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Bound by a Spell

CHAPTER V.

I did not meet my reverend master until the next morning at prayers. After prayers, he went through the process of examining the boys. What a vile mass of hypocrisy all this seemed to me by the new lights that had broken upon me. Judith was not present. I felt that my manner was embarrassed, and I could not endure to meet his eye. He remarked upon my pallid looks; I had not slept a wink all night. He asked rather sharply, "What ailed me?"

"I have a headache; I had a bad night's rest last night," I stammered.

"Oh! we will soon set that all right; you shall breakfast with me this morning. A cup of strong green tea will soon kill the headache."

At the table I was treated more like a guest than even a member of the family. He himself handed to me the good things, pressing me to eat and drink of all. Martha, who was waiting, could scarcely contain her wonderment.

"You have taken my place well during my absence," he said, in a fawning tone. "I am only just beginning to discover the treasure I have in you. Oh, what a blessing it is to know that the seed I have sown will yield so goodly a harvest! Well, I am getting old, and shall soon want a supporter and comforter. Ah, if I had such a son! But I must not repine, for I am blessed with the best of daughters? You two must be brought more together than you have been, for you are a goodly pair."

He was in a rhapsody of hypocrisy. He drew his chair close to mine and took my hand. We were alone now; he had desired Martha to leave the room.

"Have you ever noticed Judith, Silas? A fine girl, though I say it, and gifted with that beauty which to young blood is more attractive even than the beauty of the spirit. If she were to go forth into the sinful world she would have scores of lovers, and the children of the heathens would flock to ask her hand in marriage. But such is neither my wish nor hers; I would see her bound in the holy bands of wedlock to some sober, pious youth. I would not ask of him the goods of Mammon, nor covet for my child either gold, or jewels, or fine linen, or silken raiment; for what is all that compared to that peace of the soul which passeth all understanding?"

I know not what answer I made, or even whether I made any, to these cunning speeches, and others that followed in the same strain. At last, with many blessings, that sounded in my ears like bans, he dismissed me to the school room. To get away from his hideous hypocrisy was like emerging from the fetid atmosphere of a sick room into the pure air of heaven. Business which had accumulated during his absence kept him from home all day, and until late in the evening.

As soon as my school duties were finished, I went into the grounds—I could not bear to be in the house—and sat there until Martha came out to call me in to tea.

"Why, whatever is the matter with you, Master Silas?" she asked. "You look as white as a ghost! Are you ill?"

"Oh, no, Martha! I have a headache—nothing more."

"Master Silas," said Martha, "there's something wrong with you—something's preying on your mind. Why was master so awful civil to you this morning? Don't think I'm asking these questions out of curiosity. Master Silas, you're as innocent as a lamb! That man—or anybody else, for the matter of that—could get you to do anything—get you into goodness knows what trouble. And mark my words, he's a regular bad 'un! Don't you be led away by him! He's no good to you or anybody else!"

"Don't talk like that to me, Martha," I cried, bursting into tears. "You must not ask me questions—indeed, you must not."

"Poor boy! what have they done to you?" she said, half to herself. "Well, I don't want to pry into your secrets," she went on; "but if I can help you with advice, or in any other way, don't be afraid to ask me."

"Heaven bless you, Martha, I won't!" I cried, throwing my arms round her neck, and kissing her. "It is not my secret, or I would tell you all!"

How contemptible all this will read to men of the world—a youth of nearly nineteen, to depend upon a woman's defense rather than upon his own courage! From that cowardly thought, as such men will phrase it, I began to derive a little secret comfort.

The next day Judith appeared at dinner, for the first time during several weeks. She looked exceedingly ill. Mr. Porter's manner to me was marked by the ingratiating demeanor that shudderingly suggested the idea of a cunning hyena luring me into his den for the sake of making a meal of my body. When the cloth was removed Judith rose to leave the room, and no persuasions, winks or signs from her father could induce her to remain.

"Ah, Silas, what a treasure she is!" he said, with a hypocritical sigh, as the door closed behind her. "Her dear mother, who is now no more, left her to me as a precious token of holy love."

He passed his handkerchief across his eyes. He little thought what I had overheard.

"With such a treasure and a stainless conscience, what should a pious young man want in this valley of sin?" he cried, in an enthusiasm of self-plaudation.

"What, indeed?" I murmured, perceiving that he expected some answer from me.

