

The CASTLES

BY ARTHUR HENRY VESLEY
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CHAPTER XXIX.

I Open the safe.
"It is true," she murmured. "It is true, and too horrible."
"Do not believe it," I said obstinately. "It is impossible."
"Can one deny a fact? Am I a child to be soled with smooth words? I have seen; I must believe, though God knows the truth when I wish a hundred times that I lay beside my poor disgraced brother."

It is always painful to see one whom we respect the prey of an emotion uncontrolled. It was doubly painful for me to see this strong woman, whose dominant quality was courage and calm, write under the blow that deprived her for the moment of all power to think soberly. I did not tell her my belief that I held the combination of the safe, and that before many minutes were passed I might have the papers in my possession.

The woman who tortured us both stood at the threshold of the little room Helena had just left, a malevolent figure in her hour of triumph. As I looked toward her, tempted to expel her brutally from that room, and my surmise was false, to force from her, even by violence, if necessary, the combination of the safe, she withdrew hastily, leaving Helena and myself alone. It was then that I learned the worst. She had appealed to Helena. She was confident of her success.

Still I held Helena's hands lightly in mine. I wished to give back to her her peace, her calm courage.
"Mr. Haddon," she whispered presently, "do you think—it is possible—to do this thing?"

"It is possible, but it would be the act of a madman and a liar," I said quietly.

"You say it is possible." She withdrew her hands almost roughly. Her voice was monotonous and harsh. "Then you will save my mother and myself, from this deep disgrace."
"There is no service that I would not do for you, Miss Brett, that would bring you peace and happiness."
"Peace! Happiness!" she interrupted with fierce remonstrance. "I do not look for peace or happiness. Honor or itself—and the motto of the Brett is 'Honor, My Sword'—can be our proud boast. But if silence can be purchased it must be. I dare not let my brother's name be held in reproach. I dare not, I cannot, for his mother's sake, let it be known that he has been false to England."
"We may yet save him!"

"Yes," she broke in with a strange exultancy that was even more dreadful to me than her despair, "and it is you whom I have despised that it is to save us. A life for a life—those were the words I said to you at Lucerne. Now it is to be dishonor for dishonor. I am asking you a terrible sacrifice. I am dragging myself and mine to death. But there is no other to help us. Say that you will."
"Your grief robs you of your reason," I said gently. "Escape is not to be found in that way. It is the last hope of a desperate and unscrupulous adventurer, who has herself little hope of success. It is her last card, and she will lose nothing by playing it. But we, you and I, we risk everything."

"Ah, you refuse! You are afraid of the risks. I might have known you would be afraid. That woman said that it was hopeless to ask a service so heroic from one who was a proven—Oh, forgive me, I did not mean to say that."

"Miss Brett, I think there is no disgrace I would not gladly endure to help you. I swore to rescue your brother's honor if it were possible. If I could do so now, though I sacrificed myself, I tell you I would. More than that, though even death tells me that I should fail, I will do what you ask even now."
"Heaven bless you!" she cried brokenly.

"But first of all I want you to realize clearly just what you are asking. I want you to be quite sure that you are not adding dishonor to dishonor in asking me to do this thing. No; it is not that I am afraid. I have not that kind of fear. But I think that neither of us should be so cowardly as to yield to this woman's demands. In the oratory younder lies your brother. Ask yourself, when you see him, if it is merely the mere death that he has smoothed his forehead, or whether the calm and serenity is that of a man who held the motto of his house, 'Honor, My Sword.'"
This appeal was perhaps not wholly sincere. One cannot deny facts because one wishes to. It still seemed to me that it must be true that Sir Mortimer was proven guilty of taking bribes.

Now did I dare tell Helena now of my wild conjectures. I dared not raise her hopes at the risk of a speedy disillusionment. Once the papers were in my possession, together we could defy Madame de Varner. And if disillusionment was to miss I hoped that by the aid of her brother Helena

would recover her courage and clear vision.

Again I was alone. But Madame de Varner who had awaited the result of Helena's intervention, now came toward me. I saw with a thrill of thankfulness that the door of the room of the safe was not closed.

