

"SHREWSBURY"

By STANLEY J. WEYMAN.

Chapter XXXIII—Continued. He was so righteously indignant at the presumption of which I had been guilty in attacking the family, that though it was his own indiscretion that had led me to the point, I made haste to utter an apology, and doing this with the better grace for the remembrance that Smith was now powerless, and his wicked plans abortive, I contrived presently to appease him. But the ferment which the discovery I had made wrought in my spirits moved me to escape as quickly as possible to my room, there to consider at leisure the miserable position in which, but for Smith's timely capture, I must have found myself.

A suspicion of the truth I had entertained before, but this certainty that the man I was to be prepared upon personating was my benefactor, and that in the plot, his own mother was engaged, filled me with much horror, when I considered the necessity of complying, under which I might have lain, with my mind, that I had never as my relief upon the reflection that those schemes were now futile. I will not say, suffice it, that the knowledge that but for Smith's arrest I must have chosen between playing the basest part in the world and roasting a king whereat I shuddered, filled me with thankfulness immeasurable; a thankfulness which I did not fail to pour out on my knees, and which was in no degree lessened by a shuddering consciousness, that in that dilemma, had Providence not averted it, I might, ere this, have played the baser part.

No wonder that a hundred harrowing recollections crowded on my mind; or that under the pressure of these tumults of my spirits, became so powerful that I presently seized my hat, and hastily escaping from the house, sought in rapid movement some refuge in the unpopulated retrospect. Crossing the green park, I chose a field path that led by the Pimlico marshes to Fulham, and gradually the songs of the larks and the spring larks for the day was calm and serene—leading my mind into a more cheerful groove. I began to dwell rather on the fact of my escape than on the crime from which I had escaped, and, contemplating the secure career that now lay in view before me, I was not long in seeing that thankfulness should be my strongest feeling. Turning my back on the day with the village assembled to do the old man honor.

In a word, tasting the full relief of emancipation, I began to gaze at the prospect, and even the smoke and din of London, when I re-entered it, failed to subdue the unusual humor. I could have sung; I could have laughed aloud; I could have burst into a fit of dancing. For Ferguson, Smith, the Monterey— a fit! Who had come off best after all? And of their fine plottings and contrivings what had been the upshot? They had failed, and I had triumphed; they were prisoners, I was free and safe.

through the few formal words that they had exchanged peered a sort of understanding. This shook me, and when Smith turned to me, a faint smile of his lips, and I while he squares his shield and shatters his spear to meet the occasion, has he it under the fifth rib.

"Or are you a bigger fool than I take you for?" "Why? Why, to push in on Porter after that fashion," he muttered under his breath. "For Martin was making toward us. 'Lucky' he did not recognize you, and hence you were for a great he would do it—or to spite the duke! Take care, man," he continued, seriously, "if you do not want to join Charon, but by-by, Mr. Price, I must not keep you."

"I muttered, 'I shall not go.'" "No," I muttered, "I shall not go." "I re-entered it, failed to subdue the unusual humor. I could have sung; I could have laughed aloud; I could have burst into a fit of dancing. For Ferguson, Smith, the Monterey— a fit! Who had come off best after all? And of their fine plottings and contrivings what had been the upshot? They had failed, and I had triumphed; they were prisoners, I was free and safe."

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the man answered, drily. "And so would you, master, with his leg!" Smith swore again, and sat gloomily silent. "He says if you can stand it off for twenty-four hours," the man continued, "he will arrange that—"

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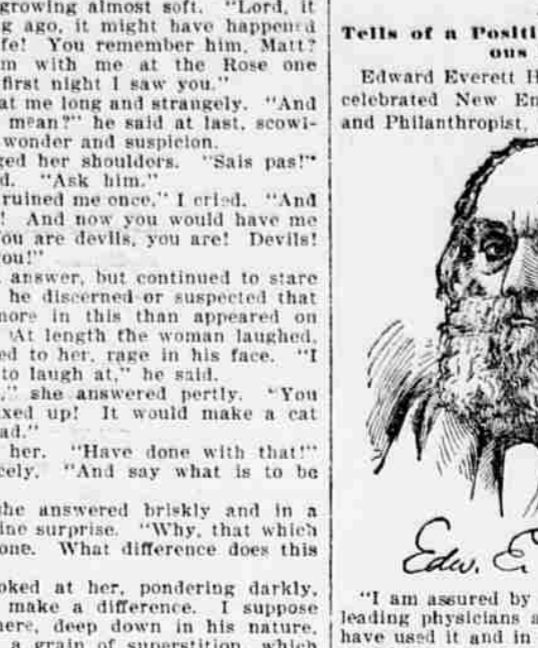
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