

Prisoners and Captives

By H. S. MERRIMAN

CHAPTER XI.—(Continued.)

After dinner Easton at last conceded to explanation. Chairs had been drawn around the fire. While he spoke the American kept his eyes fixed upon the fire, and at times moved his limbs nervously, after the manner of one who is more highly strung than muscular. "Gentlemen," he said in his peculiar, slow drawl, and an immediate silence followed. "Gentlemen, I asked you to come here to-night for a special purpose, and not for the warmth of my own hearth. What I am going to tell you cannot be quite new to some, while to others I surmise that it will be very new. There is a country on the map called the Dark Continent, but during the last few years it has come under my notice as Africa is as light as the heavenly path compared to another land nearer to this old country. I mean Siberia. Now, I am not going to talk about Siberia, because there are four men in this room who know more than I do. In fact, they know too much. Before I go I will explain for a spell who we all are. Four of us are Russians. Of these four, one has a wife living in the Siberian mines, condemned by mistake; a second has a father living in a convict prison, almost on the edge of an Arctic sea; a third has been there himself. These three undertake what may be called the desperate part of our scheme. The fourth Russian is a gentleman who has the doubtful privilege of being allowed to live in Petersburg. His task is difficult and dangerous, but not desperate. Two of us are Englishmen; one has given up the ease and luxury of the life of a moneyed British sportsman—has, in fact, become a sailor for the deliberate purpose of placing his skill at our disposal. In addition to that he has opened his purse in a thoughtless and generous way. Why he has done these things I cannot say. In Mr. Tyars' position I certainly should not have done so myself. His is the only name I mention, because I have seen the portraits of him in the illustrated papers, and there is no disguising who he is. The rest of us have names entirely unknown, or known only to the wrong people. Some of the Russian names, besides possessing this unfortunate notoriety, are quite beyond my powers to pronounce. The second Englishman is a naval officer, who, having shared considerable danger with Mr. Tyars on one occasion, may or may not think fit to throw in his lot with him again. His decision, while being a matter of great interest to us, lies entirely in his own hands. He is as free when he leaves this room as when we entered it. Lastly come myself—"

"The little face was very wistful, while the thin lips moved and changed incessantly from gaiety to a great gravity. The man's hollow cheeks were singularly flushed in a patchy, unnatural way. "I," he continued, with a little laugh, "well, I'm afraid I stay at home. I have here a doctor's certificate showing that I would be utterly useless in any but a temperate climate. I am—"

"He produced a paper from his pocket and held it in his hand upon his knee, not daring to offer it to any one in particular. There was a painful silence. No one reached out his hand for the certificate, and no one seemed to be able to think of something to say. At last the stout gentleman rose from his chair with a grunt. "I, too, stay at home, gentlemen," he said, breathlessly, "and have no certificate. He crossed the hearth rug, and taking the paper from Easton's hand, he deliberately threw it into the fire. "There," he grunted, "the mischief take your certificate."

"Then he sat down again, adjusting his large waistcoat, which had become somewhat rucked up, and attempted to smooth his crumpled shirt, while the paper burned slowly on the glowing coals. "I only wished," said Easton, after a pause, "to explain why I stay at home. It is no good sending second-rate men out to work like this."

"He paused and looked around. There was something critical in the atmosphere of the room, and all the seven men assembled looked at one another in turn. Long and searching eyes looked into the other's face. If Easton had set down the rule that second-rate men were of no avail, he had certainly held close to it. These were, at all events, first-rate men. Not talkers, but actors; first-rate men, but full of courage; determined, brave and fearless. The slight breeze, raised by the speaking of a different tongue, seemed to have crumbled away, and they were as brothers. "Our plans," said Easton, "are simple. We fit out a ship to sail in the spring, ostensibly to attempt the northeast passage to China. Her real object will be the rescue of a large number of Russian political exiles and prisoners. The three Russians go to Siberia overland. The fourth is the most dangerous task of all, the largest, the most important. He remains in Petersburg, to keep up communication, to forward money, food, guides and arms. Mr. Tyars takes command of the steamer, which is now almost ready for sea, and forces his way through the ice, God willing, to the Vankar."

