

FETTERED BY FATE

BY ALEXANDER ROBERTSON

"Jollette's Fate," "Little Sweetheart," "Lottie, the Sewing Girl," "Goldmaker of Lisbon," "Wedded to Win," "Diana Thorne," "Nora's Legacy," Etc., Etc.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Roger Darrel, walking through the forest and drawn by the hand of fate, stopped several times, as though to turn back, but on each separate occasion he found himself impelled forward.

"At least I will not enter when I reach there. Let me look upon the old mill once again, and perhaps this mad fancy on my part will be satisfied. What it is I know not, but I cannot resist it."

He finished his words with a startled cry, for his eyes had suddenly caught a glow of light through the forest trees.

"It cannot be the moon rising, for, unless I have lost my bearings, I am heading toward the west. It is the old mill on fire! What if she should be lost?"

He started on a wild run, leaping over holes and logs as though they were almost nothing, and rapidly nearing the blazing mill, which with every passing minute seemed to become more and more the victim of the flames.

Now he seemed to understand the subtle power that had drawn him on, and in his heart he prayed, oh, so earnestly, that he might yet be in time to save his darling.

All thoughts of bitterness toward her had been swept from his heart as if by magic. He had the proofs of his innocence, but his words about throwing her love from him were forgotten.

On he dashed. It seemed as though he would never get there, and the old mill was now a perfect pyramid of flames, roaring and leaping upward as though in fiendish glee over the destruction of the haunted building.

The woods were now lighted up, and he could see his way better, so that he made better time, but his heart was full of a terrible fear lest he should arrive too late.

Finally, like a mad deer, he sprang from among the trees and rushed into the open space. A terrible scene, full of awful grandeur, was before him, but he heeded not its sublime splendor. The one thought before his mind was the harrowing uncertainty in regard to Carol. Was she safe? What if she were in that abyss of flame?

Almost mad at the bare thought, he rushed frantically forward. A scream reached his ear—the scream of a woman—and for the first time he noticed a female figure close to the burning mill. The glare and smoke kept him from recognizing her, and, with his heart leaping for joy, he bounded toward the woman, who was wringing her hands wildly. When he reached her side he saw that it was Mrs. Richmond, not Carol.

Several other forms had darted from the woods, and were hurrying toward the spot where the lady stood. The leading one he recognized as Lawrence Richmond, but beyond that he did not spare the time to look.

"Carol—where is she?" he cried. There was not a second to lose. The poor lady could not speak, but, raising her hand, she pointed to the blazing building. It was enough.

"Heaven help me!" fell from his shut teeth.

Then, bracing himself like a giant preparing for a mighty battle, he rushed forward, hurling himself through the barrier of fierce flames that crossed their angry tongues before the doorway.

He found the stairs more from instinct than sight, as the place was full of smoke. Up he went with great leaps. At the top he could see nothing, but, groping his way along, he cried aloud:

"Carol, oh, Carol, my darling, where are you?"

Oh, the bitterness in his voice. It spoke of heart-breaking, racking pain, but there came no answer save the roaring and crackling of the flames as they fed upon the dry timbers of the old mill.

He groped his way along a passage until he came to a door. It refused to give way at his touch, and, rendered desperate by the situation, he raised his foot and sent it down with a crash.

Entering, he found the interior full of smoke, and yet it was more bearable than out in the hall, because of the closed door. A slender figure arose and staggered toward him. With a cry he held out his arms for her.

"Carol, my love, my life, thank heaven you are alive!" he cried, as he folded her in his arms and crushed her to his heart. "You—forgive me—Roger—I loved you—I believe in you now!" the poor girl gasped.

"Hush, darling, heaven will forgive us both. I have forgotten all—everything but that I love you better than the whole world. As proof of it, witness me here to save or die with you."

He had shut the door in order to keep out the dense volume of smoke until he was ready for the final plunge, and, after hastily wrapping several blankets about the precious form of the girl, who was clad only in a loose wrapper of her mother's that she had thrown about her when first awakened by the dense smoke, he opened the door.

The hall and stairway were still full of smoke, but he would no longer have to grope his way along either, for the ruddy flames, dancing and forking out their diabolical red tongues, as though in fiendish glee, lighted up both.

How was he ever going to run the gauntlet with that precious burden in his arms? Was it possible to escape by the window? One glance in that direction told him that such a thing could hardly be accomplished; in fact, that it was impossible, for the fire was already glaring in through the glass with evil eyes.

