THE ACADIAN

AND KING'S CO. TIMES.

HONEST, INDEPENDENT, FEARLESS.--DEVOTED TO LOCAL AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

Vol. XV. WOLFVILLE, KING'S CO., N. S. FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1896. No. 25.

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POETRY.

Truth.

There's a hand on the rudder that will not flinch,
There's no fear in the pilot's face
As he guides the worlds, like boats in a storm,
Through the rocking seas of space,
And whether they make the harbor at last
Beyond the shoals and the swell,
Or sail forever a shoreless sea,
I know that all is well.
And I learn these things from the heart of the wood,
From the solemn soul of the sea,
For never a bird in a wire bound cage
Told all these to me.

And the soul of a man is a sunward bird
With wings that are made for flight,
To pierce the fount of the shining day,
And float through the depths of night.
And I read these things in that Bible of God
Whose leaves are the spreading sky,
And the legible face of the dark green sea,
With the eye behind the eye.
For truth is not closed in the lids of a book,
For its chainless soul is free,
And never a bird in a wire bound cage
Told all these things to me.

For truth surges into the open heart,
And into the willing eye,
And streams from the breath of the steaming earth,
And drops from the bending sky;
'Tis not shut in a book, in a church, or a school,
Nor cramped in the chains of a creed,
But lives in the open air and the light
For all men in their need!
But the fish that swims in a goldfish vase
Knows not of the salted sea,
And never a bird in a wire bound cage
Told all these things to me.

'Tis the voice that comes from the gilded peaks,
From the hills that shoulder the sky,
Through the topless heights of a man's own dreams
This voice goes wandering by;
And who roams the earth with an open heart,
With an ear attuned to hear,
Will catch some broken chord of the sound
Whenever the voice comes near.
But not past the prison of custom or creed
Will the voice of the vision flee;
And never a bird in a wire bound cage
Told all these things to me.

—*Sam Walter Foss.*

SELECT STORY.

Wolfe the Ranger.

CHAPTER IX.—*Continued.*

That's very true," remarked the Marquis, in a voice that was no interruption.

"We seized upon the suggestion, elected the suggester captain, and, being well horsed, started at once. There were ten of us; and on the principle that one honest man is a match for three rogues, we were quite confident that if we could get upon the trail of the rangers we should overmaster them."

"Quite so," assented the Marquis.

"Well, we started," continued Mr Hendrick, "and luck was with us. We had not been on the hunt two days before we 'struck' them. An escort had started to guard a gold train—that is a horse train, of course—to Melbourne. The rangers had got intelligence of this, had stopped the escort, seized the gold and half the horses, and started the escort helter-skelter back again. That was enough for us. Carefully examining our weapons, we started on the trail. We came to a farm—this was at the end of the third day—where the rangers had stopped to 'requisition' hay for their horses. They had taken nothing else; indeed, they had more than paid for the hay, for the chief ranger, with the ridiculous nickname, had thrust a huge nugget worth a considerable sum into the hands of one of the children just as he rode off."

"That was kind; he was not so very wicked, then?" interpolated Arol.

"Oh, no; he was always doing that sort of thing," said Mr Hendrick. "We learned from the woman at the farm—her husband was out—the direction they had taken, and rode after them. We reached a small hut, quite in the wilds, and saw by the marks of horses' hoofs that they had been there, but we were too late."

"Oh, how you are trembling, Miss Grahame, dear!" exclaimed Arol.

The blood rushed to Constance's face—it had been white a moment before—but she said nothing

"We are all trembling—with excitement," said the Marquis, listlessly. "What's that, mother?" He leaned forward, and listened. They were all silent and listening.

"I hear nothing but the wind, dear," replied the Marchioness.

"Excuse me a moment," said the Marquis, with a nod to Mr Hendrick.

He went across the room to the inner and smaller one, and drawing back the window curtains with a quick jerk, opened the French window, and stopped out. A gust of wind rushed in and set the wax candles flickering and flaring, and the sound of the rain could be heard beating fiercely on the marble floor of the terrace.

"What an awful night!" exclaimed the Marchioness with a shudder. "Wolfe! Do come in! Ernest," and she turned anxiously to Lord Elliot, "do go and tell him to come in at once; he will get wet through."

Lord Elliot sprang up with instant obedience, but before he could reach the door the Marquis appeared. He stood for a second, a second in which, with the lights fully on, his face was in plain relief against the dark curtains which he held together behind his back and Constance fancied it was paler and sterner than usual.

"Don't be alarmed," he said. "It was nothing but the wind."

