big Political Gatherings.

Chicago.—Plans for raising a \$150,000 campaign fund for the purpose of bringing one or both of the national political conventions to Chicago in 1908 were formulated by the executive committee of the Chicago Commercial association at a meeting at the Great Northern hotel. It was practically agreed that merchants or others who subscribed to the fund would have only to pay 60 per cent. of their original subscription pledge in case one of the conventions was brought to Chicago.

THOMAS M. LOGAN DEAD.

Brother of Famous Soldier Passes Away Suddenly.

Murphysboro.—Thomas M. Logan, aged 80 years, dropped dead at his home here. He was a brother of Gen. John A. Logan and the son of Dr. John Logan, a pioneer who donated the site for the founding of Murphysboro.

Thomas M. Logan was instrumental in the upbuilding of Murphysboro, owned a large tract of property here and was associated with Vice President Clarke of the Missouri Pacific in the real estate business in Murphysboro years ago.

Mr. Logan was one of the best strings of race horses in the middle west and was well known throughout this section of the country.

REV. J. NORDBY.



Lee (Ill.) Clergyman Who Was Recently Elected Bishop of the Eastern District of the Norwegian Lutheran Synod of America.

Body Found in Old Clatern.

Benion.—The decomposed body of Thomas Pritchard was found in a chert tomb in an old saloon building in Sesser, a village in the county located on the new extension of the Burlington road. Pritchard had been missing since June 8, Coroner Adams held an inquest and returned a verdict that Pritchard had been murdered and the neck broken.

Company Declared Bankrupt.

Decatur.—Felix B. Trail, president and principal owner of the Tall Manna, a furniture company of this city, has failed, his liabilities being estimated at \$250,000. He was out of the city in the west, when the bankruptcy proceedings were started, and has not been heard from since.

Illinois Politician Wins.

Freeport.—Homer F. Aspinwall, 66 years old, a well-known Republican leader, was married in Miss Sible Clingan at the home of her parents in Dakota village. Mr. Aspinwall is the candidate for the Republican nomination for state treasurer.

Victim of Premature Fourth.

Emmagan.—Walter Mayrworth, aged seven, died of tetanus, the first victim here of those who celebrate a victory Fourth. He was wounded in the hand by a toy pistol and lockjaw followed.

Stone Tied to Dead Man.

Carr.—Bearing evidence of murder, the body of T. A. French was found in the Wabash river. Tied to his neck was a heavy rock. French had been slaying a week.

Girl Meets Death on Excursion.

Springfield.—John Krus, 17 years old, was killed when he fell from the rear platform of a picnic train as it rounded a curve just outside the city.

Big Sewer Contract Let.

Pana.—The contract for the sewerage for west Pana was awarded to John Ham, of Litchfield, Ill., for \$10,473. By rejecting all bids one week ago and re-advertising for bids the city saves the taxpayers over \$5,000.

Illinois Pioneer Woman Dead.

Dakota.—Mrs. O. D. Weaver, 87, died at the home of her son, O. D. Weaver, 2524 Third Winchester avenue, Peoria, while visiting there with her husband. She was born in Center county in 1811.

Grand Minister Dead.

Girard.—Rev. M. V. Stumiller, the founder of the First Baptist church of Girard, and for years its pastor, is dead. For 40 years he was active in the ministry. At the time of his death he was 81 years old.

Paying Good Price for Cops.

Arthur.—Arthur dealers have contracts for large deliveries of new sets at 25 cents per bushel, which seems to be considered above the prices paid for other lots. The present crop promises to be a bumper.