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REGAL TABLE SALT FREE RUNNING

The Imprisoned Heiress

The Spectre of Egremont.

CHAPTER VII.

The next moment he made a startling discovery. The cord had been cut near the top!

This discovery was proof sufficient of his great peril, and he gently drew back his arm and awaited the next attitude of affairs.

He was still thinking, when he heard a faint sound in his room—a token of another presence there than his own.

There might be more than one man there, he thought, and they would be well armed. To attempt to dash past them would be a rash upon certain death. To be still would be worse.

His resolve was taken.

Keeping a vigilant watch upon his curtains, alive to the faintest sound, suppressing his breathing to the lowest possible pitch, and with the utmost caution and noiselessness, he gradually arose in his bed and slipped out at its head, standing erect between the couch and its drapery.

He had scarcely done so when the sound he had heard was repeated.

His lordship drew himself up and awaited the result.

Suddenly—so suddenly as to startle him, there having been no premonitory warning but that faint sound—the curtains were gently parted and an arm was thrust within the opening, the hand grasping a murderous-looking knife.

Lord Ashcroft remained silent.

The arm looked brawny and large, and the hand was incased in an old and stained leathern glove.

Nothing was to be seen but that sinister arm, except an evil-looking eye that gleamed through the parting in the bed-curtain above, although its glances rested only upon a deserted bed.

The fact of its desertion was evidently not apparent to the assassin, for with a sudden and nervous movement he struck out his arm, plunging his knife into the bed at the spot where his victim's heart should have been.

A smothered curse came from the lips of the assassin as he discovered his failure.

That imprecation still lingered upon his lips, his hand still grasped the knife, when Lord Ashcroft, with a tiger-like spring, leaped from his hiding-place upon him.

The assassin gave a startled cry and turned to flee.

Catching up his dressing-gown Lord Ashcroft started in pursuit.

The would-be murdered rushed into the parlor, pulled open the door

leading into the corridor, and as he did so his pursuer noticed his form distinctly, the freight being clear and bright.

The face he could not see.

Through the dimly lighted corridor, down the broad staircase, through the lower hall, went the pursuer and the pursued, with a clattering noise that sounded fearfully loud at that hour, and, as they passed into the vestibule opening onto the portico, his lordship noticed that the outer door was ajar.

Even as he made the discovery the intended assassin dashed through the opening, and out into the pitchy darkness of the night.

Farther pursuit was useless.

As his lordship acknowledged this reluctantly to himself, the fresh wind brought to his ear a mocking laugh, and the words:

"Better luck next time!"

Lord Ashcroft thought seriously of rushing out in the direction from which the voice came, but remembering the state of his toilet, closed the door and went back to the staircase, upon the upper step of which lay his dressing-gown, where he had thrown it in his anxiety to capture his intended murderer.

He caught it up and put it on, subduing his excitement as he heard one or two doors open on the upper corridor, and then composedly walked on toward his room.

He had not taken a dozen steps ere the Lady Lorean rushed out from her room and Lord Egremont emerged from his, both startled and frightened.

Lord Egremont carried a pistol, and was followed by his lady, who appeared alarmed.

"What is the matter?" cried the host, excitedly. "Is it you, my lord? I—I thought—"

"Oh, what is it, Lionel?" cried his sister, running toward him, and clasping her arms about him. "I thought I heard some one pursuing some one else."

"Hush, Lorean, there is no need of fear now, dear. I was pursuing some one."

Lady Egremont groaned and caught her husband's arm.

"I beg your ladyship not to be alarmed," said Lord Ashcroft, astonished at her manner. "The man was quite alone. I pursued him out of the house and closed the door upon him. He cannot intrude again tonight."

"The—the man!" said Lady Egremont hysterically.

"Yes, your lordship, the same, I

think, who shot at me in the plantation. He was in my room with murderous intent a few minutes since."

The Lady Lorean uttered a faint shriek and sobbed convulsively, pressing her brother's hand as if she would never more permit him to leave her.

"Oh, I wish you were back at Ashcroft, Lionel!" she exclaimed. "Your life was never in danger there, and here you have been twice attacked."

Lord Egremont came forward, his features working with emotion.

"My lord," he said, "your life is as sacred to me as my own—more sacred in fact, for with yours is connected that of my dear ward. The words of the Lady Lorean are perfectly natural, but they have stung me to the quick. The assassin who has twice attacked you shall be immediately discovered, I pledge you my honor. Did you think him to be the same as before, Gosman Kepp?"

