

LAY PRESCOTT'S WARD

There long a knock sounded upon her door.

"At her 'come in' it opened; a tall, dark woman, wearing a covered basket, entered, the servant shut the door, and the two women stood facing each other, a look of mutual recognition upon their faces.

"Well, Judith, you concluded to come, then," said Miss Therwin, sinking into a chair with a long-drawn breath.

"Yes, Miss Ada, I could not refuse, considering the introduction which you offered. Will you examine my dress?"

"I saw! I saw! you know well enough that I do not care anything about the dress—you may leave a piece or two just for the name of the thing, however."

"I hope, though," she added, sharply, with a glance at the good-sized basket, "that you did not spend all the money I sent you just to gain access here."

"Not I, Miss Ada. Trust me for knowing the best use to put gold to. Now, what is it you want of me?" she demanded.

"Take off your bonnet and cloak, and draw a chair close to me, and then I'll tell you. But first look at the door, so that no one can overhear us," Ada continued, in low, eager tones.

The woman obeyed, as if accustomed to do so, and then sat down and fastened her eyes on the beautiful girl.

The stranger was as dark as Miss Therwin was fair.

She had the blackest of hair, eyes and lashes; a dark, clear, though rather pale complexion, white, handsome teeth, regular features, a tall, large, well-developed form.

She was apparently about forty years of age, and probably in her younger days was quite handsome, though, undoubtedly, with a rather severe kind of beauty.

"It's a pity your children did not live to be a comfort to you as you grow old," Miss Therwin observed, with a keen glance into Judith's face.

"It would have been a greater pity if they had lived," cried the woman, sternly, her face assuming a ghastly look. "Ugh!" she added, with a shiver, "don't you ever say that to me again, Miss Ada, for I loved the little things, for all they brought me so much trouble; but they are better dead than to live to know all they would have to know," she concluded, bitterly.

"I did not mean to pain you, Judith," Miss Therwin replied, with assumed gentleness; "but I was thinking how low pleasure must be for you if you only had a daughter to live with you now, and be a companion for you as she is."

"What are you driving at, Miss Ada? Out with it, and don't be teasing round the bush any longer," she said.

"I am, Judith, colored, and then, nervous laugh, said:

"Sure you are not going to know me for you in such pompous, and I've a story to tell which will make you open your eyes, and pick up your eyes, I assure you."

"Then, dropping her voice, she talked in a quick, rapid manner for more than half an hour.

The woman was evidently greatly surprised and interested in her tale, and when she concluded she asked a few sharp-pointed questions, after which she sat in deep thought for a moment, Miss Therwin watching her intently, and somewhat anxiously, all the while.

"Well," she said at length, "don't you think it necessary for something to be done?"

"No, if you could only be reasonable."

"I can't—I won't be reasonable, as you call it. This thing shall never come to light if I can prevent it, and if you won't help me, why, then, I must devise some other way," Ada interrupted, angrily.

"You know, Miss Ada, that there is nothing that I would not do for you if I could, and I'm not accustomed to be very self-centered as a general thing, but—"

"Well!" demanded Miss Therwin, sharply, as Judith hesitated.

"But this is rather a hard fate you have decreed, I must say."

"The only alternative is ruin, utter and absolute, for me."

"Never! Do you think I would be content to be second when I have always been first?" cried the girl, angrily, then, her eyes blazing with fury, she went on, "Judith, you shall do this thing for me, or I shall—"

She bent forward and whispered some words to her companion.

Judith instantly grew crimson—almond eyes, then pale again, and so forth, until at last a few moments she seemed to be gasping for breath.

"You are sitting so suddenly erect, my dear, as if you were suddenly aware of something," said Miss Ada.

"I should do more for you for the hold which you have on my heart, and for your dear mother's sake, than for any threats with which you may try to frighten me. Let me warn you that I will never be safe for you to say the same thing to me again, after knowing the facts with which you have put me in possession to-day."

"Come, come, Judith, I had no idea of offending you, but you made me so angry, and you know I never could be refused anything. Be good, now, and say you will help me; you would not like to see me going to my present position after holding it so many years," Ada said, striving to conciliate her companion, though such a fury of passion had been kindled in her that she would have been glad to annihilate her on the spot could she have done so.

"No, Miss Ada, it has been a source of pride to me to know you were so well off, and I should grieve sorely should you have to lose it now. I will try to help you in this thing until you marry, and are settled in life; I will promise for nothing longer than that. Will that satisfy you?"

"I suppose it will have to, but, having been brought up to expect every thing, I am not ready to lightly yield my claims at this late day."

