

The Crimson Blind

By FRED. M. WHITE

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The Fascination of Mrs. Merritt. On the whole Mr. James Merritt, ex-convict and humanitarian, was enjoying himself immensely. He did not sleep at the castle, for Lord Belmont drew the line there, but he contrived to get most of his meals under that hospitable roof, and spent a deal of time there. It was by no means the first time he had been "taken up" by the aristocracy since his conversion, and his shyness was wearing off. Moreover, Henson had given his henchman strict instructions to keep his eyes open with a view to getting at the bottom of the Rembrandt mystery.

Still, there is always a crumpled leaf left somewhere, and Merritt had had a few days after Henson's departure so hurriedly from town the stolen Rembrandt disappeared from Merritt's rooms. Nobody knew anything about it; the thing had vanished. "You are going to see some fun presently," she said, coolly, to the astonished Merritt, as she laid the missing picture before him. "No, I shall not tell you anything more at present. You shall hear the whole story when Reginald Henson stands in the pillory before you. You know now that Henson was at the bottom of the plot to destroy Dr. Bell's castle, and that he was a great scoundrel." Merritt purred over his cigarette. "And if you succeed in exposing him thoroughly I shall watch the performance with the greatest possible pleasure. I am not curious, my dear young lady, but I would give sixpence to know who you are."

"I hope so," Chris said, with a curling lip. "You look guilty enough now." Merritt explained that it was merely the first emotion, and would pass off presently. Nor did he boast in vain. He was quite cool as the officers came up and called him by name. "That's me," Merritt said. "What's the trouble?" One of the officers explained. He had no warrant to search Mr. Merritt, but he would have to trouble Mr. Merritt to accompany him to Moreton Wells. A diamond star had been found in the pocket of a gentleman in a blue coat which he expected at Litterer Castle at any moment. The police were coming, and Merritt was late to-day. If Merritt failed to turn up the whole situation would be spoiled. It was with a feeling of unutterable relief that Chris saw him coming up the drive.

"Come on the terrace," she said, "I have something very serious to say to you. Mr. Merritt, you have got us both into very serious trouble. Why did you do it?" "Ain't done nothing," Merritt said, doggedly. He repeated the old formula. "What's up?" "Er—it's about my diamond star," said Chris. "I lost it a few days ago. If I had known what was going to happen I should have put up with my loss. But I made inquiries through the police without saying a word to anybody, and now I find the star was pawned in Moreton Wells."

"Oh, lor," Merritt gasped. "You don't mean to say the police know that, miss?" "Indeed I do. You see, once I allowed matters to go out of my hands I was powerless. The case now rests entirely with the police. And I am informed that they may come here and arrest you at any moment. I fear there is no escape for you, you must do the thing yourself in your own name. What a thousand pities you yielded to sudden temptation."

"But I found it," Merritt whined. "I'll take my oath as I found it on the terrace. I—I was rambling along the cliffs one day and I found it. And I didn't know it was yours. If I had known it was yours, I'd never have gone and done no such a thing." Chris shook her head sadly. "And just as you were getting on so nicely," she said.

"That's it," Merritt whined, brokenly. "Just as I was properly spooning everybody as I—I mean just as I was getting used to a better life. But you can save me, miss; you can say as you were hard up for money and that, knowing as I know the ropes, you got me to pawn it for you. Put it in that way and there's not a policeman in England as can touch me."

"I had thought of it," Chris said, with a pretty assumption of distress. "But, Mr. Merritt, I have a terrible confession to make. I was not I who started the police; it was somebody else. You see, the star was some my property at all. I—I got it in London."

Mr. Merritt looked up with involuntary admiration. "You don't mean to say as you nicked it?" he asked. "Well, well." Chris bent her face lower to conceal her agitation. Her shoulders were heaving, but not with emotion. The warmth of Merritt's admiration had moved her to silent laughter, and she had made the exact impression that she had desired.

"I have telegraphed to the lady, who is my best friend of mine," she said. "I have urged her to take no further steps in the matter. I fancy that she is a good and kind girl and that—but a reply might come at any time." "There was a reply on the way now, as Chris knew perfectly well. The whole thing had been carefully arranged and planned to the moment by Merritt and the others.

"I dare say they'll let you down easy," Merritt said, disconsolately. "But I'll be hot for me. I've copped it too many times before, you see." "Yes, I see," Chris said, thoughtfully. "After what you've done for me, if I had not—er—borrowed that star, it would not have been lost, and you would not have found it, and there would have been no trouble. My conscience would not rest if I allowed you to be dragged back into the old life again. I am going to save you—I am going to tell the police that you pawned that star for me at my instigation."