Drawing in a long breath, and pressing Carol still closer to him, for he felt that by this baptism of fire she was given to him for all time and eternity, Roger

dashed boldly into the flames and down the stairs.

Had he been alone he would have taken a flying leap to the bottom, and very probably have come out almost unscathed, but now his progress was much slower, and he received many a flash from the tongues of flame that darted out this way and that.

Heaven knows how he passed through that fiery ordeal! The consciousness that he held in his arms all that made life dear to him gave him additional courage and strength.

Several times he heard what he fancied were the voices of men, hoarse and loud, accompanied with rapid blows, but he knew not what to make of them, not being aware of the fact that two mortal souls were locked in a room near by, and almost suffocated by the smoke and fire.

The hand of heaven must have directed the heroic young man, for he reached the foot of the burning stairs in safety. Then, nerving himself for the final act in the drama, he rushed through the barrier of flame and out into the clear air.

Loud cries greeted him as he staggered forward and placed his burden in the arms of Lawrence Richmond, blackened in face, and his garments burning in a score of places.

He heard a terrible roaring noise, as though the old mill had fallen in, and then he knew no more.

CHAPTER XXX.

Five minutes from the time that Roger dashed from the burning building, blind with smoke and burning wherever the flames had licked his flesh, the whole mill was tottering and threatening to fall. It had yielded itself so completely to the demon fire that it burned like tinder.

Just at this time a man staggered from the door, threw up his arms as a falling burning rafter struck him, and dropped like a rock. No one dared go to his assistance, for the whole mill was about to topple over in that very direction.

Those who were looking, however, saw a second figure emerge from the building. He stumbled over the Captain, stooped, and, raising the fallen man, bore him to a place of safety just as, with a mighty roar, the burning structure gave way, sending a myriad of sparks skyward as it crashed in like an eggshell.

Roger was not seriously hurt. True, he bore upon his arms burns that would never be wholly lost, but they would be sacred scars, for they were received while he had in his arms the girl he loved.

When he recovered his senses he found Carol bending over him, supreme love written on every lineament of her sweet face. Her soft lips pressed kisses upon his wounded arms. Between those two no clouds could ever come again; they had been baptized in fire, and the bond was cemented forever.

His face and hair had escaped because he had been wise enough to cover them with a wet cloth, all but the eyes, and he had ducked his head when passing through the flames.

Presently he was able to arise, and then he found a group near by, bending over a form upon the ground. It was the Captain.

A strange fate had brought together all those whom he had wronged to see the arch schemer die. Above him stood the Russian detective, scarred a little from contact with the flames, and yet still worth a dozen dead men, Lawrence Richmond, Jack, and the girl who had been the wife of the dying man, as she believed—Nora Warner.

Kneeling beside the Captain was the gypsy, Barbara Merriess.

The two men, locked in the room and with the fire roaring round them, rendered desperate by their situation, had hurled themselves against the door, but the effort was useless, and they would undoubtedly have been burned alive but that the detective chanced to remember an ax that was lying in a small closet.

With this they assailed the door by turns, like two great Farnese Hercules, but it was almost too late, for the smoke was filling the room, and, when they did manage to smash the lock of the door, it was only to find themselves face to face with huge billows of seething flames that swept up the stairs and licked up the woodwork.

The Captain rushed down first, and was just in time to receive the crushing blow from the rafter outside the building.

Thus did the vengeance of heaven overtake the plotters when that of man seemed almost without hope.

He lay there dying now—there could be no mistake about that—and his eyes wandered from one face to another, lighted up by the glare of the still burning remnants of the haunted mill.

When he saw Roger approach, supported by Carol's arm, something that was almost a smile came across the dying man's face, and he beckoned for them to draw still nearer.

"Death has caught me, cousin," he hoarsely whispered, as they bent over him. "I have wronged many in my life, but now all is over, and I go to pay the penalty. Is there one here who can say he or she will not forgive me? In the name of heaven, do not refuse a dying man this request."

All were silent. No one denied him this, and, although his voice grew weaker as he proceeded, his face lighted up strangely.

