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TANGLED THREADS

CHAPTER XLV.

For one awful moment after the foregoing paralyzing declaration, Helen sat staring blankly at her mother. Then she sprang to her feet, with a half-stifled shriek.

"That man my father!" she cried wildly, and throwing out her hands, with a passionate gesture of repulsion. "Mamma, you cannot mean it! Oh, I cannot believe it! I will not believe it! I will not have it so!"

Mrs. Lancaster had also arisen, and now stood regarding the girl in blank dismay, mingled with wonder.

"Helen!" she said almost sternly. "I can understand that you are astonished at what I have told you, but I cannot understand such an unwarrantable display of passion and rebellion, in view of the fact. Perhaps I have done wrong to keep the truth from you for so many years. I fear I have made a

grave mistake; but I did what I thought was for your best good. I felt sure, if I allowed you to know, during your childhood, that your father was living, your youthful curiosity would be aroused, and you would be continually asking questions that would be painful to me to answer. Indeed, I believed that he was the same as dead to me, and that we should never be reunited in this world. I knew, also, that with your loving, sensitive temperament, you would ceaselessly yearn for him and never be satisfied until you found him. I have said this to you already—when I recently revealed the fact that he was still living—and I will not rehearse. Going back still farther you will remember how overcome I was when I learned, through that letter of Marjorie's to you, who Rob's uncle was. At first I was so overcome that I thought the truth would have to come out. All the old bitterness was revived, however—yes, intensified, if that could be possible, for I had begun to realize that the proud and aristocratic uncle of your lover did not wish him to marry out of his own gilded circle, and when, like a thunderbolt, it was revealed to me that that uncle was my own husband, and your father, the blow seemed tenfold more crushing, and

I said to myself that I would never allow you to marry Robert Eggleston. Of course, I had to give you some explanation, having betrayed so much, but I purposely made it blind, vowing to myself that you should never learn your real name, if I could help it. Even when we talked of this matter only a while ago, although my feelings had begun to change somewhat, I could not bring myself to tell you that I told you that, sometime, I might reveal it, but I resolved to put off that day as long as possible, little dreaming it was so near. I think, Helen, that half that made me ill was fretting over the discovery that Mr. Lancaster was Rob's uncle, and the knowledge that, in spite of all my past suffering, I loved my husband still."

"Loved him?" When he had insulted you in the worst possible way that a man could insult his wife?" interposed Helen in tones that rang with scorn.

"Yes, Helen; for, while I was ill, I began to realize that I had not been blameless. I should have been more patient—I should have waited until he had time to grow calm and reasonable, when he doubtless would have seen how he had wronged me," Mrs. Lancaster argued feelingly.

"I had no right to leave him so summarily—without a word, making his home desolate, and dooming him to a terrible suspense. When I found that I was to become a mother, I felt, for a time, as if I had committed an unpardonable crime—as if I had stolen from him the sweetest hopes of his life, and this sense of wrong grew upon me, and embittered my cup tenfold, after you came, for I knew you rightly belonged to him as much as to me. But I was proud and obstinate. I would not yield, and the first step toward a reconciliation. It was not until I began to fear that I was never going to recover from that illness a year ago last winter that I began to relent, and realize that Marjorie's worth was more guilty than anyone else. I have told you how she deliberately planned to ruin me, to gain the man whom she loved."

"Was it Mr. Lancaster whom she loved? I seem to be rather mixed regarding the two men," said Helen, somewhat sharply, as she recalled the fact that Mrs. Ellsworth and Marjorie had been in the same party with Mr. Lancaster and Rob during their travels.

"No; she loved the other."

"And who was that?"

"My own cousin, John Wilton," Helen started.

"Why, do you mean that Mr. Wilton who was at the Ellises, in the Adirondacks, two years ago?"

