

Prisoners and Captives

By H. S. MERRIMAN

CHAPTER XVIII.—(Continued.)

"My Dear Oswin—If you want to carry out this theater party, come and see me about it. I shall be at home all the morning. Yours very truly,

"AGNES WINTER."

The young sailor read this letter among others at the breakfast table. His father and sister were engaged on their own affairs—Helen with her letters, the admiral among his newspapers. Oswin Grace read the letter twice, and then slipped it into his pocket together with the envelope that had contained it.

Miss Winter's elderly maid servant expected Lieut. Grace, for she opened the door and stood back invitingly. He was ushered up into the warm, luxurious drawing room, and after the door had been closed, stood for a few moments irresolute in the middle of the deep carpet. Presently he began to wander about the room, taking things up and setting them down again. He inhaled the subtle atmosphere of feminine home refinement and looked curiously around him. There were a hundred little personalities, little inconsiderable feminine trifles that are only found where a woman is quite at home. There was a silly little lace handkerchief utterly useless and vain, lying upon a table beside a work basket. He took it up, examined its texture critically, and then instinctively raised it to his face. He threw it down again with a peculiar twisted smile.

"Wonder what scent it is," he muttered. "I have never come across it anywhere else."

He went toward the mantelpiece; upon it were two portraits—old photographs, somewhat faded. One of Helen, the other of himself. He examined his own likeness for some moments.

"Solemn little beggar," he said, for the photograph was of a little square-built midshipman with a long, oval face. "Solemn little beggar; wonder what the end will be? Wonder why he is on this mantelpiece? I think that I was rather a fool to come here. Tyars would not like it."

While he was still following out the train of thought suggested by this reflection the door opened and Miss Winter entered. She had evidently just come in, for she was still gloved and furred. "Ah!" she said, gayly, "you have come. I was afraid that your exacting commander would require your services all the morning."

"My exacting commander," he answered, as he took her gloved hand in his, "has a peculiar way of doing everything himself and leaving his subordinates idle." She was standing before him, slowly unbuttoning her trim little sealakin jacket.

"What," she said, suddenly, "about the expedition?"

He looked back at her over his shoulder, for he had gone toward the window, and there was a sudden gleam of determination in his eyes. It was her influence that had disturbed Tyars' restlessness.

"What expedition?" he asked curtly, on his guard.

"This theater expedition," she replied sweetly.

"Oh, well, I suppose it will be carried through. We all want to go. I suppose you are not strongly opposed to it?"

"I?" she laughed lightly; "of course I want to go. You know that I am always ready for amusement, profitless or otherwise—profitless preferred. Why do you look so grave, Oswin? Please don't—I hate solemnity. Do you know you have got terribly grave lately? It is—"

"It is what, Agnes?"

"It is that you do not know him!"

"I do not," answered Easton, imperiously.

"Except by reputation?"

"Precisely."

"He is reputed," said Miss Winter, "to be a great diplomatist."

"So I believe—hence the lamblike manners."

Easton's face was a study in the art of suppressing curiosity.

"Do you think that he is a wolf in lamb's clothing?" asked the lady with a laugh. "I will tell you what he said about you."

"Thank you."

"We were talking about Russia—it is his favorite topic—and he said that at times he felt like the envoy from some heathen country, so little is Russia known by us. By way of illustration, he asked me to look around the room and tell him if it did not contain all that was most intellectual and learned in England. I admitted that he was right. He said, 'And yet there are but two men in the room who speak Russian.' Then he pointed you out. 'There is one,' he said; 'he knows my country better than any man in England. If he were a diplomatist, I should fear him.' 'What is he?' I asked, and he merely shrugged his shoulders in that guileless way to which you object."

Matthew Mark Easton did not appear to be much impressed. He moved from one foot to the other, and took considerable interest in the pattern of the carpet.

"And," he inquired, "did he mention the name of the second accomplished person?"

"No."

"I wonder what it was?" said Easton. "Mr. Tyars," suggested the lady, calmly. "Possibly. By the way, I thought of asking him to join us on Wednesday at the Epic."

