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The Mystery of Rutledge Hall

OR
 "The Cloud With a Silver Lining"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

It was a foolish—nay, a mad project, born of a confused brain reeling with terror and distress, and one which could have arisen only in the mind of a poor weak woman half-distracted with anguish and distress. Through it all, too, Sidney was painfully conscious of her own weakness. She knew that such a journey, undertaken alone and in such weather, was an almost impossible undertaking for a delicate woman who the previous day could not have walked half a mile and who could hardly bear a sudden noise without fainting; but she felt that she would find strength enough for her purpose, no matter at what cost.

Presently she heard the carriages rolling homeward from the ball, and Dolly's return. Agnes Burton was staying in the house; but Jessie had gone home with Lady Agnes and her brothers. With all her senses sharpened and quickened she heard them come quietly up-stairs, and the low hushed tones in which they spoke, not to disturb Sidney, and there was a soft laugh or two, doors softly closed, and then all was quiet again.

The night wore on; gradually the note of the rolling carriages died away, and a great solemn stillness reigned over the town. Under Sidney's windows the Parade was silent and deserted, the lamps were burning brightly in long straight rows. In the earlier part of the night there was the monotonous plash of the wavelets upon the beach; but soon that died away as the tide receded, and all was still.

All through the night-hours Sidney sat, waiting for the coming dawn, still and motionless in the window-seat, wrapped in her warm gown. She was too absorbed to feel the cold or to be nervous at the intense stillness. Once or twice she started and shivered as the monotonous heavy step of the policeman going his rounds struck upon her ear, but otherwise she sat motionless.

When the day dawned, and the golden glory of the morning filled the sky, she rose, and, leaving the window, began to dress. It was rather a slow process—for Sidney had grown accustomed to dispense with the services of a maid, and her little fingers had lost their old deftness; but she managed fairly well; and, when Mason came with the morning cup of tea, she was startled and surprised to see her mistress up and dressed, sitting quietly reading.

As the maid entered, Sidney put aside her book and looked up with a smile. "Are you surprised, Mason?" she said, lightly. "I feel so much better and stronger this morning that I am going up to London by the early train. I have some business there. Will you tell them to get some breakfast at once and bring it up here?"

"Am I to go with you, ma'am?" asked Mason, who was to well-drilled a servant to show the astonishment she felt.

"No; I am going alone. Do not disturb Mrs. Sandys," Sidney added hastily, feeling that she could not face Desille's remonstrances; and Mason went away, puzzled and bewildered, to aprise the sleepy household of her mistress' intention.

Strive as hard as she might, Sidney's attempt at breakfast was a failure. She forced herself to drink some tea; but she could not eat; she felt as if every morsel must choke her, and finally, giving up the attempt, she told Mason to order a cab. "One of the men can go with me to the station," she said quietly, as Mason put on her long sealskin coat. "I have left a note for Miss Daunt. Do not let her be disturbed—wait till she rings. She must be tired after last night."

"Are you sure you can go alone, ma'am?" Mason said gently, seeing how pale her mistress looked; and Sidney forced a smile as she took her gloves and answered with an effort: "Oh, yes; I shall be met in London."

It was only when she was in the train on her way to London that Sidney fully realized the difficulties in her way, and how weak and feeble she was to cope with them. The train was a full one, and among the many gentlemen hurrying up to town to their business Sidney dreaded to see some face she knew—some one who would recognize her and comment upon her early journey to town.

Thickly veiled as she was, more than one of her fellow travellers cast quick curious glances at the graceful woman in her sealskin and furs who sat so quietly in her corner, her hands linked together in her muff, her beautiful shining eyes gleaming through her thick veil. But no one recognized her, and she felt that her greatest danger of recognition was over now.

She was strangely frightened and helpless in the bustle and confusion of the arrival at the London station; but at last a friendly porter took pity on the shrinking, trembling little figure, and got a cab for her, and was the richer by a munificent "tip" for his civility. The train from Brighton had been somewhat late in arrival and there was a thick fog hanging over London, so that the drive to Paddington Station was a long and tedious one. Shivering in the corner of the comfortable four-wheeler, Sidney trembled at the delay, fearing she would lose the train for Ashford; but there was no help for it. The cabman did his best; but progress was necessarily slow, and it was with a sickening

heart that Sidney glanced at her watch on arriving at Paddington and saw that it was eleven o'clock.

