The CASTLE of LIES

BY ARTHUR HENRY VESEY

CHAPTER XXXV.—Continued.

"That is not necessary," assured Starva. "Let all these candles be snuffed except those in the candelabrum that stands at the head of the staircase. Bring your man, Jacques, to that point and no farther. We shall see him; but he will not be able to see us."

Fortune was favoring us indeed. Locke and I silently bestirred ourselves. Now at last had come the moment for action. But still another grumbled; and still fortune favored us.

"That is all very well," objected Ignatieff. "And perhaps a traitor may strike a blow in the dark. I for one refuse to gratify the curiosity of Kuhn in this matter."

"But Starva was determined to have his way.

"To prevent that," he answered, "each of us will lay his weapons on the table at the end of the hall."

There were cries of fierce dissent. Starva silenced them with an angry gesture.

"One moment, friends," he purred. "You do not quite understand. When we first came into this room I suggested that lots should be drawn, and he who was favored with the lucky number should fire, concealed in the gloom, that none might be sure who had been chosen to snuff out Ferdinand's little soul. But since our friend Kuhn's loyalty has been questioned, it is he who shall have that honor, and with Gornji's dagger he shall do the work. And lest an accident should happen, or lest his courage should fail him, Bratinau and I will keep our revolvers. I think there is none to question our loyalty?"

Kuhn had grown frightfully pale; he trembled. But he spoke no word.

"By this arrangement," continued Starva, "the loyalty of Kuhn of Macedonia will be established. And if," he was glaring at Gingaja and Count Piteschti," there are any mad enough to dream of disloyalty at this late hour, and harbor treachery, they will be powerless.

Starva's ruse was hailed with shouts of approval. Gornji, Ignatieff, and Gortschakoff strode to the table at the end of the hall and flung down their weapons defiantly. Gingaja reluctantly followed their example. Piteschti folded his arms defiantly, standing motionless.

"This is child's play," he muttered, with pale lips.

"Nevertheless," whispered Bratinau in his ear, "you will obey, and quickly. By all the saints, Starva, I think your plan has proved a wise one. Come, sir, we are waiting. Or are you so ignorant of the rules of etiquette that you insist in taking precedence over a king?"

With a gesture of despair Count Piteschti walked slowly to the table and left his revolver there.

"Now, friend Kuhn, we are waiting only for you!" cried Starva sharply.

"I have no arms," answered the poor wretch, with a sob.

"You shall be armed presently," cried Gornji.

"Now, Jaques, you may go. Out with the candles, Gornji and Ignatieff. The rest of you remain quietly as you value your lives. You will find your man defenseless, Jacques. But if he proves troublesome, you have only to call and I will come. You have taken care of Alphonse?"

"I have put him to sleep," he chuckled.

As Jaques lifted the tapestry Locke choked him into silence. Together we carried him struggling up the hidden staircase and burst into the anteroom of the tower. Not until we had flung him breathless into the room of the safe, and had locked the door, did we answer Forbe's frenzied questions. Locke gripped his arm for silence.

"Quick, there is not a moment to lose. Have you arms?"

"No," growled Forbes, ready for action.

"In the first room to the right of the corridor," panted Madame de Varnier. "In the drawer of the cabinet near the door."

"Then come. And you two stay here. There is man's work below."

We stole silently down the stairs, Locke and myself in the lead, to the cabinet, where both Locke and Forbes chose their revolvers.

"Do you, Capt. Forbes, make your way along the gallery until you come to the spiral staircase at the end of the hall," I commanded, briefly. "When I appear at the main stairway with Locke, reach the hall with no delay. There is a table by the little stairway; there are arms on it; let no one approach that table until Locke or myself have reached your side. Now then, Locke, are we ready?"

We had filed silently into the corridor. Forbes sped with caution to his vantage ground. Locke was already approaching the main staircase when I seized him by the arm.

"I am going to fool Starva I am going to call for help. He will think it Jacques. As he comes, I shall take care of him. Bratinau is your man. Wait till he shows himself, and mind you, aim straight."

