



CHAPTER XXI.

—20—
Atonement.

"Mrs. Farquhar, do you hear me—do you understand?"

The wide blue eyes flickered an instant; it was her only response. She lay stretched out, white and still on the great bed—a pathetic figure in which age and childhood's frailty had joined in the completed circle of life. Her hands lay on the counterpane. They were still loaded with rings, and the heavy, glistening stones seemed to have drawn in all the vitality from the dead and helpless fingers. For the first time her wig sat straight, and by contrast the face beneath looked smaller, wizened and shriveled like a little old witch who, somehow or other, had retained a grotesque fascination. Only the eyes were terrible. Save for that one scarcely perceptible flicker of assent they never closed or wavered, yet the change in them was ceaseless. They passed from face to face with a concentrated intensity that was savage in its dumb significance. They became then pitiable in their appeal or frantic in their fierce impatience.

Preston, standing beside her, took one of the helpless hands and pressed it shyly.

"You understand, Mrs. Farquhar? I've been something worse than a blackguard—I've been a fool. But now I'm going back to make good. You trust me now, don't you? You believe me—I'd lay down my life to have Richard back. You know that? I won't touch my native shore till I've made things right."

It was scarcely a smile that shadowed the blue eyes. Then suddenly they closed, and the last sign of life was snuffed out like the light of a candle. Preston looked up. Gabrielle stood at the foot of the bed and she beckoned him, and they went out together in the adjoining room. Preston closed the door. His boy's face, contrasting curiously with the upright, powerful figure, had lost its hopefulness and had become haggard and overcast.

"My God, and to think that I was instrumental in that!" he said hoarsely. "I—I feel as though I had murdered someone; it's pitiable—terrible. I shall see those eyes to my life's end, Miss Smith."

She nodded from the window where she stood looking out on to the street bathed in the mellow glow of evening.

"It is awful to watch the struggle," she said half to herself. "She is trying to tell us something, and I cannot read the message. Her eyes are full of it—I feel that I am blind and stupid not to understand—but I only know that it is vital, that it may mean life or death."

"Death?" he echoed blankly. "After what you saw that night, don't you realize that death is not far off?"

He thrust his hands deep into his pockets.

"I won't believe it," he said decisively. "They dare not."

"Is there anything that dare not be done to a legionary?"

"He is an Englishman. If—if they dared I should make it an international question—I should rouse all England—"

"Would you succeed in getting a letter into the Times, do you think, Mr. Preston?"

He drew his hands out of his pockets and swung round angrily on her. She was smiling a wry amusement.

"Miss Smith—can you afford to laugh?"

"Yes—a little. I suppose you think me heartless. As a matter of fact, we laugh most easily when—" She stopped short with a gesture of impatience. "Forgive me, I have a tendency to be trite, and at that moment I was perilously near pathos as well."

"I know what you mean, though. I didn't think you heartless. But you can't feel as I do. You haven't all this on your conscience—you weren't his friend, as I was." He caught a glimpse of her face clean cut against the light, and suddenly he faltered and the slow color mounted to his eyes.

"I—I understand. You're rather splendid, Miss Smith. If I could only set things right—make good!" he muttered.

She made a little gesture of assent. "That seems to me all that we live for," she said thoughtfully, "to make good—either to others or to ourselves. Only—it isn't often granted us."

He had the feeling that she was not speaking to him, that for the moment he had passed out of her range of vision, and he remained silent. Someone tapped at the door, and instantly their eyes met in mutual interrogation. "A gentleman to see you, mademoiselle."

She passed into the little adjoining sitting room and closed the door quietly behind her. So quiet indeed had been her entry that the man hunched together by the window did not appear to notice her. His face was turned to the full light as though in deliberate defiance of its own harshly revealed suffering and misery.

"Stephen!" He started and tried to rise, but she came toward him with an authoritative movement. "No, don't get up. Sit there. You look—tired—ill."

"Yes, I am ill," he admitted. He dropped back with a short stifled sigh. "If I had not been ill I should not have come. It is my only excuse." He looked at her almost wistfully.

"Stephen!" He looked her steadily in the pitying, sorrowful eyes.

"I have not come for sympathy, Gabrielle. I am glad it's over and done with. With one thing I should be content—"

"What do you ask of me?" "To accept my name and that which the French state will give my wife in payment for the services I have done her. It is all I have to give, Gabrielle. Accept it—no, don't shrink from me like that. I am a dying man—remember that. I ask nothing for myself but a poor formality; it may be a few days—a few weeks at most, and then—and you will be free."

"I am free now," she answered swiftly. "But if I yielded to you I should never be free again. I loved you and I accepted dishonor for your sake. I ceased to love you and regained my honor the same hour I refused your name. That was my atonement to myself. To accept your offer would be to wrong myself—and you—too deeply."

He made a movement of desperate appeal. But she did not answer him. The door had opened and Preston, with white stern face, stood on the threshold.

"Corporal Goetz is here," he said. "Miss Smith—will you come?"

