CHAPTER XXIV-Continued. -13-

He, in tera, was so intent upon maheuvering to have himself spoken to could not impose on your generosity. by that most genial of hosts, the The money would be used against him president, that he failed to see Marie until she spoke to him. The first sight of her bewildered him, and his bow did not altogether hide the effects of the offer." the delicious shock given him by her dazzling beauty. But he quickly recovered his self-possession when he saw that she was with Vandervyn, replied. That young man, though more boyishly handsome than ever, bore himself ness or satire in his wit, her chin liftdy's clear gaze with a forced smile. when the girl transferred her hand him?" from his arm to Hardy's.

"Only a very few minutes," she soothed the disappointed lover.

"Whatever you say!" he deferred to her caprice, and he drew back to speak dent.

Hardy was gazing into the wonderful blue-black eyes of his companion. They were as inscrutable as when he a hearing." mad last looked into their depths. He tried to speak calmly, but his voice

"Do you know that you are by far the most beautiful woman here?" Mer long lashes drooped and rose egain to disclose the same inscrutable

*So I have been told several times already-I wished a few moments with you, that I might thank you for your generosity. It has given me the great opportunity of my trip abroad and this visit in Washington."

"I am saving all the reports of your social triumphs," he said. "They have made me very happy."

Again the girl's lashes drooped. "That is good of you- It is quite necessary for me to become the rage-if I am to force a recognition from Reggle's relatives. He says that, fortunately, his fiancee has become interested in another man who is qu'te as ellgible as himself."

Hardy's eyes contracted, yet he did not falter:

"Since it will bring you happiness, I -wish him-good fortune."

"You do?" The question was almost an exclamation. But the girl at once regained her quiet composure. compensation as attorney tribe?"

"I said good fortune," replied Harcontract would be tainted."

Marie arched her black eyebrows. "Is it not true that he will get through tion of his motives, was received by a much larger appropriation than oth- his officer judges with marked gravity. erwise would have been made?"

"The lands are fully worth the few hundred dollars. These supposed friends of the tribe want millions."

"Do you wish to deprive me of the share that I would receive through him?"

"Yes-of every dishonest dollar," said Hardy, his mouth stern, though his eyes besought her to forgive his harshness. "You have enough al-"Are you certain?" she rejoined.

"You may have heard that mines often pinch out or run into valueless ore-You can guess why Pere and I have told no one, least of all Reggie," Hardy remained unshaken. "If he

is worthy of you, that will make no difference to him." "But myself? I am already used to

luxury." pleaded the girl.

"Down in your heart you know the values in life that are real," he said. "You do not wish for wealth gained through fraud."

"I have not admitted that there is any fraud in the contract." "Perhaps it is as well," he remarked. "You should not doubt your future

husband." She flashed him an odd, quizzical must I not?"

"Yes," agreed Hardy.

dollars? I understand that, for some strange reason-or unreason-you in coming to Washington. have refused your pay as captain."

"My resignation has not been withdrawn, and I am engaged in a private enterprise. I cannot draw pay as an officer in the service," explained Hardy.

gued. "Most would make the excuse findings. The thought of voluntarily considered a wrong to others is not to be considered a private enterprise." "I must beg to differ with you, Miss

Dupont." "Then let it pass. But the little

-which, you see, would hardly do." "Then you refuse any loan?" "It was most kind of you to make

'Son Quixote de la Mancha!" she

murmured. "Tilting at machine windmilis!" he

Though there was no trace of bitterwith rather a sullen air. He met Har- ed to the angle of offended pride. "That is sufficient, Captain Hardy, dent's military aide. The smile became still more forced May I ask you to take me back to

Vandervyn was waiting for her near the president. As they approached upon the court-martial," stated the him, she gave Hardy a look of halfrelentment. "You must understand, to a sharp-eyed man near the presi- dictates, though I confess that lobby- be only a few-" ing is far from agreeable to me. I

> "I cannot wish you success," he replied.

She gave him a quizzical glance and turned away with Vandervyn.

a nod from the president, he fully appreciated the ease with which, in the they were whirled away over the sleety aged to obtain several moments' conversation apart with the nation's chief half averted from his companion as if magistrate.

when the sharp-eyed man to whom seat. Vandervyn had spoken came around beside Hardy and murmured a few words in his ear. Hardy looked him to move away. The man followed him until he had left the White House.

CHAPTER XXV.

Condemned.

The court-martial began its session at nine in the morning, and the trial of Hardy was over before three in the He passed into the room beyond, but afternoon. Vandervyn testified to the reappeared in a few moments and suppression by the accused of the existence of the developed mine and of Redbear's misconduct.

