

(Continued from last week.)

would have gone away unknown ratner than profit by his claim as Sir Thomas Godwin's kinsman, even though Moll should be no better than old Simon would have him believe, upon which he cries: "Lord love him for it, say I again! Let us drink to their health. Drink deep, Kit, for I've a fancy that no man shall put his lips to this mug after us."

So I drank heartily, and he, emptying the jug, flung it behind the chimney, with another fervent ejaculation of gratitude. Then a shade of sorrow falling on his face as he lay it in his hand, his elbow resting on the table:

"I'd give the best half of the years I've got to live," says he, "to see 'em together and grasp Mr. Godwin's hand

in mine, but I'll not be tempted to it, for I perceive clearly enough by what and ruining my dear Moll's chance of erly." happiness. But tell me, Kit," straightening himself up, "how think you this marriage will touch our affairs?"

"Only to better them, for now our prosperity is assured, which otherwise might have lacked security."

"Aye, to be sure, for now shall we be all in one family with these Godwins, and this cousin, profiting by the estate as much as Moll, will never begrudge her giving us a hundred or two now and then for rendering him such good serv-

"Twill appease Moll's compunctions into the bargain," says I heedlessly.

"What compunctions?" "The word slipped me unintended," stammers I. "I mean nothing."

"But something your word must mean. Come, out with it, Kit." "Well," says I, "since this fondness has possessed her I have observed a

greater compunction to telling of lies than she was wont to have." "'Tis my fault," answered he sadly. "She gets this leaning to honesty from

"This very morning," continues I. "she was, I truly believe, of two minds whether she should not confess to her sweetheart that she was not his cousin."

"For all the world my case!" cries he, slapping the table. "If I could only have five minutes in secret with the dear girl, I would give her a hint that should make her profit by my folly." And then he tells me how, in the heyday of courtship and the flush of confiding love, he ried gallantry somewhat too far with Sukey Taylor and might have added a good half dozen other names beside hers but for her sudden outcry, and how, though she might very well have suspected other amours, she did never reproach him therewith, but was forever to her dying day a-flinging Sukey Taylor in his teeth, etc.

"Lord, Kit!" cries he in conclusion. "What would I give to save her from such torment! You know how obedient she is to my guiding, for I have ever studied to make her respect me, and no one in the world hath such empire over her! Could it not be contrived anyhow that we should meet for half an hour secretly?

"Not secretly," says I. "But there is no reason why you should not visit her openly. Nay, it will create less surprise than if you stay away. For what could be more natural than your coming to the court on your return from a voyage to see the lady you risked so much to save?"

"Now God bless you for a good, true friend!" cries he, clasping my hand. "I'll come, but to stay no great length. Not a drop will I touch that day, and a fool indeed I must be if I can't act my part without bungling for a few hours at a stretch, and I listening every night in the parlor of the Spotted Dog to old seamen swearing and singing their songs. And I'll find an opportunity to give Moll a hint of my past folly and so rescue her from a like pitfall. I'll abide by your advice, Kit, which is the wisest I ever heard from your lips."

But I was not so sure of this, and remembering the kind of obedience Moll had used to yield to her father's commands my mind misgave me.

CHAPTER XXIII.

I returned to Hurst Court the following day in the forenoon, and there I found Mr. Godwin, with Moll clinging to his arm, in an upper room commanding a view of the northern slopes, discussing their future, and Moll told me with glee how this room was to be her husband's workroom, where he would paint pictures for the admiration of all the world, saying that he would not, nor would she have him, renounce his calling to lead the idle life of a country gentleman.

"If the world admire my pictures, the world shall pay to have them," says he, with a smile. Then, turning to her, he adds very tenderly: "I will owe all my happiness to you, sweetheart. Yet guard my independence in more material matters. No mercenary question shall ever suspicion on my love."

Seeing I was not wanted here I left them to settle their prospectives and sought Don Sanchez, whom I found reading in a room below, seated in a comfortable chair before a good fire of apple logs. To please me he shut up his book and agreed to take a stroll in the park

vnue dinner was a-dressing. So we slap on our hats and cloaks and set forth, talking of indifferent matters till we had come into a fair open glade, which sort of place the prudent don did ever prefer to holes and corners for secret conference, and then he told me how Moll and Mr. Godwin had already decided they would be married in three

"Three weeks?" says I. "I would it were to be done in three days." To which desire the don coincides with sundry grave nods, and then tells me how Moll would have herself cried in church, for all to know, and that nothing may be wanting to her husband's dignity.

