

Prisoners and Captives

By H. S. MERRIMAN

CHAPTER XIX.—(Continued.)

The effect of the discovery that they distinctly formed a group apart was barely visible to the keenest glance. Helen's slow, gentle eyes were turned toward the center of the house, bent vaguely on the brightly dressed occupants of the stalls.

"I suppose," said Helen, closing her fan, "that all this is rather trivial for you. The interest you take in it must be superficial now that you are so busy."

"Oh, no!" Tyars hastened to begin; he was looking past her in that strangely persistent way into the theater, and something he saw there made him turn his head quickly toward the stage.

"Halloo!" he exclaimed. Then he caught her wrist in his grasp. "Keep still," he whispered.

The painted curtain was bellying right forward like the mainsail of a bark, and from the space at either side a sudden volume of smoke poured forth in huge, uneven clouds.

In a second the whole audience was on its feet, and for a moment a sickening silence reigned—the breathless silence of supreme fear.

Then a single form appeared on the stage. It was that of the man referred to by Claud Tyars a moment before; he who played the villain's part so unconsciously. He was still in his dark wig and pallid make-up. On his arm he carried the coat he had just taken off, and the other arm, clad in white shirt sleeve, was raised in a gesture of command.

"I must ask you," he cried, in a full, clear voice, "to leave your seats as—"

And his tones were drowned, completely overwhelmed by a strange, unearthly roar; the roar of a thousand human voices raised in one surging wall of despair, like the din of surf upon a shingle shore.

The man shouted, and his gestures were almost ludicrous, even at that supreme moment, for no sound could be heard from his lips.

Then the gas was turned out, and in the darkness a terrible struggle began. Some who came out of it could liken it to nothing on earth. Women shrieked and men forgot themselves.

As the gas flickered and finally collapsed those in the stage box caught a momentary vision of wild, distorted faces coming toward them. The pit had overflowed the stalls. Strong barriers crumbled like matchwood. Into a hundred minds at once there had flashed the hope of escape through the stage boxes.

"Grace! Yeston!" It was Tyars's voice raised, and not shouting. The crisis had come, the danger was at hand, and Helen knew who it was that would take the lead. She heard the two men answer.

"Keep the people back. I will break open the door on the stage. It is our best chance."

The girl felt herself lifted from the ground and carried to the back of the box.

"Helen!" whispered Tyars.

"Yes."

"Are you all right?"

"Yes."

"I thought you had fainted, you were so quiet! Hold on to my coat! Never leave go of that!"

He turned away from her, and above the din and uproar came the sound of his blows upon the woodwork of the door. It seemed impossible that such strokes could have been dealt by an unarmed human hand.

Between the blows came the sickening sound of the struggle at the front of the box; impressions and supplications, mangled with groans and the dull thud of merrill's fists upon human faces. Shoulder to shoulder the two men—the American and the Englishman—fought for the lives of the women placed by the hand of God under their protection. It was a terrible task, though few women reached the front of the box. Each man struck down, each assailant beaten back was doomed, and the defenders knew it. Once down, once under foot, and it was a matter of moments.

Fresh assailants came crowding on, treading on the fallen and consequently obtaining an ever-increasing advantage as they rose on a level with the defenders. Neither needed to question the wisdom of Tyars's command. It was a matter of life or death. Those already in the stage box would only be crushed by the onrush of the others were they allowed to enter. With a dazed desperation the two men faced the frightful odds, hammering wildly with both fists. Their arms ached from sheer hard work and they panted hoarsely. Their eyeballs throbbled with the effort to pierce unfathomable darkness. It was quite certain that their defense could not last long.

"Stick to it!" yelled Tyars. He might have been on the deck of the *Marlborough* during a white squall, so great was the uproar all around him. At last there was the sound of breaking wood.

"Grace!" shouted the voice of Tyars.

"Yes."

"Look after Miss Winter when we go."

"Easton!" he cried again.

"Yes, old man!"

"Come last, and keep them back if you can." Then a minute later he shouted, "Come!"

At the same instant the roaring crowd of madmen poured in over the front of the box, like soldiers storming a bastion. The door which Tyars had succeeded in opening was so narrow as to admit of the passage of only one person at a time, but at that instant the larger door leading into a narrow passage, the real exit from the stage box, broke down before a pressure from without, and from this point also a stream of half-demented beings tried to force an entrance.

The only advantage possessed by the original occupants of the box was that they knew the position of the small door.

The subsequent recollection of such individuals as survived were so fragmentary and vague that no connected story of the terrible tragedy in the stage box of the *Epic Theater* was ever given to the public.

