

He knew that Seibel was jealous as death because she could not stretch her voice up to the score and sing Marguerite, that she did not understand the measure, and sulked so that she lost the beat.

That Martha was driven to tears in her efforts to hear the cue, and implored wildly for some one to beat the time.

That Mephistopheles, disgusted with the hurry and scurry of the music, was up at the back of the stage, winking at the chorus, singing *sotto voce*, when he should have been down at the footlights, helping the tenor and contralto out of their difficulties by his experience of a hundred performances of the opera.

That Faust, in shooting-jacket, knickerbockers and gaiters, with hat cocked on the back of his head, cigar in mouth, lounging on a chair, score in hand, did not know a bar of the music, could not sing the part, and never would, though he tried hard enough.

That Marguerite could not reach a single high note, not if a year's output of the Jumpers' mine was poured into her lap.

That the cornet tooted in the wrong bar to his right. The violin scraped and scratched out of tune on his left. The bassoon gave melancholy yelps at the wrong beat. In fact,

that a chaos of sound and a warfare of time assailed him on every side.

He knew all this, but never swerved for a moment in his determination to produce the opera, that masterpiece of grand melody, in less than a week. In fact, the bills were already displayed around the town proclaiming the event.

But, was he not a perfect Trojan of determination, this ugly little man? Indeed he was. And his worst enemy, looking on him seated there, thumping the piano, beating time, giving the cue, swearing at the chorus, bullying Martha, abusing Seibel, working with voice, limb, and brain, could not escape a touch of sympathy, and wish him the success which such commendable energy certainly deserved.

They were not a few, those who made up the company of the little man's enemies. His brusqueness lost him many a friend. He had no patience with weakness, no pity for those whom Nature had endowed with a delicacy of mental equilibrium which his coarse balance totally lacked.

Fine mental culture meant failure in a new country, where the adventurous, the unscrupulous, and the boldest dare-devilism secured the highest place. Filled with that spirit, he

tackled fortune with a rough and ready hand. Possessed of the faculty of adaptability, he rode rough-shod over difficulties that would have appalled a man of superior mind and heart.

A failure in London, a failure in Melbourne, a failure in New York, he was the Prince of success in Johannesburg. Hence the little man's luck. He had given the golden city her first shanty-theatre, erected three years before. This he had forsaken in a few months for a new, commodious, and pretentiously-decorated theatre built with the money, coined in hatsful at the old one, when Johannesburg was a canvas town. Now it was a full-fledged city that had arisen like a dream of gold out of the delirium of the gold-fever, wherein very naturally it was the man of uncouth, unbridled energy who came to the fore.

If the little man clinched success in the matter of building theatres, he could not be blamed for indulging an ambition to make those walls resound with the masterpieces of Verdi and Gounod, no matter how inadequate their presentation to the indulgent Johannesburg audiences, many of whom had left their critical faculties, together with their reputations, for safe-keeping behind them in London.

For three long hours the thumping toil of

piano and orchestra, braying of the tenor, growling of the bass, and piping of the soprano, abetted by the howling efforts of the chorus, interpolated now and then by skirmishes between the small army of dogs—from the prima donna's thin-skinned tiny greyhound to the mangy cur of the theatre cleaner, all of which were granted unlimited freedom of the stage—continued with unabated fury.

Suddenly the little man arose and declared the rehearsal over; for in South Africa, be it known, there is nothing of the day and night unflagging rehearsal to be found in London. The most insignificant super would revolt at the idea of a rehearsal carried beyond mid-day. He would throw up the whole business, and live like a Kafir, rather than give up that part of the day devoted to tiffin and the indispensable siesta.

The rising of the manager was the signal for a hasty exodus of principal, chorus, and musicians; as all remembered it was salary day, and the 'ghost' was walking in the little ticket-office of the theatre.

Martha was standing aside at the back of the stalls, awaiting the exit of the impatient crowd about to interview the 'ghost,' who had never yet failed to show its face punctual

to the minute, at one o'clock every Monday morning.

As the little man approached her, he exclaimed in angry tones—

“Why did you not know the music better this morning? I can't understand how you, who sang Lenora with only three rehearsals, and made such a success, should stumble over those few bars of Martha in such a style.”

“You forget,” replied the gentlewoman, “that the music is entirely below my range of voice, and that in my contract Seibel is the part allotted me in ‘Faust.’”

“Yes, I know that,” answered the little man, mollified by the dignified explanation, “but I can't help myself in giving you an unsuitable part. Try and do the best with it you can.”

“I shall endeavour to do so,” said Martha, moving away as Seibel approached.

“What was she saying?” whispered Seibel, who was the little man's better-half. “Trying to get you to give her my part, I bet. She shan't have it. I hate her grand airs. I wish you would send her away.”

“Oh, don't talk nonsense, dear,” he exclaimed, impatiently. “I'll have to take the part from you if you don't sing it better than you did at the rehearsal; but there,” warned by

a choking sob from his wife that his terror, a fit of hysterics, was impending, "I'll tell Bernard to come and study it with you this afternoon, and make you perfect for to-morrow."

"Oh, thank you, darling!" giving him a kiss as they emerged from behind the *portière* separating the stalls and the lobby.

"What a lovely day," she said sweetly, saluting Martha, whose only answer was a cold bow.

As she flounced out and jumped into her cart, a bewildering mass of fluttering feathers and ribbons, Martha's glance rested scornfully on the ungloved hands, blazing with diamonds on every finger. Her heart ached with the bitterness of the realisation that she had left friends and home in a wild chase after fortune, only to find her every chance snatched from her by the jealousy and vanity of this overdressed creature.

CHAPTER XX

THE ASSISTANT LANDDROST HOLDS COURT

“BAAS, I swear by the Almighty that every word I say is true. I was fast asleep in the lock-up last night, when a big wind came and blew the door wide open. The wind made me so cold that I walked out of the door, and went right away to my hut and got my blanket, for I was shivering with cold. And when I was coming back to the lock-up this morning, the constable ketched me by the neck and put me in the stocks, because, he said, I broke out of gaol last night. But, before the Almighty, I am telling the truth. The high wind blew the door open, Baas ; before the Almighty it did, Baas.”