"You are greedy, Miss Ada—as greedy as your poor father was, and, mark my words, you will yet overreach yourself some fine day, and come to grief as he did."

"Held," said Judith, and, once for all, she decided that you

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"I don't know whether it is or not," Madam Judith said, sullenly.

"Indeed, or you must give me an amount, which I can finger the gold in the Shirley coifers," she pleaded.

"You seem to have some doubt about the matter, it seems," Judith replied, with a leer, adding, as if to enquire concerning her for the moment her companion: "And taking all things into consideration your chance does look mighty slim."

"I was not to put any confidence in you, Judith; but I've done it now, and it can't be helped—only I have not quite counted myself beyond redemption yet, seeing I have not told you who the parties are. I would be willing to promise you five thousand pounds, though, if you would carry my plans out as I want you to."

"Well, well, Miss Ada, I don't pretend to any great amount of goodness as you very well know, and I'm as glad to earn a handsome sum as any one I ever saw, only you've made me mad by throwing out so many absurd figures, and, besides, I felt like kind of paying you back for your dirty work this time."

"If you'll agree to pay me well, but what's going to support me meantime?"

"Oh, I will take care that you have everything I'll make you comfortable; and now, I'll be taking accomplished just as soon as possible. You can take this, find yourself some comfortable rooms, and furnish them well, but not showily, and I'll prepare myself for the campaign before you. Just as soon as you are ready let me know," concluded Miss Therwin, handing her at the same time a five-pound bill.

Judith took it, deliberately unfolded it, and seemed satisfied with the result, for she said, more brightly than she had yet spoken:

"Well, I think you may expect to hear from me in the course of three or four days at the farthest."

"All right, but be very cautious about your money, and don't let any one know aught of your business or past life."

"Never fear, I learned how to keep money before even you were born, Miss Ada," she chuckled.

"Very well; but there is one other thing I wish to speak about. I want you to dress in black, wear no lace, and lace kerchief; in fact, make yourself look just as attractive as you possibly can."

"What are you driving at, Miss Ada? Out with it, and don't be teasing round the bush any longer," she said.

"I will attend to that; the proofs that you will have in your possession will be incontestable," Miss Therwin replied, with a light in her eye which made her companion regard her in wonder.

"Good gracious, Miss Ada!" she said "you look just as if there was a volcano inside of you, just ready to burst out of your eyes."

"Look out, then, that you don't arouse his slumbering fires," Ada said, striving to speak lightly, yet really feeling as the woman's comparison was not inapt.

"You will remember that henceforth your name is Sylvia Henrietta Prescott," said Miss Therwin, with a peculiar look upon either cheek. "I suppose," she added, a moment later, "that you will allow me to prefix the Mrs. before it for propriety's sake."

"Certainly, it will be advisable for you to do so, at least, until you are ready to make your revelations and claim your long-lost comfort," responded Miss Therwin coolly, and she saw her guest depart with a feeling of infinite relief and satisfaction.

"What, then, is settled," she said, "Judith will not go back on her word, and there is no reason now why my plans should not succeed, if I can only make good my belief in the truth of her story. You would fare well enough, even then."

"Never! Do you think I would be content to be second when I have always been first?" cried the girl, angrily, then, her eyes blazing with fury, she went on, "Judith, you shall do this thing for me, or I shall—"

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as there was no one to whom they would descend by right—and gradually a change came over her. She was rather more submissive and gentle outwardly, though at heart she grew, if possible, more cold and selfish than ever.

She secured a brilliant education, being determined to make the most of her opportunities, and be fitted to assume the very highest position possible.

She made a great sensation in the world when she was introduced, and reigned a belle for a number of seasons, and, while the countess could not fail to be proud of her in a certain way, yet she missed the love which her childless heart was forever reaching out after.

And thus Ada Therwin grew to womanhood—beautiful, accomplished, and with powers of action which few women in the world possess.

Yet there was not one particle of good in her heart, though she often deceived people, as she was now doing, by her single point, being to deceive Sibyl, into the belief that she was an angel of light.

She won hearts by the score, only to trample them on the instant when they became her captives, and laugh over the conquests she had made; and she never yet met the man to whom she could yield her will, single point, or who could satisfy her ambition for position in the world.

She had begun to tire somewhat of London society and her conquests there, when the invitation came from her friend, Mrs. Mapewood, for her to spend the winter with her in Dumfriesshire, and upon her acceptance, they set forth every effort to make the season a brilliant one for her.

That it happened that Miss Ada Therwin, among other acquaintances, "I suppose it is because I feel my own littleness, and your magnificence," she answered, striving to speak lightly. "Mentally, I mean," she added, in the next breath, and with a laugh, straightening up, for I'll do you dirty work this time."

