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Bound by a Spell

CHAPTER VIII.

Judith was quite right; although her words filled me with fear, they could not destroy, or even weaken, the fascination she exercised over me. Our marriage day was fixed. How distinctly I remember every aspect and event of that day. The ceremony was, of course, to be celebrated at Little Bethlehem by the bride's father. All the principal members of the congregation were to be of the party, and the Rev. Obadiah Porter provided the entertainment with no niggardly hand.

When I entered the parlor I found it full of people. Of these two solemn-looking young men, whom I had often seen at chapel, represented the groomsmen; and two remarkably sour-looking girls, daughters of Mrs. Humphries, the bridesmaids.

Two or three dark-looking cabs were at the gate, and when all was ready we sallied forth. Martha was standing in the hall, holding the house door in her hand. I had never exchanged a word with her since that night when she waylaid me upon the landing; indeed, had never seen her, except when she waited at meal times. How sorrowfully she looked at me that morning! As I passed out into the garden with Miss Humphries upon my arm, she threw an old shoe after me. The young lady was astounded, and I heard her master pause for a moment to rebuke her for such a "heathenish" act, as he was pleased to style it.

Although in the height of summer, it was a most miserable morning. From edge to edge of the horizon, the sky was one of uniform leaden hue; there was a fine, soaking rain, that blurred and blotted to the eye every more distant object; the saturated trees kept up a constant drip, drip; the calyx of every flower was a miniature lake; and on the point of every leaf and blade of grass quivered globules of water. Large pools lay in the graveled path, and the earth was soddened.

The little chapel was chill and gloomy as a vault, and the damp atmosphere clung upon every object, dimming the windows, and half-veiling the cold, gray light that struggled through them.

"Not a pleasant day for a marriage," remarked Miss Humphries, solemnly; it was the first remark she had addressed to me.

"More fitting for a funeral," I answered drearily.

She looked at me rather strangely, and it certainly must have sounded a somewhat strange remark in the mouth of a bridegroom.

The ceremony, according to the tenets of these people, commenced; and as I took her hand, I looked at Judith for the first time that morning. She seemed unconscious of my glance. Her face was deathly pale, and very rigid, like one who had nerved herself to a terrible and repulsive task, as indeed she had. The touch of my hand awoke her from her reverie. She shuddered; but I thought there was less of hardness and scorn in her manner, as well I might, for her tears were falling fast.

Mr. Porter also was not quite himself; he seemed agitated and nervous. To my morbid fancy his prayers sounded like a service for the dead. At last, it was all over. The whole party was gathered near the door preparatory to leaving. Judith and her father had gone into a little room that stood near the entrance, where she had left her wrappings. I was the last. Moodily I was following the rest, when my eyes happened to fall upon a small glittering object. It was a golden locket. In picking it up my finger pressed the spring and opened it. What a thrill ran through me! It contained the portrait of a girl of about 14. It was the face of the child I had met in the Norman gateway!

Who had dropped it, or how had it come here? Putting it into my pocket, I resolved to carefully note any person who should appear to or speak of having lost anything.

The cabs conveyed us home again, and the dinner was waiting. Towards evening the company dispersed, but no person spoke of a loss, and the mystery of the locket remained an inscrutible mystery. I would not make any inquiries for the owner, as I had resolved not to part with it. I hugged it as a treasure; and, somehow, amidst the misery of that day, it fell upon my heart like a gleam of hope.

While waiting at table Martha contrived to slip a piece of paper into my hand. My fingers instinctively grasped it. Our visitors had gone. Judith had retired to her room to change her dress, and Mr. Porter was in his storeroom. I seized the opportunity to examine the paper. It was a note, but written in a scrawl almost illegible. It ran thus:

"This is my last day here. I leave to-morrow. Always to be heard of at No. 3 Rackstraw's building, Camden Town. Take care of yourself. God bless you. MARTHA."

So I was deprived of my only friend. I was now utterly alone in the lion's den. A new feeling of fear and desolation fell upon my heart.

CHAPTER IX.

I could endure it no longer, and so I fled. One month after my wedding night I left that roof forever. Upon what passed during that month my lips are sealed. To no living being shall I ever reveal the story of my sufferings during those thirty-one days.

On the night of the 31st of August, I crept out of my chamber, ascended to the boys' room and, unseen and unheard by them, opened their window and descended to the garden by means of the pear tree. Vividly did my frightful dream come back upon me at that moment, and I almost expected to see the red snake with his glittering eyes writhing round some leafy branch. But I reached the ground in safety, without encountering any object, fanciful or real.

