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The Imprisoned Heiress

—OR—
The Spectre of Egremont.

CHAPTER XXII.

Lady Egremont struggled to command herself, and, with flashing eyes and angry demeanor, cried out:

"Lord Ashcroft. I am astonished! Do you call this infringement or hostility gentlemanly?"

Lord Ashcroft colored, but, as he had been actuated by the most honorable and creditable motives in penetrating to the haunted rooms, he was by no means crushed or overwhelmed at being discovered there or accused of ungentlemanliness.

"We will not enter into a discussion of my conduct here, madam," he responded, with a significant glance at the pale and alarmed Aimee. "Should you desire explanations—"

"I do desire them," said her ladyship, haughtily. "Be kind enough to accompany me to my rooms."

Lord Ashcroft bowed and passed into the drawing-room, but not before he had whispered a few assuring words to the drooping prisoner.

Lady Egremont lingered to address a few stern sentences to Aimee, and a stinging reprimand to Toplift; then she led the way into the anteroom, down a private staircase Lord Ashcroft had not seen, into her sitting-room, with which the staircase directly communicated.

Here she closed the door, and turned upon her guest.

"I will hear your explanations now, my lord."

"I have only to say, madam, that I was desirous of visiting the closed rooms, and looking upon a scene which is connected so many interesting associations, and your assurance that the rooms were uninhabited silenced any scruples I might have had."

Lady Egremont bit her lip until it almost bled, and a tide of indignation arose to her mouth, and was suppressed only because it was not expedient to utter them.

In her rage and alarm she hastily looked about for an excuse for Aimee's presence there, and was soon successful.

"You must have been surprised," she forced herself to say, "to find

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be turned from your betrothed. Xina has been informed by her guardian of your love and admiration for her, and she loves you deeply, fondly, and devotedly. In truth, as I may say frankly, since you are engaged to wed her of your own free will, the poor child would be miserable without you."

"It is enough, madam. An Ashcroft is always honorable."

"I know it," cried Lady Egremont, triumphantly. "You would not break your promise of marriage to Alexina, and you will never betray the secret of the haunted room. I depend upon your lordship's honor."

"Your trust is well placed. So long as the Lady Alexina cherishes an interest in me so long shall I be bound to her. Should her affection for me vanish I shall of course be free. But I shall never betray your ladyship's confidence."

Lady Egremont began to feel her alarm subside and her rage depart, and she showed more self-confidence and ease of manner than since the discovery of Lord Ashcroft in her prisoner's room.

She detained her guest some time, endeavoring to obliterate all thoughts from his mind of Aimee, little imagining how far the acquaintance of the young couple had progressed, and making frequent allusions to Alexina's regard for him. She dwelt, too, upon his promise of secrecy, as if anxious to impress it upon his mind, and he was obliged to reiterate it several times before she would be entirely reassured.

At length, as the riders were seen in the distance returning to Egremont she permitted him to depart, and sank down to moan over his discovery of her long-guarded secret, while he returned to his room, meditating upon the explanation she had given.

"I don't quite believe it," was his ultimate decision. "That pure angel is not the child of such parents as she would have me believe. I noticed how she avoided my eye when she told the tale. That nurse's visit suggested an idea to me which is far more probable. I must work secretly to unravel the mystery."

CHAPTER XXIII.

After Lord Ashcroft had retired from her presence Lady Egremont lost her calmness and self-possession and gave herself up to emotions of the wildest alarm. The assurance that had sustained her throughout the interview with Lord Ashcroft deserted her, and she paced the floor, murmuring:

"Perhaps he suspects—oh, no, he cannot. Why should he? I did not overdo my part. I was as calm and quiet as if my whole future were not at stake. He thinks I told him the truth about Aimee's parentage, and if he were to suspect the real truth we should be overwhelmed with ruin. What fate led him to the haunted rooms? Was there a fate in it?"

She asked herself these questions in a hollow, apprehensive tone, as though terror were brooding at her heart.

She was walking about thus, her face flushed, her hair disarranged, and her manner full of excitement, when her husband entered the room fresh from his ride.

"What is the matter, Evelyn?" he asked, in astonishment. "Are you ill? Has Aimee escaped?"

"No, Evart, I am not ill, and Aimee is safe in her rooms. But she and Lord Ashcroft have met."

Lord Egremont looked at his wife as though he believed her mind to be wandering.

"It is true, Evart!" she cried, excitedly. "You know that when his lordship declared his intention of remaining at home I determined to stay, too. But little did I imagine what would occur in your absence. I remained in this room, and Toplift came down here to see me about some books and flowers for Aimee, and the child was left alone."