"True!—what, indeed?" he echoed. "Yes, one thing he wants ere he departs for the regions of the elect—to see the earthly happiness of that treasure secured. Have you noticed how ill Judith has been looking lately?"

I answered that I observed she looked very pale.

"Something on the mind—something on the mind, and I think I've found out what it is. Girls will be girls, you know. There's many a fine fellow would give the eyes out of his head to be in your shoes. Well, I am quite content; she's quite content; and I'm sure you must be quite content; so there's nothing more to be said in the matter, and the sooner the affair is settled off-hand, the better."

The reverend gentleman was becoming very repulsive. For a time, I could not understand his meaning; at last, it began to dawn upon me—he actually meant to infer that Judith was in love with me. What an idiot he must have thought me! And yet, without the key his conversation with his daughter had given, might I not, in my simple trust of his truth, have believed? I shame to say, that I fear I might. But knowing what I did, I felt positively sick at the nauseous hypocrisy and falsehood of the man.

He paused, rubbed his hands, then brushed back his hair, chuckled and waited for me to speak. What could I do—what could I say? Must I yield to this man's inclinations without a struggle? Did he suspect that I knew aught of his secrets, what might he not do to me? Kill me—imprison me for life! Instinctively I felt that he would pause at nothing to secure his own ends. I must say something. To his proposition, or rather to his innendoes, I could make no reply. I would evade the question—try to turn the subject. As a matter of course, I said the thing which above all others I ought not to have said.

"Did you hear anything about my friends while you were in the city?"

Had a thunderbolt fallen at his feet it could not more suddenly have changed his whole demeanor. He pushed back his chair with a start; and such a look of fierce inquiry came into his face, such a savage twinkle came into his eyes, that I felt sure he was going to strike me down upon the spot. The words were scarcely off my lips before I was conscious of the irretrievable blunder I had made.

"What do you mean?" he cried, menacingly.

"Did you not say you intended to make further inquiries when you went to the city?" I faltered.

"Not to you. Have you been listening?"

I could feel the telltale blod rush into my face at the question. "Ever since you were speaking to me on the subject, I have thought of nothing else," I cried, in the same faltering voice.

"Look here, Master Silas; what's the meaning of this behavior? There's something up—I know there is, by your manner. Don't attempt to humbug me, because it won't do. Or is it that you are such a thorough-paced idiot that you don't understand the drift of what I've been saying? I'll satisfy myself upon that point by and by. In the meanwhile, I'll speak a little plainer. I mean you to marry my daughter. To this you can't possibly make any objection, as all the sacrifice is on my side and here. Now come, what do you say to that?"

Now that he had thrown off the mask, and spoken more plainly, I felt, for the first time in my life, something like courage to oppose him. "I know that I possess no advantages to entitle me to such a match, but I am too young to marry," I said, with some little firmness.

"I am the best judge of that," he answered sharply.

"But I have no wish to marry."

"What!" he exclaimed, furiously. "Do you mean to say that you've the impudence to refuse my daughter?"

Then followed a string of invectives and opprobrious epithets that I need not repeat. He literally foamed at the mouth.

"You shall smart for this insult!" he went on, wiping the perspiration from his face. "You shall go down upon your knees and beg my pardon for this, and pray with all your heart and soul for what you've just refused!"

With these words, and casting a malignant look upon me, he hurried out of the room.

I sank into a chair, literally stupefied and overwhelmed. But even the faint resistance that I had made inspired me with new confidence. I felt that I was no longer a school boy, but verging on manhood; that it was cowardly and disgraceful to yield a slavish obedience against my conscience to such a man as he had now shown himself. The first resolution I formed consequent upon this better and firmer state of mind was that I would make a clean breast to Martha of all I knew, and then be guided by her superior worldly wisdom as to what I had better do. Feeling much relieved, I went up to the school room to superintend the afternoon tasks.

CHAPTER VI.

The day's work was done, and I went down into the kitchen to have my tea and my confidential talk with Martha. In this last intention, however, I was doomed to be disappointed. Her master had entrusted her with certain commissions that obliged her at once to set out for Bury. So I was left alone. As soon as I had finished my solitary meal, I wandered down to the bottom of the orchard. Lying down in the shadow of a large pear tree, I soon forgot my troubles.

Behind the high, thick hedge at my back lay the extremity of the front garden. I was disturbed in the midst of my meditations by the sound of voices. Their owners were walking in the garden, and presently I could hear their footsteps close behind me. For the second time I became an involuntary eavesdropper. Cowering still closer to the earth, I caught their words.

