

UNDER TWO FLAGS

By "OUIDA"

"Do not think me without feeling without sympathy, pity—
"If you loved me," he pursued passionately—"Ah, God! The very word from me to you sounds insult! And yet there is not one thought in me that sounds insult—if you loved me, could you stand there and bid me drag out



"Choose for me, Venetia!"

this life forever, nameless, friendless hopeless, having all the bitterness but none of the torpor of death, wearing out the doom of a galley slave, though guiltless of all crime?"
"Why speak so? You are unreasonable. A moment ago you implored me not to tempt you to the violation of what you hold your honor. Because I bid you be faithful to it you deem me cruel."
"Heaven help me! I scarce know what I say. I ask you if you were a woman who loved me could you decide this?"
"These are wild questions," she murmured. "What can they serve? I believe that I should—I am sure that I should. As it is—as your friend!"
"Ah, hush! Friendship is crueler than hate."
"Cruel?"
"Yes, the worst cruelty when we seek love—a stone proffered us when we ask for bread in famine!"
"Lord Royallieu," she said slowly, as if the familiar name were some tie between them, some cause of excuse for these the only love words she had ever heard without disdain and rejection—
"Lord Royallieu, it is unworthy of you to take this advantage of an interval which I sought and sought for your own sake. You pain me; you wound me. I cannot tell how to answer you. You speak strangely and without warrant."
He stood mute and motionless before her, his head sunk on his chest. He knew that she rebuked him justly.
"Forgive me, for pity's sake! After tonight I shall never look upon your face again."
"I do forgive," she said gently, while her voice grew very sweet. "You endure too much already for one needless pang to be added by me. All I wish is that you had never met me, so that this last, worst thing had not come unto you! You wrong me if you think that I could be so callous, so indifferent, as to leave you here without heed as to your fate. Believe in my innocence! You know that I do as firmly as though you substantiated it with a thousand proofs. Reverence your devotion to your honor! You are certain that I must or all better things were dead in me. You reject my friendship. You term it cruel, but at least it will be faithful to you—too faithful for me to pass out of Africa and never give you one thought again. I believe in you. Do you not know that that is the highest trust, to my thinking, that one human life can show in another's? You decide that it is your duty not to free yourself from this bondage, not to expose the actual criminal, not to take up your rights of birth. I dare not seek to alter that decision, but I cannot leave you to such a future without infinite pain, and there must—there shall be—means through which you will let me hear of you, through which, at least, I can know that you are living."
She stretched her hands toward him with that same gesture with which she had first declared her faith in his guilelessness. The tears trembled in her voice and swam in her eyes. He seized her hands in his and held them close against his breast one instant, against the loud, hard panting of his aching heart.
"God reward you! God keep you! If I stay, I shall tell you all. Let me go and forget that we ever met! I am dead. Let me be dead to you!"
With another instant he had left the tent and passed out into the red glow of the torchlit evening. And Venetia Cornea dropped her proud head down upon the silken cushions where his own had rested and wept as women weep over their dead, in such a passion as had never come to her in all the course of her radiant, victorious and imperious life.
It seemed to her as if she had seen him slain in cold blood and had never lifted her hand or her voice against the murder.
The guard saluted and resumed his beat.
"Why did you refuse the word, sir?"
"I did not hear."
"Why are you absent from your squadron?"
"There was no reply."
"Have you no tongue, sir? Why are you here?"
There was again no answer.
Chateauroux's teeth ground out a furious oath. Yet a flash of brutal delight glittered in his eyes. At last he had hounded down this man, so long out of his reach, into disobedience and contumacy.
"Why are you here, and where have you been?" he demanded once more.
"I will not say."
The dark and evil countenance above him grew livid with fury.
"I can have you thrashed like a dog for that answer, and I will. But first listen! I know as well as though you had confessed to me. Your silence cannot shelter your great mistress' shame. Ah, ha, la Faustine! So madame your princess is so cold to her equals only to choose her lovers out of my blackguards and take her midnight intrigues like a camp courtesan!"
Cecil's face changed terribly as the vile words were spoken. With the light and rapid spring of a leopard he reached the side of his commander, one hand on the horse's mane, the other on the wrist of his chief, that it gripped like an iron vise.
"You lie, and you know that you lie! Breathe her name once more, and by heaven, as we are both living men, I will have your life for your outrage!"
And as he spoke with his left hand he smote the lips that had blasphemed against her.
Chateauroux wrenched his wrist out of the hold that crushed it and drew his pistol. Cecil knew that the laws of active service would hold him but justly dealt with if the shot laid him dead in that instant for his act and his words.
"You can kill me; I know it. Well, use your prerogative; it will be the sole good you have ever done to me."
And he stood erect, patient, motionless, looking into his chief's eyes with a calm disdain, with a muttered challenge that for the first moment wrung something of savage respect and of sudden admiration out from the soul of his great foe.
He did not fire. It was the only time in which any trait of abstinence from cruelty had been ever seen in him. He signed to the soldiers of the guard with one hand, while with the other he still covered with his pistol the man whose martial law would have allowed him to have shot down or have cut down at his horse's feet.
"Arrest him," he said simply.
Cecil offered no resistance. He let them seize and disarm him without an effort at the opposition which could have been but a futile, unavailing trial of brute force. He dreaded lest there should be one sound that should reach her in that tent where the trial of standards drooped in the dusky distance. He was content with what he had done—content to have met once, not as a soldier to chief, but as man to man, the tyrant who held his fate.
None knew, not even Cigarette. She sat alone, so far away that none sought her out, beside the picket fire that had long died out, with the little white dog of Zaralla curled on the scarlet folds of her skirt. She had the cross on her breast, the idol of her long desire, the star to which her longing eyes had looked up ever since her childhood through the rank of carriage and the smoke of battle, and she would have flung it away like dross to have had his lips touch hers once with love. She rose impetuously. The night was far spent, the camp was very still, the torches had long died out, and a streak of dawn was visible in the east. She stood awhile looking very earnestly across the wide black city of tents.
"I shall be best away for a time, I grow mad, treacherous, wicked here," she thought. "I will go and see Blanche."
Blanche was the soldier of the army of Italy.
In a letter while she had written and