"Yes; although I did not know that he was in the place until the day before he left," said Mrs. Lancaster, with a sigh, as she recalled that painful interview. "He was the only child of my father's brother, and came to live with us when his mother died. He was always fond of me, and was heartbroken when I chose another—but you know all that."

"Have you ever seen him since?"

"Yes. You remember the day that you went on the excursion, when you met Marjorie?"

"Yes."

"I went into the woods that morning to gather mosses. I took a book with me, and while resting in the glen, John, who was out hunting, came suddenly upon me. I had not a suspicion until that moment that he was in the place. We had a harrowing interview, during which he expressed great sorrow for what he had done to mar my life; he even begged that he might see a share of his wealth upon us, but I would not have allowed him to do so, even if we had not been beyond the need of it at that time. He mentioned that he had met you, and a few days later I heard you speak of having been introduced to a Mr. Wilton, of some time previous, and you also stated that he had just left town."

"He was a nice-looking—a kind looking—man, mamma. I remember that I was attracted to him," said Helen.

"He always was kind, and as generous as a prince, and my feelings have changed toward him also of late; I hope I may meet him again sometime, and tell him so," said her mother, a wistful look in her blue eyes. "I am so happy today, Helen, in view of this reunion with your father, I feel almost as if I could forgive my worst enemy," she concluded, with a tender thrill in her voice.

"Even Mrs. Ellsworth, perhaps?" said Helen, bitterly.

"Poor woman!" said Mrs. Lancaster, with grave sweetness. "I am sure that she must be very wretched, for no one can wrong others, as she has done, and maintain such a vindictive spirit as she has recently manifested, without bringing upon herself great suffering. Her sins must eventually recoil upon her own head."

"But, mamma, you have not yet told me how you happened to meet Mr. Lancaster today," Helen observed, after a moment of silence.

Mrs. Lancaster told her of the accident in the grandstand, and which had so nearly proved to be of a serious nature, and how, just in the midst of it, Mr. Lancaster had suddenly appeared before her; how she had fainted, and he had afterward taken her to "The Antlers" where all the past had been explained and all sense of wrong and bitterness blotted out of their hearts.

"He feels very regretful, Helen, because he has been working against his own child in opposing Rob's desire to marry you," she observed, after she had rehearsed the most important facts of the interview between herself and her husband.

"Oh, then he acknowledges having opposed it, does he?" said Helen, a crimson spot burning upon either cheek while she wondered how much Mr. Lancaster had confessed to her mother.

"Yes; he admits that he took Rob away, hoping that he might get weaned from—well," Mrs. Lancaster now flushed with embarrassment. "It may as well out with it—he could not be reconciled to the idea of his marrying the daughter of a common dressmaker."

"You were no 'common dressmaker'!" Helen sharply retorted, but secretly relieved as she realized that her mother was still ignorant of the wretched and ignominious transaction between Mr. Lancaster and Hubert Alton.

"Well, but, dear, he did not know that."

"He might have known had he taken pains to inform himself," said Helen, perversely. "It does not follow because a woman is a dressmaker, a milliner, or follows some other trade, that she is 'common' or unfit to mate with her more fortunate fellow-beings; there are doubtless thousands of women who have been tenderly reared

and cultivated, and who have suddenly been reduced to poverty and the necessity of earning their daily bread. I have no patience or sympathy with such insufferable prejudice," the girl spiritedly concluded, her heart as hard as adamant against the man who had made use of such dishonorable measures to separate her from Rob.

"Helen," said her mother, regarding her in deep distress, "it is not like you to be so harsh and unforgiving. What has come over you, my child, to make you so bitter against anyone, and especially against the father for whom you have always yearned?"

Helen flushed crimson under the reproach, turned sharply upon her mother and opened her lips as if impelled to an angry retort, but she closed them resolutely again.

It had been upon the tip of her tongue to tell her about the letter and telegram but something restrained her, and she merely returned in an icy tone:

"I think him worthy of all condemnation."