In less than three minutes more I was in the high road, a vagabond, a homeless outcast, but a free man. All my worldly possessions were the suit of clothes I wore, and my wedding suit and a change of linen that I carried tied up in a bundle. It was a bright moonlight night. I cast one farewell glance upon the only home I had ever known and walked swiftly onward.

I made towards Bury. I passed Little Bethlehem, and thought, with a shudder, of my marriage day. Then I entered the town, and took the street that led me past the old Abbey ruins. I had never seen them since that October night. I stopped at the old Norman gateway, and peered into its shadows, almost expecting to encounter the sweet, pale face again. But all was silent and deserted—not a soul was in sight.

Whither was I going? I was going to Martha. I had carefully preserved her note. I knew she would give me a shelter until I could obtain some kind of employment. When I reached the next town I would sell the bundle of clothes, and the money would provide me with food and lodging on the way. I had no conception of the road, but I resolved that I would take the one down which I had seen her disappear. She said that she understood that to be the right one. I would follow in her steps.

The day was just dawning when I came upon a large, old-fashioned village. Unused to violent exercise, and exhausted for want of food, for I had eaten nothing since dinner time the day before, my steps began to flag. I looked round some place to rest; there was no sign of life in any of the houses—all seemed buried in sleep. I walked slowly on until I came to a little swing gate, which led to the village church—an ancient looking building, embossed in trees. Here, I thought, is a quiet spot where I can rest a little while. I opened the gate, and passed through.

It was a pretty, quiet spot. I could not have found a better for an hour's rest. There was a heavy dew upon the long grass, so I stretched myself upon a high, flat tombstone, and placed my bundle beneath my head. I was very weary, and in spite of the cold air of the dawn, that made me shiver, I fell fast asleep, with the twittering of the waking birds sounding in my ears.

When I awoke the sun was shining brightly, and the birds were in full song. For a moment I could not comprehend my position. I sat up and looked round, but my doubts were only of a second. Then I knelt down against my stone bed and offered up a thanksgiving for my deliverance, and a fervent prayer for my future safety.

When I rose from my knees I became conscious that I was not alone. Seated upon a tomb a little distance from me, and attentively watching me, was an old gentleman dressed like a respectable farmer.

"Good morning, young man," he said, in a cheery voice; "you've had rather a cold bed, I'm thinking. I suppose you've been traveling all night?"

"Yes, sir," I answered. "From Bury."

"Why, that isn't more than ten miles! You should have had a little more sleep in your bed, my lad, and have started about this time. Enough to give you your death of cold to lie out here and go to sleep in the dew. You don't look very strong, either. Wherever you're going, you won't get on now till you've had a bit of breakfast."

I colored up at the mention of breakfast. I had not a farthing of money, and until I could dispose of the contents of my bundle, I could not procure a mouthful. I thanked him, took up my bundle, wished him good morning and turned to go.

"Stop, stop! come here a minute," he called out.

I advanced a few steps nearer to him. He scrutinized me more carefully than ever, with the expression of a man who was about to make a proposition of doubtful prudence.

"Here, here! you shall come and breakfast with me," he said, after a minute's pause. "I like the look of you, and I don't think you're a tramp."

I thanked him very much for his kindness, which, under the circumstances, I certainly had not strength of mind enough to decline. We left the churchyard and proceeded down a lovely green lane canopied with trees.

"I always rise at five," said the old gentleman, as we walked along; "and, unless it is very bad weather, take a walk as far as the churchyard. It's been my custom for many years, and, I suppose, will continue to be so until some morning I am carried there, never to come back again. Nothing like exercise, however, and the early morning air, to delay that little event; but not sleeping on tombstones," he added, with a laugh.

After about ten minutes' walk we stopped before a dor in a high garden wall, which my conductor opened with a key, and facing us at the end of a garden path was the prettiest cottage I had ever seen, very old-fashioned, and entirely covered with roses and woodbines, that loaded the whole air with delicious perfume. The garden was beautifully laid out in flower beds; on one side was a grape house, on the other a conservatory, filled with the most brilliant colored plants. The rays of the morning sun were slanting brightly across the scene, and imparting to it the most joyously cheerful air.

"How different to the house I have just left!" I thought.

"Pretty place, isn't it?" said the old gentleman.

