

THE GOLDEN KEY

Or "The Adventures of Ledgard."

By the Author of "What He Cost Her."

CHAPTER XXXIII.—(Cont'd).

He nodded, and pointed to the numbers which were going up. She flashed a sudden look upon him which more than compensated him for his defeat. At least he had earned her respect that day, as a man who knew how to accept defeat gracefully. They walked slowly up the paddock and stood on the edge of the crowd, whilst a great person went out to meet his horse amidst a storm of cheering. It chanced that he caught sight of Trent on the way, and, pausing for a moment, he held out his hand.

"Your horse made a magnificent fight for it, Mr. Trent," he said. "I'm afraid I only got the verdict by a fluke. Another time may you be the fortunate one!"

Trent answered him simply, but without awkwardness. Then his horse came in and he held out his hand to the crestfallen jockey, whilst with his left he patted Iris's head.

"Never mind, Dick," he said cheerfully, "you rode a fine race and the best horse won. Better luck next time."

Several people approached Trent, but he turned away at once to Ernestine.

"You will let me take you to Lady Tresham now," he said.

"If you please," she answered quietly.

They left the paddock by the underground way. When they emerged upon the lawn the band was playing and crowds of people were strolling about under the trees.

"The boxes," Trent suggested, "must be very hot now!"

He turned down a side walk away from the stand towards an empty seat under an elm-tree, and, after a moment's scarcely perceptible hesitation, she followed his lead. He laughed softly to himself. If this was defeat, what in the world was better?

"This is your first Ascot, is it not?" she asked.

"And your first defeat?"

"I suppose it is," he admitted cheerfully. "I rather expected to win, too."

"You must be very disappointed, I am afraid."

"I have lost," he said thoughtfully, "a gold cup. I have gained—"

She half arose and shook out her skirts as though about to leave him. He stopped short and found another conclusion to his sentence.

"Experience!"

A faint smile parted her lips. She resumed her seat.

"I am glad to find you," she said, "so much of a philosopher. Now talk to me for a few minutes about what you have been doing in Africa."

He obeyed her, and very soon she forgot the well-dressed crowd of men and women by whom they were surrounded, the light hum of gay conversation, the band which was playing the fashionable air of the moment.

She saw instead the long line of men of many races, stripped to the waist and toiling as though for their lives under a tropical sun, she saw the great brown water-jars passed down the line, men fainting beneath the burning sun and their places taken by others. She heard the shrill whistle of alarm, the beaten drum; she saw the spade exchanged for the rifle, and the long line of toilers disappear behind the natural earthwork which their labors had created.

She saw black forms rise stealthily from the long rank grass, a flight of quivering spears, the horrid battle-cry of the natives rang in her ears. The whole drama of the man's great past rose up before her eyes, made a living and real thing by his simple but vigorous language. That he effaced himself from it went for nothing; she saw him there perhaps more clearly than anything else, the central and domineering figure, a man of brains and nerve who, with his life in his hands, faced with equal immovability a herculean task and the chances of death. Certain phrases in Fred's letter had sunk deep into her mind, they were recalled very vividly by the presence of the man himself, telling his own story.

She sat in the sunlight with the music in her ears, listening to his abrupt vivid speech, and a fear came to her which blanched her cheeks and caught at her throat. The hand which held her dainty parasol of lace shook, and an indescribable thrill ran through her veins. She could no more think of this man as a clochopper, a coarse upstart without manners or imagination. In many ways he fell short of all the usual standards by which the men of her class were judged, yet she suddenly realized that he possessed a touch of that quality which lifted him at once far over their heads. The man had genius. Without education or culture he had yet achieved greatness. By his side the men who were passing about on the lawn became suddenly puppets. Form and style, manners and easy speech became suddenly stripped of their significance to her. The man at her side had none of these things, yet he was of a greater world. She felt her enmity towards him suddenly weakened. Only her pride now could help her. She called upon it fiercely. He was the man whom she had deliberately believed to be guilty of her father's death, the man whom she had set herself to entrap. She brushed

all those other thoughts away and banished firmly that dangerous kindness of manner into which she had been drifting.