"But I love him, Helen—with all my heart and soul I love him, and—I have forgiven him," said Mrs. Lancaster, with quivering lips, a yearning tenderness in her tremulous lips.

Helen started and glanced into the pleading face before her. Her own softened instantly and her conscience reproached her. She glided to her side and twined her arms lovingly about her.

"Have you, dear?" she queried gently. "Is there no lingering bitterness or regret in your heart?"

"No, my darling; only because of the fact that I did not forget and become reconciled to him long ago," was the tearful reply. "You forget that I, also, have done wrong—that I, too, needed to be forgiven, and that he has suffered no less than I. Ah, Helen, I feel very humble, as well as joyful, in view of the great happiness that has come to me today."

"Then forgive me, mamma. I would not wound you for the world, and I will never utter another disparaging word in your presence again," Helen returned, as she kissed her tenderly.

"But that does not satisfy me, love," said her mother, searching her face, which had grown grave and sincere again. "I want you to receive him cordially, as your father—to take him into your heart and love him, as I do."

But Helen shrank from that as if she felt the sting of a lash.

Love the man who had bartered her like a piece of merchandise, to keep her from marrying the man whom she adored?

[To be Continued.]

EXPLORERS SEEK IMMENSE TREASURES

\$500,000,000 Buried in a South American Lake.

ENGLISH DETERMINED TO GET IT

Rain Alone Needed to Unveil Marvelous Treasures, the Votive Tributes to an Indian Deity.

London, July 16.—In a small city office situated in London-Wall news is anxiously awaited from a man who is sitting on the edge of a mountain lake in Colombia, Central America, waiting for rain.

Heavy rain may mean for him and for those in the city office in London-Wall, the recovery of treasure worth, so experts say, at least \$500,000,000. The hero of the vigil is H. Knowles, managing director in Bogota of Contractors, Limited.

The story of the company is one of the most amazing romances of treasure-seeking in history. The Lake of Guatavita, in Colombia, lies in the basin formed by the cone of an extinct volcano. It stands 9,000 to 10,000 feet above the sea level, and is but a few miles from the thriving little coal city of Bogota. Many centuries ago it was the Sacred Lake of the Chibchas, a race which at the time of the Spanish conquest numbered over 1,000,000 individuals.

Chibchas worshipped the "Gilded Man," and devoutly believed that their deity made his home at the bottom of the Lake of Guatavita. Periodically they are declared to have made pilgrimages to the lake, when they cast every imaginable kind of treasure, gold, silver and jewels into the waters with the object of propitiating the "Gilded Man," who, through his army of priests, threatened all kinds of pains and penalties unless the treasure were offered in sufficient quantities.

The story of the Chibchas has many times been investigated by explorers, and all agree in believing that the lake contains untold treasure. Humboldt, the famous traveler and historian, was one of those who estimated its value at \$500,000,000.

An Early Failure.

Quesada, the Spanish conqueror of the Chibchas, was told the story of the treasure, and succeeded in reducing the water of the lake, then 214 feet deep to 15 feet. Then the sides fell in, and all his labor was wasted. Further attempts were abandoned, and the lake regained to a very large extent its former depth.

Where the great Spanish administrator failed, however, Contractors, Limited, a prosaic British syndicate, formed just over six years ago, has determined to succeed.

The syndicate was formed for the purpose of exploring the region obtained from the Colombian Government to drain the lake and recover for their own uses the treasure believed to be hidden by its waters. Among its directors are R. J. Price, M. P. for the eastern division of Norfolk, chairman, and C. J. de Muretta, its capital was originally \$150,000, and was increased to \$175,000 in 1903.

After six years of hard work, however, some of those connected with the company are beginning to believe that the "Gilded Man" is still at the bottom of the lake guarding his treasure. Encouraging finds of isolated gold and silver gods and jeweled goddesses have from time to time supported the tradition of the treasure, but so far the dreams of untold wealth have not materialized.

