

For The Term of His Natural Life

By MARCUS CLARKE

CHAPTER XXVII.

On or about the 8th of December, Mrs. Frere noticed a sudden and unaccountable change in the manner of the chaplain. He came to her one afternoon, and, after talking for some time, in a vague and unconnected manner, about the miseries of the prison, and the wretched condition of some of the prisoners, began to question her abruptly concerning Rufus Dawes.

"I do not wish to think of him," said she, with a shudder. "I have the strangest, the most horrible dreams about him. He is a bad man. He tried to murder me when a child, and had it not been for my husband, he would have done so. I have only seen him once since then—at Hobart Town, when he was taken."

"He sometimes speaks to me of you," said North, eying her. "He asked me once to give him a rose plucked in your garden."

Sylvia turned pale. "And you gave it him?"

"Yes, I gave it him. Why not? You are not angry?"

"Oh, no! Why should I be angry?" she laughed constrainedly. "It was a strange fancy for the man to have, that's all."

"I suppose you would not give me another rose, if I asked you?"

"Why not?" said she, turning away uneasily. "You? You are a gentleman."

"Not I—you don't know me. It would be better for you if you had never seen me."

"Mr. North!" Terrified at the wild gleam in his eyes, she had risen hastily. "You are talking very strangely."

"Oh, don't be alarmed, madam. I had better leave you. Indeed, I think the less we see of each other the better."

Deeply wounded and astonished at this extraordinary outburst, Sylvia allowed him to stride away without a word. The next day he met her, and, bowing, passed swiftly. This pained her.

So a week passed, and Mr. North did not return. Unluckily for the poor wretch, the very self-sacrifice he had made brought about the precise condition of things which he was desirous to avoid. But the very fact of the sudden wrenching away of her companion showed her how barren was the solitary life to which she had been fated.

Her husband, she had long ago admitted, with bitter self-communings, was utterly unsuited to her. She could find in his society no enjoyment, and for the sympathy which she needed was compelled to turn elsewhere. She understood that his love for her had burned itself out. In a word, she found that the society of North had become so far necessary to her, that to be deprived of it was a grief—notwithstanding that her husband remained to console her.

After a week of such reflections, the barrenness of life grew insupportable to her, and one day she came to Maurice and begged to be sent back to Hobart Town. "I cannot live in this horrible island," she said. "I am getting ill. Let me go to my father for a few months, Maurice." Maurice consented.

His wife was looking ill, and Major Vickers was an old man—a rich old man—who loved his only daughter. It was not undesirable that Mrs. Frere should visit her father; indeed, so little sympathy was there between the pair, that the first astonishment over, Maurice felt rather glad to get rid of her for a while. "You can go back in the Lady Franklin, if you like, my dear," he said. "I expect her every day." At this decision—much to his surprise—she kissed him with more show of affection than she had manifested for a long time.

The news of the approaching departure became known, but still North did not make his appearance. Had it not been a step beneath the dignity of a woman, Mrs. Frere would have gone herself and asked him the meaning of his unaccountable rudeness; but there was just sufficient morbidity in the sympathy she had for him to restrain her from an act which a young girl, though not more innocent, would have dared without hesitation.

Between the commandant and the chaplain now arose a coolness, and Frere set himself, by various petty tyrannies, to disgust North and compel him to a resignation of his office. The convict jailers speedily marked the difference in the treatment of the chaplain, and their demeanor changed. For respect was substituted insolence; for alacrity, sullenness; for prompt obedience, impertinent intrusion. The men whom North favored were selected as special subjects for harshness, and for a prisoner to be seen talking to the clergyman was sufficient to insure for him a series of tyrannies. There was but one being who was not to be turned from his allegiance—the convict murderer, Rufus Dawes, who awaited death. For many days he had remained mute, broken down beneath his weight of sorrow or of sullenness.

Frere, unable to comprehend the reason of the calmness with which the doomed felon met his taunts and torments, thought that he was shamming piety to gain some indulgence of meat and drink, and redoubled his severity. He ordered Dawes to be taken out to work just before the hour at which the chaplain was accustomed to visit him.

