

The CONQUEST OF CANAAN

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Author of "Cherry," "Monsieur Beaucaire," Etc.

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CHAPTER XII.

MAMIE, waiting just inside the door as Ariel and Eugene entered, gave the visitor a pale greeting and a moment later, hearing the wheels of the brougham crunch the gravel of the carriage drive, hurried down the broad hall and disappeared. Ariel dropped her parasol upon a marble topped table near the door and, removing her gloves, drifted into a room at the left, where a grand piano found shelter beneath crimson plush. After a moment of contemplation she pushed back the coverlet and, seating herself upon the plush covered piano stool (to match), let her fingers run up and down the keyboard once and fall listlessly in her lap as she gazed with deep interest at three life sized colored photographs in carved gilt frames upon the wall she was facing—Judge Pike, Mamie and Mrs. Pike, with her rubies.



"It's one of those simpler Grieg things, isn't it?" he said.

"Please don't stop playing, Miss Tabor," said a voice behind her. She had not observed that Eugene had followed her into the room.

"Very well, if you like," she answered, looking up to smile absently at him, and she began to play a raskish little air which, composed by some rattle-brain at a cafe table, had lately skipped out of the Moulin Rouge to disport itself over Paris. She played it slowly in the minor, with eldsh pathos, while he leaned upon the piano, his eyes fixed upon her fingers, which bore few rings—none, he observed with an unreasonable pleasure, upon the third finger of the left hand.

"It's one of those simpler Grieg things, isn't it?" he said, sighing gently. "I care for Grieg."

"Would you mind its being Chamade?" she returned, dropping her eyes to cloak the sin.

"Ah, no; I recognize it now," replied Eugene. "He appeals to me even more than Grieg."

At this she glanced quickly up at him, but more quickly down again, and hastened the time emphatically, swinging the little air into the major.

"Do you play 'The Pilgrim's Chorus'?"

She shook her head.

"Vous name pas Wagner?" inquired Eugene, leaning toward her.

"Oh, yes," she answered, bending her head far over, so that her face was concealed from him, except the chin, which, he saw with a thrill of inexplicable emotion, was trembling slightly. There were some small white flowers upon her hat, and these shook too.

When she turned to him, he was surprised to see that she looked astonishingly happy, almost as if she had been struggling with joy instead of pain.

"This chair," she said, sinking into it, "makes me feel at home."

Naturally he could not understand.

"Because," she explained, "I once thought I was going to live in it. It has been reupholstered, but I should know it if I met it anywhere in the world."

"How very odd!" exclaimed Eugene, staring.

"I settled here in pioneer days," she went on, tapping the arms lightly with her finger tips. "It was the last dance I went to in Canaan."

"I fear the town was very provincial at that time," he returned, having completely forgotten the occasion she mentioned, therefore wishing to shift the subject. "I fear you may still find it so. There is not much here that one is in sympathy with intellectually—few people really of the world."

"Few people, I suppose you mean," she said softly, with a look that went deep into his eyes—"few people who really understand one."

Eugene had seated himself on the sill of an open window close by. "There has been," he answered, with the ghost of a sigh, "no one."

Mamie appeared in the doorway, and Eugene rose swiftly. "I have been trying to persuade Miss Tabor," he explained, "with something too much of laughter, to play again. You heard that little thing of Chamade's?"

Mamie did not appear to hear him. She entered breathlessly, and there was no color in her cheeks. "Ariel,"

(Mr. Bantry's expression, despite this tribute, was not happy.) "And he advised me to tell mamma about it and leave it in her hands. But she always tells papa everything!"

"Certainly; that is understood," said Ariel slowly, turning to smile at Eugene.

The daughter of the house exhibited signs of consternation. "He wants to see you," she repeated faintly. "He's in the library."

Having thus discharged her errand, she hastened to the front door, which had been left open, and out to the steps, evidently with the intention of removing herself as soon and as far as possible from the vicinity of the library.

