

# THE CASTAWAY

BY  
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This is the sixth installment of "The Castaway," by Hallie Erminie Rives, one of the most notable novelists of the day. "The Castaway" began on March 26 and will be concluded at an early date.

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WHEN she issued from the gate again she carried her birthday gift, a Bible, and a German magazine given her by the nun who had taught her that tongue in her heart she bore a far heavier burden, for in that hour she had held a child in her arms and listened to a story that had sunk into her soul. Her face was deathly white and her limbs dragged.

Calling to Tita to wait, she left the road and climbed a path that zigzagged up a wooded knoll overlooking the narcissus-scented valley and the hurrying river that flowed past the convent walls. The briars tore her hands, but she paid no heed, climbing breathlessly.

The sparser crown of the hillock was capped by shaggy vine-festoons and dappled by the shadow-play of firs, whose aged roots were covered with scalloped fungus growths. As a child this had been her favorite haunt. With one of these giant tree-fungi for a seat she had loved to day-dream, gazing down across the convent inclosure and the stream that flowed silvery on, past Ravenna, to the sea.

She stood a moment knee-deep in the bracken, her form tense with suffering, then dropped the books on the ground and throwing herself down, burst into tears. She wept long and passionately, in utter desolation.

She had listened to the Superior's story with her face buried in the child's frock, now burning, now drenched with cold. The touch had given her a wild delight and yet an agony unfeignable. As she lay she wept, tenderness and torture still mingled inextricably in her emotions. She knew now why Gordon had been in Ravenna that spring day. He had told the truth; it had been with no thought of her.

A sudden memory of his words in the casa garden came with sickening force: "By a tie that holds me, and by a bond you believe in, I have no right to stand here now." Was this the tie he had meant? No, the loving wife in England, but the mother of this child—a later, nearer one? When he had come that once to her, was it at best out of pity? Did he love this other woman? Was this why she herself had seen him no more?

Before the acute shaft of this pain the facts she had learned of his life in London fell unheeded. They belonged to that far dim past that he had forsaken and had forsaken her! But the one fact she knew now had to do with his present, here in Italy—the present that held her! She was facing for the first time in her life the hydra, elemental passion-jealousy. And in the grip of its merciless talons everything of truth in her wavered.

For a moment she lost hold on her own heart, her instinct, her trust in Gordon's words, the faith that had returned to her at San Lazzaro. What if all—all—what the whole world said, what this magazine told of him—were true after all, and she, desolate and grieving, the only one deceived? What if it were! She drew the magazine close to her tear-swollen eyes, only to thrust it from her desperately.

"No, no!" she said. "Not that! It is a lie! I will not believe it!" In her anguish she was flinging her arms aside and leaning against a tree. Her glance fell on the great saffron fungus that jutted, a crumpled half-disk, above its roots. Into the brittle shiny surface words had been etched with a sharp point—names in English, almost covered it. She began to read the unfamiliar tongue aloud, deciphering the words slowly at first, then with more confidence:

River, that rolls by the ancient walls, she said, "I loved it when I was a girl—only a year ago, how long it seems!—in the convent there!" He started. The fact explained her presence to-day. She had known those words that hid Allegra! It seemed to bring them immeasurably nearer. If he could only tell her! Reckless, uncaring as she knew a part of his past had been, could he bear to show her this concrete evidence of his dishonor?

Looking up at the pallid comeliness under its slightly graying hair, Teresa was feeling a swift, clairvoyant sense of the struggle that had kept him from her without understanding all its significance.

"I am glad I came in time," she continued. "A few days and the words will show no longer. I shall not need them then," she went on, her face faint. "I shall know them by heart. As soon as I read the first lines I knew they were yours—that you had been here."

"I am stopping at Bologna," he told her. "Ab, Madonna!" she said under her breath. "And you have been so near Ravenna!"

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### Barriers Burned Away.

Teresa came to her feet with a cry. Her mingled emotions were yet so recent that she had had no time to recover pose. Gordon's face was as strangely moved. Surprise edged it, but overlapping this was a something lambscent, desirous, summoned by sight of her tears.

