

## *Garnet Buttons*

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by Captain Felix Constant

Half an hour out of New York, that is to say, long enough for the express train to have acquired the peculiar vibrating, thrilling motion peculiar to express trains, because only in them is the forward impulse steady enough and prolonged enough to pervade with equal force every particle of matter animate and inanimate from the front of the engine to the rear of the last car. The notion is, I flatter myself, an original one, and as such I generously preset it to the public, merely asking such of my readers as are gifted with a sensitive and sympathetic organization to test the matter for themselves. Meanwhile, we will return to our mutton, or rather to our lamb, for it is pretty, innocent and youthful, also sentimental and melancholy; all of which are lamblike qualities and seldom found in sheep. Her name is Marcia Brandon, and she is returning from a somewhat prolonged visit with some city cousins to her home in a large western town which we will name Io, that being as far as possible from its actual cognomen.

And why should Miss Marcia Brandon be melancholy, being, as has been stated, young, pretty and innocent? The city cousins had provided her with an elaborate lunch, two of the latest novels, shawls, foot-rug, kisses, good wishes, and invitations for next winter. She was going home to a father who idolized her, a maiden aunt who spoiled her, and two brothers who did not torment her, what more should a young lady want, given a handsome wardrobe and liberal pocket-money? She wanted—a pocket-handkerchief, and having extricated it from her traveling-bag, she withdrew in its company behind the very thickest and bluest of blue veils, and began to cry.

“I don’t care, I don’t care a single bit!” whispered this untruthful young woman, in the depths of the combined handkerchief and veil. Yes, untruthful, for if she did not care, why did she cry?

Just in time to answer this question, had we been there to ask it, a gentleman entered the car through the rear door, and quietly seated himself several seats behind that occupied by Miss Brandon and her numerous wraps. A *very* quiet-looking gentleman, in a very quiet costume, and with hardly a salient point of face, dress and demeanor by which we could have described or recognized him, unless, indeed, some physiologist had noted the peculiar brilliance and quickness of the gray eyes generally half veiled by the drooping lids, or the resolute lines of the clear-shaved chin, and the reticent curve of a mouth too thin for beauty. But these were not head-marks for ordinary observers, and Mr. Lewis Reignold, after one or two keen and comprehensive glances through the car, felt himself tolerably safe from detection.

In spite of her efforts at self-control, in spite of the blue veil and the handkerchief, no attentive observer could have failed to detect Miss Brandon’s grief, and an attentive observer was at no loss for its motive. But for this very reason, and because he was a man well versed in women, Mr. Reignold took especial care not to betray either his presence or his sympathy, but waited patiently for at least another half hour, when, the storm being over, and sunshine in the shape of a pair of soft brown eyes timidly peeping from beneath the blue veil, while Miss Brandon unclasped her bag, and drew forth one of the latest novels, he quietly arose and bending over the bag inquired:

“Is this seat engaged, Miss Marcia?”

“Why, Mr. Reignold, is it possible? No the seat is not engaged except to my impediments,” replied Miss Marcia, while a vivid blush dried the last trace of moisture from her cheeks.

“Of which I claim to form a part,” quietly suggested Mr. Reignold, mysteriously accommodating himself and the wraps perfectly in a space apparently only large enough for either. To be sure Miss Brandon occupied less room by considerable than she had done.

The town of Io is distant from New York about thirty-six hours, that is to say, Miss Brandon leaving the metropolis at eight o'clock in the morning of Monday calculated upon taking a late tea under the paternal roof on the evening of Tuesday, and consequently was obliged to spend the whole of two days and the waking portion of one night in company with the escort whom some remarkable accident had supplied to her. Now such of our readers as have been similarly circumstanced will comprehend that a great deal of conversation can be included within two days and half a night, and said conversation is extremely liable to become personal and confidential. Certainly it did in the present instance; and as space and time do not permit us to give more than a brief illustration of this fact, we choose one specimen from the most convincing portion, the time being between six and seven o'clock of Tuesday afternoon, just in the delightful twilight hour which of all others conduces to sympathy and confidence. Miss Brandon is saying:

“And I had not the slightest idea that I should ever see you again, for you never intimated any intention of going West, or any desire to continue the acquaintance.”

“No, dear, I took special pains not to do so,” replied Mr. Reignold, with his favorite inscrutable smile.

“Well, why not, if I may inquire?”

