

The Sacrifice of Enid

CHAPTER XXVIII.—(Continued.)

By MRS. HARCOURT-ROE

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LOUISE turned to him. "I am sorry for you, Ronald," she said airily, although her dark eyes were gleaming with an angry light, "but I cannot help saying that you have brought all your troubles on yourself by your absurd and quixotic admiration of that girl."

"I see nothing absurd in admiring one who is the best of her sex," Ronald answered gravely, with marked coldness; "your sympathy is not very comforting, Louise."

"I suppose not. Are you so insane as still to contemplate marrying her?"

"I prefer not to discuss the question."

"But are you?"

"The widow of the Hon. Horace Cornwallis and daughter and heiress of Sir Thomas Iredale, is not very likely to marry a paper-manufacturer."

"Very Honourable," sneered Louise.

"Mother, dear," said Ronald, ignoring her, "go back to Willowbridge. I require all my wits about me now, and you unnerve me."

"I cordially agree with him," put in Mr. Westlake; "your best place is at home, my dear; go back at once, and we will write and telegraph every day. Take Louise with you."

"I think you are right," Mrs. Westlake answered, tears rolling down her face. "I am sure you would be better without us. Oh, my son, my own dear son!"

"But why are you assuming that I shall be convicted, Mother?"

"He will have the cleverest counsel in England, and of course he will get off," said Mr. Westlake. "Come; pack up both of you at once. I will order a carriage round in half an hour to take you to the station."

But although both men spoke cheerfully neither had a shadow of doubt in their hearts as to Ronald's fate.

Mrs. Westlake and Louise returned to Willowbridge, and the latter's excitement was so great that her hostess declared she would as soon have a caged tiger in the house.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The Trial.

THERE was sensation throughout the length and breadth of the land when it became known that Enid Cornwallis and Ronald Westlake were to be tried for aiding and abetting at the escape of Horace Cornwallis from Dartmoor. For Enid had been a society beauty, not an unnoticed girl and every one was now talking of her.

"Good thing Sir Thomas Iredale died," said the men at their clubs. "What a catch she'll be with all that money!"

Ronald was so much disposed to volunteer information about his late doings that his lawyers were furious, and bade him attend to their directions. It is possible he would not have done so had not Enid added her entreaties.

"For my sake you will not seek to incriminate yourself," she said, and he promised that he would not, although he could not depart from the truth. For he considered it a most wicked thing to tell a lie, a greater sin than to do a bad deed. That she should use the words "For my sake," gave him more hope for the future.

The court house was packed when the day of the trial came. All eyes were fixed on Enid, and after her on her mother, whose still beautiful mournful face and widow's deep weeds excited universal compassion.

Enid wore a plain black dress and close bonnet with a small white border, but she would not put on crape, or streamers or outward exaggerated expressions of woe.

Had she continued to love Cornwallis deeply she would not have done so, but in the circumstances she considered it would be absolutely wrong. The tense look had gone from her face, it was serene and calm, she seemed endued with strength.

Both pleaded "not guilty" for they considered that in intention they had

been innocent. But whereas Ronald was represented by the cleverest counsel money could procure, Enid, to the surprise of everyone, was apparently represented by no one, she was to plead her own cause.

But her counsel knew very well what he was about. He wished her to tell her own story which, hardened barrister as he was, had drawn tears from his eyes.

"She is the one woman in England who may succeed," he said. "If she can't get herself off I can't."

The evidence against Ronald was very slight. Cornwallis' disguise had been so good that no one would swear to him except as he lay dead. As it happened, the sojourn in the Eddystone lighthouse was entirely unknown to the police, for the men, for their own sakes, had been silent, and the destroyer's men had known little or nothing; the police had been drawing a bow at a venture when they endeavoured to arrest Cornwallis.

But it was abundantly proved that while Henry Jackson worked in the mill Ronald was unaware that he was a convict.

It was with the gravest fears that Enid's friends beheld her. The action of counsel was inexplicable to them. But it seemed that from the moment she began to speak almost every man in court was her champion. More than once the judge assisted her, while no one bullied her. She told her narrative very simply, saying that she had thought it no harm to help her lover, she had been quite unaware of the law. She took the entire blame on herself and carefully avoided inculpating any one else. Throughout she left a favourable impression towards Ronald, whose counsel had been very careful to avoid throwing a shadow of blame on her. In his speech he was in reality counsel for both.