I raised my voice in a cry of distress.

"A moi, Starva!"

My trick succeeded admirably. Starva bounded up the staircase. As he showed himself in the light of the candelabrum I fired. He fell headlong without a groan. Locke stood at the head of the staircase waiting. I peered down in the darkness below.

Forbes' revolver rang out again and again. The uproar was terrible.

"Kuhn! Gingaja! Piteschti! To the staircase!" I cried in French.

That was the last I knew of our melee.

I sank gently to my knees behind the antique rug. Bratinau's bullet had struck me.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"Honor, My Sword."

I awoke to consciousness to find myself in the music room. I opened my eyes languidly. Helen was bending over me.

"What is it?" I murmured. "Yes, I remember—the fight on the staircase."

"I struggled to my feet, but sank back dizzily, my hands to my aching forehead.

"Thank God you are alive, and it is all over!" cried Helen, brokenly.

"And Ferdinand is safe?"

"Quite safe and unhurt. Already he has left the chateau. Capt. Forbes will tell you everything presently.

"I have been unconscious so long? Am I wounded? I feel no pain, only this headache and dizziness."

"A bullet grazed your temple—an eighth of an inch more—" She shuddered. "It wounded you only slightly, but you have been unconscious nearly an hour."

"My usual luck," I cried, bitterly. "It was to have been my chance; I hoped to retrieve myself; and I am winged the first shot. Fate is determined, it seems, that I shall stick to my role of coward."

"Don't, don't ever say that horrible word again!" cried Helen, passionately. "It was your shot that killed Starva. It is you who have saver Ferdinand; it is you who have saved for me the honor of my poor brother so far as the world can know. How can I ever be grateful enough?"

"Helena" I cried, passionately, "you remember at Lucerne, on the terrace, when I told you of Willoughby's death, how he had died calling me coward, it was you that pointed out to me a way of escape—you told me how I could regain the self-respect I thought I had lost forever. It was to be a life for a life, you said. When I had saved a life for the life that was lost through my cowardice, I was to stand once more upright among men. Tell me, you despise me no longer?"

"Despise you!" she murmured. "If you knew how I honored you!"

"Ah, it is worth while to hear you say that. But you must say more, infinitely more than that now, dear, to satisfy me. Helena, I thought only a week ago that if I could win your respect I should be happy. But now I want your love."

"Don't!" she cried in pain ."How can you speak of love at such an hour!"

"Forgive me. What a selfish brute I am. But by the by—when time has softened your bitter pain—in happier days may I come to you?"

"Happier days!" She clasped her hands in quick despair, looking beyond me as if into a future that must be always dark for her.

"Yes," I said, passionately, "there shall yet be happier days for you and for me. Do you remember on the terrace the little beacon light in the far-off mountains? That was my star. It comforted me then; it bids me hope now; it tells me, Helena, you love me."

"Never!" She withdrew the hand I had held almost fiercely.

Her vehemence brought me rudely to my senses. I had been mad to hope. I turned slowly from her, groping my way toward the door; for my head was still throbbing furiously.

She stopped me with a cry of distress. She clung to me in her eagerness.

"You don't understand," she pleaded. "You have saved my brother's honor as far as the world can know. But this shame that curshes me this disgrace, can I forget it?"

"I would help you bear it."

"Mr. Haddon, we Bretts have been a proud race. Our happiness we share with others. But disgrace we bear alone."

"Don't say that; you are bitter now, but—"

"If you had known me better," said Helena, quietly, "you would understand that I do not give to-morrow what I must deny to-day."

When I told her of Willoughby's tragic death, I had thought it pathetic that a woman should be so strong. It was her calm courage that had first awakened my love for her. I must not complain now if she was not to be moved by my entreaties. But this question I did ask:

"If I could have proved that your brother had not, after all, shown himself false to the motto of your house, 'Honor, my Sword,' would you still have refused to listen to me?"

