

FETTERED BY FATE

BY ALEXANDER ROBERTSON

"Jollette's Fate," "Little Sweetheart," "Lottie, the Sewing Girl," "Goldmaker of Lisbon," "Wedded to Win," "Diana Thorpe," "Nora's Legacy," Etc., Etc.

CHAPTER XVI.—(Continued.)

On that morning she had received her first terrible punishment, that of allowing cold water to fall upon her head for a certain length of time, and she shuddered even then at the recollection of that torture.

She knew that the edict must have gone forth, that the doctor must have received orders from the Captain to complete the terrible work, and there were times when a nameless chill crept over her frame at the bare thought of being made mad.

Up to this time, in the midst of these horrors she had maintained her reason simply because of her strong will, but none knew better than Nora Warner that ere many weeks passed, if this water torture were continued, she would be as stark, staring mad as any inmate of the place.

Captain Grant had realized that he had made a false step in wedding her—for she was really and truly his wife—and his only remedy for it, seeing that he had other plans in view, was to shut her up in this mad house, and leave the rest to the doctor, who knew his business well.

Escape was the only thing that occupied her mind besides those ideas of revenge upon the man through whose villainy she had been incarcerated in this frightful abode. Plans feasible and otherwise filled her brain, and, as she comprehended what a terrible state her affairs were in, she can be pardoned for weeping bitterly, scalding tears.

Examination showed to her that there was no hope of escape so far as forcing a way out of the asylum was concerned; whatever she did would have to be accomplished by subtlety and cunning.

The doctor had been careful enough to have the bars at the windows secure enough to resist the efforts of the wildest maniac, and her puny strength would have availed nothing. True, she had a small bottle of aquafortis secreted on her person, which she had secured when free so as to be ready in case of recapture and incarceration, but her cell was quite a distance from the ground, and she could conceive no way of lowering herself, even should she be so fortunate as to break the stout iron bars with the use of the acid.

Thus it was she saw no reasonable plan open before her by means of which she could hope to escape from the demons who held her—escape from the terrible fate that, like a great abyss, seemed yawning to engulf her.

She saw the sun sinking toward the west with mingled feelings, such as can only be experienced and appreciated by one who stands behind prison walls, looking out between iron bars, and surrounded by all the horrors of a private mad-house.

Her meditations were interrupted. The rattling of a key in the lock brought back to her the immediate situation, and she turned just in time to see the door open and the figure of a man enter.

He was a new hand—at least she had never seen him before during the long period of her stay at the asylum, though he might have been engaged during her absence.

In stature he was rather tall, and his dress and looks proclaimed him a ruffian, while there was something about his language that spoke of a previous acquaintance with the Green Isle.

His face was dirty and red, the latter probably the result of debauchery, and there was a half-comical leer in one of his eyes that would have made some people laugh and others shudder, according to their disposition.

Nora could not understand the trembling that seized upon her as she gazed upon this terrible looking creature. What did it mean? Was intuition telling her that she was to meet her death at the hands of this villain? He advanced toward her, and she shrank back, appalled. What new system of torture was about to be applied to her?

She watched him with startled eyes as he held up his hand, pressed his finger to his lips, uttered the one word "hush!" and then, gliding to the door, bent his head in a listening attitude. Did he mean to murder her, and was he listening to make sure that no one approached?

Again he turned and advanced. Was that a grin of triumph on his face, or did her horror-stricken eyes deceive her? She tried to cry out, but her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth, and her limbs seemed paralyzed. He stood before her now; his arms moved. Ah, what sentence was he about to pronounce upon her?

"Nora!"

CHAPTER XVII.

When that one word fell from the lips of the keeper, Nora Warner uttered a low cry, in which was blended amazement and joy. She had expected something terrible to happen, but in the place of it something wonderful had occurred. Never would she have penetrated the disguise assumed by the other; but when he spoke a light dawned upon her soul, for only one man in the world could speak her name like that.

It was Jack! When he left the widow and Carol, the man had immediately turned his steps toward the mad house on the Potomac. When he gazed upon those grim walls, and saw how almost impossible it would be for an inmate to escape from them without outside assistance, he began to despair, but, remembering what he was working for, he began his labor at once. In the end he succeeded in being hired by the doctor in the place of a man who had been recently discharged. Evidently

it was the ferocious look of the new keeper that had been his best recommendation in the eyes of the mad-house doctor, and, knowing this, the disguised Jack gave him to understand that he was by nature quite a bloody minded rascal, ready to obey all orders without question.

He had already been in the institution two days, and his soul was sickened by what he had seen. The doctor had hired him for a special purpose, and as yet he had not been required to indulge in any work, though he accompanied the other keepers so as to familiarize himself with the inside arrangements of the asylum.

