Prisoners and Captives

By H. S. MERRIMAN

CHAPTER XXVII.

Three years are an important period, but in the middle of existence their weight is less perceptible. They seemed to have passed very lightly over the small phase of existence working itself out unheeded by the world in the drawing-room where we last saw Agnes Winter, and where we now find her again.

The room as unchanged, and the Agnes Winter dwelling therein was the same woman. The same strong, finished grace attended her movements, but her eyes lacked repose. They were the eyes of one who has waited and waited in vain. None need search very far afield to find such eyes as now looked up nervously toward the door at the sound of the large, old-fashioned bell pealing in the basement.

"Who is that?" said Agnes Winter to herself. "Who can that be?"

She rose and set one or two things in order about the room, and after glancing at the clock, stood motionless with her tired eyes fixed on the door, listening intently. While she stood there the door was opened, and the maid announced:

"Mr. Easton."

Matthew Mark Easton came into the room immediately afterward. He shook hands rather awkwardly, as one sees a man go through the ceremony whose fingers are injured.

"How do you do, Miss Winter?" he said, gravely.

"Well," she said in a sharp, unsteady voice, ignoring his question, "what news have you?"

"I have no news of the ship, Miss Winter," he replied.

"Tell me," she said, "what you have done."

"I have," he said, "explored every yard of the coast from the North Cape to the Yana river."

"And why did you stop at the Yana river?" asked the lady, with an air of knowing her ground.

"I will tell you afterward," he said; "when Miss Grace is with you—if—if she does not object to my presence."

She drew writing materials toward her and wrote: "Mr. Easton is here; come at once." She read it aloud, and, ringing the bell, dispatched the note.

"I presume," said Easton, slowly, "that the admiral is still with us?"

"Yes; he is alive and well. Helen is—you will find her a little changed."

He raised his eyes to her face. His glance was as quick as ever, but his eyes did not twinkle now; they were grave, and the rapidity of their movement, being deprived of brightness, was almost furtive. Then they sat waiting, until the silence became oppressive. Suddenly Easton spoke with a return of the quaint, narrative manner which she remembered as characteristic.

"One evening," he said, "as we were steaming down the Baltic last week—a dull warm evening, Tuesday, I guess—I was standing at the stern rail with my arms beneath my chin, when something fell upon my sleeve. I looked at it curiously, for I had not seen such a thing for years. It was a tear—most singular! I feel like crying now, Miss Winter; I should like to sit down on that low chair in the corner there and—cry. There are some disappointments that come like the disappointments of childhood—when it rained on one's birthday and put a stop to the picnic."

Miss Winter said nothing. She merely sat in her gracious, attentive attitude and looked at him with sympathetic eyes.

"It shows," he continued, presently, "how entirely one may be mistaken in one's own destiny. I never should have considered myself to be the sort of person into whose life a catastrophe was intended to break."

She still allowed him to continue, and after a pause he took advantage of her silence.

"Some men," he went on, "expect to have other lives upon their consciences—but their own lives are more or less at equal stake, and the risk is allowed for in their salary, or is supposed to be. I have thirty lives set down on the debt side of my account, and some of those lives are chips off my own."

"Thirty?" questioned Miss Winter. "There were only eighteen men on board—all told."

"Yes; but there were others. I shall tell you when Miss Grace comes. It is not a story that one cares to relate more often than necessary."

In a few moments they heard the sound of the front door bell. Easton rose from his seat. He did not go toward the door, but stood in the middle of the room, looking rather breathlessly toward Miss Winter. She it was who moved to the door, going out to the head of the stairs to meet Helen.

"Dear," he heard her say, and her voice was smooth and sweet, "Mr. Easton is here; he has come back."

There was no answer, and a moment later Helen Grace stood before him. As he took the hand she stretched out to him with an air almost of bravado, he saw at once the difference hinted at by Miss Winter. It lay in the expression of her face, it hovered in her eyes. It is to be seen in most ball rooms, and the faces carrying it are usually beautiful. The striking characteristic of such women is their impregnability.

"I am glad, Miss Grace," Easton said, "that you have done me the honor of coming."