"Ah, if, Mr. Haddon!"

For almost the first time since I had known her she smiled; and that faint smile opened the gates of paradise to me. She would not be moved to declare her love for me, but she did love me; I was sure of it.

And then suddenly I thought of the words of the Countess Sarahoff when I made my escape by the ladder of stones: "Go, and I swear by the cause I hold sacred, that, if you can save Ferdinand, the honor of Sir Mortimer shall be saved." That promise might mean little. It might mean that she would show her gratitude by refusing to make public Sir Mortimer's disgrace. Or had her words a deeper significance?"

'But," I cried eagerly, "nothing is quite impossible. I repeat now what I said to you when in your grief you asked me to meet the banker, I cannot believe in your brother's guilt. I cannot conceive how a man whose integrity has been undoubtetd during a brilliant career should suddenly stoop to the shame of taking bribes."

A flash of hope shone in Helena's pale face, only to be followed by the deepest dejection. "But there are the proofs," she said, mournfully. "I cannot, would that I could, deny my brother's writing."

"I must see Madame de Varnier. A few hours ago she held us at her mercy. But now we have the upper hand; there are many things she must explain. Where is she?"

"She left the chateau with Ferdinand half an hour ago."

"Left the chateau!" I cried, aghast. "Why was she not held?"

"Prince Ferdinand insisted that she must go at once to Sofia. He has sent her on some secret mission. I think she must be one of his spies."

"And she left no message for me?" I demanded, gloomily.

"No," replied Helena, looking at me in wonder. "Why do you ask?"

I did not tell her of Madame de Varnier's promise. I knew now that it had been given me quite recklessly to spur me to action. I was mad to expect mercy and gratitude from such a woman. She was too determined on her revenge. I remembered bitterly how she had told me in the tower that she sacrificed friends and enemies if they proved obstacles to her plans.

"I had hoped," I answered, vaguely, "now that Ferdinand was saved, that she might in some way be able to show us that your brother's dishonor is not so great as it appears."

"But could she explain away his writing?" asked Helena mournfully. "No; even if she feels remorse for her cruelty in torturing me, it is too late. I have eaten of the tree of knowledge, Mr. Haddon, and it is very bitter. Heaven has reversed my fate and yours. It is I who now have lost my self-respect, while you have gained—"

"No," I cried, bitterly, "I have failed utterly in my task. I dared hope for too much. I have dared too greatly in dreaming that I should find happiness in this Castle of Lies."

"But," she whispered, "I, too, have dared, Ernest, and I shall not forget."

"Helena!" I crushed her hands in mine. "Even now I refuse to despair. I will find this woman though I search the earth for her. She shall tell me everything, and perhaps even now—"

"Not even your love can bring about the impossible."

"But if it could— If by a miracle your brother's honor were shown to be stainless?"

"Ah, if you could work miracles—yes," she faltered.

The door was flung open brusquely. Locke stood at the threshold, his keen glance bent cynically on me.

"So you are quite yourself again?" He concealed his embarrassment by a gruff demeanor. "So much the better; for you must be off before the dawn, my friend."

"And where?" I demanded astonished and not a little piqued at his cool assurance.

"En route for America, if you are wise."

"You are settling my destiny in a rather highhanded manner," I cried, angrily. "And will you tell me why you dispose of me so summarily?"

"Why," replied he, with a quiet laugh, "I have promoted you—"

He became suddenly serious, glancing uneasily at Helena.

"Miss Bret, Capt. Forbes and myself will accompany you to your hotel presently. Will you wait here while I say a few words to Mr. Haddon?"

"But it is not possible that you still mistrust him after to-night?" she demanded with indignation.

"No, no," he assured her. "I would spare you from embarrassment; that is all."

"Come, then," I said, shortly.

When we had reached the gallery I saw to my astonishment that the hall below was empty. I listened and there was complete silence.

"What have Forbes and yourself done with your prisoners?" I demanded. In my perplexity I forgot to ask what Locke had meant in saying flippantly that he had promoted me.