"I thought I heard voices," said Lady Ruth.

"You did," he responded, carelessly. "A dog was outside, and I spoke to him."

"And that was—has you heard?" said Lady Ruth.

"What quick ears you must have, Uncle Wolfe!" exclaimed Arol admiringly.

"Yes, I have, Arol," said the Marquis; and he locked the window, arranging the curtains carefully, and came back to the rest wiping the great drops of rain from his face and shirt front. "Will you fellows come and have a cigar?" he said.

Mr Hendrick straightened himself and nodded assentingly but Arol uttered a cry of dismay.

"Oh, Uncle Wolfe, we haven't heard the finish of the story yet. What a shame!"

The Marquis smiled

"I beg your pardon, but it's late for little boys to be hearing about ugly ogres. Ask Mr Hendrick to tell you to-morrow."

Constance rose and took Arol's hand, but he drew back and looked ruefully at Mr Hendrick.

"Oh, please tell us the end. Mightn't one, grandma?"

"It will only take a few words," said Mr Hendrick, good naturedly. "And I'm afraid you'll be disappointed, Arol. When we reached the but we were too late; the rangers had gone—just gone as it appeared. They had racked the place, stolen everything."

The Marquis leaned forward and pointed to a candle that was burning in its socket.

"I beg your pardon, Elliot, blow that candle out, there's a good fellow. Thanks. Well, Hendrick," and he turned with a smile on his lips and in his dark eyes, "you say they had stolen everything, and killed the simple folk of the place—"

"No, no," replied Mr Hendrick. "They hadn't killed any one. Fortunately, the owner of the place and his daughter had started for Melbourne before the rangers reached the hut. We scarcely listened to the story; there was no time to lose, you see. We rode off in hot pursuit. The tracks led into a ravine, and we followed them, feeling sure that we had the two thousand pounds; we could almost hear it chink. In the middle of the ravine we pulled up; it was thick undergrowth, and we had to go slowly, you see, and we hadn't got ten paces when suddenly a voice rang out, 'Halt!' We halted, and there above us on both sides we knew were a score of rifles pointing at us, covering every man of us. We were in a trap.

"We give you two minutes to lay down your arms and ride out," said the voice. "If one man fires, you are lost. One—two—"

Mr Hendrick paused dramatically. Every eye was fixed upon his face, Arol's like large saucers.

"We threw our rifles and revolvers into the bush and rode for dear life."

Various exclamations broke from the little audience, but above all them rose the Marquis' short laugh.

"'Pon my word, Mr Hendrick," he said, "it would have been better for your reputation for courage if you had cut out the end of the story."

The great traveller smiled.

"It tells against us, doesn't it?" he said. "But we weren't cowards, neither were we fools. We knew the man—by repute—we had to deal with, and not one of us thought it worth while to lose our life. You see we hadn't a chance."

"Ah, yes, I see," said the Marquis. "It's a good story, and you must put it in your next book. And now come and have a cigar."

"And Gentleman Jack—what became of him? Is he caught?"

"No one knows what became of him," said Mr Hendrick, rather gravely. "He disappeared shortly afterward; in fact this was his last exploit. The band broke up, and some of the men were caught, but nothing was heard of the leader."

"But surely some of the men, I mean those who were ultimately caught could have given information concerning him?" said Lady Ruth, sharply.

"They might have done, but they didn't. But I doubt their capability. The man was a mystery even to them. At any rate, nothing is known of him to this day."

"And nobody will get the two thousand pounds?" said Arol.

"I'm not so sure," said Mr Hendrick. "The Australian Government still offers the reward. It is a large sum, and many clever men would like to earn it. I rather think that Gentleman Jack will be discovered some day. For one thing, a man who has once tasted that kind of life rarely leaves it for good and all; he is sure to go back, sooner or later, and sooner or later the chief of the bushrangers will be caught."

"I don't know," said Arol, pensively. "I rather like him. He wasn't so very bad or he wouldn't have given that nugget to the little girl."

"Mr Hendrick, you have corrupted Arol's morals," said the Marquis laughingly. "Come, let us go into the smoking-room. Your story has made me thirsty; I don't know what it must have done for you."

Mr Hendrick followed his stalwart form, but Lord Elliot lingered.

"Won't you think better of your refusal, Miss Grahame?" he said in a low voice. "Will you not let me take you—and Arol—for a drive to-morrow?"

Constance rose, holding Arol's hand. She was pale and looked tired. The recital of the most eventful incident in her life was thrilling to her. The coincidence was overwhelming in its strangeness.