Merritt was touched even to tears. There was not an atom of chivalry in the rascal's composition. He had little or no need for the trouble that his companion appeared to be piling up for herself, but he was touched to the depths of his soul. Here was a clever girl, who in her own way appeared to be a member of his profession, who was prepared to sacrifice herself to save another. Self-sacrifice is a beautiful and tender thing, and Merritt had a notion of thwarting it.

"What, and I'm your pal for life," he huskily. "And I never went to a prison yet. Ask anybody, anybody knows me. Tain't as if you weren't one of us, neither. I'd give a trifle to know what your little game is here, eh?" Chris smiled meaningly. Merritt's delusion was distinctly to be fostered. "You shall help me then, presently," she said in a mysterious whisper. "Help me and keep your own counsel, and there will be the biggest job you ever had in your life. Only let you and I get out of this mess, and we shall see what we shall see presently."

Merritt looked speechless admiration. He had read of the class of high-toned criminals in the gutter stories peddled by certain publishers, but he had never hoped to meet one in the flesh. He was still gazing open-mouthed at Chris as two men came along the avenue. They were both in plain clothes, but they had "policeman" writ large all over them. "Cops, for a million," Merritt murmured. "You can tell me when you're asleep. And they are after me; they're coming this way. I'll be all right presently."

Merritt's heart was gained. His pride was touched. "Go back on you!" he cried, hoarsely. "After what you've done for me, only give old Jim Merritt a call, and it's pitch-and-toss to manna for those pretty eyes of yours. Good day's work! Aye, for both of us." And Chris thought so too.

CHAPTER XL.

A Useful Discovery. Waiting with the eagerness of the greyhound in leash, David Steele was more annoyed and vexed over the appearance of the wounded Van Sneek than he cared to admit. He had an uneasy feeling that the unseen foe had checkmated him again. And he had built up so many hopes upon this strangely-uninvited guest of his. If that man spoke he could tell the truth. And both Cross and Bell had declared that he would not lie.

As soon as the result of the election last night became known Hon. Mr. Templeman was the recipient of enthusiastic congratulations by friends, not only in Victoria but throughout Canada. Among the first to arrive was one from the veteran chief of the party, the First Minister of Canada and this was followed by others from less distinguished sources, but of equal heartiness. Some of these received were as follows:

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CONGRATULATIONS TO NEW MINISTER

IS RECIPIENT OF HEARTY WELL WISHES

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form flow of our rivers and limiting our valuable water powers to a few months in the year. A bill will be presented for your consideration empowering the government to set apart reserved reserves on lands under its control. In accordance with the offer made by my ministers to the government of the United Kingdom, the Imperial treasury companies in the neighboring Republic have naturally created some uneasiness in the public mind as to the condition of Canadian companies. A commission has therefore been appointed to inquire into and report on the management and financial standing not only of companies holding Canadian charters, but also of all companies doing business under license in Canada. Satisfactory progress is being made in the exploration and surveys of the eastern division of the national transportation and it is expected that the construction of the important sections, embracing together about 400 miles, will shortly be commenced. The interim report of the Canadian commission will be laid before you. The work of the joint commission has been somewhat delayed owing to a doubt as to the jurisdiction of the American section on the waters dividing the two countries and the opportunity for the generating of electric power at many points necessarily involves questions which can only be dealt with by international arrangement or by treaty. At Niagara the commission will have to consider how best to preserve the scenic effect of the falls, while not unduly restricting the use of the flow of Niagara river so valuable for power purposes. A report has been received from the transportation commission containing valuable recommendations. The document will be laid before you. The legal experts appointed to revise, classify and consolidate the public general statutes issued since the revision in 1898, have completed their task and it is expected that the volumes will be ready for distribution before July. A measure for the better observance of the Lord's day will be submitted for your consideration. You will be invited to consider among other subjects bills to amend the Railway act, an act respecting usury and also the Denmark, Immigration Act. Gentlemen of the House of Commons. In again summoning you to meet for the dispatch of business I am glad to be able to congratulate you on the prosperity prevailing throughout the Dominion. The severe bereavement which Queen Alexandra has sustained through the death of her father, the King of Denmark, has occasioned much sorrow throughout the empire, and I am satisfied that the warm sympathy of the people of Canada will be readily extended to Her Majesty. It afforded me much pleasure as the

