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THE KINGDOM OF SLENDER SWORDS

By HALLIE ERMINE RIVES

INDIANAPOLIS THE BOBBS-MERRILL COMPANY PUBLISHERS

CHAPTER IX.

The Web of the Spider.

Bersonin walked on, fighting desperately with his ghastly spasms of... a nervous attraction which had haunted him for years. It dated from a time when, in South America, in an acute crisis of desperate peril, he had laughed the goal of that strange laughter of which he was to be ever after... Since then it had seized him... unexpectedly and in moments of strong excitement, to shake him like a lark. It had given him a gleam of laughter in others, recently he had thought that he was... the weakness—for in two years past he had had no such... and the recurrence tonight checked and disconcerted him. He, the man of brain and attainment, to be led captive by a ridiculous hysteria like a nerve-racked anemic... The cold sweat stood on his forehead.

Before long the paroxysms ceased and he grew calmer. The quiet road had merged into a busier thoroughfare. He walked slowly till his command was regained. West of the outermost of the imperial grounds, he turned on a pleasant lane-like street and presently entered his own gate. The house into which he let himself with a key, was a rambling, modern, two-story structure of red brick. The lower floor was practically unused, since its tenant lived alone and did not entertain. The upper floor, besides the hall, contained a small bedroom, a bath and dressing room and a large, barely furnished laboratory. The latter was lined on two sides with glass-covered shelves which gave glimpses of... of test tubes and crucibles, the paraphernalia of organic chemistry and complicated instruments whose use no one knew save himself—a fact setting for the great student, the peer of Offenbach in Munich and of Bayer in Vienna. Against the wall leaned a drafting board, on which, pinned down by thumb tacks, was a sketch-plan of a revolving turret. From a bracket in a corner—the single airy touch... in a chamber almost sort of... appointments—swung a bamboo cage with a brown bird, or Japanese finch, a downy puff of feathers with its head under its wing.

In the upper hall Bersonin's Japanese head-boy had been sitting at a small desk writing. Bersonin entered the laboratory, opened a safe let into a wall, and put into it something which he took from his pocket. Then he turned, and threw himself into a large leather chair.

"Make me some coffee, Ishida," he said.

The servant did so silently and deftly, using a small brass samovar which occupied a table of its own. With the coffee he brought his master a box of brown Havana cigars.

How to Get Rid of Catarrh

A Simple Safe, Reliable Way, and It Costs Nothing to Try.

Those who suffer from catarrh know its misery. There is no need of its suffering. You can get rid of it by a simple, safe, inexpensive, home treatment discovered by Dr. Blosser, who, for over thirty-six years, has been treating catarrh successfully.

His treatment is unlike any other. It is not a spray, douche, saline, cream, or inhaler, but is a more direct and thorough treatment than any of these. It cleans out the head, nose, throat and lungs so that you can again breathe freely and sleep without that suffocating feeling that all catarrh sufferers have. It heals the diseased mucous membranes and arrests the food discharge, so that you will not be constantly blowing your nose and spitting, and at the same time it does not poison the system and ruin the stomach as internal medicines do.

If you want to test this treatment without cost, send your address to Dr. J. W. Blosser, 794 Walton Street, Atlanta, Ga., and he will send you by return mail enough of the medicine for it as a remedy for catarrh, catarrh of the head, nose, throat, catarrh of the lungs, catarrh of the stomach, catarrh of the bowels, catarrh of the bladder, catarrh of the prostate, catarrh of the uterus, catarrh of the vagina, catarrh of the rectum, catarrh of the anus, catarrh of the bladder, catarrh of the prostate, catarrh of the uterus, catarrh of the vagina, catarrh of the rectum, catarrh of the anus.

Write him immediately.

Bersonin should have in his possession a technical naval chart and what was the meaning of certain curious markings he had made on it.

CHAPTER X.

In a Garden of Dreams.

In the garden the moon's faint light glimmered, on the broad satiny leaves of the camellias and the delicate traceries of red maple foliage. At its farthest side, amid flowering bushes which cast long indigo shadows, stood a small pagoda, brought many years before from Korea, and toward this Daunt and the girl whom he had held for a breathless moment in his arms, strolled slowly along a winding, pebbled path tremulant with the flickering shadows of little leaves. The structure had a small platform, and here on a bench they sat down the fragrant garden spread out before them.