“Because I did not wish any one else to guess at my intention.”

“That is no answer,” pouted the young lady.

Mr. Reignold considered within himself for a moment, and a bright color mounted to his usually colorless face. Then he moved a little closer and bent a little nearer to his betrothed, and asked in a low voice:

“Marcia, can you keep a secret—a secret of life and death, of honor and dishonor—a secret which involves my whole welfare and expectations?”

“The girl looked up steadily for a moment, then replied in a kind and meaning voice:

“Try me, remembering that your welfare is my welfare now, and your honor my honor.”

“Did I not know it, Marcia?” asked the lover, exultingly; and to do his penetration justice, Mr. Reignold’s two months’ study of Marcia Brandon’s character had taught it to him better than she knew it herself. Omitting the few sentences next succeeding, the tenor of which can easily be imagined, we take up Mr. Reignold’s discourse at this point.

“And so, dear, I am not afraid to tell you what I am, and what I am about, neither of which do you yet know.”

“I thought you were a lawyer, no, an agent, I think somebody said.”

“Either will do,” replied Reignold, with his secret smile. “But my real occupation is that of a private detective.”

Marcia opened her eyes wide, but did not shrink back, and did not remove the hand which under cover of her shawl lay within her lover’s. He smiled, well pleased.

“Yes, dear, nothing more noble or elevated than that, but I am not ashamed of my calling, nor are you, I see. But the very first requisite to any man’s success in this, is a complete and continuous incognito. The moment I become known, my occupation is at an end. And now, to tell you why I am going to the West, and why I so carefully refrained from giving you or any one else information of my intention: You remember hearing during the last year of a band of fellows calling themselves J. P.s?”

“O yes,” replied Marcia, turning a little pale. “Horrible creatures, they actually killed one man who had offended them, and the numbers they have robbed, and frightened, and forced to give them money lest they should have their houses burned—O dear!”

“Yes, all this and more is true of the J. P s, Marcia,” replied Mr. Reignold, smiling at her earnestness. “And the result was that after exhausting the skill of the local police and effecting nothing, several of the leading men of Io, your father among them, applied at our office in New York for a special detective, offering a very large reward for his services at any rate, and doubling it in case of his success. The head of the office turned the case over to me, and I started at once for Io, with full powers to work it up in any manner I saw fit. It was during that visit I first saw you, Marcia.”

“At Io? I never saw you until we met in New York.”

“Not consciously, but you dined at your father’s table with the Reverend Mr. Haskins, an old gentleman with white hair and beard, and a little deaf; don’t you remember?”

“Of course I do! You never mean to say—”

“No dear, I never mean to say more than I can help about such matters, having a great respect for the proverb that the least said is the soonest mended, but if you had been an operative in the axe factory a little way out of Io you would very probably have encountered Bill Norris, a green hand, who worked there for a week or so and then fell sick and was obliged to leave. Or, if you

had frequented the drinking saloons and billiard rooms of your native city, you would no doubt have seen Mr. Montgomery A Mortimer a swell cove, pardon me, darling, who lounged about those haunts for a while, and then departed as swell coves are very apt to depart. I do not wish to shock you, love, but it is essential that you should fully understand just what I am, and what I mean by calling myself a detective. You are not disgusted with me, are you, Marcia?"

"Disgusted? What do I care for all this except to admire your cleverness, so long as I am sure, certain sure, that you will never deceive me in any manner."

And the young girl looked up into the face of her betrothed, with the proud confidence of a woman who loves. He met the look with one as fond, albeit a little sad, while he replied:

"No, Marcia, I will never deceive you in the smallest particular, and so long as you believe that all will be well between us. You must trust me, dear, even more than most girls trust their lovers, most wives their husbands."

"I do, I will;" whispered Marcia, and Reignold, well pleased, resumed his story:

"By means of these various disguises, and a good deal of plotting, deception and contrivance, with which I will not offend your good taste, I at last succeeded in discovering at least the ringleaders of this J. P. gang, and found one of them at least in a position of prominence and trust. I could not, however, get the proofs I wanted against this man in particular without finding another fellow who had absconded from his creditors some months previously, and was supposed to be in New York. To New York I went, therefore, and being already very much in love with Miss Marcia Brandon, I lost no time in obtaining an introduction to her, and doing my best to awaken an answering interest. All this without neglecting business, you understand, for my man belongs to the polite circles where you first met me, and it was at a German that that I finally got the clue which led to his detection. After this everything was plain. The runaway debtor gave all the information in his power, on condition that I would effect a compromise with his creditors, of whom your father is the principal, and I am now hastening back to Io to complete the business. The only sin I can lay to my soul in your connection is, that I did delay my journey for twenty-four hours for the sake of making it with your, and I did slyly influence you to choose to-day instead of Wednesday as you as you at first proposed."