"They are all gone but two," Locke answered cooly. He lighted a cigarette, and leaning on the gallery rail stared down into the hall. "Starva and Bratinau's bodies are in the dining-rooms, but their souls have been swiftly ferried across the Styx by old Charon. Nothing reminds us of our fight except the dark stain on the staircase carpet yonder. It was a good scrap while it lasted. Your shot winged Starva, as you probably know. I settled Bratinau. Forbes peppered away in the dark, and had fair luck. The man called Go on or Geeup, or something like that, got a shattered ankle, and the Servian a rather nasty wound in the thigh. As for the rest of the gentry, three of them rallied to your slogan and joined me at the staircase; the other two were easily settled with. Yes, it was a good fight, but much too short—especially for you, old chap." He shook his head despondently.

"But your prisoners?" I demanded again, irritated by his superfluous comments.

"It was Prince Ferdinand who insisted on their release."

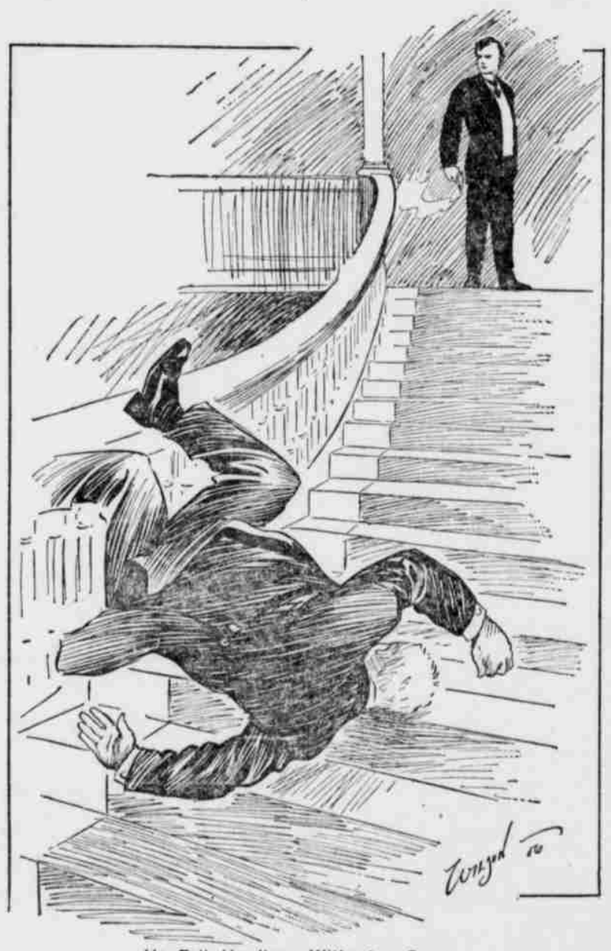
"Their release!" I interrupted, furiously. "What incredible folly!"

"You remember that Starva and Bratinau were the only Bulgars among the conspirators, and they are dead. The two ringleaders are wounded badly enough to go to a hospital. Forbes himself has accompanied them there to see that they are not discharged until one of us is told. Practically they are prisoners. There remains Kuhn, Piteschti and Gingaja, the three men who showed that they had some instincts of humanity when it came to the crisis. The other two were arrant cowards; Ferdinand prefers to consider the three his loyal friends and two others powerless. He has set them at liberty."

"By Jove, his magnanimity or his folly will cost him dear."

"I am not so certain of that," resumed Locke, thoughtfully. "It is possible that he has made five friends of five enemies. You must remember that even if he wished to punish the conspirators he is powerless to do this without advertising to the world the intended uprising of the Balkan States."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



He Fell Headlong Without a Groan.

WOMAN'S INTERESTS

ABOUT THE GLOVES

TO SAVE EXPENSE AND HAVE NEAT APPEARANCE.

First "Fit" Has Much to Do with the Life of These Important Dress Accessories—Proper Way to Mend.