"After all," says I, "three weeks is no such great matter. And now, senor, do tell me what you think of all this."

"If you had had the ordering of your own destiny, you could not have contrived it better," answers he. "'Tis a most excellent game, and you cannot you tell me that my wayward tongue fail to win if" (here he pauses to blow and weakness have been undoing us all his nose) "if the cards are played prop-

This somehow brought Dawson into my thoughts, and I told the don of my visit to him, and how he did purpose to come down to see Moll, whereat the don, stopping short, looked at me very curiously with his eyebrows raised, but saying nothing.

"Tis no more than natural that a father should want to see what kind of man is to be his daughter's husband," say I in excuse, "and if he will come, what are we to do?"

"I know what I should do in your place, Mr. Hopkins," says he quietly. "Pray, senor, what is that?"

"Squeeze all the money you can out of old Simon before he comes," answers he. "And it wouldn't be amiss to make Mr. Godwin a party to this business by letting him have a hundred or two for his present necessities at once."

Acting on this hint, when Moll left us after supper and we three men were seated before the fire, I asked Mr. Godwin if he would permit me to speak upon a matter which concerned his happiness no less than his cousin Judith's.

"Nay, sir," replies he, "I do pray you to be open with me, for otherwise I must consider myself unworthy of your friendship."

'Well, sir," says I, "my mind is somewhat concerned on account of what you said this morning-namely, that no pecuniary question shall ever be discussed betwixt you and your wife, and happiness. This, together with your purpose of painting pictures to sell, means, I take it, that you will leave your wife absolute mistress of her present fortune."

That is the case exactly, Mr. Hopkins," says he. "I am not indifferent to the world's esteem, and I would give no one reason to suspect that I had married my dear cousin to possess her for-

"Nevertheless, sir, you would not have thought it that she begrudged you an equal share of her possessions. Your position will necessitate a certain outlay. To maintain your wife's dignity and your own you must dress well, mount a good horse, be liberal in hospitality, give largely to those in need, and so forth. With all due respect to your genius in painting, I can scarcely think that art will furnish you at once with supplies necessary to meet all these demands."

"All this is very true, Mr. Hopkins," says he, after a little reflection. "To tell the truth, I have lived so long in want that poverty has become my second nature, and so these matters have not entered into my calculations. Pray, sir, continue."

"Your wife, be she never so considerate, may not always anticipate your needs, and hence at some future moment this question of supplies must arise, unless they are disposed of before your marriage."

"If that could be done, Mr. Hopkins,"

says he hopefully. "It may be done, sir, very easily. With your consin's consent and yours, , as her elected guardian, at this time will have a deed drawn up to be signed by you and her, settling one half the estate upon you, and the other half on your cousin. This will make you not her debtor, but her benefactor, for with this deed all this, now hers, becomes yours by legal right upon your marriage, and she could not justly give away a shilling without your permission, and thus you assure to her the same independence that you yourself would maintain."

"Very good," says Don Sanchez in a sonorous voice of approval as he lies back in his high chair, his eyes closed and a cigarro in the corner of his mouth. "I thank you with all my heart, Mr. Hopkins," says Mr. Godwin warmly. 'I entreat you have this deed drawn up if it be Cousin Judith's wish."

"You may count with certainty on that," says I, "for if my arguments lacked power I have but to say 'tis your desire, and 'twould be done, though it took the last penny from her."

He made no reply to this, but bending forward he gazed into the fire, with a rapture in his face, pressing one hand within the other as if it were his sweet-

heart's. "In the meantime," says I, "if you have necessity for a hundred or two in advance, you have but to give me your note of hand."

this you do me this service?" cries he eagerly. "Can you let me have £500 by tomorrow?"

"I believe I can supply you to the extent of six or seven. "All that you can," says he, "for besides a pressing need that will take me to London tomorrow I owe something

Don Sanchez waived his hand cavalierly, though I do believe the subtle

to a friend here that I would fain dis-



He made no reply to this, but bending forward he gazed into the fire. Spaniard had hinted at this business as much for his own ends as for our assur-

"I will have it ready against we meet in the morning," says I.

