







OUR SAVIOUR

Upon the cross our Saviour died,
The mercy crown upon his head;
From his hands fell, and from his side,
Drooping down a precious side.

THE SPECTRE'S SECRET

THE HEIR OF INGLESIDE

By SYLVANUS COBB, JR.

CHAPTER XIV.—(CONTINUED)

Edith had not listened to the recital in silence, though she was silent for a time after it was concluded.

'Light begins to break in upon me,' she said at length. 'I now know why I have received no answer from Lily. Lily Hargrave has an embassy at the post-office at Oxington. With his position and his money he could easily do that. The office is small, and the post-master is old. I sent my letter to Lily four weeks ago. Hargrave got it. And so, also, has he detained the letters which have come for Lily from over the sea. I must go to Oxington at once! I will know all.'

'You must be very careful, Edith. You know not what a villain you have to deal with.'

'I know him, Molly, and I will, for the present, avoid him.'

'Dear Edith, if you do not shrink from such a thing, I would say to you, disguise yourself before you come within the possibility of that man's seeing you.'

'I will do it, Molly. I should do it for more reasons than one.'

'After this the letter from Matt Bango was re-read, and then followed many questions and answers, and much consultation; and finally the capture of a letter for the immediate future was marked out. It was past midnight when Edith Somerset drew the paper 'wait to her bosom, and said:

'Dear Molly, Hargrave has sent you to do this good work; and in the doing of it all the stain of the past may be washed away. This hour is yours while you please to stay, and you shall be to me a sister. God bless and keep you.'

On the following morning Edith brought a soiled piece of paper—the fragment of an old letter—and gave her younger brother to write upon it the following:

ROLLINGTON, October, 1881.

Mr. LION HARGRAVE: E. S. has gone away to visit a sick friend. I shall have till she comes back.'

There was no signature, and having folded this in a half-sheet of cleaner paper, and sealed it, the brother, in his rough hand, superscribed it, and took it to the post office.

After breakfast Edith put on one of her mother's faded silk dresses, and also put on a lace cap, with her own hair combed back, and a partial fringe of gray hair in front, visible under the bill of the cap. A pair of green spectacles completed a metamorphosis so complete that even her brother did not recognize her until she had spoken and smiled, in explanation to the family she said that she must go to Ingleside to perform a sacred duty, and she did not wish to be recognized by Lily Hargrave. They had heard enough of affairs at Ingleside not to wonder at this, and they promised sympathy without making many questions. Molly was the one of whom Edith took leave as she went away.

'You will help my mother and sister when I am gone, Molly?'

'Yes, I will, dear Edith.'

'Yes—I know. God keep and bless you. Good-by!'

They exchanged kisses, and then Edith entered the wagon, in which her brother was to drive her some distance on her journey.

It was on Tuesday evening, the second day of November, that Adolphus brought a letter up to Ingleside for the master. Lily looked at the postmark, and then nodded to the young man that he might retire. When alone he broke the seal and read. With an oath he threw the letter into the fire. And with another oath he muttered:

'What is she up to? She must have looked on the map. Well, well, and I don't think Molly Dowd has a soft spot in her heart that can turn her to those thousand dollars.'

Next of the afternoon of the same day, a woman in faded silk and mob-cap, with gray hair and green spectacles, called at the post-office, and asked of the young man in attendance, if there was a letter for Sarah Wendland.

There was no such letter.

'Then she must walk to the rear of the street, where Mr. Hardy was at his desk, and bought of him a few small articles, chatting the while as though she knew him.'

'I see you have a new clerk since I was here,' she said, casually.

'Yes, the old one had a headache, and when he was here I was here.'

'The new one has a headache, too, I suppose. When he was here I was here.'

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Mr. Hargrave—and I took him to help him on with his studies.

'Ah—I see. The young "Quaker" is, Lily Hargrave, got him the situation?'

'Yes, yes.'

'Mr. Hargrave is very considerate, I am sure. Good-day, sir.'

'Good-day, ma'am.'

And Mr. Hardy returned to his desk, while the lady left the store, giving a keen, searching glance at the young post-clerk as she passed him.

Later, on this afternoon, Lily Marston was informed by Mary Carter that an old lady wished to see her in the sitting-room.

Lily went down, and found the woman in the faded silk gown and mob-cap.

'This is Miss Merton?' said the visitor, rising stiffly.

'It is, madam.'

'Miss Merton, when you know my business I am sure you will pardon my intrusion. I would like to speak with you in private.'

'We can do so, madam.'

'I should prefer to speak with you in your own chamber. Do not refuse me.'

There was a persuasiveness in the woman's manner which Lily could not resist, and, moreover, there was a winning sound in the music of her voice. She hesitated but for a moment, and then bade her visitor follow her.

Arrived in the comfortable chamber, Lily closed the door, but this did not satisfy the other, who turned the key in the lock. The young girl might have been alarmed had time been given her to realize the situation, but no sooner had the visitor locked the door than she turned and tore off the mob-cap and the false hair, and removed the green spectacles.

'Edith!'

'Hush!—Yes, Lily, it is Edith. O, my poor child!'

And Lily was in her arms in a moment, and she had time been given her to realize the situation, but no sooner had the visitor locked the door than she turned and tore off the mob-cap and the false hair, and removed the green spectacles.

'O, Edith! Bless you for coming. My dear, dear Edith! O, how glad I am!'