And she smiled exactly as he expected—the hard, inscrutable "society" smile, which never betrays and is never infectious. She did not, however, trust herself so far as to speak. There was silence for a moment—such a silence and such a moment as leave their mark upon the entire life. Easton breathed hard. He had no doubt at that time that he was bringing to each of these women news of the man she loved.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"It is a long story," he said. "Will you sit down?"

Both obeyed him so mechanically and so rapidly that he had no time to prepare his words, and he hesitated.

"I have to tell you," he said, "that there is no news of the ship. She sailed from London three years and seven months ago. She was sighted by the whaler Martin on the third of May, three years ago, in the Greenland Sea, since when there is no word of her. It is the opinion of all the experts whom I have consulted that the vessel was crushed by ice. Her crew and her officers have perished."

"You give us," said Miss Winter, "the opinion of others. What is your own?"

"Mine?" he said, after a pause. "Mine is the same. There is no reason to suppose—there is no hope whatever."

"But I have something else to tell you—something which is not a matter of conjecture. But first I must ask you to—assure me that it goes no further. It must be a secret sacred to ourselves, for it is the secret of two men who—well, who know more than we do now."

"Of course," said Miss Winter.

"Of course," echoed Helen.

He went on at once, as if anxious to show his perfect reliance in their discretion.

"This expedition," he said, "was not dispatched to discover the northeast passage. It had quite another purpose. There is a political side to the question. At present the history of this generation is not yet dry—it is like a freshly written page, and one cannot yet determine what will stand out upon it when all the writing is equally developed. But there is a huge blot, which will come out very blackly in the hereafter. When this century is history, all the world will wonder why Europe was so blind to the internal condition of its greatest. I mean Russia. I have given more than half my life to this question, and Tyars—he knew a lot about it. Together we worked out a scheme for aiding the escape of a number of the most gifted nihilists—men and women—who had been exiled to Siberia, who were dragging out a miserable felon's existence at the mines for no other crime than the love of their own country. Our intention was not political; it was humane. Tyars and I clubbed together and supplied the funds. I was debarred from going—forbidden by the doctors—please never forget that. But Tyars was the best man for the purpose to be found anywhere, and his subordinate officer, Oswin Grace, was even better than Tyars in his position. A rendezvous was fixed at the mouth of the Yana river, and a date was named. Three Russians were dispatched from London to aid in the escape. They did their share. The party arrived at the spot fixed, but the ship—the Argo—never reached them. I have been there. I have seen the dead bodies of nine men—one of whom, Sergius Pavloski, I knew—lying there. They seemed to be waiting for the great Assize, when judgment shall be given."

He stopped somewhat suddenly, with a jerk, as a man stops in the narration of something which has left an ineffaceable pain in his life. After a little pause he returned to the table and slowly folded the rugged maps. The manner in which he did so betrayed an intimate knowledge of each frayed corner; but the movements of his fingers were stiff and awkward. Helen was watching him.

"And you," she inquired gently; "you have endured great hardships?"

He folded the maps and placed them in the breast pocket of his coat.

"Yes," he answered, without meeting her eyes, "I have had a bad time of it."

They waited, but he said nothing more. That was the history of the last two years. Presently Helen Grace rose to go. She appeared singularly careless of details. Part of the news she had learned was old, the remainder was too fresh to comment upon. She kissed Miss Winter, shook hands with Matthew Mark Easton, and quickly left the room.

"I always felt," said Miss Winter musingly, "that something was being concealed from us."

"At one time I thought you knew all about it. You once warned us against the Russian minister."

She thought for some moments, recalling the incident.

"Yes," she said at length, "I remember. It was the merest accident. I suspected nothing."

"Concealment," pleaded the American, "was absolutely necessary. It made no difference to the expedition, neither added to the danger nor detracted from it. But I did not want Miss Grace and yourself to think that these two men had thrown away their lives in attempting such a futile achievement as the northeast passage. They were better men than that."

She smiled a little wearily.

"No one will ever suspect," she said; "for even now that you have told me the story I can scarcely realize that it is true. It sounds like some tale of by-gone days; and yet we have a living proof that it is all true that it has all happened."