"You are so certain of her sanction?" he asks in delight as if he could not too much assure himself of his cousin's de-

"She has been guided by me in all matters relating to her estate and will be in this, I am convinced. But here's another question, sir, which, while we are about business, might be discussed with advantage. My rule here is nearly at an end. Have you decided who shall govern the estate when I am gone?"

"Only that when I have authority that rascal Simon shall be turned from his office neck and crop. He loves me as little as he loves his mistress that he would set us by the ears for his own advantage.

"Ah, honest man nevertheless-in his peculiar way," observes the don.

."Honest!" cries Mr. Godwin hotly. 'He honest who would have suffered Judith to die in Barbary? He shall go!" "Then you will take in your own

hands the control of your joint estate?" "I? Why, I know no more of such matters than the man in the moon."

"With all respect to your consin's abilities, I cannot think her qualified for this office."

"Surely another steward can be found."

"Undoubtedly," says I. "But surely, sir, you'd not trust all to him without some supervision? Large sums of money must pass through his hands, and this must prove a great temptation to dishonest practices. 'Twould not be fair to any man."

"This is true," says he. "And yet from natural disinclination, ignorance and other reasons I would keep out of Then, after some reflection, he adds: "My cousin has told me how you that you will owe nothing to her but have lost all your fortune in saving her, and that !tis not yet possible to repay you. May I ask, sir, without offense, if you have any occupation for your time when you leave us?"

"I went to London when I left you to see what might be done, but a merchant without money is like a carpenter without tools."

"Then, sir, till your debt is discharged, or you can find some more pleasant and profitable engagement, would you not consent to govern these affairs? I do not ask you to stay here, though assuredly you will ever be a welcome guest, but if you would have one of the houses on the estate or come hither from time to time as it might fit your other purposes and take this office as a matter of business I should regard it as a most generous, friendly kindness on your part."

I promised him with some demur, and yet with the civility his offer demanded, to consider of this, and so our debate ended, and I went to bed very well content with myself, for thus will vanity blind us to our faults.

CHAPTER XXIV.

I got together £600, out of the sum left us after paving Don Sanchez his £10,-000, and delivered 'em to Mr. Godwin against his note of hand, telling him at the same time that, having slept upon his proposal, I was resolved to be his steward for three months, with freedom on both sides to alter our position, according to our convenience, at the end of that time, and would serve him and his lady to the best of my power. Thanking me very heartily for my friendly service to him, though, God knows, with little reason, he presently left us. And Moll, coming back from taking tender leave of him at her gates, appeared very downcast and pensive. However, after moping an hour in her chamber, she comes to me in her hood, and begs I will take her a walk to dispel her vapors. So we out across the common, it being a fine, brisk, dry morning and the ground hard with a frost. Here, being secure from observation, I showed her how I had settled matters with Mr. Godwin, dividing the estate in such a manner as would enable her to draw what funds she pleased, without let, hindrance or any inconvenient question.

At this she draws a deep sigh, fixing her eyes sadly enough on the perspective, as if she were thinking rather of her absent lover than the business in hand. Somewhat nettled to find she prized my efforts on her behalf so lightly, I proceeded to show her the advantages of this arrangement, adding that, to make her property the surer, I had consented to manage both her affairs and Mr. Godwin's when they were married.

"And so," says I in conclusion, "you may have what money you want and dispose of it as you will, and I'll answer for it Mr. Godwin shall never be a penny the wiser."

"Do what you find is necessary," says

TARRE DESMICHE sake say no more on this matter to me. For all these hints do stab my heart like

Not reading rightly the cause of her petulance, I was at first disposed to resent it, but reflecting that a maiden is no more responsible for her tongue than a donkey for his heels in this season of life, but both must be forever a-flying ont at some one when parted from the object of their affections, I held my peace, and so we walked on in sullen I kiss you for bringing me to my senses" silence for a space; then, turning suddenly upon me, she cries in a trembling voice:

"Won't you say something to me? Can't you see that I am unhappy?"

And now, seeing her eyes full of tears, her lips quivering and her face drawn with pain, my heart melted in a moment, so taking her arm under mine and pressing it to my side I bade her be of good cheer, for her lover would return in a day or two at the ontside.

"No; not of him-not of him!" she entreats. "Talk to me of indifferent things.

So, thinking to turn her thoughts to another furrow, I told her how I had been to visit her father at Greenwich.