"I hope," said Miss Winter, with a gracious little bow, "that he will be able to come."

"Dear Miss Grace," began Easton, solemnly, as if repeating a lesson, "I have secured the stage box at the Epic for Wednesday evening next, and I hope that you and your brother will do me the pleasure of accepting seats in it. Will that do?"

"Very nicely."

"And may I count on you?"

"Yes, you may count on me."

"Thank you," he said simply, and took his departure.

kind Oswin Grace when the bell was rung again.

Miss Winter, standing in the drawing room, heard the tones of a man's voice, and in a few moments the maid knocked and came into the drawing room.

"A gentleman, please, miss; a Mr. Easton," she said.

"Mr. Easton," repeated Agnes Winter. For a moment she forgot who this might be. "Show him up at once."

Matthew Mark Easton had evidently devoted some care to the question of dress on this occasion. Some extra care, perhaps, for he was a peculiarly neat man. He always wore a narrow silk tie in the form of a bow of which the ends were allowed to stick straight out sideways over the waistcoat. His coat was embellished by an orchid.

"I am afraid," he began at once, with perfect equanimity, "that I have made a mistake—a social blunder. I came to inform you that I have secured a box—the stage box—for Wednesday night, at the Epic Theater. It will be doing me a pleasure if you will form one of my party. I do not know exactly how these things are managed in England, but I want Miss Grace and her brother to come as my guests, too. Miss Grace was kind enough to ask me to be one of a theater party, and mentioned the Epic, so I went right away and got a box."

"Oswin has just gone to procure seats for the same night," said Miss Winter, quickly.

"No," replied the American, "I stopped him. I met in the street."

Miss Winter knew that they must have met actually on her doorstep, and she wondered why he should have deliberately made a misstatement. She felt indefinitely guilty, as if Oswin's visit had been superfluous. Suddenly she became aware of the quick, furtive glance of her companion's eyes, noting everything—each tiny flicker of the eyelids, each indrawn breath, each slightest movement.

"How am I to do it?" he asked, innocently. "A note to Miss Grace or a verbal invitation to her brother?"

"A note," replied Miss Winter, with a gravity equal to his own, "to Helen, saying that you have secured the stage box for Wednesday evening, and hope that she and her brother will accept seats in it."

He nodded his head, signifying comprehension, and rose to go.

"That," said Miss Winter, skipping away from the subject under discussion with all the inconsequence of her sex and kind, "reminds me of something I heard said of you the other evening. It was, in fact, said to me."

"Then," replied the American, with cheery gallantry, "I should like to hear it. Had it been said to any one else I allow that I should have been indifferent."

He stood with his hands clasped behind his back, looking down at her with a smile upon his winsome little face.

"Do you know Mr. Santow?"

The smile vanished and the dancing eyes at once assumed an expression of alert keenness, which was almost ludicrous in its contrast.

"The Russian attaché—unaccredited?" he replied, giving back question for question. "N-o-o," he said, slowly, "I do not; I think I know him by sight."

"I have met him on several occasions. I rather like him, although I cannot understand him. There is an inward Mr. Santow whom I have not met yet; I only know a creature who smiles and behaves generally like a lamb."

"Santow," said Easton, deliberately, "is altogether too guileless."

Miss Winter countered sharply.

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not the sort of fellow to boast of his accomplishments. She must have heard it from Grace, and to hear from him she must have asked, because Grace is more than half inclined to be jealous of Tyars, and would take care not to remove the bushel from his light."

For some time he walked on, whistling a tune softly. Cheerfulness is only a habit. He did not really feel cheerful nor particularly inclined for music. Then he began reflecting in an undertone again.

"Here I am," he said, "in a terrible fright of two women; all my schemes may be upset by either of them, and I do not know which to fear most—the clever little lady with her sharp wit, or that girl's eyes. I almost think Miss Helen's eyes are the most dangerous. I am sure they would be if it was my affair—if it was me whom those quiet eyes followed about. But it is not; it is Tyars. Now, I wonder—I wonder if he knows it?"

CHAPTER XIX.