"Sweetly pretty," I murmured.

He led the way into a little low-roofed room, darkened by the overhanging blossoms that hung thickly over the latticed window. It was comfortably, indeed, handsomely, furnished. The table was laid for breakfast. A second cup and saucer and plate were soon produced by a kind-looking, middle-aged woman, and I was soon sitting before a substantial meal of eggs and bacon, and cold beef, to be washed down by plenty of strong coffee. Never had food been so grateful to me before, and I certainly did ample justice to it. I could perceive that my host every now and then cast a curious glance at me, as though I presented something of a puzzle to him.

"Now, if I might be permitted to hazard a guess, I should fancy you were something in the parson line," he said, leaning back in his chair.

I disclaimed the honor.

"Well, it was the long hair and the queer-looking black clothes that put that idea into my head; and you look so serious for a lad of your years. I have it! You're a school usher."

I confessed that his last guess was correct.

"Ah, poor fellow! No wonder you look so miserable!" he said, compassionately. "It must be a hard life, and a badly paid one; and I suppose you've left your place? Where are you going now?"

"I am going to the city."

"You're friends there, I suppose?"

"I have one, sir, who I think will help me."

He must have thought me very close and churlish, to be so sparing of my answers after his kindness; but the fact is, that I was undecided at the moment whether I should make a clean breast of all my troubles to him; he seemed so kindly hearted that I felt sure he would pity me. But the natural reticence of my disposition, rather than any feeling of mistrust, prevented me.

"But you're not going to walk?" he questioned.

"Yes, sir. I have no other means of getting there. I have a suit of clothes in this bundle, that I intend to sell as soon as I come to a town," I faltered.

The old gentleman paused, and looked very hard at me—seemed, for a moment, to revolve an idea—and then said, "Leave the clothes with me. I don't want to look at them. I will lend you five dollars. That will take you to your friend, and leave some money to boot in your pocket. Any time you bring me or send me the money you shall have your clothes back again. A mile and a half from here is the railway station. In half an hour a train will stop there. You will be able to catch that comfortably. I will walk a little distance with you, and put you in the right path. Stop a minute, and I'll bring you the money."

Without waiting to listen to my fervent thanks, he left the room. Never in my life had I felt so light-hearted and hopeful.

I rose from the chair to take the clothes out of the handkerchief and smooth them, as they must have been somewhat crumpled by doing service as a pillow; also to take out the change of linen which I could not do without. In doing so, my eyes fell upon a portrait, hung in a dark corner of the room. It was that of a woman, with bright auburn hair, transparently fair complexion, blue eyes, a very beautiful, pensive face, with something in it that came back upon me like a memory. It seemed to me that I had seen that face somewhere. While I stood trying to remember, the old gentleman re-entered the room.

"Ah, you're looking at my poor girl's portrait," he said, in a sad voice.

"Your daughter's, sir?"

"Yes—my only one."

"Is she still living?" I asked, somewhat hesitatingly.

"She has been dead these eighteen years," he answered, sorrowfully.

"I must be mistaken; I was only an infant in arms at that time," I thought.

He gave me the money, but would not listen to my thanks.

"Tut, tut!" he said; "that's nothing. I'd give you more, if I really knew you were all right; but I have been so often taken in that I'm doubtful of everybody now. But I like your looks; but I've liked others that have been the property of great vagabonds."

(To be continued.)

DRAUGHT DOGS IN HOLLAND

Animal Does the Work of the Donkey in the Low Countries.

In Holland and Belgium the dog occupies the place which the donkey does in several other countries. In the former the sight of a couple of dogs dragging along a pushcart loaded with vegetables, flowers or shining milk cans is a familiar one. They trot along underneath the cart, within easy reach of the blunt toe of the sabot of the woman, who walks behind it to guide it by the handles attached at that point.

In Belgium the dogs are hitched in front, as the Russians attach their horses to their droskies, three abreast, and are guided by a pair of rope reins fastened to a muzzle about the nose of the dog in the middle.

Recently the National Cart Dog Association, organized to regenerate the original race of Belgian mastiffs, held its first exhibition of cart dogs. The Flemish breeders have found that in crossing the Belgian mastiffs with the Great Danes, with the idea of increasing the size of the cart dogs, and so securing additional strength, they made a mistake. The result proved to be animals with weak hindquarters and disproportionate limbs. Now they are endeavoring to revive the original stock.