Eugene, visibly perturbed, followed her to the doorway of the room and paused.

"Do you know the way?" he inquired, with a note of solemnity.

"Where?" Ariel had not risen.

"To the library."

"Of course," she said, beaming upon him. "I was about to ask you if you wouldn't speak to the judge for me. This is such a comfortable old friend, this chair."

"Speak to him for you?" repeated the nonplussed Eugene.

She nodded cheerfully. "If I may trouble you. Tell him certainly I shall be glad to see him."

Eugene went. There was nothing else to do. And he wished with every step that the distance to the portals of the library might have been greater.

In whatever guise he delivered the summons, it was perfectly efficacious. A door slammed, a heavy and rapid tread was heard in the hall, and Ariel, without otherwise moving, turned her head and offered a brilliant smile of greeting.

"It was good of you," she said as the doorway filled with red, imperial wrath. "to wish to have a little chat with me. I'm anxious, of course, to go over my affairs with you, and last night after my journey I was too tired. But now we might begin, not in detail, of course, just yet. That will do for later when I've learned more about business."

The great one had stopped on the threshold.

"Madam," he began coldly, "when I say my library I mean my—"

"Oh, yes," she interrupted, with amiable weariness; "I know. You mean you keep all the papers and books of the estate in there, but I think we'd better put them off for a few days!"

"I'm not talking about the estate!" he exclaimed. "What I want to talk to you about is being seen with Joseph Loudon!"

"Yes," she nodded brightly. "That's along the line we must take up first."

"Yes, it is!" He hurried his bull bass at her. "You knew everything about him and his standing in this community! I know you did, because Mrs. Pike told me you asked all about him from Mamie after you came last night, and see here, don't you?"

"Oh, but I knew before that," she laughed. "I had a correspondent in Canaan, one who has always taken a great interest in Mr. Loudon. I asked Miss Pike only to get her own point of view."

"I want to tell you, madam," he shouted, coming toward her, "that no member of my household—"

"That's another point we must take up today. I'm glad you remind me of it," she said thoughtfully, yet with so magically compelling an intonation that he stopped his shouting in the middle of a word, stopped with an apoplectic splutter. "We must arrange to put the old house in order at once."

"We'll arrange nothing of the sort," he responded after a moment of angry silence. "You're going to stay right here."

"Ah, I know your hospitality," she bowed graciously. "But of course I must not tax it too far. And about Mr. Loudon? As I said, I want to speak to you about him."

"Yes," he intervened harshly, "so do I, and I'm going to do it quick! You'll find—"

Again she mysteriously baffled him. "He's a dear old friend of mine, you know, and I have made up my mind that we both need his help, you and I."

"What!"

"Yes," she continued calmly, "in a business way, I mean. I know you have great interests in a hundred directions, all more important than mine. It isn't fair that you should bear the whole burden of my affairs, and I think it will be best to retain Mr. Loudon as my man of business. He could take all the cares of the estate off your shoulders."

Martin Pike spoke no word, but he looked at her strangely, and she watched him with sudden keenness, leaning forward in her chair, her gaze alert but quiet, fixed on the dilating pupils of his eyes. He seemed to become dizzy, and the choleric scarlet which had overspread his broad face and big neck faded splotchily.

Still keeping her eyes upon him, she went on: "I haven't asked him yet, and so I don't know whether or not he'll consent, but I think it possible that he may come to see me this afternoon, and if he does we can propose it to him together and go over things a little."

Judge Pike recovered his voice. "He'll get a warm welcome," he promised huskily, "if he sets foot on my premises!"

"You mean you prefer I shouldn't receive him here?" She nodded pleasantly. "Then certainly I shall not. Such things are much better for offices; you are quite right." She swept lightly and quickly to the door, where she paused, gathering her skirts. "I shall not detain you another instant! And if Mr. Loudon comes this afternoon I'll remember. I'll not let him come in, of course. It will be perhaps pleasanter to talk over my proposition as we walk!"