Miss Winter remembered finding herself caught up in a strong pair of arms, which she presumed to be those of Oswin Grace. Almost at the same moment she and her protector were thrown to the ground. After that the next thing she could remember was the touch of a hand over

her face and hair and a whispered voice in her ear:

"Agnes Winter—is this you?" She recognized the peculiar American twang which was never unpleasant. At that moment, she almost laughed.

"Yes—yes," she answered. "Then crawl to your feet. Don't try to get up; crawl over this man. I don't know who he is, but I surmise he is dead."

She obeyed, and found her way out of the narrow door and up some steps. Close behind her followed some one, whom she took to be Matthew Mark Easton, but it ultimately turned out to be Oswin Grace, who was in his turn followed by the American, but not until later.

Helen Grace heard the word "Come," and submitted obediently to the supporting arm, which half dragged, half carried her up some steps. She remembered being carried like a child through some darksome place where the atmosphere was cold and damp. Then she was conscious of a halt, followed closely by the sound of breaking wood and the tearing of some material—probably canvas, for they were among the scenery. After that she probably fainted, and was only brought to consciousness by the shock of a violent fall in which her companion was undermost. Then she heard a voice calling out:

"This way, sir; this way."

She recollected seeing a fireman standing in a narrow passage waving a lantern. By the time that she reached the open air she was quite conscious.

"Let me walk," she said, "I am all right. Where is Agnes?"

"She is all right. She has two men to look after her. You have only me."

"Wait for them," said the girl. "I will not go home without them."

"All right; we shall wait outside. Let us get out first."

They were standing in a small room, probably the office of the theater, and a policeman stationed near the window, of which the framework had been broken away, called to them impatiently.

The window was about four feet from the ground, and Helen wondered momentarily why Claud Tyars accomplished the drop so clumsily. In the narrow street he turned to a police inspector and pointed to the window.

"Lift the lady down," he said.

A cab was near at hand, and in it they waited, seated side by side in silence, for what seemed hours. The crowd dropped away, seeking some more interesting spot. At last there was a movement at the window, and Tyars got out of the cab and went away, leaving Helen in an agony of mute suspense. In a few moments it was over and the girl breathed freely.

It seemed strangely unreal and dreamlike to hear Agnes Winter's voice again; to see her standing on the pavement beneath the yellow gas lamp, drawing together the gay little opera cloak round her shoulders.

As Miss Winter stepped into the cab she leaned forward and kissed Helen. That was all; no word was said. But the two women sat hand in hand during the drive home.

Tyars and Oswin spoke together a few words in a lowered tone quite overwhelmed by the rattle of the cab, and then sat silently. The light of occasional lamps flashed in through the unwarmed window, and showed that the men's clothes were covered with dirt and dust, which neither attempted to brush off.

When the cab stopped in Brook street, Oswin got out first, and going up the steps opened the front door noiselessly with a latch key. Tyars paid the cabman, and followed the ladies into the house.

The gas in the hall and dining room had been lowered, and they all stood for a moment in the gloom round the daintily dressed table. When Oswin Grace turned on the gas they looked at each other curiously.

Miss Winter kept her opera-cloak closed, simply stating that her dress was torn. Her hair was becomingly untidy, but she showed no sign of scratch or hurt.

Helen was hardly ruffled beyond a few little stray curls, almost golden in color, stealing down beside her ears. She doubtless owed her immunity from harm, and in all human probability the safety of her life to the enormous bodily strength of Claud Tyars. It was she who spoke first.

"Your arm!" she said, pointing to Tyars's right sleeve. "Have you hurt it?"

He looked down at the limb, which was hanging in a peculiar way very close to his body, with a vague and questioning smile, as if it were not his property.

"Yes," he said, "it is broken."

Miss Winter and Oswin went to his side at once. Helen alone remained standing at the table. She said no word, but continued looking at him with very bright eyes, her lips slightly parted, breathing deeply.

He avoided meeting her glance in the same awkward, embarrassed way which she had not noticed before; answering the questions put to him with a reassuring smile.

"It happened," he said, "during the first rush. We fell down somewhere through some scenery, and my arm came underneath."

"You put it underneath," corrected Helen, almost coldly, "to—save me, I suppose."

"Instinct," he exclaimed, tersely. "Shall I fetch a doctor, or will you come with me?" asked the practical Oswin, gently forcing his friend into a chair. "We are surrounded by them in Brook street."