"Easton stopped speaking. As he returned to his seat, he glanced inquiringly toward Owen Grace, whose eyes had followed him. "Of course, gentlemen," said Grace, glancing comprehensively around the group, "I go with Mr. Tyars."

expected to meet him, just as one expects to meet certain well-known faces at every assembly. Miss Winter saw him immediately after noticing Matthew Mark Easton, and before long he began to make his way across the room toward her. Wherever they had met during the last few weeks, Tyars had invariably succeeded in exchanging a few words with Miss Winter, seeking her out with equal persistence, whether Helen Grace were with her or not. If, as the lady opined, he was determined to become one of their intimate friends, he displayed no indecent haste, no undue eagerness; and in so doing he was perhaps following the surest method. He had not hitherto showed the slightest desire to cross the line which separates acquaintances from friendship. There was a mutual attraction existing between these two capable, practical people, who met to-night as they usually did with that high-toned nonchalance which almost amounts to indifference. There was a vacant seat, for a wonder, beside Miss Winter, which Tyars promptly appropriated.

"Who," she asked, after a few conventionalities had been exchanged, "is that gentleman talking to the American minister, and apparently making him laugh, while I should say, no easy matter?" "He is generally making some one laugh," replied Tyars. "His name is Easton—Matthew Mark Easton. The sort of name that sticks in the wheelwork of one's memory. A name one does not forget."

"And," added Miss Winter, lightly, "a face that one does not forget. He interests me—a little."

Tyars laughed at the qualification implied by the addition of the last two words. "That is always something," he said. "A small mercy. He is one of my greatest friends—may I introduce him?"

"Certainly," murmured the lady, with a little bow of the head, and then she changed the subject at once. "Helen," she said, "is not here to-night."

Tyars looked bitterly disappointed. "She does not always care to leave the admirals, and he objects to dissipation on a large scale. Is that not so?" he suggested. "Yes, that is the case to-night."

She wondered a little at his intimate knowledge of Helen's thoughts, but said nothing. It was probable that he heard this from Owen, and his singular memory had retained it.

"Miss Grace," said Tyars, presently, "has a strong sense of duty, and is unconscious of it. An unconscious sense of duty is one of the best of human motives. At least it seems so to me."

Although Agnes Winter was bowing and smiling to an old lady near at hand, she had followed him perfectly. "Well," she answered, "a sense of duty of any description is not a bad thing in these times. Indeed, it is added, turning suddenly toward him, 'a motive is in itself rather rare. Not many of us have motives.'"

Her manner implied as plainly as if she had spoken it: "We are not, all of us, like you."

There was something in the expression of his eyes that recalled suddenly their first meeting at the precise moment when he, entering the drawing room, overheard a remark of hers respecting himself. It was not an unpleasant expression, but it led one to feel instinctively that this man might under some circumstances be what is tersely called in France, difficult. It was merely a suggestion, cloaked beneath his high-class repose of manner, but she had known many men of his class, some of whom had made a name in their several callings, and this same suggestion of stubbornness had come beneath her quick, flashing eyes before. He looked gravely around the room, as if seeking to penetrate the smiles and rapid affections.

"Oh," he said placidly, "I am not so sure. There are a good many people who pride themselves upon steering a clear course. The prevailing motive to-night is perhaps a desire to prove a superiority over one's neighbors, but it is still a motive."

Miss Winter looked at him critically. "Remember," she said, warningly, "that this is my element, in all things, these people are my motives—their pleasure my pleasures—their life, my life."

"Thank you," she said. "Now I know something of him. I have to conceal beneath a smile the fact that I know absolutely nothing of American commerce, American politics or oratory. I wonder," she added, as an afterthought, "whether there is anything he can persuade me to do to-night?"

"He might," suggested Tyars, "persuade you into the cultivation of a motive."

Then he turned and left her. Matthew Mark Easton saw him approaching, and broke off rather suddenly a waning conversation with his minister. "Easton," said Tyars, "come here. I want to introduce you to Miss Winter."

"Miss Winter," returned the American; "a person of considerable influence in the Grace household. Do you understand? It is in Miss Winter's power to deprive us of Owen Grace, if she cares to exercise that power."

Easton's face expressed somewhat ludicrously a passing consternation. "Hang these women!" he muttered. "Does she," he inquired, "suspect something?"

"I think so," was the reply, "and, moreover, she is a clever woman; so be careful!"

(To be continued.)