He had remembered that a guest from America had known that this must be she. But, strangely enough, it did not seem as if they had never before met. Nor had he the least idea that, since that short sharp scene, they had exchanged scarcely a dozen words. In his curious sequel, as he stood listening to the echo of Bersonin's strange laughter, he had momentarily forgotten all about her. Then he had remembered with a shock that he had left her perched, in evening dress, on the high railing of the arbor.

"I wonder if you are in the habit," she had said with a little laugh, "of putting unacquainted girls on the tops of fences, and going away and forgetting all about them."

Her laugh was deliciously uneven, but it did not seem so from fright. He had answered something inordinately foolish, and had lifted her down again—not holding her so closely this time. He remembered that on the first occasion he had held her very tightly indeed. He could still feel the touch of a wisp of her hair which, in his flying leap, had fallen against his cheek. It was red-reddened and it shone now in the moonlight like molten metal. Her eyes were deep blue, and when she smiled, they were like sapphires.

He wrenched his gaze away with a start. But it did not stray far—merely to the point of a white-beaded slipper peeping from the edge of a ruff of gauze that had mysteriously imprisoned filmy sprays of lily-of-the-valley.

He looked up suddenly, conscious that she was laughing silently. "What is it?" he asked.

"We seem so tremendously acquainted," she said, "for people who—" She stopped an instant. "You don't even know who I am."

In the references to her coming he had heard her name spoken and now, by a sheer mental effort, he managed to recall it.

"You are Miss Fairfax," he said.

"And my name, perhaps I ought to add, is Daunt, I am the secretary of embassy. I hope, after our little effort of tonight, you will not consider diplomacy only high-class vaudeville. Such comedy scarcely represents our daily bill."

"It came near enough to being tragedy," she answered.

"It was so uncommonly life-like, I was torn with a fear that you might not guess it was gotten up for your especial benefit."

"How well you treat your visitor!" she said with gentle irony. "Had you many rehearsals?"

"Very few," he said. "I was afraid the boy might misread the stage direction and slip the dog-chain too soon. But I am greatly pleased. I have always had an insatiable longing to be a hero—if only on the stage. I aspire to grand opera, also, as you have noticed." He laughed, a trifle shamefacedly, then added quickly: "I hope you liked the final disappearance act. It was rather effective, don't you think?"

She smiled unwillingly. "Ah, you make light of it! But don't think I didn't know how quickly you acted—what you risked in that one minute! And then to run back a second time!" She shuddered a little. "You could have done nothing with that piece of wood!"

"I assure you," he said, "you underestimate my progress! But it wasn't to be used—it was only the dog's cue."

"Poor brute!" she said. "I hope he will injure nobody."

"The locks, the children are off the streets at this hour," he answered. "He'll not go far; the police are too numerous. I am afraid our efficient performer is permanently retired from the company. But I haven't yet congratulated you. You didn't seem on bit afraid."

"I hadn't time to be frightened,—I was thinking of something else! The fright came after, when I saw you—when you left me on the railing." She spoke a little constrainedly, and went on quickly: "I really am a desperate coward about some things. I should never dare to go up on an aeroplane, for instance, as Patsy tells me you do almost every day. She says the Japanese call you the 'Honorable Fly-Man.'"

"There's no foreign theater in Tokyo, and no winter opera," he said lightly. "We have to amuse one another,

and the Glider is by way of contributing my share of the entertainment. It is certainly an uplifting performance." He smiled, but she shook her head.

"Ah," she said. "I know! I was at Fort Logan last summer the day Lieutenant Whitney was killed. I saw it."

The smile had faded and her eyes had just the look he had so often fancied lay in those eyes he had been used to gaze at across the burning driftwood—his "Lady of the Many-Colored Fires." He caught himself longing to know that they would meet and soften if he too should some day come to grief in such sudden fashion. They were wholly wonderful eyes! He had noted them even in the instant when he had snatched her from the piazza—from the danger into which his cavalier singing had called her.