The prisoner, a genuine Hottentot, clad in a ragged pair of trousers, a faded blue cotton shirt, and dilapidated digger's hat, gave his evidence in Kafir-Dutch. A broad grin illumined his jetty countenance, the humour of which was apparently lost on the Assistant Landdrost, seated in his rostrum, slightly above the level of

the room where he officiated as magistrate of the Johannesburg Police Court.

"So, Alexander," said the magistrate, looking at the prisoner steadily, despite the roars of laughter which his *naïve* defence elicited from the crowd in court, "so you have been stealing again. Not satisfied with paying a surreptitious visit to the Landdrost's house a short time ago, you must try your hand at the brickfields. Well, officer, what is the charge?"

"He borrowed a cart from the police-station yesterday morning," said the policeman, "and went to the brickfields, where he proceeded to load the cart with two hundred and fifty bricks. He was just about to drive off with the bricks, when the owner came along and caught him. I arrested him and put him in gaol. He broke out last night; and this morning I succeeded in capturing him, when I put him in the stocks."

"Well, Alexander," said the magistrate, "you are very ingenious, but no doubt your ingenuity will bring you to the gallows. The charge of theft must be passed. But I fear the high wind of last night gave you a bad cold. I'll give you a prescription that will warm as well as cure you—you shall receive ten lashes."

The unfortunate Hottentot was speedily removed, amid howls and protestations, which

occasioned renewed laughter and jeers from the court, to give place to three coolies, named respectively Kissimsing, Jatsulla, and Lutsing, on a charge of cruelty to animals.

As the three men stood up in the dock, they represented as repulsive-looking specimens of humanity as could be found in the length and breadth of the Transvaal. Clad in semi-European dress, rough corduroys, loose shirts, their heads swathed in gaudy bandanna handkerchiefs, their feet shod in Malay sandals, they looked capable of any cruelty, despite their efforts to appear bland and innocent.

"Constable Delemore," said the Assistant Landdrost, without even a glance in the direction of the coolies, "state your charge."

"These men," answered the market constable, "were arrested by me on a charge of extreme cruelty to animals."

"What kind of animals?" queried the magistrate.

"Pigs."

A general laugh followed the constable's laconic explanation, while the Assistant Landdrost, without a change of countenance, bade the constable proceed with his charge.

"They brought eight pigs into market this morning, in a pitiable condition. The poor

animals were bound together by a reim tied tightly round their legs. When they were thrown out of the waggon, I found that their hoofs had rotted off from the tightness of the reims, and their legs were full of sores and maggots."

"Where did the coolies get the animals?" said the magistrate to a Moslem who acted as interpreter for the men.

"They bought them at a farm."

"How many days since?"

After a parley with the coolies the interpreter replied—

"Eight days ago."

"Which is the owner of the animals?"

Again a consultation occurred, and the interpreter answered—

"Kissimsing."

"He is fined five pounds or a month's imprisonment. And you, constable, have the poor animals put out of torture immediately."

The coolie sullenly paid his fine, and then left the room with his companions, in an apparently excited debate with the interpreter, upon whom they fell, once clear of the court, with kicks and blows as a reward for his non-success.

The next prisoner to appear was Jim, a

Kafir, charged with assaulting his brother in darkness, Tim.

"So it is you again, Jim," said the magistrate, glancing at the big Zulu before him, whose genial face broadened into a delighted grin at the Assistant Landdrost's recognition. "Well, what have you to say?"

"Good morning, Baas; I hope you are very well," replied Jim, in excellent Dutch. "I hope you won't be hard on me this time, Baas."

"Go on," said the Assistant Landdrost, while a twinkle crept into his brown eyes. The Zulu's Dutch seemed to please him immensely.

"Yah, Baas, I thrashed that low dog, Tim, because he insulted me."

"Insulted you?"

"Just so, Baas. I was at Fillis' with my chums last night, Baas, doing nothing, but quietly looking at the lions, when this here fellow Tim and another chap come along and called out to me, 'Who's your father?'"

At this speech, given with a comical attempt at dramatic effect, a storm of merriment swept over the court, drowning the voice of the Zulu, who joined in the laughter, and even went to the length of winking at the Kafir police, who forgot their dignity for the time, and were giving vent to boisterous guffaws.

"Yah, Baas," continued Jim, when order was restored, "that low-born Kafir Tim called out, 'Who's your father?' And that's a mighty bad insult to a Zulu; it is, Baas, the biggest insult you could throw in a well-born Zulu's teeth. So I called back, 'Who's yours?' And then that low-born Tim 'saulted' me, and I tried to save my life by sawing at his throat with a piece of iron I had in my hand. He nearly killed me, Baas, and I was trying to save my life, that's the almighty truth, Baas."

"It's an almighty lie, Baas," roared Tim. "That Kafir ain't no Zulu. He's a Cape nigger."

"Silence!" thundered the magistrate. "Now, constable, give me the truth of this affair."

"Jim and his chum there were looking at the animals when Tim and another Kafir came up and called out something in Zulu to Jim, whereupon Jim's chum ran away, while Jim and Tim clinched. In a few minutes Jim's pal returned with two other Kafirs, and they all set upon Tim to beat him. There was such a row. The lions and tigers began to roar, and even the little elephant bellowed."

"So, Jim," said the Assistant Landdrost, sternly, "you created a terrible disturbance.

As I am not acquainted with Kafir folk-lore sufficiently to appreciate your defence, I shall fine you three pounds or fifteen lashes for breaking the peace."

"Thank you, Baas," replied Jim, with a grin. "I'll take the fifteen lashes."