In the first swift glimpse, through the fern fronds, of that agitated form bent above the fungus, he had noted the tokens of returning strength—and knew her present grief was from some cause nearer than the casa in Ravenna. These were not tears of mere womanly sensibility, called forth by the lines written there, for a shadow of pain was still lurking in her eyes. Was it grief for him? He tossed aside gloves and riding crop and drew her to a seat on the warm pine needles before he spoke:

"I did not imagine your eyes would ever see that!" She wiped away the telltale drops hastily, feeling a guilty relief to think he had misread them.

"This is an old haunt of mine," she said. "I loved it when I was a girl—only a year ago, how long it seems!—in the convent there!"

He started. The fact explained her presence to-day. She had known those words that hid Allegra! It seemed to bring them immeasurably nearer. If he could only tell her! Reckless, uncaring as she knew a part of his past had been, could he bear to show her this concrete evidence of his dishonor?

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"I am stopping at Bologna," he told her. "Ab, Madonna!" she said under her breath. "And you have been so near Ravenna!"

"Better it were a hundred leagues!" he exclaimed. "And yet—distant or near, it is the same. I think of you, Teresa! That is my punishment. Every day, as I have ridden through the pines, every hour as I have sat on this hill—and that has been often—I have thought of you!"

"I knew that!" she was gazing past him to the river and the far dusky amethyst of the hills—"when I read what is on the fungus."



"TITA, QUICKLY!  
HE IS  
WOUNDED."

you would. But I do not believe what it says! I cannot! You can never have done such things! Ah, is it not enough that I have had trust—even, she ended hurriedly, "though it would make no difference?"

His pulses were beating painfully. He drew her fingers gently from their hold and opened the magazine to a page turned down lengthwise. It was a critique of his drama of "Cain"—a sole fruit of that last year in Venice—which he had himself called a "drama of madness," and in sheer, mocking bravado had posted to John Murray, his publisher. He saw at a glance that the article was signed with the name of Germany's greatest mind, the famous Goethe.

She was trembling. "Remember," she said, "I have not asked you! I should never have asked you!" Gordon translated the cramped text with a strange lurid feeling, like coming in touch with an ancient past.

"The character of the author's life permits with difficulty a just appreciation of his genius. Scarcely any one compassionate at the suffering which cries out laboriously in his poems, since it arises from the phantoms of his own evil acts, which trouble him. When a bold and impetuous youth he stole the affections of a Florentine lady of quality. Her husband discovered the affair and slew his wife. But the murderer on the next night was found stabbed in death on the street, nor was there any one save the lover on whom it seemed suspicion could attach. The poet removed from Florence, but these unhappy spirits have haunted his whole life since."

He raised his eyes from the page. Her face was turned away, her hand pulling up the grass-spears in a pathetic apprehension.

"Teresa," he said in a smothered voice; "it is not true. I have never been in Florence."

"I knew—I knew!" she cried, and all her soul looked into his. She had not really credited. But the tangible allegation coming at the moment when her heart was wrenched with that convent discovery and warped from its orbit of instinct, had dismayed and disconcerted her. The balm she had longed for was not proof, it was only reassurance.

He closed the magazine. The feeling that had choked his utterance was swelling in his throat. For the rest of the world he cared little, but for her!

"Yes," she breathed, "all that, and more! I have not understood it quite, for our Italy is so different. But you have helped me understand it now! It was like this."

She picked up the Bible from where it had fallen and turned the pages quickly. "Listen," she said, and began to read:

"And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats. . . . And the goat on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the Lord, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness."

"And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness."

"And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited; and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness."

He had risen and now stood motionless before her.

She looked up as she finished. "So it was with you."

"No, Teresa, I have not seen her for two years."

An overmastering emotion, blent of bitterness and longing, surged through him, beating down constraint, blotting out all else, all that thrilled him finding its way into broken speech. In that moment he forgot himself and the past, forgot the present and what the convent held—forgot what bound them both—forgot grief and danger. London and Venice, Annabel, the master of Casa Guiccioli drew far off. There was nothing but this fragrant, Italian forest, this whispering glade above the blue rushing of the arrow river, this sun-drenched afternoon—and Teresa there beside him. With an impulse wholly irresistible he caught her to him, feeling her form sway toward him with fierce tumultuous gladness.

"Amor mio!" she breathed, and their lips clung into a kiss.

As she strained back in his embrace, letting the tide of love ripple over her, looking up into his face in desperate joy, something swift and flashing like a silver swallow darted through the air.

It sung between them—a Malay kris—and struck Gordon above the heart.