"My father!" says she, stopping short. "Oh, what a heartless, selfish creature am I! I have not thought of him in my happiness! Nay, had he been dead I could not have forgot him more. You saw him. Is he well?"

"As hearty as you could wish and full of love for you and rejoiced beyond measure to know you are to marry a brave, honest gentleman." Then I told how we had drunk to their health, and how her father had smashed his mug for a fancy, and this bringing a smile to her cheek I went on to tell how he crayed to see Mr. Godwin and grip his hand.

"Oh, if he could see what a noble, handsome man my Richard is!" she cried. "I do think my heart would ache

Why, so it shall," says I, "for your father does intend to come hither before

"He is coming to see my dear husband," says she, her face aglow with

"Aye, but he does promise to be most circumspect and appear as if, returning from a voyage, he had come but to see

how you fare and will stay no longer than is reasonably civil." "Only that," says she, her counte-

nance falling again, "we are to hide our love, pretend indifference, behave toward this dear father as if he were naught to me but a friend."

"My dear," says I, "'tis no new part you have to play." "I know it," she answers hotly, "but that makes it only the worse.'

"Well, what would you?" "Anything," with passion. "I would do anything but cheat and cozen the man I love." Then, after some moments' silence o' both sides, "Oh, if I were really Judith Godwin!'

"If you were she, you'd be in Barbary now and have neither father nor lover. Is that what you want?" says I, with some impatience.

"Bear with me," says she, with a humility as strange in her as those newborn scruples of conscience. "You may be sure of this, my dear,"

says I in a gentler tone. "If you were anything but what you are, Mr. Godwin would not marry you." "Why, then, not tell him what I

am?" asks she boldly. "That means that you would be tomorrow what you're not today." "If he told me he had done wrong, I

could forgive him and love him none the less.' "Your conditions are not the same. He is a gentleman by birth; you but a make bad blood between two consins, player's daughter. Come, child, be reasonable. Ponder this matter but a mo-

ment justly, and you shall see that you have all to lose and naught to gain by yielding to this idle fancy. Is he lacking in affection that you would seek to stimulate his love by this hazardous experiment?" "Oh, no, no, no!" cries she.

force him to give you un and sock an

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other wire?" She starts as if flicked with a whip. "Would you be happier stripped of your possessions, cast out of your house, to fly from justice with your father?" She looks at me in pale terror. "Why, then, there's nothing to be won, and what's to lose? The love of a noble, honest gentleman, the joy of raising him from penury."

"Oh, say no more," cries she in passion. "I know not what madness possessed me to overlook such consequences. (with that she catches up my hand and presses her lips to it again and again). "Look in my face," cries she, "and if you find a lurking vestige of irresolution there, I'll tear it out."

Indeed I could see nothing but set determination there, a most hard expression of fixed resolve, that seemed to age her by ten years, astonishing me not less than those other phases in her rapidly developing character.

"Now," says she quickly, and with not a note of her repining tone, "what was that you spoke of lately? You are to be our steward?"

"Yes," says I, "for Mr. Godwin has declared most firmly that the moment he has authority he will cast Simon out for his disloyalty." "I will not leave that ungrateful duty

wretch at once and choose the shortest I led her back across the common, and coming to Simon's lodge she herself

to him," says she. "Take me to this

knocked loudly at the door. Seeing who it was through his little grating, Simon quickly opens the door, and with fawning humility entreats her to step into his poor room, and there he stands, cringing and mopping his eyes in dreadful apprehension, as having doubtless gathered from some about the house how matters stood betwixt Moll

and Mr. Godwin. "Where are your keys?" demands Moll in a very hard, merciless voice.

Perceiving how the land lay and finding himself thus beset old Simon falls to his usual artifices, turning this way and that, like a rat in a pit, to find some hole for escape. First he feigns to misunderstand; then, clapping his hands in his pockets, he knows not where he can have laid them, and after that fancies he must have given them to his man Peter, who is gone out of an errand, etc., until Moll, losing patience, cut him short by declaring the loss of the keys unimportant, as doubtless a locksmith could be found to open his boxes and drawers without 'em.

"My chief requirement is," adds she, "that you leave this house forthwith and return no more."

Upon this, finding further evasion impossible, the old man turns to bay and asks upon what grounds she would dismiss him without writ or warrant.