"And she managed to escape?"

"No, not that, Lord Ashcroft, prompted by curiosity, undertook to go through the haunted rooms, as I have often heard he would. Toplift let the key of the outer door in the pocket of her cast-off gown, and Aimee, thinking Lord Ashcroft to be her governess, unlocked the door and admitted him."

Lord Egremont uttered an exclamation of terror, and seated himself in the nearest chair, being unable to stand.

(To be continued)

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Chummy, An Intelligent Bull Terrier

TORONTO, Dec. 19 (C. P.)—"Chummy" a four-year-old Boston bull terrier of Toronto is a mathematical dog wonder. He distinguishes between questions; multiplies, adds, subtracts, or divides, and without hesitation. The interviewer went to see if the dog was as good as he had heard.

His owner held a biscuit in his hand, looked deep into Chummy's eyes for half a minute, then asked him "How old are you?" Chummy gave four quick barks—and got the biscuit. "How many toes have you?" He barked once, then after a pause, six times, to indicate 16. How many ears? Two quick barks. "How many tails have you?" One indignant thump with that appendage on the floor. These were

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Profitless Prophecy

It's No Joke Being A Weather Prophet When The Anti-Cyclones Don't Play Fair.

I am one of the most abused persons on the face of the earth. In other words I am a weather prophet.

It is a dreadful confession to have to make—especially this year; but I wonder if those who are inclined to be hardest on my colleagues and myself realize the difficulties which lie in the way of those responsible for the weather forecasts.

Take "depressions"! The "prophets" have wind of one advancing at a certain speed and in a certain path from the Atlantic. They calculate that the disturbances will reach us in twelve hours and that it will pass over this country by such a track, and that wet, gloomy weather will, in consequence, prevail in particular districts.

Off It Goes Again!

But the "depression" meets with some interference out in the Atlantic, or it is retarded or diverted in some other way, with the result that not only does it not maintain its uniform speed, but it is switched on to another line. Consequently, it arrives a day late—and not where it was expected.

Another "depression" will be moving away, and fine weather is promised. Suddenly the wretched thing comes to a halt and stands "at ease" for two or three days during which the atrocious weather continues.

Then sometimes one of those fair weather areas, "anti-cyclones," arrives over us, and we announce bright, sunny conditions. When an "anti-cyclone" turns up we expect it to remain for, at least, two or three days. But lo! this particular "anti-cyclone" moves away without giving us a single day of fine weather.

One prophet—an amateur—predicted a drought for this past summer, and the prediction received some attention at the time. For that sort of prophecy, however, there is absolutely no excuse. It has been shown over and over again that "long shots" at forecasting cannot be any more than guesses. Indeed, weather science, so far as forecasting is concerned, is still in its infancy.

U.S. Republican for Bigger Navy

Bill Introduced at Washington to Strengthen Fighting Naval Force.

Washington, Dec. 20 (A.P.)—Coincident with the passage by the House late yesterday of the Naval Supply Bill carrying nearly \$800,000,000 for activities already authorized, Representative Britten, of Illinois, ranking Republican on the House naval committee, introduced a measure to appropriate \$101,400,000 for new naval construction.

His measure would authorize the building of four scout cruisers costing \$11,100,000 each and one floating dry dock to cost \$7,500,000, the elevation of the turret guns of 13 battleships at an aggregate cost of \$6,500,000, and would increase the limit of cost of the two airplane carriers Lexington and Saratoga, now building, from \$23,000,000 to \$33,000,000.

Mr. Britten's Bill was automatically referred to the Naval Committee and he said hearings would be held on the proposal would serve the purpose of drawing from Navy Department officials, the information as to the exact condition of the American navy he has been seeking to bring out through a congressional investigation.

On the Senate side of the capitol, the Navy Committee shelved the resolution of Senator King, Democrat, Utah, proposing a searching inquiry into the status of the navy, but agreed to seek from the Navy Department, data which will show whether the United States is keeping up its end of the arms conference 5-5-3 ratio.

In addition to the reference made to it in the Britten Bill, the question of gun elevation also was brought again into prominence by the announcement at the White House that a note setting forth the views of Great Britain was before the Senate department.

Hitherto, the officials had not revealed that the British representations on the subject went beyond mere informal suggestions and inquiries.

Neither the White House nor the State Department would elaborate on yesterday's announcement, or indicate what might be the next step in the diplomatic angle of the controversy.

McMurdo's Store News.

GREETINGS AND THANKS.

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