"I will go with you," answered Tyars. Refusing all offers of hospitality made by Oswin and his sister, Claud Tyars went off with his friend to the doctor's, leaving the ladies comfortably installed in arm chairs by the fire.

They protested that they could not possibly sleep, and that, as it was only twelve o'clock, they would await Oswin's return.

And the two ladies left there sat, each in her deep arm chair, toasting her neatly shod toes on the fender, and said never a word. They both stared into the fire with such a marked persistence that one might almost have suspected them of fearing to meet each other's glance.

At last Helen moved. She had evident-

ly just become aware of a black mark on the soft mauve material of her dress. With her gloved hand she attempted to brush it off, and as this had no effect she began rubbing it with a tiny handkerchief. Then she raised her eyes. Miss Winter was watching her with a curious smile—a smile much more suggestive of pain than of pleasure.

Their eyes met, and for some moments both seemed on the verge of saying something which was never said. Then suddenly Helen leaned forward and covered her face with her two hands.

Helen recovered herself as suddenly as she had given way, and, rising from her chair, stood with her shoulder turned toward her friend, her two hands upon the mantel-piece, looking down into the fire. Her attitude, moral and physical, was reflective.

"I wonder," she said, "if every one got out of the theater?"

"Mr. Easton promised to come and tell us," answered Miss Winter.

Helen raised her head and looked critically at her own reflection in the old-fashioned mirror over the fireplace. The trace of tears had almost vanished from her young eyes—it is only older countenances that bear the marks for long.

Before she moved again the sound of cab wheels made itself audible in the street, and the vehicle was heard to stop at the door. Miss Winter rose and went to let in the newcomer.

It was Matthew Mark Easton. He followed Miss Winter into the dining room, walking lightly—an unnecessary precaution, for his step was like that of a child.

"I do not know," he was saying, "the etiquette observed in England on these points, but I could not resist coming along to see if you had arrived safely. No one hurt, I trust?" continued he.

"Yes," answered the girl, gently; "Mr. Tyars is hurt—his arm is broken."

Easton's mobile lips closed together with a snap, betraying the fact that he had allowed himself the luxury of an expletive in his reprehensible American way. He turned aside, and walked backward and forward for a few minutes, like a man made restless by the receipt of very bad news.

It was a matter of a second only. Like a serpent's fang the man's keen eyes flashed toward her and away again. The peculiarly nervous face instantly assumed an expression as near stolidity as could be expressed by features each and all laden with an exceptional intelligence.

Then he turned away, and took up a broken fan lying on the table, opening it tenderly and critically.

But Miss Winter was as quick as he. She knew then that he had guessed. Whatever he might have suspected before, she had no doubt now that Matthew Mark Easton knew that Helen loved Claud Tyars.

"The worst of it," he broke out, with sudden airiness, "is that there was no fire at all. It was extinguished on the stage. The performance might have been continued."

"It only makes it more horrible," said Miss Winter; "for I suppose there—were some killed."

"That is so," he answered. "They took forty-two corpses out of our box alone."

"I did not know," said Helen, after a painful pause, "that it was so bad as that."

Oswin Grace came in, opening the front door with his latch-key. He was greeted with an interrogatory "Well?" from Miss Winter.

"He is all right," he answered. "It was a simple fracture. Old Barker set it very nicely, and I sent him off to his club in a cab."

"Then," said Easton, holding out his hand to say good-by, "I shall go and help him into bed—tuck him in, and sing a soft lullaby over his pillow. Good night, Miss Winter. Good night, Miss Grace."

(To be continued.)

The Halberd.

The distinctive weapon of the Swiss was the halberd, which was their principal weapon at Morgarten and Laupen. It is curious to note how the Teutonic nations, even to this day, prefer the cut and the Latin nations the point.

We have been told by German officers that when the German and French cavalry met in the war of 1870 the German sword blades always flashed vertically, over their heads, while the French darted in and out horizontally in a succession of thrusts. Even the German dead lay in whole ranks with their swords at arm's length. So the English at Hastings worked havoc with their battleaxes. The Netherland mercenaries carried a hewing weapon at Bouvines. The Flemings at Courtrai used their godendags fitted alike both for cut and thrust, and finally the Swiss made play with their halberds, an improvement on the godendag.

The halberds had a point for thrusting, a hook wherewith to pull men from the saddle and above all a broad, heavy blade, "most terrific weapons" (valde terribilia), to use the words of John of Winterthur, "cleaving men asunder like a wedge and cutting them into small pieces." One can imagine how such a blade at the end of an eight-foot shaft must have surprised gallant young gentlemen who thought themselves invulnerable in their armor.—*Macmillan's Magazine.*

As It Is in Chicago.