"I tell you, Judith, he knows something! I believe he's been listening!" I heard Mr. Porter say.

"He has not the brains or the courage!" she answered scornfully. "He's simply a fool!"

"Why, then, should he ask me such a question, and follow it up by stammering that I had told him? I intended doing so before I went away; I certainly did intend doing so, but I never mentioned it even to you. Besides that, there's been a great change in him during these few days back. Instead of being grateful, as he always was before, for any little indulgence, he seems to shrink from it, and from me, too!" Then he added quickly, as though a sudden idea had struck him, "Where was he the night that I came back? If I remember, we held all our talk in the parlor, with the window wide open, and you didn't speak in very low tones."

An exclamation broke from Judith. The footsteps paused close behind me. I feared they would hear the violent beating of my heart.

"Stop!" she cried. "That reminds me! Not a quarter of an hour before you returned he was clipping a bush in front of that window. I saw him from my bedroom."

There was an ominous pause; in my mind's eye I could picture their looks of consternation.

"Why did you not tell me this?" said Mr. Porter, in a troubled voice.

"I never thought of it until this instant," she answered. "I was too eager to hear your news, to think of him."

"If he heard all that passed in that room, he knows enough to utterly destroy us. We are completely in his power. More than that, I have given him a clue that may lead to profitable discoveries for himself."

"And my humiliation known to that contemptible cur! Oh, heavens! I cannot survive it!" she cried, passionately.

"Silence!" said her father, in a stern voice. "This is no time for raving; this must be seen to at once. We must not lose a moment. To question him in the usual way is useless. We must resort to the other this very night. Until we find out what he really does know, we can't tell what to do. That once known, I shan't want much consideration."

"Where is he now? Have you seen him lately?"

"I heard him leave the boys' room at 5 o'clock. I have not seen or heard him since then."

"Go and see where he is at once; he might have left the house while we are standing here."

In an instant I heard them hurrying towards the house. I sprang to my feet, ran across the orchard into the kitchen garden, rushed into the summer house, laid my book upon the table, and resting my head upon my hands, assumed an attitude of attentive study. My breath came short and thick, and my breast was heaving when I heard my master's hasty footsteps upon the path.

He began in a bullying tone; then bethinking him that he was betraying himself, stopped short. The expression of my face evidently disconcerted him.

"What are you doing here?" he asked, evidently not knowing what to say to cover his blunder.

"I usually come here of an evening to read," I said quietly. "I never heard you object to it before."

"Oh, it isn't that; but get the boys in at once," he said.

"Very well, sir." I closed my book, and went to find the boys; my master advancing in the same direction, that he should not lose sight of me. I felt that from that moment a constant watch would be set upon me.

I led the boys into the house, and up into the school room. But the prayer that was in my heart and on my lips were not in unison with that which sounded on my ears. I was praying to escape from that dreadful house. I had taken the desperate resolution that I would not pass another night beneath the roof.

The boys were dismissed to bed half an hour earlier than usual. I was going down to the kitchen when Mr. Porter stopped me.

"I've some work for you, Silas. Fold and put these tracts into envelopes, and direct them; I'll give you the list of names. You can carry pen and ink, and your desk, into your own room, and do them there."

He gave me a pile of papers, which I carried into my room, and then fetched the desk and writing materials, he watching me all the time. I went in, and shut the door; then I heard him walk away. I did not touch my work, but sat down upon the side of the bed, and tried to think how I could get away. I had no money—I knew nothing of the roads; but better to starve, to die under a hedge than remain in that man's power. If I could only get five minutes' talk with Martha, she would help me—would perhaps direct me where to go.

(To be continued.)

Thoughtful.

General "Joe" Wheeler relates the following amusing incident that took place during the night of the El Caney affair:

"General Lawton's division was marching back to El Poey, there to take up a new position in the morning. The General, in company with Major Creighton, inspector general of his staff, was standing at the edge of the road, watching his troops file past. Just as the dawn was breaking the colored troops came in sight. They gave evidence of being dead tired, but were nevertheless full of 'ginger.'

"General Lawton's attention was attracted to a certain corporal of the Twenty-fifth Infantry, a great six-foot negro, who, in addition to a couple of guns and two cartridge belts loaded full, was carrying a dog. The soldier to whom the other gun belonged was limping alongside his comrade.