bridled Etiole-Filante and ridden out of the camp without warning or fare-well to any. Thus she went, knowing nothing of his fate. And with the sunrise went also the woman whom he loved—in ignorance.

CHAPTER XXII

THE warm, transparent light of an African autumnal noon shone down through the white canvas roof of a great tent in the heart of the encamped divisions at the headquarters of the army of the south. In the tent there was a densely packed throng, an immense, close, hushed, listening crowd, of which every man wore the uniform of France, for they were in court, and that court was the court martial of their own southern camp.

The prisoner was arraigned on the heaviest charge that can be laid against the soldier of any army, and yet, as the many eyes of the military crowd turned on him where he stood surrounded by his guard, his crime against his chief was forgotten, and they only remembered Zaralla. He preserved entire reticence in court. The instant the accusation had been read to him he had seen that his chief would not dare to couple with it the proud, pure name he had dared to outrage. His most bitter anxiety was thus at an end. For all the rest he was tranquil.

No case could be clearer, briefer, less complex, more entirely incapable of defense. The soldiers of the guard gave evidence as to the violence and fury of the assault. The accuser merely stated that, meeting his corporal out of the bounds of the cavalry camp, he had asked him where he had been and on his commanding an answer had been assaulted in the manner described with violence sufficient to have cost his life had not the guard been so near at hand. The statement passed without contradiction by the prisoner, who only replied that the facts were stated accurately as they occurred and that his reasons for the deed he declined to assert. When it was finally demanded of him if he had sought to urge in his own extenuation, he paused a moment, with a gaze under which even the hard eagle eyes grew restless, looked across to Chateauroux and addressed his antagonist rather than the president:
"Only this—that a tyrant, a liar and a traducer cannot wonder if men prefer death to submission beneath insult. But I am well aware that this is no vindication of my act as a soldier, and I have no desire to say words which, whatever their truth, might become hereafter dangerous legacies and dangerous precedents to the army."
That was all which he answered, and neither his counsel nor his accusers could extort another syllable from him. He never moved once while the decree of death was read to him, and there was no change in the weary calmness of his eyes. He bent his head in acquiescence.
"It is well," he said simply.
It seemed well to him. Dead, his secret would lie in the grave with him and the long martyrdom of his life be ended.

