

## IN GOLDEN BONDS.

## CHAPTER XXX.—AND LAST

The heartless cruelty of Mr. Rayner in allowing his poor submissive wife to live in a room such as he would not for the world have kept horse, or dog, or even violin in checked and repelled me, and wrung from me the cry—

"The villain!"

"Hush!" said she. "He may be listening to us now."

"I don't care!" cried I passionately. "I am glad if he hears—if he hears me say that this morning I hoped he would escape, but that now I hope they will find him, for they cannot possibly punish him as he deserves. Oh, Mrs. Rayner, and I—I sleeping up in the turret to be out of the damp! How you must have hated me!"

"I did once, I own," she whispered, sinking into a chair and taking the hands I stretched out towards her. "But it was foolish of me, for you did not know—how could you know?"

"But why did you stay? Why did you say nothing about it? And why were you not glad to go up stairs, instead of begging as you did to remain here?"

"Because," she whispered, her nervous agitation coming back again, "I knew that while I remained down here they would not kill me outright; they would not let me die down here and introduce doctors and strangers to examine into the cause of my death into this room. I knew that a change of room was my death-warrant; and it would have been, but for the accident which happened to Sarah on the very night when, but for you, I should have been sleeping upstairs ready to her hand."

I staggered back, suddenly remembering the message Mr. Rayner had in his letter told me to give Sarah. It was this—"Tell Sarah not to forget the work she has to do in my absence." And I remember also the grim way in which she had received it. Could he have meant that?

Mrs. Rayner continued—

"He hates violence; all was to have been over by his return, and he free to marry you."

"But he couldn't. I was engaged to Laurence, Mrs. Rayner."

She gave a little bitter smile.

"And do you think that, with Laurence away and Mr. Rayner here, you could have withstood him? In spite of his soft manner, he has a will that acts like a spell. I tell you," said she, twisting my fingers nervously, "though you say he is in America and Laurence reads says I shall never be in his power again, his influence is strong upon me even now. There is no peace, no freedom for me as long as he lives."

"Mrs. Rayner," said I suddenly, "may I ask you if what Mr. Rayner told me when I first came is true—that you were rich and he poor, and that he lived on your money?"

"No, it is not true. I had a little money when he first married me; which he ran through with at once."

"And is it true you once wrote books and had a little boy whose death made a great change in you?" said I slowly, watching her face.

"No; I never had any child but Mona and Haidee."

"Then what did he—"

"What did he tell you so for? He delights in making up fantastic tales of this sort, and often in making me bear witness to the truth of his inventions; it is part of his wily humour. When he went away to carry out a robbery, he would let me know what he was going to do—just to torture me."

The dead calmness with which she told me all this was maddening to me.

"Why did you bear it? Why didn't you rebel, or run away and tell a policeman?"

"If Sarah had killed me, and you had married Mr. Rayner," she answered slowly, staring straight at me, "you would have understood why."

And the power this man exercised over every one who came much in his way became in a moment clear to me, when I saw by what different means he had on the one hand cowed his wife and the fiery Sarah, and on the other gained a strong influence over such different women as Mrs. Reade and myself. But the revelation was more than I could bear. I said faintly—

"May I go to my room, Mrs. Rayner? I am not well."

And she herself led me very slowly—for I was indeed weak and ill, half with the pain

of my arm and half with misery and disgust—up to my bed in the turret-room.

Before the end of the day I heard that Mrs. Saunders had disappeared without any warning or any application for payment of services, as soon as Sarah had been taken off to the lunatic asylum. She had spared no pangs of self-reproach on her account, however, by taking with her Mrs. Rayner's watch, and also the cook's, which had been left in the rooms of their respective owners.

"She doesn't expect to see Mr. Rayner again then," I whispered to Mrs. Rayner, who came to my bedside to tell me the news, "or she would never dare to do that."

And, persuaded by me, Mrs. Rayner now relieved of any dread on Sarah's account, returned to the front spare-room, which, however disagreeable the remembrance of Sarah's mad attempt on her life might be, was at any rate healthier than the dungeon in the left wing. There was really nothing to keep the poor lady at the Alders now, as I told Laurence by letter that evening all that Gordon had said to me in the store-room, and the idea had gained ground that Mr. Rayner had gone to America. But she insisted upon remaining until I was well enough to be moved, an event which I had myself retarded by rashly leaving my room three times since I had been told to keep my bed.

Next day, which was Saturday, Laurence wrote to say he had himself searched the store-room and Mr. Rayner's study, but found no trace of Gordon beyond a pair of handcuffs placed neatly in the middle of the store-room on the top of a pyramid of biscuit tins and pickle-jars, with a sheet of paper saying that the lace weaver begged to return them with thanks to the police, who might perhaps succeed in making them stay longer on the wrist of a simpler rogue than his obedient servant, F. Gordon.