And he, on his part, felt a glow of keen pleasure when he realized how the events of the day had gone in his favor. If not yet of her world, he knew now that his becoming so would be hereafter purely a matter of time. He looked up through the green leaves at the blue sky, bedappled with white, fleecy clouds, and wondered whether she guessed that his appearance here, his ownership of Iris, the studious care with which he had placed himself in the hands of a Saville Row tailor were all for her sake. It was true that she had condescended to Bohemianism, that he had first met her as a journalist, working for her living in a plain serge suit and a straw hat. But he felt sure that this had been to a certain extent a whim with her. He stole a sidelong glance at her. He saw the personification of daintiness, from the black patent shoes showing beneath the flouncing of her skirt, to the white hat with its clusters of roses. Her foulard gown was as simple as genius could make it, and she wore no ornaments, save a fine clasp to her waistband of dull gold, quaintly fashioned, and the fine gold chain around her neck, from which hung her racing glasses. She was to him the very type of everything that was aristocratic. It might be, as she had told him, that she chose to work for her living, but she knew as though by inspiration that her people and connections were of that world to which he could never belong, save on sufferance. He meant to belong to it, for her sake—to win her! He admitted the presumption, but then it would be presumption of any man to lift his eyes to her. He estimated his chances with common sense; he was not a man disposed to undervalue himself. He knew the power of his wealth and his advantage over the crowd of young men who were her equals by birth. For he had met some of them, had inquired into their lives, listened to their jargon, and had come in a faint sort of way to understand them. It had been an encouragement to him. After all it was only serious work, life lived out face to face with the great realities of existence which could make a man. In a dim way he realized that there were few in her own class likely to satisfy Ernestine. He even dared to tell himself that those things which rendered him chiefly unfit for her, the acquired vulgarities of his rougher life, were things which he could put away; that a time would come when he would take his place confidently in her world, and that the end would be success. And all the while from out of the blue sky Fate was forging a thunderbolt to launch against him!

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"And now," she said, rising, "you really must take me to Lady Tresham. They will think that I am lost."

"Are you still at your rooms?" he asked.

She nodded.

"Yes, only I'm having them spring-cleaned for a few days. I am staying at Tresham House."

"May I come and see you there?"

The man's quiet pertinacity kindled a sort of indignation in her. The sudden weakness in her defences was unbearable.

"I think not," she answered shortly. "You don't know Lady Tresham, and they might not approve. Lady Tresham is rather old-fashioned."

"Oh, Lady Tresham is all right," he answered. "I suppose I shall see you to-night if you are staying there. They have asked me to dinner!"

She was taken aback and showed it. Again he had the advantage. He did not tell her that on his return he had found scores of invitations from people he had never heard of before.

"You are by way of going into society, then," she answered insolently. "I don't think I've made any particular efforts," he answered.

"Money," she murmured, "is an everlasting force!"

"The people of your world," he answered, with a flash of contempt, "are the people who find it so."

She was silent then, and Trent was far from being discouraged by her momentary irritability. He was crossing the lawn now by her side, carrying himself well, with a new confidence in his air and bearing which she did not fail to take note of. The sunlight, the music, and the pleasant air of excitement were all in his veins. He was full of the strong joy of living. And then, in the midst of it all, came a dull, crashing blow. It was as though all his castles in the air had come toppling about his ears, the blue sky had turned to stony grey and the sweet waltz music had become a dirge. Always a keen watcher of men's faces, he had glanced for a second time at a gaunt, sallow man, who wore a loose check suit and a grey Homburg hat. The eyes of the two men met. Then the blood had turned to ice in Trent's veins and the ground had heaved beneath his feet. It was the one terrible glance which Fate had held against him, and she had played the card.

Considering the nature and suddenness of the blow which had fallen upon him, Trent's recovery was mar-



The Viscountess Archeson

formerly Miss Mildred Carter, of Baltimore, the only daughter of J. Ridgely Carter, former American Minister to the Balkan States, whose work on the Duchess of Marlborough's War Relief Committee of American ladies has been highly commended by Queen Mary.

vellous. The two men had come face to face upon the short turf, involuntarily each had come to a standstill. Ernestine looked from one to the other a little bewildered.

"I should like a word with you, Trent," Captain Francis said quietly.

"In five minutes," he said. "I will return here—on the other side of the bandstand, say."

Francis nodded and stood aside. Trent and Ernestine continued their progress towards the stand.

"Your friend," Ernestine remarked, "seemed to come upon you like a modern Banquo."

Trent, who did not understand the allusion, was for once discreet.

"He is a man with whom I had dealings abroad," he said. "I did not expect him to turn up here."

"In West Africa?" she asked quickly.

Trent smiled enigmatically.

"There are many foreign countries besides Africa," he said, "and I've been in most of them. This is box No. 13 then. I shall see you this evening."