"If you'll agree to pay me well, but what's going to support me meantime?"

"Oh, I will take care that you have everything I'll make you comfortable; and now, I'll be taking accomplished just as soon as possible. You can take this, find yourself some comfortable rooms, and furnish them well, but not showily, and I'll prepare myself for the campaign before you. Just as soon as you are ready let me know," concluded Miss Therwin, handing her at the same time a five-pound bill.

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Britain After Him

The Third Campaign Against the Mad Mullah.

The British have set their forces in motion this week for the third campaign against the Mad Mullah. They entertain high hopes that he will be cornered, if the Mullah is where the British think he is, one mile south of the high sandy plateau between two mountain ranges. His appearance so far north is doubtless due to the climatic conditions which have recently prevailed.

Most of the country is a sandy thicket free from drought only during the rain months of October, November and December, when grass covers the widespread wastes. This is the time when horses and camels may graze far and wide, while for eight or nine months their food fringes only the narrow river valleys or the irrigated tracts around the wells.

During the rainy season now closing, however, the interior has been dry, though the coasts have been abundantly watered. Grass has completely failed in some districts. The Mullah has been driven north and toward the coast by the urgent need of fodder to put his live stock into good trim for the campaign.

Next month the dry season begins. Meanwhile the British have for months been preparing for what they hope will be the day of triumph against their implacable foe. They have brought from India several fully equipped camel corps and a large number of camels for transport purposes. In addition to their own Indian and other troops, they have enlisted many hundreds of recruits from the north and north-east coast tribes, who hate the Mullah, and are anxious to see him in the desert and moving their warships to get on all sides of him.

His tone was both entreating and reproachful, and touched her deeply. "Ray, I am ashamed of myself, and I have been very foolish and inconsiderate. If not selfish, she replied, with charming frankness, yet with an air of self-condemnation.

"Nay, I shall not allow you to say such things about the Princess of the House of Prescott. You shall still hold your castle, and keep your fighting qualities, and you must come in whenever I wish and share their beauty."

"Ray, I have no 'treasures' of knowledge; I am only a simple and unlearned girl even now, notwithstanding my six years of hard study," she said, humbly, and half-regretfully.

He laughed.

(To be continued.)

He was nearly as tall as he was now.

He smiled, but he could not help the look of admiration which he gave her, she was so beautiful in her modest confusion before him.

Then suddenly facing her, he laid his hand on her shoulder, and said, gently:

"Sibyl!"

The beautiful color came and went in her cheeks, a thrill ran through every fiber of her being at his touch, and the white lids quivered over the drooping eyes, as if pride and humility were each struggling for mastery.

"Sibyl!" he repeated.

With an effort the large dark eyes turned to meet his. "I am not such a rare bird, after all, my princess. What makes you afraid of me?"

"I am not afraid of you, Ray," she said, in a low, sweet voice. "I am afraid of my own heart, and of the thought that you will leave me, and I shall be alone."

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just reported, has been occupied by a detachment of his camel cavalry. The British force of the British is at Bololote, 100 miles west of the Mullah. Still further west are several thousands of Abyssinian soldiers, guarding the frontier of Menelik's large slice of Somaliland. It is not yet certain that Menelik will take a more active part in the campaign than that of the Mullah out of his territory.

The Mullah cannot go north, for he would march into the arms of his enemies. If he tries to escape by sea he may meet the British or Italian warships that are on the lookout for him.

The British are spreading their net for him with hopes but no elation. Hadji Mohammed Ali Abdullah, whom they call the Mad Mullah simply because he has preached a war of extermination against all whites, is a very elusive sort of person. Leonelli, the Russian adviser of Menelik, says that the Mullah is a remarkable soldier and is well supplied with arms and ammunition. In the campaigns of 1901 and 1902 he was generally repulsed, but fled only to recruit his forces and take the field again. He has a keen eye for the discovery of small detachments of the enemy, whom he may easily cut to pieces. He knows every inch of the country, and the British cannot guard them all. The coast is well watched, but it remains to be seen whether the British can keep their enemy in the Nogal district, as they hope to do, till they can cut him off and to his disastrous hostility.

The advantages of the British are that the enemy is now inside their lines and that they have better camels and camel drivers than in the earlier campaigns. They have also the advantage of small detachments of the enemy, whom they may easily cut to pieces. He knows every inch of the country, and the British cannot guard them all. The coast is well watched, but it remains to be seen whether the British can keep their enemy in the Nogal district, as they hope to do, till they can cut him off and to his disastrous hostility.

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