When she had finished no one's eyes were dry.

The judge summed up. "He is counsel for the defence," said the counsel for the prosecution, not however ill pleased, for he, like every one else, wished Enid to go free, yet, in the face of facts how could she do so?

"The sentence will be as light as the law allows, simply nominal," he continued, "but the jury can't go in the face of facts, and she has admitted everything."

CHAPTER XXX.

The Verdict.

THE jury retired to consider their verdict. If they could have found Ronald guilty and Enid not guilty they would certainly have done so, the man usually coming in for the punishment where the guilt is equal, but this was manifestly impossible, as, owing to the extreme ability of his counsel, it really appeared as if he had done nothing.

So, to the unbounded astonishment of every one they returned into court with a verdict of "Not Guilty" concerning both prisoners. They were convinced in their own minds that Enid was absolutely innocent in intention as she had declared, therefore they considered themselves justified in their conduct, but what they would like to have said in the words of olden times was, "Not Guilty and we hope she won't do it again!"

The judge stared at this open defiance of evidence, but before he could say anything there came a ringing cheer throughout the court. It was instantly suppressed, but it told how popular feeling stood.

The verdict was amazing but the judge in his heart was glad. To sentence this pure minded heroine—who had acted from beginning to end with the most supreme unselfishness and bravery—even to a nominal sentence would have been dreadful to him.

"I do not understand," said Enid as

congratulations poured in on her; "am I to go free?"

As she and her mother left the court the crowd outside shouted itself hoarse with acclamation, while Ronald came in for his full share. He drove away hurriedly, his heart full of the most devout thankfulness.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Ronald's Fate.

LADY IREDALE and Enid went abroad at once. The papers, though they condemned Enid's act, praised her motives, her heroism, so highly that her one desire was to escape from England and Society. She received letters without end, more than one containing an offer of marriage.

"Why do they say these things?" she exclaimed. "I am no heroine. I loved him, and the only desire of love is to help and assist whenever possible. If they would only leave me alone."

Before going abroad she saw Ronald at his request. But there seemed a barrier between them. She requested her mother not to leave them alone and the conversation was of the most superficial nature, concerning only their route. It was evident that while Enid was telling him they should take the Dover-Calais boat in preference to that from Folkestone that her thoughts were far away. Her sufferings had been so keen, and so recent, that she shrank even from an allusion to past events, while she dreaded lest Ronald should speak some word such as he had spoken when he told her he loved her at Willowbridge.

But he spoke no such word; his manner was grave and quiet, he felt chilled and disheartened. Enid Cornwallis seemed so very much farther away from him than Mary Williams had been.

He accepted Lady Iredale's thanks for past services with a slight inclination of the head, saying "it is good of you to unank me but it is painful to me to be thanked. There was no selfdenial involved in any of my actions."

Then he plucked up courage and turned to Enid.

"May I write to you sometimes while you are away?"

She replied without hesitation. "Yes. I will write to you first and tell you where we are."

This was a great concession, and on the strength of this he took his leave. She had no need of him now, he felt sadly.

"There goes a man," said Enid from her window as she watched him depart.

But though her heart was still so sore she was conscious of a feeling of unutterable relief. To be free to go or to come without being watched or hampered, to take her rightful position once more, above all to have rid herself of the ever present sense of shame and haunting fear, all these things gave her cause for the deepest thankfulness.

"She is young, she will recover, but it will take time," thought Lady Iredale.

So they wandered by Swiss lakes and Italian shores, avoiding the beaten tracks as much as possible, and, by degrees, Enid's sore heart began to heal.

Ronald went back to Willowbridge, where the joy in his home and in the factory at seeing him again was unbounded.

"Ah, Mr. Ronald," said the old foreman, "I think you have cause to thank me for getting you that nice typewriting girl, Mary Williams. Didn't I feel as how she was a lady? And that aggravating scamp Henry Jackson was her husband, and a gentleman! Folks is oddly mated in this world. They're like a shuffled pack of cards, the right kings and queens never come together. Now she would have suited you down to the ground."

"Suited me?" queried Ronald as if the idea could not possibly have occurred to him before. "What very

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