The method and manner of Frere's conversation on the subject of whispered to the convict, but that he had refused to accept the prohibition, and, by a threat of what he would do when the

returning vessel had landed him in Hobart Town, had compelled the commandant to withdraw his order. The commandant, however, speedily discovered in Rufus Dawes signs of insubordination, and set to work again to reduce again still further the "spirit" he had so ingeniously "broken." The unhappy convict was deprived of food, was kept awake at nights, was put to the hardest labor, was loaded with the heaviest irons. Troke suggested that, if the tortured wretch would decline to see the chaplain, some amelioration of his condition might be effected; but his suggestions were in vain. Firmly believing that his death was certain, Dawes clung to North as the savior of his agonized soul, and rejected all such insidious overtures. Enraged at this obstinacy, Frere sentenced his victim to the "spread-eagle" and the "stretcher."

Now, the rumor of the obduracy of this undaunted convict, who had been recalled to her by the clergyman at their strange interview, had reached Sylvia's ears. She questioned her husband concerning the convict's misdoings, but, with the petulant brutality which he invariably displayed when the name of Rufus Dawes intruded itself into their conversation, Maurice Frere harshly refused to satisfy her.

One sultry afternoon, when the commandant had gone on a visit of inspection, Troke, lounging at the door of the new prison, beheld with surprise the figure of the commandant's lady.

"What is it, ma'am?" he asked, scarcely able to believe his eyes.

"I want to see the prisoner Dawes."

"He's—he's under punishment, ma'am."

"What do you mean? Are they flogging him?"

"No; but—but he's dangerous, ma'am."

"Do you wish me to complain to the commandant?" cries Sylvia, with a touch of her old spirit, and jumping hastily at the conclusion that the jailers were, perhaps, torturing the convict for their own entertainment. "Open the door at once—at once!"

Thus commanded, Troke, with a hasty growl of its "being no affair of his, and he hoped Mrs. Frere would tell the captain how it happened," flung open the door of a cell on the right hand of the doorway. It was so dark that at first Sylvia could distinguish nothing but the outline of a framework, with something stretched upon it that resembled a human body. Her first thought was that the man was dead, but this was not so—he groaned. Her eyes, accustomed themselves to the gloom, began to see what the "punishment" was. Upon the floor was placed an iron frame about six feet long, and two and a half feet wide, with round iron bars, placed transversely, about twelve inches apart. The man she came to seek was bound in a horizontal position upon this frame, with his neck projecting over the end of it. If he allowed his head to hang, the blood rushed to his brain, and suffocated him, while the effort to keep it raised strained every muscle to agony pitch. His face was purple, and he foamed at the mouth. Sylvia uttered a cry. "This is no punishment; it's murder! Who ordered this?"

"The commandant," said Troke, sullenly.

"I don't believe it. Loose him, I say. Hailey—you, sir, there!" The noise had brought several warders to the spot. "Do you hear me? Do you know who I am? Loose him, I say!" In her eagerness and compassion, she was on her knees by the side of the infernal machine, plucking at the ropes with her delicate fingers. "Wretches, you have cut his flesh! He is dying! Help! You have killed him!"

The prisoner, in fact, seeing this angel of mercy stooping over him, and hearing close to him the tones of a voice that for seven years he had heard but in his dreams, had fainted. Troke and Hailey, alarmed by her vehemence, dragged the stretcher out into the light, and hastily cut the lashings. Dawes rolled off like a log, and his head fell against Mrs. Frere. Troke roughly pulled him aside and called for water. Sylvia, trembling with sympathy, and pale with passion, turned upon the crew. "How long has he been like this?"

"An hour," said Troke.

"A lie!" said a stern voice at the door. "He has been there nine hours!"

"Wretches!" cried Sylvia, "you shall hear more of this. Oh, oh! I am sick"—she felt for the wall—"I—I—I—"

North watched her with agony on his face, but did not move. "I faint, I—I—"

She uttered a despairing cry that was not without a touch of anger. "Mr. North! do you not see? Oh! Take me home—take me home!" And she would have fallen across the body of the tortured prisoner had not North caught her in his arms.

Rufus Dawes, awaking from his stupor, saw, in the midst of a sunbeam which penetrated a window in the corridor, the woman who came to save his body supported by the priest who came to save his soul; and, staggering to his knees, he stretched out his hands with a hoarse cry. Perhaps something in the action brought back to the dimmed remembrance of the commandant's wife the image of a similar figure stretching forth its hands to a frightened child in the mysterious far-off time. She started, and, pushing back her hair, bent a wistful, terrified gaze upon the face of the kneeling man, as though she would fain read there an explanation of the shadowy memory which haunted her. It

is possible that she would have spoken, but North—thinking the excitement had produced one of those hysterical crises which were common to her—gently drew her, still gazing, back toward the gate. The convict's arms fell, and an indefinable presentiment of evil chilled him as he beheld the priest slowly draw the fair young creature from out the sunlight into the grim shadow of the heavy archway. For an instant the gloom swallowed them, and then they passed out of the prison archway into the free air of heaven—and the sunlight glowed golden on their faces.