"Helen Grace——" he suggested.

"Of course you knew. And did you know about him?"

He did not reply at once, but glanced at her keenly.

"I knew that he loved her," was the answer.

"Are you going to stay in England?" she asked.

"No;" and he offered her his hand; "I am going back to America for some years, at all events."

"When you come back to England," she said, in rather a faint voice, "will you come and see me?"

"Do you mean that, Miss Winter?"

"Yes."

His quick, dancing glance was flitting over her whole person.

"If I come," he said, with a sudden relapse into Americanism, "I surmise it will be to tell you something else—something I thought I never should tell you."

She stood quite still, a dignified, self-possessed woman, but never raised her eyes.

"Do you still mean it?"

She gave a little nod. The door handle rattled in his grasp, as if his hand were unsteady.

"I thought," he said slowly, "that it was Oswin Grace."

"No."

"Never?" he inquired, sharply.

"Never."

"Then I stay."

And he closed the door again.

(The end.)

RAM'S HORN BLASTS.

Warning Notes Calling the Wicked to Repentance.

THE roving life seldom lights on the gold of life.

The best time to repent is before you commit.

It takes more than acquittal to make a clean heart.

There is nothing more eloquent than silent industry.

The worst part of any trouble is waiting for it.

There is none of the music of heaven in a holy tone.

Only the smile that is rooted bears fruits of refreshing.

There's a world of difference between wishing and willing.

No man ever succeeded in preaching truth by acting a lie.

You lose force with men as soon as you lose faith in them.

The fiercest fighting may be but the polishing of the crowns.

The world is not lighted by burning the candle at both ends.

The preacher who is anxious for popularity loses his power.

A man's judgment of others is often an indictment of himself.

Every great talent has come out of many a furnace-like trial.

The worldly Christian will never make the Christian world.

Education is always deficient so long as it can see a terminus.

Wealth is a matter of appreciation rather than of acquisition.

Complacency is often complacently mistaken for consecration.

You cannot prove your holiness by putting your head into heaven.

He to whom success is the soul of all will not find success in his soul.

The blessings that nourish a living tree work the decay of a dead one.

The emerged tithe will do a lot to solve the problem of the submerged tenth.

Many women forget that it takes more than a perfect house to make a home.

STRANGE CARGOES.

During a journey from Peking to Kalgan, in China, the author of "Round About My Peking Garden" was favored by a most extraordinary sight, which she describes as follows:

Just as we turned the corner by a beautiful temple, we came upon a great company of men, carrying what seemed to me the most unheard-of cargo, each man two eagles! All, men and eagles alike, were seated upon the ground when we first caught sight of them, and the men said they were taking the birds into Mongolia to recover their plumage, and that they were kept in Peking for the purpose of making eagle feather fans; but other people told us afterward that the birds were being taken to catch hares and other game for their masters, and possibly also to catch more eagles. Probably both stories were correct, and both agreed that the whole party was to come back in December. Only one very big eagle was hooded, and I was able to walk in and out among them and look at them closely; but when I asked if it were safe to stroke one, the men exclaimed in horror, "They eat flesh!"

Presently the men got up and went off, carrying their burdens, about forty very large eagles and forty smaller ones. The smaller birds sat each upon a basket dangling from the man's shoulder pole. Each basket was apparently full of something or other, I could not see what; but the larger eagles sat on the poles at the other end, and it was amusing to see them turning round and balancing themselves and generally settling themselves comfortably before setting off.

The men seemed not to have the least anxiety lest these fierce creatures, with their powerful beaks, should each take a nip out of the cheek nearest them as they went along.

Probably True.

Wholly unintentional, but felt sharply by its recipient, nevertheless, was the rebuke an old colored "mammy" administered the other day to her mistress, who belongs to an amazing number of clubs. The family has a mansion in one of the suburbs. The privileged old servant does not altogether approve of some methods of the modern woman. One day her mistress had a dozen club friends out to luncheon in her home, and the feast was spread on the porch. By and by the hostess heard a lively colloquy between her eldest hopeful, 7 years old, and the nurse. "You just git down outen dat tree," said the nurse. "You want to fall out and kill yourself, do you? Well, you just try it, and see what good it'll do you. You' mother, she dat busy right now she won't even hab time to go to you' funeral."—New York Press.

