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The Contrabandist: OR One Life's Secret!

A TRUE STORY OF THE SOUTH OF FRANCE

CHAPTER XVIII.—(Continued.)

They reached Paris and shortly were established in another home, at the Hotel de Clairville. Here the kind-hearted Count Frederic and his amiable wife congratulated themselves upon having gathered together so happy a family party; and no pains were spared to contribute to the enjoyment of each. Rose had never been in Paris before; its splendor and gaieties were novel and pleasing to her. But every enjoyment had its chief source from the presence of Louis; nothing was complete if he were not at her side to share in her pleasure; and it charmed him to perceive this.

"You shall dwell here, some day, my Rose," he said to her, with his own bright smile that the young girl loved so well.

And she smiled in return; while Helen Montauban turned away, with a dark gleam in her eyes—a darker frown on that splendid brow.

"Some day! How little," said the haughty woman, mentally, "how little do they dream that the will of another is to exercise authority! They count confidently on their future upon the fate that is awaiting them. Ah, they knew what it is to be—that fate!"

Now that Paris was gained, she was nearer to her purpose, and the fierce impatience she had felt subsided as she approached to the consummation of that purpose. Not because she quailed, or shrank from it, but that now she was able to contemplate it more nearly—to look upon her revenge as almost accomplished, and she was content to wait yet longer.

"Helen, you are ill, I think," said Francis Egerton in alarm.

She had been sitting in the same attitude for a full hour, with her head resting on her hand, and those dark, calm eyes fixed on the floor. But her lips were very pale, and her face marble white.

"You are ill, Helen," he repeated, gently, bending over to attract her attention, and laying his hand on hers. But the icy coldness of that hand chilled and startled him.

"You are not quite right, my lord," she answered; "for I am not ill exactly, and yet I am not well. I have merely a severe headache." And she pressed her hand to her brow.

"A headache—is that all? Nay, you are feverish, for now your cheeks are burning. Let me ask your father to send for a physician. You may, perhaps, have taken the fever which is prevailing in the city. Dear Helen, be advised!"

"Francis, I command you to remain where you are," said Mademoiselle Montauban, imperatively. I have assured you that I am not ill, and do not wish either to attract attention or to interfere with the enjoyment of others. Since you are so anxious, I shall endeavor to rest awhile in my own apartment, and may regain my usual spirits by evening, in which case I will rejoin the family. Present my excuses to them, if you please."

She left him and ascended to her chamber.

Night came. The rest of the family were to attend the opera. Helen Montauban assigned a severe headache as her reason for not accompanying them, and remained at home. From the case of her room she looked down and saw the carriage roll away from the gates.

An hour afterwards there emerged from the hotel a youth, wearing a broad hat slouched over his eyes and a cloak, which he drew about him, half concealing his face with its folds. He looked back with a hurried, nervous glance as he gained the portal. "No one has seen me," he muttered, "and the rest is sufficiently easy." At a rapid pace he hastened on.

It was dark; but the lamps in the streets poured a flood of light along his way as he proceeded, and crowds of pedestrians passed him and the way was thronged with carriages and vehicles of every description. He only drew his hat further over his eyes, arranged the folds of the cloak so as more fully to hide his features, and hurried along, passing from one street to another, and never looking at a single face in all the jostling multitude about him.

At length, in a retired street, he reached the door of a building, half shop, half dwelling; at this door he knocked. A domestic appeared, bearing a light, which she held up to survey the features of the youth; but he shrunk further back into the shadow, and gathered the folds of the cloak more closely about his face as he asked, in a low and somewhat hoarse voice:

"Is the alchemist at home?"

"He is, monsieur. Will you come in?" The youth entered, the woman looking at him with a half-curious glance for an instant; but then muttering to herself, "Well—well, I need not trouble my head; he is not the first man that has come hither," she added aloud: "This way, monsieur; you will find my master in here," and led the way through the room into which he had entered from the street to a back one, opening from the first. Here was an old man, bent half double, seated at a table, and engaged in poring over a rich and curious volume of antique appearance. About the apartment were arranged, in different places, various stuffed figures of animals, and some of them reptiles so hideous as to send an involuntary shiver over the boy as he beheld them. Strange and horrible forms were everywhere about him; he turned from contemplating them in disgust. The old man laid aside his book and looked up.

