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[SUPPLEMENT GRATIS.]

"THE SHADOW OF FATE." By JUDGE JARVIS.



"AS HE EMERGED FROM THE WATER, THE STRANGER SLIPPED HIS ARM AROUND THE WAIST OF THE WOMAN AND DREW HER UP INTO THE SADDLE."
SEE NEXT PAGE.

Two Serial Novels

OF
GREAT POWER!

ONE FULL OF DRAMATIC
INTEREST.

One More Domestic in
Character.

THE SHADOW OF FATE.

BY
JUDGE JARVIS.

CHAPTER I.—AN ADVENTURE.



RIDER was threading his way over a road which lay along the hills at the base of the Blue Ridge Mountains, in the region known as the Piedmont of Virginia, about the sources of the Rappahannock River. His horse's pace was the quick, nervous walk, alternated with a skipping dog-trot, which unmistakably marks the sure traveler of long distances. The animal was thoroughbred, large, big-boned, without unnecessary flesh—in fact, rather clean about the muscles and legs, with bright eyes well set in a small, strong head.

The man himself might be described in the same language, as far as it would apply. Beyond this his age was about twenty-three, his hair brown and full in lock, his eye of a grayish blue, and his beard, which was worn closely clipped all over the face, was made up of those various colors which, by reason of the light and red predominating, give the general appearance of a blonde. He seemed about five feet nine or ten inches, as he sat in the saddle like a portion of the beast he rode, and was of symmetrical build, his body broad, deep and solid, and his limbs full and tapering. He was clad in dark clothes of a neat fit, and wore a soft felt hat. The man and the horse were not striking in the common sense of the word beyond a certain military air that distinguished them, but, to a judge of human nature and of horse-flesh, both were noteworthy objects.

The afternoon was well advanced, and the long shadows of the mountains to his left were creeping silently and swiftly over the landscape, which the Fall had begun to tinge with its delicate and variegated hues, and had made melancholy with its marks of fading life.

The lazy cattle on the rolling hills, the falling leaves, the tortuous fences, the bright grass and the brown trunks of the forest trees, together with the houses, barns and cabins, around which could be seen distinctly the animation of human and other life, gave picture-queeness to the ride; but these passed unnoticed by the traveler. With bridle held more from habit than presence of mind, he moved steadily through the gathering shadows of the glorious October afternoon, with head bent forward and his thoughts upon distant things.

The horse pricked up his ears. Like a true horseman the rider was alert, and casting his eye down the road in his front, he saw a figure preceding him on horseback.

A pressure of the knees upon the horse was quickly answered, and in a fine sweeping trot the latter soon covered the ground between the two riders. The horseman, with the courtesy of the country, slackened his pace upon perceiving that some one was coming up behind him, and nodded pleasantly.

"Good-evening, sir," said our traveler.

"Good-evening, sir," was the echo of the farmer.

"Can you tell me whether the ford is passable, and how far I have yet to ride before I reach it?"

"The creek is about six miles ahead. I saw Mr. Johnson this morning, who crossed on horseback about six o'clock, and he seemed to have got his stirrups and legs wet in coming over. The Fall rains have been unusually heavy, and the flood of water during the week will probably have swollen it so that you will be unable to cross to-night, or even to-morrow. The creek rises very rapidly, and when it is up, the water is so angry as to make it unsafe to swim it. Yonder is my house, however, and if you feel inclined to stop and rest over night, you are welcome."

"No, I thank you," responded the traveler, "it is preferable for me to cross to-night. Should I return this way, however, I shall gladly acknowledge the kindness of your offer by accepting it."

"If you are bent on crossing it to-night, you can only do it at great peril. However, a willful man may have his way. If you find the stream running even with the banks or higher, you will have to swim for it. In that case, get into the creek, and go up stream about a hundred yards, keeping well near this bank where it is shallow; your horse seems strong, and this course will allow you about a hundred and fifty yards for the rapidity of the current. You will then strike straight across, and land where you can; any part of the other bank below the ford will give you a good foothold."

"Thank you," said the stranger, riding off as the farmer halted at his gate. "I will mind your directions."

His way quickly brought the traveler to the stream now running over its banks. By that time the twilight had given way to the more sombre night, which was lit up with the stars alone, across

which rolled occasional clouds. In this imperfect light he shaped out the course of the ford from bank to bank as well as he could with the memory of the directions given him, and, although he anticipated that he might possibly have to swim his horse, a long and intimate acquaintance with the noble brute assured him that he could be trusted in such an emergency. Moreover, the shimmer on the water gave it the appearance of smoothness and placidity, greatly softening the turbid rushing of the stream to the eye, though it was so plain to the ear. And, trusting to his eye alone, he inferred that the noise must proceed from some obstruction above or below the ford, over which the waters dashed with impetuous violence. But, even though he had seen his danger in the broad light of the day, his nervous resolution would have still impelled him irresistibly to rush upon it, with twenty miles of his road in front of him and an object in view.

Slipping easily from his saddle, he tightened the girths, slackened the crupper, and gently patting the animal addressed a few affectionate words to him. Remounting with equal facility, he fixed himself firmly in the saddle, gathered his bridle in a manner to impart to his companion his own energy and determination, with knowledge of the occasion for its exercise, and moved into the creek.

The water was about one hundred and thirty yards from edge to edge. Owing to a curve in the stream which had caused a deposit of firm sand and gravel for some distance above and below the ford, his horse's hoofs found firm bottom in water which rose to the flap of the saddle. Turning up the stream, he proceeded for about a hundred yards along the bank and then struck boldly across in a direct line, with the horse's head slanted up current. The depth of the water did not sensibly increase in the course of eighty yards, and the stranger was congratulating himself upon the probability of getting over without a wetting, when the animal in two steps increased the depth until he could no longer hold his footing and sprang boldly into the middle of a deep rushing channel. In an instant, the rider had seized the mane of the horse in his left hand and slipped smoothly out of the saddle to the lower side, where he floated along in accord with the motion of the animal.

Man and beast battled bravely with the flood for a moment, when the former was startled to feel the horse flinch and turn with a terrified snort down the current. A quick jerk upon the left rein served to procure but an instant's pause in the precipitate course of the beast, but in that instant the stranger became aware of another presence by the touch of a clammy object upon his hand.

Raising his head above the neck of the charger, he saw dimly outlined upon the waving and shimmering surface a dark and undefinable object. The next moment the desperate plunges of the beast had obstructed his vision, when, with the self-command of one accustomed and nerved to the hardship of athletic sports and a soldier's danger, he swung his leg over the back of his animal and gathered himself into his saddle.

Reaching out a hand as he tightened the bridle and clasped his knees firmly against the horse's shoulders, he was about to seize the object of his horror, when it rolled over in the water and exposed, in the dim light of the now unclouded sky, the ghastly features of a woman's face.

For an instant only he hesitated; then, recovering from the thrill which ran from the soles of his feet to the roots of his hair, he grasped the head firmly by the loose, flowing, tangled mat of raven tresses, and raised it above the water upon the pommel of his saddle.

Then, addressing himself to the frantic horse, he, with the dexterity of a master hand, quieted him sufficiently to render him once more pliable to his direction.

Turning his head again up-stream, he renewed the combat with the tide. Twice it seemed as though man, woman and beast must all succumb, as the waves swirled over them with the impetuosity of the mountain storms in which they had their birth, and twice the noble struggles of the animal, in obedience to the will of his lord, cheated the turgid grave of its victims.

Finally, at a moment when even the branches of the trees upon the bank seemed bending forward in fierce expectancy to see a frowning Fate engulf those who dared to raise their hands against the execution of her decrees, the hoofs once more crunched the firm bottom of the stream, and ten paces brought the party safely to the shore.

