THE CASTAWAY

by HALLIE ERMINIE RIVES

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Gordon closed his eyes. Such a narrow span between this life and the unbridged gulf, between the old questioning and the great solution. An hour, and he should test the worth of Dallas' creed, should know if the friar of San Lazzarro had been right. An hour, and life would be behind him, with its errors ended, its longings quenched.

Its largest endeavor had been defeated: that was the closest sting. In his weakness all else sank away beside the thought that he had tried—and failed. Even the one blow he might not strike. The nation was in straits, the loan delayed, the campaign unopened. He caught the murmurs of the crowds in the courtyard. His lips framed words: "My poor Greece! Who shall lead you now?"

Yet he had done his best, given his all, even his love. She, Teresa, would know and hold his effort dear because she loved him. But there was another woman—in England—who had hated and despised him. He had piled upon her the mountain of his curse, and that curse had been forgiveness. Must her memory of him be always bitterness? In the fraying fringe of life past resentments were worn pitifully small. Should he go without one tenderer word to Annabel?

He tried to lift himself. "Fletcher!" he said aloud.

The old valet, shaken with emotion, came forward as the others turned away.

"Listen, Fletcher. You will go back to England. Go to my wife—you will see Ada—tell my sister—say—"

His voice had become indistinct and the phrases ran together. Only fragmentary words could be distinguished: "Ada"—"my child"—"my sister"—"Hobhouse." His speech flashed into coherence at last as he ended: "Now I have told you all."

"My dear lord," sobbed the valet, "I have not understood a word!"

Pitiful distress overspread Gordon's features. "Not understood?" he said with an effort. "Then it is too late!" He sank back. Fletcher, blind with grief, left the room.

A subdued commotion rose unwontedly beneath the windows. Mavrocordato spoke hurriedly to an orderly who had just come to the door. "Have they not been told?" he whispered. "What is the matter?"

Through the closing darkness Gordon's ear caught a part of the low reply. "What did he say?" he asked.

Mavrocordato approached the couch. "Some one has come in a vessel bringing a vast fortune for Greece."

The dimming eyes flared up with joyful exultation. The cause was not lost then. The armament could go on—the fleet be strengthened, the forces held together till the loan came—till another might take his place.

A sound of footsteps fell on the stair—there was a soft knock. The orderly's voice demanded the password.

If there was reply, none of the watchers heard it. Gordon had lifted himself on his elbow, his head turned with a sudden, strange expectancy. "The password?" he said distinctly.—"it is here!" He laid his hand upon his heart.

A sobbing cry answered and a woman crossed swiftly to the couch and knelt beside it.

A great light came to Gordon's countenance. "Teresa!" he gasped. "Teresa—my love!"

The effort had brought exhaustion. He sank back, feeling his head pillowed upon her breast. He smiled and closed his eyes.

A friar had followed her into the room. Mavrocordato beckoned the wondering surgeons to the door. They passed out, and young Gamba, after one glance at his sister, followed. The friar drew near the couch, crucifix in hand, his lips moving silently. The door closed.

After the one cry which had voiced that beloved name, Teresa had made no sound. She cradled Gordon's head in her arms, watching his face with a fearful tenderness. From the court came the hushed hum of many people, from the stair low murmur of voices; behind her she heard Padre Somalian's breathed prayer. Her heart was bleeding with a bitter pain. Now and again she touched the damp brow, like blue-veined marble, and warmed the cold hands between her own as she had done in that direful ride when her arms had held that body, bleeding from a kriss.

The day was declining and the air filled with shadows. The storm that had hung in the sky had begun to mutter in rolling far-off thunder, and the sun, near to setting, made a lurid flame at the horizon-bars. Gordon stirred and muttered, and at length opened his eyes upon the red glare. He heard the echoes of the clouds, like distant artillery.

With the energy of delirium he sat up. He began to talk wildly, in a singular jumble of languages: "Forward! Forward! Courage—strike for Greece! It is victory!"

The hallucination of weakness had given him his supreme desire. He was leading the assault on Lepanto.