"You told me that it would be for her to decide," she said confidently. "I know that she has decided. And your own decision? Does your resolution falter?"
"You are mistaken." I began to pace the floor with rapid steps, advancing nearer and nearer to the room of the safe. "She has not yet decided. I believe with all my heart that she will refuse. She is in your oratory there. She will gain strength from the presence of the dead to defy you."

"Perhaps," sneered the woman. She seated herself near the table slightly turned from the room she had left.

An instant and I had gained it, and drawn the bolt. Another and I was on my knees, my fingers tremblingly writing about the shining surface of the little knob that controlled the combination.

CO-W-A-R-D.
I whirled it this way and that, then pulled at the handle.

It resisted my efforts. A cold perspiration broke out on my forehead. I had been a victim of my own madness. But again I moved the knob; this time slowly, with infinite care, with the calmness that comes with despair.



"CO-W-A-R-D."

I heard the woman without call my name in a frenzy of rage, her hands beating against the door.

Once more I turned the handle. It yielded to my touch. The safe was open.

I saw no papers of any sort in the large compartment. It was empty with the exception of a jewel case. I slipped out a drawer, the only one in the safe. Two packets were there.

I seized them greedily. I was about to open them, when a shadow fell across the room. There was a light step behind me. I looked up, the papers in my hand.

Captain Forbes was standing by my side. He had made his entrance through the open window.

"Good evening, Sir Mortimer!" I rose to my feet, staring at him stupefied.

"I am sorry if my abrupt and unceremonious entrance has alarmed you," he said smiling, and regarded me with a cold smile.

"You have managed to escape?" I stammered.

"Exactly; and I hope I do not inconvenience you. With your permission, sir, I will withdraw the bolt. This little room reminds me too well of the one I have just left. It is too cramped for my taste."

He brushed by me brusquely and drew the bolt. I thrust the papers in my breast pocket. With one motion I closed the safe softly, and turned the knob.

CHAPTER XXX.

Trapped.

Captain Forbes passed into the larger room. I followed him slowly.

"Ah, that's better," he sighed. "Now I am among friends." His marble smile took in Madame de Varner and myself, who had not yet recovered from our astonishment.

Indeed, it was rather embarrassing that he would know that it was not Sir Mortimer whom he had surprised at the safe. And knowing that, it was inevitable that he mistake me for one of the conspirators. First of all at Vitman—I had taken dispatches from his hand. Had I indeed been really under the influence of an opiate I might have urged that as the reason. I could have said that I was not conscious of any deception; I was simply a victim of Dr. Starva and Madame de Varner, and not responsible for my acts.

But not only had I not taken the opiate, but Madame de Varner knew that I had not, and even had I wished to tell her she would have contradicted me.

And now he had caught me red-handed at the safe. He would draw his conclusions swiftly. It would be absurd to suppose that I should know the combination of the safe, merely as Madame de Varner's guest. A hostess does not vouchsafe to her guests the key of her strong box. If I were not Sir Mortimer, I must be in league with Madame de Varner and Dr. Starva.

That was the conclusion he must arrive at. To tell him the absolute truth—that by one chance out of ten thousand I had stumbled on the combination—would only deepen his conviction as to my guilt.

And Helena? What would she think? Would her faith in me be so strong that she would believe me? Had Captain Forbes not surprised me at this moment my guessing of the riddle of the safe would have seemed miraculous indeed, but the fact that I had the papers, and could place them in her hands to be destroyed, would support my story readily enough.

But I dare not give up these papers before Captain Forbes and Madame de Varner! It seemed to me that he king's messenger of all per-

sons that your Excellency had received Sir Mortimer's letter. It was time to put an end to this game of cross-purposes.

"Then possibly madam can enlighten you as to its whereabouts."
"Your Excellency, Oh, no!" she swept me a mocking courtesy. "I am not so deeply in your Excellency's counsel."