In the brightness of the noon Cigarette leaned out of her little oval casement, and, for the first time also, happiness was not with her.
They were gone forever—all the elastic joyance, all the free, fair hours, all the dauntless gaiety of childhood, all the sweet, harmonious laughter of a heart without a care. They were gone forever, for the touch of love and pain had been laid on her, and never again would her radiant eyes smile cloudlessly, like the young eagle's, at a sun that rose but to be greeted as only youth can greet another dawn of life that is without a shadow. To her it seemed impossible that this patrician who had his passion should not return it. She only thought of love as she had always seen it—quickly born, hotly cherished, wholly indulged and without tie or restraint.
"And I came without my vengeance!" she mused. To the nature that felt the ferocity of the vendetta a right and a due there was wounding humiliation in her knowledge that she had left her rival unharmed and had come hither, out from his sight and his presence, lest he should see in her one glimpse of that folly which she would have killed herself under her own steel rather than have betrayed either for his contempt or his compassion.
The touch of a bird's wing brushing her hair brought the dreamy comparison to her wandering thoughts. She started and lifted her head. It was a blue carrier pigeon, one of the many she fed at that casement and the swift and surest of several she sent with messages for the soldiers between the various stations and corps. She had forgotten she had left the bird at the encampment.
She crossed it absently, while the tired creature sank down on her bosom. Then only she saw that there was a letter beneath one wing.
She found an old French cobbler sitting at a stall in a casement stitching leather. He was her customary reader and scribe in this quarter. She touched him with the paper. "Good Machiean, will thou read this to me?"
And he read aloud:
"There is ill news, I read the bid on a chance to find them. He's—his—your struck the black flag—a light blue, but with threat to kill following it. He has been tried, and is to be shot. There is no appeal. The case is done. The color could have not been down, were that all. I thought you would know. We are all sorry. It was done on the sight of the great tent. I am thy humble lover and slave."

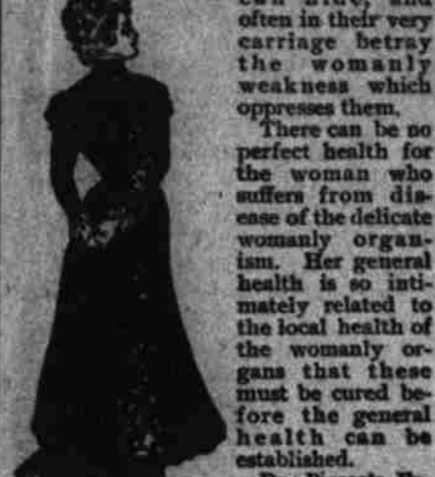
(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Shake Into Your Shoes

Alton Foot-Pain-Exorciser. It cures painful, burning, nervous feet and ingrowing nails, and instantly takes the sting out of corns and blisters. It is the greatest medical discovery of the age. Alton's Foot-Pain-Exorciser is now almost sold every where. It is a sure cure for rheumatism, neuralgia and all other painful foot ailments. Sold by all druggists and shoe stores. Don't forget to get it. It will save you a great deal of money. Trial package FREE. Address Alton S. Quimby, La. Bay, N. Y.

THE POISE

Of a woman in perfect health attracts the eye at once. Such a woman is all too rarely seen. The most of women bear scars of suffering on their faces, which no smiles can hide, and often in their very carriage betray the womanly weakness which oppresses them.



There can be no perfect health for the woman who suffers from disease of the delicate womanly organs. Her general health is so intimately related to the local health of the womanly organs that these must be cured before the general health can be established.
Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription makes weak women strong and sick women well. It cures womanly disorders and diseases; brightens the dull eye, rounds out the hollow cheek and gives strength for wifely duties and maternal cares.

"My health is the best now that it has been for four years," writes Mrs. Fiebe Morris, of Ira, Cayuga Co., N. Y., Box 52. "I have taken but two bottles of your medicine, 'Favorite Prescription' and 'Golden Medical Discovery.' These medicines have done me more good than all that I have ever taken before. I couldn't do my work only about half the time, and now I can work all the time for a family of four. Before I took your medicines I was sick in bed nearly half the time. My advice to all who are troubled with female weakness is to take Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription and 'Golden Medical Discovery'—the most wonderful medicines in the world."

