

At the same moment a glittering object was flung to the table in the center of the apartment.

Thud!

Every eye stared curiously at it. Harvey Talcott recoiled with a shudder of dread, and uttered a startled ejaculation.

For, interlinked one with the other, there on the table lay a manacle and a bracelet!

CHAPTER XLVII.

CONCLUSION.

The next moment Vincent Morton sprang from the garden through the open window into the library.

It was he who had flung the manacle and bracelet upon the table.

He had followed the action by appearing himself.

Now, flushed with excitement, he cast one tender look upon the woman he loved, and then fixed his glance on Harvey Talcott.

"Do you see them?" he cried, pointing to the objects on the table.

"That manacle is the one by which your accomplice, Alstynne, bound me to a horrible death, whence I providentially escaped.

"It is emblematical of the iron will and cruelty of your band of criminals.

"The bracelet, typical of the gold in plotting for which you risked all, comprises with the manacle a memento of evidence against you in the terrible persecution to which you have subjected your victims.

"To-day they confront you. To-day I—rescued last night by Ernest Clifton and escaped my bonds an hour later, and on your trail till now—assert that you do not know where the letters are with which you have so long menaced the welfare of the Clifton family."

Talcott was silent.

"The letters I took from the vault where you placed them; the counterfeit plates are in my possession."

A sudden cry of rage escaped from Talcott's lips.

"Foiled! baffled!" he raved. "But I will not be dragged to the jail like a common criminal. Alstynne, a bold break for liberty, ere it is too late!"

Talcott had sprung to the window.

"Be warned!" cried Langdon, menacingly. "You cannot escape. Every exit is guarded by the police."

A cry of pain and a quick shot were heard as Talcott disappeared.

A moment later a lieutenant of police entered the library.

He informed Langdon that Talcott, a fugitive fleeing from arrest, had been shot dead.

One hour later every element of distra-

tion and crime in the Clifton case had been banished from the mansion.

Alstynne and Viola Dale had been taken to jail, charged with conspiracy and attempted murder.

The woman had only once spoken to the man she loved.

"You are absolved from your promise," she said, sadly. "You could never love me, now that Ethel Clifton is restored to you and through no aid of mine."

In the drawing-room of the mansion that night there was a happy family reunion.

General Clifton, blessed by the presence of his son and niece, heard Langdon again detail all the tragic occurrences of the past few weeks.

Every mystery was explained away, and the satisfied detective confessed the case just ended to be the most difficult, yet signally successful, of all his eventful career.

Ethel and Vincent were entirely reconciled when the latter explained how, to save the life of his affianced wife, he had agreed to wed the siren, Viola Dale.

Langdon returned that same evening the diamonds he had recovered from Harvey Talcott.

With tears of gratitude General Clifton bade the brave detective good-night, when the family party disbanded.

Later he insisted on awarding Langdon a princely gift for all his unselfish devotion to himself and his loved ones.

For many days thereafter the community was intensely startled over the revelation of the true details of the Clifton case.

Only that portion of it referring to the counterfeit plates was kept secret.

Then amid the excitement of similar and more recent tragedies, it became a story of the past.

Viola Dale was not punished for her share in Harvey Talcott's crimes, but was sent out of the country at her own request.

Alstynne, Bartley, and Barnet were, however, tried on several charges, and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment in the State penitentiary.

Marie, the housemaid, was discharged from service, and with a wholesome fear of the police went to another city.

Howard, the detective, was found imprisoned in a suburban haunt of Talcott's accomplices and liberated.

Thus at last the tangled skeins of destiny were unraveled, and all the past made clear.

There was a happy wedding at the Clifton mansion when Vincent Morton led to the altar the millionaire's beautiful niece.

Happier still were the long golden years succeeding that event, when General Clif-