"My patience, Sir Mortimer," cried Forbes, breaking into direct speech. "has its limits. I see you at Lucerne only with the greatest difficulty. I warn you of the grave purport of a dispatch which I am unable to deliver to you because of your condition. The next morning, when I would see you, you have disappeared again. I trace you here with difficulty. When for the third time I attempt to deliver this dispatch, I am held captive; the dispatch is forcibly taken from me. When I ask you if you have received it, you give me an indifferent answer. I dare swear that you are so far from your sense of duty that you countenance these violent acts of a bandit. But I must insist."

"He passed abruptly. I thought it because he realized that his anger had carried him too far. But when I looked where he looked, I saw Helena Brett.

"Miss Brett!" he exclaimed in pained surprise, "I am sorry to see you here."
"And I am infinitely relieved, though bewildered, to find you, Captain Forbes," she extended his hand, smiling warmly.

"But you will help me to make your brother realize the danger of further misunderstanding," he said gently, his anger at my indifference vanishing at the sight of her pale and haggard countenance.

"My brother, Captain Forbes, is dead. He lies in that room," she answered firmly, though her lips trembled.

She had made her decision. She, too, was determined at all hazards not to act a lie.

"But for Captain Forbes, he was dumb with dismay and concern. But though he did not speak his startled glance dwelt on me.

"My friend is my loyal friend," said Helena, interpreting his look. At the same time she reassured me with a quiet smile that more than her words expressed her trust.

A slow flash of anger mounted to the temples of the king's messenger. He towered over me menacingly.

"You have dared tamper with his Majesty's business; you have tricked one of his servants. By Heaven, you will rue it dearly!"

"Captain Forbes!" Helena laid her hand on his sleeve in her distress. "I am not! He turned on her indignantly. "I have been deliberately passed himself off as your brother. He tricked me into giving him important papers of state. You know that, and you defend him? You dare call him friend?"

"I did not know that," he replied firmly. "But I dare call him friend, Captain Forbes. You do not understand."

"Understand!" he stormed, before I could make any reply myself. "I understand this only too well: he is in league with a notorious woman, and the still more infamous Dr. Starva, two Bulgarian adventurers of the most dangerous type. I think that is enough. That he has obtained under false pretenses my dispatches convicts him of high treason. He will not leave my sight until he is placed under arrest."

"I am an American," I said quietly. "You may find it more difficult to do that than you imagine."

My mild expostulation maddened him only the more.

"An American!" He advanced to me as if to lay hands on me. "Do you flatter yourself that your nationality leaves you free to play the spy and traitor with impunity? Give me those papers."

He came a step nearer. Instinctively I placed my hands at my breast pocket as if to protect the precious papers. But as Helena, distressed at his violence, restrained him.

"Captain Forbes," she pleaded, "pray restrain your anger. It is natural that you should feel the deepest suspicion against Mr. Haddon. But you will be patient. I am sure he will make all clear to you."

"Miss Brett," he said sternly, "this is a man's word. It is hardly becoming to you to defend one who has introduced your brother's honor. How dare you claim an impostor like this as a friend? He must be indeed a clever villain to have so deceived you."

"Mr. Haddon has done enough," she answered proudly, "to justify my faith in him. And let me tell you, Captain Forbes, that I believe in his word so implicitly that I have given him my word that, until I have been told to the contrary, I will not interfere with his motives nor interfere with any action of his. Nor shall I permit another to act on my behalf."

"Investigation and surprise fought for mastery, as Forbes answered with resolution:

"I shall refuse to obey you, Miss Brett. You forget that it is not you who have been wronged so much as Sir Mortimer," she said. "Now, sir, give me those papers that you took from the safe."
For the first time Madame de Varner, since her last right attention, spoke. Her surprise at the demand forced from her a contemptuous sneer of myself.

"You are mad!" she cried involuntarily.

"You see, Miss Brett," exclaimed Forbes, with satisfaction, "this accomplice defends him."

Check the Divorce Evil by Curing the Cause

By ALICE STONE BLACKWELL.

I BELIEVE that we are in a transitional stage in America now, and the causes for divorce are bound to grow lighter as the world advances. Just now they seem to be very evident.