"You want me?—well, what is it?" he said, leaning back in his chair, and regarding his guest closely with the piercing dark eyes that seemed still darker and more piercing from the bushy, snow-white brows that overhung them.

The youth spoke not, nor removed the cloak from his face; but silently advancing, presented a folded paper to the old man. He received and glanced over it. A slight frown darkened over his face, and again he fixed on the boy that same searching glance.

"You do not want me, but my wife,"

he said. "I touch not such matters as this," and he handed back the paper. Then going to a small door in the wall, he opened it and called, "Bianca—Bianca!"

An instant and there appeared at this door a tall, dark-looking yet splendidly handsome woman, with a brunette complexion, magnificent black eyes and a noble and commanding form. Those eyes were fixed upon the muffled figure and half-concealed face of the stranger.

"Bianca," said the old man, "there is one who has need of your services."

"What do you want?" asked the woman, in the sweetest and most musical of voices, as she came forward, with her glance still fastened on the youth—"what do you want?"

He gave her the paper, which she perused. Then regarding him closely once again, she said:

"Follow me, and I will obtain for you what you desire."

Without further speech, she crossed to the opposite side of the room, to where a chintz curtain hung before a low arched doorway; lifting this, she passed through, and beckoned to him. He followed.

They were now in a kind of large closet, which contained two or three chairs, a circular table covered with boxes and vials of different sizes and shapes. The woman seated herself before this table, over which was burning a brazen lamp, pendant from the wall. She motioned to the youth to take another seat near her. He did so.

"Do you know," she said, reading the contents of the paper again, "what it is that you wish for?"

"Yes. Hasten; I must have it!"

A purse of gold was flung upon the table before her. She saw the glitter strike through its meshes and smiled.

"You know the worth of your wish. There is but one physician, I believe, now living who is acquainted with the secret of this drug."

The youth shuddered visibly. His dark, burning eyes were fixed upon the face of the woman.

"You doubtless know the effect of it?" she asked next, as she opened a small casket of solid iron, which stood among other boxes on the table.

"I do."

If her intention had been to penetrate the boy's disguise, or to hear the tones of his voice, she was baffled. She abandoned the attempt, therefore, and proceeded to take from the casket certain vials, nearly all of which were filled with some liquid. Perhaps twelve of these were removed, and the casket appeared entirely empty; when, touching a secret spring, a false bottom was removed, disclosing three smaller vials lying side by side in separate compartments. The one lying in the center she took up; it was filled with a fluid colorless as water.

The boy bent forward, breathing heavily, his burning glance fixed eagerly upon it. He stretched out his hand to take it; that hand was small and fine and lily-white. The woman saw it, but her quick eyes were instantly fixed upon the vial again.

"No—no," she said, calmly. "This contains a hundred times the quantity you want. A single drop is sufficient to rid you of your worst enemy—your rival, if you have one."

The youth shuddered again; and she marked well the shudder, but there was nothing strange to her in it. She recognized the feelings actuating him; she was accustomed to these things, and did not seem to observe his emotion.

Selecting a small vial from a box of empty ones beside her, she measured out and poured into it a very small quantity of the fluid; then stopping the mouth of this vial tightly, she melted a piece of wax and sealed it over.

"Here is the drug," she said finally, giving it to the youth.

He grasped it eagerly; the fingers that clutched it trembled. Pointing to the purse which he had thrown upon the table, he thrust the vial into his breast, passed through the archway, through the outer room, and gaining the passage, once more entered the street.

Cool and damp the night air swept over his burning forehead. With a deep-drawn breath he hurried on, still grasping the fragile vial containing that death poison, and creeping fearfully from the neighborhood where it had been obtained. Each moment he turned his head to see that no one followed him; for he was in possession of that which might, in more ways than one, prove dangerous to its owner; and the scrutiny of those splendid eyes haunted him. But besides himself, not a soul traversed the nocturnal and deserted street. Yet he shivered with strong excitement. With rapid and almost noiseless steps, he hurried on.