"The train for Ashford has just gone, ma'am," said the porter who came up to open the door of the cab. "There is another at 12.10."

Faint and sick with disappointment and anxiety, Sidney made her way to the waiting-room, and with a long despairing sigh sunk down on one of the cushioned seats. An hour and ten minutes wasted there waiting for a train! Oh, it was terrible; meanwhile Stephen might be in danger, and she would reach Easthorpe too late to warn him; too late to save him. Oh, it was terrible, she thought wildly, terrible beyond all words; and she was so powerless, so helpless! She could have cried out aloud in her anguish, and there was an hysterical lump in her throat which she could not get rid of, and which made her fear that her strength was giving away already.

Leaving the waiting-room, which was warm, even close, from the blasting fire and number of waiting travellers, she went out on to the platform and sat down wearily on one of the benches, pushing up her veil for a moment to let the cold keen air blow on her burning face and aching eyes, and looking wistfully at the clock.

How slowly the hands moved! The minutes seemed hours to her in her anxiety. A newspaper boy came to offer her newspapers; but she shook her head. She dared not buy a paper, lest she should see what she dreaded in it; she dared not chance it, knowing that her strength would not be equal to the shock. If once the hope of being useful to Stephen deserted her, she felt that her strength would fall her.

"It was this hope which was bearing her up now, strength the weak limbs, serving her to make she had set herself to do at the painful pace of the weary-looking woman as they sauntered up and down the platform; and, rather nervously, Sidney pulled down her veil again, and went back to the waiting-room.

Train after train came in with brights of travellers, and luggage-porters hurried hither and thither; cabs drove off loaded, or dashed up to the station with tardy travellers; trains left the station which Sidney looked after longingly, wishing the time would pass, and struggling against her anxiety and suspense as best she could.

How slowly the time went by! The minutes were leaden footed and crept along, the hours were laggards and would not pass. Would twelve o'clock never come? Why, it would be night when she got to Ashford—too late for anything, too late for Stephen to make preparations, too late for safety!

Twelve o'clock came at last, and with a sigh of relief, which was almost a sob, Sidney rose and left the waiting-room. She was trembling so much that she could hardly steady her voice sufficiently to ask for her ticket, and she fancied that the booking-clerk looked at her suspiciously as he asked her hurriedly whether she wanted a return or a single ticket. She had to repeat her answer twice before she made him understand that she wanted a single ticket, and she wondering if he noticed how the fingers were trembling as she took up the ticket.

It was an intense relief to find herself at last alone in a carriage and the train on the point of departure.

(To be continued.)



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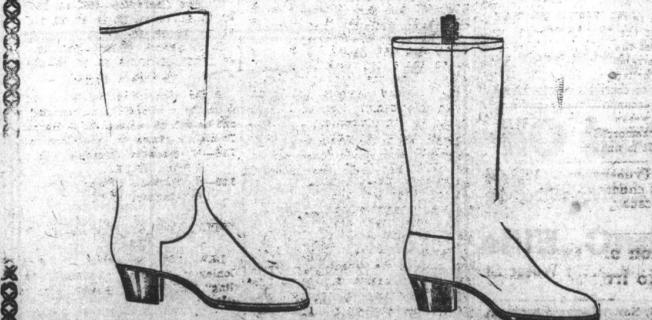
He did not expect to be able to effect reductions in expenditure. It had been suggested in the newspapers that expenditure might be reduced immediately by 100 millions. I issue an invitation to the newspapers of this country (said Mr. Churchill), amicably but pointedly, if you have a plan for reducing expenditure by 100 millions, let us have the details. If that were done it would be of the greatest service, and it would be much more helpful than a great deal of indiscriminate abuse. I will undertake that any solutions of this problem which may reach me from the Press shall be very carefully and seriously studied and classified in order of merit, and I undertake to offer a prize to the successful competitor, and if need be I will in person place a wreath of laurels on the brow of any newspaper proprietor who is able to present a solution which, as subsequent events will show, is most helpful and most in accordance with what is carried into effect. (Cheers.)

A miners' strike or a railway strike next spring would, however, result in a serious set-back to the country's prosperity.

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Drastic Steps Suggested

FOR ENFORCEMENT OF U. S. PROHIBITION REGULATIONS.

