The Countess of Landon.

CHAPTER XLI.

The countess sighed and nodded.

"That is what I wanted," she said. "Perhaps he will not come back for years—" her voice broke for a moment, then she went on more cheerfully: "But we won't look forward so dismally, dear. Yes, you ought to go away out of the sound of my croaking."

Irene laughed.

"You see, I should miss it so dreadfully," she said; "and as to Royce not coming back for years—" she stopped, for she had heard at that moment a step outside the hall door.

For a second she stood, her face white, her heart beating. Then she smiled at her own fancy. That could not be Royce's step. Doubtless at that moment he was traveling across an African veldt and had something else to think about than "the old folks at home."

But even as she moved away, the handle of the door turned, and a stalwart figure stood outlined against the dark blue of the sky. The countess dropped her stick and held out her arms.

"Royce, Royce!" she cried, and the next moment she had fallen on his breast.

Irene went very pale for a moment, then the blood came back to her cheeks, and in far too unconcerned a voice to be natural, she said:

"Why, yes; it is Royce!"

He couldn't shake hands with her for a moment; then he took his mother on his arm and squeezed Irene's hand.

"Did you think it was my ghost?" he said. "Why didn't I write? Well, I made up my mind to come all in a moment, and crossed by the mail steamer; so I've brought myself instead of a letter."

"Let me look at you, Royce," said the countess, almost impatiently, wiping the tears from her eyes as she let them wander over him with the hunger of a mother's love.

He looked thinner, older, graver, through his eyes were bright and full of joy. His face resembled the village blacksmith, inasmuch as it was "like the tan," and he held himself as a man does whose muscles are knitted into steel by plain living and hard work.

Irene, after one glance, stood with downcast eyes during the inspection, but it is probable that she took in all the details in that one glance.

"You are taller—or is it because you are thinner? You are thinner. You have not been well, Royce!" exclaimed the countess.

He laughed as he took off his traveling-cloak; and with his arm well around her, went to the fire.

"Nothing to speak of, mother. I had a little mishap with a lion which I didn't think worth while bothering you with, and it laid me on my back for a few weeks. But one doesn't run to fatness in Africa, you know. Oh, how glad I am to get back!" and he looked round with a sigh of happiness and quiet joy.

As he did so, the butler, followed by the rest of the servants, came crowding up at the back of the hall.

"It is his lordship!" said he. "I said it was your voice, my lord. Welcome home, Master—I beg pardon—my lord.'

Royce shook hands with him and nodded pleasantly to the rest.

"Thank you,' he said. "I am as glad to see you all as you are to see me. Get some of the old wine on the table in the servants' hall after dinner, and I'll come down and drink a glass with you and exchange news. Let the men come up from the stables."

"And I will come, too," said the countess, eagerly, as if she could not spare him for even half an hour. "Irene, give him some tea."

"Yes, and the top brick off the chimney," said Irene, trying to speak lightly. "Prepare to be made a good deal of, Royce, for at least the next month."

He put the countess in her chair, and threw himself down on the rug at her feet.

"All right," he said, laughingly. "I can stand any amount of petting, it will be such a thorough change after roughing it on the Dark Continent."

"You must tell us everything," said the countess, with her hand upon his close-cropped head.

"Of course; and I'll begin to-night—but after dinner. I couldn't tell you, if I tried, how I am looking forward to that ceremony. And I hope you won't have beefsteak, mother; for one gets tired even of beefstake after living on it for ten months. Ah! there's the dressing-bell. Do you know, I used sometimes to dream that I heard it, and wake up with a start, but it was only the bells on the oxen of the wagon."

"Come up with me," said the countess. "Where are your things, Royce?"

(To be continued.)

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At the Mouth of the Treacherous Pit

STORY OF LOVE, INTRIGUE AND REVENGE

CHAPTER I.

"No," answered the Squire, sadly. "I must leave White Cliffe and find refuge in a work-house or an alms-house, and Dolores—oh, Dolores, my darling!—will have to work. I am the last of the Cliefdens, and such is my destiny. Fate has been more than cruel to me!"

Again the soft arms stole round his neck, and a sweet voice whispered to him—

"Papa, what some men call fate others call Providence; and Providence can never be cruel."

But the Squire would not listen.

"I am an old man," he murmured, "my eyes are dim, and my hair is gray. I am an old man, and it is hard to eat pauper's bread, and die like a pauper."

Then Lord Rhysworth went up to him and, laying his hand upon his shoulder, said gently—

"Will you listen to me, Squire? I can find you a way out of your trouble—a way by which you may live at White Cliffe, by which you may enjoy a good income, with every comfort, and luxury, until your death, if you will listen to me." There was a curious hesitation in his manner, a pallor on his face, and a tremor in his voice. "Let me marry your daughter, Dolores," he went on, "and you shall be a rich man for life. Hush—do not speak—do not refuse! Hear what I have to say first—a rich man for life, Squire! I will buy back White Cliffe for you. I will settle an annuity on you. You shall be a richer man than you have ever been. Hush—wait! I love Dolores. I have loved her since the first moment I saw her—a child, you remember—and she came dancing into the room with little, blue shoes on. I have loved her all my life I would sacrifice much to make her my wife. I love her as no young man could ever love her. She shall be the happiest woman in the land. One moment more. I lay my fortune, my title, my heart, my very life at her feet. She shall live in luxury and magnificence. She shall never know one wish ungratified, one longing unindulged. She shall have all that this world can give her, all that love can compass for her, if she will marry me." He paused for a few moments, not for want of words, but because his emotion was so great. "Hush," he said again—"you must not give me any answer yet! I could not bear it. Let me grow calm. Wait until I recover myself."