When a few more petty cases had been heard, and justice dealt out for various offences in the form of lashes and fines, not the least of which was attempted gaol-breaking and drunken assault, the Assistant Landdrost, after carefully sorting the papers on the desk before him, glanced several times from the clock to the door at which the prisoners appeared.

He was evidently waiting for some case, so also was the court.

A hush of expectancy fell over the crowd, which was no ordinary one. The rows of expectant faces were not those of the regular *habitués*, grimy, dissipated-looking reporters and idle loungers. There was an air of respectability which rarely appeared in the everyday session of the stuffy little chamber. Among the crowd the quick eye of the Assistant Landdrost singled out the smiling face of a woman here and there, charming, pretty faces, the most prominent therein being the saucy, self-conscious phiz of a popular barmaid, and

the dark-eyed, brilliant beauty of an equally popular actress ; while away in a corner between the ledge of two windows, the round little bonnet, dainty cap and strings framing a sweetly pretty countenance, proclaimed that some gentle hospital nurse had braved the stifling publicity of the court.

The sight of these women, every one of whom was young and pretty, made the susceptible heart of the big Boer, in the seat of justice on the little rostrum, throb a trifle quicker ; for being a true Boer of the good old-fashioned sort, he had a decided weakness for feminine beauty, whether fair like the lily or tinged with the dusky hue of the damask rose. Consequently he straightened himself up a bit, gently stroking his bushy beard with one hand, while the other was complacently tucked away in the pocket of his commodious broadcloth waistcoat. To appear interested would have been beneath the dignity of his position, therefore he straightway became restlessly conscious, the usual resource of too susceptible men when in the presence of an overpowering femininity.

The presence of so many ladies in the court that morning, where the fair portion of the Johannesburg community rarely appeared, even in the character of witnesses, much less com-

plainant or defendant, precluded some event of more than passing interest. In fact, it was the day of the Great Reef murder trial, when the five Kafirs were to answer the charge. Rumours had been flying broadcast to the effect that one of the Kafirs had turned State's evidence, in consequence of which a crowd assailed the primitive temple of justice long before the doors were open, filling every inch of the broad wooden verandah, the railing in front, and even the window-ledges; where a host of venture-some Boer urchins had perched themselves for a peep from without at the proceedings within, if nothing better could be done.

The doors once opened, a rude but good-humoured throng took possession of every inch of space available; policemen swore, reporters protested, and women pleaded prettily for a place, just as at the Old Bailey or any other court where the awful fascination of a murder trial draws the crowd.

There must be some peculiarly innate love of cruelty or crime in the woman who can find pleasure in watching the silent throes of the unfortunate creature doomed to endure the slow torture of the condemned dock. Women who would scream at the sight of a harmless mouse, or faint at the idea of looking under the bed for

a burglar, or shrink from walking a block alone, after dark, lose all their affectation of delicacy and faint-heartedness at the prospect of gazing securely at the face of the perpetrator of crime, well guarded by the environs of the law like some captive beast; they gloat over every sickening detail, and crane their pretty necks for a good look at the ashy countenance of the condemned, when the black-capped judge commends the tortured soul to God's mercy.

It is usually the timid women, well-nourished, well-bred, the society woman, and her sister, the society actress, whose delicate sensibilities can withstand the shock of such scenes. Brave, tender-hearted women, women who have faced the stormy side of life, the workers and thinkers, have no desire to look on such scenes, unless it be in the cause of mercy; and that, every true woman must feel, is not for the tribunal of justice; the fitting place for her mission of alleviation is the solitude of the condemned cell, not the public dock.

Man is far more merciful in the administration of justice than ever woman could be. The man can be just, without being cruel; but woman, with her more highly-strung temperament, quick sensibility, and complex hysterical nature, becomes a perfectly merciless virago the

moment her slender hand touches the scales of justice. That she plays the mischief with those scales, and vanquishes all balance, is a fact that almost every epoch of history can verify.

Idleness is said to be the mother of crime, and luxury is certainly the lover of vice. The two combined give to the world the class of women who possess that morbid appetite which enables them to coolly partake of their lunch of sandwiches, and imbibe sherry, while waiting for a jury to pronounce the fatal verdict. The creeping sensation of pleasure, the shiver of horror at the sight of the dumb, helpless agony of a fellow-creature's misery, is to them the very acme of harrowing enjoyment. They should be belled out of court, such women, and be no more allowed to preside at the reading of the death sentence than they should be permitted to assist at the hanging of the wretched victim.

To the crowd in the little court the wait of a quarter of an hour seemed very long. Everyone was growing impatient; even the placidity of the Assistant Landdrost began to waver; when a noise of wheels, followed by the shuffling of heavy feet, was heard outside; and the eyes of the expectant rabble were soon gladdened by the sight of the prisoners, as they were ushered

in one by one, each under the care of a brace of policemen.

Five more wretched-looking men could not have been found in all the Transvaal that day than the prisoners as they stood in the dock.

Dick, the old Zulu, held his head up and looked straight before him over the heads of the people through the wide open door, where the crowd pressed thickest, into the sunlit street, with the helpless, miserable pain of lost liberty tugging at his heart.

There was no one in all that court who realised more fully the heinousness of his crime, and knew the certain death awaiting him, than did the old man himself. He knew the utter helplessness of pleading that he had been mad with the frenzy of drink when the awful crime was committed. He knew he had been a coward. No word that he could call himself in his utter abasement was too vile. He had murdered unknowingly, unwittingly, in a delirious paroxysm, a man who had been to him, the black man, a kind and generous friend; who had many times spoken words of wonderful import to him; who had told him of a beautiful faith that would regenerate the poor despised negro; who had offered to lead him to the very throne of the God whom he adored. And this gentle, noble-

hearted friend was the man whom he had foully done to death.