CHAPTER XL.

### The Oath on the Kris.

Teresa stood chained with horror—the cry frozen on her lips. As the silver flash had flown she had seen a dark, oriental face disappear between the bracken and had recognized it.

Gordon had shuddered as the blow struck, then stood perfectly still, his arms about her. In that instant he remembered the scene he had witnessed at the Ravenna osteria, and his heart said within him: "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?"

Her voice came then in a scream that woke the place and brought Tita rushing up the path.

gan the descent. She thought certainly along the difficult path, though every nerve was thrilling with agony, every mind-one incessant clamor. At the expense of his own heart he had stayed away. And this was what their chance meeting to-day had brought him.

Gordon was breathing hard at the foot of the hill. He had fought desperately to retain consciousness, but a film was clouding his eyes.

"It is only a few steps now," she said, "to the carriage."

He stopped short.

"You must obey me," she insisted wildly. "It is the only way! You must go to Ravenna!"

"Tita—bring my horse!"

It was the last stubborn flash of the will, fainting in physical eclipse. With the words his hand fell heavily from her shoulder and Tita caught him in his arms.

At a sign from Teresa the servant lifted him into the carriage.

"Home!" she commanded, "and drive swiftly."

Through the miles of rapid motion under the ebon shadow deepening to twilight she sat, chafing. Gordon's hands, her eyes, widened with a great suspense upon the broadening stain crimsoning his waistcoat.

In that interminable ride her soul passed through a furnace of transformation. The touch of his lips upon hers had been the one deathless instant of life's unfolding. In that kiss she had felt poured out all the virginal freshness of a love renaissance and completely no more to be withheld than a torrent leaping to the sea. But the awful instant that followed, with its first glimpse into the hideous limbo of possibilities, showed her all else that might be in that love, of the irreparable, the disastrous, the infinitely terrifying. Her marriage had been a baleful bond of ring and book, seasoned with hate, empty of sanctity. His had been sunk somewhere in the black slough of the past, a stark dead thing. That they two should love each other—she had imagined no further. She had known her own heart, but the hour on the hill had been the complete surety that Gordon loved her fully in return.

Born of his extremity, there swelled in her now the wondrous instinct of the lionses that is a part of every woman's nature. It leaped her its courage. All fear, save the one suppressing dread that gnawed her heart, slipped from her.

Day fell before they reached the town, and in the quiet street the freight of the carriage was not so stiff. Before the entrance of Casa Guiccioli stood her father's chaise.

Count Gamba met her in the hall, to start at her strained look and at the pallid face of the man Tita carried in. He turned to her with a look behind him; by this she knew her husband was returned.

She scarcely heeded her father's ejaculations. "Bring linen and water quickly to the large chamber, blotting out the large chamber and garden wing," she directed, "and send for Doctor Aglietti."

Paolo went stealthily to inform his master.

When Count Guiccioli crossed the threshold of the candle-lighted room he came upon a strange scene. Teresa bent over the bed, her face colorless as a mask. Her father, opposite, to whom she had as yet told nothing, was tying a temporary bandage. Between them lay the inert form of the man against whom his own morbid rage had been amassing. His eyes flared. Where had she found him? Had Trevanion bungled or betrayed? Did she guess? And guessing, had she brought him to this house, in satanic irony, to die before his very sight?

straightened with all the dignity and pride of a face.

Teresa's answer rang with a subtle, electric energy. "That is false! You never asked—only accused. Believing all falsehood of me, you have made every day of my life in your house a separate purgatory. I have kept silent thus long, even to my father. Now I speak before him. Father," she said with sudden passion, "he has believed this since my wedding day. There is scarcely an hour since then that he has not heaped insult and humiliation upon me. I will bear it no longer! I have already appealed to the Curia."

Her eyes transfixed her husband. "How shall I may not leave your roof to nurse this man, so I have brought him here. What you have believed of myself and of him is false. But now, if you will hear the truth, I will tell you I do love him! I love him as I love my life—and more, the blessed Virgin knows!—a million times more!"

As she spoke her passion made her beauty extraordinary. It smote her father with appealing force and with a pang at his own ambitious part in her wedding. He had thought of rank and station, not of her happiness.

"You shall answer to me, Count, for this," he said sternly.

"No, father!"