As he emerged from the water, the stranger slipped his arm around the waist of the woman and drew her up into the saddle. Once upon the dry land, he dismounted and placed the body upon the ground.

Feeling the forehead, he found it cold, the hands were also chilled, but he thought he felt a slight flutter of the pulse. Tearing open the dress, he pressed his hand against the heart and found it still warm.

He at once called to his aid a treatment he himself had been subjected to when nearly drowned in his youth, as described to him after his recovery. First holding up the body with face downward, to let the water run out of the mouth, throat, lungs, etc., he then laid it upon its back, stood at the head, seized the arms by the upper part and worked them vigorously up and down.

He was soon rewarded by perceiving her breathe, and, after a few more pump-handle strokes, the woman made an attempt to speak, which resulted, however, only in a moaning cry.

At this point he began to look for other assistance, when he observed a light upon the hill above the creek. Once more raising the body to the pommel of his saddle and mounting behind it, he sought the road, which was now about two hundred yards above him, the terror of his horse having caused him to be carried thus far down the stream below his objective point.

The horse, fatigued by such desperate struggles, coming after a thirty miles journey, stumbled heavily over the broken ground, and the rider spoke to him hoarsely in his excitement.

On arriving at the road he encountered a high rail-fence, which it was necessary to topple over to enable him to reach the roadway. This, incumbered as he was by his burden and the restive horse, he attempted with little success; but, upon exclaiming at the beast, he was greeted from the road by a man who approached.

Desiring him in quick, impatient tones to take down the rails from the fence, the horse soon passed over safely, and the rider, with hasty thanks to his helper, rode away toward the house.

The latter was not more than three hundred yards distant across the fields, but the road, winding in its ascent of a rather steep hill, stretched out the distance to a full half-mile.

Just before reaching the gate at the crest of the hill, he saw three men standing upon the road, outlined against the sky, who seemed to anticipate his

arrival. In fact, they stood in front of the horse in such a way that there would have been no passage beyond the gate, had his course led him straight down the road.

Before he could accost these men, he was himself saluted in a shrill, piping voice with:

"Hello, stranger, who are you, and where are you going?"

At the same moment a second of the party moved swiftly in the direction of the approaching horse's head, as though to seize the bridle; but the rider, swerving skillfully to one side, evaded the grasp, and turned into the open gate, followed by the party. A few steps brought them to the piazza.

"Hands off!" cried the traveler, as a second attempt was made to catch the rein. "Here, one of you, take this body down and fetch some brandy as soon as possible."

One stepped around to receive the woman, and another entered the house to procure the stimulant. "What's this?" said the one who was assisting the traveler in dismounting the woman.

"Postpone your questions until a more suitable time; you will have as much as you can do for the present in restoring the object of your curiosity to health. Send for the nearest physician at once."

Between them they lifted the motionless but reviving form into the house and deposited it upon a sofa.

The stimulant was soon brought, and, upon a small portion of it being administered, the woman indicated an increased vitality by a broken gurgle. This, after a while, gave way to clearer articulation, in which, however, only syllables were emitted. These were in turn succeeded by one or two sharp cries of pain, which gradually subsided into a moaning chatter of wailing, incoherent sentences.

At this point the stranger, in raising his hand to her head to brush the tangled hair from her brow, noticed a clot of blood upon the wet skin of his finger; rubbing it off, he found no trace of a wound.

"She must be bleeding," he ejaculated; "see if there is a cut anywhere."

An examination soon revealed a ghastly wound—an ugly, gaping abrasion upon the left side of the head, above the ear, and just behind the temple. The locks were matted over it, and the blood still oozed slowly from its mouth.

Pending the arrival of a doctor, the stranger clipped the hair from around the wound, and, after bathing it with feminine tenderness, he gave the patient over to the charge of the ladies of the house who were in attendance.

Still continuing her wild chattering, she was removed to the bed-chamber across the hall, where she received the appropriate ministrations of her sex.

Little had been said up to this time. The males and females both seemed to recognize an experienced agency in the stranger, and had contented themselves with yielding to, and subserving, his directions.

Upon the return of the party to the parlor, however, the latter courteously intimated his desire to have his horse well fed and groomed, as, after a rest of an hour or two, he desired to proceed on his journey.

A servant was called to take care of the horse, but the stranger followed him to the stable, like an honest horseman, and stood by while the proper attention was given. After the horse was well dried and rubbed and oats had been fed to him, a clean straw bed was spread in his stall, and his master went back to the house.

Upon his entering, he cast a quick, discerning glance at the parties, who, having come out after him, had stood in close proximity to the stable-door, and preceded him on his return to the house. The most noteworthy of the three was he whom the traveler judged to be the host of the house. He was a tall, stout, well-made farmer, past the middle age, with fine features, somewhat browned by the weather and years, and an honest, intelligent expression of countenance.

By his side was his son, who might have been taken for a miniature of the father, at his then age of about twenty-one years.

The third of the party, who had his hat in his hand, was a tall, lank, mountaineer-looking man, with a shrewd eye, yet a general physiognomy which indicated that he might be either knave or fool, as you chose to construe him.

Upon his glance resting on the latter, the stranger, for the first time bringing his ideas down to the reality of what was going on around him, remembered the voice at the gate, and identifying it with the voice at the ford when he was taking down the fence, associated it at once with the man, who in truth was his owner. The owner did not do credit to the voice, nor the voice to the owner; his dress was mean, and an indefinable, vagrant restlessness told of errant pauperism, which was in a measure confirmed by the manner of holding his hat that seemed to say it was his only lawful shelter, and that he was ready to get under it at any time. His shoes were in keeping with his appearance, and wore a garb of mud and dust that, with their other features, was expressive of a ceaseless shuffling over endless roads. The voice, as remembered by the traveler, was shuffling like the shoes, with intermissions of faintness between the gasps and trebles which could with difficulty be distinguished as articulations of words.

CHAPTER II.—A MYSTERY.

In his rapid, comprehensive glance, the horseman detected a certain reserve of manner in the party, and a certain attention and curiosity, not to say sternness, somewhat to his surprise, if not concern. But, as a man of action, he did not wait to be attacked.

"I presume you are the host, sir," said he, at once addressing the elder of the two gentlemen. "If you will be kind enough to let me have a bed, until I can rest for an hour or so and dry my clothing, I shall resume my journey under great obligation to you."

"Do you wish to proceed further on your way before the morning?" asked the one whom he addressed.

"Matters of importance urge me to lose no time, and I shall only delay until my horse can recruit for the balance of my ride. In fact, but for the incident of finding the unfortunate lady in the creek, I should have continued on the road without consulting my comfort so far."

"Will you tell me how you happened upon the adventure, and how you account for the lady's wound and present condition?"

The traveler gave a brief account of the events detailed in the preceding chapter, without, however, throwing any light upon his own identity or business.

Throughout his narration the stranger spoke pleasantly and freely. The vagrant's face, unlike

that of the other two auditors, expressed a marked incredulity, which, however, the traveler did not notice. As he concluded his account there was a pause.

"May I ask your name, sir?" inquired the host, whom we will introduce to the reader as Mr. Thornton, or Squire Thornton, as he was dubbed by his neighbors in honor of his being a justice of the peace.

"I have heard that such a question was an unusual one to be put by a cultivated host to his guest in this country," responded the stranger.

"I will inform you," said the squire, with a faint color, "that I am a magistrate of the county, and you will understand that my inquiries, instead of being governed by impertinent curiosity, are semi-official. It would not add to your chances of acquittal of any connection with the violence which has been done this woman to withhold your name!"

"I beg pardon for the misconception. My name is Gaspard Durer, a short while since a soldier in the French service. Do you see anything in my appearance or anything else about this case which justifies you in interrogating me officially?"