"My son"—the friar's voice spoke—"there are other victories than of war. There is that of the agony and the cross."

The words seemed to strike through the delirium of the revered fantasies and calm them. The dying man's eyes fastened on the speaker with a vague inquiry. There was silence for a moment, while outside the chamber a grizzled servant knelt by a group of officers, his seamed face wet with tears, and from the courtyard rose the plaintive howl of a dog.

Through the deepening abyss of Gordon's senses the crumbling memory was groping for an old recollection that stirred at the question. Out of the maze grew sentences which a voice like that had once said: "Every man bears a cross of despair to his Calvary. He who bore the heaviest saw beyond. What did he say?—"

The failing brain struggled to recall. What did he say? He saw dimly the emblem which the friar's hand held—an emblem that had hung always somewhere, somewhere in a fading Paradise of his. It expanded, a sad, dark Calvary against olive foliage gray as the ashes of the Gethsemane agony—the picture of the ternal suffering of the Prince of Peace.

"Not—my will, but thine."

The words fell faintly from the wan lips, scarce a murmur in the stirless room. Gordon's form, in Teresa's clasp, seemed suddenly to grow chill. She did not see the illumination that transformed the friar's face, nor hear the door open to her brother and Mavrocordato. She was deaf to all save the moan of her stricken love, blind to all save that face that was slipping from life and her.

Gordon's hand fumbled in his breast and drew something forth that fell from his nerveless fingers on to the bed—a curling lock of baby's hair and a worn fragment of paper on which was a written prayer. She understood, and, lifting them, laid them against his lips.

His eyes smiled once into hers and his face turned wholly to her, against her breast.

"Now," he whispered, "I shall go—to sleep."

A piteous cry burst from Teresa's heart as the friar leaned forward. But there was no answer. George Gordon's eternal pilgrimage had begun.

CHAPTER LXIII.

The Great Silence.

Blaquiere stood beside Teresa in the windowed chamber which had been set apart for her, overlooking the courtyard.

All in that Grecian port knew of her love and the purpose that had upheld her in her journey. To the forlorn town her wordless grief seemed a tender intimate token of a loss still but half comprehended. It had surrounded her with an unvarying thoughtfulness that had fallen gently across her anguish. She had listened to the muffled rumble of cannon that the wind brought across the marshes from the stronghold of Patras, where the Turks rejoiced. She had seen the palled bier, in the midst of Gordon's own brigade, borne on the shoulders of the officers of his corps to the Greek Church, to lie in state beside the remains of Botzaris—had seen it borne back to its place amid the wild mourning of half-civilized tribesmen and the sorrow of an army.

The man she had loved had carried into the Great Silence a people's worship and a nation's tears. Now as she looked out across the massed troops with arms at rest—across the crowded docks and rippling shallows to the sea, where two ships rode the swells side by side, she hugged this thought closer and closer to her heart. One of these vessels had borne her hither and was to take her back to Italy. The other, a ship-of-the-line, had brought the man who stood beside her, with the first installment of the English loan. It was to bear to an English sepulture the body of the exile to whom his country had denied a living home. Both vessels were to weigh with the evening tide.

Blaquiere, looking at the white face that gazed seaward, remembered another day when he had heard her singing to her harp from a dusky garden. He knew that her song would never again fall with such a cadence.

At length he spoke, looking down on the soldiery and the people that waited the passing to the water-side of the last cortege.

"I wonder if he sees—if he knows, as I know, Contessa, what the part he acted here shall have done for Greece? In his death faction has died, and the enmities of its chiefs will be buried with him forever!"

Her eyes turned to the sky, reddening now to sunset. "I think he knows," she answered softly.

Padre Somalian's voice behind them intervened: "We must go aboard presently, my daughter."

She turned, and as the friar came and stood looking down beside Blaquiere, passed out and crossed the hall to the room wherein lay her dead.

She approached the bier—a rude chest of wood upon rough trestles, a black mantle serving for pall. At its head, laid on the folds of a Greek flag, were a sword and a simple wreath of laurel. A dull roar shook the air outside—the minute-gun from the grand battery firing a last salute—and a beam of fading sunlight glanced through the window and turned to a fiery globe a glittering helmet on the wall.