Had the keen-witted Easton been asked why he felt impelled to disburse ten guineas for the benefit of the lease of the Epic Theater, he would scarcely have been able to make an immediate reply. In his rapid, airy fashion he had picked up and pieced together certain little bits of evidence tending to prove that the young people with whom he found himself on somewhat sudden terms of intimacy were exceedingly interesting.

Matthew Mark Easton was leisurely surveying the half-empty house when Miss Winter, Helen Grace and Oswin were shown into the box by an official. His quick glance detected a momentary droop of Helen's eyelids. A blundering man would have made some reference to Tyars' lateness of arrival. Easton did not do such thing. He proceeded to draw forward chairs for the ladies, and did the honors with a certain calm ease which in no way savored of familiarity.

"I should like," said Miss Winter, untying the ribbon of a jaunty little opera cloak, "the darkest corner."

"Why?" asked Helen, almost sharply. "Because the piece is said to be very touching, and I invariably weep."

"Sorry," said Easton; "sorry it cannot be done. But I can lend you a huge pair of opera glasses."

"But," urged Miss Winter, "my tears drop—audibly on the program."

"We want the dark corners for the men—the background," urged the American, holding a chair invitingly. "We love the shadow—eh, Grace?"

"Speak for yourself," said the sailor, bluntly, pulling forward a second chair and seating himself immediately behind Miss Winter.

One great fault in Matthew Mark Easton was soft-heartedness. He was one of those mistaken men who hesitate to punish a dog.

"It appears," continued Easton as Tyars entered the box, "that the piece is touching. We shall require your moral support; that calm exterior of yours will, I surmise, assist us materially to keep a serene countenance turned toward the stalls."

"Don't be personal," replied the Englishman. "You may rely upon me at the pathetic parts. It is some years since I wept."

"The last time I did it," said the American, thoughtfully, "was when I got my ears boxed because another fellow broke a window."

Helen and Miss Winter laughed. They all felt that there was a hitch somewhere. They were conversationally lame and halt.

"We both told untruths about it," continued Easton, determined to work this time to its deepest. "But mine failed, while his succeeded. That was why I wept. Mine was not an artistic lie, I admit; but it might have got through with a little good luck. There is nothing so humiliating as an unsuccessful attempt to pervert the truth. Have you not found that so, Miss Winter? But of course you would not know. I apologize; I am sorry. Of course you never tell them."

"Oh, yes," said the lady, candidly, "I do."

At this moment the curtain was drawn up, and Miss Winter broke off suddenly in the midst of her confession, turning toward the stage and settling herself comfortably to watch the play. In so doing she unconsciously drew her chair a little further away from Helen, and thus left her and Claud Tyars more distinctly apart.

(To be continued.)

Not the One to Get Left.
The winter had been mild. Water congealed only enough to drown the incautious skater. Plainly the ice crop was to be a warm frost, as it were.

"But you know it's a cold day when we get left," remarked the ice trust merrily.

Theorepion price went up 30 per cent.—Philadelphia Ledger.

His Idea of a Duet.
"Yes, de professor an' me played a duet on de organ wunst."

"You?"

"Yes, me. When I stopped he stopped."

"But you don't know one key from another."

"Sure not. I did de pumpkin!"—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Love's Idle Dream.
Gunner—They say he was a young and daring adventurer.

Guy—So I have heard. He married the wife of the late millionaire and gossip says she idolizes him.

Gunner—You mean idolized him. He has not done a stroke of work since the wedding.—Columbus Dispatch.

Facts in the Case.
"According to the papers," said the alleged funny man, "an Ohio sheriff eloped with a locomotive last week."

"Was it a love match?" asked his friend.

"Probably not," replied the party of the funny part, "although there seems to have been a tender attachment."

One of Many.
Young Wife—It's wonderful how well Tom and I manage to get along on his small salary, isn't it?