In the first place, the "fit" has a good deal to do with the life of a glove, and so, for this reason alone, it will be worth while paying extra for a pair that will be fitted to the hands rather than buying haphazard a cheaper pair.

Fat fingers can not be forced into gloves cut for slender ones without bursting at the second wearing.

A well-fitting glove will be perfectly easy on the hand, yet show no wrinkle anywhere, and to be too large is quite as bad as being too small, for, while the tighter glove will be no more apt to crack or split, the looser one will become shabby sooner.

Having exercised care in selecting gloves, the same should be studied in keeping them in good condition. The well known glove mending sets are an aid to this and a means of keeping all the necessary articles together, for it often happens that one might mend gloves in less time than is consumed in looking up the necessary articles.

A set of this kind includes threads of every wanted shade arranged in the form of a broad braid, a small pair of scissors, an emery and an enameled darner. A small ball is attached to one end of the darner, at the other is an egg-shaped knob. This is used when repairing rips in the fingers, the ball being inserted to help in repairing a hole. Cotton is always used for mending gloves of kid or of lisle thread, but a silk glove mender set comes for silk gloves.

Needles are not included, but they may be bought separately. For repairing lisle thread or silk gloves any ordinary sewing needle may be used, but the kid ones will be mended much neater if a special needle that comes for the purpose is used.

From the eye half way downward the needle differs in no way from other sewing needles, but the point half has three sides instead of being round. This makes a smaller hole than the round needle, and as the thread employed is so very fine it does not fill up the hole formed by the round needle passing through. So it is best to use the glove or fur needle. They are about the same thing.

Rips in the seams of gloves are always repaired on the right side, with an overhanded stitch that is perfectly simple. Supposing one does not possess a darner, then it is better to insert a finger than to hold the glove to be mended in the hand. The seam will be flatter and more flexible, while repaired without such aid the result is apt to be a botch.

WOULD MAKE PRETTY GIFTS.

Three Small Articles Designed for the Dressing Table.

Either of the three little articles pictured on this page would be an addition to the dressing table, and in the making furnishes a pleasant occupation for summer days. Any bit of figured or flowered silk could be used up in making the little heart-shaped hanging pincushion, the edges being finished with a row of pins. The tiny doll's-house chair makes a novel

watchstand. The watch hangs on the little hook at the top of the chair-back, and the seat is stuffed for a pincushion. The small brocade box might serve to contain a watch or any small piece of jewelry. It is daintily padded and lined with silk, a landscape design being shown in the space at the top, gilt tapestry braid is used about the edges and to outline the panels.

Danger in Confidences.

Confidences are sometimes blinding, even when they are sincere.—Eliot.

MODEL IN CREPE DE CHINE.

Much Betucked Frock Is One of the Recent Gowns Seen.

Despite the long run it has had, crepe de chine is still immensely popular, its soft clingyness is so well adapted for fine tucking. The model is a charming example of a much betucked frock in silver-gray crepe de chine. The embroidery on stole fronts, collar and shoulder pieces is done in silver thread, and there is a piping of black velvet at neck and arm finish. The guimpe is dotted gray silk mousseline. The finishing touch

is a hat of gray neapolitan, with loops of black velvet ribbon uniquely arranged on top and small branches of cherries on left front side, where brim turns from the face.

Correct Corsets.

Nothing can be more absurd than to see, as one constantly does, a short, stout woman, who by the aid of straight fronted corsets, has succeeded in so lengthening her waist line as to get it apparently just midway between her toes and her shoulders. To begin with, this really is not good style, as the tendency of the moment rather is towards the high waisted effect of the empire. At the same time, this is a season of large liberty in one's choice in dress, and a well balanced figure—tall and slim, and yet well rounded, being favorably suited by a long waisted effect—can and wisely does secure that end. The short, stout woman should strive to establish a proper proportion between the upper and lower parts of her figure. She should not allow her things to be made too tight, nor her small stature to be overpowered by a large hat.

Demand for Soft Silks.