Gently, as though a sleeping child lay beneath it, she withdrew the pall and white shroud from the stainless face. She looked at it with an infinite yearning, while outside the minute-gun boomed and the great bell of the Greek church tolled slowly. Blaquiere's words were in her mind.

"Do you know, my darling?" she whispered. "Do you know that Greece lives because my heart is dead?"

She took from her bosom the curl of flaxen hair and the fragment of paper that had fallen from his chilling fingers and put them in his breast. Then stooping, she touched in one last kiss the unanswering marble of his lips.

At the threshold she looked back. The golden glimmer from the helmet fell across the face beneath it with an unearthly radiance. A touch of woman's pride came to her—the pride that sits upon a broken heart.

"How beautiful he was!" she said in a low voice. "Oh, God! How beautiful he was!"

CHAPTER LXIV.

"Of Him Whom She Denied a Home, the Grave."

Greece was nevermore a vassal of the Turk. In the death of the archistrategos who had so loved her cause, the chieftains put aside quarrels and buried private ambitions—all save one. In the stone chamber at Missolonghi wherein that shrouded form had lain, the Suliote chiefs swore fealty to Mavrocordato and the constitutional government as they had done to George Gordon.

Another had visited that chamber before them. This was a dark-bearded man in Suliote dress, who entered it unobserved while the body of the man he had so hated lay in state in the Greek church. Trevanion forced the sealed door of the closet and examined the papers it contained. When he took horse for Athens, he bore with him whatever of correspondence and memoranda might be fuel for the conspiracy of Ulysses—and a roll of manuscript, the completion of "Don Juan," which he tore to shreds and scattered to the four winds on a flat rock above a deep pool a mile from the town. He found Ulysses a fugitive, deserted by his faction, and followed him to his last stronghold, a cavern in Mount Parnassus.

But fast as Trevanion went, one went as fast. This was a young Greek who had ridden from Salona to Missolonghi with one Lambro, primate of Argos. Beneath the beard and Suliote attire he recognized Trevanion, and his brain leaped to fire with the memory of a twin sister and the fearful fate of the sack to which she had once been abandoned. From an ambush below the entrance of Ulysses' cave, he shot his enemy through the heart.

On the day Trevanion's sullen career was ended, along the same highway which Gordon had traversed when he rode to Newstead on that first black home-coming, a single carriage followed a leaden casket from London to Nottinghamshire.

In its course it passed a noble country-seat, the hermitage of a woman who had once burned an effigy before a gay crowd in Almack's Assembly Rooms. Lady Caroline Lamb, diseased in mind as in body, discerned the procession from the terrace. As the hearse came opposite she saw the crest upon the pall. She fainted and never again left her bed.

The cortege halted at Hucknall Church, near Newstead Abbey, and there the earthly part of George Gordon was laid, just a year from the hour he had bidden farewell to Teresa in the Pisan garden, where now a lonely woman garnered her deathless memories.

At the close of the service the two friends who had shared that last journey—Dallas, now grown feeble, and Hobhouse, recently knighted and risen to political prominence—stood together in the lantern-lighted porch.

"What of the Westminster chapter?" asked Dallas. "Will they grant the permission?"

A shadow crossed the other's countenance. Popular feeling had undergone a great revulsion, but clerical enmity was outspoken and undying. He thought of a bitter philippic he had heard in the House of Lords from the Bishop of London. His voice was resentful as he answered:

"The dean has refused. The greatest poet of the age and country is denied even a tablet on the wall of Westminster Abbey!"

The kindly eyes under their white brows saddened. Dallas looked out through the darkness where gloomed the old Gothic towers of Newstead, tenantless, save for their raucous colonies of rooks.

"The greatest poet of his age and country!" he repeated slowly. "After all, we can be satisfied with that."

AFTERMATH.

Springs quickened, summers sped their hurrying blooms, autumns hung scarlet flags in the coppice, winters fell and mantled glebe and moor. Yet the world did not forget.

