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The Countess of Landon.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

She felt rather than saw that Royce had come to her side—felt rather than saw that the countess was standing watching her with dilated eyes. For a moment she stood, as if still kept in the thrall of a hideous dream; then she said loud enough to be heard by every soul in the vast room:

"It was my fault. He was an old friend. It was my fault. I—"

She staggered slightly, and Royce sprang to her side. At the same moment Irene glided to her and took her hand.

Madge looked from one to the other with a piteous smile.

"My fault," she murmured.

The music ceased. With a prolonged stare the guests moved away toward the hall. It was as if a gasp had suddenly broken out and each was seeking safety in flight.

In a few moments the vast room was silent, and Madge standing between Royce and Irene, gazed on emptiness, for even Rochester, after a moment's hesitation, had gone with the rest. What could he—what could any human being do for her?

The musicians stole from the gallery, some servants came into the room, half fearfully, to turn out the lights. The countess and Irene, still holding Madge's hand, stood as people stand in the center and shock of an earthquake. Royce was pacing up and down, his head upon his breast, his lips tightly compressed. Seymour had disappeared.

The entrance of the servants seemed to rouse the three women from their lethargy. Madge drew her hand from Irene's, and moved across the room slowly with weary, dragging step. Royce looked after her for a second, as if hesitating.

"Go to her, Royce," murmured Irene brokenly, but when he followed her Madge shook her head and held up her hand.

"I—I want to be alone. Do not come—yet," she said, and Royce stopped short.

Madge went slowly up the great staircase. Most of the lights had been extinguished in the hall, and a funereal dimness marked the scene, which only a few minutes since had been so dazzling.

She went to her own room, and stood leaning against the bed, breath-

ing slowly and painfully, and Marion entered a moment or two after her. The girl looked pale, and started with a cry of alarm when she saw her mistress.

"Oh, madame—" she began, tremulously.

Madge raised her head. "Leave me, Marion," she said in a faint, hollow voice—"leave me. I—I want to be alone. I will undress myself. Go, please."

The girl lingered for a moment, then slowly and reluctantly left the room.

Madge, with trembling hands, unfastened her ball-dress. As she did so, in a vague way she missed the diamond ornaments. For a second or two she stood as if trying to remember what had become of them. Then it all flashed back upon her the whole hideous scene, and, made clearly than all, the look of shame and misery upon Royce's face.

Yes, she who loved him so dearly that she would have given her life to purchase him an hour's happiness had ruined and degraded him. She had brought disgrace and humiliation upon this noble house. The countess's prophecy had met with speedy fulfillment. She—Madge—had made herself a curse unto her husband.

All this—and how much more!—bore down upon her, set into her heart, as she stood before the glass. What should she do? What could she do? To repair the ruin she had caused was impossible. Royce must hate her. Hate her? A faint cry broke from her cold lips at the thought, and she staggered back from the glass at the reflection of her own face, which had been the cause of his ruin.

What should she do? The question beat upon her brain with cruel persistence. Presently the answer came as if from some inner source: "Go away! Leave him and the house you have dragged down to your own level. Go, before worse happens. The man Jake will come back as soon as the money obtained by the diamonds is spent—will come back to work fresh misery and despair. Go, and go at once!"

"Yes," she murmured; "that is best. I must go, and forever! Jack hates me—he must, he could not help it. He must wish me dead. Oh! if I could only die! If I had only died before he saw me!" and she clasped her hands over her face.

After a moment or two she found strength to obey the inner voice. She went to the drawer at the bottom of one of the wardrobes and took out

the old linsey dress and red shawl. She would wear no other dress—nothing that he had bought her—nothing that should remind her of any one else but she was Royce's wife.

With feverish haste, now, she put on the dress and wrapped the shawl round her, and as she looked in the glass a bitter, miserable smile passed over her face. It was in this dress that she had listened to his vows of love, and yet, the sight of it now would only remind him of what she was, and make him hate her more intensely.

She looked round the room with a heavy sigh, and turned to the door, then, as if she had suddenly remembered it, she went to the drawer and took out the watch and the locket. She looked at them with something like a shudder, and put them on the dressing-table, but they seemed to appeal to her with dumb eloquence, reminding her of the night Royce, all unconscious, had lain with his head on her bosom and she thrust them into her pocket.