There was a very faint, spicy odor, like wild roses and cinnamon, left in the room where Martin Pike stood alone, staring whitely at the open doorway.

(Continued next week.)

THE OLDEST CITY.

Damascus, Seen by Saul of Tarsus, is Still in Existence.

If you were suddenly asked to name the oldest city in the world which is still in a flourishing condition, what would be your answer?

In nine cases out of ten the person to whom such a query might be propounded would hark back to Egypt, Greece or Rome. He would be wrong. The oldest city in the world is Damascus.

Tyre and Sidon have crumbled on the shore, Baalbec is a ruin, Palmyra is buried in a desert, and Nineveh and Babylon have disappeared from the Tigris and the Euphrates. Damascus remains what it was before the days of Abraham—a center of trade and travel—an isle of verdure in the desert, "a presidential capital," with martial and sacred associations extending through thirty centuries.

It was near Damascus that Saul of Tarsus saw the light above the brightness of the sun. The street which is called Strait, in which it was said "he prayed," still runs through the city.

The city which Mohammed surveyed from a neighboring height and was afraid to enter "because it was given to man to have but one paradise, and for his part he was resolved not to have it in this world," is today what Julian called the "Eye of the East," as it was in the time of Isaiah "the head of Syria."

From Damascus came the damson, our blue plums, and the delicious apricot of Portugal called damasco; damask, our beautiful fabric of cotton and silk, with vines and flowers raised upon a smooth, bright ground; the damask rose introduced into England in the time of Henry VIII.; the Damascus blade, so famous the world over for its keen edge and wonderful elasticity, the secret of whose manufacture was lost when Tamerlane carried the artist into Persia, and that beautiful art of inlaying wood and steel with gold and silver, a kind of mosaic engraving and sculpture united, called damaskeening, with which boxes, bureaus and swords are ornamented.—Scrap Book.

Much Broken by Misfortune.

Mrs. Cartwright, in search of a painter to touch up her kitchen walls, was directed to Napoleon Lamere. "Do you think," asked Mrs. Cartwright, eyeing tottering Napoleon doubtfully, "that you could paint the side walls of my kitchen?"

"But yes, madam," returned Napoleon, "eef dose appartment eet ees not of a too large highness. Eef you 'ave som w't you call low down job, me, I can do heem de mos' bes' of hannybody else."

"But, madam! Helas! No more can I do dose up high ceiling, dose steep roof, dose so elevate church steeple, dose skyscraper. Me, I 'ave hon ma two foot too great of de shake. Behol! Already, madam, me, I 'ave de large misfortune to broke seex of ma laig."

CURIOSITY.

In Its Proper Sphere It Is a Noble and Serviceable Quality.

Upon the higher level curiosity is a noble and serviceable quality, without which no great thing can be done in science or literature. It was intellectual curiosity which sustained a man like Darwin in his long and patient labors. He was determined to find out the how of the universe, and he had all the instinct of a curious person for the gathering and arrangement of details. He was forever observing and tracing and detecting and over-seeing.

Renan's biographer tells us that to the last he was still questioning the universe, still asking what was the meaning of things and how they came to pass. Without curiosity the scholar would lose half his interest and the thinker would fall by the way. It is this instinct which makes a man wish to get at the bottom of things. If it be the affairs of his neighbor, it is base; if it be the affairs of the world, it is great. When curiosity dies within a man achievement is hopeless and hope itself is dead.

Curiosity may be a valuable asset in the equipment of a professional man. Without it the parish clergyman never will have an intimate knowledge of the affairs of his people, for he never will take the trouble to learn them. What he is told he almost certainly will forget, while a touch of curiosity will store up every piece of information and watch every passing incident and catch hold of every suggestion in conversation.

By and by the history of every one, old and young, will be in the man's possession. Of course, if he be an ignoble man, then his knowledge will be intolerable; if he be a sympathetic man, it will be most valuable.