"Until one who is found with a body that has been murdered or dangerously assaulted has accounted satisfactorily for his presence there, there is a legal suspicion fixed upon him. You are welcome to a bed and my hospitality, but you must consider yourself as under detention until the morning, at least, when all diligence will be used in examining into the matter. If your statements be confirmed by the results—of which I have no doubt—I shall wish you Godspeed with all my heart. I trust you will not put me to the formality of issuing a warrant for this purpose, but will let me regard you as a guest during the night."

"If I must be detained to satisfy the law, I yield to the annoyance with as little impatience as possible where the officer of the law exercises his duties so courteously."

Upon the traveler's submitting to the hospitable imprisonment of the squire, the latter changed the subject to his condition.

After a few more remarks were passed, the squire bade his son Eddie conduct the gentleman to his room and see him well provided for the night.

After the traveler had left, the vagrant still lingered. Shifting his hat restlessly but mechanically, he seemed to resume a conversation which had probably been interrupted by the stranger's exit from the stable.

"Pears to me now"—an expression which indicated the result of some mighty reflection for his calibre—"pears to me as he ain't tellin' the truth. He ain't named Gaspard Durer, because he'd a-said so fust. 'Pears to me he looks like old Raoul Dupuy, and Gaston afore him; and, if I ain't mistaken, he's been in these parts afore."

"Who's the woman, Randy?"

"I have been lookin' at her, but 'pears to me I never seen her afore—leastways, she don't come from about here."

"The resemblance of Durer to the Dupuys is striking, and I thought at first he was the son of Gaston, who has been absent so long. What think you, my son?"

"Can't say, father, but his resemblance to Mr. Dupuy at the manor would be noticed by any one."

"Perhaps," suggested the vagrant, "he's a son of Dupuy himself, if half they bring from furrin parts about him is c'rect; 'pears to me he must have more'n one."

"But," resumed the squire, "he is the very image of Gaston, as I remember him in his youth, save that his features seem more hardened, as though he had not led the luxurious life which eventually brought shame upon Gaston's name. He has the very expression which I have seen Gaston wear at times, but a haughtier, prouder mien. Though Dupuy himself was not lacking in either pride or haughtiness; and that is what has made it always appear incredible to me that he should ever have debased himself so far as to ruin a beautiful woman of good position and character, and then live with her and introduce her to his friends as his wife. Were it not that Raoul Dupuy asserts it so emphatically, and the bastard son of Gaston accepts the situation so fully as to banish himself and permit his uncle to enjoy the property without a protest, I should be ready to swear it all a fraud and a lie."

"And your friend Raoul ain't too good for a fraud or a lie," chirped the vagrant, who seemed always ready on any opportunity for saying something to the injury or depreciation of any one.

"We will dispense with your comments on the characters of my friends," retorted the squire, somewhat mortified that he had permitted the tramp to assume such a familiar tone.

"No offense, squire, but 'sponse or no 'sponse, I knows the laws, and I allers take care to have proof afore I says a libel upon any man."

"What do you know of Raoul Dupuy, villain, that you dare maintain such a thing concerning his character, which is polluted by your mention of it?"

"Never mind what I know, squire, so long as I ain't said it," answered the tramp, who was nettled and would have liked to have beaten the squire in the colloquy, but instinctively drew himself into his rag shell, as a snail does upon the approach of curiosity.

As the last words were uttered the party was startled by the voice of the stranger, who had opened the door without their hearing it in the absorbing turn which the conversation had taken, and no one could tell how much of their words he had overheard.

If he had heard any, however, he did not betray it in his tone, as he asked the host the favor of a night-dress, which had been overlooked by Edward Thornton in conducting him to his room. This being given him, he once more retired, and closed the door with a "Good-night."

"Well, squire, I must be looking out for myself. It's too late to cross the creek (creek) to-night, and I'm obliged to ask you for lodgin'." But, squire, ain't you going to hold him over in the mornin'? I swear as I tell you, I heard the scuffle down by the road."

The squire without noticing the last question, requested his son to dispose of the vagrant for the night, and give him food if necessary, and went to join his wife and daughter, who had not intermitted their attentions to the unfortunate lady placed in their charge.

As he stepped into the hall he was just in time to admit the physician, who had received the message on his return from a visit, and started without delay for the house. They went into the room together, where they found the patient in bed and quiet, but not asleep.

The doctor examined the wound, heard a report of the case, as far as known to the inmates of the house, and made his diagnosis. Then leaving the proper remedies, which he took from his saddle

bags after the manner of country-doctors, he retired to the parlor with the squire.

"What is your opinion, doctor?" asked the squire.

"It is rather early to ask an opinion about the patient, squire; the night will have much to do with her chance of recovery. The skull is fractured, and it may be necessary to trepan it, if any portion is bearing upon the brain."

"Do you think the blow will permanently affect her brain, or that she will be sound in mind should she recover?"

"If the pressure of the bone upon the brain be removed she will doubtless recover her senses. But until she is completely well again, and even after, no risk must be taken in the case. Absence of excitement or noise is indispensable, as the slightest mental shock might make her a raving maniac. Blows upon that region of the head have been known to deprive persons of the power of speech, and it she is not kept perfectly quiet, she may recover only to linger out a dumb existence."

The doctor then, enjoining the greatest care in the management of the patient, left for home, promising to call in the morning.

The next day burst gloriously out of the east, and before the sun was over the crest of the hills, Durer was at his horse's side. The night's rest and fresh air had restored both man and beast to their wonted courage and elasticity, and after seeing that the stable-boy gave the horse proper attention, Durer strolled buoyantly around the inclosure, delighting in the prospect as though he communed with a long-lost friend.

Upon entering the house, he found his host stirring about, and the family assembled in waiting for breakfast. He noticed with curiosity the youngest member of the party, a piquant blonde of about twenty Springs—for there seemed neither Summer, Fall nor Winter in her composition—and addressed himself in particular to her, by which her instinct detected a gallant man.

It was not difficult to engage her in conversation, and whether she had heard the stranger's resemblance to the Dupuys mentioned by her father, or whether she observed it herself, cannot be positively told; but, by some very easy and natural train of association, the conversation turned to Raoul Dupuy's household.

The squire, on hearing the name mentioned, looked searchingly at the traveler's face, but was unable to find the slightest change of expression pass over it.

The young lady, the daughter of the squire, and Laura by name, was extravagant in her enthusiasm over Miss Fanny Bell, the ward of Mr. Raoul Dupuy, and an inmate of his household.

"You should see her—or, perhaps, you have? Well, if you haven't, you must call at the house as you pass. Any one will show you Loudon Manor, and everybody will praise its mistress. The most queenly beauty you ever saw, with a face and form like an Italian marble, and a pair of eyes like diamonds stained with the imperial purple of the ancients, if you can imagine such a combination. No, you can't, because you should see her to get an idea of it. I wish I were a man when I think of her teeth, her lips, her cheeks, her forehead, her ears, her hair, that I might admire her more, and conquer that frosty stateliness with which she condemns her lovers to despair. Admirers? The whole county, the whole State, would be at her feet if she would allow them the privilege," etc., etc.

And the little beauty rattled on in praise of her friend, until the stranger wondered that she did not have to repeat her words to find vent for her admiration.

Nor was the stranger at all loath to listen, for whether he was charmed by the praises of Miss Bell, or delighted with the bewitching grace and ardor of his *vis-à-vis*, he seemed deeply interested in all that was said, and even encouraged her by stimulating incredulities and questions to still more excessive raptures. It was with evident reluctance that he finally arose, on the announcement of breakfast, to conduct Miss Laura to the table.