"How brazen you must have thought it!" he exclaimed. "My impromptu solo, I mean, I hardly know how I came to do it. I suppose it was the moonlight (it does make people idiotic sometimes, you know, in the tropics!) and then what you played—that dear old song! I used to sing it years ago. It reminds me—"

"Yes—?"

"Of the last evening at college. It was a night like this, though not so lovely. I sang it then—my last college solo."

"Your last?" She was leaning toward him, her lips parted, her eyes bright on his face.

"Yes," he said. "I left town the next day."

Her eyes fell. She turned half away, and put a hand to her cheek. "Oh," she said vaguely. "Of course."

"But it was brazen," he finished laughing. "I promise never to do it again."

The breath of the night was coolly sweet. It hovered about them, mingled of all the musky winds and flower-months of Eden. A dulled, weird sound from the street reached their ears—the monotonous hand-tapping of a small, shallow drum.

"Some Buddhist devotee," he said, "making a pious round of holy places."

He is strolling along in a dingy, white cotton robe with red characters stamped all over it—one from each shrine he has visited—and here and there in a doorway he will stop to chant a prayer in return for a handful of rice."

"How strange! It doesn't seem to belong, somehow, with the telegraph wires and the trolley cars. Japan is full of such contrasts, isn't it? It seems to be packed with mystery and secrets. Listen!" The deep, resonant boom of a great bell at a distance had throbbled across the nearer strummings. "That must be in some old temple. Perhaps the man with the drum is going there to worship. Does any one live in the temples? The priests do, I suppose."

"Yes," he answered. "Sometimes other people do, too. I know of a foreigner who lives in one."

"What is he? European?"

"No one knows. He has lived there fifteen years. He calls himself Aloysius Thorn. I used to think he must be an American, for in the chancery safe there is an envelope bearing his name and the direction that it be opened after his death. It has been there a long time, for the paper is yellow with age. No doubt it was put there by some former chief, of mission at his request. He has nothing to do with other foreigners; as a rule he won't even speak to them. He is something of a curiosity. He knows some secret about gold-bugs, they say."

"Is he young?"

"No."

"Married?"

"Oh, no! He lives quite alone. He has one of the loveliest private gardens in the city. Sometimes one doesn't see him for months, but he is here now."

She was silent, while he looked again at the white toe of the slipper peeping from a gauzy hem. This didn't know how quickly you acted—what you risked in that one minute! And then to run back a second time!

"You could have done nothing with that piece of wood!"

"I assure you," he said, "you underestimate my progress! But it wasn't to be used—it was only the dog's cue."

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"There's no foreign theater in Tokyo, and no winter opera," he said lightly. "We have to amuse one another,

too lovely to be real! I shall wake presently to find myself in my berth on the Tenyo Maru with Japan two or three days off."

He fell into her mood. "We are both asleep. That was why the dog vanished so queerly. Dream-dogs always do. And I don't wonder at my singing, either. People do exactly what they shouldn't when they are asleep. But no! I really don't like the dream version at all. I want this to be true."

"Why?"

Her tone was low, but it made him tingle. A sudden melee of daring, delicious impulses swept over him. "Because I have dreamed too much," he said, in as low a voice. "Here in the East the habit grows on one; we dream of what all the beauty somehow misses—for us. But tonight, at least, is real. I shall have it to remember when you have gone, as I—I suppose you will be soon."

She leaned out and picked a slender maple-leaf from a branch that came in through the open side of the pagoda and holding it in her fingers, turned toward him. Her lips were parted, as if to speak. But suddenly she tossed it from her, rose and shook out her skirts with a laugh. Carriage wheels were rolling up the drive from the lower gate.

"Thank you!" she cried gaily. "But no hint shall move me. I warn you that I intend to stay a long time."

In the lighted doorway, as Patricia and her mother stepped from the carriage, she swept him a curtsy.

"Honorably deign to accept my thanks," she said, "for augustly saving my insignificant life! And now, perhaps, we can be properly introduced."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

DEATH SENTENCE IMPOSED UPON FRENCH STRIKER

Paris, Nov. 26.—The death sentence was imposed today upon Durand, secretary of the coal handlers, union, who had been convicted of killing a foreman on the docks at Havre during the strike in September.