They sat down, side by side, and hand in hand, and by and by, after more words of love, Lily said:

'I have wondered, Edith, why you did not write to me—why, at least, you did not answer my letter.'

'I received no letter from you, dear child.'

'I wrote, a month ago, and directed it to Rollington.'

'And I wrote to you, Lily—but we will come to that by and by. Tell me, now, the nature of your engagement to Lily Hargrave. Be not afraid, darling, added Edith, as the stricken girl pined and shivered. 'I have come to help you if I can. Tell me all.'

And then Lily told the whole story of the power which Lily had gained over her father, and how it had been brought to bear upon her.

'When I could bear it no longer,' she went on, 'I told my father that when one year should have elapsed from the departure of Horace, if both he and Lily were dead, I would become Lily's wife.'

'If both your father and Lily should die, would you then marry me?'

'Yes.'

'And that year is not up until the last of December?'

'On the twenty-third.'

'Take heart, Lily, and take hope.'

'Edith!'

'Hush! Serve yourself for a battle, dear child. Tell me if you are strong?'

'O, yes! What is it?'

'Mark me, Lily: What may have happened since the closing of the month of June we cannot tell; but I can swear to you that the item in the newspaper, announcing the death of Horace Moore, was false.'

Lily Merton gazed up with staring look, and gasped for breath. She clutched Edith's arm, quivering like an aspen leaf.

'I have seen a letter, Lily, written more than six weeks after the date of the reported death by an officer of Horace's ship. The captain and mate of the ship Xerxes had died, and Captain Percy had been put in command of that ship, while Horace had been promoted to the command of the Speedwell.'

'O, Edith!'

'Hush, darling. Lay your head here upon my bosom, so. Now listen patiently. I did not get your letter, and you did not get mine, because Lily Hargrave has his own base tool in the post-office. Hush! And letters which have come from Horace, and which have been stolen away and delivered at Ingleside. O, Lily, it is a wicked plot, from beginning to end, and the demon is even now plotting to destroy me; and that is why I came to you in such a masquerade. But, if you can be strong and brave, we will conquer. As I live, I believe that Horace will come back to us, safe and sound. If he does not arrive before the allotted year is up, we must contrive to put the marriage off. We can do it easily.'

After a little time Lily grew calm and collected, and her native strength—her quick strength and pride—began to show itself. Her eyes shone as they had not shown before since her faithful promise to her father.

'And then Edith told her the whole story, from beginning to end, as she knew it. She told of Molly Dowd, and of Matt Bango's letter, and of Sugg Wilkitt, and how, thus far, the demon of Ingleside had been thwarted, without yet knowing it, at every step. And she also told what she had discovered at the post-office.

'I know it was my letter to you, Lily, that had alarmed Lily Hargrave to seek my life. I know he must have intercepted it. I showed my maid my knowledge in it very plainly.'

'And then the demon had this plan, and Lily was sure she could see her part without betraying herself.

'After this a season of sweet, refreshing converse, and the two friends separated.'

A few days after this Lily Hargrave was very much surprised, Lily told her, and showed him in a friendly manner. And this she considered to be a warning to collect. She did not know how to do it, but she was sure she would do it.

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he cold and discontent, and sometimes she smiled in his presence.

'Scores the game for me!' cried Lily, to himself, as he walked forth one evening from Mr. Merton's house.

'The proud beauty has given in at last!'

And he went home, and drank some brandy, and then he had a few more games at billiards.

CHAPTER XV.

MATT'S FINAL REVELATION.

The ship Speedwell dropped a single anchor at Cape Town, and remained long enough to obtain a few needed supplies. After doubling the southern cape, Capt. Percy called his crew all on pleasant day, and asked them, kindly, and with parental concern, if they had ever felt a regret at the loss of Grover and Wilkitt and their companions. The answer was quick and hearty.

'And now, my men,' said Captain Percy, 'I want you to take this lesson to heart. Think how much better off you are to-day in every way—your health, your spirits, your pockets—than you were when you had been flung in the blood of a madman. Since that night you have pleased me, and from this time I give you back my entire confidence. Let the one false step be forgotten.'

The men gave their captain and mates three hearty cheers, and then went to their stations; and thereupon the crew of the ship was a model of harmony and excellence.

When the Speedwell cast her anchor in the river Hoegly it was found that only two ships had ever made the passage from America so quickly. She had been blessed with fair winds in the Indian Ocean, and she had been managed by competent masters.

In Diamond Harbor, on his arrival Capt. Percy found the ship Xerxes, just in from Canton—a ship belonging to the owners of the Speedwell, and shortly afterward her captain and first mate died of fever. The agent and the underwriters conferred with Capt. Percy, and asked him what should be done. The Xerxes was a heavy ship, and was to return home with a valuable cargo. Had he an officer competent to take charge of the Speedwell?

'Yes, gentlemen,' he answered, promptly. 'Mr. Moore is capable in every way.'

'And entirely trustworthy?'

'None a more true and trusty man walked a deck.'

And so it came to pass that John Percy went to the command of the Xerxes, while Horace Moore was elevated to the command of the Speedwell. William Lander was his first mate, Tom Martin his second, and Matt Bango his third.

'I have come to help you if I can. Tell me all.'

And then Lily told the whole story of the power which Lily had gained over her father, and how it had been brought to bear upon her.

'When I could bear it no longer,' she went on, 'I told my father that when one year should have elapsed from the departure of Horace, if both he and Lily were dead, I would become Lily's wife.'

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