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Phyllis Dearborn

OR, THE
Countess of Basingwell

CHAPTER XXI.
CHAPTER XXII.

When Lionel left Flora he went first to the library, and there sat down and took out and laid smooth before him the note he had read in the morning. He had not read it since. He read it now.

"You did not come last night. I will give you one more chance. Come to-night, at the same time, to the same place. If you do not I will show you no mercy—G."

That was the note. Lionel read it twice and three times. Then he rose and went to a cabinet and opened a drawer, from which he took a case containing a very elaborately finished revolver of an American pattern. He took it out of the case and turned it over, as if examining it if it were in good order.

"He dares to threaten my wife!" he murmured. "He dares to make an appointment with her for such a time and place!"

He examined the cylinder and counted the cartridges. Then he put the pistol back in its case, and locked the case in the drawer again.

"He is not worth it," he muttered, and left the library, first putting the note in his pocket.

Instead of going straight from the castle, he stopped first at the closet where he kept his riding toggery. There were a number of whips there. He selected a short, pure, whalebone riding-whip, of the pattern used by ladies, but heavier than ordinary. He switched it once or twice, trying it, and then walked out into the night.

It was nine o'clock by this time, and he walked around to the north side and crossed the lawn to the woods. He stopped a few moments, until his eyes became accustomed to the gloom, which was almost impenetrable, and then went slowly forward.

Intuition seemed to take him in the right direction, for after a while, when he had stopped to listen, there came a voice out of the darkness:

"Ah," it said, in a tone of mockery, "I thought you would change your mind."

The thought that such a speech was directed at his wife made Lionel clutch at his throat as if his rising wrath had choked him. He stood so a moment, peering about to catch a glimpse of the speaker, and gradually he grew to distinguish the dim outline of a figure swelled to unnatural proportions by the gloom.

That was enough. Only to know where he was. He sprang forward and made a clutch for the throat of the man, uttering, with a hoarse roar: "You hound!"

Lord Gree stepped back, feeling ineffectively in his pocket. He hit against a root, stumbled, and fell backward. Lionel stooped, groped,

and caught him by the breast of his coat and pulled him to his feet, Lord Gree scrambling. Both men were breathing short and quick, like men in mortal strife. Neither was conscious of exertion, though it was certain to both that Lionel was the physical master.

"Stand up, you snake!" said Lionel. The fumbling hand of the other had grasped at last what it had been seeking, but it rested in the pocket yet.

"I have a few words to say," went on Lionel, in short, jerky sentences. "Only a few. Not a word; but you must understand."

"Stop a minute, Warner!" panted Gree, using the familiar name.

"No, I go right on."

"Your wife—"

The hand that held him by the breast shifted suddenly to his throat.

"Heed what you say!" said Lionel, hoarsely.

"Take your hand off my throat."

"When I'm through with you."

Both men talked in hoarse, panting gutturals now, with desperation and some fear in Gree's tones, and a sort of repressed ferocity in Lionel's. The brute in each was to the fore.

"I'm dangerous," said Gree.

"I think so," answered Lionel, holding, without a quaver, the throat of the other. "But you won't be when I'm through. I want you to listen. I'll be over sooner."

"Don't choke me. I'll listen."

Lionel changed his grasp to the collar, bursting the false collar of the shirt, and his knuckles pressing the bones of the other's throat.

"Now keep still and listen," said Lionel. "I intended to kill you first—shoot you. You're not worth it. I'll kill you next time, though—if there is a next time—if you're not satisfied. You are a dog, a cur—there is no word for you—not one vile enough for you. You know what you've done. No need for me to tell you. I know everything. I ought to cut your hand off—I ought to slit your tongue. You ought to be put in the pillory as the custom was in the old times. I would do it now, but there is no time for it. I am going to whip you!"

Lord Gree had feared what was in the free hand of Lionel. He had not dared to take his hand out of his pocket for fear of what might be in Lionel's hand. Now he knew. It was a whip. He drew his hand out of his pocket. Lionel did not see the sheen of the glistening bangle.

"I warn you! don't touch me!" panted Lord Gree.

"You warn me!" said Lionel, and his whip rose and fell with a whistling sound over the shoulders of the other.

The desperation that took the place of courage in Lord Gree made him raise his pistol and draw the trigger. The sharp report rang in the air, a gasp broke from the lips of Lionel, and his fingers loosened their clutch on the collar. But only for a moment, then they tightened again.

"Well for you now that I left the pistol behind. But you sha'n't escape. No, no, no!" and there was a terrible ring in his voice.

Once again, and for the last time,

his hand shifted and caught fairly around the throat of Lord Gree, where it squeezed horribly.

Lord Gree fumbled desperately with the pistol, put up one hand to tear the other's from his neck, and failing to move it, clung to the slinky wrist.