First the lake was drained. It was

not an easy task, for it is some nine miles in length, and unforeseen difficulties were continually confronting the workers. The most harassing of these was the constant rain, which, winter and summer, hardly ever ceased.

Lake Drained.

At last, however, toward the end of 1903, the welcome news reached London that Mr. Knowles and his staff of engineers and workmen had succeeded in cutting through the basin of the lake, and the water had been drained off successfully. There was great jubilation, and preparations were made for the large consignments of gold, silver and jewels which might be expected to arrive by the next boats.

Unfortunately, however, the water is not the only barrier on which the "Gilded Man" has to rely for the safe-keeping of his treasure. The jubilation in London-Wall was summarily ended by a cablegram stating that 25 feet of solid mud, or some 30,000,000 cubic feet in all, still lay between the treasure-seekers and their quest.

But what is 30,000,000 cubic feet of mud when \$500,000,000 is at stake? A new engineering feat was decided on—the construction of a great dam across the hole made in the side of the basin terminating in a shaft through which the mud should be washed and carefully precipitated, so as to secure the gold and silver treasures as they were disturbed from their hiding place of centuries.

The dam was constructed, and with it the cleansing shaft, but while the work was in progress a strange thing had happened. The "Gilded Man" was evidently at work again.

For over three years the engineers had worked in the rain, in such a down-pour, indeed, as was unprecedented in Central America. As the water ran from the lake, however, the rain had stopped, and a drought equally without a parallel in the history of the country set in. For more than two and a half years not a drop of rain had fallen at the scene of the operations, and when the engineers had completed the construction of the dam it was only to find the sun had baked the 30,000,000 cubic feet of mud into the consistency of hard rock.

Hidden Wealth.

Then, metaphorically speaking, the engineers sat down and wept. The rocklike substance still lies as an impenetrable bomb-proof lid over the golden gods and the silver dishes and ornaments, to say nothing of the jeweled goddesses and their glittering handmaidens.

The few natives in the region, remnants of the great race of Chibchas, occasionally visit the scene and smile cheerfully at the downcast Englishmen. "It is all the work of the 'Gilded Man,'" who is watching over his treasure mountain," they say, and they plainly hint that when the rain comes—if ever it does come—to soften the mud, some other obstacle will defeat the desire of the treasure-seekers.

Letter after letter from Mr. Knowles to the little office in the city dejectedly refers to the determined opposition nature has placed in his way.

"I regret to say rain absolutely refuses to fall here," he wrote in one of his letters. "This is all the more heartrending as it falls all round. I have been here hoping against hope, hearing the thunder and seeing the storm pass us by, which is an awful trial, as you can imagine."

"We really ought to get all the water we want in May," he wrote again; "but nobody can guarantee this."

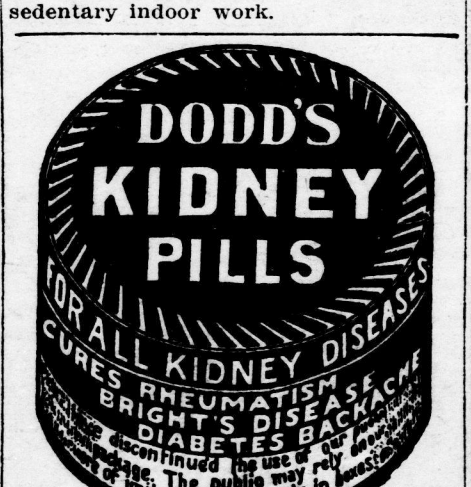
So far his pessimism has been justified. The "Gilded Man" is taking care of his own.

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Health says women are more subject to cancer than men is one of the latest discoveries in medicine. Sixty-three per cent of the deaths from cancer were women, while only 37 per cent were men. It seems, also, that those people who are employed in hard outdoor work are more subject to cancer than people employed at sedentary indoor work.



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