"The General halted the men. 'Here, corporal,' said he to the six-foot man, 'didn't you march all last night?'

"'Yes, sir,' responded the negro, saluting.

"'And fought all day?'

"'Yes, sir.'

"'You have, besides, been marching since 10 o'clock to-night?'

"'Yes, sir.'

"'Then,' said Lawton, 'why on earth are you carrying that dog?'

"'Well, General,' replied the negro, showing his white teeth in a broad grin, 'the dog's tired!'"—Woman's Home Companion.

The Reply Unhappy.

"Edwin, am I the first woman you have ever loved?" she suddenly asked him when he was measuring her finger for the ring.

"Yes, Mamie," he blurted out, being somewhat disconcerted; "the others were only girls."—Woman's Home Companion.

H. H. Ballard, just 51 years old, is president of the Agassiz association, which has 1,000 branches. He organized the association in 1875, and has been its head ever since.

DOINGS IN CONGRESS.

Tuesday, January 17

In the senate today Heyburn concluded his speech on the joint statehood bill and Stone gave notice of a speech tomorrow on his resolution for an investigation of charges of corruption in the campaigns of 1896 and 1904. Lodge presented the conference report on the Philippines bond and railroad bill, and explained the house amendments.

Senator Mitchell appeared on the floor of the senate and defended himself in regard to the indictment in connection with the Oregon land frauds. He called his accusers liars and perjurers and will demand an investigation. Many of his colleagues crowded around him to welcome him.

Another obstacle has arisen in the way of the Klamath irrigation project. Chairman Mondell, of Wyoming, of the house committee on irrigation is fighting the bill. He says he is not in favor of expending a single cent of the reclamation fund in either California or Oregon until both states "pass a decent set of water laws." He would take more of the reclamation fund for use in his own state regardless of amount contributed.

Wednesday, January 18.

The house today adopted the 12 articles of impeachment against Judge Charles Swayne. The speaker was authorized to appoint members to present the case to the senate and conduct the impeachment proceedings before that body.

Senator Stone occupied considerable time with his speech asking an investigation of the campaigns of 1896 and 1904. Clay spoke in opposition to the statehood bill. He had no objection to the consolidation of Oklahoma and Indian Territory.

Thursday, January 19.

The house of representatives today completed consideration of the army appropriation bill and will vote on it tomorrow. A vigorous attack was made on the army transport service by Humphrey and offered an amendment abolishing it. The house fixed Friday, February 17, as the date for holding appropriate exercises in Statuary hall accepting the statue of Frances E. Willard. A bill was passed extending the extradition laws of the United States to the Philippines.

Consideration of the statehood bill was continued in the senate today and Stone spoke for two hours in opposition to it. The bill for the remuneration of American fur sealers who suffered losses because of their suppression, was also debated at some length, but no action was taken.

Friday, Jan. 20.

The statehood bill and the fur seal indemnity bill again divided the attention of the senate today, and both went over without action. Fulton spoke in support of the indemnity bill, and McCreary and Bate in opposition to the statehood measure.

Immediately after the senate was called to order President Pro Tem Frye laid before it a telegram from the governor of New Mexico, transmitting a memorial adopted by the legislature of that territory protesting against the union of New Mexico and Arizona in one state, and urging the admission of New Mexico as a state according to present boundaries.

The house passed the army appropriation bill. The Indian appropriation bill was considered for the remainder of the day, but was not concluded when the house adjourned until tomorrow.

Monday, January 23.

The session of the house today was devoted entirely to the consideration of bills relating to the District of Columbia. Severval efforts were made to take official notice of the rioting in St. Petersburg, but they were all turned down.

Beveridge made another ineffectual effort in the senate to have a time fixed for voting on the statehood bill. The fortifications appropriations bill was passed. A joint resolution appropriating $7,000 to pay the necessary expenses of the inaugual ceremonies was passed.

Italy Suspicious of Austria.

Rome, Jan. 21.—Uneasiness is felt here at the concentration on the Italian frontier of Austrian troops, the Patria going so far as to say that Austria is preparing for war against Italy. On the other hand, the Tribuna publishes a statement to the effect that its correspondent at Vienna has been assured by the Austrian foreign office that the increase in the number of Austrian troops on the frontier of Italy was merely due to the return of soldiers to their posts after having been on duty along the Russian frontier.

To Include Swamp Land.