And the Italian, Bianca, looking forth an instant after the slight figure that fitted on through the gloom, turned again to the room in which sat the aged alchemist. "You gave the boy his drug, Bianca?" he asked, raising his head.

"Yes—yes! But I tell you, it was a woman's heart that throbbeth beneath that mantle; a woman's hand—and a beautiful one, too—that paid me in yellow coin. See?" and she tossed the heavy purse to her husband; "there is the reward—the price for which I have sold the life of another mortal! How many are entered on my list now, I wonder?" She laughed bitterly, and then a deep, despairing groan followed the laugh.

And along the streets of Paris at midnight, upon the figure of that boy, on whom with nervous and shuddering haste, clasp the fatal vial. Till, at length, the Hotel de Clairville is gained once more, and unseen, unheard, he glides silently in, and stealing up the stairs, enters a chamber, and securing the door, flings aside the disguise of that night's guilt. And Helen Montauban stands revealed!

CHAPTER XIX.

A month had been passed in Paris, and the party were preparing for a return to the chateau, with the exception of Louis, who was to remain here some three weeks longer, and then follow them, so as

to reach the residence of his uncle a day or two before the wedding ceremony, which was to take place on the first day of the ensuing month.

It was a wild, dark, stormy night when the carriage of the marquis approached once more the neighborhood of the Chateau Montauban. The tempest raged with terrible fury; the darkness was that of the merriest midnight. All along the forest road, the giant trees skirting the way creaked and groaned as if almost with human agony, and the tossing of their mighty arms, unseen in the gloom, was yet heard with dreadful distinctness; while, to add to the impression of awe that kept each of our travelers silent the deep and mournful wailing of the unchained winds almost took the sound of human voices shrieking in despair. An inward horror seized Helen Montauban. Those voices seemed to utter her name—to wall forth upon the night the awful secret over which she brooded; to denounce her with the tones of fiends, and declare her guilty—murderess!

A hand, small and trembling, and icy cold, was laid on hers. With a faint, shuddering cry upon her lips, she started, and then sank back again, almost fainting. It was no spirit's touch, but the touch of poor little Rose herself, who, cold with terror, nestled up to her companion, and sought the friendly clasp of her hand, to re-assure her own sinking heart.

"Ah, dear Helen, what is it—did it frighten you?" anxiously asked the young girl.

"What is it—what is it?" uttered the rest, eagerly.

Angered at her own weakness and want of self-command, even while she still shuddered from head to foot, Mademoiselle Montauban made some hasty apology, and relapsed into silence again. Wondering at her strange manner, Rose, too, shrank within herself once more.

And the tempest raved more wildly yet. Onward pressed the drenched horses, over the rough, uneven road, that threatened every moment, with jagged ruts and scattered stumps and rocks, which could not be avoided for the darkness, to overturn the carriage. It jolted fearfully. The utmost care was insufficient to guard against danger. If the rain had not poured so violently, it would have professed walking the remainder of the distance to remaining in the carriage. They proceeded slowly and with difficulty.

"Helen," the marquis said, kindly, "I think we are almost at home now. Rose, my poor little darling, you are sadly alarmed, I fear!" And he took her little, cold hand in his own. "How cold you are! Francis, hand me my cloak, which is somewhere beside you. That is it!" He wrapped it tenderly about her, drawing the immense and heavy folds closely together.

But the words were arrested upon her lips by a fearful sound that drew the attention of all. Torn by the force of the tempest from their trunks, the sturdy limbs of the overhanging trees were thrown with furious force along their path, striking the carriage, and falling upon the frightened beasts, who, maddened with pain and terror, sprang forward, leaping wildly over the obstacles in their way and dashing the vehicle from side to side with a violence that every instant threatened destruction to those within. The reins were torn from the hands of the paralyzed driver, and dragged about the feet of the terrified animals, over whom there was no longer control. Still the carriage swayed to and fro, and death seemed to all the silent, stricken party within the every moment inevitable. The moment was one of awful suspense; but that suspense was not destined to be prolonged. Suddenly, in their blind course, the horses stumbled, the carriage swung on one side, and was dashed to the earth.

"Helen—Rose—my children!" called the voice of the marquis, "are you hurt? There was no answer. The voices of the Count de Clairville and Francis Egerton alone were heard.