CHAPTER II.

They formed a striking group—the old Squire, with his gray head raised in wonder, his face full of pain, surprise, all striving for mastery; the young girl by his side, whose faultless face had grown perfectly colorless, whose hands clung more closely to her father's neck; and the eager noble-looking man.

Twice the Squire had assayed to speak, but each time his voice had died away; the only sound that had come from his lips had been the whispered name of "Dolores!" Twice he had looked up with an eager, excited gesture as though he would fain interrupt, but the fire and passion in the other face had stricken him dumb.

Lord Rhysworth bent over him.

"You must not think," he said, "that I take an unfair advantage. I speak abruptly now; but the object of my visit has been the dream of my life. I was thirty years of age before I looked with admiring eyes at any woman's face; and then I saw Dolores. She was only a child, but, oh, how I loved her, and how I have loved her ever since! She was only a child; but I vowed then, that when she grew into womanhood, she and no other should be my wife. I have watched her from year to year, and have loved her with a deeper and deeper love as time went on. Dolores," he cried, turning suddenly to the beautiful, wondering girl, "have you never guessed how much I loved you?"

"No," she answered, faintly.

"I wonder at that, for girls are quick enough in such matters. There have been times when I have gone away half mad from you, and have left you because I could no longer control my love. Dolores, have you never fancied it?"

"I have never even thought of it," she answered.

"My beautiful love, you are fresh and fair as the morning, your eyes beam with the clear light of youth and innocence, your lips have the bright smile of happy girlhood! It was hardly likely you would think of it. Still I have loved you so! I am not young, Dolores; but many a man of half my years has a heart twice as old. My eyes have sought no face save yours, my heart no love but yours—you have filled my life. I have wanted to tell you this for months past, but I have lacked courage. It is your father's trouble that forces it from me now. I come of a race that knows no fear; but I tremble for the word which has to fall from your lips, and which will mean either life or death for me!"

(To be continued.)

Colour's Carnival

All the victories of the War were not decided on the day of the great Armistice, and since then the commercial warfare, has been rich in honours for the British producer. One of the greatest achievements has been in the world of dyes. The success of the British Dye Manufacturers stands out as vividly in the story of the last few years as their corner of the Wembley Exhibition stands out vividly in colour. It is said that competition is a good thing for business, but here it is proved that co-operation can lift an industry to the very apex of achievement. The British Dyers, in this corner of the vast grey stone Palace of Industry, have set up a stall so that Everyman might stop in passing and realise.

Visitors to the Exhibition should not pass this stand, which is very near to the Palace of Industry. It does not set out to flaunt the virtues of any one firm. Its slogan is unselfish and national—"British Dyes." Above all its carnival of colour there is a sombre, black lump of coal on top of a golden pillar. Here is a symbol of the importance of aniline dyes. The coal suddenly bursts into a glowing lump of colours, illuminated from within. It is thus that Everyman can realize that out of the lump of coal which is thrown on the fire so disparagingly, come the colours of the rainbow. Perhaps the most interesting exhibit in the stall is a bottle set fittingly in a little wooden temple. This contains some of the hontual mauve dye, discovered and produced by Professor William Henry Perkin in 1856. It was then that aniline dyes were in their cradle. The innocent little bottle is the starting point of the story of dyes.

And the story is well told in the stall!

But it isn't entirely a commercial story that this stall at the Exhibition tells! It is set in a Palace of sombre grey concrete, with great machines and stacks of produce. You come upon it suddenly—

"Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,
As are the tiger-moth's damask'd wings."

Blue, green, red, yellow, and all the other colours, in a hundred shades, dance before your eyes in cotton, in silk, and satin. It comes on you with kaleidoscopic brilliance, just as the sun will sometimes flood the earth with sudden light after it has been veiled with a cloud.

The stall, as a thing of beauty, will delight every eye that is sensitive to colour. It is like a Brangwyn canvas to life—a dress rehearsal for a Russian Ballet. Here is colour's carnival.

The dye manufacturer is a paradox. It is by dying that he lives, and the more he dyes the better he lives, and the better for British trade, which, in this department, has established a victory as conclusive in its way as those greater victories which made this one possible.

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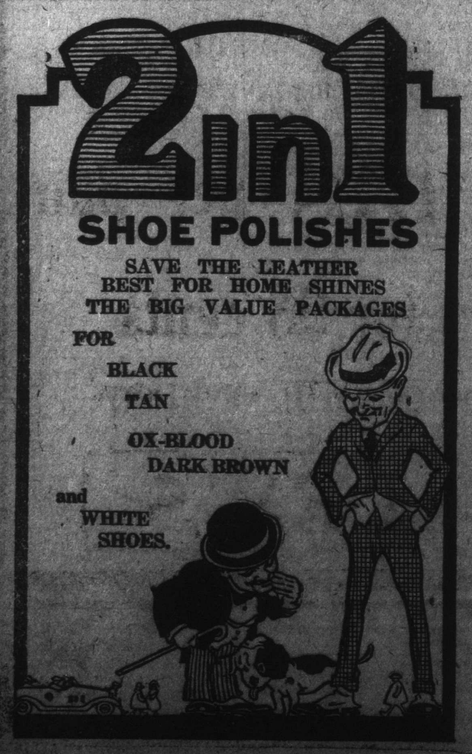

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