DOLLAR FOR DOLLAR.

Leonardo da Vinci, who painted the very souls of his subjects, might have found material for his brush in the trio seated one December day in Lawry Norton's office—"Old Dan" Lyle, president of the village bank, sturdy, self-made, stern; another old man, of quite different type, mild, inadequate, unfortunate; and the wife of the second man, a woman whose Madonna-like face and silver hair seemed to harbor a certain radiance.

Old Henry Dawson was settling with his creditors—people wondered if he could pay 50 cents on the dollar. Everybody knew that old Henry was hard-working and honest, but people criticized his imprudence, and thought they saw in his easy-going ways the explanation of his sons' unfortunate careers.

But no one ever said one word against "Aunt Milly" Dawson, as everybody in the church called her. Cheerful and ready to help others, no matter what her own troubles were, unselfish, gentle, a "splendid manager" in her own home—in Aunt Milly no one saw anything to explain the family straits or the misdeeds of the Dawson boys.

It was generally hoped—and believed—in Brunsellville that the home, at least, might be saved from the wreck for Aunt Milly, especially as the chief creditor, Old Dan Lyle, was a member of the same church and a lifelong friend.

And, as a fact, the close-fisted old bank president had displayed a leniency that left Dick Norton, the lawyer, familiar with his usual uncompromising "business" attitude, almost speechless with surprise.

But now that the papers were signed and everything finished, a tide of reaction set in in the mind of the old man—pride of his own "self-made" career and prone to judge severely when any thing resembling incompetence was on trial.

"Well, Henry," he remarked, rising pompously, "some folks get out of things mighty easy. Now I—"

He straightened himself—"have always paid dollar for dollar."

To this little threat old Henry had not the spirit to reply. Through the proceeding thus far the woman had sat silent—sometimes restraining her tears with some difficulty. But at this point—as Dick Norton told us afterward—"Aunt Milly flared right up!"

"Yes, Brother Lyle," she said, rising also, and standing erect herself in gentle dignity, "everybody knows that that's so. But, Dan Lyle," she fixed him with her motherly blue eyes—"I want to know one thing—do you remember every day to thank God that you've been able to pay dollar for dollar?"

There was a pregnant silence. Then a subdued and humbled Dan made reply. "I guess maybe there is something to be said on that side, Aunt Milly," he said, mildly.

Concerning Rewards. Many persons think they ought to be rewarded for simple honesty. The idea is not only wrong but silly, declares a writer in the Denver Post, and tells of an incident that roused his wrath:

A few days ago, while walking down an Omaha street, I saw a man ahead of me drop a pocketbook. A messenger boy picked it up. Just then the man missed it, and the boy returned it to him without looking inside. The man gave the boy a quarter. The boy accepted it, but was disgusted.

Is that all I get for being honest? he asked. "There is just three dollars in that pocketbook," said the man.

"Well, you ought to give me a dollar, anyway," the boy replied, sulkily.

Had I been the man I would have added a kick to the quarter; and there are lots of persons like that boy in this world.

Pity the Working Woman. "Poor woman! She works hard all day, and then she's up nearly all night with the babies."

"What's the matter with her husband? Why doesn't he help her?" "O, he puts in all his time agitating for an eight-hour day for the working-man."—Philadelphia Press.

She Lost Out. Mrs. Caller—it doesn't always pay to husband one's resources.

Mrs. Homer—Why not? Mrs. Caller—Well, I judge so from Mrs. Barker's experience. She let her husband have the \$5,000 she inherited from her grandmother and he lost it all in speculation.

If a ton of coal is placed on the ground and left there, and another ton is placed under a shed, the latter loses about 25 per cent of its heating power, the former about 47 per cent.

Canada has forests which, at the present rate of consumption of timber for paper, will supply the world with paper pulp for 840 years.

SOME LOCAL RESULTS OF CELEBRATING THE FOURTH.



POOR DOG WAS IMPRESSED ON AND HAD HIS SWART REVENGE.

—Williamsport (Pa.) Grit.

THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER.

O say, can you see, by the dawn's early light, What that flag means we had that day? Whose broad stripes and bright stars, through the clouds of the night, At the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming? And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave, O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave!