To check divorce we must first get behind the divorce to the causes that lead to domestic misery. I wish that all the public schools could have regular courses in ethics and make a point of teaching the children justice and generosity. Before checking domestic misery we must try to educate frivoly out of young women, and brutality out of the men, and selfishness out of both. So far as people could be helped by education, you could by this means cut off the chief sources of divorce.

I do not think with those who say that domestic unhappiness is the fruit of the last decade or the last 50 years. There was probably as much domestic trouble a hundred years ago as there is now. There were no divorces then but there was a vast amount of misery.

I do not think that feminine selfishness is increased by more education and liberty. Nowadays a woman who is selfish and light-minded may neglect her home duties to attend to too many clubs, but a hundred years ago the same kind of a woman would have neglected her home just as much for parties and dances, and gadding and gossiping among the neighbors.

The emancipation of women is supposed to have gone farthest where they have the ballot. In Wyoming they have had full suffrage ever since 1869. In the 20 years from 1870 to 1890 divorce in the United States had increased about three times as fast as the population. In the group of western states, omitting Wyoming, it increased nearly four times as fast as the population. In Wyoming it increased only about half as fast as the population. An ounce of fact is worth a ton of theory.

Youth of Land Needs Saving

By REV. JOSEPH STEPHAN, St. Louis.

Of 15,000,000 young men in this country, 2,500,000 are church members.

In a well-known Christian city it was estimated that out of 4,000 young men not more than 1,500 attended church, and in Louisville, Ky., on a certain day, it was found 99 per cent. of the young men were not at church.

Although a large number of young men do not frequent saloons, low theaters and become criminals, it is a significant fact that two-thirds of all the criminals of our prisons are boys and young men; and it has been estimated that 75 per cent. of those who commit crime after they are 23 began before that age.

The character of city life itself makes the entrance upon vice and ungodliness easy. Unknown in a large city, with its sense of concealment, he is easily led to give rein to his appetites.

Seventy-five per cent. of the young men of our cities live in boarding houses. Thus thrown away from home influences, they form transient acquaintances and frequent wrong places. Many are living a nomadic, transient life, which in itself has a tendency to produce carelessness.

There is in the atmosphere of city life that which affects the young man's habits and ideals. The unsophisticated youth from the country may be called a "hayseed," but he is not ignorant; he is simply natural and genuine. Unless he is a strong character, with fixed convictions, his unselfish aims will become subservient only to his own selfish ends.

The city is the young man's opportunity to test and develop his character, but unless he is fortified the customs and the spirit of city life will corrupt and poison him.

Of course, if the young man is morally unsafe outside of the citizen's duty of removing from our social life its pitfalls, the boy must first of all receive our attention. Wellington said that the battle of Waterloo was won on the playgrounds and that is where this one must be won. The home and the church must form a holy alliance in saving and training the boy for noble and victorious manhood.

The Actual and the Possible Man

By REV. M. J. TRENER, Milwaukee.

The actual man is not worth saving. The actual man is brutal, amoralizing, groveling and ignorant. All you need to do is to read the history of humanity to realize this truth. The history of humanity is largely that of war, and what is far but organized murder. As Sherman said, "war is hell," and that is the truth. And hell is for devils, and men through all these ages have acted more like devils than like saints. Let a man appear whose acts are prompted by higher motives than the average and he is at once voted down and out as a disturber.

And it is a sad fact that the church history is little better than general history. Even in the church it is a fact that brotherly love has all too often been the last thing to be heard and practiced. For the sake of a certain kind of worship, for a peculiar twist or turn in doctrine, for the nonessential mode of baptism, for some idiosyncrasy in belief, for mere whims or prejudice, men have been slain with fire and sword, or tortured by rack and dungeon, thus sowing bitterness and reaping hate.

Is it not a fact that we sit still and permit the diabolical Turk to butcher the oldest Christian people in existence for a consideration? International courtesy permits Leopold to continue practicing cruelties that would put to shame the wild beast of the jungle.

And so it is because Jesus does see this latent and possible man that we all have hope here tonight. The actual man may not be worth saving. The possible man looked up in every human heart, is what led the eternal God to the fullest surrender possible in order to touch and elevate the deeper man within.



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