Jack Beacon—Yes, in Boston we have all cultured love making. When a young man goes wooing in the Hub he must embrace all foreign phrases and poetical quotations. You don't see anything like that in prosaic Chicago.

Dick Lakeside—I should say not. Here a fellow is satisfied to embrace the girl.

Best He Could Do.

"You know," said the young man in the case, "that I am poor, but don't you think we might be able to live on bread and cheese and kisses?"

"Yes," replied the fair maid, but—"Then," he interrupted, "see if you can work your father for the bread and cheese and I'll attend to the rest."

More Important.

"Here's an article in this paper entitled 'How to Tell Good Milk.'"



The Shattered Vase of Hope.

Wuns wenn weere goen fishen reddly brown was awl prepaired too go ann he kaim down too henry beamus howe ann went to gett sum wurms fore bate ann henry sedd he berrt the fish wood bite today ann wile he wentt to gett a sinkur reddys muther seent fore him to kum ann mind the baby soze it woodent gett the cockle wile shee goze to vizzet with the naburs ann so redd wentt aloly hoam as if his hart was ledd.

ann wenn we wentt past reddys we kood sea him sitten there in turbie mizzery

"SITTEN THERE IN TURBIE MIZZERY."



ann henry sedd it only goze to sho u kannst tel wott an ovr brings fourth uno.

ann henry sedd u wood not reckunize him sitten there with big teers in his eyes ud the sailm lad hoo dug the wurms fore bate.

ann nevur noo the turbie earvl fate wich soon wood cawl him hoam soze he doant share the wurms he so bizzzy diggen there.

ann enn henry watcht him with a si ann saw him waly a sorrowful goodbi at us us the thay shut the prisson door ann he is abut up there forevermoar.

ann henry sedd it teeches us to be lite harted wile we kan fore mizzery may kum to use sumtime the seim us redd ann we may be her vicktims, ann innstedt u goen fishen we may haftoo stay ann sea ovr komruds go thare joyjus way.

—Philadelphia Ledger.

The Unbidden Guest.

For a long time Johnnie had waited for an invitation to Dorothy's party. Two whole weeks had gone by since the little pink, sweet-scented envelopes had been proudly displayed by the fortunate little boys and girls in Johnnie's class.

"Going?" they all asked Johnnie.

"Got one?"

"No," he had answered bravely, each time. "I guess I'll get mine to-morrow." The to-morrow came, but the little pink envelope did not. Still he was patient and hopeful until the day of the party.

When he saw his playmates running by, with happy, eager faces, he could bear it no longer. His mother could not comfort him.

Why had not Dorothy remembered him? He had seen her every day at school. Perhaps she had thought him too young; he was so little. With wistful eyes Johnnie looked at the big house on the hill.

After a long time his tears were dry, and then he jumped up and ran to his mother.

"Mamma," he cried, "I'm going! I'm going!" he repeated, not understanding the look in his mother's face. "I've just thought when they get there and don't find me it won't seem right, for I always play with them, and Dorothy'll feel badly when she finds she has forgotten me."

"Course," he continued, "I haven't time to go and buy a present, so I guess I'll take Jerry. Anyway, a cat's 'bout the only thing Dorothy hasn't got. I'll miss Jerry—his lip trembled—but I've got to carry something—and I go by Dorothy's every day, and when I whistle he will come running out to see me. Please get me ready, mamma!"

A great struggle was going on in his mother's heart, but Johnnie did not know.

How could she talk about intentional slights when no knowledge of such a thing had ever entered his honest little head? He was only five and—of course there must be some reason for it—he should go to that party and carry his cat, too, and she would trust to Dorothy's good nature to understand. She would surely reward Johnnie's faith in her.

"Yes, dear," she said aloud, "it's all right. You shall go, and she made his hasty toilet while Jerry rubbed his head against Johnnie's hands."

"You'll be good, won't you, Jerry?" Johnnie asked.

"Miaw!" responded Jerry.

"Good-by!" Johnnie called, and he trudged off, holding his cat tightly in his arms.

Meanwhile Dorothy was taking her first taste of the responsibilities of a hostess. Her guests did miss little Johnnie, and ignored the laws of etiquette to such an extent as to ask why he had not been invited. Her explanation that he was a mere child was not satisfactory.

After that nothing seemed quite so

nice, the candles with the rose shades did not look half so pretty, the fancy costumes did not seem so wonderful, and the numerous games that had been devised for their amusement were not nearly so entertaining. The little people began to separate into groups, which is fatal to the success of any affair.