On that shore dimly seen through the mists of the deep, Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes, As the sun's low beams, now conceal, now disclose, What a glory that glory has wined of the morn's! In full glory reflected so shines on the stream, 'Tis the star-spangled banner, O long may it wave, O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave!

And where is that "home" who so vauntingly swore That the havoc of war and the battle's confusion, A home and a country should leave us no more? Their blood has wash'd out their foul footsteps' pollution. No refuge could save the hireling and slave, From the terror of flight, or the gloom of the grave. And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave, O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave!

O! thus be it ever, when freemen shall stand Between their loved homes and the war's devastation; Blest with vict'ry and peace, may the heav'n rescued land Praise its power, that bathed with blood made and preserved us a nation. Then conquer we must, when our cause is just, And this be our motto: "In God is our trust." And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave, O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave! —Francis Scott Key.

Willie Perkins was 8 years old and Nero was only 4 but when Nero walked on all fours he was nearly as tall as Willie, and when he lifted his great shaggy dogship upon his hind legs he could lay his forepaws on somebody's shoulders, and that somebody was Willie's father.

Mr. Perkins called Willie and Nero "the chums," and it was indeed seldom that the two were apart, except at school times and meal times, and when the sandman had paid Willie a visit; even at those times they were not far apart. When Willie went to school Nero trotted along by his side, and like the good fellow that he was when they came to the door and Willie said, "Now, old boy, wait for me right here in the yard and be sure not to frighten any of the children as they come in. Tell me good-by and be a good fellow." Nero would wag his tail and lick the hand that had been patting his head so lovingly all the time Willie was talking to him, and then lie down and watch his master disappear through the great door of the school house.

By and by Nero got tired of lying still and would go for a walk around the building. The sky fellow! He well knew that the janitor's wife would have a little heap of bones hidden off in one corner of the yard for him, and when he enjoyed his feast he would look up to see her watching him from the basement door. Then again that great tail would wag as he said: "Thank you so much for those nice meaty bones." When winter came on there was a large box that the janitor's wife and Willie bought him to go into when he was cold and wanted to lie down, and so his school days were not at all dreary.

But the happiest time for "the chums" was when Willie put his books away for the long summer vacation and he and Nero had the whole day together. Even when Willie had to go to school it was Nero who carried it by his strong teeth, while Willie carried a bucketful of coal. By and by Willie began to tell Nero of a great day that was coming, when all the boys would have frecklers and Roman candles and torpedoes, and playing with the boys and hands playing and Nero would have a good time. Nero always listened to every word that



DRUMMED THE BOYS HOW TO CELEBRATE.

—Williamsport (Pa.) Grit.

AT LAST THE FOURTH CAME, AND AT 10 O'CLOCK ALL THE BOYS EXCEPT ED WERE GATHERED IN WILLIE'S YARD AND WILLIE WAS TALKING TO THEM.

"Now, boys," he was saying, "you left it to me to put some one in Ed's place, and I have selected some one that you all know and like. He has his share of crackers and will wave his flag fine. Will you promise to give him a rousing welcome when he comes, so he won't feel hurt at being asked to march with us at the last minute?"

They all promised, and then while they were asking who it was Willie ran into the house. A few moments later he came out, and who should come trotting by his side but Nero, carrying in his mouth the handle of a basket that was filled with frecklers and waving his tail, to which was tied a little flag, pole and all!

The boys all gave a great shout when they saw Nero, and then they formed in double column and started for the commons. Nero walking by Willie's side, the proudest dog that ever waved a Fourth of July flag.

Among the newest fireworks are the parlor variety, which a child can handle with safety and which can be set off in the house without danger of fire. This pattern includes diamond rain sticks, roman candles and carwheels. The fire and sparks from these designs are harmless.

As an Oversight. "Drat the luck!" exclaimed Noah, as he sat on the forward deck of the ark perusing a patent medicine almanac. "What the matter, pa?" queried Mr. Noah. "Matter!" echoed the famous navigator. "Why, this is the Fourth of July, and shiver my timbers if I didn't forget to bring a pair of toy pistols on board."

Fourth of July Fiasco. "I should say you have! You're lucky. All the other boys say they had a hard time to get what they had to. How'd you manage it?"

"I earned the money, getting coal and kindling," Willie explained. "Well, you ought to have the right to give out the flags. We'll all meet here at 10 sharp," and Tom sauntered on.