"I have not yet come to that conclusion, my lord."

"In that case my duty is plain," said Lord Egremont, resolutely. "I must convince you that the assassin is not an inmate of the mansion. Your lordship secured the outer door?"

Lord Ashcroft assented.

Lord Egremont passed into his chamber and touched his bell-pull, in consequence of which summons a servant appeared and received an order, at which he departed wondering.

A few minutes later the great bell of Egremont, that was used only on special occasions, and which had been originally designed to summon the tenantry to the defense of the mansion in feudal times, was rung with a subdued peal that awoke every sleeper within the dwelling.

"Let me go down to the lower hall, my lord," said Lord Egremont, as sounds of commotion began to be heard.

Lord Ashcroft assented and conducted the Lord Lorean below, Lord and Lady Egremont following them.

In a few minutes they were joined by the Lady Alexina, who seemed greatly alarmed, and by Lyle Indor, whose anxiety seemed relieved on observing that the members of the family were all gathered there, and by a host of wondering servants, in every variety of costume.

The general impression seemed to be that Egremont was on fire, but that idea was immediately dissipated by Lord Egremont, who called upon his housekeeper and butler to declare if every servant in the family employ was there.

They were all there, as was soon ascertained, from the Lady Alexina's French maid to the lowest scullion employed in the kitchen, and not one of them showed any signs of guilt or confusion.

"Does any one of them resemble your assassin, my lord?" whispered Lord Egremont.

Lord Ashcroft answered in the negative.

Lord Egremont and the countess, Lady Lorean and Alexina, with Lyle Indor and Lord Ashcroft now hastened to the latter's chamber, to search for some clew to the assassin.

In the bed was discovered a murderous-looking knife, but it gave no hint as to its probable owner.

The matter was discussed, and various suggestions offered; but it was noticed that Lady Alexina said but little, and failed to express her gratitude at the narrow escape of her betrothed.

While the discussion was progressing, Lyle Indor withdrew, but soon returned, saying:

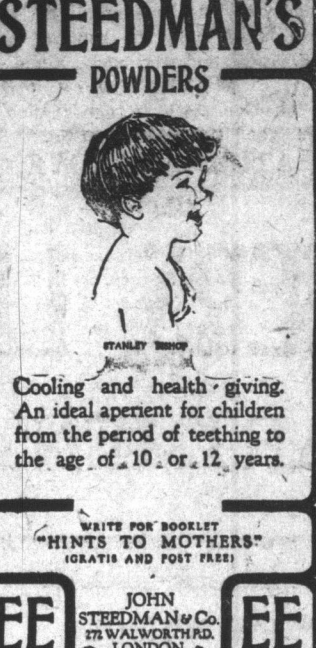
"There is a pistol, my lord, that I took to Italy two years ago. I never had occasion to defend myself against the brigands, so the weapon has scarcely been used. I think it is better than nothing and you will favor me by keeping it until your cowardly assailant is secured."

Lord Ashcroft regarded the pretty useless thing, thinking how appropriate it was to its effeminate owner, and that he should greatly prefer for his own use the gun he had captured in the plantation, but he thanked Indor courteously, and deposited the pistol in his pocket.

When Lord Ashcroft was left once more alone, he fell into a perplexed reverie as to Alexina's strange conduct.

"How strangely Alexina regarded me," mused his lordship. "She looked as though she were disappointed because I was not killed."

(To be continued.)



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The line was built by the Government of Brazil. It circumvents nineteen cataracts, starts two thousand miles from any other railroad, and ends at a similar distance in Bolivia. The great waterways complete the journey from Atlantic to Pacific. The Americans say that it was really built by "Dr. Lovelace and quinine."

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Rumor J. K. L. Ross Will be Head of Besco

MONTREAL—Rumors of immediate reorganization of British Empire Steel Corporation are continuously in the air. This week's story was to the effect that Commander J. K. L. Ross would accept the presidency of the British Empire Steel Corporation, and that a complete reorganization would be effected that would cause some of the present bondholders to take preferred stock in order to allow new bonds to be issued.

The amount of new money that would be raised would be about \$25,000,000.—Financial Post.

To one cupful of corn, add one beaten egg, 1-4 cupful of flour, and seasoning. Drop by spoonfuls in hot fat, and fry until crisp brown.



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nov21,24

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