And Lowe saw how she turned from him, not with indifference, but with the absolute oblivion of a mind whose whole force has swept suddenly in one deep channel. He followed her to the open door and stood there, silent and forgotten, watching her.

Corporal Goetz bowed as she entered. He looked at her narrowly, a little curiously.

"I heard your name," he said in his careful French. "I have a message for you—from my comrade."

"From Richard Farquhar?"

"I know him as Richard Nameless. He gave me the message out there in the desert—a simple sentence that I have retained word for word. 'Tell her,' he said 'that truth was more beautiful than the mirage.'"

There was a brief silence. She stood in the full red glow of the evening as it poured in through the window, and Stephen saw her face. It seemed to him inspired, almost beautiful—a miracle of a great happiness.

"And the sentence?" It was Preston who spoke, and for all his self-restraint his voice had lost its steadiness.

"To be shot at daybreak." "It is impossible—absurd—" Preston muttered.

She turned to him then as though waking from a dream. The brief moment of serene triumphant happiness had passed. She was face to face with life again, and the strength and beauty were all with the old fiery resolution.

"It is impossible," she said. "But we have one hope before all others. Madame Arnaud has influence, and she has given me her word to use it."

"Madame Arnaud is dead." They stared at Goetz in stricken horrified silence, and he added grimly: "She was murdered by a Jewish flower-seller this afternoon. It was Colonel Destinn who found her. There is no hope from that quarter."

"Then there are other means," Preston said. "Corporal, I'll stop at nothing to free him. I'm a rich man. You understand?"

The German looked up at him with a faintly arrogant amusement. Gabrielle turned suddenly from the window. Her eyes flashed into the legionary's face.

"Perhaps I understand," she said quietly. "You too are Richard Farquhar's friend—you will help me?"

In that single impulsive appeal for herself, and for herself alone, she had revealed all that Lowe had waited for. He left his place at the door of the inner room. Throughout that brief interview he had watched her steadfastly. When he spoke his voice sounded subdued and yet firm, like that of a man, already weary to exhaustion, who hoards all his remaining force for a last purpose.

"And if I had help to offer would you accept it now, Gabrielle?" "Thankfully, Stephen."

"Richard Farquhar's life is safe," he said simply. "Even Colonel Destinn will not murder his own son."

"It is useless."

"Useless? What do you mean?"

"This much"—the legionary's features were shadowed with a faint irony—"that your information, wonderful as it is, has come too late. Colonel Destinn rode out of Sidl-bel-Abbes three hours ago. His destination is unknown, and when he returns it may be that the sun will have already risen."

Stephen Lowe turned slowly. First and last he saw the face of a woman. He read there only an infinite compassion.

CHAPTER XXII.

Toward Dawn.

In the condemned cell Richard Farquhar stood with his back against the wall, his arms folded, watching the yellow streak of light that filtered



"Goetz," You Fool, Do You Think I Would Do It? It's Useless."

through the narrow barred window and fell slantwise across the darkness to the iron door opposite. He knew that the light came from an overhanging lantern outside, and that beneath a sentry with fixed bayonet kept guard.

Footsteps sounded on the passage. The light still burned steadily. Morning was not yet come. Nor could he hear voices or the familiar clash of bayonets. The footsteps were swift, stealthily. The jarring turn of the key in the lock sounded subdued, as though the strength of the will behind it had

CONSIDERED HIS SOUL LOST

Soldier's Last Moments Passed in Mortal Anguish Concerning His Hopelessness of Salvation.

Strange are the humors of the dying. Today a young German soldier, badly wounded, was lying in his cot. Little hope for him. He came of a good family, was brought up by pious parents. The doctor, nurse and I stood watching by his cot. The boy was restless, and it was not the restlessness of pain alone. He muttered to himself, "I have missed it—missed it at the last."

"What?" asked the doctor.

"Missed—missed—missed!"

"But what?"

"Doctor," the boy spoke solemn and wide-eyed, "I have missed the salvation of my soul."

"Oh, no," the doctor and I spoke together. "Do you remember the thief on the cross?"

"Yes. But the thief never said to the Holy Ghost, 'Go your way.' But I did. And now he is saying to me, 'Go your way.'"

He lay a while looking up with staring eyes.

"A little time ago," he said, "I was anxious, but I did not want to be saved then. I am young. I wanted to live my life as other young men. I heeded not my mother or my father. I did not trouble then about my soul."

"There was something then that seemed to say to me, 'Don't put it off; ah, don't postpone it.' But no, no, no. Later I would take up the subject at a more convenient time. And now it is too late and I have missed."

I told him there were some who came at the eleventh hour.

"My eleventh hour," he answered

hushed sound itself. Farquhar faced about firmly. If this were death, then it came under a strange guise. The door swung open. For an instant the light from the window spread out and mingled with the dingy reflection from the passage, then narrowed once more, leaving the darkness on either hand the more impenetrable.

"Nameless! Take these clothes. Change instantly—"

"Who are you?"

"I will introduce myself later on. Do as I tell you."