Hardy's statements in explanation "I do not understand. If you wish him were cold and dry. Acting as a civil frown of perplexity. Across the room good fortune, why then do you seek officer, he had considered the question a man sat writing at a businesslike to prevent him from receiving his of withholding any mention of the desk. There was no one else presmine as a matter within his discretion. ent. When interrogated whether he had not for himself, his bald admission of the fact, unaccompanied by any explana-

The other charges were far more serious, and he opposed them with amount agreed upon," stated Hardy, vigor. He denied emphatically any in-"The tribe should receive all the ap- tention to desert or to remain permapropriation. Honest lobbying would nently absent from his proper duties carry the bill through at a cost of a without leave, and showed the tele



"I Could Not Impose on Your Generosity."

look. "No, I cannot doubt my future gram from a high official in the war husband now, Captain Hardy. I must department that led him to believe his believe in him if I am to be happy, resignation and application for leave of absence would be at once favorably Vandervyn contract. He spoke delibacted upon by his commanding officer erately, but with a conciseness that She uttered a gay little trill of at Vancouver barracks. This, in some circumstances, might have been con- clearly, in words as forceful as they "That is so good of you to say it, sidered sufficient excuse for his con- were few. The president listened at-Captain! It makes me feel that I duct. But his refusal to explain his tentively, but with no change in his exreally must do something for you in reason for taking advantage of his se- pression. At the end of eight minutes return. May I not offer you a little cret knowledge of the mine perceptibly Hardy stopped. loan of, say, three or four thousand influenced the members of the court to doubt the statement of his purpose

Though the court-martial adjourned without rendering its findings, he left the courtroom ten years older in appearance than when he entered. The but raised his finger. "One moment. regretful, commiserating glance of the most friendly of his judges seemed "Few would be so quixotic," she ar- plainly to indicate what would be the that an attempt to frustrate what they resigning from the service had been hard. To be cashiered was almost un-

endurable. Yet he walked out with his back about your charges." straight and his head well up. He | The aide appeared and immediately

against Vandervyn's contract. This he lowed. addressed to the president and stamped for malling. He wrote nothing with regard to his own case.

When, near morning, he at last fell asleep, he was so near exhaustion that set for the reconvening of the court- against your Indian contract." martial had already come. He sprang nto his uniform with a celerity that of reveille in cadet barracks at West ever, I believe I have enough left to Point. last me through. And in any event, I

The worn soles of his highly polished shoes beat a tattoo on the carpetiess old stairs by which he descended to the street. He did not turn to charged Hardy. go in for a belated breakfast at the meager table of his landlady. He hastened along the few feet of narrow hall to the street door. As he drew it open, another man in uniform stepped into the doorway and confronted him. The other officer saluted. Hardy responded mechanically. For all his cool look, he was astonished. The man before him was the presi-

"Captain Floyd Hardy?"

"At your service." "You should now be in attendance

aide with cold severity. "I shall explain to the court," re-Captain, that I must do as my heart plied Hardy. "If not delayed, I shall

"You will come with me," interrupthave already met his excellency, and ed the aide, still more severely. "Your he has been so kind as to promise me conduct has been brought to the attention of the president. It is to be seen, sir, whether you will continue to refuse to answer the inquiries of your superiors."

Hardy went white, but his jaw set Standing in the eager, jostling firm with grim resolution. He stepped crowd that waited for a word or even out beside the aide, and crossed the sidewalk to the waiting motor. As midst of so great a crush, she man- asphalt, the aide sat with more than military stiffness, his head and body to avoid contamination. Hardy sat She was still beside the president as stiffly at the other extreme of the

The ride was short. The car made sudden turn, and curved around to the executive offices of the president. in the eye, bowed, and quietly started Hardy looked at his companion, perplexed. The face of the aide showed only the stern watchfulness of one dent looked thoughtful, "Of course, who has a reputedly dangerous prisoner under arrest. At the entrance he stepped behind, as if apprehensive that Hardy might attempt to escape. A doorkeeper conducted them along a dians?" corridor into a small waiting room. signed to Hardy to enter.

Hardy stepped into the room, and ter." the door was closed behind him. The aide and the doorkeeper had remained

taken advantage of this suppression and abruptly made a beckoning ges- told you about the affair. The fellow dy. "Any money paid him on that to enter the contest and win the mine ture. Hardy's hand went up in salute presence of the commander in chief of the army and navy.