Those days that I spent in bed were a miserable time for all of us. The suspense we were all in—never sure whether Mr. Rayner was in America or whether he might be really close to us all the time. The bits of news brought us from hour to hour by the awe-stricken Jane—first that there was a large reward offered for his capture; then rumours, which always proves to be false, of his having been caught; then complaints of the number of people who came just to look at the outside of the house that the ugly stories were being told about! For the facts fell far short of the accounts which were freely circulated—of there being a cellar full of human bones, supposed to be the remains of Mr. Rayner's victims, under the Alders; that the household consisted entirely of women whom he had married at one time or another; and so forth.

Meanwhile the fog still hung about the place, and Nap, the retriever howled every night. When Monday came, I, anxious to be declared convalescent as soon as possible, and to be able to avail myself of Mrs. Maner's invitation to stay at the vicarage, persuaded Doctor Lowe to let me go down stairs. It was about twelve o'clock when I left my room, and I had made my way as far as the corridor below, when I became aware of an unusual commotion on the ground floor, doors being opened and shut, the sobbing of a woman, excited whisperings between Jane and the cook, and then a heavy tramp, tramp of men's feet through the hall and along the passage to Mr. Rayner's study.

I went to the top of the back stair-case, descended a few steps, and looked over the garden and Sam were carrying between them a door, on which something was lying covered by a sheet. The cook opened the study door, and they took it in. A horrible dread filled my mind and kept me powerless for a few moments. Then I ran along the corridor, down the front staircase, and met little Haidee with awe on her childish face.

"Oh, Miss Christie," she whispered, clutching my arm in terror, "they've found papa!"

Jane ran forward and caught me as I tottered in the child's clasp. Before I had recovered sufficiently to go to Mrs. Rayner in the drawing room, Laurence and Mrs. Maner arrived, having heard the ghastly news already. They took us over to the vicarage at once, and I never returned to the Alders again.

In the evening Laurence told me all about the discovery. The gardener, who had done little work for the last three days beyond keeping the gate locked and driving away with a whip the boys who would swarm over when they got a chance, "just to have a look at the place," had been attracted that morning by the shrill cries of Mona, who,

now more neglected than ever, spent all day in the garden in spite of the fog. He ran to the pond, where she was nearly always to be found, and whence her cries came, fearing she had fallen in. But he found her standing in the mud on the edge of it, screaming, "Come out, come out!" and clutching with a stick at an object in the water. It was the body of her father, entangled among the reeds.

The down-trodden grasses and rushes at that corner of the pond nearest to the stile which joined the path through the plantation to the path through the field beyond told the story of how he must have missed his way coming through the plantation in the dense fog of Wednesday night, on his way back from the Hall to the Alders, slipped into the pond, and been drowned out there in the fog and darkness, while his dog Nap, hearing his cry for help, had tried in vain, by howling and barking, to draw attention to his master's need.

It was an awful thing that night to lay awake in my strange room at the Vicarage, and picture to myself the dead Mr. Rayner lying at the Alders, the sole occupant, with the exception of the woman hired to watch by him, of the big dreary house where he, with his love of fun and laughter had seemed to me to be the one ray of brightness.

I heard next day that two passages, booked in the name of "Mr. and Mrs. Norris," had actually been taken by him on board a ship which left Liverpool for New York on the very Thursday when we were to have started on our journey "to Monaco." The tickets were found upon him and also the necklace, which proved to be a valuable ornament of rubies that had belonged to Mrs. Cunningham, which he had clasped around my neck on the night of his death, but which I had flung upon the floor. These were the only ones, of all the stolen jewels, which were ever recovered, with the exception of the diamond pendant, which I sent back to its owner, Lord Dalston. Upon the house being searched, the candle which had fallen from my hand when I first went into the cellar under the store room was found under the stagnant water there, and also the brown perimantean, which was identified as the one belonging to Sir Jonas Mills; but the jewels, with the exception of one drop, from an ear ring, had disappeared.

I heard about Gordon, as he told me I should, through Carruthers, who long before the impression these events made died away, received a letter dated from New York, in which Gordon, in a very respectful manner, apologised for the inconvenience his sudden disappearance might have caused his master, who had, he could not doubt, by this time learned the reason of it through the London papers. Mr. Carruthers would find that the bills he had commissioned him to settle in Beaconsburg on that unfortunate Wednesday afternoon had been paid, and he begged to forward him the receipts; he had also let the silver-mounted flask to be repaired at Bell's and the hunting stock at Maradon's. He had given up service for the present and taken to a different profession as he felt if he was not taking a liberty in saying so, that it would be impossible for him to find in America a master who gave him in all respects so much satisfaction as Mr. Carruthers had done.