There came an April day when the circumstance of a sudden shower set down from an open carriage at the porch of Newstead Abbey a slender girl of seventeen, who had been visiting at near-by Annesley.

Waiting in the library the passing of the rain, the visitor picked up a book from the table. It was "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage."

For a time she read with tranquil interest—then suddenly startled:

Is thy face like thy mother's, my fair child!
Ada! sole daughter of my house and heart?
When last I saw thy young blue eyes they smiled,
And then we parted—not as now we part,
But with a hope.

She looked for the name of its author and paled. Thereafter she sat with parted lips and tremulous, long breathing. The master of the house entered to find an unknown guest reading in a singular rapt absorption.

Her youth and interest beckoned his favorite topic. He had been one of the strangers who, year by year in increasing numbers, visited the little town of Hucknall—travelers who, speaking the tongue in which George Gordon had written, trod the nave of the quiet church with veneration. He had purchased Newstead and had taken delight in gathering about him in those halls mementoes of the man whose youth had been spent within them.

While the girl listened with wide eyes on his face, he told her of the life and death of the man who had written the book. He marveled while he talked, for it appeared that she had been reared in utter ignorance of his writings, did not know that he had lived beneath that very roof, nor that he lay buried in the church whose spire could be seen from the mole. He waxed eloquent as he told her how the gilded rank and fashion of London had found comfort in silence—how Tom Moore, long since become one of its complacent satellites, had read its wishes well; how he had stood in a locked room and given the smug seal of his approbation while secret flame destroyed the self-justification of a dead man's name, the Memoirs which had been a last bequest to a living daughter.

The shower passed, the sun came out rejoicing—still the master of the Abbey talked. When he had finished he showed his listener a portrait, painted by the American, Benjamin West. When she turned from this, her face was oddly white; she was thinking of another portrait hidden by a curtain, which had been one of the unsolved mysteries of her childhood.

On her departure her host drove with her to Hucknall Church, and standing in the empty chancel she read the marble tablet set into the wall:

IN THE VAULT BENEATH
LIE THE REMAINS OF
GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON,
THE AUTHOR OF "CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE."
HE WAS BORN IN LONDON ON THE 22ND OF JANUARY, 1788.
HE DIED AT MISSOLONGHI IN WESTERN GREECE, ON THE 19TH OF APRIL, 1824.
ENGAGED IN THE GLORIOUS ATTEMPT TO RESTORE THAT COUNTRY TO HER ANCIENT FREEDOM AND RENOWN.

HIS SISTER PLACED THIS TABLET TO HIS MEMORY.

A long time the girl stood silent, her features quivering with some strange emotion of reproach and pain. Behind her she heard her escort's voice. He was repeating lines from the book she had been reading an hour before:

My hopes of being remembered are entwined
With my land's language: if too fond and far
These aspirations in their scope inclined—
If my fame should be, as my fortunes are,
Of hasty blight, and dull Oblivion bar
My name from out the temple where the dead
Are honored by the nations—let it be—
And light the laurels on a loftier head!
Meantime, I seek no sympathies, nor need;
The thorns which I have reaped are of the tree
I planted. They have torn me—and I bleed.

My task is done—my song hath ceased—my theme
Has died into an echo; it is fit
The spell should break of this protracted dream.
The torch shall be extinguished which hath lit
My midnight lamp—and what is writ, is writ.
Farewell! word that must be, and hath been—
A sound which makes us linger;—yet—farewell!

Ye! who have traced the Pilgrim to the scene
Which is his last, if in your memories dwell
A thought which once was his, if on ye swell
A single recollection, not in vain
He wore his sandal-shoon, and scallop-shell!

Could he whose ashes lay beneath that recording stone have seen the look on the girl's face as she listened—could he have seen her shrink that night from a woman's contained kiss—he would have known that his lips had been touched with prophecy when he said:

"The smiles of her youth have been her mother's, but the tears of her maturity shall be mine!"