He finished with a little smile of triumph, and Marcia said with an affectation of anger:

"Ah yes, you have begun to manage me already, and I shall never know after this whether I am acting my own pleasure or yours."

He finished with a little smile of triumph, and Marcia said with an affectation of anger:

"We will make the two identical," suggested the lover; whereupon the talk lapsed into that magical language such utter nonsense to the uninitiated, such charm eloquence to those who use it.

The express train whirled along, its steady vibrant motion soothing the nerves like a lullaby, and harmonizing with the low-toned conversation of the lovers like a full-toned accompaniment to a simple melody. But of a sudden came a jar, a break in the motion, a jerking halt.

“What is this, what is the matter? There is no station here! What has happened!?”

So exclaimed and queried one after another of the passengers, rousing from the sleep or lethargy into which the long journey and monotonous motion had soothed almost every one, and several men rushed out of the car to ascertain the cause of detention. Reignold rose to his feet, his face resuming its usual contracted and reticent expression, but Marcia softly said:

“O never mind! Don’t go out there;” and he sat down again, but evidently on the alert. The first men returned, yawning and stretching themselves.

“It is nothing—some obstruction on the track, and a fellow was waving a lantern to stop the train. It will be all right in a minute.”

But even while he spoke, murmurs, exclamations, cries arose from the forward cars, and in another moment a crowd of men dressed all alike in long black cloaks, their faces covered with black masks came pouring in at the forward door while two stood sentinel upon the rear platform revolver in hand, preventing all egress.

“What is all this!—The J. P.s I’ll be sworn, and after me!” ejaculated Reignold drawing a pistol from his breast pocket and rising to his feet.

Marcia rose, too, her face as pale as ashes, her eyes glittering with terror and determination, her unconscious purpose to die or live with her lover. Not a word was spoken upon the part of the assailants who poured steadily on until several had passed the seat where Reignold and Marcia stood, the former unwilling to take the initiative in violence, but of a sudden a blow from behind struck the pistol from his hand, and as many arms as could reach were thrown around him to drag him from the seat.

“Aha! you want me!” exclaimed Reignold, and, all unarmed as he was, struck out right and left, fighting for his life with silent, dauntless determination.

“Yes, you—” muttered the voice of a tall, stalwart figure foremost among the assailants, and casting an arm around the waist of the detective had wrenched him from the hold he had taken with foot and leg upon the seat in front of him. Marcia saw the lithe swaying form yield to this terrible force, and with an instinctive movement seized that arm of iron in both her hands, trying to drag it away. It yielded much as a bar of iron, and the next moment Reignold was carried, still struggling and fighting, alongside the car and out at the further door. Marcia, gasping for breath, her eyes and lips burning, and her brain reeling, followed mechanically, her right hand tightly clasped upon something she knew not what which it enclosed. A crowd of persons followed, likewise, although at a safe distance, and were in time to see the prisoner surrounded by his captors hurried down a lone wood-path crossing the track at right angles, and then they saw no more, for a number of the masked men, never speaking, but illustrating their meaning with

gestures and leveled pistols, drove the spectator back into the train, while the two who had kept watch over the engine driver and conductor released them with motions intimating that they were to proceed. This they were of course most ready to do, and in the shortest possible time from the departure of the J. P.s with their prisoner the train was put in motion and bore its hundred or more of terrified passengers from the scene of the assault.

Two remained behind; one as we have seen was Lewis Reignold and the other was Marcia Brandon, who as soon as she left the train had glided away into the wood closely bordering the track, and so escaped observation of the scouts detailed to drive back those passengers who attempted to follow. In the moment during which she stood motionless behind the trees a plan of action suggested itself to the bewildered girl, already recovering from the first shock of the surprise that at first paralyzed all but the instinct which had led her on to follow her lover.