"Drop the pistol!" said Lionel, shaking the moaning wretch, and without dropping the whip, used the hand that held it to wrench the weapon away and throw it into the woods. "Now I shall punish you."

After that he said nothing more, and Lord Gree was capable only of inarticulate but awful cries.

Lionel forgot his humanity, forgot everything except that he held in his grasp the man who had insulted his wife and who had pierced his side with a bullet. He could feel the blood trickle under his shirt.

He lifted the whip and brought it again and again with blinding fury across the face of his antagonist, across his head, across his neck, and when he could lift the whip no longer he used what strength remained to him to throw the wretch from him.

He did not even give him a last word, but walked out of the woods and across the lawn to the castle. At the threshold the thought of Flora came to him, and he shuddered at his own terrible wrath. He passed some of the servants with drooping head, and went to his own apartments. Harrison was there.

"Harrison," he said, "I have had a little trouble. I think there is a trifling wound in my side."

Then he sank into a chair, and let Harrison take off his coat and other garments.

Harrison did not even make an exclamation of surprise or concern, but went at his work with a steady hand.

"Shall I need a surgeon?" asked Lionel, when Harrison was enabled to look at the wound.

"It would be better."

"Not unless it is necessary," answered Lionel. "Wash the wound and see."

Harrison did so.

"The bullet—I think it was a bullet—"

"It was."

"The bullet went through the flesh and grazed a rib, your lordship. It has bled terribly, as you can see," and he held up the saturated garments.

"But it is not serious"

"No, your lordship."

"Bind it up and dress me again."

"I beg your pardon, your lordship, but I don't feel competent to bind it so you will be safe to go about with it."

"I'll take the risk, Harrison. Bind it. Her ladyship must know nothing of this, nor the other servants, of course."

"Certainly, your lordship."

The wound was bound with a greater skill than Harrison's modesty would have prepared any one to expect, and Lionel was dressed again. He was pale and a little unsteady when he rose to his feet. Harrison proffered his arm. Lionel pushed it aside.

"Give me some brandy, Harrison."

The brandy was given, and on the stimulus of it Lionel walked out and down to the little drawing-room where Flora still sat, just as he had left her. He was glad then that she did not look up until after he had taken a seat, though he remembered it differently afterward.

"I was longer than I thought to be," he said.

She raised her head slowly and looked at him. He believed then that his eyes were uncertain because of his weakness, and that was why there seemed such a look of terror in her face.

"I am glad you are back," was all she could bring herself to say.

She could neither think nor practice any deception then. She had been waiting to be told that he was dead. She had expected to wait and to wait, until waiting became so unendurable that even she could not continue it. And there he was! He had had some sort of encounter. She could tell that by his change of clothing, which she had noticed the first thing. But he was alive, and she had not known how glad she would be to have him so.

When Lionel was taking his seat in the drawing-room Lord Gree, out in the gloomy woods, was recovering consciousness, and trying to grope his

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way to a tree to help him rise to a standing posture.

And when he had risen he passed his hand across his face and felt a dampness there, and his eyes ached so that he kept them shut and felt his way along from tree to tree, only opening his eyes to look when it was necessary to make out the direction.

He had a carriage, with the knowing tiger waiting on the seat, hid in the copse near the road. He found it after a hunt, and took his place in it. "Go home, quick!" he said, and the boy kept the reins and drove into the next village to Basingwell.

"We go by the earliest train to London," was the last thing he said to the little tiger.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Mr. Simmons was a man who could keep a secret as well as the next. It was seldom that anything passed his lips without deliberate intention on his part; but he was only human, too, and could not exist without some sort of confidant, so he was in the habit of going into a little dimly lighted den where he kept his books, and there whispering his soul to his ledger.

That ledger knew such of his secrets as had materialized, so to speak; but now and then there was a trifle of speculation which promised profit without risk or employment of a penny, and that did not go down in black and white. Then it was that Mr. Simmons indulged in his only romance. He would shut himself in his den, and would draw forth the great ledger, and pat it and stroke it while he whispered to it his hopes and his fears. And occasionally he would bestow upon it the sweetest of human caresses—a kiss.

It was the only folly of the worthy Mr. Simmons, and is mentioned merely to let it be known that he had at least one frailty in common with the rest of mankind.

Mr. Simmons had been hilarious since the day of his visit to the castle—the day on which he had purchased a paper from a Bible in the library. The only evidence the world had of this hilarity was in an increased courage to hold out for a better bargain when there was one in progress; but to his ledger he made frequent confidences of his secret joy, and always ended by prophesying great profits very soon.