"Nora, I see you have found happiness with that noble young man, and it is not so hard to forgive; nor can you, cousin, now that all the clouds are cleared away, Lawrence Richmond, you will find the false paper I held over you on my person. It was a forgery, for you were innocent of the crime, though circum-

stances aided me in securing my power over you. Jack Arenal, I know you now. Your sister is at last avenged. As for you, Barbara, poor girl, once I loved you better than ought else in my life. Had I let that love reign, I would have been a better man, but I trampled it under foot, deceived you, and became worse than ever; but this I swear—once I really loved you."

The poor gypsy girl uttered a cry and hid her face in her hands, overmastered by emotion. Captain Grant was almost gone, but, turning his eyes upon the detective, he gasped:

"It will serve you just as well—you know it was—dead or alive. I can defy you—now."

He was dead. Heaven be merciful to his soul, for he had never known what mercy was in this world, and there were more hearts than those present at the time of his death that were crying out for vengeance because of this evil man.

They buried him in the country church yard along with the Darrels, though he ill deserved this distinction, and tried to forget him.

Nora Warner went home with Carol, and they two became great friends. The latter was as happy as the day was long, and delighted to hear Nora tell of what a noble man Roger Darrel was.

Nora knew Lawrence Richmond of old, for they had met before. She was the daughter of a wealthy Virginian, and no poor obscure girl. He had imagined that she had done him harm, but it all turned out that she had done, in her womanly indignation, upbraided him for his conduct toward his wife, the story of which she had heard.

Nora married Jack Arenal, whose sister had been one of the dead man's victims, which accounted for Jack's hatred, and they have always been a happy couple. The past is shut out; they live in the present.

Roger and his sweet wife know no wants. They are all in all to each other, and the two old folks, dandling the little grandchildren on their knees, bless heaven for the light that has come to them after those long years of darkness.

Doctor Grim's establishment was eventually broken up by the authorities.

The detective obtained the reward offered by the Russian government for hunting down the Man with the Black Glove, and was heard of no more.

One morning they found the gypsy girl dead on the grave of her lover, who had reaped the wages of sin, and they buried her beside him in pity, dropping a tear for her sorrows.

(The end.)

GIANT CRAB FOR MUSEUM.

Spreads Eleven and a Half Feet—Comes from Japanese Waters.

One of the large square cases in the natural history room of the museum of the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences contains a giant crab, just mounted, the gift of Eugene G. Blackford, and one of a number of interesting specimens of marine animals from the Japanese coast which he has recently presented to the museum, says the New York Tribune. They are from the collection made by Prof. Bashford Dean, of Columbia, in 1901. The crab spreads eleven and one-half feet, and is of a delicate old-rose tint on the top of the carapace, the legs toning to a pale brownish-castor shade on the under side. The two front legs have the usual claws, but the others end in narrow brown hoofs, not toes. The eyes on their branches with feelers beyond are a more noticeable feature than in other crabs.

Its mounting took about a month, as it required gentle handling, because, coming from the deep sea, its coating is more delicate than that of an animal from shallow water. Its home is at a depth of from 600 to 1,200 feet. Its size varies from nine to twelve feet, and not more than a dozen are taken in a year. The manner of the capture is interesting in that it illustrates a method of Japanese fishing. At night fishermen sink lines several miles in length, arranged with many hundreds of hooks, to the bottom of the sea. When hauled in at early morning giant crabs, sea lilies, sponges and many other wonderful forms are found attached. While naturalists and philosophers of the west were disputing as to whether or not life could exist in the cold depths of the ocean the Japanese were engaged in getting life from there. This was not in the interest of science, but to provide for the market, as the Japanese consume almost every kind of sea product.

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No, Not You.

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"That was an accumulation of household recipes your father cut out of the papers downtown and put away for my benefit. I have to clean them out of his pocket about once a month."—Chicago Tribune.

Plausible.

"He's a great sprinter. Inherited it from his father."

"So?"

"Yes; his father lived in the suburbs and made some splendid records catching trains."

Cause for Pride.

"What's he stuck up about?"

"He just won some money on a horse race."

Hope for Him.

"Ah!" he said, as he led her back to her seat after the waltz, "I just love dancing."

"Well," she replied, as she attempted to repair a torn founce, "you're not too old to learn."—Philadelphia Press.

Mothers will find Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup the best remedy to use for their children's teething season.

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Mr. Snapp—That's strange; you haven't much material to work with.—Philadelphia Press.

Positive and Negative Pleasure.

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Husband—Just for the pleasure of inviting some of your friends, eh?

Well, yes, and the pleasure of not inviting some.—Modern Society.

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