One moment for consideration, and the next for action. The principal group of assassins, with Reignold in their midst, were already passing down the wood road; and the rest, after seeing the train set in motion, followed in scattering groups or singly. Marcia watched them carefully; all were dressed alike, in long black cloaks and low-crowned hats with masks beneath; all moved silently, noiselessly and independently.

“I can do that,” said Marcia to herself, and snatching the hat from her head she tore out the feather and ribbons, bent it into another shape, and doubling the veil, arranged it as a mask, ruthlessly thrusting her finger through its delicate fabric to make the eyeholes, and thanking the freak which had led her to adopt the fashion of short curled hair. Dropping her crinoline to the ground, she folded and arranged her other skirts and compactly as possible, and lastly wound some strips torn from her black dress about the upper portion of her boots. The dark water-proof cloak upon her arm covered all the rest, and in the deepening twilight the bold girl stepped out from her concealment and followed the last group of masks, who turned at sound of her footsteps, satisfied themselves by a glance that all was right, and resumed their march. Marcia’s heart which as they turned had stood still with terror, gave a great bound as they went on, and she felt as if her enterprise had received a sure promise of success; but in the next moment her high hopes were dampened and almost crushed by the sound of retreating wagon wheels. They had put Reignold into a wagon, and she could not hope to enter it undiscovered. But still she hastened on, and at the next turn of the road found her fears realized. Several light wagons stood ready, and one was already disappearing down the road. Into those which remained, the men who preceded Marcia climbed as they arrived, and all had started but one holding the five or six last stragglers, when, breathless with haste and terror, she reached it, and springing in at the back seated herself, her feet hanging out and only her head and shoulders visible.

“Probably they will discover me and murder me, but so they will Lewis, and we shall go together.”

So thinking, she sat and waited for the blow which like most of the blows foreseen and prepared for did not come, and mile after mile of woodland was passed and the twilight deepened into the night, and still she was not discovered.

And now she blessed the daring which had led her to this bold attempt, for the horses put to their speed, traversed the intricate woods at a pace she could never have emulated or even followed, while the wild woodland region grew more and more unfamiliar to her strained and aching vision. Her companions remained silent, or exchanged an occasional muttered sentence with each other; no one spoke to her, and thus another chance of detection was escaped.

After an hour or more of sharp travel the horses were suddenly halted in the thickest portion of the wood, and the occupants of the wagons hastily dismounted. Marcia followed, keeping herself as much as possible upon the outskirts of the crowd, and avoiding the light of the pine torches which were now kindled. In the same silence which characterized all the proceedings, the prisoner was taken from the wagon and led between two stalwart figures to the foot of a steep hill near which the halt had been ordered. The rest followed so soon as the horses had been secured to the neighboring trees. Marcia, keeping as much out of sight as practicable, followed the one figure upon which her eyes were fixed. The steep path was arduous and intricate, winding among the trees with the evident intention of concealment, and terminating at last upon a narrow shelf of rock, which, as the rushing sound of water far below suggested, overhung a rapid river.

Proceeding along this shelf, the leaders of the gang carefully rounded a projecting boulder at its further extremity and disappeared, the remainder following as fast as footing could be obtained upon the shelf. Among the last came Marcia, who, trembling with fear and agitation, made her way round the great rock, and found herself at the entrance of a cave, vast in extent, sepulchral in atmosphere, and filled with a vague and paralyzing horror, which struck a chill to the heart of the young girl and caused her to waver for an instant in her forward course. But just at this moment she caught sight of the pale and heroic face of Reignold looking undauntingly from a group of his black-masked captors, and the sight banished in an instant all thought of her own danger or terror. Boldly advancing into the cavern she hastened to place herself behind several bashy masks, and yet in a position commanding the prisoner, who stood facing his accusers upon a slight elevation of stone intended perhaps for a fireplace should the cave be used as a dwelling-place. The masked figures silently and with the precision of habit arranged themselves in form of a tribunal, a group stationed themselves close to the entrance of the cave, several others in the rear of the prisoner; a moment's solemn pause ensued, and then a tall and commanding figure stepped forward, and, in a voice perfectly disguised by the introduction of some substance into the mouth, spoke slowly and impressively:

“Lewis Reignold, prisoner and accused, you stand before this tribunal of your countrymen and equals to answer for your life to certain charges now to be brought against you. Listen well, and consider deeply, for, unless you are able to clear yourself of this accusation, your last moment is indeed at hand.”