"Say yes," he pleaded, as she moved toward the door.

Her lips moved; she found it difficult to speak. He saw, though he did not understand, her emotion.

"You are tired and unwell," he said, in a low, anxious voice, "and I will not worry you. Forgive me. If you know—Miss Grahame—"

His face flushed and then went pale as he stopped.

They had reached the door, and he opened it for her.

Constance held out her hand, and just managed to murmur "Good-night."

"Good-night," he said, and his hand closed over hers and held it—held it so tightly that, at another time, Constance could not have failed to have noticed the passionate, pleading pressure. But she was feeling dazed and bewildered by all she had gone through, and was too anxious to reach her room to remark his manner.

To get to her room and lie down and rest! She could not foresee that the night had not closed for her yet, and that it still held another exciting chapter for her!

CHAPTER X.

Constance waited with Arol until he had been put to bed; for, like most children when they are overtired, he was inclined to be fretful with the nurse; but Constance's sweet, gentle voice soothed him, and he fell asleep with his arms around her neck, and an indistinct murmur of, "I love you, Miss Grahame, dear!"

Then she laid him down and went to her own room.

The events of the day were dancing before her like the ever-changing and confusing pieces of a kaleidoscope. That the great traveller, Mr Hendrick should happen to come to the castle and there in her presence recite the story of the adventure in the wilds of Australia in which she had played a part, was one of the extraordinary coincidences with which, strange to say, life is full.

It was a painful coincidence to her. What would he, what would they all say if they should ever learn that she had been of the persons in the hut attacked by the rangers? How could she explain her silence—silence which savored of concealment and deceit?

She could almost fancy she heard the grave voice of the Marquis saying to her with reproachful surprise:

"You sat and listened to this story, you who were concerned in it, and said nothing. "Why did you not speak?"

A dozen times she had tried to summon up courage to exclaim:

"I was one of the persons in the hut!" and never had she felt it more incumbent upon her to avow her share in the adventure than when Mr Hendrick had stated that the rangers had robbed and sacked the hut. She felt mean and guilty of injustice, and the blood rushed to her face with shame at her moral cowardice when she recalled, in the silence and quiet of her own room, how generously the leader of the rangers had behaved to her. He might have robbed them of everything they possessed, [illegible] prevented his fellows from doing anything of the kind, and provided her and her father with a conveyance and safe escort to Melbourne.

And she had remained silent, and uttered no word in defence of this man who, bad as he doubtless was, had protected and in a manner, actually befriended her.

She paced up and down the room for hours. At one moment she resolved to go down to breakfast with the firm intention to say what she had been, as it seemed powerless to say to night; then the thought of telling in cold blood the story of that terrible night on which her father had lost his reason and received his death-blow proved too much for her, and clasping her hands in a kind of mental despair, she flung herself on the bed, dressed as she was, and tried to sleep.

She must have slept for a time, for she woke with a start, roused by the sound of horses' hoofs.

She sprung from the bed and looked at her watch. It was a quarter of three. She listened, but all was silent. The great house was as still as a tomb. Convinced that she had been mistaken, and had really heard nothing, she began to undress.

Suddenly she started, and felt hastily and fearfully in the bosom of her dress, then uttered a little cry of distress.

Her locket was gone! It had been attached by a very slight gold chain—Australian gold—the links of which might be easily bent or twisted. Where had she dropped it?

She searched her room carefully indeed minutely, but it was not to be found.

Then she sat down and tried to remember when she had seen it last, and succeeded in recalling the fact of placing it round her neck when she had changed her habit for the black dress. She was sure of that.

If, then, she had dropped it, she must have done so in one of the rooms downstairs, in the drawing-room or in the hall.

Arol had been sitting near her a great part of the time with his arms round her neck. It was possible that in some of his restless movements he might have pulled the locket out and broken it away from the chain. If so, it was lying on the floor somewhere, an easy prey to the curiosity of the housemaid, who would be the first to enter the drawing-room.

Constance's love for her dead father was an absolute devotion, and the thought that his portrait would probably be handed round the servants' hall was simply torture to her.

The house was perfectly quiet; not a soul was about, or, indeed, probably awake. Why should she not go down very, very quietly and look for the locket?

She acted on the impulse, without waiting to consider it.

Putting on her dressing-gown, she took a candle, and unlocking her door very cautiously stole out in the corridor. She waited a moment, listening intently, but there was no sound in the vast place, excepting the ticking of the tall old-fashioned clock in the hall, and treading on tip toe, she stole down the stairs, examining each foot of her way.

Continued Next Week.

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