On the morning after the meeting in the north woods of Basingwell he closed a delightful seance with his ledger, locked that friend in his fire-proof, burglar-proof safe, and sauntered forth into the street, bound for

the house of the Countess of Dareleigh, whither he had been invited by note the evening before. The countess was at home, of course, and the astute Mr. Simmons knew by the first glance at her that something was wrong with her. Knowing that Lord Gree had gone to Basingwell to pursue his project of revenge, he was prepared to learn that the countess had become aware of his disposition of one of the notes.

"I wished to see you about those notes," said the countess, severely.

"Certainly. Did you wish to pay them?" asked Mr. Simmons, with his air of astonishing and exasperating innocence.

"Yes," said the countess, to the extreme surprise of the money-lender.

"You wished to pay them!" he shrilly exclaimed, wondering how his plan had gone so wrong. "The settlements haven't been signed, have they?"

"No," answered the countess, with a mingling of virtue and triumph that puzzled Mr. Simmons; "but I am prepared to pay the notes. Where are they?"

"I didn't bring them, my lady," said Mr. Simmons. "I didn't suppose you would be ready, don't you know."

"Of course," said Lady Dareleigh, "you have the notes in your possession?"

Then Mr. Simmons thought he understood. Lady Dareleigh was merely practicing a little finesse in order to make him squirm. He had done that sort of thing himself, and it amused him that one of his victims should suppose that he could be made to squirm.

"I have run of them," he answered, with the greatest coolness. "The other I sold to Lord Gree. He was very anxious to have it."

"Yes," said Lady Dareleigh, her eyes flashing, "you betrayed us."

"Merely a matter of business, my lady. He offered me a good price, and I let him have the paper."

"Do you know that you are a scoundrel, Mr. Simmons?" said she.

He shrugged his shoulders and smiled. It was quite evident that it did not matter to him what her opinion of him might be.

"But," she went on, "you have overreached yourself this time. Lord Basingwell knows everything, and you must deal with him now."

A few days ago that would have been a sorry bit of news for him, but it did not trouble him now, so he only smiled a trifle wider than before and shrugged his shoulders a little higher.

(To be continued.)

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THE THOUGHTS

THE COAL COMMITTEE.

I understand that the committee on coal, the eight dollar coal, is exhausted, so that the work of this committee is ended. They were appointed solely to oversee the proper distribution of this coal, and it is good to find that it has lasted so long. Everyone has been supplied, and the factories and other institutions have been kept running. In the distribution of the Altona's and Floridians and other Government cargoes, the regulation of price of this important coal, the Government alone is responsible. Concerning the matter in which this has been done, the Government has virtually given over the coal trade for the next three or four months to three firms to the exclusion of all other coal dealers. I have further comments to make. Sufficient to say now that the contract is creditable neither to the firms nor to the Government.

DIPHTHERIA.

There are some parents who contemplate keeping their children from school while there is so much diphtheria about, and indeed there seems to be such a quantity of it that it were better to close the schools and take any risk of an epidemic. Of course this would be a terrible thing as far as the C. H. E. Exams. are concerned—it would be well-nigh impossible to get through all the examining that would be required to fit the lumps for the examination standing in June if a month was lost now. But instead of closing down, why have open air sessions? Take the classes out for walks—take them to Signal Hill and let them breathe the sky and clouds. Make the sea more interesting to them by the story of fishes, and its fishes. Let the C. H. E. Exams. go to Germany, and make the children interested instead of bored students.

There is too much danger in diphtheria to disregard it. In the olden times whole families were stricken and died, and we are reading every day now of the very serious sickness prevalent in Cape Breton and in some parts of the States. My idea of a Public Health Office is that it should exist to keep a city well, not to wait till the city becomes sick. How active a Department it should be then always, how accurate should its knowledge of the civic conditions everywhere, how energetic should it be to watch every street and every backyard, even to examine children to see if they are susceptible to disease germs. The Public Health Department ought to be just about the busiest institution in St. John's. In this time of grippe there might be many little tips that the Public Health Office might circulate, and which might put many of us on our guard and enable us to escape the clutch. One might go on with many suggestions like these, but enough for the present. The Public Health Office might do worse than attempt to do this.

Avoid Harsh Pills. Doctors Condemn Them

Most pills unfortunately are harsh and drastic; they cause inflammation and great discomfort. Rather, the nature is the way a pill should be, mild but effectively. Science has established nothing more satisfactory as a family pill than the old reliable pills of Dr. Hamilton's, which for forty years have had a premier place in America. Dr. Hamilton's Pills are very mild and can be effectively used by the aged, by children, and by men and women of all ages. No stomach or bowel medicine is so reliable. No remedy for indigestion, headache or biliousness is so effective. So mild, so certain to cure, that a 25c. box of Dr. Hamilton's Pills.

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