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At the Mouth of the Treacherous Pit

STORY OF LOVE, INTRIGUE AND REVENGE

CHAPTER XXII.

Dolores was living in Paris when she heard that the Villa Baira was to let, and it occurred to her that Florence would be a very suitable place of residence for her. There she would have every opportunity of educating her daughters, and at the same time would find a haven of rest and the happiness to be derived from a lovely climate and beautiful scenery.

So to the Villa Baira, as to a haven of rest, she came, with her two little children and faithful, old servant, John Frodsham; and there for sixteen years she lived.

But she had never grown accustomed to her pain. It was as keen now as of old. If she woke in the middle of the night her first thought was always this—why had Karl left her whom he loved for one whom he had not loved? She never quite reconciled to the loss—she never quite understood it. One other thing was a mystery to her. Sir Karl had never drawn any money; and she wondered from what source he derived his income, and decided in her own mind that it was merely a strong sense of justice on his part that had caused him to leave his money untouched for his wife and child. Then her heart rebelled against the notion that he was living on Lola's money. It was so unlike the brave, generous, manly husband who had been her hero.

Kathleen was over twenty now, and Gertrude a beautiful, blooming girl of seventeen. They had not suffered by their mother's voluntary exile. They had received an excellent education; masters came every day from Florence to instruct them. They could not fail to imbibe every pure, high, and holy principle from Dolores; and from her they inherited also that high-bred grace-of-manner and refinement of taste that made her one of the most charming of women. They moved in the highest society. Dolores made but one stipulation. They might make the acquaintance of Italians, Austrians, Spaniards—people of every and any nationality except English; they were forbidden, under the severest penalties, ever to allow any introductions to the latter, no matter what their rank or position.

As the golden-haired lady with the sweet, sad face stood looking over the Arno, the waves of which were slowly brimming over until they reached her feet, she thought of all those long years, and wondered if her peaceful

rest from sorrow and shame must, on account of her dear children, come to an end. They would not always be content here.

Everything was so peaceful and calm. The crimson light was lying now on the river. The same thought recurred to her which, like a poisonous snake, had stung her every hour of her life since her husband had left her—"What is he doing now? Is he standing by Lola's side, watching with her some scene as fair as this?"

She turned from the river with a cry of pain on her lips. She felt more lonely than usual this evening, for her children had asked for a holiday, and with a good-natured Neapolitan Countess for their escort, had gone to see the famous Pitti palace. Dolores had wished the old butler to accompany them—he was in her eyes a bodyguard in himself; but her daughters had laughed so merrily, and the countess had seemed so amused that she had been compelled to abandon the idea. Frodsham was always on the alert when there were any English about, and Dolores knew that she was beginning to think that the children were rather late when she heard the carriage stop.

Ah, what a difference those sweet, fresh, young voices made! She heard them in the distance, and her heart beat at the sound. "My darlings!" she said to herself.

Presently Gertrude cried: "Frodsham where is mamma?"

"I saw her by the river, Miss Gertrude, not three minutes ago."

"Oh, Kathleen, there she is, under the vines! I can see the gleam of her golden hair. Come, Kathleen, quickly!"

But the elder sister drew back, as though reluctant, which was something unusual.

"She will be so very angry, Gertrude, and we have never seriously displeased her before—never."

"Yes, I am afraid she will be vexed. The best way will be to tell her the truth at once. We have done wrong; but how could we help it? I almost dropped when that dear old lady caught hold of me. Why, Kathleen, it is quite an adventure! Come and let us tell our mother all about it!"

They hastened to the vine-walk. Dolores's fair face brightened as she saw them, and the sadness died out of her eyes. Gertrude went up to her.

"Darling mamma," she said, "do not

kiss us until you have heard what we have done."

Dolores was somewhat startled, and her face paled a little, but she answered quietly:

"I am quite sure, my darlings, that you have done no wrong. But where is the Countess?"

"She had to drive off at once; a message came to her at the palace. She left every possible apology and compliment for you, mamma. She has been very kind to us, and we have had a happy day. But, oh! mamma, how am I to tell you what has happened? Kathleen says you will be dreadfully angry. I feel that too, yet I cannot see how we could possibly have avoided it."