It was a welcome relief when the door opened and Johnnie came in, still hugging his cat. Dorothy's mother was with him.

"I knew you'd all be glad to see me," he said, as the children gathered round him, "so I just came up myself. And, Dorothy, I thought you'd feel pretty bad when you knew you forgot me. I brought you my Jerry. He's the best cat there is!"

Dorothy's mother looked at her little daughter, but Dorothy understood. Her eyes filled with tears when she realized her mistake and saw that Johnnie's little heart knew nothing about pride nor difference in ages. She put her arms about him.

"Of course I'm glad you came," she said, "and your cat is beautiful! It's present enough for you to just bring him to the party. I couldn't keep him always, you love him so. And, Johnnie, I think you are old enough to play with us—so we'll never leave you out again!"

After this the party was the merriest they ever knew.—*Youth's Companion.*

Junior Conundrums.

Which is the best tree for preserving good order? The birch.

Why is a person who never lays a wager as bad as a regular gambler? Because he is no better.

When is a man like a horse? When he holds a bit in his teeth.

When are men like time? When taken by the forelock.

When are men's pockets like a company of soldiers? When rifled.

When is a piece of linen like the entrance to a prison? When barred.

When are country lassies like bridges? When rustic.

The Remainder.

Teacher to Class—If Willie should be sent to the store for a dozen eggs and, while returning home with them, fell and broke twelve eggs, what would be the remainder?

Johnnie (aged 7 years)—Please, teacher, I know.

Teacher—Well, Johnnie, you may tell the class.

Johnnie—The shells, teacher.

X-RAY SURGERY SAVES DOG.

Buttons Found in the Stomach of a Valuable Blenheim Spaniel.

All of Tot's anxious Philadelphia friends will be rejoiced to learn that she underwent a very difficult operation in this city yesterday, and her chances for recovery are good, says the *New York Herald.*

It should be stated, perhaps, that Tot is a thoroughbred Blenheim spaniel, and moves in the very best circles of Philadelphia's bow wow set. She is the leader of her set, the possessor of several blue ribbons and a general favorite.

But Tot has been a great sufferer and her case is likely to become a celebrated one in canine surgery. It is now nearly a year ago that she began to complain. At first she was treated for indigestion by several of Philadelphia's best physicians. Brisk walks and plenty of exercise were prescribed, but that treatment did her little good.

Then she was taken to Hot Springs, Ark., and received a regular course of sulphur water baths, with a special attendant to administer massage. She grew steadily worse and at last developed convulsions. These attacks would last from one to three minutes and came at frequent intervals. Two nurses were with her constantly, and when her condition became more alarming it was decided to take her to a New York specialist.

She arrived here three weeks ago and was hurriedly taken to the office of Dr. D. S. Johnson and a consultation was held. With the greatest care her case was studied for three weeks and finally the X-ray was applied.

No doubt it was the searching eye of the X-ray and the memory of one of the nurses that saved Tot's life. Yesterday morning when the patient's condition seemed more critical than ever the physician called one of the nurses to the bedside and questioned her closely as to Tot's early life. The nurse remembered that once, when Tot was very small, she swallowed a large, round, black bone button.

"Ah," said the physician. "There's light." Ten minutes later Tot was in the operating room and a nurse was holding the chloroform mask to her little nose. When it was all over the "large, round, black bone button" was lying on the marble table beside the surgeon's knife. It was found in the intestines. The X-ray discovered it. Tot will live.

His Identity.

"Does any one know this poor fellow?" asked the good Samaritan, addressing the crowd which had quickly gathered at the scene of the accident. "His mind seems to have become an absolute blank, and—"

"Trust official! Trust official!" shouted the assemblage in one voice. "Out of his head, and think he's on the witness stand!"—*Watson's Magazine.*

Your independence might look like impudence in your neighbor.

THE WEEKLY HISTORIAN



1644—Battle of Marston.

1685—Archibald Campbell, Earl of Argyll, beheaded at Edinburgh.

1720—The "Miasissippi bubble" burst.

1745—Capture of Cape Breton by the English.

1776—Battle of Fort Moultrie, Charleston, S. C.... Battle of Long Island.

1777—Dr. William Todd executed at Tyburn.

1778—Battle of Monmouth.... Turkish fleet defeated and destroyed.

1797—Richard Parker, head of the naval mutiny at the *Nore*, hanged.

1800—Act passed for legislative union of Great Britain and Ireland.