The women and dogs of these two little countries are another evidence that human and canine nature are the same the world over. When one sees the white-capped Belgian milk woman with her dogs standing near a well, the woman having a battered can slung on her forearm, one instinctively becomes suspicious. The suspicion is confirmed when one discovers a policeman detaining at the roadside a pair of sulky-faced milkmaids, with their dog team and cart laden with slender-necked milk cans, while he jots their names in his little book against a charge of watering milk. When the cart comes to a standstill the dogs are no longer draught animals, but dogs. They sit or lie complacently down and loll their tongues from their open mouths. Apparently they have forgotten that they are animals intended for human companionship, but condemned to hard labor for life.

Cold-Blooded.

"I came very near freezing last night," said the mosquito.

"But it wasn't cold," protested the fly.

"No," rejoined the mosquito, "but I tackled a Boston man by mistake."

English is taught in the public schools of Japan. The Japanese youths in the towns and cities are all eager to learn English, as a passport to wealth, position and employment.

READY FOR PEACE

Grand Dukes Admit Inability to Cope with Japan.

TOO MUCH TROUBLE AT HOME

With Nation in Rebellion Reserves Cannot Be Sent to Cope with Those Sent by Japan.

London, Feb. 7. — The highest authority is claimed by the St. Petersburg correspondent of the London Daily Chronicle for the statement that the grand ducal party has suddenly decided that Russia must sue for peace.

The correspondent states that the grand dukes and their supporters have held frequent conferences of late at which they discussed the Far Eastern war and came to the conclusion that the country could not afford to continue the war under the present conditions. The immediate cause for this change of mind on the part of the very men who have right along stood in the way of peace is said to have been the recent disaster to the Russian arms on the Hun river.

Coupled with the news of this defeat has come to the grand dukes the realization that they cannot compete with Japan's ability to throw army after army into Manchuria, especially in view of the internal situation, which may render further mobilization of reservist troops almost impossible.

The correspondent states that, accordingly, the Russian embassy at Paris has been asked to gain the good will of Great Britain with a view to mitigating the terms which Japan is likely to impose.

STREET CAR OVERTURNS.

Portland Wreck Causes One Death and Thirty-one Injuries.

Portland, Feb. 7. — One man was killed and 31 persons injured, some of them fatally, by the wrecking of a car of the Portland Consolidated railway company on the Montavilla line, at the corner of East Twenty-eighth and East Glisan streets, at 7:20 o'clock yesterday morning. The accident occurred on a sharp curve at the base of a steep incline. The car's momentum was so great that it was unable to make the turn and was overturned. There were 66 passengers on the car at the time of the accident, the majority being business men and employes on their way to work in the heart of the city.

It is a question whether the motorman lost control of the car or whether he did not use the usual precautions until it was too late. Five blocks from the scene of the accident the car was running at a speed greatly in excess of the rate specified in the city ordinances governing street car traffic. One passenger, who stood on the front platform of the car beside the motorman, declares that no effort was made to govern the speed of the car until it was almost rounding the curve. The street car company says the brakes had been set as shown by the fact that the wheels were worn smooth by sliding.

READY TO FIGHT.

Warlike Talk of High British Official Causes Kaiser to Anger.

Berlin, Feb. 7.—At the foreign office it was said this afternoon that Germany would ask England for an explanation of the provocative anti-German speech made at East Leigh, February 2, by Arthur H. Lee, civil lord of the admiralty, in which he said that Britain would smash an unnamed enemy in the North sea before that enemy had time to realize that war had been declared. The foreign office said:

"We hope that nothing will result from Lee's speech. We prefer to believe he spoke more as a naval expert than as a statesman or cabinet officer. Yet it is impossible not to put a political construction upon his utterances. We shall, of course, take up the matter."

Will Fight Near Sandepas.

St. Petersburg, Feb 7. — Military operations in Manchuria continue at a standstill. No importance is attached by the war office to the Japanese movements on the Russian center and left, which are regarded as merely demonstrations. General Heisman, a war critic, expresses the opinion that the Russians are not likely to surrender the positions captured northeast of Sandepas, and that a series of encounters there will probably continue until the weather is favorable for a general advance.

Rivers and Harbors Next Week.

Washington, Feb. 7.— Although the river and harbor bill was reported to the house today, it will probably not be considered before next week. The naval appropriation bill is ahead of it and will be called up Thursday, when the railroad bill is disposed of. The naval bill will remain under consideration three or four days, shoving the river and harbor bill over until next Tuesday or Wednesday. Probably it will be passed about Feb. 15.