"My dear Gertrude, you forgot that all this time you are keeping me in suspense," her mother said, half smiling.

They made a striking group, these three fair women—Dolores in the fair splendor of matronhood, Kathleen with her pathetic beauty, and Gertrude in the freshest bloom of her girlhood, dainty, delicate, and lovely.

"I will tell you at once, mamma," she said, "and you must promise me not to be very angry."

CHAPTER XXIII.

Mother and daughter walked down to the water's edge.

"If you have a long story to tell me," said Dolores, "let us sit down here; these bamboo chairs are quite inviting."

She did not feel alarmed. Her children had not hitherto caused her any uneasiness. Still it was plain that something out of the usual current of events had happened. Kathleen had grown pale, and Gertrude rosy red.

"Mamma," began Gertrude, "it is better to tell you the truth, though I am afraid a great deal of mischief has been done. You know that Kathleen and I have not asked you any questions about England; we both knew that if there was anything to tell you would tell it in good time. But, Mamma, to-day, for the first time, we have heard that there is something strange—"

"Strange, Gertrude?"—and Dolores's face was troubled.

"Yes; but, darling, never mind what comes of it. Kathleen and I are your devoted children; if you say that we are to forget this, and never ask any questions about it, we will do so."

"I know that you are the best children in the world," said Dolores; "but what is it you have heard, my dear?"

"You know we went with the countess to see the Pitti palace, and one room in it delighted us above all others. Some of Raphael's most beautiful Madonnas are there, and a lovely Dolores—ah, mamma, how like your name—by Fra Angelico. Kathleen and I stood before it for a long time. Other people were in the room; and at last I saw a group that I felt sure were English. Presently we heard the sound of their voices. It was right in my surmise, for they spoke pure, beautiful English. The young gentleman walked away to look at a picture at the other side of the large saloon, so that he was at some distance from his mother. I think she had grown tired, for she sat down in one of the great chairs and sighed. A few minutes afterward she dropped her purse, and it slid along the polished floor until it came to my feet. Now, mamma, in common politeness, could I help picking it up?"

"No, my dear," said Dolores, gently—"certainly not." She had always taught her children to be attentive to the aged.

"I did pick it up; and as a matter of course, handed it to the owner. My face flushed, and I felt very uncomfortable. I knew that she was English, and that you had forbidden us to speak in such a case. Madam, I said, 'I think this is yours.' They were very simple words, but the effect upon her was something marvelous. She sprang up and caught me by both hands with a cry that rang through the great saloon. But, mamma, you are growing pale and paler!"

"Go on, my dear," said Dolores—"never mind me."

"She caught me by both hands, and cried out, 'Child, who are you, who are you?' She was a beautiful lady, mamma—quite old, with a fine face that had many lines on it—not fair and smooth like yours—and white hair. When she laid me and looked at me, her eyes flashed. 'Who are you?' she cried. 'What is your name—your name?'"

"That was the name, I am sure, mamma—Karl Allanmore."

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Britain's Most Curious Colony

THE "TIT-BITS" MAN VISITS OUR "ELLIS ISLAND."

I had the unique experience recently (writes the Tit-Bits man) of paying a visit to what is perhaps the strangest spot in Britain—one which, while situated in that typically English country of Hampshire, is yet, if one is to judge by its inhabitants, a Russian village!

What and where is this strange place? It is at Eastleigh, about five miles from Southampton, and, while it is in no sense an island, the name which has been given to it—Britain's "Ellis Island"—conveys the best description of it although its comforts are far superior to those of the latter place.

A Home for Emigrants. A collection of huts and airship hangars which have been converted into homes and recreation rooms, Atlantic Park Hostel—to give its proper name—is a temporary home for many thousands of emigrants—mostly Russian and Polish—who are held up from time to time in this country owing to the fact that the emigration quota in America is full.

Under the United States emigration laws only a certain number of emigrants from each country are allowed to land on American soil within specified times; thus emigrants who reach Southampton when the quota has been exhausted are taken to Atlantic Park and housed and fed there until the next quota is opened in America.