'Tis sufficient," returns she, "that this house is mine, and that I will not have you a day longer for my tenant or my servant. If you dispute my claim, as I am told you do, you may take what lawful means you please to dispossess me of my estate and at the same time redress what wrong is done you."

Seeing his secret treachery discovered, Simon falls now to his whining arts. telling once more of his constant toil to enrich her, his thrift and self denialnay, he even carries it so far as to show that he did but incite Mr. Godwin to dispute her title to the estate, that thereby her claim should be justified before the law to the obtaining of her succession without further delay, and at the expense of her cousin, which did surpass anything I had ever heard of for artfulness. But this only incensed Moll the more.

"What!" cries she. "You would to the ruin and disgrace of one, merely to save the expense of some beggarly fees! I'll hear no more. Go at once, or I will send for my servants to carry you out by force."

He stood some moments in deliberation, and then he says, with a certain dignity unusual to him, "I will go." Then he casts his eye slowly round the "Would he be happier knowing all?" room, with a lingering regard for his She shakes her head. "Happier if you piles of documents and precious boxes of title deeds, as if he were bidding a last farewell to all that was dear to him on earth, and grotesque as his ap-

> pearance might be there was yet something pathetic in it. But even at this moment his ruling passion prevailed.

"There is no need," says he, burst these goodly locks by force. I do bethink me the keys are here"-opening a drawer and laying them upon the table. Then, dropping his head, he goes slowly to the door, but there he turns, lifting his head and fixing his rheumy eyes on Moll. "I will take nothing from this house, not even the chattels that belong to me, bought from the mean wage I have allowed myself. So shalt thou judge of my honesty. They shall stand here till I return, for that I shall return I am as fully persuaded as



that a just God doth dispose of his creatures. Thee hast might on thy side, woman, but whether thee hast right as well shall yet be proven, not by the laws of man, which are an invention of

me devil to fatten rogues upon the substance of fools, but by the law of heaven, to which I do appeal with all my soul," lifting high his shaking hands. "Morning and night I will pray that God shall smite with heavy hand which of us two hath most wronged the other. Offer the same prayer, if thee darest."

I do confess that this parting shot

went home to my conscience and tronbled my mind considerably, for, feeling that he was in the right of it as regarded our relative honesty, I was constrained to think that his prophecy might come true also to our shame and undoing. But Moll was afflicted with no such qualms, her spirit being very combative and high, and her conscience, such as it was, being hardened by our late discussion to resist sharper slaps than this. Nay, maintaining that Simon must be dishonest by the proof we had of his hypocrisy and double dealing, she would have me enter upon my office at once by sending letters to all her tenants, warning them to pay no rent to any one lately in her service, but only to me, and these letters, which kept my pen going all that afternoon, she signed with the name of Judith Godwin, which seemed to me a very bold, dangerous piece of business, but she would have it so and did her signature with a strong hand and a flourish of loops beneath like any queen.

Nor was this all, for the next morning she would have me go to that Mr. Goodman who had offered to buy her farm for ready money and get what I could from him, seeing that she must furnish herself with her gowns and make other outlay for her coming marriage. So to him I go, and after much haggling, having learned from Simon that the land was worth more than he offered for it, I brought him to give £6,000 instead of £5,000, and this was better business on his side than on mine at that, for that the bargain might not slip from his hands he would have me take £3,000 down as a handsell, leaving the rest to be paid when the deed of transference was drawn up.

And now as I jogged home with all this gold clinking in my pockets I did feel that I had thrust my head fairly into a halter and no chance left of drawing it out. Look at it how I might, this business were a most evil aspect, to be sure. Nor could I regard myself as anything but a thorough faced rogue.

"For," thinks I, "if old Simon's prayer be answered, what will become of this poor Mr. Goodman? His title deeds will be wrested from him, for they are but stolen goods he is paying for, and thus an innocent, honest man will be utterly ruined. And for doing this villainy I may count myself lucky if my heels save my neck."

With this weight on my mind I resolved to be very watchful and careful of my safety, and before I fell asleep that night I had devised a dozen schemes for making good my escape as soon as I perceived danger. Nevertheless I could dream of nothing but prisons, scourgings, etc., and in every vision I perceived old Simon in his leather skullcap sitting on the top of Tyburn tree, with his handkercher a-hanging down ready to strangle me.

(To be Continued.)

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