Unbiased.

'Tis true, I am no more myself—
That is, the self of long ago;
But I am nearer like that elf
Than anybody that I know.

Since I am so much like the man
Whom once I heartily admired,
I bear with me as best I can,
Although I sometimes make me tired.
—Washington Star.

Woman is the holiday of man—and every man is entitled to a holiday.

Improving Live Stock.

The best families of horses, whether thoroughbred runners or trotters, were produced from a few selected ancestors, inbreeding being largely practiced. Breeding close to the Messenger blood, through Hambletonian, has certainly increased the speed of our trotters, and, admitting that the instinct of trotting has been more firmly impressed, yet there is a much larger proportion of failures, compared with the success attained, if the fact is considered that the number of the whole is many times greater than that of half a century ago. The form of the trotter, as well as that of the thoroughbred, shows plainly the work of inbreeding, for while the spirit and will force have been increased, it has required an occasional infusion of new blood (not, however, altogether foreign) to retain the stamina so essential to roadsters. The thoroughbred runner of to-day is largely indebted to Diomed, Sir Archy, Glencoe and Lexington for improvement in endurance and speed.

The mutton breeds of sheep are now capable of producing specimens exceeding 400 pounds live weight, with also an increase in length of wool and weight of fleece, while the best merinos can shear over thirty pounds.

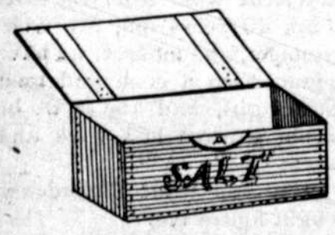
Every decade has witnessed the breaking of "records" among all classes of animals, which is the best evidence that improvement is rapid, much of the success being due to inbreeding, a system that is unsafe unless practiced by one who fully understands the selection of the choicest individuals, their adaptation to circumstances and the objects sought to be accomplished.

Feeding Gluten Meal.

Gluten feed is very valuable in the dairy; rich in protein and something of which the stock are very fond, it can be profitably used if handled rightly; on the other hand there is opportunity to feed it extravagantly as well as to feed so much of it that the cows will be injured. It should be invariably fed with some other grain, and if other concentrated foods are used it is better not to feed the gluten daily. If, however, bran is used to a considerable extent the gluten feed may be safely made a part of the daily ration. While gluten meal is frequently fed with ground corn and cob meal, and fed inexpensively in this way, we prefer to use it with cornmeal and bran, about three pounds of gluten meal to two pounds each of the bran and cornmeal, giving, of course, a liberal quantity of roughage. As gluten produces considerable body heat, and more when fed in conjunction with cornmeal, it is essentially a valuable winter feed, but is best cut out of the summer ration.

Handy Salt Box.

This handy salt box can be put up against the shed, and cattle can get salt at will. The salt will be out of the weather, and there will be no trouble of salting the cattle every few days. The box should be made 18 inches wide, 24 inches long, 12 inches deep in front and 16 inches in the back, so that the lid will have enough fall to shut itself when released. The lid should extend four inches over the box for a cow to get hold on. A notch should be cut four inches deep in front of the box (a), so that when a cow smells the box she will smell salt and stick her tongue in the notch (a) and lick it. By



HANDY SALT BOX.

pushing a little harder the lid will raise up and she can get enough salt, and the box will close.—Farm Progress.

How to Prune Large Trees.

In changing the top of large trees, such branches only should be cut as will insure a well-balanced top. Two or three years will be required for grafting a large tree. It will not do to slaughter all the branches at once. It would be liable to give a shock from which the tree would never recover. Some of the small side branches or limbs grafted should be allowed to remain the first year, at least, and pruned off when the grafts have attained considerable size. It must not be inferred that grafting is limited to the apple. The pear, plum and cherry may be worked in the same way. Neither is it necessary to wait for the old or new moon before cutting your scions. The precise time for grafting is not material. It may be done when apples are on the tree the size of hickory nuts, but an earlier time is preferable.