It was proven in the court of assizes that Durand had introduced a motion that the union get rid of Donge, the foreman which was adopted. Donge was beaten to death the next day on the streets, the penalty imposed by his union for deserting the strikers and returning to work.

Those who actually participated in the killing were sentenced to fifteen years at hard labor.

To Celebrate Victory.

Baltimore, Md., Nov. 26.—At a conference held here between Chairman Norman E. Mack and Congressman Champ Clark and prominent Maryland democratic leaders, it was decided that a meeting in the nature of a celebration of the recent democratic victory should be called. It probably will be held here early in January.

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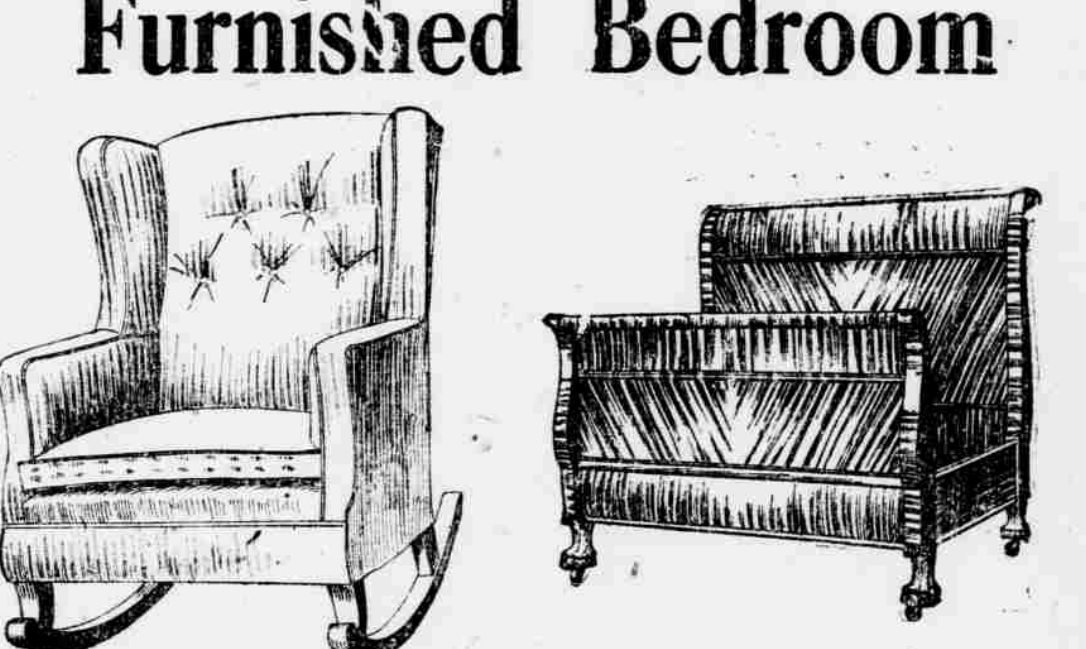
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Party Return Over The Southbound

Albermarle, N. C., Nov. 26.—Winston-Salem Southbound special enroute to Wadesboro passed Albermarle at noon. In addition to the party carried to Winston-Salem yesterday, members of the Winston-Salem board of Trade and a large number of Winston-Salem people made the trip to Wadesboro, where they will be the guests of The Wive Awake Club. This afternoon the entire party stopped at Whitney to inspect the big dam for the proposed hydro-electric plant. Lunch was served on the train by President Fries.

FIVE PEOPLE POISONED BY BUM OYSTERS

Mobile, Ala., Nov. 26.—Five persons in the family of F. W. Gibson, residing in this city, including his negro cook, were poisoned from eating oysters today and had a narrow escape from death.

They ate turkey stuffed with oysters left over from the Thanksgiving dinner and soon afterward suffered excruciating agony for several hours and it was only by heroic treatment that their lives were saved. Gibson is chief clerk of the United Fruit Company, in this city.

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