"Adele!" cried the count to his wife, "I cannot see you; speak to me—tell me that you are unharmed!"

"Ah, my wrist—it is broken, I believe!" uttered the countess, in a tone of pain. "But that is nothing; where are those dear children? If one could but see!"

"Helen—Rose!" called the marquis again, in agony. "Ah, for lights!"

With the utmost difficulty and danger as well, from their close neighborhood to the hoofs of the struggling and kicking horses, the gentlemen extricated their companions and themselves from the vehicle in the darkness. Furiously the rain poured down, drenching them to the skin in an instant. All, however, were found to be safe, excepting Mademoiselle Montauban and Rose, neither of whom betrayed the least sign of consciousness. It was too dark to distinguish their features.

A faint sigh breathed from the lips of Helen. Supported by the arm of Lord Egerton, she endeavored to rise to her feet. An almost insupportable thanksgiving escaped from him. She was safe. Did not this woman repent, in that moment, when her own life was spared, the wicked design that she had entertained? No—never for a single moment!

"Where is Rose?" she asked, hoarsely, and with a strange, unnatural voice. A wild hope darted through her brain. Had death anticipated her?

Poor child! lying senseless in the arms of the marquis, no sound reached her now. Alike insensible to the pain of that hour, or to the falling rain that saturated her clothing yet failed to revive her, she lay there motionless and silent.

(To be continued.)

Needs Must.
Mrs. Upton—I saw Mr. Newton bowing with the most courtly grace to a very commonplace woman. He's a gentleman of the old school, isn't he?"

Mr. Upton—No, a gentleman of the new school.

"New school?"

"Yes. He lives in the suburbs, and that was his cook."—New York Week.

Unprecedented Thou-hfulness.
Mr. Gasper—I am going to have the courts look into the sanity of that man who lives next door.

Mrs. Gasper—Why?

Mr. Gasper—Well, he's taking lessons on a horn and told me if his playing annoyed us he would give up learning.—Ohio State Journal.

Cured Now.
She—Have you ever been in love?

He—Oh, yes, I have had all the childish diseases—mumps, whooping cough, and all the rest.—Somerville Journal.



Boys And Girls

Sally Jenkins's Will.

"My last will and testament," wrote Sally.

"I bequeath my doll, Flora Roosevelt Jenkins, to poor Washwoman Muldoon's Molly."

"I bequeath my pair of bantams, Sir Grover and Lady Cleveland Jenkins, to Coachman Ford's lame Tommy."

"I bequeath my big picture Bible to my dear old nurse, Aunty Lincoln Washington Rogers."

"I bequeath my silver hand-mirror to Trilly Truffles, because I think it she could see herself in a glass that then she would try to keep her face clean and her hair combed."

"All my other belongings I bequeath to Miss Kindergarten Lovely to give to her slum children."

"Signed and testified to in the presence of myself this 12th day of May, 1903."

"SALLY JENKENS."

"There," mused Sally, "that's right, guess. Sounds just like grandpa's will. But I wonder how they'll act when I'm dead and gone, and they come into their inheritance. O dear, I wish I knew just what they'll say! I—I guess I'll give something now, and then I'll know."

So she got ready—her mother said she might—and took her best beloved doll, Flora Roosevelt Jenkins, over to Molly Muldoon, and Molly Muldoon could hardly believe her eyes.

"What, for me?" she exclaimed. "The first flesh-and-blood, real live doll I ever had! See her weeny, weeny eyes joggle. This is just lovely of you, Sally!"

Then Sally went home, and the coachman put the bantams in a basket for her to take over to his little boy, Tommy Ford.

How Tommy opened his eyes when the cover was raised, and Sir Grover Cleveland Jenkins crowded! "My, but he's a beauty!" said Tommy. "And the little hen is just like you, Sally. Aren't they beauties?"

"Oh!" mused Sally to herself on her way home after the Bible, "this is a lot nicer than waiting till after I'm dead and buried before they get 'em. At least, I guess it is!" Then she knocked at Aunty Lincoln Washington Rogers' door.

"Come in, my honey. I see you comin'!" and Nurse Rogers opened the door.