His eye-balls burned with the red film of unshed tears, his whole body racked and throbbed with pain, as he thought over all the doings of that fatal night. But through all his misery he was dumb ; no word of defence or protest had fallen from his lips. While his gaolers declared him the most hardened and dangerous of all the prisoners, they feared his silence, they trembled for their lives in his presence. A half dozen of them had bound him to the cot on which he slept in the gaol, and tied with extra ropes his great brawny hands as they led him into court.

Lohia, Jim, Jan, and Charley looked pitiable enough as they were seated, trembling in every limb, with hanging lips and rolling eyes. Their frightened faces elicited jeers and scoffs from the crowd until the Assistant Landdrost raised his hand commanding silence, as the court proceedings were about to begin.

The first witness sworn was an uncle of the murdered man. He gave his testimony briefly, but with much emotion.

The deceased, he said, had left for town on Sunday afternoon, the 8th inst., at about two o'clock, saying he was going to see some

friends, and also to church, and would return about half-past nine. On the Monday morning a man came down to where he was working, and told him that a white man in a state of nudity was lying in one of the cuttings of the Great Reef property. Witness then went up, and to his horror found that it was the body of his nephew.

The witness then identified the clothing of the deceased, which was produced.

A carpenter who worked at the mine was then sworn. He said that the dead man occupied the same room with him. He remembered the deceased leaving for town on Sunday afternoon, as he had asked him for the loan of his watch. Witness asked him if he would come in later, and they would return to the compound together in the evening. He said he could not promise, and he did not go into town. On Monday morning witness saw the corpse lying naked near the boundary of the Langlaagte property. The body was horribly mutilated. He identified the watch, hat, and coat as the property of the deceased.

A physician being sworn, said :—" I am Acting District - Surgeon. On Monday, the 9th inst., I went out to see the body of a white man, who it was stated had been murdered. I

found the body in a state of nudity, lying in a deep cutting. The body was much mutilated. The head was covered with blood, so much so that it had to be washed before it could be examined. On the back of the head there was an open wound, two and a half inches long, laying bare the skull. On the top of the head there was another wound, two and a half inches long by one and a half inches wide. On the left side of the forehead there were two severe bruises. The throat was cut from ear to ear, and there were also two gashes on the side of the neck. The body had been ripped from the neck to the lower part of the abdomen. Several holes had been pierced through the side of the body, one of which had entered the lung. The cause of death was due to the blows on the head, accelerated by the cutting open of the abdomen. Several parts of the body were missing."

An engine-driver at a neighbouring mine testified that on Sunday evening, the 8th inst., he accompanied the deceased to the Wesleyan Church, and afterwards to a boarding-house, where they remained a short time. They walked in the direction of the Salvation Army. Witness left the deceased, as he was going home to the Langlaagte. This was about

half-past nine in the evening. Deceased carried a stick.

Another witness said that he was engaged in laying the train at the Great Reef Mine. He knew the accused, Charley, who worked at the mine. On Sunday evening witness went to look for Charley, but could not find him anywhere. He then went to bed at the eating-house. And about one o'clock Charley returned and went to sleep in the next room. The next day he appeared restless, and did not attend to his work. When witness found out that Charley was to be arrested, he told him so, and he became very frightened and restless.

The compound manager being sworn, said he knew all the accused, who, with the exception of Charley, all shared one hut. On Monday a Kafir came to the property carrying a stick in his hand. As soon as Charley saw the stick he said, "There's the stick!" But, being interrogated, would not give any further information.

The next witness, a young Kafir, was sworn. He gave his name as Andries, and said that he had arrived from Natal a few days before the murder. The day after the murder he met Dick, who offered to sell him a watch for four pounds. Suspecting it was the dead man's property, he sought out a detective, and told

him of the occurrence. They then went back, and witness called Dick, who offered the watch for sale. The detective arrested Dick, and later on the rest of the boys were taken in charge.

The detective's story was heard with breathless attention by the throng of horror-lovers in court. After being sworn, he gave a graphic account of the finding of the murdered man's wearing apparel, the arrest of the boys, and other details of the terrible affair.

"On Monday morning, the 9th inst.," he began, "it was reported to me that a man was lying murdered at Langlaagte. I went there, and found the body of the deceased. There was nothing on the poor fellow but the wristbands of his shirt, and his mutilated body was a fearful sight. Lying there at the bottom of the sluit, it turned my very heart sick to look at it. I went away and set to work at once to trace the whereabouts of the murderers or murderer. I soon found out the occupation of the deceased, and got a description of the clothes he had worn when last seen alive, and the valuables he possessed. On the Thursday following I got a clue from a canteen-keeper, who told me a Kafir in the employ of the Great Reef Company had been seen offering a

watch for sale. I got Andries to go and buy the watch, and bring the Kafir to me. He did so, and I found the watch and chain answered the description given to me. I asked the Kafir, whose name is Dick, how much he wanted for the watch, and he said he would take four pounds, as the watch was his, and he wanted the money to go to his kraal. I then took him into a room in my shanty, and questioned him closely as to where he got the watch. At first he said it was in the brickfields; but after a lot of talking and coaxing, he owned up that he stole it and some clothes from a white man that he and the boys had killed on Sunday. I cautioned him in the usual way, and asked him the names of the boys. The old boy seemed much cut up over what had occurred. He swore that he and the rest were drunk, and did not know it was poor Clark they were murdering, who had always been a good friend to all the boys. Finally I got him to tell the names of the boys; and then I went to the compound. Just as I was going in at the door I saw Lohia, but as soon as he saw me he ran off to his hut. I followed and arrested him. Jan was pointed out to me; and, pointing to Sam, Lohia said, 'There's another.' Sam cleared, and I could not catch him at that time. Jan pointed

out Jem, who was very drunk and seemed to enjoy seeing the others run in. I went into town with the man, and offered a sovereign to whoever would bring me Sam. When I put my prisoners up in gaol, I returned to the mine and searched the hut of the boys. In a bag belonging to Dick I found the coat and vest belonging to the murdered man. In Sam's bag I found the trousers, and under the blankets the murdered man's boots. I found the hat and boots of the deceased concealed under two pieces of ant-heap, close to the spot where the body was lying. The trousers of Dick and Lohia were thickly spotted with blood. After Dick had made his confession to me he gave up the knife with which he had done the deed. Andries interpreted between Dick and myself; but I, too, understand and speak Zulu."