When he was gone, Willie began to talk to Nero again. "Now, there it is. I have frecklers and torpedoes enough for you and me, too, and you helped me earn 'em, carrying kindling, didn't you? Oh, why haven't you some hands to carry a flag with?"

Willie was excited now, and up jumped Nero, waving his tail as hard as he could. Willie looked at him for a minute and then he said:

Find the boy who really threw the flag.

LEGAL INFORMATION.

If a person disappears and is not heard from by any of his friends or relatives for seven years, he is presumed to be dead.

A man may give all of his property, by will, to his second wife if he so desires, though in doing so he disinherits all of his children.

The village board has power to make, alter, widen or otherwise improve, keep in repair, vacate or discontinue sidewalks. The board also has authority over shade trees located within the limits of the streets in the village.

If children advance money to their father to be used for the purpose of paying assessments on a policy of insurance, the children can recover the amount in a suit against the father. The amount paid cannot be recovered from the insurance company.

A man can assume any name he desires if not done for fraudulent purposes. Such name would not be his legal name, however. Any person may petition the court for permission to change his or her name. The fact of a man having married under an assumed name will not affect the validity of the marriage.

Aliens over 21 years of age may acquire lands and hold the same for six years. If under 21, they may hold it six years after reaching 21. If the alien becomes a citizen during the six years, he gets a good title to the property, or if he sells to a bona fide purchaser for value during that time, the purchaser gets a good title.

If a man gives a deed of his real estate to his son, and takes back a mortgage with a condition that the son shall support the father during the father's life, such a deed will pass all of the father's interest, though his wife did not sign the deed. After the death of the father his widow will still have her dower interest in the property. Though the father has since deceased, his widow can now quit claim all her interest in the property to the son, if she so desires.

PHONOGRAPH AND PARROT.

Easy Method to Relieve the Weary Tedium of Teaching Polly.

The teaching of parrots to talk has occupied the attention of bird enthusiasts for many years, but it has remained for a Philadelphia woman to utilize a modern invention to relieve the weary tedium of teaching Polly. The parrot learns by sound, not by the sense of what it hears, and it is only by machine-like repetition of the sentence



TEACHES POLLY TO TALK.

that Polly can be made to talk. The necessity of this gadgetry can be done away with by placing a phonograph close to Polly's perch, and by keeping the talking machine repeating for hours at a time the sentence which the parrot is to learn, the best and quickest results can be accomplished. In this way the parrot will learn a sentence in a week or less, while to become proficient in a number of sentences requires about six months. Those who have attempted the almost insurmountable obstacle of teaching Polly a number of sentences will at once recognize the practical efficiency of the talking machine as a teacher.

BEST RESULTS FROM COAL.

Poorest Qualities Yield Most Power When Converted Into Gas.

If some one were to discover that ordinary dirt was fuel which, burned under certain simple conditions, yielded as good or better results than the best Pennsylvania anthracite it is easy to imagine the popular sensation that would be caused. Yet results almost if not quite as sensational obtained by the United States geological coal testing plant have passed almost unnoticed by the general public.

The experiments at this plant have demonstrated that bituminous coal, heretofore considered less than half as valuable as anthracite, will when manufactured into gas and burned in a gas engine produce as much net horse power to the ton of fuel as the best anthracite; and, still better, that lignite, which is so common all through the west and has been considered almost worthless, will actually yield more horse power to the ton than the best anthracite burned under a steam boiler.

It has shown that all grades of coal, from the best to the most worthless as judged by former standards, can be utilized in this manner, their value for producing gas being, generally speaking, exactly inverse to their value in directly producing steam in a boiler. That is to say, the poorer the coal for direct steam-producing purposes (by which power coal has been valued in the past) the more valuable it seems to be for yielding gas for use in the gas engine.—Technical World.

Possibly.

"Why is it," she whispered at the close of the ceremony, "that the bridegroom always looks as if he couldn't call his soul his own?" "Probably," replied her brother, "it's because from that moment he really can't."—Catholic Standard and Times.

Mutton in Parvo.

Wigg—My wife is a woman who is willing to suffer for her beliefs. Wagg—So is mine and one of her beliefs is that she can get a number four foot into a number three shoe.—Boston Transcript.

About the proudest man on any paper is the base-ball editor.