A shadow moved and came out into the line of light. Farquhar caught a glimpse of the gaunt hard-lined face frozen now into impassive resolution. He tossed the bundle of clothes back on to the floor.

"Goetz, you fool, do you think I would do it? It's useless. I'm not going to have you shot in my stead."

"Pig-headed Englishman, do you think I should ask you to do anything so sensible? Get into these clothes if you don't want to be strangled? Name of heaven, Don Quixote, may not it occur to Sancho Panza to accompany you on your little expedition into freedom?"

"The thing is impossible—"

But even in the half-light he had caught the blaze in the usually cold and arrogant eyes. It fired his blood. It was like a blast of northern wind in the fetid closeness.

"It is not impossible. Your friends are here—your mother. There are horses waiting for us both outside the fortifications. Tomorrow we shall be in Oron. God, man—if you had seen her face when I gave your message! Will you let that little woman break her heart over you?"

Farquhar tore off his tunic.

"Who has the watch?"

"Bertrand. He went over to the canteen five minutes ago. As I know, he will not be back yet a while. At the worst we have three minutes to spare."

"Give me that coat!"

Neither man had raised his voice above a whisper. Goetz's laugh was inaudible.

"Ah, das ewig weibliche! Are you ready?"

"Yes."

"Then come."

The iron door swung back smoothly.

In the neighboring cell there was a sudden hush; as though warned by some instinct the rough voices died down into a dull murmur, through which the two listeners heard other sounds—a harsh command, heavy approaching footsteps. Goetz closed the door. He set his back against it, and in the pale light falling slant his face Farquhar saw that he was smiling savagely.

"I demand a hundred pardons. I miscalculated. Our friend Bertrand has deserted the bottle a minute too soon. It is scarcely credible. No doubt he intends to pay you a farewell call, in which case accept my profuse apologies, Nameless."

"Who goes with Bertrand on the round?" Farquhar asked almost with indifference.

"Harding. He knows. He will do all he can. He quiet now—they are in the next cell."

The drunken shouts subsided suddenly into a cowed sullen silence. They heard the sergeant's savage abuse, the jangle of keys, the clang of an iron door slammed violently to. Instantly the chorus broke out afresh.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Just Like the Real Ones.

Artificial ears are so skillfully made that they may with difficulty be distinguished from natural ones. When the person who has lost an ear applies to the manufacturer for a substitute, there is made a mold of the remaining ear. If there be left any part of the other, a mold of that part also must be taken to assist in the fitting of the artificial. Manufacturers assert that no two ears are alike, and that it takes a skillful workman to prepare an ear from the mold or molds.

When finished the new ear is pasted on the stump, or simply set in the position of the lost ear. It is really only the first artificial ear that is expensive, the chief cost pertaining to the making of the mold. Vulcanized rubber, which can be bent and twisted, has been found to constitute the best material for the making of artificial ears.

Soldier's Message to His Wife.

Some of the best stories of the war come from the base hospitals, and are bestowed on the doctors in the same spirit that grateful patients bestow gifts on their medical attendants in civil life. One told recently has traveled from the farthest outposts in Mesopotamia. A Turkish officer, captured in the Mesopotamian campaign, asked and received permission to telegraph to his wife when he was brought to Basra. His message read: "Safely captured."—London Times.

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A Tall Yarn.
He was describing the privations of a voyage from which he had just returned. "Then," he said, "I went down to the cabin to lunch."
"Lunch!" exclaimed one of his hearers. "But you told us there was nothing to eat left on board. What did you have for lunch?"
"Oh!" was the reply, "It was a very modest affair—beef, wine and an egg."
"Beef? Where did you get the beef from?"
"Oh," was the reply, "that came from the bulwarks."
"And the wine, how about that?"
"Oh, that came from the port hole!"
"Oh, oh!" laughed the listener. "Good, very good! But tell me where did you get the egg?"
"Oh, that was the simplest of all," came the reply. "The captain gave orders for the ship to 'lay to,' and he gave me one."—Pearson's Weekly.

Human Nature.
"But you will at least admit that there are two sides to every question, and—"
"I admit nothing of the kind!" interrupted J. Fuller Gloom. "As far as I am concerned, there is only one side and a lot of confounded foolishness."
—Judge.

In Style.
Mrs. Styles—Oh, dear, I want a new street skirt.
Mr. Styles—But, wife, you know I'm short just now.
Mrs. Styles—Well, dear, I want a short skirt.—Yonkers Statesman.

"ANURIC!"
THE NEWEST
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This is a recent discovery of Doctor Pierce, who is head of the Invalids' Hotel and Surgical Institute at Buffalo, N. Y. Experiments at Doctor Pierce's Hospital for several years proved that there is no other eliminator of uric acid that can be compared to it. For those easily recognized symptoms of inflammation—as backache, scalding urine and frequent urination, as well as sediment in the urine, or if uric acid in the blood has caused rheumatism, it is simply wonderful how surely "Anuric" acts. The best of results are always obtained in cases of acute rheumatism in the joints, in gravel and gout, and invariably the pains and stiffness which so frequently and persistently accompany the disease rapidly disappear.
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