Booy, a native, being sworn, stated that he worked on the Great Reef property, and knew the prisoners well. They, the Kafirs, eat at sundown; but on Sunday evening the prisoners did not eat there. They did not work on Monday. The prisoners were great friends, and were always together.

Hans, the canteen-keeper's black assistant, said the prisoners had come to the bar at nine o'clock that Sunday night; but as they were

already very drunk, the Baas would not sell them any more brandy. The boy gave his evidence in a state of great trepidation, for the beady black eyes of the canteen-keeper were riveted on him from his post at the back of the court, and he dared not give the lie to the evidence of his cruel master, who had sworn that the Kafirs got no drink at his place that night.

And now the sensation so eagerly looked forward to occurred. The youngest of the five prisoners arose, at the bidding of the court, and gave his evidence for the State.

The story was heard with bated breath ; for the young Zulu described with pathetic dramatic effect the details of the murder and the drunken bout preceding the fatal night. A shudder ran through the crowd, and a storm of hisses, oaths, and imprecations arose from the crowd when the trial was declared over.

As the prisoners were about to be led away, a rush was made for them by the angry mob ; but a posse of sturdy policemen held the crowd back. Outside an awful scene occurred, when the prisoners, thrown one after the other into a heavy cart, were bound to the bottom like so many cattle.

The burly canteen-keeper drew near to

watch the process of binding. When the old Zulu caught sight of the wicked face, gloating with a leer of delight at the spectacle, he swung himself loose from the police, and with one bound was at the throat of the seller of vile whisky.

So sudden was the attack that, for an instant, the police were paralysed with astonishment. The next moment they tore the maddened Zulu from the prostrate body of the canteen-keeper, and felled him with blows to the earth; then they bound and lashed the unconscious prisoner to the waggon, and dashed away amidst the howls of the excited crowd through the town, and on over the hill, in the direction of Pretoria.

Once on the road, they never slackened speed, until a few hours later the waggon and its burden drew rein before the Pretoria gaol, where the prisoners, more dead than alive with fright and exhaustion, were to await their final trial and punishment.

CHAPTER XXI

KING FEVER THE AVENGER

CAPTAIN ARCHIBALD ACHILLES lay dying in one of the little rooms of the Nurses' Home. The gaunt hand of deadly typhoid had smitten him down in spite of his splendid physique and gay, reckless spirits. The hot fingers of the cruel fever bound, as in an iron vice, his throbbing temples, drained his aching body of every vestige of strength, and swamped his vitality in the stream of cold perspiration oozing from every pore.

Yes, Captain Archie—the popular cricketer, the favourite originator of many an amateur theatrical success, the greatest heart-breaker of the camp, from barmaid to nurse, as unscrupulous with women as he was dishonest with men—was dying, and dying as many another of his countrymen, fine, robust Englishmen too, were dying around him, far from the sweet, wholesome air of merrie England.

The mutterings of the dying man, as he

fought for life with the deadly fever, were the only sound in that little chamber, where the young nurse moved noiselessly about, performing her duties of the sick room. The silent watcher by the bedside stirred neither hand nor foot, as he sat with bowed head listening to the laboured breathing and delirious talk of his stricken friend.

For hours Hector had sat by that bed, till he was numbed and dazed with watching, until he almost envied the unconscious state of the dying man. A great change had come over Hector. Grief at the flight of Ariadne, combined with the effects of the dissipation in which he had sought forgetfulness of her cruel and inexplicable conduct, had wrought sad havoc in his handsome face, now drawn and haggard, the eyes dull and bloodshot, the golden moustache drooping and unkempt, while the hands supporting his bowed head were weak and tremulous with the excesses of the past weeks.

Those who have stood guard over the bedside of the dying, can alone know the wearying strain of patient waiting for that last struggle which no word can cheer, nor caress alleviate. It is the saddest duty we can ever perform for those near and dear to us, a duty which brings no consolation, since it brings no hope, which

elicits no thanks or meed of gratitude from friend, foe, or beloved one, when once stricken with the impassive indifference of death.

There had been a strange coolness between the men, for what reason Hector could never clearly define. But when the captain was stricken down as by a flash of lightning with the fever, his last conscious word was an urgent request for Hector. That had been some days ago, and Hector had watched incessantly by his side; but he had never regained consciousness.

"And now," thought Hector, sadly, "the poor boy will go without one word of farewell or message for the *mater* and home so far away."

The nurse entered the little room, adjusted the night-lamp, and then glided to Hector's side. She touched him lightly on the shoulder, saying, "I shall be within call, should he grow worse."

When she had gone, he arose from his place beside the bed, and stood at the foot, gazing at the dying man. His mutterings had ceased, or were so faint that they could not reach Hector's ear.

A long bar of yellow moonlight spread its luminous length across the room and over the

bed, shining on the coverlet, which the sick man clutched in his trembling fingers.

The pale golden light seemed to disturb him in some mysterious manner, for the hands on which it shone began to grasp helplessly at some unseen object, while with laboured breathing he strove to raise himself in the bed.

Seeing the disquieting influence of the moonlight on the dying man, Hector went softly to the window and gently drew the curtain partly over it, shutting out the moonlight. In a few moments he ceased his restless movements, and lay quite still.

Hector remained in his place by the window, half concealed in the folds of the *portière* curtain. A hot air filled with a peculiar odour, half sickly, half pungent, was wafted through the open window. Hector shivered slightly, he knew the odour well; it came from a shadowy procession of carts drawn by Kafirs passing along the roadway a slight distance away. He watched the procession file slowly past, until it was lost to view as it turned with the road round a low kopje. Then he let his gaze rove over the scene before him.