The breakfast was dispatched with the profuse meats and endless variety of bread of the country, without other than commonplace conversation, in which the stranger took a ready but collected part, showing extended information and experience, but carefully suppressing himself throughout. The conversation turned to no other subject in which he manifested the interest which had held him while Miss Laura was speaking before breakfast; but this might have been owing to the fact that there is more stiffness around the board than there is on the drawing-room sofa.

After breakfast, a servant, whom the squire had dispatched across the creek upon his first arising, returned with the information that the creek had fallen during the night, so as to admit of easy passage by the regular ford, from which the traveler seemed to have gone astray the night before, to make allowance for the currents taking him down in swimming his horse.

He had been to Mr. Taylor's—the gentleman whom the stranger had left at his gate on the road—and Mr. Taylor would be over immediately after breakfast.

Upon the arrival of Mr. Taylor he and the squire retired for a consultation, to which they, after a while, called Randy, the vagrant. They then returned to the traveler, and, after hearing his account once more, and comparing the time of his leaving Mr. Taylor with that of his arrival at the squire's, they proceeded to the creek in company. There they examined the ground carefully, and its general appearance verified the stranger's account, the part disturbed having been evidently affected by laying the wet body upon the ground and pumping the arms as described.

After the inspection was concluded, and the party was about to adjourn, it was joined by young Thornton, who displayed a piece of dress, which he had found on the jagged limb of a fallen tree, which was then caught by its branches in the bushes on the bank, and floating in the stream about a hundred yards above the road. Thither the party repaired and scrutinized the log, but without result, and they finally repaired to the house.

Upon their arrival, the squire addressed the traveler:

"I have taken counsel with Mr. Taylor touching this case, which seems a deep mystery, after all the information we have been so far able to gather; the lady seems unknown even to Randy, who visits every house in this and the adjoining counties, and you are equally a stranger to us. From what I gather, however, when taken in connection with the finding of a piece of the dress in a place where it would seem impossible for you to have been, and the time consumed by you in passing from Mr. Taylor's house here, I consider that you have been fully discharged from any connection with the affair. Yet we must first attempt to gather something from the lady herself."

At this point the doctor came out of the sick-room, having reached the house while the party was at the stream. He stated that the lady had greatly improved during the night, and that the wound was in all probability not serious; the lady had even recovered in a measure the control of her mental faculties and language, though she was not fully conscious or coherent as yet.

Upon being asked, he gave permission for the party to enter the sick-room, provided they moderated their inquiries to suit her enfeebled condition, and refrained from putting too great a strain upon her mind or her emotion.

The squire, Mr. Taylor, the traveler and the doctor together proceeded to the bedside of the unfortunate woman, the stranger—being assured of his release by the words of the squire—first ordering a servant to bring his horse to the door before leaving the piazza.

Upon reaching the bed the woman opened her eyes, and, seeing the kind, manly faces of the squire and Mr. Taylor, she faintly smiled, and ran her eyes over the rest of the group.

She passed the doctor without any variance of expression, and then rested them upon the face of the stranger.

The eyes became set in a horrible stare, the light forsook them, the pupils dilated; she raised herself to a sitting posture by a convulsive movement of the arms; then, crouching to her knees and throwing herself wildly down upon her face, she shrieked out, with a curdling moan:

"Oh, oh, Dupuy! don't, don't!" and consciousness once more left her.

Despite his self-command, the traveler paled. He at once retired with the gentlemen, however, to the piazza, and the doctor moved to the assistance of his patient.

In a short while he, too, joined the party upon the piazza, in front of which the traveler's horse had just been brought, and was now standing saddled and bridled. Nothing had passed between the group until the doctor broke a painful constraint which had fallen upon all.

"Gentlemen," said he, "the worst mishap that could befall this unfortunate lady has just occurred through her having seen this gentleman, Mr. Durer. She is a raving maniac. She may die, she may recover after a lingering illness. But, in any event, she will be fortunate if she ever recovers her reason. Darkness has settled upon her brain for a long night, which may never be followed by the dawn."

"To what, doctor?" asked the squire, in a serious tone, "do you attribute her shock?"

"She was evidently stricken with horror at the sight of Mr. Durer, whom, from my knowledge of the laws of the human brain, she has in some way associated with the violence which has been done her, to her great terror."

There was a pause, a painful lull of language and feeling.

Then the squire spoke to Durer.

"The case, sir, has taken a new turn. You doubtless appreciate the weight of what has transpired at the bedside of this injured lady, and will not be surprised that I conclude it my duty to commit you to await further developments in the matter."

The stranger's eyes flashed, his bronzed face became swarthy with fire.

"And you ought not to be surprised, sir, to hear that I have submitted to your restraint beyond patience. I have no right to be called Dupuy, and I never saw this woman's face before the light of the stars gleamed upon it in yonder creek. Nor, having no connection with her mishap, shall I permit an act of humanity to entangle me in a web of suspicions and delays. Stop me who dare!"

The words came out upon the morning air as clear and sharp as steel upon an anvil, and with a magnetic energy which held every one as with a spell.

Upon the last syllable he strode from the piazza, booted and spurred, his steps clanging an echo to his voice. One spring and he has vaulted into his saddle; he brushes away the servant who holds his bit with imperial disdain, and turns his horse at the gate.

The animal clears it with the activity and fire of his master, gathers himself on the other side, and, before the squire can recover from the stupor of amazement, is off and away with the speed and beauty of Al Borak, well beloved of the prophet.

CHAPTER III.—A CHASE.

THE rider sped down the road at a break-neck pace, until he had covered about a mile of ground, and put all chance of being pursued on foot behind him. Then, gathering in his horse to a hand-gallop, he forged easily along, reserving the courage and strength of the animal for a waiting race with his pursuers, for he had no doubt that the squire would not consider his official duty discharged until he had made every effort to capture him.

And, in fact, he was right. The horse's hoofs were still ringing out their clang, when the squire sounded to horse.

Armed with pistols and an official warrant, which he had prepared while the horses were being saddled, he mounted with his son for the pursuit. Mr. Taylor accompanied the party from curiosity to see the ending of the affair, and the fascination which a chase of any sort has for the old sportsman.

The horses and riders rattled down the road, firm after the heavy rain of the week, which had beaten it down.

The track was a good one. Holding their steeds in for a mile or so, to enable them to get their second wind without distress, they kept along side by side.

"I'll swear him a Dupuy," said the squire, "though it is not of the blood to lie or deny their name. A brave one, though, and he has seen hard knocks, I'll warrant."

"But who can he be?"

"That I can't determine to my satisfaction. The woman recognized him, and gave him the name we had selected for him beforehand. And yet, instead of clearing the matter, to my mind it only obscures it; for, despite her terror at recognizing him and her pitiful prayer for mercy, I feel a leaning to the young one which makes me think him innocent. No, it cannot be; and, although I see it my clear duty to hold him for a further inquiry into the matter, I can't believe him guilty of harm to a woman, and I trust to God he will come out blameless. But we must take him before we hold him; the game is up, and the view halloo will soon crack the air."

"The game is up, father, but not caught; and I doubt whether we will add another brush to our trophies at the expense of this fox. I was looking at his horse in the stable, and noticed him again as he flew over the gate; there is not a horse in the county that can hold wind or pace with him."

"Pshaw!" said the squire, "youth will ever be

conceited about horse-flesh. Rigand is handicapped with my weight, and is a little out of condition, himself; but, forward, gentleman, and we will see."

The pace increased gradually, until it became a terrific run. The pursuers had good speed and good bottom under them; and as houses, barns, woods, fields, flew by them, the gaping inhabitants looked up from their work and turned to admire the superb cavalcade.

"The squire's abroad again," said they, "but where are the hounds?"