"You are ill," said North. "You will faint. Why do you look so wildly?"

"What is it?" she whispered, more in answer to her own thoughts than to his question—"what is it that links me to that man? What deed—what terror—what memory? I tremble with crowding thoughts that die ere they can whisper to me. Oh, that prison!"

They reached the house, and he placed her tenderly in a chair. "Now you are safe, madam, I will leave you."

She burst into tears. "Why do you treat me thus, Mr. North? What have I done to make you hate me?"

"Hate you!" said North, with trembling lips. "Oh, no, I do not—do not hate you. I am rude in my speech, abrupt in my manner. You must forget it—and me."

A horse's feet crashed upon the gravel, and an instant after Maurice Frere burst into the room. Returning from the Cascades, he had met Troke, and learned the release of the prisoner. Furious at this usurpation of authority by his wife, his self-esteem wounded by the thought that she had witnessed his mean revenge upon the man he had so infamously wronged, and his natural brutality enhanced by brandy, he had made for the house at full gallop, determined to assert his authority. Blind with rage, he saw no one but his wife. "What's this I hear? You have been meddling in my business! You release prisoners!"

"Captain Frere!" said North, stepping forward to assert the restraining presence of a stranger. Frere started, astonished at the intrusion of the chaplain. Here was another outrage of his dignity, another insult to his supreme authority.

"You here, too! What do you want here? This is your quarrel, is it?" His eyes glanced wrathfully from one to the other, and he strode toward North. "You hypocritical, lying scoundrel! If it wasn't for your black coat, I'd—"

"Maurice!" cried Sylvia, in an agony of shame and terror, striving to place a restraining hand upon his arm. He turned upon her with so fierce a curse that North, pale with righteous rage, seemed prompted to strike the burly ruffian to the earth. For a moment or two the two men faced each other, and then Frere, muttering threats of vengeance against each and all—convict, jailers, wife and priest—flung the suppliant woman violently from him and rushed from the room. She fell heavily against the wall, and as the chaplain raised her he heard the hoof strokes of the departing horse.

"Oh!" cried Sylvia, covering her face with trembling hands, "let me leave this place."

North strove to soothe her with incoherent words of comfort. Dizzy with the blow she had received, she clung to him, sobbing. Twice he tried to tear himself away, but had he loosed his hold she would have fallen. "Why should you be thus tortured?" he cried. "Heaven never willed you to be mated to that boor—you, whose life should be all sunshine. Leave him—leave him. He has cast you off."

"I am going," she said faintly. "I had already arranged to go."

North trembled. They looked at each other; she comprehended the "hatred" he had affected for her, and, deadly pale, drew back the cold hand he held.

"Go!" she murmured. "Leave me, leave me! Do not see me or speak to me again."

(To be continued.)

No More Deadheads.

"Ah," gushed the beautiful girl at the reception, "so you came through the famous mountains by rail. Tell me of the chasms, canyons, and passes."

The Congressman frowned and looked troubled.

"I saw the canyons and chasms," he sighed, "but passes I saw none. I haven't seen a pass since the first of the year."—Chicago News.

Her Little Scheme.

Tess—I saw Miss Vane on the avenue yesterday with a lovely new hat, but she had it cocked over so far to one side it was almost falling off her head.

Jess—Yes; she told me she pushed it over that way just as you came along so you'd be sure to notice it.—Philadelphia Press.

The Way He Went.

"Is Casey workin' here?" asked Flanagan, entering the quarry shortly after a blast.

"He was, but he jisht wint away," replied Flanagan, the foreman.

"Are ye expectin' him back?"

"Yes, I suppose so. Annyway, they do say, whatever goes up musht come down."—Philadelphia Press.

As They Viewed It.

"It's a fine day, deacon?"

"Yes; but we're all miserable creatures."

"Well, thank God, we're still a-livin'!"

"Yes," groaned the deacon, "but our time's comin'!"—Atlanta Constitution.