Then she opened the door, listened intently, and went swiftly down the corridor. Half-way she heard footsteps ascending the stairs. To go back to her room and be found by Royce, to face that look in his eyes, was impossible. She pushed the door nearest to her, and finding it open, entered the room. It was dark, but she drew back to the furthest corner from the door, and waited. The footsteps ceased, and she was about to leave her hiding-place and go on her way, when she heard a voice. It was Royce's, and it came from the adjoining room, and then, peering about, she saw that she had entered the small boudoir next the countess's dressing-room. The door was ajar, and Madge could hear as plainly as if she had been in the room itself. At the sound of Royce's voice her heart leaped with an awful craving, and she stood still. She was listening to that beloved voice for the last time, as she told herself—for the last time.

"What is to be done?" she heard the countess say in a voice which sounded hollow and weak with trouble and weariness.

"God knows!" said Royce, and Madge knew that he was pacing to and fro as she had paced in the hall-room—could picture his pale, handsome face as plainly as if she saw it—"God knows! I feel confused, bewildered, and miserable," he added, with a groan. "Mother, I ought not to have come here. It was a mistake—a fatal one. I might have known that—that some of them would find us out, and—bring this upon you. Forgive me, mother. Even since I was born I have been a trouble to you—I have disgraced the old name, and now—and now—"

His voice choked.

The countess had sunk into a chair, and sat with her face turned from him.

"Yes," she said, as if she were communing with herself rather than speaking to him, "it is disgrace and ruin."

"And I have brought it upon you!" he said bitterly.

She turned her head slightly, almost as if she did not understand, then she put her hand to her brow.

"You mean—" she said, confusedly.

"I mean that fellow's presence here to-night," he said. "I might have known that he would come after Madge, and want money. I might have known, but I did not think. I thought of nothing but my own happiness."

"It is the way with all of us," she said, almost absently.

"No," he said, with deep emotion; "it is not your way, mother. You have always thought of others—"

She rose with a strange gesture of denial, then sank into the chair again. "It is I who am to blame," he went on.

"Yes," she assented, wearily; "you have been to blame also. God works in a mysterious way. It was fated that you should do what you have done—that you should bring down the edifice built upon sand—upon sand! I am punished!"

"You, mother?" he said, as if he did not understand her, then, after a pause: "What have you done, except think and act for my welfare? And how have I rewarded you? But there, what is the use of talking? The question is what are we to do?"

The countess remained silent. It seemed as if she were so oppressed by her own thoughts to understand all he said.



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Spent Two Years in Dark Dungeon

When Out of Bolsheviki Prison Walked 700 Miles To Safety.

After recovering sight and hearing which he lost during 23 months captivity in a Russian dungeon exposed to darkness and damp, Vilho Leikas, prominent business man of Finland is now in Montreal.

As a representative of the firm of Crogrist, Talonen and Leikas, grain merchants and fruit importers of Helsingfors, Finland, he has come to this city for the first time since 1905, seeking out better trade relations between Finland and Canada. At the same time he is studying colonization with a view to sending out farmers and colonists from Finland. He called at the Colonisation and Development Department of the C.P.R. to-day.

On the occasion of his former visit to Montreal, Mr. Leikas was interested in a book publishing company and by the placing of Finnish literature in the public libraries of this continent. When war broke out in 1914 he had a large grain business in Petrograd. This, together with all the rest of his property, the Bolsheviks confiscated in 1918, and on his refusal to sanction the seizure by signing away what they had taken, they threw him into jail fourteen different times and kept him prisoner 23 months.

He was imprisoned in a dungeon so dark that through lack of light and rheumatic affection he became blind. He also lost his hearing, and when less strict supervision enabled him to make his escape, he travelled some seven hundred miles to northern Russia in an effort to reach a port there, sleeping in the forest at night, since he dared not find other shelter.

When he finally arrived in Esthonia he was in hospital eight months recovering from the hardships he had undergone. Under the new treaty made between Russia and Finland he has applied for compensation for the confiscated property and hopes to receive the amount of his claim. Although he organized the Finnish Legion in Russia to fight with the Allies, he does not wish to take part in any more politics. He had enough in Russia, he said.