The game was up, and they had his trail; the hounds were not needed. Conversation was no longer possible; the squire led with teeth set and bridle firm in hand; Mr. Taylor and Edward had as much as they could do to keep up. The horses were warming, when, at a turn in the road after about eight miles were put behind them, they caught sight of the object of pursuit. The squire was the first to see him, and warn the others. It had now become in reality a hunt in which the game was a human being. The party held the pace in until they should be seen, in order to close the gap as much as possible before the final struggle. But the game was wary—casting his eye to the rear at every minute of his ride, they had scarcely uncovered him before he became aware of their proximity.

A half-mile lay between them; the stranger pressed his horse's sides, and the distance began to open.

"He is leaving us," hallooed the squire, in excitement; "but if we can hold our distance until we reach the woods beyond Harrison's, we will take the mill-road and cut through the trees at the creek. That course will enable us to head him on the road by two miles, at least, and we can wait for him at our own leisure."

The squire, for the first time, put the whip to his horse. The animal answered beautifully, and it seemed as though the distance were closing again. They passed Harrison's with the stranger still in full view, and a half-mile from where the road skirted a large wood on the right and began to curve off to the left. It was a moment of intense expectancy to the squire, who could not but debate in his mind what knowledge Durer had of the country, and whether he would take the cut-off or not. The matter was not long in doubt; the stranger skimmed over the road like the shadows over the plain; he neared the wood; he was within twenty yards of the mill-road; he gathered his horse in under the bit, and launched over the gate like a deer.

"By Jove, he has taken the cut-off!" yelled the squire, who by this time was alone, and had, doubtless, forgotten the sermon of the Sunday previous, in his eagerness.

The stranger had, indeed, taken the cut off, and he was whirling along over the mill-road with all the decision of one to whom the bearings of the country were familiar. The squire who now reduced the pursuit to an issue between the merits of his own and Durer's horses, spurred hotly forward; Rigand answered once more and faithfully, but the noble brute was beginning to show signs of punishment. He threw up his head and blew the foam in great flakes from his muzzle. The gritty squire headed him for the gate. He went over without touching a splinter, but landed on the other side only to weaken and fall over and over, bringing everything down with a rush into a sand-leap.

"Dished," yelled the squire through the dust in his throat, "and the game slips away."

Rigand was first upon his legs. He trotted off a few steps with head in the air, then turned and came back with a whinny to where his master was just recovering his erect position.

Durer crossed the little branch to turn up the woods, and glanced over his shoulder in time to see the fall. He reined in under the impulse to help his pursuer, paused, turned, and came back at a gallop. When he had obtained ear-range he hallooed.

"Are you hurt, squire?"

"Hurt! let me get on Rigand and I'll show you whether I am hurt, my young cockspur," answered the mortified squire.

"If you are not injured I see that Rigand has barked his knee, and I fear that, with the disadvantage of a lame leg, Don would outfoot him through this rough wood," said Durer, with a slight tinge of irony.

At this moment, Mr. Taylor and Edward came up.

"Are you hurt?" anxiously inquired they, having seen the fall at a distance.

"No; help me up, and we'll run him down yet," gave back the plucky squire.

"Hold, squire," interposed Mr. Taylor, "he has earned grace from you by his beautiful run, and he is mounted on the devil himself. If you think, further effort is required, put the warrant in the hands of the constable. Dick Braden lives a mile or so from here, and he can come in for his share of the sport, should he want a good run."

"Devil or no devil, I trust, my brave fellow," hallooed the squire to Durer, "that we may meet again and determine who can show the cleanest wind and limb. Rigand, you are a bold beast, and it was too much to put you at the gate after your run, with my weight on you. But your fall won't hurt you. My son, take this warrant and ride on to Dick Braden's. Put it in his hand and tell him to earn his fee, if he can. Rejoin us at Mr. Harrison's, where we will have the horses cared for, and take a bite before returning home."

The squire and Rigand swallowed their mortification as best they could, and, with Mr. Taylor, retraced their steps in subdued silence. Edward went off down the main road in the opposite direction to execute his commission.

The stranger turned away at a round trot. Coming out upon the main road, and convinced that effective pursuit was ended with the squire's mishap, he took once more the pace in which we first met him. The excitement of the chase seemed to stimulate him, and he smiled grimly at the defeat of his pursuers; but soon other thoughts came back to him, and the events of the day were shirred over by more serious reflections. In these he remained absorbed, occasionally throwing his head over his shoulder to make assurance doubly sure. Despite their seeming want of relation to each other, he began to connect matters of pure personal interest to himself with the events of the preceding night in his speculation. Before he knew it, the threads of the two apparently unconnected trains of thought had crossed and recrossed each other until he found them completely interlaced.

"Have I ever seen that woman before? No; yet her face has something in it which seems to rise vaguely to my memory as a dream of boyhood or youth. But what could have caused that fearful cowering, that freezing stare, that curdling shriek for mercy, when her eyes rested upon me? She called me Dupuy; from that she evidently does not know me, and yet, singularly enough, I thought I heard the squire also mention Raoul Dupuy as I opened the parlor-door last night. Could he have connected me in any way with Raoul Dupuy. And

what could have been his suspicion? [The continuation, fully sustaining the promise of the above opening of this dramatic story of mystery and interest, will be found in FRANK LESLIE'S CHIMNEY CORNER, No. 661, published January 15th, at all news depots.] The woman certainly could not articulate distinctly before the morning, and had she mentioned the name last night, I could remember it without doubt. Did the squire connect her in any way with Raoul Dupuy? Impossible. But what was it the vagrant had to say, touching him, and refused to say, yet the mere suggestion of which excited the squire to such language?"

Karl Kennett's Kinsmen

BY

MISS SEARCY,

AUTHOR OF

"The House with an L," "How Three Kept a Secret," etc.

CHAPTER I.—CRAZY KARL.

KARL KENNETT'S your uncle, is he?"

"My great-uncle."

"Have you ever seen him?"

"Not since I was a small boy."

"Heard of him, I suppose?"

"I know very little about him. In fact, he and my father did not agree very well."

"Do you know why?"

"I believe he objected to my mother when she was introduced to him as his future niece, because, to his fancy, she resembled a camelopard. She is tall, and has a rather long neck, but my father never forgave him the comparison."

"Ha, ha, ha! Just like him. Why, he made my fortune—I'm a butcher—just because he said I looked like the British lion—the one John Bull's body is topped with in all the what-d'ye-call-ems—cartoons? Now, how do you guess he made my fortune?"

"I suppose by buying meat of you. Does he keep a hotel?"

"No, but he looks after his relations; has a household of them, fine, handsome fellows, too, well-fed—I'll answer for that, as far as the meat goes—and with servants to look after 'em, as if each was a lord. You're a good-looking one, you are, but you'll never come up to any one of them in his good graces."

"May I ask how many he has in his house at present?"

"Bless you, I can't tell! But I know that I sent two beefs and six muttons to his house day before yesterday, and they was all gone before the next morning."

"Do you mean that you sent the whole animals?"

"Ea-tire! Deed chops 'em up for him, and he's a very neat hand for a hatchet, I can tell you. I get out here, so I'll say Good-by. Shall see you again most likely, and you can tell me how you get along with your new relations."

"Can it be that he was fooling me?" said the young man to himself, as the cars stopped at a street-corner and his burly companion left him. "If my uncle has such a houseful already, why does he ask me to visit him?" and taking a letter from his pocket, he read as follows:

"DEAR NEPHEW—Can you spare your son George to me for a while? Not that I feel the want of a companion in my old age. I have the best of company, and plenty of it"—ah!—"but I have it in my power to benefit him to the tune of some fifty thousand dollars—what do you say to that?—if his personal appearance should come up to my standard."

"Hum! That confirms what the butcher said. Can they all be better-looking than I am? Mother wouldn't believe that!"