How far away we are from the old, stiff silks that cracked and tore up almost before they were made up!

The woman of to-day demands that silks be soft, pliable and cling to the figure so as to accentuate its lines.

She will not for a moment consider the use of stiff, unwieldy fabrics.

This has resulted in the maufacture of exquisite chiffon taffetas that drape as softly as crepe. Of these latter there is an abundance to choose from this fall, as well as the supple, brilliant liberties, which are being daily more used for the wonderful creations of the Paris modiste.

Tussor, the softest of silk or silk and wool, is almost always shown in solid color, but sometimes appearing in Pekin effects, with graduated stripes, which offer splendid opportunity for novel combinations of colors.

Practical Petticoats.

Practical petticoats are made of moreen this season, with a deep flounce trimmed with two set-on ruffles. These ruffles, already made, may be purchased at any of the department stores for about a dollar.

Silk-finished sateen and cambric petticoats are shown, made with a deep flounce. Two or three of these narrow set-on ruffles can be bought ready-made, and they are easily adjusted to the petticoat.

Mohair skirts, trimmed with silk flounces, are also serviceable as well as reasonable in price.

Japanese Buttons.

Now that kimono-shaped blouses are so fashionable, it is quite natural that the buttons placed so conspicuously upon them should be decidedly Japanese in character. The round medallions in badges found in Japanese textbooks, depicting flowers, plants, birds, fish, insects, etc., as well as purely conventional forms, are all available for this purpose and may be painted or embroidered as fancy dictates.

Washable Cravats.

A cravat of lawn which is to be worn with an embroidered linen collar and which can be washed every week, may be embroidered in three narrow scallops, forming a rounded end. A stripe of shadow embroidery in color is above this and above the stripes is a fleur-de-lis in white. They are easy to make and are considered chic.

HAD A FELLOW FEELING.

Aunt Susan's Heart Went Out to "Pore Missus Astor."

Uncle Eli felt he knew the metropolis pretty well. Had he not been there three times in four years—and twice he had ridden on the elevated. So when he brought Aunt Susan with him (on the fourth trip) he naturally assumed the role of guide.

She marveled at everything until they sat down for luncheon. They had gone into the Astor house for that meal, but all its other marvels seemed lost on the visiting country hostess, as she looked open-eyed at the crowds that filled not only the corridors but the restaurants. Scarcely had they found seats, when this amazement took definite shape.

"Eli," said she in a stagey whisper, "I can't set here an' eat peaceably. I jes' must go downstairs an' help pore Missus Astor with the cookin' an' dishes."—Bohemian.

When the Orator Soared.

In the course of an address extolling the virtues of the medical profession, Dr. L. B. McBrayer of Asheville, N. C., used the following characteristic southern language:

"Could I borrow from the sun his cheery smile, from the moon her golden beams of light, from the southern zephyrs their softness, from the rose its fragrance, from the rainbow its celestial beauty, from the babbling brook its laughter and song, from the sea its awe and wonder, from the valley its serenity, and from the mountains their majesty and put these down upon a piece of azure blue sky, with comets for commas and planets for periods, I might then paint for you what the practice of medicine is like."

On Wit and Humor.

Man is the only animal that laughs and weeps, for he is the only animal that is struck with the difference between what things are and what they ought to be. We weep at what thwarts or exceeds our desires in serious matters; we laugh at what only disappoints our expectations in trifles. We shed tears from sympathy with real and necessary distress; as we burst into laughter from want of sympathy with that which is unreasonable and unnecessary, the absurdity of which provokes our spleen or mirth, rather than serious reflections on it.—William Hazlitt.

Tripped.

Gunner—So you think the DeBlowers are faking about their extended European tour?

Guyer—I should say so. They said there were so many Americans in Venice that many had to walk in the middle of the street.

Gunner—Well?

Guyer—Why the streets of Venice are canals.—Chicago Daily News.

Who is the mighty man? He who subdueth his temper. Who is rich? He who is content with his lot.—Epictetus.