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The Imprisoned Heiress
—OR—
The Spectre of Egremont.

CHAPTER XVII.

Lord Ashcroft made no further attempt to learn the cause of her emotion at the moment he had intruded upon her, and she did not enlighten him, feeling angry and annoyed at the failure of her scheme.

They conversed a little longer, not of love, nor of their united future, but of the topics the heiress most loved to dwell upon, and Lord Ashcroft's brow was grave and his heart heavy when he at last quitted her side and rejoined the party in the drawing-room.

And Alexina, in her lonely nook, wept tears of anger and disappointment that her hope of freedom to wed whom she chose should have been so short-lived.

She was weeping softly when the curtains were lifted, and Lady Egremont stood beside her.

"Crying, Xina!" she said, in a low tone of surprise. "Why, what is the matter? Have you and Lord Ashcroft quarrelled? He came into the drawing-room just now, looking as though he had lost his best friend."

"We have not quarrelled," answered the heiress, drying her tears. "But I hate him!—I do, indeed, and I wish he were dead!"

"Hush!" said her guardian's wife warningly, with a glance at the drawing-room. "They might have heard you then if they had not been at the farther end of the room."

"I should not have cared much if they had," returned Alexina, in a passionate voice, "I am almost desperate enough to rush out and tell them, and let him do as he pleases about wedding me."

"This is madness," said Lady Egremont, sternly, yet trembling with fear; "at least the heiress should do as she suggested. 'Ah! thank heaven, they have all gone into the music-room, and the Lady Lorean is going to play upon your organ. Come with me, Alexina. I have something to say to you.'"

She took the arm of the unresisting maiden, and conducted her through the deserted drawing-room to the wide hall up stairs, to her own suite of rooms.

"Here we are!" she said, ushering her husband's ward into her boudoir, which glowed with its wealth of crimson coloring, and glittered with its profusion of golden adornings.

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croft advantageously to myself, and marry Lyle, I shall do so."

"You will not!" exclaimed the countess, in a tone so stern that the maiden shrank from her. "Alexina, I cannot explain myself, but you are standing upon the brink of a fearful gulf, and there is no escape for you except in a marriage with Lord Ashcroft. If you marry him your life will be surrounded with grandeur; if you break with him, even retaining Egremont, there is no safety for you. I know my words sound strange, and perhaps false, but they are true. Your destiny is in your own hands. Marry Lord Ashcroft, whether he loves you or not. In that marriage lies your only safety."

She spoke impressively and with agitation, and the heiress listened to her words in frightened silence. She would not further explain the mystery which evidently existed, but repeated her injunctions, until Alexina yielded an assent to her demands, promising to hold Lord Ashcroft to his compact, and hasten her marriage with him.

"Remember," said the countess, at last, as they prepared to return to the drawing-room, and her tone caused her superstitious charge to shiver; "on the one hand, terrible fate; on the other happiness. Come!" They quitted the room together.

CHAPTER XIX.

The family and guests of Egremont were assembled in the pleasant morning drawing-room, engaged in cheerful conversation.

All thought of Kepp, of whom no trace had been found, was dismissed, and a feeling of general security prevailed. The Lady Lorean, who had been nervous and anxious from the moment of the assault in the plantation on the day of their arrival, now showed herself a very agreeable and well-informed woman, of whom her brother might well be proud.

As has been said, she possessed a masculine mind, and on this particular morning she gave and received a great deal of pleasure in arguing politics with her host, who did not understand the subject as well as herself.

Lyle Indor sat at his aunt's feet, making himself useful as a skein-holder, for Lady Egremont was absorbed in the fascinations of canvas and wool, and was making commendable progress in the development of a marvellous animal, with pink eyes and blue hair, supposed to belong to the canine species.

The heiress had been greatly impressed with the declarations of Lady Egremont on the previous evening. Perhaps her very failure to comprehend them added to their impressiveness. She could not understand why she stood on the brink of a fearful gulf from which Lord Ashcroft alone could save her, but Lady Egremont's manner had convinced her that such indeed was the fact.

Without endeavoring to arrive at a comprehension of the truth, without caring to question her guardian's wife further, she had resolved to treat her betrothed with more consideration and to affect an interest in him which she did not feel.

With this idea she sat near Lord Ashcroft, and listened to his every word with apparently rapt attention, seeming to see and hear no one but him, and her heart throbed with a delightful sense of power as she fancied that her betrothed was nearly overcome at her condescension, and that Lyle Indor was enduring all the pangs of jealousy.

(To be continued.)

"Sit down in this chair, Alexina, and let us have a serious talk."

The heiress obeyed wonderingly. The countess' tone with her had been hitherto almost obsequious, but now it was commanding. Her manner, too, was stern, where it had always heretofore been extremely gentle and deprecating. And the heiress did not like the change.

"Seat yourself, also, Lady Egremont," she said, with a condescending air, and with the remembrance that she, and not the countess, was the owner of Egremont. "If you have anything to say to me, I will listen to it."

The countess smiled contemptuously. "I do not choose to sit," she said, walking to and fro with rapid steps. "Alexina, are you aware how very nearly you came to wrecking your fortunes a few minutes since? Suppose you had rushed out as you threatened. Why, Lord Ashcroft would have dissolved your engagement with him at once."