"Here's my last will and testament for you, Aunty Lincoln," said Sally. For a moment the old negress stood speechless, and then were the strings of her tongue unloosed.

"Bress de Lawd, Who knows my ole eyes was a-dimmin' so's I can't read no mo' de fine print; dis yer book am lovely. Jus' you hear me now." And she read (or recited), "De Lawd is my shepherd; I shall not want;" and on through to the last, "an' I will dwell in de house ob de Lawd forever."

"An' yer say dis am your last will and testament. It's de last will and de first will. It's de whole bressed Bible."

Then Sally hurried home and got her last special gift, and took it over to Trilly Truffles. "My last will and testament!" exclaimed Sally.

"Why, it isn't a Testament! It's a looking-glass," laughed Trilly, rapturously. Then Trilly looked, and stared, and blushed; and then she excused herself, and hurried out into the kitchen. What a splashing of water Sally heard, and "Ouch! ouch! ouch!" for Trilly was combing her hair.

"It's just as I said," thought Sally, on her way home. "The looking-glass is just what Trilly needed. My, but this is nice! Wonder if I haven't got something else so that I can make another will and testament."—Youth's Companion.

Sayings of Children.
Teacher—Johnny, why can't you lift yourself by your bootstraps? Johnny (promptly)—Cause I wear shoes.

Little Margie—I have a new changeable silk dress to wear next Sunday. Little Elsie—Pooh, that's nothing! All my dresses are changeable.

Mamma—Tommy, didn't I tell you the other day never to let me hear of you playing with those naughty boys again? Tommy—Yes, mamma; but you needn't blame me if you heard it; I didn't tell you.

Little Dot—The paper says they are going to build more sky-scrapers in Chicago. What's a sky-scraper? Small Willie—Oh, a sky-scraper is a machine the weather man uses to scrape the clouds off the sky.

A 4-year-old youngster while at supper the other evening requested his brother to help him to something and was told that he should say, "if you please." So he said: "Pass me some of that if you please."

Little Stories and Incidents that Will Interest and Entertain Young Readers

active and dangerous as ever.

The hen attacks the centipede with delight, and often swallows them, head first, without taking the trouble to kill him. The cat hunts him, but is careful never to put her head near him. She has a trick of whirling him round and round upon the floor so quickly as to stupefy him; then, when she sees a good chance, she strikes him dead with her claws.

A Melancholy Tale.



Unanswered.

"Is that God's ribbon in the sky? 'Tis the worlds together?"

A sweet child asked, On seeing Nature's rainbow belt Worn after rainy weather; "Or is it some of heaven's light A-peeping through the floor Or at an open door? I wish I knew. Don't you?"

She paused a moment, Wondered, thought, Then, with a long-drawn sigh, Was heard the old, old cry, "I wish God told us more, Don't you?"

—Elizabeth Porter Gould.

A STARVING LAD'S NOBLE VOW

From Poverty's Cradle He Climbed to Philanthropy.

William Quarrier, one of Scotland's best known philanthropists, who died recently at Bridge of Weir at the age of seventy-four, will be remembered for a laudable and humanitarian vow nobly and faithfully kept.

He was the son of a ship's carpenter, and ultimately came to be regarded as Scotland's finest exponent of practical Christianity. When he was only three years old his father died at sea of cholera, and his widowed mother was left to fight a hard battle against starvation.

At the age of six young Quarrier got work as a factory hand, and toiled for sixty or seventy hours a week for a wage of a single shilling.

A year later he was apprenticed to a shoemaker, and it was while in this employment that once, after he had gone for thirty-six hours without food, he made a vow that if he was ever in a position to do so, he would devote his life to helping the fatherless and those otherwise severely handicapped in the fight for a living.

The noble manner in which he kept this vow is told by prosperous colonists who owe their start in life to him in every part of the empire, and by thousands of children who have passed through his orphan homes at Bridge of Weir.

He began his rescue work in 1864. Later on he founded the Scottish Orphan Homes. These have grown until they now form a model village of sixty-two buildings in Renfrewshire, where 1,400 orphans are housed and educated.

Since 1878 over 13,000 children have passed through the homes, while thousands of others have received temporary assistance. Between 1871 and 1897 5,000 children were sent out to Canada, where situations were provided for them. Many are now prosperous farmers, and among them no name is more highly esteemed than that of William Quarrier.—London Express.