The Nurses' Home stood, like a monument of woman's gentle care and noble self-sacrifice,

on a low hill overlooking Doornfontein and Johannesburg. He could see from the window the whole wonderful town at his feet. The view was one of weird, indescribable beauty, as difficult to imagine, by one who has never seen it, as it is difficult to describe; for, there is in the African moonlight a nameless charm, half melancholy, half mystical, which gilds with an almost spiritual beauty the most commonplace objects.

It is a mellow, golden, dream-like moonlight, as unlike the cold glittering moonshine of the north as silver is to gold; a moonlight which has a hush in it that is holy; a moonlight which seems to charge the very atmosphere with its magnetic silence; in which the harshest voice falls soft as the ring of a distant bell upon the ear, and the very ugliness of man and beast becomes transformed into beauty, albeit grotesque, in that sacred light. There is no land on all God's gracious earth that embodies so perfectly supreme rest, suspense from labour, the oblivion of sleep, as the heavenly calm of a moonlight night in South Africa.

Hector leaned far out upon the window-sill; the slight shiver running up and down his back gave place to a glow which seemed to mount to his head and fill him with a delicious

dreaminess : he forgot Archie, he longed only for sleep ; but the scene before him, now transglorified to his fever-smitten eyes, held him in thrall.

The thousand roofs of unpainted zinc gleamed like a mine of opals in the warm moon rays.

Far away the low outline of the distant kopjes seemed bathed in a pale blue vapour like the haze of the ocean.

The shafts, clear to his practised eyes, of mine and battery arose like the phantom masts of ship and barque in ghostly array against the distant blue of the imaginary sea.

Suddenly, far away, he caught the sight of Devonshire hills round the placid waters of a gleaming lake, on whose banks rose a quaint, rambling old mansion.

With a cry he stretched forth his arms ; but the scene was gone : and he knew that glimpse of his beautiful English home was a vision woven by the mirage of the midnight moon.

Beneath the window stretched a garden, whose blooming beauty had been planted and tended by the hands of the lady nurses. As his eyes rested upon it, the roses and tulips seemed to change to the familiar faces of far-away friends, as they nodded their uplifted heads in the warm night-breeze.

A great gaunt Kafir dog strolled along the garden path, his black body shining like satin in the mellow light. He walked on his own shadow, cast beneath him by the moon, now full in the meridian of the heavens, where she hung for a few moments apparently stationary. Hector watched, with eyes that began to burn strangely, the shadow of the dog slowly pass from under his body, and lengthen along the path behind him.

Once the lonely animal stopped, and stared up at Hector with great white eyes, then raised its head and gave vent to a prolonged, melancholy bay. Hector shuddered, and then waved the dog away. The gesture seemed to frighten the animal, for he turned and sped towards the roadway, clearing the low fence in a bound, and was off.

Then Hector's gaze rested drowsily on the flowers; but the roses looked no longer up to him; the tulips hung their heads as though bent by the burden of a passing wind. The moonlight seemed to be swallowed up in an approaching darkness; the garden beneath, the town lying beyond, seemed revolving in a vapouring mist; and he was fast succumbing to unconsciousness when every sense was

aroused to alertness by the sound of the dying man's voice calling in hoarse tones—

“Ariadne!”

It was the first time in all those days and nights of watching that Hector had heard that name on his lips.

“Ariadne,” he called again, this time in stronger tones, “Ariadne, you must hear me! I'm leaving the Rand for ever. I cannot go without you. Come with me, Ariadne, come—come——”

The last words floated away in a whisper, but Hector's ear, strained by excitement, caught them distinctly as he approached the bed, dazed and staggered by the shock of the revelation made by the raving of the dying man.

“So it was true, after all,” muttered Hector. “He did love her. Oh, Archie, Archie, why did you deceive me?”

Then the poor fellow sank on the chair by the bed and began to weep childishly; worn out with watching and weakened by the fever, which had already fastened its fangs in his brain, and poured its poison in his blood. He wept feebly. Had he not loved this man with more than the love of a brother? And that this man of all men should have coveted the woman

he loved ; coveted her while he cloaked his real feelings in a semblance of distrust and contempt for her ! It was too much for Hector's weakened nerves. He could only find relief in hysterical tears.

Suddenly the stupor into which the unusual state of tears had reduced him was dispelled by the renewed ravings of the captain. At first his words were jumbled and indistinct, but gradually their real meaning was caught by Hector, who started from his seat with a rage he could not control, as the voice from the bed cried passionately—

“ I lied about Hector—I lied—lied. Forgive me, it was through love for you—Ariadne—love for you. I lied when I told you—when I said Hector—Hector was married—Hector——”

The last word died in a gurling sound as Hector seized the dying man by the throat.

“ Scoundrel,” he gasped, frenzied by fever and rage, “ you drove her away ! Wake up ! no shamming. You're no more dying than I am. Get up. Let us fight it out like men. The one who lives shall marry her.”

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It was an awful sight that met the eyes of the frightened nurses as they rushed into the

room, drawn thither by the sound of the struggle. Hector had dragged Archie out of the bed, and the two were locked in each other's arms in a desperate embrace. All at once Hector's grasp relaxed, and he fell insensible on the floor.

As the doctor and the nurses laid Archie in the bed, he seemed to regain consciousness for a moment.

"I have told Hector at last," he whispered faintly. "He said the one who lived should marry her. Tell him I couldn't help myself. I loved her."

Then he relapsed into unconsciousness.

"He has collapsed," said the doctor, as he felt his pulse. "He will not regain consciousness again, but pass away quietly in that state."

But the doctor was mistaken; for an hour after, when Hector had been removed raving and fighting in the delirious struggles of high fever, Archie opened his eyes and looked at the nurse seated in Hector's place by his bed.

"Tell Hector," he said faintly, so faintly that the young nurse had to put her little ear close to his lips, "tell Hector I could not help it. Tell him to forgive me—when I'm gone."