Nothing more has ever been heard of Gordon under that name; but some time afterwards a representative of the United States Congress, who was described as a rich West India merchant, made a great sensation by a very impressive speech upon some financial question; a rough sketch of him in the New York illustrated paper fell into the hands of Mr. Carruthers, who sent it to Laurence, and under the trimly cut moustaches and hair parted very much to one side we fancied we recognised something like the clear-cut features and bland expression of our old friend Gordon.

I was married to Laurence before the trial of poor Tom Parkes and of the subordinate who had been caught removing the plate from the Hall. I had to give evidence, and I was so much distressed at having to do so that Tom, good-natured to the last, called out—

"Don't take on so miss. Lor' bless you, you can't say any worse than they know I only a matter of form you know."

He took a stolid sort of glory in his iniquities, pleaded "Guilty" to the charges brought against him of taking an active part in all three robberies, and exulted especially in the neatness of the execution of the robbery at Donham Court, where the various articles stolen were being quietly abstracted one by one at different times by Gordon for

two or three days before the Tuesday, when they were finally carried off by Mr. Rayner, and taken by him and Tom to the Alders, where Sarah had received them, as I had seen.

As to what had become of the jewels afterwards, Tom professed himself as innocent as a child; but, whether this is true or not, nobody believed him. He was sentenced to fourteen years penal servitude, and did not hear the sentence with half so much concern as I.

Poor Mrs. Rayner never entirely shook off the gloomy reserve which had grown around her during those long years of her miserable marriage. Kind-hearted Sir Jonas Mills was among the very first to come forward to help her; and, by his generous assistance and that of other friends, she went to live abroad, taking Haidee with her, and Jane, who proved a most devoted servant and friend.

Laurence and I who were married before she left England, undertook the care of poor little savage Mona, who has grown into almost as nice a girl as her sister. And now I have one of my own too.

(THE END.)

## The "Hollow Square."

The "hollow square" formation that won the battle at El Teb, is undoubtedly a formidable one in these days of long range rifles, when the assailants can be exterminated long before they ever reach the bayonet points. But that Infantry squares have been broken by cavalry on more than one occasion, is now a matter of history. Authorities are still divided as to whether Victor Hugo was right in affirming, or Siborne in denying, that the French heavy brigade drove in the face of a British square at Waterloo.

But Montbrun's cuirassiers broke a Russian square at Borodino in 1812, and Col. Caulaincourt's horse, in the same battle, actually charged into an entrenched redoubt. In the course of the Anglo Arabian war that followed the annexation of Aden, in 1839, an English square was attacked in the open plain by a mass of Abdali horsemen. The Arabs forced their way in so far as to kill several men in the third rank, and were then beaten off with bayonets and clubbed muskets, an occurrence utilized by James Grant in one of his military novels. The Irish brigade had a similar experience at Talavera.

"So, my Connaught boys," said General Pictou to them after the battle, "you let the Frenchmen get into your square, to-day, did you?"

## Blessed for Charity.

A little old woman, pale faced and bowed in form, dressed in the habit of the order of St. Vincent de Paul, is always to be found pacing the wards or corridors of the chain of institutions which surround the block bounded by Sixty-eighth and Sixty-ninth streets, Lexington and Third Avenues, New York. This is Sister Irene, the foster mother of thousands of foundlings. Toddlers of all complexions cling to her skirts and nestle at her side, awaiting her benignant smile and loving greeting. Four fully appointed buildings, the Asylum, St. Ann's and St. John's Hospitals, and an imposing chapel, occupy the square purchased by the efforts of this woman, who began her work without a penny in her pocket. Sister Irene and Mrs. P. L. Thebaud begged the first ten dollars that was the nest-egg of the fund to save the foundlings. Last week \$10,017 was paid as wages to the nurses who take care of the children in their homes. There are nearly two thousand children in the asylum, besides 1,700 nurses outside. The number left in the crèche daily average forty-nine. "The great effort of my life," says Sister Irene, "is to restore the mothers; if they come here they are shielded, and, by kindness and good counsel, brought back to a virtuous way of living."

In 1881 a Fargo (Dakota) farmer noticed a single stool of wheat in his oat-field, which consisted of twenty-two stalks, headed out. These contained 560 grains, of which 760 were planted in 1882, yielding one-fifth of a bushel. Last Spring this wheat was planted and carefully cultivated. The product is seventeen bushels, an increase of eighty five fold, and a yield of fifty-six bushels and thirty-two pounds to the acre. Seventeen bushels from a single kernel in three years is a good growth.