OPENING OF THE DOMINION HOUSE

EARL GREY READS SPEECH FROM THRONE

No Reference Made to Tariff Revision—Parliament Likely to Be Summoned in Fall. Ottawa, March 8.—The second session of the tenth parliament of the Dominion of Canada was opened today by Lord Grey. There was a large attendance inside and outside the parliament buildings, and interest in the function was as great as in past years. The fact that the opening was some two months later than last year did not in any way detract from the enthusiasm of the occasion. As is always the case the escort which accompanied the viceregal carriage from Government House to the parliament buildings was supplied by the Princess Louise Dragoon Guards, and the guard of honor which received His Excellency at the main entrance to the House of Commons was from the Governor-General's foot guards. The usual salute was fired from Niagara point as Lord Grey proceeded to the senate and delivered the following speech from the throne: Hon. Gentlemen of the Senate; Gentlemen of the House of Commons: In again summoning you to meet for the dispatch of business I am glad to be able to congratulate you on the prosperity prevailing throughout the Dominion. The severe bereavement which Queen Alexandra has sustained through the death of her father, the King of Denmark, has occasioned much sorrow throughout the empire, and I am satisfied that the warm sympathy of the people of Canada will be readily extended to Her Majesty. It afforded me much pleasure as the

CITY EXPENDITURE TO BE DISCUSSED

BY ALDERMANIC BOARD AT TONIGHT'S SESSION

Proposal to Appoint an Independent Auditor is Also on the Tapis. (From Thursday's Daily.) At this evening's meeting of the city council the expenditure by-law for the current year will come up for a third reading, but it is not expected that there will be any serious opposition. The estimates have been before the council for the past month, and have been thoroughly scrutinized. In their original form they called for \$33,362, but this amount was pared down to \$24,978, almost every department, except salaries, suffering a reduction. This item still stands at \$2,139 per annum. The board of health are granted an extra appropriation; the original estimate was \$16,644, which was raised to \$17,134, in consequence of several improvements necessary at the isolation hospital and in other branches of the department. The figures of the board of

SEEN FROM THE PRESS GALLERY. John Oliver Quotes the Columbia and Western Subsidy Bill to Prove that the Government has Refused Settlers Their Rights.



school trustees were cut down \$2,000 after a very vigorous kick on the part of the gentlemen in charge of public education. For streets, bridges, etc., the estimate remains as originally presented, \$4,330; but under the heading "miscellaneous" the figures were altered from \$3,250 to \$2,400. The maintenance of public institutions is naturally the biggest item on the list, and for this purpose \$18,521 was voted, the amount asked for being \$14,012. Under this heading there was an all-round increase sought, but the pruning knife was freely used with the result here stated. The fire department, for instance, asked that the brigade be provided with uniforms, but this the council considered unnecessary and agreed to supply them instead with helmets. There is also an item of some \$15,000 for improvements at the city hall. In its present condition the hall is generally pronounced a disgrace to the city. The council distributed all over the building, and so many of these are there that great inconvenience is experienced by the public having business there. The new arrangement will bring nearly all the offices together and greatly facilitate the transaction of business. The police court is also to receive a general and much needed overhauling. In addition to the expenditure by-law, the question of appointing an independent auditor will also come up for discussion at tonight's meeting, with several other matters of importance.

VETERINARY COURSE AT HOME. \$1200. Many courses in home medicine, surgery, etc., are being held in various parts of the province. The course at home is particularly popular. The course at home is particularly popular. The course at home is particularly popular.

SEATTLE MAYORALTY. Result is Still in Doubt—Riplinger is Leading. Seattle, March 7.—Complete returns of 68 out of 96 precincts give John Riplinger, Republican candidate for mayor, a plurality over Wm. M. Moore, Republican ownership. The result is in doubt.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE LEGISLATURE

GOVERNMENT'S POLICY SEVERELY

John Oliver Exposes Incoherence of McBride Administration—Tricks Exposed. (Continued from Monday.) North Vancouver. On the second reading of the incorporation of North Vancouver City, Mr. John Oliver said that the desire to have incorporation there had been mentioned in various provisions of the act, but that no provision from any of the residents of the corporations had been passed into law. Speaker Will Deane said that the bill to amend the Corporation Act was now before the House. J. F. Garden moved a resolution: (1074) For licensing a electricians and those operating buildings, poles or for the purpose of the electric power for lighting or other purposes providing for a board of examination of such and other persons and to prohibit electrical work not possessing such certificates of efficiency and to prohibit electrical work not possessing such certificates of efficiency. Dr. Young objected to the amendment and stated that he had not according to the provisions of the act, with private parties, first introduced containing anything of this kind. The committee had amendments from the past had not been the Mr. Garden said that to be regarded as a precedent that the city in the past had not failed to advertise each amendment. John Oliver pointed out that the Municipal Act would be the legislature. He explained why the city preferred to pay for special act and pay large changes in it except of getting special privilege amendments from the past had not been the Mr. Garden said that to be regarded as a precedent that the city in the past had not failed to advertise each amendment. John Oliver pointed out that the Municipal Act would be the legislature. 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