Brief Farm Topics.

The farmer who broke his hoe handle leaning on it was leaning on the wrong thing.

F. G. Bartlett, of Socorro County, N. M., recently sold 12,000 pounds of scoured wool, the last year's clip of his own flocks. He claims to have made $1,200 off his wool.

To combat the fraud of selling sheepskin for real kid a demonstration was recently made in Wilmington, Del., with a view to educating purchasers to buy nothing but the real article.

As a rule it requires quite a change of the program to induce a man to leave the cornfield to engage in other pursuits when there are so many weeds that need killing, but it is all right to stop to haul off a lot of hogs that have been finished for the market when prices are right.

Insects on Grass.

Numerous inquiries have come into the office of the Rhode Island Experiment Station regarding the cause of the frothy masses on grass and other herbaceous plants and on shrubs and trees. Popularly this has been ascribed to frogs and snakes and named either frog or snake spittle, as the case might be. In fact, it is due to a small insect belonging to the Hemiptera or true bugs, which live inside the frothy mass. Commonly these insects are called spittle insects for obvious reasons, and also frog hoppers, becaue of their connection with the frothy mass which was formerly known as frog spittle, or because in their broad, squatty appearance when mature, they resemble frogs to some extent. It is not known exactly how the frothy mass is produced, but it is supposed that the insect pumps the sap out of the plants, and in passing it through the alimentary canal mixes air with it to form small air bubbles. There are quite a number of species found at the present time, some living on grass, others on shrubs, and also on trees, both evergreen and deciduous. Most of the species have their early or nymph stage entirely within the protection of the frothy mass. When adult, however, they are found outside in the open air.

Stacking Arrangement.

The two pole stacking arrangement here shown can be readily constructed. The poles are leaning against the two taut guy wires so the fork hangs directly over the load. As the horse pulls on the rope with pulley attached a short distance from the ground the load of hay on the fork is drawn up to the pulley and the pulling draws the poles

CONVENIENT STACKING DEVICE.

over as shown in the dotted lines so the fork hangs over the stack when the strip is thrown and the load discharged on the stack.

Roots for Sheep.

Turnips and rutabagas are probably the best roots for sheep. Breeding sheep, and especially lambs, should be fed largely upon them instead of grain. This is a view held by the best shepherds. The view is probably correct and the practice might well be inaugurated by sheepmen. The purple-topped, strap-leafed turnips have generally given best results. They should be sown somewhat thick, and thinned to four to six inches in a row. The thinning can best be done when the drills are made upon ridges provided for the purpose. With these crops should be drilled either a bit of turnip or radish seed. This will permit earlier cultivation, because these seeds come up earlier than the mangels or carrots and thus outline the row. The mammoth Long Red and Golden Tankard mangels and the Mastodon carrots are standard varieties.

To Combat Cabbage Maggots.

For cabbage maggot use lime or wood ashes, or both mixed, sprinkling them over the soil and plants. But a new remedy used last year was made from a very strong soapsuds, to which was added one pint of crude carbolic acid to a gallon of the boiling suds, and the mixture made into an emulsion by shaking it together in a tightly covered pail. Take this emulsion and add to thirty times its bulk of water, and use freely around the plants. Of course this remedy would not be practical on a very large area, but for those who raise only a few cabbages it seems to be the best plan there is. The large growers do not bother much with remedies, but rely on using fresh ground about every year to prevent attack by such pests.

Millions of Frozen Carcasses.

According to Sir E. Montague Nelson, says the Engineer of London, there are sixty large meat-freezing establishments in the colonies and Argentina; the carrying trade is represented by 174 refrigerated steamers, with a capacity calculated at no less than 10,000,000 carcasses; and in England there are 28 refrigerated stores in London and 100 in provincial towns for the storage of meat on arrival. These distribute daily on the average over 26,000 sheep and lambs and 4,000 quarters beef. The total importation of frozen meats into Great Britain during 1905 consisted of 8,277,731 carcasses mutton and lamb and 1,271,353 quarters beef.

Bogus Clover Seed.

