



BOCKADE-BREAKER. CHAPTER VII. TANGLING THE REIN.

The music had broken up early, and the Gilmore Gray mansion was tightly closed. Not one light shone from its tall, brown front, and the very servants' quarters were dark and still, as the clock of the church hard by chimed out twice upon the night.

Bessie Westchester had soon left her hidden guest, to mingle brightly again with those below; but never had the cordial hospitality of that fair maiden of her whole household, in fact—really found so "sweet" that proverbially much-shattered "old word, good-by!"

"I may disappoint some colored lodge, for once," he had remarked to his wife, as he pocketed the key; "but to-night even our own eyes and ears are dangerous to trust to."

And now Bessie Westchester, her becoming ball-dress changed for a loose, but equally becoming wrapper, again stepped on the floor close to Carolyn Clay, who waited, calm and resolute, as the minutes sped on with feet that seemed leaden-shod to her anxious suspense.

"I wish they all could over there!" the wife retorted, her wanting logic conduced by a deep sigh. "Just think of your poor brother Lowndes, Gilmore, starving on bacon and hard-luck!"

"It is good for me, my dear," Mrs. Gray replied, with a lightness befitting his eyes. "My brother Lowndes has so far in his life eaten perhaps as much rapin enough to bring camp-fare for the next ten years up to a pretty luxurious average."

But away up in the attic hiding-place no badinage was spoken. Carolyn Clay had several times gone over the details of her perilous trip across the line, and she had spoken with naive freedom of her fears, her suspense and her joy of rescue—all without reserve. But one thing she had never told—approaching it with ready purpose, only to find her lips close and a throbbing something just beneath her throat which she could not control.

"Oh, God! I cannot—cannot!" Wondering more still, but still deeply sympathetic, Bessie Westchester watched this unwonted weakness of the woman who had been her model of fearlessness and strength.

Only one instant, though. The next she was kneeling by her side, her arms close about the heaving bosom, her lips pressed upon the glorious, bowed head: "Forgive me, dear! Pardon forgive me! I was silly even to mention him—worse than silly to press you so. I think I understand."

"The door opened quickly and Mrs. Gray stood in it, panting from hasty ascension with a troubled face. "Caro, Willie is here."

"Thank God I am ready!" The fight of battle on her face melted into tender longing; hope to be realized swept away thought of right and justice as the words brought plainly before her the wide, dark river, the yearning love of "Stop, dear," the matron said, stopping with a gesture the quick grasp for hat and gloves, the careful, instinctive touch for precious packages sewed into the skirt.

"Not so bad as that, I hope," Mrs. Gray answered, gently; and, stepping to the door, she called softly, and Willie McKee tiptoed into the room. His face was grave and troubled, his manner wholly changed from the boyish exultation which had lounged from that house two hours before. Those were days that made many men play strange parts; and Willie McKee was a natural actor.

"It disappoints me, Miss Clay, almost as much as yourself," he said, quietly. "I had set my heart on getting you across to-night; and I believe you know that to do so I would risk anything, save one—your capture."

"I must always risk that," the girl cried, impatiently. "I have no fear. Go on, let us start!"

"Not until you know all," the man answered, firmly. "Ordinary danger would not deter me, of course. Everything is ready—medicines packed, passes secured. But, remember, this time your capture would be more serious than ever before. You are under gravest suspicion."

"Yes, I know. But, oh, I have been so careful—so on one. None could dream of my being here."

But this cold Sabbath morning brought McKee very early, and with him anxiety and activity to all the household. At breakfast when he came the family rose promptly from the unfinished meal at the news he brought, and rapidly all eyes were turned to the contents of the ample pantry, that was Mrs. Gray's prideful boast, were parcelled out and put in portable shape.

For that morning was one of those dire hours which made every sympathetic heart in Baltimore beat with heavier throbs—days which made firm lips tremble and strong hands clinch hard, while they forced tears to tender eyes of all true women, southern or union in their sentiment.

Rebel prisoners were to march through those streets, a spectacle and a warning, not wantonly, perhaps, "to make a Roman holiday," but because McHenry, the Old Capitol and other border prisons overflowed; and these men, unexchanged, must go to prison-pens farther from chance of escape or recapture by sudden raid.

In most every residence along that fashionable street—nearest route of march to the northern depot—now showed activity and bustle unwonted at such an hour or on such a day, and many window-shutters bowed, then closed, as eager-watching eyes saw no approaching column, and their owners went back to the work of the day.

"Mereful God! Why am I so helpless!" Oh, if it but dared! Miss Clay cried aloud, as her hands dropped listless from the lattice. "Oh, if Bessie were but here! Father, aid me now!"

As though in answer to her prayer the door opened hastily, and the girl she longed for, running in panting, passed her arm about the other as she followed her gaze below.

"I thought of you, Caro, so helpless up here!" she gasped. "There might be some one you knew; some friend—"

"There! Evan, my cousin!" Carolyn Clay cried, trembling in her eagerness. "Thank God that He sent you! See the tall boy—no, not that—the costless one! Bess, he is Evan—the one captured that night for me! You must—"

"All right! I know," the other answered, rapidly; and the warm kiss she passed to press on her friend's cheek told her that she was understood.

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MISS CLAY'S EYES WERE STUDYING THE PICTURE IN THE FIRE.

you live, seeing only what you see, it is hard indeed to understand us. Amid the privations, the suffering, the danger around me, I should be worse than base to think of such light things. Once, perhaps, I was very different—the red glow burned on my face once more, the sweat of my forehead, and then, ere she went on gravely—"but, even then, those rumors were idle."

"Forgive me, dear, I believe—Oh! Caro, I forgot; serious things drove it out of my head; but who do you suppose was here to-night?"

"How should I guess? There was more of weariness than of interest in Miss Clay's reply; but inborn courtesy forced the admission. "I am such a stranger—"

"An old friend of yours; and a very good one, too, they said. Frankly, I do not like him, though it may be 'Dr. Fell.' I think he should be in the army—our army! But otherwise he's just splendid. Guess."

CHAPTER VIII. "AS THEY MARCHED THROUGH THE TOWN."

The Sabbath morning broke clear, but piercing cold, the garish sunlight giving little warmth in the teeth of the fierce east wind.

Two days had passed, heavy, leaden-footed days to all inmates of the Gray mansion; and to one of them expectancy became almost torture, as no word came from Carolyn Clay's unnamed watcher on the shore. Willie McKee stopped to sleep, but he only hunched his head gloomily in answer to eager queries, and avoided all suspicious mounting to the hidden visitor above. And she, cheered by the sympathy and love of trusted, tender women, recovered from the shock of surprise and disappointment. She seemed almost her old self again—quiet, patient, almost hopeful outwardly, even if well-nigh despairing at heart.

DUCKLER & BULTMAN, MAIN STREET, OPPOSITE COURT HOUSE, SUMTER, S. C.

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"AND NOT EVEN TO KNOW HIS NAME!"

rapidly under the loose folds of the wrapper, as she heard the twice-told tale for the last time, as she believed—followed the night escape through the driving snow, welcomed the slow-coming dawn, and thrilled at the first sight of Rosser's advance.



CAROLYN CLAY GAZED THE PRISONERS WITH BLAZING EYES.

and a hot sigh coming, but never a tear, and some poor wretch who clung to the door, almost hopelessly, as they sent fervent supplication for these sufferers—strangers, yet brothers in their woe—up to the Throne's foot of the All-Father.

TO BE CONTINUED.]