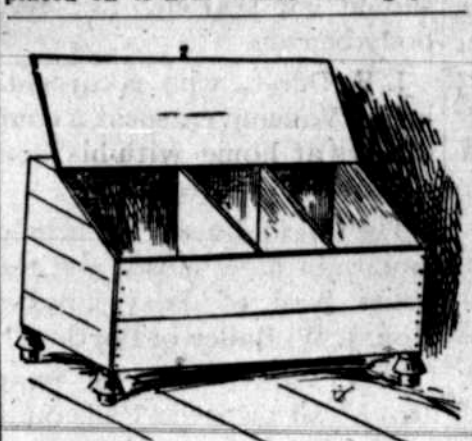
Her Brother—Oh, I don't know. It is partly owing to your economy, but Tom owes the most of it to his friends.

FARMS AND FARMERS



Home-Made Grain Box.

There is enough grain stored on every farm to warrant the building of a grain box, particularly when one can be built for a very small sum and with but little labor. Such a box is easily constructed from dry goods boxes, using a number of the same size to obtain the desired capacity and setting them end to end, fastening them together or not as desired. The fronts are cut so as to obtain the proper slant and then a cover is made so that the box or boxes may be locked if necessary. Divisions are made in the inside in accordance with the quantity of each kind of grain to be stored. The boxes are set on legs about fifteen inches high and each of these legs has an inverted cap of tin placed on it near where the leg joins



THE HOME-MADE GRAIN BOX.

the box. These tins will prevent vermin in the shape of rats and mice from easily climbing up the box and getting at the grain. If desired the several divisions may be lined inside so as to make them more vermin proof. The illustration shows how simple this grain box is.—Indianapolis News.

Shearing Sheep by Machine.

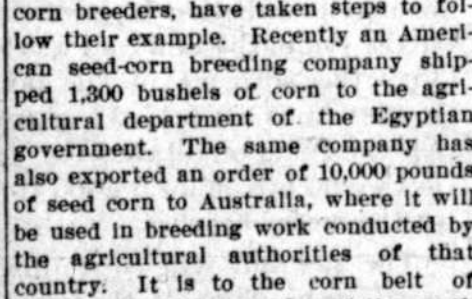
I have used a sheep-shearing machine for the last five or six years, says a correspondent of Rural New Yorker. The machines have been very much improved in that time. The first knife, or clippers, that I had very soon got clogged, and did poor work on sheep that had fine or oily wool, or had any wrinkles. The one I now have, used on the same machine, will clip any kind of a sheep or wool. Now as to the direct question, Has the machine any advantage over hand work? So long as we had the old-fashioned shearers, who could turn off thirty to forty sheep a day, well sheared, I had no need of a machine. As the old men died off, or were unable to shear any longer, and because of the scarcity of sheep—few young men took up shearing—it became a problem to know how to get the sheep well and economically sheared. The men who were unused to it not only cut the sheep and tangled up the wool, but they would shear only a few sheep per day, which made it expensive. For this reason I put in a machine.

Seed Corn Breeding Pays.

Corn-breeding work, still in its infancy, already has spelled profit for many growers. Material increases in yield, due in large measure to planting improved tested seed, have been so general that farmers everywhere are adopting better methods of seed selection. And other countries, noting what has been accomplished by American corn breeders, have taken steps to follow their example. Recently an American seed-corn breeding company shipped 1,300 bushels of corn to the agricultural department of the Egyptian government. The same company has also exported an order of 10,000 pounds of seed corn to Australia, where it will be used in breeding work conducted by the agricultural authorities of that country. It is to the corn belt of America that the peoples of the earth come for corn. Our corn crop is the envy of all civilized countries which cannot or do not grow corn.

White Pekin Ducks.

The White Pekin is a popular duck which has a distinctive type especially its own, and differing from all others in the shape and carriage of its body. The legs are set far back, which causes the bird to walk in an upright position. In size these ducks are very large, some reaching as high as twenty pounds to the pair. Their flesh is very delicate and free from grossness, and they are considered among the best of table



WHITE PEKIN DUCKS.

Field of a Million Acres.

The largest fenced pasture field in the United States is on the Blackfoot Indian reservation, in Montana. This field contains 1,500,000 acres, and the 200 miles of barbed wire fence inclosing it have been completed. About 400,000 pounds of wire were required for the work. There are 60,000 head of cattle wintering in this pasture, half of which belong to the stockman, who are paying for the privilege of pasturing.