Mountains Are Moving.

"The mountains are constantly moving," was the remark of an officer of the Denver and Rio Grande Road recently in speaking of the great land-slides in the canyon above Glenwood Springs, Colo. "We find from actual experience in maintaining tunnels, bridges and tracks in the mountains that the mountains are moving. It costs a railway passing through the mountains a great deal of money in the course of ten years to keep the tracks in line, and maintenance of tunnels is even more expensive. Drive a stake on the side of a mountain, take the location with the greatest care and return after a few months. The stake is not in the same location. The whole side of the mountain has moved. This experiment has often been tried and in all cases the result proves that the mountains are moving. The mountains are gradually seeking the level of the sea."

Just the Thing.

Mrs. Crawford—Ain't you got an old torn-suit to put on the scarecrow?

Mr. Crawford—No; I'll wait till Hiram gets through the cane rush up at college an' let him send down one of his suits.

"Her death," they say of a woman who died lately, "was a tragedy." That is nearly true of every death.

DOINGS OF WOMEN

The True Home.

The truest homes are often in houses not especially well kept, where the comfort and happiness of the inmates, rather than extreme tidiness and the preservation of the furniture, is first consulted. The object of the home is to be the center, the pivot on which the family life turns. The first requisite is to make it so attractive that none of its members shall care to linger long outside its limits. All legitimate means should be employed to this end and no effort spared that can contribute to this purpose. There are many houses called homes, kept with such wary neatness by painstaking, anxious women, that are so oppressive in their anxiety as to exclude all home feeling from their spotless precincts. The very name of home is synonymous with personal freedom and relaxation from care; solid comfort.

But neither of these can be felt where such a mania for external cleanliness pervades the household as to render everything subservient thereto. Many housewives, if they see a speck on the floor or wall, or a bit of thread or paper on the floor, rush at it as if it were the seed of pestilence, which must be removed on the instant. Their temper depends upon their maintenance of perfect purity and order. If there be any failure on their part or any combination of circumstances against them they fall into a pathetic despair and can hardly be lifted out. They do not see that cheerfulness is more needed at home than all the spotlessness that ever shone. Neatness is one thing and a state of perpetual house-cleaning quite another.

Out of this grows by degrees the feeling that certain things and apartments are too good for daily use. Hence chairs and sofas are covered and rooms shut up, save for special occasions, when they are permitted to reveal their violated sacredness in a manner that mars every pretense of hospitality. Nothing should be bought which is considered too fine for the fullest domestic appropriation. Far better is the plainest furniture on which the children can climb than satin and damask, which must be viewed with reserve.

When anything is reserved or secluded, to disguise the fact is extremely difficult. A chilly air wraps it round and the repulsion of strangeness is experienced by the most insensible.

Home is not a name, nor a form, nor a routine. It is a spirit, a presence, a principle. Material and method will not and cannot make it. It must get its light and sweetness from those who inhabit it, from flowers and sunshine, from the sympathetic natures which, in their exercise of sympathy, can lay aside the tyranny of the broom and the awful duty of endless scrubbing.

Telling Tidbits.

Stains on Black Cloth—Can often be removed by rubbing with a raw potato.

Stains on Marble—Can often be removed by rubbing with salt; rinse afterwards, and polish with a soft cloth.

For Tender Feet.—Mend your stockings with silk, instead of wool, if you are troubled with tender feet. The silk does not chafe the skin.

Ironing Starched Things.—If you want to prevent your flannel sticking rub it, after heating and before beginning to iron, on a board well sprinkled with bathrick.

Black and Dark Cloth—Can be freshened by sponging with equal parts of water and spirits of turpentine. After sponging iron on the wrong side, and then hang in the air to remove any suggestion of turpentine.

Getting Up Lace.—Never rinse white lace in blue water under the impression that this will improve the color. Real lace should be finally rinsed in skim milk, which will give it the soft, creamy tint so much admired.

Effective Pressing—Is one of the secrets of good home dressmaking. A badly pressed thing never looks well. For cloth, or any thick material, a damped cloth laid over the seams