Dr. Pierce's Common Sense Medical Adviser is sent free on receipt of 21 one-cent stamps to pay expense of mailing only. Address Dr. E. V. Pierce, Buffalo, N. Y.

THE FREE PRESS is prepared to supply elegant and beautiful calendars to advertisers. Don't place an order until you see our samples. Don't forget this!

--SATISFACTION--

My customers are being satisfied with the choice Staple and Fancy Groceries I am offering. I want other customers to appreciate the good things I sell.

Try an Order Today

for your satisfaction tomorrow. Those who find an inferior bit in anything I sell are compensated if they will only tell me the difficulty.

I want a share of your patronage.

MARK MEWBORN.

Cor. Queen and Gordon Sts.

L. HARVEY & SON,
LEADING
INSURANCE
AGENCY,
KINSTON, N. C.

With New Type

and Machinery, large variety and stock of Papers and competent workmen.

THE FREE PRESS

is prepared to do all of your Job Printing in neat and artistic style.

The Pride of the Eye.

is among the sins of the flesh of which we are all warned, but the lover of fine China hopes it doesn't mean her, for she does want to indulge a bit in this feast of beauty. Our lines of China and Glass-ware are complete.

Mrs. N. L. Bruton & Bro.

INSURANCE!

Life, Fire and Accident.

Best Companies Represented.

SAMUEL ABBOTT,
KINSTON, N. C.

TUCKER BROS.,

WILMINGTON, N. C.

The place to buy your Cemetery Work at Bottom Prices in Foreign and Domestic Granite and Marble. Lettering and Finish the Best. Latest Designs. All work delivered.

ALEX FIELDS,
Agent Lenoir County.

DR. W. R. JONES,
PHYSICIAN AND SURGEON,
KINSTON, N. C.

Residence and office at Mrs. Kate Looper's, Blount street.

A. J. LOTTIS W. A. MERRICKS
LOFTIN & MITCHELL,
ATTORNEYS-AT-LAW,
KINSTON, N. C.
Office in Court House Building.

ROUSE & ORMOND, N. J. ROUSE
ATTORNEYS AT-LAW,
KINSTON, N. C.

Will practice wherever their services are desired. One member of the firm can always be found at their office, at the rear of the court house, during office hours, between the hours of 9 a. m. and 4 p. m.

HERE IS A BARGAIN FOR YOU!

Our entire line of BEAUTIFUL TRIMMED HATS to be closed out AT COST. We will also sell cheap for cash Laces, Ribbons and Notions

Come and inspect our line. We can save you money.

MISS MEACHAM & CO.

LOOK HERE!

Where are you going? Down here to Harrell's Repair Shop. You know that they do the best work in the shortest time for the least money. Brand new car wheels at \$14. Call and see us. W. A. HARRELL, Manager, Southwest corner Gordon and Heritage Streets, Kinston, N. C.

ARE YOU TIRED OF QUACK MEDICINES THAT HAVE DONE YOU NO GOOD?

GIVE HARRIS LITHIA WATER A TRIAL!

It finishes the Kidneys and Bladder and excretes the uric acid in the system. It has cured thousands of Kidney and Bladder Troubles, Rheumatism and all Kindred Diseases, and

IT WILL CURE YOU!

The man or woman who has used Harris Lithia Water has made a discovery. Case 12% gallon bottles, \$4.00, delivered. One dollar allowed for return of bottles. Harris Lithia Water carbonated in quarts and pints. As a table water it is unexcelled. For sale by dealers.

LOCAL DISTRIBUTORS: TRIPLE-MARWTON DRUG CO. AND J. E. HOOD.
HARRIS LITHIA SPRINGS CO., Harris Springs, S. C.

Tobacco Flues! Tobacco Flues!!

Have Plenty of Sets Already Made. Can Deliver On An Hour's Notice.

Roofing, Plumbing,

Heating and General Repair Work Done in a First-Class Manner.

S. H. ISLER, JR.,
KINSTON, N. C.

Cotton Gins and Presses.

Complete System Ginneries. Sold on Easy Payments. Write us if interested.

HYMAN SUPPLY CO.,

NEWBERN, N. C.