The president looked him up and down with a severe glance. "You are Captain Floyd Hardy?"

"Yes, sir." "The same who suppressed the late

insurrection in the Sulus?" "I happened to be in command at he time, sir."

"After that you obtained a detail, your conduct in discharge of which has resulted in your trial by courtmartial on serious charges. I have before me the findings of the court. The cause of your record and of certain statements that have been presented to me, I have been persuaded to give could have gone." you an opportunity to explain your conduct."

Hardy saluted. "Permit me, sir, to first present for your consideration a matter relating to the interests of the tribe which-"

"Stop!" ordered the president. Others are waiting for interviews. I can give you only ten minutes. If you expend them on this other matter, you will have no further opportunity to state your own case."

tial covered the facts, sir. If those then I am guilty, and desire no clemency. That is all I have to say on my own case, sir. With regard to the matter which I desire to present-'

"Sit down!" ordered the president. "You have nine minutes. Be brief."

Hardy seated himself and proceeded to present his argument against the covered what he had to say fully and

The president showed a trace of surprise. "Is that all you have to say? There is still a minute." "That is all, sir," replied Hardy, ris-

The president touched a call button, What if I should confront you with witnesses?"

"As I have stated, sir, my only request is that all the witnesses in the case be examined."

"There are some already at hand. You shall see what they have to say

went directly to the White House and went out again at a sign from the sert in a written application for an president. He returned with Vander-

Interview with the president. It was vyn and Marie. At sight of Hardy the you wish him to acknowledge you as refused. He went to his lodgings and young man stopped short, but, meet- his wife?" spent the remainder of the day and ing the president's cordial smile, came half the night drafting and redrafting forward with easy assurance. Marie a concise statement of his argument did not look at Hardy, as she fol-

The president addressed Vandervyn: Captain Hardy has declined to ask for clemency. I have decided to sustain the findings of the court-martial. In the face of all this, he has had the he did not waken until late. The hour temerity to make a charge of fraud tribal council."

Vandervyn nodded: "Captain Hardy is too skilled a strategist not to realize might have reminded a fellow officer that the best way to shield himself is to raise the cry of 'stop thief!' against others. Does he allege that the signatures to my contract are forged?"

"The signatures are genuine. They were obtained by fraud," bluntly "My word is as good or perhaps

somewhat better than that of a cashiered officer," rejoined Vandervyn. "You deny the charge," the president

stated rather than inquired. "Most emphatically," pleasantly agreed Vandervyn. He looked significantly from Hardy to Marie. "As a sol-



"My Word's as Good or Better Than Cashiered Officer's."

dier-until recently-the gallant captain probably believes in the saying that all is fair in war and love."

Marie lowered her eyes. The presi-Mr. Vandervyn, there can be no question, when it is a matter of your word against his. Yet were there any other witnesses than yourselves and the In-"Your excellency evidently has not

seen the contract," said Vandervyn. "It is duly witnessed by Charlie Redbear, the official interpreter, and by his sis-"Ah, the interpreter, you say? This

matter may be rumored in the house of his actions were as brief as they outside. Hardy looked around with a and even in the senate. It will be well for you to send for the man." Vandervyn shrugged. "Can't do it,

even to oblige you, Mr. President, The tellow has gone to the place where The man turned in his swivel chair cold storage is unknown. My uncle was drunk; he aimed his 'gun' at me. as he stepped forward. He was in the I supposed it loaded, and shot him in self-defense. Hardy was present. He can't deny what I say, without forswearing himself."

Hardy met the president's look of inquiry, and bowed in confirmation of the statement. The president again looked thoughtful. "That leaves the man's sister as the only witness to the contract. It would be well if she could be produced."

The aide left the room. Vandervyn again shrugged. "Search has been made for her, Mr. President. All that could be learned from her Indian relatives was that she had been very sick circumstances are exceptional. Be and had gone away. Of course that meant to the happy hunting grounds. There was no other place that she

The aide returned to the room leading a tall young woman who was dressed in a Parisian tailored suit that Vandervyn had last seen on Marie. She was gloved and heavily veiled, and she entered the room with perceptible timidity. Marie went to take her arm in a reassuring clasp and raise the veil. At no time since their coming to Washington had Vandervyn been given so much as a glimpse of Miss Dupont's reputed Hindu maid. "The evidence before the court-mar- This undoubtedly was the woman, and he looked at her with sharp curiosity facts sustain the charges against me, as Marie raised the veil. Marie stepped aside and gave him a full view of the girl's face. "Olnna!" he exclaimed.

"Yes. Is it not a happy surprise? sald Marie.