Chicago, Nov. 16.—The conclusions of the Anti-Saloon League's "enforcement crisis" convention were summed up last night in resolutions which "insist that the people of the country have the right to expect that the secretary of the treasury shall manifest equal concern to secure efficient enforcement of the prohibition law as to secure the collection of income and other taxes."

WHAT THEY WOULD HAVE.
 A number of definite recommendations for strengthening prohibition enforcement legislation were announced:

Placing all prohibition appointments under civil service.
 Deportation of aliens convicted of liquor violations.
 A law directing all liquor, whenever obtained of its legal status.
 A law making it a felony to forge or use forged liquor permits.
 A status authorizing the president to use designated ships and officers of the navy to prevent smuggling.
 A nominal tax on cereal beverages and industrial alcohol.

Continuation of the appropriation for posters for law observance and enforcement.

Each local community has equal responsibility for enforcement of the prohibition law, the resolution declared, "but we cannot agree to any policy that minimizes the obligation of the federal government."

"We challenge the legality and patriotism of these association against the prohibition amendment," said one resolution, "which recognizing its inability to secure a repeal of the amendment, seeks to repeal the laws to make it effective."

FOREIGN LIQUOR DEALERS.
 "We decline to accept the wet ultimatum," said one resolution, "that the present plan of enforcement is final and that if it is not a complete success, the law will be modified. We submit to these foreign liquor dealers' financing attacks on the constitution of this country, that they had better spend their ill gotten gains on relieving drink-caused poverty at home instead of adding a minority of law breakers in the United States."

The consolidation of prohibition enforcement agencies into one governmental department with augmented forces in the coast guard and dry staffs, and the faithful officers of the law who have upheld the constitution, were commended by the convention.

Charming the Eye

WHY ARTIFICIAL SILK TRADE IS DEVELOPING.

Sir Edwin Stockton, ex-president of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, told a Press representative yesterday that he was convinced that the growing expansion of the artificial silk industry would bring back to Lancashire the prosperity which a short time ago seemed hopelessly lost. He said:

"The introduction of artificial silk into our cotton products means that we shall be able to invest those products of our British looms with the very qualities in which they have been deficient. Brightness, lustre, and colour—all lacking before—can now be imported.

"By running a few stripes of artificial silk through a piece of cotton cloth we turn a utility product into an article of adornment at a cost that is trifling. We thus present something to charm the eye and to appeal to the little bit of vanity that is in every one of us.

"That is one of the reasons why the industry is developing so rapidly."

Attempt to Blow Up Statue

Berlin—Thousands of people passed in front of the Kaiser Wilhelm I memorial statue recently and gave no particular attention to two workmen who, with chisel and hammer, were doing something to the pedestal.

One of them was smoothing a cornice and the other was making a hole in the side. As they continued working after nightfall, suspicion was aroused, and it was discovered that no order for repairs to the statue had been given. It is stated that they were Communists, who intended to put explosives through the hole in the pedestal and blow up the memorial.

A Woman's Devotion

Mrs. Williams, aged 81, who 20 years past has stood in Lord Street, Southampton, selling nonsays and other articles for the benefit of blinded and wounded soldiers and sailors, has just ceased these charitable efforts owing to age and infirmity.

A WOMAN'S SUFFERING

Relieved by Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound

Verdun, Montreal, Quebec.—"I am one of thousands who have taken Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and I have great faith in it. I can safely say it has relieved my troubles and I shall never be without a bottle of it in my house. Since my last baby was born I suffered from pains and backache and would feel as tired I could not do anything in my home. Since I have been taking the Vegetable Compound and Lydia E. Pinkham's Blood Medicine I feel so different. I recommend it to all my friends and hope it will cure other women who are suffering from the troubles I had."—Mrs. THOMAS H. GARDNER, 821 Evelyn Street, Verdun, Montreal, Quebec.

Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound is a dependable medicine for the new mother. It is prepared from roots and herbs, contains no harmful drugs and can be taken by the nursing mother.

Its worth in restoring the mother to normal health and strength is told again and again in just such letters as Mrs. Gardner writes.

A recent canvass of women users of the Vegetable Compound shows that 85 out of every 100 women taking the medicine are benefited by it. They write and tell us so. Such evidence entitles us to call it a dependable medicine for women. It is for sale by druggists everywhere. 9 C

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Business is too important to be left to chance. It is a task that requires the same care and attention as any other business.

We have a wide variety of goods for sale. It is a task that requires the same care and attention as any other business.

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