The speaker then drew from beneath his cloak a folded paper and proceeded to read it aloud. The charges which it contained, although formally and cautiously worded, all resolved themselves into one to which Reignold had already pleaded guilty in his conversation with Marcia, that of being a detective in the service of certain citizens of Io, and having played the spy upon the movements of the J. P. confederation. He was also asked if his visit to New York had not been for the purpose of tempting a certain James Ellerslie to betray the confidence reposed in him by a

certain citizen of Io, against whom it was his intention to proceed as one of the leaders of the J. P.s.

Reaching the end of the accusation, the speaker, who might be called either counsel or judge, or both in one, paused for a moment, and then inquired what answer the prisoner had to make.

“Only that I do not mean to help you cheat yourselves into fancying this pretence of justice makes your proceedings any less murder than if you had shot me in the train. You are resolved to kill me, and nothing which I should say would alter your purpose. All this is a mere farce, and if these men you lead fancy it will prove their slightest excuse when they stand before a real court of law, they are bitterly mistaken. You will murder me to-night, and so sure as there is a God in heaven so surely shall you be hung for my murder before the year is out.”

And as Reignold uttered these last words with all the fire and force of prophecy, his slender figure seemed to rise and dilate, and his pallid face to glow with an heroic power. Marcia, contemplating him with admiration and awe, looked to see his captors stand aside and bid him go free, their conqueror and their master. And in fact certain low murmurs now made themselves audible upon the outskirts of the assembly, and a vague motion of dissent became apparent, although how no man could say. The tall figure which had enacted the part of judge detected these signs of mutiny among his flowers as soon even as Marcia’s love and danger-sharpened senses, and raising himself to even a loftier stature he looked upon the swaying crowd with glances which seemed actually to scorch those upon whom they rested. Then discarding the obstacle which had hitherto disguised his voice, he exclaimed indignantly:

“What! Are there more traitors among us? Does any man here shrink back from the righteous work to which we have all put our hands? If one of you is afraid, if one is distrustful of me, or of any of his leaders, let that man depart now and forever from our midst. But first let him uncover his face that we all may know and avoid him in the future.”

He stretched out his hand in an attitude of command, and the lurid light of the torches caught and played like fire in the heart of the great gem at his wrist. Marcia caught the vivid gleam, and mechanically noted the size and fashion of the jewel, and then her eyes returned to Reignold’s face, now calm and impassive as before. A dead silence fell upon the assembly, but no man stirred, and after waiting a moment the speaker continued:

“I see, brothers, that I misjudged you, and that the murmur which I mistook for one of dissent, was actually one of indignation in listening too the insolent defiance with which this convicted spy and informer meets our solemn charges with sneers and threats; he dares us to fulfill our righteous vengeance; he dares to say that we are ignorant and blinded dupes. Brothers! Shall this man go forth safe and scathless from this tribunal, to betray the secret of its hiding-place, to flaunt his triumph in the eyes of the world, to prove in one word that he is the man of might, and we are but boastful cowards? Shall this thing be?”

Again a murmur and a motion shook the crowd from centre to circumference, and this time it was the hoarse and sullen murmur of an enraged and bloodthirsty mob whose passions are fast rising to the point where only violence and law-breaking can appease them. Marcia heard it and a



chill despair settled upon her heart; Reignold heard it, and slightly bending his head he closed his eyes and moved his lips for a moment, then looked up fearless and strong as ever; he had committed his soul to God, his memory to the woman who loved him, and now he was ready for those who would slay, perhaps torture, the body which he resigned to them.

The leader heard it and smiled beneath his mask, then spoke in a solemn and commanding tone:

“Brothers, that we are all of one mind I plainly perceive, but it is necessary to justice that this mind should find expression. As many of you are as resolved that Lewis Reignold, the prisoner at the bar, is guilty of crimes deserving death, and that shall receive the award of death at our hands, will manifest their will in the usual manner.”

Obedient to the command the right arm of every man in the assembly, still shrouded in the dark cloak which gave it the appearance of the great wing of some bird of prey, was elevated high above his head, and the speaker, looking slowly about him, answered:

“The verdict is unanimous, and Lewis Reignold is condemned to die, here and now.”

As these words were spoken, several men singled themselves out from the group, and surrounding the speaker held a consultation with him in low tones, while others proceeded to drag a rope and beam from its hiding-place in a crevice of the rock. In the confusion Marcia approached Reignold and unobserved by the guard who were watching the movements of their comrades, whispered:

“Lewis, I am here. What shall I do to help you?”