She smiled at the shrinking girl, and drew her about to the president. 'My dear, this is the great White Father of all Indians and of our tribehe is our father-your excellency, this is Mrs. Reginald Vandervyn."

The blow was given with merciless force. As Vandervyn gaped at Marie, her eyes flamed with a sudden upleaping of fierce exultance.

He gasped and choked out: "Youyou !-All these months-this-you-Indian!" "Yes, Indian-to you, even as she

was Indian to you!" cried the girl. ator Clemmer an hour ago. The treaty "You have been so eager to marry a appropriation bill will be passed with 'breed girl-here is one, already your wife!"

"It's a lie-a black lie!" denied Vandervyn. "I never married her!" "You took her by tribal custom, and

you told her that you were taking her legally according to the common law." "She cannot prove I lived with her read. openly as her husband," rejoined Van-

The president looked at the shrink-

"No, no, sir!" she disclaimed. don't want him any more."

"I am pleased to hear you say that," replied the president. He turned to Vandervyn, "I understand this witness is prepared to testify that the signatures to your contract were obtained on the false representation that it was a second copy of the minutes of the

"It's a lie!" hoarsely replied the young man. "Hardy knows nothing about it. There's only her word against mine."

"We can send for the Indian witnesses, if necessary. Another matter -at the inquest you testified under oath that a certain Indian killed Agent Nogen, and that you and Redbear then killed the murderer. When you shot Redbear, you rode off, certain that he was dead. He lived long enough to confess himself the murderer of Agent Nogen. Why did you perjure yourself

at the inquest?" "You can't prove it," defiantly challenged Vandervyn. "I stand by my testimony. This squaw and Hardy have hatched up the lie between them. Even if Redbear made such a confession, it is only hearsay and not legal | dent that you must have chosen someevidence."

"Your friend Redbear seems to have enjoyed shooting at agents," remarked the president. "He also confessed to having made the two attempts on the am of him!" life of Captain Hardy. In view of your perjured testimony at the Nogen inquest, one is led to infer a not improbable connection between those at- take this opportunity to discharge in tempts and your enmity to Captain a way the obligation that, as a member Hardy. But the point at present is of the tribe, I owe to you for your whether you still insist upon the val- services. I shall therefore return the idity of your contract. Do you wish mine to you." an official investigation that will take the evidence of the Indian witnesses?" A cold sweat was gathering on Vandervyn's forehead. He looked at Marie. She turned from him, afraid that he might misconstrue the womanly softness into which her fierce resentment had melted. He wheeled about, and left

the room, sullen, unrepentant, defiant. "A very great pity," commented the president. "Young and clever, handsome, well educated, good social standing-yet all wasted! Courage-misdirected; no sense of shame; unmoral, rather than immoral. He will ride hard to still harder falls than this one, or else to what the world calls success. But I am too busy a man to moralize. If you will pardon me, ladies, there is to be a cabinet meeting."

He bowed to them, and then confronted Hardy. "Sir, I warned you that if you did not speak in your own defense, you would have no other opportunity. I shall not reverse my approval of the findings of the courtnartial."

Hardy had stood an amazed and dumfounded spectator to the rejection and disgrace of his rival. But throughout it all Marie had never once looked at him. If her scornful casting off of Vandervyn had roused any hopes for himself, they must have been dashed when she led Oinna away without favoring him with so much as a glance of recognition. There was a slight stoop in his shoulders as he saluted the president.

"If the sentence approved by your excellency does not make association with me scandalous," he said, "I beg leave to express my thanks for the intimation that you will invalidate the fraudulent contract."

Without replying, the president abruptly faced about to his desk. Hardy again saluted, and marched from the room as if on dress parade.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Sentence.

In the anteroom the doorkeeper waved Hardy to a door on the right. It led him into a stenographers' room. He saw the flounce of a woman's skirt behind a revolving bookcase near the far end of the room, and paused. Someone stepped into the room after him, and touched him authoritatively on the shoulder.

"One moment, Captain Hardy-

your sentence." He turned and faced the president's aide with the clear, unflinching gaze of a brave man about to be shot. The aide saluted with punctilious formality. Hardy responded with equal formality. The aide presented an official document, saluted, and withdrew from the room.

For a long moment Hardy stood with the decree of his fate slowly crumpling in his hand. His eyes were fixed on vacancy. Doubtless he was seeing the years of soldierly comradeship and duty that now lay in the past and the vision of the career to which he was to have given the utmost of his powers. He had always loved his profession-and now-

The woman whose skirt he had seen was in front of him before he became aware of her presence. He found himself looking into the cool, half-mocking face of Marie.