Russia Wants More Money.

London, Feb. 7.—It is stated in well informed financial circles in London that negotiations have been completed for floating a new Russian loan of $200,000,000 in Paris. The loan will bear interest at the rate of 5 per cent per annum. The date of the issue has not yet been fixed.

DOINGS IN CONGRESS.

Tuesday, January 31.

The senate today continued the consideration of the joint statehood bill with Nelson as the principal speaker. A number of bills were passed, including one largely increasing the fees for stock companies in the District of Columbia.

In the house the senate amendments to the army appropriation bill were disagreed to and the bill was sent to conference. Williams, (Dem., Miss.) started a lengthy debate by bringing up the treatment by General Miles of Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederacy, when he was a prisoner at Fortress Monroe. The postoffice appropriation bill was debated for an hour.

Wednesday, February 1.

Clark (Mont.,) Dillingham and Teller today continued the discussion of the joint statehood bill. Proctor reported the agricultural appropriation bill and gave notice that he would ask to have it considered. Bills were passed granting certain lands to the Oklahoma Agricultural college; amending the land laws so as to permit settlers on public lands to make transfers for public uses before completing title; amending existing laws so as to require captains of passenger vessels to supply information regarding the age and sex of immigrants.

The postoffice appropriation bill occupied the house the major portion of today. With an understanding that the discussion of the question should be continued tomorrow, the bill was laid aside and other matters taken up. The conference report on the fortifications bill was adopted. The bill carries $6,747,893.

Senator Ankeny will endeavor to have a provision made in the naval appropriation bill for the allowance of a differential of 4 per cent to Pacific coast shipyards competing on government warships contracts.

Thursday, February 2.

The postoffice appropriation bill was the main topic of discussion in the house today and its consideration was not completed. During the day bills were passed as follows: Amending the law so as to reduce the amount of bond required of agents acting for consignees on imported goods; providing for the construction of irrigation and reclamation works in certain lakes and rivers in Oregon and California; granting certain lands within the Flathead Indian reservation, Montana, to certain Catholic societies for religious purposes.

The senate spent much of today discussing the distribution of ordinary farm and garden seeds by the Agricultural department. When adjournment was taken consideration of the bill had not been completed. A further conference was ordered on the fortifications appropriation bill.

Friday, February 3.

The house today passed the postoffice appropriation bill, carrying $180,787,415.

In the senate today Judge Swayne made formal response to the articles of impeachment against him. The answer was a formidable document in point of size. In every case the charge was admitted, but explained from Judge Swayne's point of view, they were not of a character to justify proceedings for impeachment. The senate issued an order requiring the house to file its reply by next Monday, and directed that all pleadings shall be in by February 9, that the trial may proceed on February 10. The senate sitting as a court, then adjourned and resumed legislative consideration of the joint statehood bill. That topic occupied the rest of the day.

Saturday, February 4.

Long occupied most of the time given by the senate today to the statehood bill with a speech in support of the bill as it stands. There was an extended debate on a provision in the agricultural appropriation bill relating to forest reservations.

The house today passed the diplomatic and consular appropriation bill, carrying $2,107,047, which is an increase of $78,713 over the concurrent appropriation. A number of minor bills were disposed of by unanimous consent.

Monday, February 6.

Following weeks of hearings and consideraton by the committee on interstate and foreign commerce, the house today began debating the proposed legislation looking to the regulation of freight rates.

Debate on the joint statehood bill closed in the senate today.

Many Killed at Riga.

St. Petersburg, Feb. 3. — The latest reports received by Consul General Watts, from the American consuls in Russia, indicate a cessation of the trouble in most of the industrial centers. The consul at Riga reports that the rioting at that place was precipitated by students and rowdies, who fired on the police. The police and troops returned the fire, and 53 persons were killed and 150 wounded. At Reval the soldiers were obliged to defend a factory on Saturday against a mob. Three strikers were killed.

Sold Mining Stock on Routes.

Washington, Feb. 3. — Postmaster General Wynne today removed three letter carriers in the Toledo, O., postoffice, ordered a fourth man to show cause why he should not be removed, and suspended 30 other carriers, all of the Toledo office, for 30 days on the charge of selling mining stock and of collecting the assessments thereon. It is charged that the men sold this mining stock while on duty as carriers, as well as when off duty.