Washington, Jan. 21. — Representative Bell, of California, today introduced a bill authorizing the secretary of the interior to include swamp and overflowed land in any irrigation project that may be undertaken under the national irrigation law, wherever it may be deemed practicable and advisable to do so. Such land, when relaimed, shall be disposed of in the same manner as other lands lying under the government irrigation projects.

More Free Coal for Japan.

Tokio, Jan. 21.—The Japanese captured the British steamer Okley in Tsushima straits Wednesday afternoon. The vessel left Cardiff on November 17, carrying 5,900 tons of coal for Vladivostok. She was brought to Sasebo.

HIS POWER IS GONE

Czar Has Been Forced to Yield to Grand Dukes.

VLADIMIR AND SERGIUS RULE

Rioting and Bloodshed Spread to All Parts of Empire — Revolution Under Full Headway.

Libau, Russia, Jan. 24.—The imperial yacht Standard is expected here to convey the czar and his family to Copenhagen.

Reports from St. Petersburg say that the actual government is no longer in the hands of the czar. This statement is made with deliberation and with a full knowledge of the day's doings. The grand ducal coterie, always powerful, but until very recently held in check by the people's pathetic faith in the power of the "Little White Father," is in absolute command.

Grand Duke Vladimir commands the troops, and every order, whether it be one of leniency or stern repression, is issued by him. Grand Duke Sergius is stated to be in control of the internal situation.

The utmost secrecy is maintained as to the czar's present whereabouts. Some have him at Tsarskoe-Selo, others at Peterhoff, still others insist that he has been at the winter palace right along. All questions put to men in authority on that score are met with the very courteous reply that they know as little as the interrogator.

MOSCOW IN TURMOIL.

Workmen Force Closing of All the Large Factories.

St. Petersburg, Jan. 24.— The most startling feature in the situation tonight is the news that several factories in Moscow have closed and that the workmen in the old capital of Russia are repeating the tactics of their fellow workmen of the new capital, marching from shop to shop and mill to mill, demanding that the establishment shut down. The whole city is reported to be in a state of great excitement over the news of the bloodshed which has precipitated immediately the strike that had been scheduled for Wednesday.

The tension, which was somewhat relaxed during the morning, continued to increase during the day. Conditions appeared to be omnious, when, shortly after dark, the workmen in two electric light plants walked out, refusing triple pay to remain, and plunging half the city into utter darkness, including the Nevsky Prospect. The water supply was also cut off, and a veritable panic ensued.

IT IS REVOLUTION.

Sailors at Sevastopol Mutiny in Mass and Destroy Buildings.

Kieff, Jan. 24.—Details of the burning of the admiralty yards at Sevastopol have arrived here, showing that it was the result of a mutiny of 8,000 sailors, such as never before occurred in Russia.

All Saturday there had been considerable talk all over the city that the sailors in the Sevastopol barracks had grown restive and that numerous instances of insubordination had occurred. Shortly after the noon hour Monday the doors of the barracks were thrown open and several thousand sailors forced their way out into the street.

One squad of mutineers rushed to the rooms of a captain, who is said to have been particularly disliked. The officer was seized and thrown to the floor. They beat in his skull, and his face was mangled beyond recognition, and then they wrecked his rooms and took every weapon they could find. Meanwhile, those on the outside had set fire to the building, which, being old and mainly constructed of wood, was burned to the ground.

From there the mutineers rushed wildly through the streets, setting up the cry of: "The revolution has begun."

One of the Horrors of Revolt.

St. Petersburg, Jan. 24.—Among the authenticated horrors of yesterday is the case of an aged general, whose sledge was stopped by the infuriated people as he was driving in the direction of the troops. "Are you going to order them to fire on us?" yelled the crowd. The general ordered his coachman to drive on, when he was instantly struck on the head by a well dressed individual in a sable fur coat. The general was then thrown out of the sledge, brutally beaten and finally rampled to death.

Ready to Take Charge.

London, Jan. 24. — The Daily Telegraph's St. Petersburg correspondent reports that, as the outcome of the meeting of the Reform party of Gorky, Annensky, Arsenieff and others and their adherents Saturday night and Sunday, a body of men has been constituted who regard themselves as the future provisional government of Russia. As yet, the correspondent says, they are political ciphers; but they hope to overturn the existing regime.

To Loot for Provisions.

St. Petersburg, Jan. 24. — A report has gained currency that the strikers intend to storm the market in Vassili Ostroff and seize the provisions there.