One of the men complained of feeling sick on this evening—the result of a powder which Jack had cunningly mixed with his supper—the latter had volunteered to visit the patients in his stead, and leave them the frugal repast that was intended to be their supper. Thus it was he entered the cell in which was confined the young girl.

When Nora realized who it was thus stood before her in disguise, and that love for her had been the object to lead him on, she felt her heart fill with rapture.

"Oh, Jack, you have come to save me, to take me away from this terrible place!" she cried.

They could not say much, for the time was limited, and there might be danger of some one overhearing them, but Jack told her to be ready and expecting him at any minute. When he stood in the doorway before leaving, he called back the one encouraging word:

"Remember!"

He did not see the dark form that had come to a sudden halt down the passage and stepped into an alcove. It was Dr. Grim.

"Remember what?" that worthy muttered to himself as he watched the new keeper go on down the corridor; "he came out of her cell, too. Besides, it seemed to me I missed his usual accent in that word. Yes, I shall remember to keep a watch on your movements, Lanty O'Shane, and if you trip up, so much the worse for you."

Thus Jack was shadowed. The doctor was too shrewd a man to let the other keepers know that he suspected the new man, for his influence over them would be gone. Already they feared the bogus Lanty O'Shane, who could tell such terrible stories about himself, and seemed ready to back up the argument at any time, that they instinctively acknowledged in him a leader, and were ready to give him the allegiance inspired by fear. It chanced, however, that Jack was very circumspect in his actions. Perhaps he had caught the cunning eye of the doctor fastened upon him. At any rate, as time passed on the master of the mad-house found nothing to complain about in his actions, though he did not give up watching him entirely.

Nora Warner now lived in an agony of suspense. She feared for the safety of her lover much more than she had done for herself.

There were times when a fierce joy would sweep over her as she realized how near he was to her, this noble man who loved her so well that he had taken sides with her against the one to whom she owed such a debt of hatred.

She watched for him continually, and yet guarded well her feelings, for unless she was careful his betrayal might come through her, and should such be the case, she would die of sorrow.

Whatever plans Jack had formed he had to be so careful in their carrying out that time passed by; but Nora, conscious of his strong presence, and the fact that he was risking all for her sake, felt her spirits buoyed up.

Twice again had she suffered the terrible torture of the falling water upon her head. Heaven alone knows what the result might have been but for that one thought ever before her—the fact of Jack's presence under the same roof.

On the second occasion she had fainted dead away, and when Jack came to visit her in the evening—he managed to have the keeper remain sick—he saw from her pale face that something was wrong.

When he finally managed to force the story from her, he was filled with the greatest horror and indignation, and vowed that not another night should pass without his making an attempt to save her from this place of horrors.

Fortunately for them they spoke low, for just outside crouched the mad-house doctor, and his keen ear was bent to the key-hole. He could only hear the murmur of voices, but the very fact of his new keeper, the bloodthirsty fellow whom he had hired especially for any work of an extra severe nature, being engaged in a conversation with Nora Warner was enough to excite his suspicions.

These were partially allayed upon hearing the curses honest Jack gave vent to when he learned what torture the woman he loved had already submitted to, though, of course, the doctor was not supposed to understand what it was brought them from the lips unused to swearing.

The mad-house doctor was a man far above the average in cunning, and, once his suspicions in regard to the mock keeper were aroused, he was like a tiger in the watch.

Although Jack was not fully conscious of being watched, except on general principles, he was very careful in his actions, fearful lest all might be discovered at the last minute.

The night fell. Gradually the noises of the house died away, for the doctor was severe in his rules, and if his most unruly patients persisted in making night hideous with their wild shrieks, he quick-

ly discovered where their particular fear lay, and treated them to a dose of it until they learned to obey.

Jack entered the cell just after the hour of midnight, fully prepared for the venture. He found Nora Warner ready. She had been in a fever of impatience and anxiety, fearing lest some little thing which they had not counted on would occur to mar their well-laid plans.

Jack had observed the way well, and had even gained a couple of keys which would aid them in reaching the yard at least, though the great gate would still bar their way, unless they could discover where the key was kept.

Softly they glided from the cell and along the corridor. Suddenly the death-like silence was broken by a terrible shriek as some madman awoke from his awful dreams, and so highly strung were her nerves that Nora could not but utter a cry.

Out of the mad-house they passed, and across the yard. The moon was shining, and the trees cast gaunt shadows upon the white ground. They came to the gate, but a hurried search failed to disclose the key. What was to be done?

Even while they stood there, irresolute, a low, mocking laugh smote on their ears, and, turning like a flash, they saw the mad-house doctor standing within a few yards of them, an evil smile on his face.