The trained nerves of the detective never wavered. No start, no sudden look, betrayed the thrill of joy and terror which shook his heart, nor could his lips be seen to move as he replied in the same tone:

“You cannot save, but you must avenge me. See what they do with my body—try to identify that leader—his name is Hughes, unless I mistake very much. Good –by, my darling—God knows how I love you. Save yourself, even if you have to leave my wishes unfulfilled. Move away from me—quick!”

Obedying this command simply because it was his command, Marcia found that four of the masked and silent men were approaching the prisoner from behind her position, and as she shrank timidly back they surrounded and laid hands upon him. But drawing slightly back he said:

“I shall not resist; it is useless to tie or blind me; let me meet death with my limbs and eyes at liberty; it is the only mercy I ask at your hands.”

The executioners hesitated, and still holding the cords with which they would have bound him they turned toward the principal speaker. He, nodding acknowledgement of the appeal, considered for a moment, then said:

“Very well. Let it be as he wishes.”

He waved his hand as he spoke, a white and shapely hand, and Marcia’s woman-eyes noted that a broad white wristband hung loosely about it.

“He has lost the jewel”—thought she mechanically, and then her whole soul abandoned itself to the movements of the men, who holding Reignold by the arms led him toward the mouth of the cave, where the beam with its pendant rope had been fixed across the passage at a point where the walls approaching within three feet of each other at the base, widened to about six overhead. One end of a rope some ten feet in length was tied to this beam, and the other was now adjusted in a slipnoose about the prisoner’s neck. Reignold glanced upward at the beam not four feet above his head, and asked with something of a sneer:

“Are you going to choke me to death? There is no room here for hanging.”

The executioners made no reply, but leading him gently forward brought him to the overhanging verge of the cliff, the white waters of the torrent rushing along hundreds of feet below, and between nothing but air.

Then the voice of his condemner was heard again:

“You have had your wish, Lewis Reignold, and your unbandaged eyes may see the death prepared for you. Leap into that gulf; we do not force you to it, but we wait here till you voluntarily end your own life. There is no retreat.”

“I had rather die than remain among so false and cowardly a set of murderers playing at justice,” said Reignold, and leaped.

“Go down and see that the body falls clear into the river,” said the leader in a low voice, and several men started to descend the winding path. Behind them moved a light figure, every nerve quivering with agony, every muscle strung tense with resolution, the woman-heart bleeding and breaking in its torture, the heroic will strong to do and dare all that remained, careless of itself so that the last injunctions of that murdered man were obeyed to the letter.

The men in front halted, and Marcia cowering close behind them, held her breath to listen. She heard the river rushing close beneath her feet, the night wind moaning through the black moist shadow of the trees above her head. She heard the heavy muffled beat of her own heart, and the thick breathing of the men who waited as she did for that other fearful sound which should tell that all was over.

At last it came. A dull rushing sound through the air as of a heavy and unresisting body falling, then a splash, a hiss of the foaming waters, and that was all.

“Safe enough; the current will take care of the rest. Come along!” muttered one of the men, and his companions followed willingly enough as he hastened from the spot.

As the sound of their footsteps died away Marcia sprang from her hiding-place, and heedless of the branches which tore her flesh and her clothes, of the darkness and of the lonely solitude of her situation, made her way down the slope of the hill until she stood upon the river's brink, and holding by the trunk of a small birch overhanging the stream, she leaned forward and eagerly searched the stream. The faint glimmer of a young moon showed the black polished surface of the swiftly rushing tide, and the white lines of foam which faintly streaked it here and there, but nothing more.

“The current is swift and has carried him down—I must follow.”

And whispering these words through lips so rigid and so bloodless that they could hardly shape the syllables, Marcia turned her face down stream and began to move slowly along its bank, heedless of all the obstacles that beset her so that they were not insurmountable.

Once she hesitated, then halted, and pressed her hand upon her burning forehead.

“He told me to follow that man—he said his name was—O, what did he say his name was?” whispered she, and then burst into a loud discordant laugh. The terrible sound of this maniac mirth reacted upon the excited brain which had for the moment yielded to the horrors of the situation. Marcia shuddered, stood perfectly quiet for a moment, then dropping upon her knees raised her clasped hands to heaven:

“O God,” prayed she, “do not let my senses or body fall before I have found him, before I have obeyed his last commands. Help me, O God, help me, for Christ's sake! Amen.”