Feed for Mare in Foal.

While in foal the mare does not necessarily require food different in quality from that fed at other times, but, all things being equal, the quantity should be somewhat larger. Oats are the best feed, yet shorts and bran may be fed with beneficial results. Mash can be given occasionally, and where possible cooked feed may be supplied at night three times a week.

RAM'S HORN BLASTS.

Warning Notes Calling the Wicked to Repentance.



I would never do for the trouble hunter to go to heaven; he would die of disappointment.

A good many men would get into heaven if they could use a ticket at the gate.

Perhaps you can tell more about a man's piety by his private prayers than by his public practice.

The consecrated cross is always invisible.

Double dealing always halves the profits.

Holy character is the only reliable heavenly credential.

The lazy man always has the worst form of heart disease.

The devil enjoys the hard names we call him, if we will only let him go right on with his business.

The world will not be saved by arguments about God in heaven, without the evidence of a God in the heart.

The rich man is willing that his money should be called tainted if only it will be the scapegoat for his sins.

The deeds of the devil would be more enduring if his fleshly desires were not so much stronger than his discretion.

If the good sisters put half as much in the offering as they carry on their heads the church would soon cease to be a beggar.

No man has any right to take into his life any more money than he can properly administer and account for as God's steward.

There is better evidence of overruling providence in prevention and preservation than in the most dramatic and singular extrication from danger.

It never seems to occur to some men that there's anything queer about preaching against graft on Sunday and asking for a preacher's discount on Monday.

MAIL-CARRIERS IN MOROCCO.

The rural free delivery system in America is the outgrowth of many years' experience. It comes as a late result in the process of development. In Morocco, on the other hand, it seems to be the basis of a system yet to be formed; only there is one respect the two methods differ: that of the United States is maintained at an expense to the government, but the Moroccan system is a source of revenue, according to the following account given by the author of "Moorish Lotus Leaves":

Swinging along at a jog-trot, a native courier—a bareheaded and barefooted fellow, with a pair of coarse slippers thrust into the hood of his ragged cloak, and a wallet on his back—approached our party, and, halting, leaned upon his long staff, while he informed us that the head of Cid Melood's oppressor adorned a gateway in the principal market-place of Marakesh.

Mail-trains and native post-offices being non-existent, these hardy letter-carriers represent the whole postal system of Morocco. Superintended by a government commissioner, a corps of couriers, as trustworthy as they are indefatigable, is to be found in every town.

Ready at an hour's notice to undertake the longest journey, perhaps through disturbed districts, always over miserable roads, generally sleeping in the open air, the courier has been known to do the double trip from Mogador to Marakesh—about two hundred and seventy miles—within five days and a half, the fee, of which a small portion goes to the government, being just eight shillings. This, it should be borne in mind, is the pay of a special courier. On any additional chance letters he may carry the charge is something under a penny.

Graceful and Gallant.

It is reasonably safe to assume from a story in the New York Tribune that the late Henry Harland, the novelist, was seldom kept after school in his boyhood.

Among Harland's early teachers was a charming young lady, who called him up in class one morning and said to him:

"Henry, name some of the chief beauties of education."

"Schoolmistresses," the boy answered, smiling into his teacher's pretty eyes.

Nautical Knowledge.

A young lady, who had, no knowledge of nautical phrases, asked a friend, "Do you know, I often wonder why a ship has to weigh anchor every time it leaves port?" The answer of her friend was not illuminating. "Well—er—the weight is constantly changing, you know, because of the—er—binnacles and things that accumulate on the anchor!"—London News.

No Desire to Be Busy.

"Do you man to tell me that you have lived in this out of the way place for ten years?"

"That's right, stranger. Just ten years."

"I'm surprised. I can't see what you find here to keep you busy."

"I can't find anything. That's the reason I like it!"—Milwaukee Sentinel.

A dinner that appeals to the eye doesn't always appeal to the stomach.