At almost the same instant the great bell in the tower clanged out its wild appeals of alarm.

All was lost!

CHAPTER XVIII.

Strange things often come to pass in this queer world of ours, but never could anything happen more singular in its nature than the meeting, face to face, of Lawrence Richmond, the man of strong impulses and fierce passions, with the woman who had been his wife, and yet upon whom his eyes had never once fallen during the past fifteen years.

Between those two, though they seemed separated by but a step, lay a chasm so deep that it would have been almost impossible to have crossed it. This was the pit time had dug and over which even love had not built a bridge.

She knew him at once, but as for him, he had not the remotest suspicion of the truth as he stood there.

That this kind-looking, elderly lady, from whose life his hand had driven all happiness except what she drew from within, was his wife of the past, was something that did not enter his mind just then, so that he had not a glimmer of the truth, and was all unprepared for what was to come.

He was hot with anger. Having followed Roger Darrel in the direction of the haunted mill, he knew just where his child had been hidden away, and had hurried on as fast as possible.

In common with others, Lawrence Richmond had heard of the widow who occupied the old mill, but he had never paid any attention to the gossip that was circulated concerning her, and the fact that she never seemed to want for anything so long as money would buy it.

He was enraged at the idea of his child being carried off in the audacious manner she had been, and then kept so close to home. In his anger, he forgot that Carol was of age, and that the law could not and would not help him in the matter.

When he found himself face to face with the mysterious widow, he saw with some satisfaction that she evidently seemed disturbed by his presence, and the fact gave him pleasure.

"Yes, it is Lawrence Richmond, madam. At last I have found you out. By tracking young Darrel I have struck the blow to which he carried her. Do not attempt to deny it, madam; my child is here!" he thundered.

At first she had suspected that he had recognized her, but was immediately reassured on this point by his words.

"I shall not attempt to deceive you; Carol has been here. She is out for a walk now, but will be back soon, when you can see her if you wish. We have nothing to fear from you, Lawrence Richmond, for the girl is of age, and no longer subject to your authority. Go your way, or remain and see her if you will."

He started at sound of her voice, as though memory had given him a stab, and yet just then he could not comprehend why he should act thus. His keen eyes seemed to search the face of the woman, but she was so utterly changed from the one he had loved, yet sent from him, that not the faintest glimmer of the truth penetrated his brain.

"You talk boldly, madam. Perhaps you forget the difference in our station. You are poor and friendless, I the rich and powerful Lawrence Richmond, of Richmond Terrace. Which do you think would have the most influence in court?"

The question was cruel, but the widow only smiled, as though ready to meet it.

"Think not your secrets are unknown to me, Lawrence Richmond. The Terrace is mortgaged to its full value, and any day the real owner may foreclose. Indeed, it has been a source of wonder to you for a year past why he has not done so. This was one reason why you wished your daughter to marry—Captain Grant. You believed him to be wealthy, the heir to vast estates. Had you let him know the truth on your side, he would never have troubled you about your daughter's hand, for he believed her to be an heiress."

"Woman," gasped the old man, "how know you this? I supposed there was not a soul in the world acquainted with the facts save my lawyer and Lionel Marsden, to whom the mortgage belongs. What witchery is this? Am I to be ruined by a babbling tongue? Surely heaven punishes me terribly for that mad act of the past."

He almost groaned these last words, and she knew to what they referred, for a low exclamation fell from her lips.

(To be continued.)

"Molascuit" is the name of a new cattle food made in the West Indies. It consists of 80 to 85 per cent. of molasses and 15 to 20 per cent. of cuscush, the finest part of the fiber of sugar cane.



Mrs. Anderson, a prominent society woman of Jacksonville, Fla., daughter of Recorder of Deeds, West, who witnessed her signature to the following letter, praises Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound.

"DEAR MRS. PINKHAM:—There are but few wives and mothers who have not at times endured agonies and such pain as only women know. I wish such women knew the value of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound. It is a remarkable medicine, different in action from any I ever knew and thoroughly reliable.

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Why He Quit.

Hal—What, you've stopped calling on the girl with the plaid waist!

Tom—Yes; it's all over there.

Hal—Why? Father object?

Tom—Bless you, no! And I had nerve enough to dodge all her hints about popping the question also, but the last time I called she had the sign "Do It Now" stuck on the center table. That floored me, and I've quit.

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Could Use Him.

"Do you know," said the pretty girl, addressing the strange young man on the opposite seat in the street car who had been staring at her impudently for several minutes, "you put me so much in mind of my brother?"

"Do I?" he responded, with a killing smile "I am delighted to hear it."

"Yes. You make me wish he was here for just about a minute."—Chicago Tribune.