Atlantic Crossed in Vain. When I visited Atlantic Park Hostel, which is conducted by Colonel R. D. Barber, the manager for the three principal Atlantic steamship lines—the Cunard, the Canadian Pacific, and the White Star—I discovered a very happy and contented colony of almost a thousand emigrants, most of whom had been there nearly six months. Two hundred of them actually crossed the Atlantic only to be turned back, within sight of the promised land, when they reached Ellis Island. They are now awaiting the time when they will be able to proceed.

The hostel extends over an area of twenty-five acres and the huts in which the emigrants live are provided with every reasonable comfort. The occupants are encouraged to beautify their temporary homes, which, as I saw in the course of my visit, they are ready and eager to do. There is a large and well-equipped hospital ready to deal with any outbreak of disease—a contingency which, of course, must be guarded against in such circumstances—while, as the emigrants comprise both Jews and Gentiles, there are two different kitchens with special cooks, one for Kosher (Jewish food) and the other for ordinary food.

After Twenty Years. The inhabitants, who have little of which to complain regarding lack of luxury, are also waited upon in the dining-rooms by waitresses. There is a large recreation room, and a football field, as well as a school, at which the young ones are taught various subjects, principally English.

"They are all very likeable people," Colonel Barber told me. "They are just like big children. But perhaps I am prejudiced because I have lived so long in Russia, know the people so well, and speak their language. They are remarkably intelligent, particularly the children, who show the most remarkable aptitude and eagerness for learning."

"The hostel has been in existence for some years now—since the war—and many thousands of emigrants have passed through it. They are all very orderly, though coming from Russia as they do, and holding widely different political opinions, it is necessary to keep some of the men separate from their companions."

"Once I had rather a bad few minutes when I heard what sounded like pandemonium break out in the dining-room. I immediately thought it must be a racial riot. But my fears when I got to the room soon allayed. One man who had sat down at table next to another had turned to discover that his companion was the man who had saved him from drowning twenty years before, and they had not seen each other from that day. It was certainly a dramatic meeting, and the two proclaimed their mutual delight in no half-hearted fashion."

"On another occasion a very well-dressed and gentlemanly-looking visitor called to see me at the hostel. He had, he said, just come from America—where he had made his fortune—to visit his brother, who was staying at Atlantic Park. He asked me to send for his brother, but not to mention who had called. I did so, and the emigrant came into my room, his eyes fixed upon me a little fearfully, no doubt wondering what he had done to warrant this 'carpeting.'"

Russia in Hampshire. "After a little his eyes wandered round the room and at last settled on a corner. The shout of joy that emigrant gave could almost have been heard miles away! I have heard pleasant reunions, but this one enacted before my eyes surely reached the high-water mark of happiness."

—By a resident Rabbi, who has

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had the pleasant duty of marrying more than one couple. But the most remarkable fact concerning the place is that some of the English shops in the near vicinity of the hostel bear notices in Russian. Walking along the country road, seeing these signs and meeting the groups of refugees out for a stroll, one might easily imagine that one had been suddenly transported to some foreign land. —Tit Bits.

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Charles C. Doyle believes in eating fish three times a day; he says it is a wholesome diet that keeps disease away. He says it stimulates the brain and makes it function fine; and though I hold him scarcely sane, it's no concern of mine. Pete Foulch fills himself with beef, the well done sort and rare; he says he sidesteps lots of grief by such a bill of fare; I know that such a diet's bad for short-necked men like Pete, but I don't chase around the grad denouncing what men eat. James Jumbleton is fond of eggs, he eats them raw and fried; they put new vigor in his legs, and brace him up inside. I feel that there is better food for gangling men like James; but I would think it coarse and rude to chide him for his games. We stir up trouble every day by taking men to task for eating prunes or prairie hay, or sauerkraut from a cask. What others do, within the law, is no concern of mine; and if they eat their turnips raw, my soul will not repine. And if they read the sort of slush that has a vile renown, I will not to their doorways rush, to harshly call them down. And when I cut a slice of soup, I call no man my friend who comes severely to my coop, to lecture without end.

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