She nodded, and Trent was free again. He did not make his way at once to the bandstand. Instead he entered the small refreshment room at the base of the building, and called for a glass of brandy. He drank it slowly, his eyes fixed upon the long row of bottles ranged upon the shelf opposite to him, he himself carried back upon a long wave of thoughts to a little West African station where the moist heat rose in fever mists and where an endless stream of men passed backward and forward to their tasks with wan, weary faces and slowly dragging limbs. What a cursed chance which had brought him once more face to face with the one weak spot in his life, the one chapter which, had he the power, he would most willingly seal for ever! From outside came the ringing of a bell, the hoarse shouting of many voices in the ring, through the open door a vision of fluttering waves of color, lace parasols and picture hats, little trills of feminine laughter, the soft rustling of muslins and silks. A few moments ago it had all seemed so delightful to him—and now there lay a hideous blot upon the day.

It seemed to him when he left the little bar that he had been there for hours, as a matter of fact barely five minutes had passed since he had left Ernestine. He stood for a moment on the edge of the walk, dazzled by the sunlight, then he stepped on to the grass and made his way through the throng. The air was full of soft, gay music, and the skirts and flounces of the women brushed against him at every step. Laughter and excitement were the order of the day. Trent, with his suddenly pallid face and unseeing eyes, seemed a little out of place in such a scene of pleasure.

Francis, who was smoking a cigar, looked up as he approached and made room for him upon the seat.

"I did not expect to see you in England quite so soon, Captain Francis," Trent said.

"I did not expect," Francis answered, "ever to be in England again. I am told that my recovery was a miracle. I am also told that I owe my life to you!"

Trent shrugged his shoulders.

"I would have done as much for any of my people," he said, "and you don't owe me any thanks. To be frank with you, I hoped you'd die."

"You could easily have made sure of it," Francis answered.

"It wasn't my way," Trent answered shortly. "Now what do you want with me?"

Francis turned towards him with a curious mixture of expressions in his face.

"Look here," he said, "I want to believe in you! You saved my life, and I'm not over-anxious to do you a mischief. But you must tell me what you have done with Vill—Monty."

"Don't you know where he is?" Trent asked quickly.

"I? Certainly not! How should I?"

"Perhaps not," Trent said, "but here's the truth. When I got back to Attria Monty had disappeared—run away to England, and as yet I've heard never a word of him. I'd meant to do the square thing by him and

HOW HINDUS BURN DEAD IN ENGLAND

WHEN SOLDIER'S BODY GOES ON THE FUNERAL PYRE.

Ritual Demands Use of Odoriferous, Nutritive, and Sweet Things, Also Medicines.

So many incredible things are happening that the imagination is apt to strike work and to take the incredible for granted. But the spectacle of Hindu burial rites performed on the Sussex Downs, England, is one to stir the most jaded sense of wonder. As I write, the sound of the queer, whining chant of the mourners lingers in my ears; the acrid fumes of the burning pyre hang in my nostrils, I seem to see the brown, bare-footed figures squatting in prayer or busy about the complicated details of the long ritual, and I know that I did not dream it all, writes a London correspondent.

There had been a death in the Kitchener Military Hospital at Brighton. The dead man was not a combatant, but one of the personnel. The funeral, therefore, lacked the picturesque element of wounded men as bearers. But he was a Brahman, and of the Arya Somaj. There are many of his kind in the personnel, and so, instead of the usual single ambulance wagon, there were three full of mourners, and instead of the brief rites of the Jats or the richer but scarcely longer ceremonies of the Sikhs, we were to see something very elaborate and particular, and in its odd way, impressive.

Before the body was put into the big black motor hearse a photographer was allowed to come and take a picture of the dead man's features, to be sent to his relatives in far India. The bier lay in a small court among the hospital buildings, where a little crowd of the personnel had gathered to watch. Over the body was stretched a pall of printed cretonne, bright flowers on a dark ground, and white chrysanthemums were strewn lavishly upon it. The folds of the swaddling clothes were turned aside to show the dead man's face—a face paler than in life, young and peaceful, with fine and clean-cut features. The photographing done, the face was covered, the bier was put into the hearse, the crowd clambered into the big motor ambulances, and we set forth upon the long drive.

Weird Procession.

Through the pretty village of Patcham, intensely English with its church and its duck pond, this strange funeral procession went, till the road changed to a steep track, and before long the motors left the track and took their heavy way over the soft turf in a fold of the downs. Soon there came into sight a very ugly little screen and shelter of corrugated iron.

At the foot of the hill on which it stood the vehicles stopped; the mourners clambered out of the ambulances, and with much chattering and gesticulating began to take the body from the hearse. In time the procession began to climb the hill, the mourners chanting as they went: "Ram Ram satya hai: Om ka nam satya hai"—Vedic verses telling of the eternal and single truth of the Name.