In the same way a physician or a lawyer will be greatly helped by a legitimate and regulated curiosity about his fellow creatures. And it must be said that if curiosity of one kind makes a man detestable curiosity of another kind makes him most popular.—Ian Maclaren (Rev. John Watson).

Snakes.

The popular idea that all snakes hiss is incorrect when anacondas are in question, if we may believe a close observer of the serpent family. The sound they make is more like a growl than a hiss and has been well described by a traveler as a "low, roaring noise." Their powers of deglutition are sufficiently wonderful to make exaggeration unnecessary, credible witnesses testifying to the fact that one has been known to swallow a horse, while bullocks are not infrequently attacked also. Few nonscientific readers, by the way, are aware that not only do the jaw hinges of the boa tribe become dislocated in the act of swallowing a large animal, subsequently resuming their proper position by means of the elastic connecting tendons, but that the skull bones separate centrally, so the whole constitutes a sort of quadrangular orifice with apparently indefinite powers of expansion.

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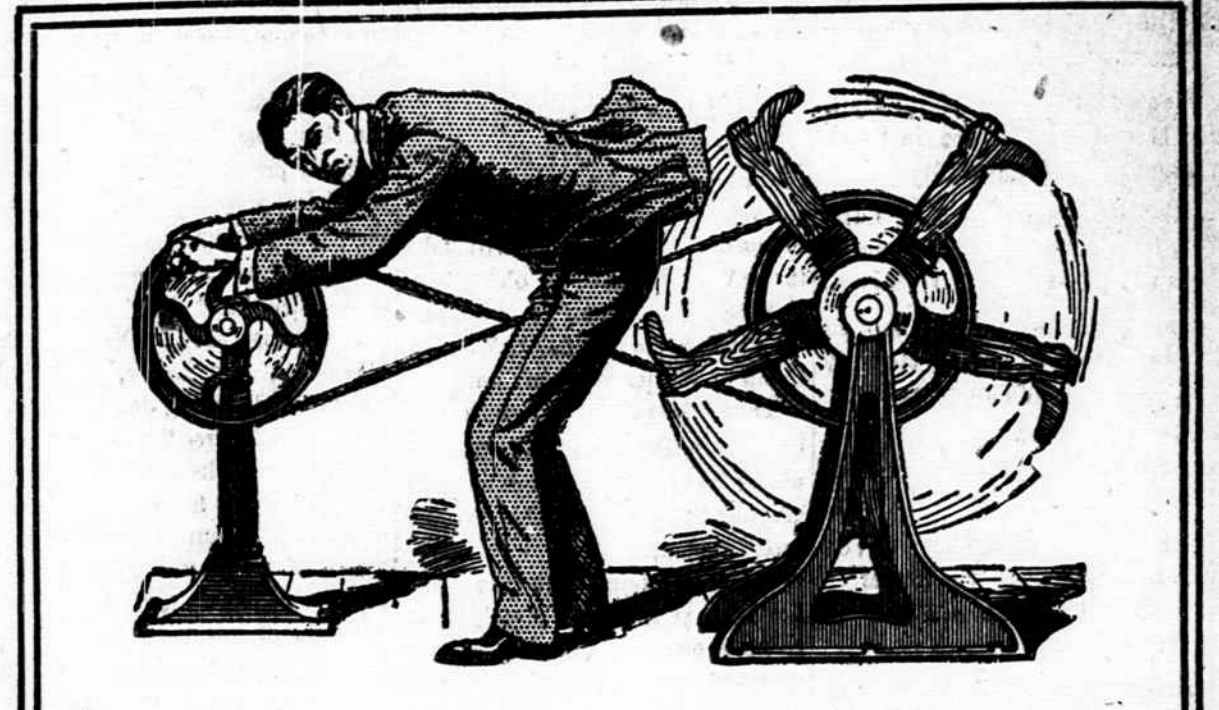
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