And he folded up the letter with a smile as the cars stopped at the station.

"Mr. Kennett's—Karl Kennett's, sir? Every one knows the way to Crazy Karl's, sir. Beg your pardon, sir, but it's so he's called, sir!" said the driver as he shut the door of the carriage, and its occupant saw a grin on his face which seemed to spread to that of the other drivers, and nods and whispers were exchanged and fingers pointed in his direction, as they all pressed forward to stare him.

He felt a hot, prickly sensation all over him, followed by a chill, that seemed to run down his backbone, and a sudden desire to jump from the carriage and start for home on the next train. A feeling of curiosity succeeded. He would see this strange uncle of his, and, at any rate, it was worth while to take some steps in the direction of fifty thousand dollars. 'Tisn't every young man, just starting in life, who has such a possibility placed before him.

He hoped it didn't altogether depend on his good looks—with a household of handsome rivals in view!

He had been so much occupied with his own thoughts that he was scarcely conscious when the carriage stopped, until he heard the driver, who had opened the door, saying:

"Here you are, sir."

When he looked out, and saw a gate opening in a high wall—the gate being of iron, the wall, of stone. Again he felt doubtful! It looked uncommonly like what might be the entrance to a lunatic asylum.

"You are sure this is Mr. Kennett's?"

"Yes, sir—Lord, sir! there could be no mistake. He's known for miles and miles around."

"What does he do?"

"Do! Lord, sir! you'll find that out, fast enough. But his money's his own, and made honest, and if he chooses to keep a lot of—"

"His relations?"

"Whose business is it? I say, for one, I'd as soon see 'em in the lot, as tramping over the country, 'specially in this hot weather, sir, which it comes hard on the poor fellows, and the old gentleman fixes 'em up here, so comfortable. Shall I ring, sir?"

The young man nodded, and presently the gate flew open, and showed a long, graveled avenue, thickly set with trees on either side.

"I won't drive in, sir, on account of the horses, they'd be starting, likely; but if you'd send somebody out to help bring in your trunks, you'd oblige, sir."

As the young man walked up the avenue, he became conscious of a peculiar hollow, moaning sound, like that of the sea when heard from a

distance. He tried to look through the trees, but could see nothing on either side, so thickly was the ground set with shrubbery that it seemed quite like walking through a wood.

Presently he heard a rustling, and, looking in the direction of the sound, saw a pair of brilliant eyes and then the graceful head of a deer, which even his unaccustomed eyes recognized as of a rare species.

"That accounts for the high walls," he thought. "My uncle has a park. He must live quite magnificently."

The avenue began to widen as he advanced, and, at last, he found himself before a long, low building, with a piazza running along its entire front, which piazza was glassed in, and filled with plants, large of leaf, brilliant in hue, and covered with flowers of which he had never seen the like, and which looked to him more like butterflies and humming-birds on the wing than mere vegetation.

Large vines wound themselves like snakes upward, downward and around, and, down one of these, which had leaves like shining green wax, and flowers like white velvet, with glistening garnet centres, a small monkey slid, chattering, and was answered by strange, bright-hued birds, which fluttered here and there among the vines, like blossoms set a-flying.

Feeling more and more surprised, the young man passed through the entrance-door, which stood hospitably open, and went into a large, cold-looking hall, paved with black and white marble, and having the ceiling, which, in the centre, rose to the entire height of the building, supported on either side by two rows of handsomely carved pillars, at the foot of one of which lay coiled up what he at first supposed to be a large dog, until it rose, yawning, and showed him a leopard-cub, with a collar around its neck, from which a chain went to the base of the pillar.

As he sprang back, in some dismay, a door at the further end of the hall opened, and a man came through it, approaching him with light and agile steps, which scarcely seemed to correspond with the grayness of the curling beard which spread itself, thick and long, upon his breast, and mingled with the long, abundant waves of his hair. "You are George—I shall leave off the Saint—you don't look much like a saint. Good! I like your looks. Really, allowing for some unavoidable differences, you might be my own brother to Djali."

"Who's Jarley, I wonder?" thought St. George, and then he shook hands with his uncle.

"Nothing of the giraffe about you," said his uncle, scanning his face and figure. "Nor of the lion either."

"Lion!" repeated St. George.

"But with that long, lithe figure, you're *feline*, every inch of you; so is she. I don't believe in *opposites*. Nature mates two of a kind."

St. George began to look bewildered. *She!* Who was she?"

Ah! now he began to understand. This was the way in which he was to come into his fifty thousand dollars—his uncle had found him a wife! St. George began to look around him a little eagerly, and to raise and twist the ends of his long, tawny mustache.

"Your trunk!—didn't you bring any trunks?" asked his uncle, and then St. George mentioned the driver's request, and his uncle rang a bell, which brought an olive-skinned man, in a white turban and tunic, to which he gave some order, in a strange tongue, and then offered to show his nephew to his room. The room was delightful, opening upon a balcony which overlooked a garden, laid out in fantastically patterned beds of flowers—and St. George, somewhat agitated, began to make his toilet, feeling as if upon that might depend much of his success with the heiress his uncle had picked up for him.

"But if she should already happen to have fancied one of the others!" he said to himself. "I'm not the Apollo Belvidere, by any means, and if they're all as handsome as the butcher said they were, I shall see them all at dinner. With such a lot of young fellows in the house he must have a billiard-room or bowling alley—yes, there are the balls!"—as a hollow, rumbling sound seemed to shake the floor under his feet. "I fancy we shall have a jolly time here, all together. But why does he give the fifty thousand to me instead of some one of the others? 'Tisn't for my looks, for it seems that one of them, Jarley, looks very much like me."

A rap on the door, and Mr. Kennett presented himself.

"I have come to show you the way to the dining-room," he said.

St. George, who had expected to be ushered into a large room in which a long table would be set, was surprised to find himself in a rather cozy octagon, in which was a small, round table, having places for two only. His uncle detected a look of disappointment of some kind, and said:

"I thought we would dine *tête-à-tête* to day. I assure you that I am still pretty good company, in spite of my years."

"I don't doubt it. Only I had heard that our—that your relations—"

"So you've heard of them already, have you? I am very fond of them, to be sure, but not so much as to dine in their company."

"Indeed!" was all St. George could say.

"You see, their manner of eating—the noise they make—no, I couldn't dine even with my pretty Djali. Let me give you a slice of this venison. By-the-way, Djali would like a bit of this. She's quite an epicure, let me tell you."

"Is Jarley a she?"

"I beg your pardon, but her name is pronounced Zhali—not Jarley. You must recollect that, as she has quite a correct ear."

"It's a foreign name, isn't it?"

"East Indian."

"Then, she—"

"Is a Bengalese. And you have no idea what a beauty she is—her skin is like satin."

"Hum! It's a—rather of an amber tint, isn't it?"

"Amber! Nothing as pale as that! Bright gold, sir, and shines—yes, positively *glitters*!"

"Good heaven!" thought St. George—"a yellow, oily skin! She must be a beauty! No, not even her fifty thousand rupees—they must be rupees, since she's an East Indian—can gild that complexion of hers. But, then, according to my uncle, it is already gilded. And I look—like her?" he said, aloud.

"Well, as far as you can. You're lithe and slender, and have that cat-like suppleness of motion."

"But my skin isn't yellow?" rather shortly.

"If you're like me, you will almost wish you had such a skin, when you see hers, and see her you shall, after dinner. Mahal—you saw Mahal; he's an East Indian, too, and came over with her—shall

bring us a bottle of my own particular sherry to drink her health in."

Poor St. George had now very little appetite for his dinner. Not even the sherry—and it was excellent—could raise his spirits. So he had come all this distance on account of a stupid East Indian—with that skin, she must be a half-caste, and they were notoriously under-witted.