The gates of the ghat were unlocked, and we passed inside a little enclosure, where stood three platforms of cement. One of these was carefully swept and sprinkled with water, and when thus purified for the reception of the dead, it was heaped with wood blocks for the burning. The body, under its bright pall and the chrysanthemums, lay outside on the grassy slope; when the preparations had been made the mourners gathered round it. It was sprinkled with cleansing water; the face was exposed again, and honey and ghee, and minute portions of the eight metals, and other ritual things, were passed between the pale lips. Then the mourners gathered around in a semi-circle, and squatting on their haunches, with their hands folded and their eyes downcast, chanted their sing-song chants, now shrill, now soft, now a murmur, and then a shout.

Ritual of the Pyre.

At last came the time of the burning and the ceremony of havan which accompanies it. The preparations had been long and complicated, for

bringing him back myself. Instead of that he gave us all the slip, but unless he's a lot different to what he was the last time I saw him he's not fit to be about alone."

"I heard that he had left," Francis said, "from Mr. Walsh."

"He either came quite alone," Trent said, "in which case it is odd that nothing has been heard of him, or Da Souza has got hold of him."

"Oom Sam's brother?"

Trent nodded.

(To be continued.)

SCOTCH WORKING HARD ON MUNITIONS

200-ACRE PLANT GREW UP IN A MONTH.

Participation of Women Apparent on Every Hand North of Tweed.

It might be assumed that to expand more than two-fold the great ship-building plants on the Clyde so far as employees and output is concerned would be all that is expected of this centre in the way of munitions. But it is not all that the Scotsmen on the western coast are contributing by any means, for here as in other parts of the kingdom new workshops are being erected for munitions and plants intended originally for other purposes are being turned into shell factories.

"Somewhere in Scotland" an Associated Press correspondent recently visited a two hundred acre filling plant, which has grown up in a little more than a month like a magic city, with its scores of separate structures.

There are no less than eleven miles of trolley track to carry shells from place to place. The plant will be finished soon and workers for it are now being trained elsewhere.

Contractors Make No Profit.

The plant is being erected by contractors who will make no profit and on a tour of munitions plants much of that sort of thing is seen.

Engineers of large experience and reputation and owners of big establishments are "doing their bit" without a thought of personal gain.

As in the case of the famous Armstrong works at Newcastle plants engaged in shipbuilding on the Clyde were open to inspection.

The shops on the Tyne and the Clyde are playing their part, and a tremendously impressive part it is, in Glasgow as elsewhere the participation of women in the industry is apparent on every hand. In their khaki or blue aprons, with dust caps of the same color, they are busy at the lathes and swarms in and out in thousands at the shift periods. Every foreman with whom the correspondent talked was enthusiastic in application of the efficiency of women of the works. Of course they are not set to work at the heavy machines and they are chiefly given tasks requiring only few days experience. In every establishment, the women workers learn how to work the machines for the lighter shells the men are taken out for the manufacture of the heavier munitions.

Problem After the War.

What the permanent effect of all this change in the working operations of women will be after the war is not concerning the employers now, though they appreciate that it will bring its chain of problems for solution later. To the women it is already bringing more money than they ever had in their lives before and a sense of independence never experienced.

This alteration in the industrial fabric by women's increasing activity and broadening opportunity is perhaps the most vivid impression left on the mind of one who devotes a week to a tour of the munition plants, second only to the comprehension of the enormous scale of production that the Ministry has planned. It is in all probability the biggest engineering and labor enterprise in modern history.

THE GUN SILENCER.

Acts on the Principle of the Muffler on a Motor.

Several things give away the position of a big gun when it is fired, the two chief being the noise and the smoke. Thanks to smokeless powder, however, the latter has practically been done away with. The silencing of a big gun is a more difficult problem, and though in the case of rifles and small arms the report can be made almost negligible, the gigantic rush of gases when a big shell is fired prevents a complete silencing.

A silencer which the French are using is so effective that no sound of firing can be heard over a greater distance than a hundred yards or so. The silencer is attached to the muzzle of the gun. As the shell leaves the gun a small shutter springs up and prevents the explosive gases escaping in the usual way. It is the sudden, fierce rush of gas which causes the "bang" when a gun is fired. The gas passes out through the two channels with nothing like the rush that is caused in the ordinary way. It is impossible to stop the gases escaping altogether, for the pressure is so terrific that the gun would be blown to pieces.

Many a man who demands justice would whine for mercy if he got it.