Answered.

Kwoter—What's in a name?

Bangrupt—A lot. All my property is in my wife's.—Cleveland Leader.

REVIVAL OF THE ANCIENT TOURNEY IN ENGLAND.



The military tournament held in England this year has for its most picturesque feature a representation of a Tudor tourney. The pageant begins with a procession of men, mounted and dismounted, in armor of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, splendid costumes of the period, or ornate uniforms. The chargers of the mounted are richly equipped and wear full armor. A prominent figure is the lord of the tournament, suitably attended and followed by the knight herald, the chief marshal, squires and pages, trumpeters and standard-bearers. Then come the challengers, four knights in armor, followed by men-at-arms, pursuivants and pages. The jousting concludes the pageant, the breaking of a lance being the signal for a fanfare.

MEDALS FOR ARMY MEN.

Veterans of Three Recent Wars to Wear New Badge.

To gratify the pride and stimulate the ambition of the soldiers of the regular army the general staff has issued an order requiring veterans of the Spanish war, the Philippine insurrection and the Peking relief expedition to wear bronze medals as a part of their uniform on dress parade and occasions of ceremony. This will give the boys something to be proud of. The general staff also provided a special badge to be worn by soldiers of the regular army who have been awarded what is known as the certificate of merit. This certificate is bestowed upon enlisted men who



have distinguished themselves for good conduct, gallantry and soldierly qualities. It is not so high as the medal of honor, but is very much prized and entitles the holder to \$2 a month extra pay.

Secretary Taft has ordered similar medals for veterans of the Civil War and the Indian wars, under similar regulations. These medals are not for volunteers, but for regulars only.

The following is a description of the several designs:

Civil War—Obverse: Head of Lincoln in circle composed of inscription: "With malice toward none, with charity for all." Reverse: The words, "The Civil War," and the dates, "1861-1865," in a circle composed of a branch of oak and a branch of laurel.

Indian Wars—Obverse: An Indian

in war bonnet brandishing a spear and mounted on a pony in a circle composed of the words, "Indian Wars," and conventionalized arrow heads arranged like a laurel wreath either side of a buffalo skull. Reverse: A military trophy with the name of an Indian campaign, in a circle of the words, "United States Army," and thirteen stars.

Merit—Obverse: Eagle in a circle composed of the words, "Virtutis et Audaciae, Monumentum et Praemium." Reverse: The words, "For Merit," surrounded by a laurel wreath in a circle composed of the words, "United States Army," and thirteen stars.

Spanish War—Obverse: A conventionalized "Morro" in a circle composed of the words, "War With Spain," and a conventionalized branch of the tobacco plant and stalks of sugar cane on either side, with the date, "1898." Reverse: A military trophy above the word "Cuba" or "Puerto Rico," or "Philippines" in a circle composed of the words, "United States Army," and thirteen stars.

Philippine Insurrection—Obverse: Conventionalized coconut palm tree, with the Scales of Justice on the right and the Lamp of Enlightenment on the left, in a circle composed of the words, "Philippine Insurrection," and the dates, "1898-1904." Reverse: A military trophy above the word "Luzon," "Mindanao" or other designation of a campaign in the islands in a circle composed of the words, "United States Army," and thirteen stars.

China Relief Expedition—Obverse: The imperial Chinese five-toed dragon in a circle composed of the words, "China Relief Expedition," and the dates, "1900-1901." Reverse: A military trophy above the words, "Peking-Tientsin" or other designation of the campaign, in a circle composed of the words, "United States Army," and thirteen stars.

The military trophy adopted for the reverse consists of an eagle perched on a cannon, with five standards significant of the five great campaigns in which the United States army has been engaged; an Indian spear, shield and quiver, a Filipino bolo and a Malay kris. The morro selected for the design on the Spanish war medal is intended to be characteristic of Cuba rather than Spain.

The eagle on the merit medal is taken from the famous marble Roman eagle in the possession of Lord Wemyss, formerly Lord Elcho, well known for his great interest in the British volunteers.

Could Not Be in Two Places.

"Pa," said little Tommy, "my Sunday school teacher says if I'm good I'll go to heaven."

"Well?" asked his pa.

"Well, you said if I was good I'd go to the circus. Now, I want to know who's lyin', you or her."—Catholic Standard.

Next to moving the county seat, the surest way to get up a row in a country town is to move the postoffice.