The nurse nodded her pretty head while she wiped away her tears.

Then he closed his eyes.

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The next day the Johannesburg papers chronicled the untimely death of Captain Archibald Achilles, the popular cricketer ; and also imparted the sad news of the expected death of Hector, who had been stricken down by fever, through devotion to his dying friend.

CHAPTER XXII

HOMeward BOUND

It was a glorious evening at sea ; the sun was setting in a blaze of fiery cloud and seething waters on one side, while on the other the pearly disc of the full moon slowly arose out of the purple waves, tipping their heaving crests with her sparkling beams, and flooding the darkness with silvery mist.

Between the rising and setting light, the dark form of the *Garth Castle* loomed up, gallantly ploughing her way in the wake of the sun, leaving behind her a snowy trail of foam, as she sped on her restless course towards that distant land behind whose shores the sun was sinking.

On board the *Garth* affairs were settling into the usual routine of life aboard ship. She had steamed out of the breakwater as the evening shadows were descending on Cape Town five days before. Her passengers were growing accustomed to the sea, and already forming

projects for the entertainment of each other during the voyage.

Two women were alone on the hurricane deck. One was leaning against the guards; her tall figure and auburn hair, tinged by the rays of the sunset, appeared positively resplendent in the rosy glow. The other was reclining in a steamer chair, carefully wrapped in a kaross, from which looked up the wan face and pale lips of Ariadne.

"Kathleen," she was saying in a voice the mere echo of her once gay ringing tones, "how charming you look in that light! The sun gilds your white gown, blue cloak, and dear red head with such a lovely tint that you look as pretty as a picture."

"Thank you," answered her sister, with a little laugh. "I'm glad your good old Kathleen looks pretty once in a while."

"I shall never wear white again," said Ariadne, sadly, as she brushed her hands across her eyes.

"Come, come, you must remember your promise," said Kathleen, drawing a camp-stool near, and sitting beside her. "No more grieving."

"I know it, but I can't do it yet. I must give way now and then. Don't be cross with me."

"No, my darling," said Kathleen, tenderly, "I won't reproach you. I'll help you all I can to forget."

"Will you not try to come down to dinner?" she said, after a pause. "The sight of all those new faces will interest and amuse you. Do come!"

"Don't ask me to-night," said Ariadne, pleadingly. "Just have patience one day longer; then I will go with you. Oh! I cannot bear it yet."

"There, there!" interrupted Kathleen, soothingly, "I'll wait. But you will be amused. We have quite a set of mashers at our table. They even attempt their blandishments on me, your staid old Kathleen. But I see them looking at your empty place, and I know they resent your absence. The captain is such a dear—I have almost lost my heart to him. And there is a handsome German from Durban who looks after me very kindly. He politely offers me a glass of champagne regularly now at dessert."

"Does he?" said Ariadne. "How kind of him! I am sure I shall like him."

"I know you will," resumed Kathleen. "Then there is a splendid-looking, weather-beaten old officer; he is a perfect giant; such a grand head and soft beautiful brown

eyes—oh!” broke off Kathleen, with a prolonged sigh.

“Why, sister,” exclaimed Ariadne, with a faint laugh, “you are growing positively eloquent. Go on ; this is getting interesting.”

“There is another officer ; he sits at the end of the table opposite my nice German ; but,” said Kathleen, impressively, “he is not like the old general, he is the courteous old school type ; but this young officer is, well, dreadful ; he slangs at the captain and every one else. Last night he roared out to some one at the doctor’s table, ‘There’s no flies at this table.’ Now, Ariadne, what do you think he could mean by such an idiotic remark ?”

“I’m sure I cannot understand,” said Ariadne, laughing outright at her sister’s solemn tone ; “but I should think he was an original.”

“He is decidedly ; but as he has just returned from Matabeleland, I have no doubt he has still a touch of the fever ; hence his wild careering on deck, and fondness for baking himself in the sun. I don’t think he saw much service in Africa, consequently he is undergoing a process of tanning his face and hands in order to appear the proper hue when we get to Plymouth.”

“Kathleen, you will become a confirmed

cynic, if I do not get strong soon, and look after you."

"Oh, the M.P. who sits next to me will do that; he is full of kindly excuses for the irrepressible young captain, who is no doubt a very good sort of soldier after all."

"No doubt," said Ariadne, "but I hope he won't subside till I am able to go down. I like to be amused."

"You will find plenty of that, dear, in the antics of a tall, thin young man who has the foot of the table."

"Indeed; what is his peculiarity?"

"Well, he has a fad for giving dinners on his own account at one of the unoccupied tables in the corner. What pleasure he can see in it I don't know, unless it is to get a lot of men round him and see them drink all he can pay for. He does me one service—he takes his disagreeable face away and rids us of the slang of our young captain from Matabeleland. I regain my appetite then."

"Poor Kathleen," said Ariadne, laughing.

"The M.P. tells me it is against the rules to give private dinners on board, but as the bilious young man is a shipping clerk for the Company he takes advantage. The M.P. declares that no such goings on as these are allowed on board the *Tartar*."

"And the German?" said Ariadne.

"Oh, he is not led away by that set; although they chaff him dreadfully, he always remains with us. Now I wonder if he thinks I would miss that glass of champagne at dessert?"

"Perhaps," observed Ariadne.

"Perhaps," re-echoed Kathleen.

"And the women?" said Ariadne. "What are they like?"

"You won't get on with them," answered Kathleen, with a laugh. "Thoroughly commonplace. I don't believe there is one who has a history, consequently they won't interest you; you'll make them all crazy with jealousy. Hurry up, dear, and get strong. I want to see some fun. There is nothing I enjoy more than seeing you rout a pack of jealous old tabbies."

"Kathleen! Kathleen!" began Ariadne, in a tone of remonstrance, but she was interrupted by the voice of the captain.