"Are you afraid to read your sentence?" she taunted. "Had it not been for you, he would have had the mine and a million from his contract and me. The president conferred with Sena clause that no commission is to be paid for the services of any tribal agent or representative. He has lost everything. And now-I am waiting to see you read that paper."

Hardy drew himself up, opened the envelope, took out the document and

As Marie saw the look of blank ineyes flashed under the lowering veil of of my mother." ing Oinna with kindly gravity. "Do their long lashes. He stared up at her,

zed to perceive the apression. change in to

"Acquitted - honorably -- on all charges!" he murmured. "On all charges-! Honorable mention recom-

mended-Approved-the President." Marie smiled with cool condescen-

"Merely a question of doing justice to you, Captain Hardy. When a man has done his duty, however harshiy, it is the duty of others to see that he receives just compensation. I take credit for having helped to bring this

about." "You?" he exclaimed. "Of course, though, if you really did not love him-'

"That does not follow. You must know I did love him. But to find that I had for rival another 'breed girlone not half so beautiful as I-I could not endure the thought. You have seen the proof that there is a good deal of my mother's red grandfather in my blood. No, I had to give him up, and I have decided to marry another man."

"Another!" echoed Hardy. "Will you not congratulate .ne?" she asked.

He railied. "I congratulate him. After what has happened, I feel confione more worthy of you."

"He is!" declared the girl, her glorious eyes melting with tenderness. "He is far more worthy of me than I

With an effort she recovered her cool composure.

"But now, before going, I wish to

She held out a document. He stepped back.

"No, Miss Dupont," he said. "I cannot accept it."

"You must. I took it from you. Though I have used the income from it not altogether for personal gratification, you must realize that my pride longer. Let me add that it has not pinched out, as you may have inferred

frivolity tortured him. "You may not believe it, Miss Dupont Yet it is "It is not," she contradicted. "When

ve were abroad, Pere and I went to Monte Carlo. I fancy the gambling spirit infected me. Let us settle the ownership of the mine with a wager. If you do not marry this year, I agree to keep it. But if you marry within that time, you will accept it back from me on your wedding day."

"It is not fair for me to bet on a cer tainty; but if you insist, I agree to the wager," said Hardy.

"Then be prepared to take the mine a week from today," she bantered.

He tore his gaze away from the lovely face whose gay smile appeared so heartlessly mocking. "You-cannot realize-how this-"

She handed him another sealed en-"Here is the order detailing you to

special service with the general staff for the winter. You will then be required to return to the reservation and carry out all the plans recommended by you for the civilizing of the tribe. Your mare is in the same stable as the thoroughbred that I have bought to use as her riding mate."

The changed tone in the girl's voice compelled Hardy to look up. In her radiant eyes he saw a look that could not be mistaken. The smile that had seemed so mocking was now tenderly

tensing. "Marie-you-" he stammered. "Are you certain it is—love—not a passing feeling of pity?"

"Pity! For you?" she cried. "Do you think I could dare pity you?—a man like you! I could not have been so presumptuous even had those treacherous conspirators succeeded in crushing you. Do you think it was pity that made me live a lie all this time-that forced me to flout you and accept his detestable attentions?"

Her voice sank to a note of deep humility. "I know how very unworthy of you

I am. Yet I hope I am not so unworthy as that first day at the coulee, when I scorned you, and you, with your skill and courage and moderation, saved us without harming those whose attack he had wantonly brought upon us. I was a coquette-a coquette infatuated with the kind of man with whom a coquette deserves to be infatuated. But I was not altogether frivolous. I soon perceived your immeasurable superiority over him. Only my head could not overcome the fascination that had bound my heart. My soul sought to free itself from the spell-I struggled and prayed- Yet not until there at the mine, when you showed yourself the bravest, the most generous-"

She flung out her arms to him in piteous appeal. "Captain! My captain! Say that you do not think mealtogether what he-thought me !"

Hardy drew her hands together, and bent to kiss them with reverent pas-

"Dearest," he replied, "you forget that other day in the coulee-that day when you thought me dying. I gazed credulity that came into his face, her up into your eyes, and I saw the look

(THE END.)

will not permit me to keep it any from what I said at the ball. It is a bonanza." "I regret that I cannot accept it," he replied. "A captain's pay is quite sufficient for a-bache'or." Marie gave him a mocking glance. Really now, Captain Hardy, you do not expect me to believe you will long emain unmarried?" He tried his best to conceal how her