Thus he sat glowering over his plate, across which an apparition seemed to stare at him—that of a girl, no richer than himself, but with a skin like peaches and cream, and whom half-a-dozen other fellows were in hot pursuit of, and who was bright enough to keep them all on at once. Yes, he would go back to-morrow.

"Are you homesick already, George?" asked his uncle, kindly, and he roused himself with a start and swallowed his glass of wine, pleading a slight headache, caused by the motion of the cars. "Now" for Djali," said his uncle, and left the table, followed by a most dejected-looking nephew.

CHAPTER II.—TWO TIGRESSES.

MR. KENNETT led the way through one of the long windows of the octagon, across a lawn and down a long alley, formed by two close walls of spicy-smelling box, which led to a gate in a high wall.

"More walls!" thought St. George, and, the gate being opened, looked around him in a start, for he found himself in a wilderness of some species of vegetation, with thick, broad leaves, which grew on a thick stalk, as corn grows, and rose higher than his head, and through which various paths ran in different directions.

"This is jungle grass," said his uncle. "I imported the seed myself." So saying, he took one of the paths, and was followed by St. George, who remarked, after a while, that it grew broader, until it ended before what seemed to be a cave, made of large, irregular pieces of rock, artificially joined in such a manner as to have the effect of having been formed by nature, and having a strong network of iron bars across its opening. Behind this, lying stretched at length, the sunlight playing on the glossy black-and-gold of her shining coat, lay a superb Bengal tigress, her head resting on her outstretched paws.

"Djali! Djali!" said Mr. Kennett, in a petting tone, and the creature raised her head; then, springing to her feet, rose slowly on her hinder-legs, and, seeming to try to thrust her paws through the grating, gave vent to a prolonged roar. Sinking on her feet again, she rubbed her satin head against the grating, and, looking at her master with half-shut eyes, purred, like some gigantic cat. "There, what do you think of her?" said Mr. Kennett, but St. George was too much astonished to reply.

"How is Saladin this morning, Diedrich?" asked Mr. Kennett, adding, to St. George, "Saladin is my oldest lion." But Diedrich did not reply, being engaged in staring at St. George with a pair of round, skim-milk-color eyes. "Dat yong chentleman! Who is dat yong chentleman?" he asked, in a hoarse whisper, sliding up to Mr. Kennett.

"My nephew, Mr. Sinclair."

"Ha, ah! dat agcounts vor it!"

"What—accounts for what?"

"Only a spy."

"A spy?"

"Ach! I'll double him up! Leaf him to me."

"Explain yourself, Diedrich."

"I vos in de pack garden, and I did hear a sgraping and glaving on de vall. I said, 'Dats gats'; but presently, up bops a poy's head! He says, 'You liss here?' I says, 'You sees me. Vat you vants?' He says, 'Dere is a yong chentleman here dat lose his burse?' I says, 'No.' He game by de gars, he says, 'and tropped him in de depot, and I bicks him up. I says, 'Dere is no yong chentleman here.' He says, 'You co and sec.' I says, 'Pe off vith you, or I lets von of de peasts loose on you!' and as he durns, I hits him smack vith a sdone. Ach! how he gries, and robs and robs himself! I but sbikes on dat vall; he is on safe."

"Did you lose your purse, George?" asked his uncle.

St. George put his hand in his pocket, and "Here it is."

Mr. Kennett looked down, thoughtfully. "I had fancied that Nehemiah kept a watch on me," he said, "and this proves it. He thinks that you are here as my heir. Well, we won't undeceive him."

"I—I assure you, I had no such expectation," stammered St. George.

"I don't think you had. After all, it's nothing but a question of chance, my dear boy, and you musn't build too much upon it. I know more about lions and tigers than I do about women. I know that if I were to offer you to Djali here, she would snap you up in a minute, but the other may prefer some stumpy, dark-skinned fellow to even a tall, fair Adonis like yourself."

"And—and—the other?" asked St. George hesitating slightly, and blushing a good deal.

"I'll introduce you to her," said his uncle. "And on our way to her we'll go by Saladin's cage—he was ailing last night."

Saladin, an enormous lion, of a pale-tawny hue, turned his immense head slowly when he heard his master's voice, and showed a pair of dimmed eyes, together with that haggard and drawn look peculiar to all animals of the cat-kind, when suffering from any disorder.

Mr. Kennett questioned Diedrich closely as to creature's symptoms, gave him minute directions as to the medicines he was to use, and the cave that was to be given him, and, after looking compassionately at the sick animal, turned away with tears in his eyes, saying:

"What should I do if I should lose my old Saladin?"

St. George was somewhat shocked to see so much feeling bestowed on a dumb animal, and asked, a little thoughtlessly:

"Were you never married, uncle?"

Mr. Kennett turned to him a face of which he could see that even the lips were livid under the gray mustache.

"George," he said, "I know why you ask that question. You are very young now, but the time may come when you will find even the unreasoning love of a dumb creature to be a comfort and consolation, and you may learn even to prefer that companionship, where there is no tongue to wound and deceive you, and but the instinct that teaches affection for the hand that feeds and caresses it, instead of a human brain to plan mischief, and a cunning hand to work it out to the end. I wouldn't exchange my Djali for the fairest woman that ever brought destruction on mankind, or my brave, old Saladin for the truest friend one man could ever find in another."

St. George was quite dismayed by the sight of the emotion he had excited.

"I spoke thoughtlessly, uncle," he said.

"I know you did, my dear boy, and I'm afraid I appeared unduly excited. But I must tell you who this young lady is to whom you are about to be presented, although, by-the-way, I have never seen her myself."

St. George opened his eyes very wide.

"She is my ward, too, and was left to my guardianship by her grandfather, with whom I was once on very intimate terms. He was to have married my sister, if she had lived."

"But, uncle, if you have never seen her, how can you—"

"We go through here," said Mr. Kennett, unlocking a gate. "Of course, I couldn't ask a young lady to live in a menagerie, so I have taken for her this house next to mine, where she will be free to receive that society which I have now forsworn for years, and with which it would be torture to me to mingle again. I have engaged a lady—a widow—to live with her as companion, chaperon, etc. The girl's position is peculiar, as, although placed under my guardianship, her father is still living. There was some very odd arrangement between him and her grandfather, by which, for a certain sum, he abrogated his rights, and she was formally adopted by her grandfather, whose name she also took."

"Is her father a very bad man?"

"Well, no, not *bad*, exactly, though there was some scandal, I believe, two or three years ago, when he was in France. But the trouble is that he is a little too gay for his years. He has already spent two or three fortunes, and his father-in-law was determined that he should not spend this one, so he has put it all out of his reach, Leoline—that's her name—has fifty thousand dollars, which came to her from her mother, but from her grandfather she inherits one hundred thousand, of which she is not to be put in possession until her wedding-day."

They had been crossing some handsomely arranged grounds as Mr. Kennett gave St. George this slight retrospect, and were now walking slowly down a path, one side of which sloped to an ornamental piece of water, while the other was protected by a thick hedge of holly.

George thought he heard feminine garments rustling on the other side of the hedge.

"And you say the young lady is not here?"

"She is not to be here for a couple of months or so. She is traveling in Italy, after having been to school in England, and to Germany to take music-lessons, and I don't know what besides. Oh, she's a very accomplished young lady."

"I'm afraid she won't look at me, if that is the case."

"My dear boy, she is still very young—only seventeen—and you are twenty-five, are you not? If she attempts to snub you, you must take a stand on your superior years. If she's a sensible girl, she won't be pedantic; but if she begins to presume on her European experience, you must treat her like the ex-schoolgirl she is, and make her respect an untraveled American citizen. By-the-way, I hope I have the right key. Yes, here it is. Now take a turn to the right, then down this long passage. It's so dark I can't find the door. Oh, this is it! Wait until I have opened a blind. This is the room I arranged, and there is the young lady."