Canada and U.S. Have not Agreed on Rum-Running

Treaty Between Two Countries Hung Up Rather Than Wound Up.

OTTAWA—The rum-running treaty between Canada and the United States which was supposed to be concluded months ago has not yet been officially completed and interested parties are now wondering what, if anything, is to come out of it.

It will be recalled that last fall the United States Government despatched to Ottawa a delegation of officials for a week of conferences on repressive measures on international rum running. The United States requests were found too extensive but part of them were agreed to in a communication sent to Washington. The principal part from a promise of general cooperation, was that Canada should notify the States of all liquor clearances and also make a rigid surveillance of the border.

The agreement provided, likewise, for the return of stolen automobiles. It seems that the United States has come back with additional proposals

Finns Are Coming

Farming conditions in Finland are not good now, he reports, as it takes too much capital to make a farm pay. This is due to the low value of the franc which is only one-eighth of its pre-war value in dollars. Numbers of Finns with some capital are contemplating coming to Canada, and while as yet he has no definite plans in regard to this emigration, Mr. Leikas proposes to visit the Government Department at Ottawa in the near future.

Among the successful manufacturers of his country is the making of articles from a sour milk residue resembling celluloid. Finland, which has a population of three and a half million people also exports pulp and paper, sulphate, dairy products, etc.

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CRIMINALS.

I hold the record for Charles H. Chief, I don't care to mire his name. He drove to jail, was pinched at last, and came down to earth in 10 days. I hear his cell, against the prison wall, beats his hands and he deserves it all. But there are some times when speeders' crimes are mighty cheap and 'vain'—high crooks are loose, and look for his unholy gain. So many beds, so many chests—with them the town is dark; they get by fraud, the widow's wad, the orphan's savings bank. So many schemes, all built on dreams, to get the sucker's kale; the fakers sell the oilies well, and seldom go to jail. By sinful wile they get our pile and rich and richer wax; and grafters rob the heartick swab who sweats to pay the tax. The men of tricks who sell gold bricks in limousines recline, and sip long drinks, in which ice clinks, beneath their tree-and-vine. But Charles H. Chief is plucked in grief; his life seems sad and sour; he pushed his wain along the lane at forty miles an hour. He did not make a man or dame, no sort of harm-befell; but cops were there and by the hair they dragged him to a cell. I don't defend my speeding friend, he's properly in jail; the erring coop must take his soup, and justice must prevail.

When the ratification of the rum running treaty between Britain and the United States, was before the House, the Premier, announced that it would soon be followed by the other treaty between Canada and the States. It has not made its appearance and has lapsed into an inconclusive state. The facts seem to be that the Government, prepared to go a certain degree to assist the States in their prohibitory enactment, are not prepared to go as far as the American authorities ask.

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Carpentier in New York

French Heavyweight All Dotted Out For Tommy Gibbons to Muss.

All decked out in the latest Parisian styles, George Carpentier, French heavyweight champion, arrived here with his party aboard the Massena.

"Gorgeous George" was under a white felt hat and inside a light brown suit, delicate striped shirt with a diamond collar.

Carpentier announced at first that he had quit drinking and smoking and had turned golf hound. "Disipation is no good for a boxer and golf is a grand game," he said.

The Frenchman looked to be in splendid condition. He said he would weigh 175 pounds, when he meets

Tom Gibbons in Michigan City on May 31 and that he really weighed 168 pounds when he met Jack Dempsey.

"My hands are in sound condition," he said and held up his dukes for inspection. "I've been working hard for four months, and never felt better."

He wouldn't talk much about his fight with Gibbons. "Any man with a good punch always has a chance against any fighter," he said.

"George will not say it but we have the big surprise for the Americans who think he is through. Francois Descamps, his manager, said.

Carpentier said he would like to meet Dempsey again and that he thought the public might give him a good fight against Gibbons.

The Frenchmen were met at the pier by Jack Curley, their New York representative. They said they were to spend the night here and that they were to Chicago, where Curley had cured a training camp for Carpentier.

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