

SOLITUDE.

Laugh, and the world laughs with you; Weep, and you weep alone. For the sad old earth must borrow its mirth, But has trouble enough of its own.

LADY KILDARE; Or, the Rival Claimants.

CHAPTER XXVI.—Continued.

The Lady Kathleen breathed heavily. Perhaps she feared that he would compel her to accompany him in his flight.

"The possession of these jewels will bring suspicion upon you as being a common house-breaker," she said. "You cannot dispose of them without suspicion."

"I believe you, Kathleen," he said simply. "I shall rely on your word. And now I am off."

The Lady Kathleen approached him, with her white, solemn face and uplifted eyes of a glorious, heavenly blue, now dimmed with tears.

"Oae last word, Nicol," she said. "There is something I have been wanting to say to you, but I could not. Perhaps this is not a fitting moment to say it, but I cannot let you go from me with these words unaided."

CHAPTER XXVII.

IN FULL ORY.

For the third time sounded that midnight summons upon the great door of Connor Hall, and this time it was so loud and imperious in its wild clangor as to arouse the household from their beds.

without making matters worse. Delaney had already gone to the door. "Then I'm lost!"

"Perhaps it is not the police. I will see. The Lady Kathleen gazed into her boudoir, and locked the door opening into the corridor. Then she softly and swiftly undid the fastenings of her great, wide French windows, and stepped out upon the balcony, into the midst of a group of plants and shrubs in pots.

"Better surround the hall," suggested Lame Bill unhesitatingly. "Gentleman Bob is a regular desperado! He may escape by the back door while we are at the front."

"This is a private entrance, never used nowadays," said the Lady Kathleen as she hurriedly drew the rusty bolts and bars. "It is screened on the outside by a heavy growth of ivy, and will probably escape the notice of the police. I will gain all the time I can for your escape. No go!"

"I beg your pardon, my lady," said the officer respectfully, and removing his hat. "I am here on a painful and most unwelcome duty, in obedience to the orders of my superior."

"My lady," he said, "we have received information that a person known as Gentleman Bob, and under various other aliases, a fugitive from the penal colonies, is living under your roof."

"I do," declared Lame Bill, stepping forward. "It is I that gave the information. There's a big reward out for him, and I've put in a claim for it. Gentleman Bob is living at Connor Hall, under the nobbish name of Bassantyne."

"The Lady Kathleen forced a smile. "Mr. Bassantyne is my husband," she said dead-stiffly. "If you desire to see him, Delaney will conduct you to his door. But why do you couple the vulgar name of some thief—with that of Bassantyne?"

"You don't know?" he questioned. "This party here," and he indicated Lame Bill, "says you have been imposed on, my lady, and that you ran away with and married a runaway convict. And I've been sent here to apprehend the man. The police have been on the lookout for him in Dublin lately owing to secret information they had re-

ceived. This is an unpleasant duty for me, my lady, but I must obey orders. I hope that it will turn out that there is some mistake, and that Mr. Bassantyne can make matters clear at headquarters. I have been to Mr. Bassantyne's room, but he is not in. Is he not in your chamber?"

"If you doubt my word," said the Lady Kathleen, addressing the officer, "you are at liberty to look through my rooms. Delaney, show him through."

"The examination of her ladyship's rooms was brief. It was quite evident that Bassantyne was not concealed in them. The little private door by which he had escaped was discovered, and the officer examined its fastenings by the light of a candle."

"He is innocent, how should he know we were after him?" asked the officer. "If he's innocent, why should he fly? It goes against my heart to lift my hand against the Connors, Delaney. Lord Connor was my father's benefactor. But duty is duty, and I must try to find the fellow. I think I'll give the rest of the house a look first."

"Hels not in these rooms," he said briefly. "I will go through the hall."

"Then you should send a man to Wicklow to telegraph in every direction," said Lame Bill impatiently, "unless you expect to make more by letting him escape."

"He had then but one man remaining, besides Lame Bill, but the latter was a force in himself. The three ascended the park, examined the hollow in which Lame Bill had been hidden, and the latter told anew the story of his recognition of Bassantyne, his conflict with him, the victory of his adversary, and how he himself had been left, stunned and senseless, as dead; and how, an hour or so later, he had come to himself, and had crept out of the hollow to a running stream near at hand; how he had washed his wounds, and then made his way to the village, brimming over with fury and hatred. And he told also how he had obtained a horse at the Ballyconnor inn and had ridden to Wicklow, intent on obtaining vengeance on his enemy, and had made known his story to the police, had exhibited various proofs of his truthfulness in the shape of advertised rewards for 'Gentleman Bob,' his own wounds, and a convincing earnestness."

"All these facts Lame Bill reviewed, muttering threats of vengeance on his enemy, but no trace of Bassantyne was discovered. "He has given us the slip," said the officer at last. "He's not at the hall nor in the park. Of course he's not in the village. He has left the valley. There's only one chance left. If he hadn't got away by the time I sent the men to guard the mountain roads, we may find him a prisoner. As we shall go back by the south pass, we'll ride now to the north pass and relieve our guard!"

"Here, sitting his horse like an old Roman sentinel, they found the policeman who had been ordered to guard that end of the valley. "Seen anything of the fugitive?" demanded the officer eagerly.

"Nothing, sir," was the response. "There's been nobody along. I don't think the man went in this direction, but if he did he climbed the mountain, avoiding the road."

Lame Bill almost gnashed his teeth, in his disappointment and rage. "The officer expressed his regret at Bassantyne's undoubted escape. "But we've done the best we could," he added. "Fall in, my man. We're off for Wicklow, to report failure."

"I don't see Wall. I told him to be here, at this point, and to await our coming!" "What's that on the ground?" asked Lame Bill, peering ahead with strained gaze. "A man as sure as I live!"

"Was he a tall, big man with a long black beard?" eagerly demanded Lame Bill. "I'm thinking he was taller and bigger nor a steuple," said Wall, rubbing his head. "But his beard was not long."

"He's trimmed it then!" interrupted Bassantyne's enemy. "Which way did he go?" "To his own dominions, I'm thinking," said Wall, struggling to his feet. "How could I see with no eyes to my head? And me in a faint swoon, total unconscious, with no wits about me. Is it a madman ye are? All I know is he came and he went, and he left with me the contents of his pistol!"

"The officer, alive now to the desperate character of Bassantyne, and sternly resolved upon his capture, bowed assent to these suggestions. Wall was taken up upon one of the horses of his companions, while Lame Bill, with the bloodthirstiness of a sleuth-hound, set out to follow the trail of Bassantyne! (To be continued.)

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