"Will you not come down to dinner this evening?" he inquired, kindly.

"No, captain. I fear I cannot just yet. You go, dear," she said, addressing Kathleen.

"Can I do anything for you?"

"Thank you, captain. If you don't mind, I

would like my chair turned round, that I may be able to watch the moon rising."

"Are you comfortable, dear?" said Kathleen, when the captain had removed the chair.

"Yes, thank you. Go to dinner now. I shall enjoy a quiet musing."

"You are quite sure you won't be lonely?" said Kathleen, as she kissed her.

"No, no. Go now."

When the last sound of their footsteps had died away, and silence reigned on the deck below, Ariadne abandoned herself to the melancholy comfort of unrestrained weeping. She wept at first softly and quietly, but the tears seemed to gain strength with their flow, increasing until a perfect tempest of grief overwhelmed her.

Hector was dead. Three months before, the news of his death had reached her. For a time an attack of fever mercifully seized her and granted blessed oblivion. With the return of health came the return of that unending regret eating at her heart like a cancer of sorrow. Regret that she had not followed the impulse of her love and remained by his side; regret that she had not thrown prudence and virtue to the winds, and been to him all, wife—if not

in name, in heart—for the brief days he had to live. Oh, saddest of sorrows and bitterest of knowledge is the sorrow void of consolation, and the knowledge of good that has been done in vain!

Through her glimmering tears she looked up at the Southern Cross, gleaming with chaste, holy light in the heavens high above her.

“Dear Southern Cross,” she said, softly, “you shine on his grave to-night, as you will shine for endless nights when I can no longer see your sacred radiance.”

Then her eyes rested on the golden moon, and glanced still lower,—suddenly they beheld the spirit of Hector standing motionless and white before her in the moonlight.

“Oh, my love!” she whispered, clasping her hands on her heart as she slowly arose from the chair. “I knew you would come to me once more. I prayed so long to see you. Let me touch you before I lose you again for ever.”

Very slowly she advanced to him, as though fearful of frightening him away. She could see his eyes shining cold as the moon’s rays. Nearer she glided, until she could touch him; and then she stretched out her arms and folded them around him.

But the arms that returned her embrace were warm; and the heart she felt beating against hers, throbbed like the beating of an imprisoned bird. The lips on her lips thrilled her with a kiss born not of heaven but of earth. Joy does not always kill; but sometimes it is too much for the fondest heart; and it sent her reeling into the dark abyss of insensibility.

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When she opened her eyes, she felt those arms still around her, and the old remembered kisses on her hair. The moon shone brightly on the dear face and the drooping golden mustaches, and on the face of Kathleen.

"Oh! I knew it all the time," cried her sister, tears of joy shining in her eyes. "I knew it from the first day we were on board; but you were too ill to bear the shock of surprise. Poor boy, he has been begging to see you, and watched you from little nooks and corners all over the deck. But to-night I sent him up to you—and—oh!"

Here Kathleen broke down, and fled to the gangway to stifle her sobs.

Ariadne nestled her head on Hector's breast.

"Speak to me," she whispered, "and then I'll know I am not dreaming."

"Ariadne," was all he said.

"Oh! it is my Hector," she cried, exultingly. "All the ghosts in the world could not speak like that."

There are reunions too sacred for words to describe. It is only those who have lost, suffered, and re-found who can imagine the picture the pen is too weak to portray.

When these two had wept out their joy together, Ariadne, woman-like, was filled with curiosity to solve the mystery of Hector's reported death.

"Tell me, dearest," she said, "how did this terrible mistake occur?"

"It would take a long time to tell you all," answered Hector, softly. "You are not well enough to hear the story now."

Then he paused, and Ariadne fancied she felt the hand clasping hers tremble a bit.

"Let it suffice for the present," he continued, "that I have escaped death, and that I am with you again, a stronger and better man than I have ever been before."

It was not until Ariadne was his bride that he told her of his escape from a living death.

How, after a long siege of fever, complicated with congestion of the brain, he suddenly col-

lapsed, and was to all appearance dead. How he was buried the very evening of the day of his supposed death—as many another helpless victim of the fever—and thrust hastily into the grave before twelve hours had elapsed, or sufficient time allowed in which to detect the difference between syncope and actual death.

How two Kafirs, coming in the early morning to prepare fresh graves, mistaking in the faint light of the dawn the low mound above his head for the remains of some freshly-turned soil, had set to work, and, to their amazement, on digging up a few feet of earth, come upon the long, narrow lid of his coffin, from which issued his lusty cry—

“Take me out of this, boys!”*

How the sound of pick and shovel, as they worked away vigorously, had roused him from that deadly sleep. How he awoke with brain and senses cleared of the fumes of the fever; and in an instant realising, thanks to his experience as a miner, that he was somewhere underground—probably buried in a shaft—uttered that cry for help with all the strength of desperation.

How the Kafirs, with true native pluck, instead of abandoning him through fright, took

* This is an absolute fact.

in the situation with grim humour, and set to work right merrily to dig him out. How the doctors stared—some resentfully that he had given the lie to their skill—and the nurses rejoiced, when the Kafirs bore him back to the hospital. How the event probably saved many another poor fellow from a living death, by teaching the medical staff a lesson, whereby they learned to be more cautious in the future.

But of all this he said nothing, that lovely night at sea, to the fair woman beside him ; for his courage faltered as he looked in the wan face, and felt the soft touch of the fragile hand.

Suddenly, like the swift stroke of a knife, a pang rent Ariadne's heart as she recalled the words of Captain Achilles that morning in the garden of Willow Grove.

Instinctively she shrank from her lover's side.

"There is something else——" she began, in a tremulous voice.

"I know what you would say," interrupted Hector, as he drew her close to him. "You would tell me of poor Archie's charge against me that day at the 'Willows.' It was false, little one, all false, every word of it ; and I never knew what was the cause of your sudden departure from the Rand, without a word of farewell, until I heard it from the poor