Then she rose refreshed and strengthened, bathed her brow and head with water from the river, and steadily pursued her way, inspired with a mysterious confidence that however long the way, however arduous the search, she should find what she sought at last.

And the presentiment did not deceive her. At the end of a long narrow tongue of sand and marsh, making out into the river nearly a mile below the point whence she had started, Marcia beheld a dark mass of something caught and held by the drooping branches of an alder, from among which gleamed a white something terribly like a human face. Plunging through the marsh, struggling through the bushes, she gained the point, stooped until the wide, staring eyes of the body seemed gazing meaningfully into hers, covered her own face for one moment in terror, and then, summoning back the life that seemed ebbing from her heart, was ready for work.

With infinite toil she drew the body of her lover along the shore of the little peninsula, until she reached its junction with the main land, and then got it out upon the grass. As she did so she noticed that one hand was caught beneath the noose still tightly encircling the neck, the murderers having apparently cut the rope just below the verge of the cliff, and suffered the body to drop with a portion of the line still attached. To remove this horrible reminder of her lover's death was Marcia's first impulse, and with a little penknife from her pocket she tried to sever it at the point where the intervening hand held it slightly above the throat. After several efforts she succeeded, but the nervous and trembling hand slipped as she did so, and the point of the knife entered the dead man's throat. Almost fainting with horror, Marcia tore away the rope, removed

the lifeless hand, and bent still lower to see what mischief she had done. A crimson stain already marked the wound, and the girl was surgeon enough to know that had life been quite extinct this could not have been the case. As rapidly as her agitation would permit, she used the simple and recognized means for recovering a person from strangulation or from drowning, and in half an hour she had the inestimable happiness of hearing a faint sigh from the lips she had thought still forever, and of seeing the glassy, staring eyes soften and close. He lived! Her lover lived! and Marcia spared one moment from her efforts to fall upon her knees and thank God, who had answered her heartfelt prayer. Then she returned to her labor, nor once again abandoned it until, as the first faint flush of sunrise stole up the eastern sky, he whom she had thought dead opened his eyes, smiled into her face and faintly murmured:

“Marcia, darling, is that you?”

“Thank Heaven, you are saved!” And for the first time the poor girl burst into tears and felt that her reason and her life were restored to her with that other life dearer to her than her own. Another hour passed and Lewis Reignold was sufficiently recovered to sit up and to talk feebly but rationally.

“I remember all now,” said he, after a long pause, in which the mind had struggled successfully with the mists still obscuring it. “When I asked the wretches to leave my hands free, I had some idea of making some attempt to free myself; but it was useless to attempt such a thing, and as I stood upon the edge of that cliff I had a better idea. I jumped, as you know, and the moment I left that cliff I got my hand in under the rope and so prevented its either breaking my spine or choking me outright. Then the cold water plunge, and your involuntary bloodletting were both good things, and your own devoted efforts were better than all. Marcia, darling, you have saved my life!”

“I should not have cared for my own unless I had,” murmured Marcia, and between the two fell a silence more eloquent than words. Then the practical question of their situation returned, and Reignold said:

“The first thing, dear, is to find out where we are. Have you the least idea?”

“Only that this must be the Awahloo River, and that we are higher up that Io, because the river is wider all the way below Io, until it reaches the Massaquod.”

“Good girl! You are made for the wife of a detective,” smiled Reignold, then added thoughtfully:

“If we had a boat—”

“Hark! I hear paddles. Wait, until I see—”

But as Marcia rose, with the intention of springing out upon the little cape to hail the passing oarsman Reignold withheld, saying almost sharply:

“Never show yourself in an enemy’s country until you know who is to see you. Crouch behind that bush, and wait until you see the boat.”

“I see it now,” replied Marcia, meekly. “There is only a boy in it—I think he is going shooting; he has a gun and some decoys in his boat.”

“That will do. Now, dear, stand up and call to him. He will be more apt to come to you than to me.”

Marcia obeyed, and so successfully that in another minute the boatman, a simple country lad, bound, as Miss Brandon suggested, upon a shooting expedition, had turned his bow inshore, and presently ran his boat upon the little peninsula. Then Reignold came forward leaning upon Marcia and feebly saying:

“My wife and I have got lost here in the woods, and worse than that I have had a fall and hurt myself a good deal. What shall I give you to take us down to Io, or rather within a mile or so?”