"I should not have objected to that."

"You would not? Would you have been so wild, so crazy? But I forgot you do not know," and the countess calmed herself by a strong effort. "Do you think I am blind, girl, that I have not seen what is going on? I have discovered that you and Lyle Indor are in love with each other."

"Well, what of it?" demanded the heiress, defiantly.

"Simply this. If you give up Lord Ashcroft, to marry Lyle, you will forfeit every penny of your fortune, and lose every acre of Egremont. Lyle cannot make up to you, even in part, what you would lose, for he has only a small income, scarcely more than sufficient to gratify his own tastes. I do not see how he can have been so mad as to win your love! He knew that you were promised to Lord Ashcroft; he has always known it. He knows the penalty of your refusal to keep the compact—"

"And he has urged me to keep it," interrupted the heiress. "He has told me frankly that he cannot afford to marry, and that he will never accept the sacrifice of my fortune, even if I would make it."

The countess regarded Alexina searchingly, and then her features relaxed into a smile, and she said: "Lyle is a sensible fellow. He is no sentimental lover, if he has a girl's face and hands. He thinks of your good, and I wish you would think of it, too. How could you have been so mad as to say such things down stairs?"

"Because I meant them. I mean, if possible, to bring about a dissolution of my present engagement, and not only keep my fortune, but receive that which his lordship will forfeit. I wish Kepp had succeeded in his designs," she added; "it would have saved me a deal of trouble."

"Alexina! You shock me! If any other had heard you express that wish they might have fancied that Kepp had acted but in obedience to your will—that you had hired him to kill your promised husband. Never speak so again, unless you would link yourself with a murderer. Give up your thoughts of Lyle, or I shall send him away."

"Nay from Egremont!" declared the heiress, with flashing eyes. "I am mistress here, if you are nominally so. And I choose to break with Lord Ash-

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Spanish Troops Hazardous Withdrawal

Gen. Primo de Rivera of the Spanish military Government, who came to Morocco in person to superintend withdrawal of his troops, has started one of the most perilous phases of the consolidation of lines he determined upon when it became apparent Spain could no longer afford to occupy all her Moroccan domain against the rebellious natives.

It is a task of all but insurmountable difficulties, for 40,000 men must be brought in safely along a single tortuous mountain trail, all but impassable for motors and so narrow that only six men can march abreast.

Every inch of the way is contested bitterly by the Moors. There is continual sniping from the mountain sides, where ghostly tribesmen, the gray of their burnouses blending with the gray of the rocks, lie in wait for the Spanish troops.

Torrential rains have added to the discomfort of Spain. The retreat is sloshing through a morass of sticky, slippery clay, mules falling and dying beside the trail—cursing troops stumbling along under full equipment, fighting, marching again.

For a fortnight the main body of the armies of Spain has been mobilized around Zoco Abaa, enduring, as the soldiers describe it "the horrors of perdition." It rained and rained. Wet, sullen, cursing men tramped guard posts and cared little if the wasp-like Moors descended on them.

Then Saturday the sun came out, drying the roads with an upper crust which layered them up with the deceptive thinness of the top of a well browned pumpkin pie. And the retreat was on.

Primo de Rivera, a grim, determined man, planned his withdrawal well. Small contingents, protected by airplanes, started down the mountain trail. The great planes roared overhead, their motors growling to a crescendo of sound as they darted from hillside to hillside to bomb the groups of Moorish guerrillas constantly harassing the march.

The United Press correspondent was permitted to witness the withdrawal from a point ten miles south of Tetuan—the focal point of the withdrawal from Zoco Abaa, which is only twelve miles farther south.

But it was "twelve miles of hell" as a young officer said profanely—twelve miles of fighting an unseen foe, twelve miles over scores of tons of supplies, thousands of men, huge guns, herds of live stock and all the litter that goes with an army on the move must be transported with order and precision.

A twelve-mile test of the ability of the Military Directorate in Madrid, which seized power in a bloodless revolution to liquidate this very Moroccan disaster—the disaster of trying to hold an impossible land against a bitter, determined foe.

It will be days before the withdrawal to Ben Kerrieh can be completed. Meantime, it is an everlasting credit to the Spanish command and the dogged bravery of the men of Spain, Primo de Rivera is confident.

"We will succeed," he says. "The withdrawal will be completed within a few days."

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The Queen of Sheba's Airship?

There is reason to believe that someone constructed an airship which Solomon gave to the son of the Queen of Sheba. Of course, there was no motor—possibly it was a glider. The Secretary of the Royal Aeronautical Society states that Solomon gave to the Queen of Sheba "a vessel wherein one could traverse the air for wind."

There are other references to flight in Abyssinian sacred writings, and there is a long description of the marvellous way in which the Queen of Sheba's son Menyelek left Solomon, journeying to his mother's country.

"No man hauled his wagon, and whether it was men, or horses, or mules, or loaded camels, each was raised above the ground to a height of a cubit."

A cubit, according to the ancient Egyptians, measured about twenty inches, but elsewhere it is recorded that over the Red Sea they were lifted up three cubits, "and everyone travelled in the wagons like an eagle when his body glideth above the wind."

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