Count Gamba looked at her questioning. He faced Count Guiccioli as Teresa went on:

"This is what I demand: If he lives he shall stay here till he is well. Not as a guest, he would accept no hospitality from this house. He shall hold this wing of the casa under rental."

There was a moment's pause.

"The assent was grudging and wrathful."

"One thing more. So long as he is in the casa you will cause him no physical harm—neither you nor your servants."

While he hesitated a sound came from the bed. Gordon's eyes were open; they held faint but conscious knowledge.

From the abyss of nothingness those voices had called to him, like conversation in a dream. Sight had opened more fully and he had stared at the gilded rafters, puzzled. This was not the Hotel Pellegrino in Bologna. He stirred and felt a twinge of pain.

With the voices grown articulate, it came flashing back—that one kiss; the flying dart of agony; the dizzy descent; Tita and Teresa. He suddenly saw a face; the old man at San Lazzaro, Teresa's husband. He shut his eyes to drive away the visions, and her clear tones called them wide again.

He knew fully and understandingly then; knew that Trevanion and Count Guiccioli had made common cause; realized the course with which Teresa had brought him to her husband's casa—all with a bitter-sweet pain of helplessness and protest against the logic of circumstances that had thrust him into the very position that by all arguments looking to her ultimate happiness he must have avoided. He heard her voice demand that grudging promise of his safety. It was then he had moaned—less with physical than mental pain.

Teresa leaned to the bed, where Gordon had lifted himself on his elbow. The effort dislodged the bandage and its edges reddened swiftly. He strove to speak, but the effort sickened him and he fell back on the pillow.

Teresa turned again upon Count Guiccioli. "Swear it, or all I know Ravenna shall know to-morrow!" She held the kris toward him, hilt up, like a Calvary, but the effort sickened him and his bent fingers touched his breast.

## CHAPTER XLII.

### Ashes of Denial.

Days went by. Summer was merging into full-bosomed autumn of turquoise heavens, more luscious foliage and ripening olives.

Gordon's wound had proven deep, but luckily not too serious, thanks to a rough fragment of stone in his pocket, which the surgeon declared had turned the heavy blade, and which Teresa had carried with secret kisses and not carefully away. But his weakness from loss of blood a tertian ague had added its high temperature, and strength had been long in returning.

He had hours of delirium when Teresa and Fletcher—whom Tita had brought from Bologna with Gordon's belongings—alternately sat by his bedside. Sometimes they had in some strange yet musical stanzas which she was able to set down. It was a subconscious bubbling up from the slithered well of melody within him; a clouded rivulet, finding an unused way along the turbid channels of fever.

More often Gordon seemed to be living again in his old life—with Hobhouse in the Greece that he had loved—in London at White's Club with Beau Brummell, or with Sheridan, or Tom Moore at the Cocoa-Tree. At such times Teresa seemed to comprehend what his strivings and agonies, and wept tears of pity and yearning.

Often, too, he muttered of Annabel and Ada, and then the fierce jealousy that had once before come to her assailed her anew. It was not a jealousy now, however, of any one person; it was a stifling, passionate resentment of that past of his into which she could not enter. In your remembrance so clear that if he dies you think to escape what I shall say?"

A greenish hue had overspread the fery hollow of the old Count's face, ghastly under the candles. She had touched two vulnerable points at once—cupidity and fear. Something too, in what she said brought a swift unwelcome memory. He recalled another—a poet, also—Manzoni, the Italian, dead by a hired assassin in Forlì years before; in the night sometimes still that man's confederate asked? In your remembrance so clear that if he dies you think to escape what I shall say?"

Early in his betterment a subtle inducement not to hasten the going he knew was inevitable ambushed Gordon. He found folded in a writing tablet, lying motionless and sealed, a letter which he occupied. The signature was his own, added. He readily guessed, during his fever. The stupor had departed, and the old Count had comforted his covetous soul. The thought to which he yielded, however, was the reflection that to depart without showing himself to Ravenna—whose untraveled gossips had made of his illness at the casa a topic of interest—would neither conceal the real situation nor make easier Teresa's position. He prolonged his stay, therefore, riding with her at the hour of the corso in the great coach and six, and later appearing at the conversation of the viceregents and at the provincial opera, to hear the "Barber of Seville" or Alfieri's "Filippo."

One day a child in Teresa's care rode from the convent of Sagnacavallo to a father whom she had never