

Jeannie Sinclair, OR, THE LILY OF THE STRATH.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE EXECUTION—AN ASTONISHING ARRIVAL. It wanted ten minutes to the fatal hour when the Magistrates assembled at the prison, and when the officials whose duty it was to see the sentence carried out entered the condemned cell with the improvised executioner in their company.

Lynedoch was calm again—unnaturally calm—and kept perfect silence, never suffering his pale, compressed lips to part for the utterance of a syllable. Mechanically, but with all readiness, he rose up to be pinioned, and stood as rigid and to all appearance as unfeeling as a statue, while Will Sanderson strapped his arms. In the presence of the others Will had to suppress all signs of his triumph, but the intensity of his inward satisfaction betrayed itself by the occasional glances he directed to the prisoner's white and bloodless face.

The operation was soon over, and the procession ready to start. The place of execution was a knoll called the Gallows, and a little distance from the outskirts of the town, at the end of a large tract of common. At the door of the prison a cart stood in waiting, and into this the prisoner was requested to ascend, when he was immediately followed by the executioner and his assistant. Will set himself by Lynedoch's side, and placed Randal opposite, so that he might be fully in the eyes of the wretched man. Lynedoch saw him, gazed earnestly at him for some moments, then with a shudder he closed his eyes, and never opened them again till the cart stopped at the foot of the scaffold.

With the same alacrity which had characterized his movements, Lynedoch stepped from the cart and ascended the steps which led to the fatal platform. The only one who went up with him was Will—Randal being stationed below, ready to draw the bolt the moment he received the signal. The crowd was a large one—far larger than it seemed in that wide stretch of open country, and quiet and awe-stricken was its demeanor—a low murmur only being heard as the prisoner and the hangman appeared together under the beam. The horrors of the scene were increased by the bleak and chilling winter day. The snow had ceased to fall, but a white coating of it lay upon the dreary, desolate landscape, and the sky above was of a dark, leaden hue, while the cold frosty air struck a chill to the heart.

With a deliberation the most cool and diabolic, Will proceeded to fasten the rope to the beam, Lynedoch standing the while and gazing with fearful fascination on his movement. The rope being firmly fixed, and the length of rope adjusted according to his own fancy, he took Lynedoch by the arm and led him upon the treacherous trap door. Here with the same horrible deliberation he bared his neck and passed his head within the noose. "Now, Lynedoch Sinclair," he hissed in his ear, "this is the moment that completes my revenge. Think of Nell, and the wrong you did her. You saw her child in the cart—your son. He is below, ready to draw the bolt at my signal. Had you not snook me now as you see me do! Take your last look of the sky, for in another moment the cap will be over your face."

Lynedoch gave no sign of being annoyed by or even hearing the words of his tormentor, who, as he uttered the last word, pulled the cap down to the chin, and again whispered with hissing emphasis the words—"Think of Nell!" At this moment loud and vehement shouts were heard in the distance, and all eyes were turned across the Common, where, although still afar off, two or three forms could be seen running forward wildly, waving their arms, and shrieking out words which sounded like a cry to delay the execution.

Will was among the first to hear the sounds, and on looking in the direction from whence they came, he gave a violent start, and uttered a fierce oath. "Guse it, how has this come about? Then rushing to the rear of the scaffold, he bent over, and eagerly cried, "Draw the bolt, Randal. Quick, quick!" The youth obeyed, the bolt was drawn, and with a fearful jerk Lynedoch Sinclair was suspended in the air, and struggling in the agonies of death. Will stood a moment to see that the deed was fully done, then he vaulted over the framework of the scaffold, and alighted alms on the spot where Randal stood, staring at him in great affright. "Fly, Randal, fly," he cried. He has escaped from the tent, and is coming. Follow me or you are lost. He rushed away by the rear of the scaffold as he spoke, and Randal without knowing the cause of his flight instinctively followed him. The crowd in front was in commotion. The people were swaying to and fro in great agitation and excitement, and were so pre-occupied with the scene, and with the cause of the interruption that had taken place, that few observed the flight of the two gipsies, and those who did only stared after them with looks of astonished inquiry.

No one thought of laying hold of or following after them; and after they had run some distance, Will looked back on the scene they had left. The form still dangled from the rope, but its struggles were nearly over, and the head had fallen to one side, which indicated that life was almost, if not altogether extinct. Will's gleaming eye rested for a moment with satisfaction on this object, then it darted towards the men who were crossing the Common, and were fast nearing the scaffold. "Let them come now as they will," he exclaimed. "My revenge is accomplished. Lynedoch Sinclair is in eternity, and we've sent him there. Our work is done, boy, and we have done it well." "Then is my mother's wrong avenged, cried Randal. "It's life for life; he took her's, you say, and now we have taken his." "By heaven, but we have nearly missed the mark," said Will. "Had he become a minute sooner, or had we been a minute later at the scaffold, our scheme would have come to naught."

"Zoe must be to blame for his escape," observed the youth. "Ay, that is something to be afterwards accounted for," returned Will. "Our present care must be to escape, for I doubt not we shall be pursued. Let us make for the rendezvous; if Mark is in your crowd he will speedily follow us." They had now reached the edge of the wood, and plunging into its dark recesses, were at once lost to sight.

TO BE CONTINUED. THE INSOLVENT LAW.—The changes to be made in the Insolvency Law are important. The most important are that either a voluntary assignment, or a compulsory assignment may be set aside by the creditors at their first meeting if they think it desirable that the debtor should not go into bankruptcy; and that there are to be two classes of certificates—the second class being the after acquired property of the bankrupt liable during a certain time. Both of these provisions are likely to meet with general acceptance. THE DUNDAS HYDROPHOBIA CASE.—The boy Roberts, who showed symptoms of hydrophobia a day or two since, having been bitten by the rabid dog that bit Mr. Wyatt, which resulted so fatally, is now considered out of danger. He was successfully treated by a man who lives near Dundas, and who claims to have an antidote for the fatal disease. One of the new townships on the map recently issued by Mr. Culling is named Ferguson. The London Advertiser says this is the first time in the history of the province that a township has been named after a man who lives near Dundas, and who claims to have an antidote for the fatal disease.

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