St. George naturally looked at the picture first, and saw an oval-faced, creamy-skinned blonde, with profuse, tawny hair, which rippled around her small, Greek forehead, and then fell, in great, careless waves, upon her shoulders. The eyes were brown, with tawny lights in them; the lips of a beautiful, velvety crimson; the attitude peculiar—she seemed to be half-fallen, half-crouched, upon a pile of crimson cushions, from which she was in the act of springing with a lightness and lithe grace which was wonderfully well represented in the picture.

St. George drew a long breath, after having looked at it silently for some moments.

"It's a wonderful picture," he said.

"Don't you plainly see the tigress in the eyes, the shape of the head, the lithe slenderness, and suggestion of repressed power of that supple, half-crouching figure?" asked his uncle. "And I don't know, my boy, but you'd better turn back now, and go straight home again."

"I?" said St. George.

"Yes; for I'm afraid there are claws under the velvet."

"My dear uncle, I had rather be scratched by her claws than patted by any one else."

"Oh, my dear boy, I see it's all over with you! But there is one thing I would advise you doing."

"What is that?"

"Study how Mahal snaped Djali. The first time she saw him, she nearly snapped his head off, and now he has her under his thumb."

"Thank you, uncle, but I should like to have my head snapped off. Just fancy those lips near one's own."

CHAPTER III.—NOT A PICTURE, BUT REALITY.

NEARLY a week had passed, and St. George, who, at home, was surrounded by a gay family group, and had innumerable young friends, among whom he was the acknowledged leader in all plans for social amusement, had begun to find this lonely, self-contained life not only tolerable, but even agreeable. Two or three days after his arrival, his uncle had proposed that he should take possession of a certain part of the house, and there receive and entertain such acquaintances as he might chance to make in going about the town.

"It doesn't seem fair to condemn a young fellow like yourself to my old-bachelor existence," he said. "I don't know any one in the neighborhood, personally—my old acquaintances having died out—but I know of them, and can vouch for their outside respectability. In that pretty Italian villa, south of us, there's a family of wolves; and in the Swiss cottage, a snake and two foxes; and a goose and a pair of deer in the house with the stone porch just beyond."

St. George understood this to be his uncle's eccentric manner of describing the personal characteristics of the occupants of the houses he had mentioned.

One day it came into his head that he should like to see the picture again, and refresh his memory of the beautiful face whose features seemed to be already impressed upon his heart.

As he hurried along the well-known Holly-walk a small white object in his path made him start and then stoop suddenly. It was a woman's handkerchief that he had picked up, a perfumed gossamer thing—and it had a great L in one corner.

St. George turned it this way and that, staring at it as if it had been an enigma. "L!" he said—"Leoline!" and looked all around, as if expecting to see the lithe shape that had haunted his dreams step from the surrounding greenery. But no one came.

When he reached and opened the door, he found himself in no carefully darkened room, of which he must open the shutters to get a glimpse of daylight, but in a cheerful apartment, with open windows, shaded only by their lace curtains, with books and work scattered about, and a bouquet of freshly gathered flowers on the table. But the picture was not there.

St. George, turning away, with a feeling of mingled disappointment and surprise, encountered a tall, female figure, in a black dress and widow's cap, which was just stepping from the piazza into one of the windows.

The figure saw him, started, drew back a step, and then called loudly:

"Miss de Forest! Leoline!"

And in another window sprang a slender figure, with tawny hair, disspread upon its shoulders, and wearing a dress of tawny-colored silk, with dark crimson velvet trimmings, which looked as if it had just stepped out of one of Titian's paintings.

St. George knew this picturesque dress by heart. It was the one on the crouching, springing figure of the lady of his dreams. And this, then, must be her living self!

"This—this gentleman!" said the figure in the widow's cap, regarding him stonily.

A giggle—yes, a giggle—responded. It came from lips as dewily crimson as those in the picture. But St. George recognized it, with a shock, as the conventional schoolgirl giggle.

"Why this is—a—the gentleman I have seen in the grounds," said the shape in the tawny robe, giggling again; but that might be from nervousness. St. George gave her the benefit of the doubt. "May I ask—" began the Widow's Cap, frigidly; and St. George, bowing, replied:

"My name is Sinclair; I am a nephew of Mr.—this young lady's guardian."

Miss de Forest gave a shrill scream, and the Widow's Cap ejaculated:

"How unfortunate!"

St. George looked from one to the other in some surprise.

"I confess this must seem like intrusion, but I had no idea—does my uncle know—"

"That we are here? Certainly not," said the Widow's Cap, aggressively. "And we did not mean that he should."

"But, as the young lady's guardian," began St. George.

"Yes, he is her guardian, to be sure, but—"

"You have heard the report about him," said St. George, eagerly. "Upon my honor, it is not true. He is as sane as I am."

"Oh, yes, he may be *sane*," said the Cap, with emphasis, and tossing its head; "but there are circumstances—Miss de Forest, will you oblige me by going out on the piazza for a few moments?"

The girl skipped out on the piazza with a backward look over her shoulder at St. George, that reminded him of certain vulgarly coquettish, colored lithographs he had seen in shop-windows, and the Cap continued:

"Is it possible you have never heard—have you lived with your uncle a long time?"

"I have only known him personally for about ten days."

"Then you don't know about his wife? But I have heard that he lives very secluded, and never sees any one?"

"That, at least, is true," said St. George.

"Oh, I have the other on the very best authority. His wife disappeared—ran away with another man, he said, but was never able to prove it—and with her ever heard of a woman carrying off her infant when she was eloping with another man? But that wasn't the worst of it. His wife was rich in her own right, and the child was her heiress. The money had been willed to her by an uncle, who hated her husband, and fixed it so that he could never have a cent of the property while his wife and child lived. [In No. 661 of FRANK LESLIE'S CHIMNEY CORNER, January 15th, for sale at all news depots, will be found the sequel to the opening of this story. This synopsis of the first part of this story, which will win favor with every lady in the land, will prepare the reader to enjoy the continuation.] Somehow or other, he did not take into consideration the possibility that the father might outlive the child, and made no provision for that event."

"Well, was there no inquiry made?"

"Oh, the case was brought into the courts, but nothing could be proved against him; and he has been a marked man from that day."

"And yet Mr. de Forest appointed him guardian to his granddaughter?"

"Oh, he would never believe him guilty, but stood up for him to the last, and left him this trust, to persuade other people into his own belief. The story has, in a manner, died out, but still the doubt remains, and will always be a shadow on his path until the end."

"How long ago did this happen?"

"Thirty-five or forty years ago."

"You have come much sooner than he expected."

"Yes; Leoline felt a longing to see her old home."

"You do not wish my uncle to know of it?"

"But I suppose it can't be helped. Leoline, you can come in now. Mr. Sinclair and I have had our private conversation."

The girl came in again, rustling her tawny train over the shining wood-floor. She was not exactly what he had expected to see, but she was certainly wonderfully pretty.

"Leoline, you must make up your mind to see your ogre."

The girl shuddered, put up her pretty shoulders, and pressed her small palms together. "Oh, I can't!" she said.

"He isn't dreadful at all," said St. George.

"But—I have such a fear of him!" she said; and, drawing a little nearer to St. George, laid one hand on his arm as if appealing to him for protection.

"I should like to ask you to stay longer," said the Cap, "but as this is the first time—"

"Very true," said St. George, "although my uncle may mis-me."

Again the Cap and the girl looked at each other.

And, with another glance at the slender shape in the tawny robe, he took his leave of his two new acquaintances.