The clover seed business is being closely watched by agents of the Department of Agriculture. Of 521 samples of red clover obtained in the open market 116 samples were found to contain seed of the dodder, five samples were adulterated with seed of yellow trifoil, a worthless plant, of which the seed resembles the clover. In fact, cattle have been made sick by eating clover mixed with the trifoil plant, while the dodder plant is a still more serious pest.

Carbuncle.—Keep a small vial of tincture of iodine on hand and when a pimple or small scratch gets to burning or itching, apply the tincture of iodine two or three times a day. But should one become thoroughly developed apply a cloth thoroughly saturated with one part carbolic acid and two parts glycerine until the inflammation ceases to burn. Then poultice with flaxseed meal.

Erysipelas.—Apply during alternate hours of the day and evening a mild solution of carbolic acid in alcohol and water as an evaporating lotion. It is only in very exceptional cases that the disease is not almost completely under control and has disappeared within forty-eight hours; but after three days it would be extraordinary if by this means any vestige of the disease remains. The strength of the solution used is as follows: Crystal carbolic acid, one-half drachm; alcohol, four ounces; water, four ounces.

Antidotes for Poisons.—For carbolic acid or creosote poisoning, give the patient all the pure alcohol possible. If this is not at hand, vinegar and white of an egg may be given freely. Use the white of several eggs with a glass of vinegar or more, if possible. This must be done quickly, as these drugs are very destructive. Apply warmth to extremities. Give flaxseed tea, elm tea or gruel. If respiration is difficult, dashes of cold water on the chest are beneficial. Give patient plenty of fresh air and call a doctor. For arsenic, fly-paper or Fowler's solution poisoning, give mustard water until the patient vomits. Also give a few teaspoonfuls of starch mixed with a little water. Mucilage or linseed tea, if at hand, are valuable.

PIANOS SCARCE IN KANSAS.

Six of the Richest Counties Report No Such Instruments.

The completed reports of all personal property in the State have been made up for the State Board of Equalization, which meets Monday morning. According to the returns, pianos are not worth much, the average assessed value in the State being $34, according to the Kansas City Star. There are 22,566 instruments. Six counties, three being among the largest and richest counties in Kansas, do not have pianos in the homes. These counties are Bourbon, Franklin, Sumner, Republic, Decatur and Stanton. There are only three counties that have any motor cars—Grant, Sedgwick and Shawnee Counties.

Kansas is rich in cattle, the farmers and stockmen owning 2,995,987 head. The average value is $5.25 a head. Butler County has the largest number, 85,623, and Rush County the smallest, 1,311. There are 117,390 mules in the State, with an average assessed value of $19.48. There are 808,148 horses valued at $4,407,508. There are 1,210,168 hogs valued at $2,503,074, an average assessed value of $1.99.

There are $251,962 sheep with an average value of 84 cents. Notes assessed at $2,776,019 are held in the State. In the banks there is $4,799,924 on deposit, according to the returns. Sedgwick County has $267,515, and Wyandotte County has only $62,340. Mortgages amounting to $4,033,923 are returned for taxation. All of these values are based on about one-fourth of the actual value of the property. Some of the counties make the assessments on one-third, some on one-fourth and some on one-fifth the actual value. The total amount of personal property in the State is $71,459,916.

Not to Be Taken Literally.

The schoolmaster opened the dirty looking envelope and smoothed out the crumpled sheet of paper. His brows contracted as he read the first word. Who had dared to insult him thus—he, a village schoolmaster? This is what he read:

"Cur, ass, you are a man of no legs and I wish to inter my sun in your skull."

Who was insulting him? Who had dared to play a practical joke on him? Then the truth slowly dawned. He had received some queer letters from illiterate parents, but this was the strangest of all. With a fellow master he translated it correctly like this:

"Sir: As you are a man of knowledge, I wish to enter my son in your school."—Answers.

Force of Habit.

The Nurse—It's a boy, sir.

Jones—Well, just ask him what he wants.

A Finished Elocutionist.

Farmer Honk—My nephew, who graduated from the academy week before last, is a finished elocutionist.

Farmer Hornbeak—That so? Kill him yourself?—Puck.