“To Io! Echoed the lad, “why it’s thirteen miles below here, Io is?”

“Very well. How much will you take?”

“Why I don’t know; I was going ducking. Well, I’d ought to get five dollars, I reckon,” and the boy, looking frightened at his own temerity in naming so extravagant a price, backed cautiously toward his boat.

Reignold smiled, but said, soberly:

“It is a good deal, to be sure, but you shall have it.” Then in a lower voice, “Marcia, please make a place for me to lie down so that my head will be below the gunwale, and fold your own veil over your face. Very possibly we may meet some one.”

These arrangements made the little party embarked, and without adventure arrived at a point about a mile out of the city, where they dismissed their boat and guide, and hiring a vehicle at the nearest farm, drove into Io, Marcia holding the reins, and Reignold reclining with covered face upon the back seat. In this manner they reached the house of Mr. Brandon, where they were welcomed with mingled astonishment and delight, the fact of Reignold’s abduction from the train having transpired but not as yet his name, while Marcia’s friends were not expecting her to commence her journey until the day following this of her arrival.

“And now,” said Reignold, as the three sat in conclave over the next proceedings to be taken, “and now I think I see the road plain before me. I am just as sure that the man who did the talking was James Hughes as I am that I sit here.”

“James Hughes!” echoed Marcia and her father in a breath.

“Yes, do you know him?”

“Certainly,” replied Mr. Brandon, while Marcia blushed vividly and said nothing. Reignold looked at both searchingly.

“Strange! I never heard of him at this house,” said he, half aloud.

“No, he is no favorite of mine, or of Marcia’s either, and does not come here now,” said Mr. Brandon, coldly. “If you had told me that you suspected him, however, I could have given you more particulars regarding both his mercantile and social standing that would have confirmed any theory as to his bad character that you might have formed.”

“I hardly knew whether to suspect him or not until I had seen that man in New York, and it is always easier for me to keep a secret than to tell it,” said Reignold, half apologetically. “But I am sure of my man now, and should only like to identify him with the outrage of last night before arresting him. Marcia, did you notice as he lifted his hand a glittering sleeve button at his wrist? You stood nearer—”

A cry from Marcia, who had suddenly turned pale as death, interrupted the speaker, and uttering it she rushed from the room. Returning almost immediately, she cried, half laughing, half crying with excitement:

“I have it! He is caught now! Did not you notice that when he raised the other arm his wristband was unbuttoned and fell over his hand? Well, where do you think that lost button was? Why in my pocket, where I had slipped it without even looking at it, when I arranged my dress to follow you. I never thought of it again, although I noticed both the shape and rich color of the button that remained, and the loose sleeve of the other arm. I never so much as remembered it once until you asked me if I saw it, and—and here it is!”

With which somewhat lame conclusion to her little oration, Miss Marcia withdrew her hand from behind her back, and held it out with a splendid garnet sleeve button glaring and burning in the palm.

With a flush of excitement upon his sallow cheek, Reignold stepped forward and took it from her, examining it closely.

“You have ‘buildded better than you knew,’” said he, briefly, and turning it over, he showed them upon the back of the button the deeply graven name of “J. Hughes.”

“That is all I want,” added the detective, cheerfully. “And now, Marcia, how came you by it?”

“Why, when he threw his arm round you to drag you out of the car-seat, I seized it with both hands and tried to pull it away, and when he tore himself away, the button, I suppose, remained in my hand; at any rate, I found something there directly after, and slipped it into my pocket without looking at it, and then as I say I forgot it until now.”

“You have won me my case, and saved my life, Marcia,” said Reignold, in a low voice, and Marcia felt herself more than repaid by the look and the tone with which the words were said.

An hour later, an officer quietly penetrating the chamber where Mr. Hughes lay sleeping off the fatigues and the debauch of the last night, captured not only him, but the shirt he had thrown aside on retiring, not noticing that one button and only one remained in the wristbands. So true it is that the nameless patron of such gentlemen always fails them at the last.

As Reignold said, Marcia had saved his life and his case, and soon after he placed the former and the proceeds of the latter in her hands, secure that she would, as she certainly has, prove herself worthy of the trust.

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