(The End)

WHAT HAPPENED to the GOOD EXAMPLE

ONCE upon a time there were two brothers more or less related in blood, but not in anything else. The eldest, who rejoiced in the euphonious cognomen of Reginald, was everything that his name would have prepared you not to expect. The psychology of names is too deep a subject for my feeble intellect to penetrate at this stage of the game, but if I only had time to go into it properly, say an hour and a half some afternoon, I am sure that I could discover profound and far-reaching truths of tremendous importance to the human race. At any rate, it is a very peculiar state of affairs that no one should ever expect anything but sugar-coated perfection from a young gentleman struggling onward and upward bearing the name of Reginald. Personally I am of the opinion that if my sponsors in baptism had inflicted any such indignity on me I should have lived only to get even with them, if I had to start a magazine and expose them in order to satisfy my thirst for revenge.

However, as I remarked some time ago, Reginald had a brother. This brother's name was John. Now if there is one name in all this world of care which is calculated to arouse confidence and a childlike trust in the honesty and intelligence of the wearer of it, it is John. Even Theodore is no better than a fair second with John, and Alton is hopelessly lost in the dust.

As Reginald and John grew to manhood it was clearly discerned by their parents and admiring friends that the former was destined to contribute materially to the gayety of the town, especially around midnight, and would probably add largely to the stock of carmine in which the community was shrouded for a good part of the year. On the other hand, and even farther away than that, there was John. John was undeniably designed by nature to be a comfort to his parents and a prop to their declining years. Every single night found him planted close beside the family hearth reading Macaulay or the North American Review. He never stayed out after 10 unless the executive committee of the Young Men's Christian Association sat unusually long in extra session, debating the advisability of serving coffee or cocoa at the next sociable. Take it all in in all, John was everything that a son should be.

Time flowed along as it has been in the habit of doing for lo these many years and Reginald and John pursued their customary vocations and avocations with varying degrees of assiduity and success. His parents did not know it, but John had been looking with a brotherly eye upon the ways of sin in which the feet of Reginald were straying, and taking counsel with himself as to how he might best persuade them therefrom. The result of these careful cogitations was an announcement one evening that he intended to sally forth with Reginald and see if he couldn't win him from his evil courses by degrees. Reginald didn't seem particularly excited over the prospect of being coaxed into righteousness, but he couldn't very well make a kick in the presence of the old folks.

As soon as they were out of sight of the house he demanded to know what was up. Being naturally a suspicious individual and having seen more or less of the world here and there he wasn't at all taken in by John's polite talk about saving his brother from the evil one. John put a good face on the matter and informed Reginald that he considered a knowledge of the other side of life as an essential part of a liberal education; it didn't seem to bother him at all when Reginald demanded to know why he considered him a competent instructor in the ways of life on the other side of society. "What do you take me for," inquired Reginald in cutting accents, "an amateur guide to Chinatown or a plain clothes man in disguise? Can your feeble intellect grasp the idea that I don't know any more about the ways of sin—that is, real, dyed in the wool sin—than you do? If you think I'm going to have any scion of the Association for the Feminization of the Young Men of America grabbing me by the coat tails every time I fall by the wayside for a quiet game of pool or sit into an inoffensive seance of penny ante with a 5-cent limit, you're distinctly barking up the wrong tree. Back to the fireside for yours. When I need a guardian I'll hire one from a ladies' seminary who can take real care of me and see that I don't get run down by an automobile or injure my mind by reading too much exciting literature."

But John was not to be shaken. Far back in the innermost recesses of his alleged mind he was maturing a scheme, and Reginald's assistance was necessary to its proper working out. Therefore he made that soft answer which is properly supposed to take the keen edge off righteous indignation. All that he asked was that he might be allowed to accompany his dear brother and see that no serious harm befell him.

It didn't take Reginald more than three nights to discover John's little plot. The real secret at the bottom of his sudden interest in his brother's welfare was that he had grown weary of the life of peace and order and good work that he had been leading and was determined to do a litle busticating on his own hook. The discovery so shocked Reginald that he reformed on the spot and went straight back home to take his brother's place by the family hearth.

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