

The Witch of Cragenstone

By ANITA CLAY MUNOZ,

Author of "In Love and Truth"

"Go on thy wicked way!" he cried in quavering tones, "and stop not before the door where thou hast wrought such dire evil! Thy wreath of roses leth in ashes in the road! We applied a torch ere thy servant left; and thy god, take it with thee. I want it not!"

He closed the door and fastened it, drawing the bar across with noisy violence. Margaret's face was white as she picked up her rein, and La Fabienne rode at her side with dark looks and flashing eyes.

"Gads, in France we have a man whipped for less than that! Mon Dieu," he exclaimed angrily, "were not



"Go on thy wicked way!"

the man so old and did not death lie in his household I would have him out! No man could live after those rough words to thee!"

The look of sad wonder in Margaret's eyes did not leave them as she guided her horse to the narrow footpath that led through the forest.

"I feel for them naught but good will and they treat me with keen dislike," she said. "Fain would I understand them. Dost get their meaning, Godfrey?"

"Fair love, thy pure and generous soul could never grasp the meaning of their cruel and wicked ignorance," he answered, then, seeing that the shadow still rested on her face, cried in vexed tones:

"Margaret, cease sorrowing! Sweet, thou hast done naught but show them acts of kindness! Some enemy of thine hath been at his foul work most diligently. 'Tis a man I've had mine eyes on!"

"Thou meanest my cousin Josiah?" The blood rushed to La Fabienne's face.

"Call him not thy cousin, Margaret," he cried hotly, "for I swear he hath no feeling of kinship for thee. Damne, but I detest the man! The mere mention of his name doth cause my gorge to rise."

Just then a large, hulking lad who was coming toward them with a bundle swung on a stick over his shoulder, humming a tune as he came, at the sound of their voices ceased his noise suddenly, hesitated to make sure, then pushed through the brushwood and slunk away under the trees in the opposite direction.

"Was not that Toby, the horse boy?" Margaret asked. "Strange that he should dodge and hide in that odd manner!"

Sir Godfrey shook his head and frowned, then, as if anxious to dispel the gloom that had fallen on them, called out gayly to Margaret, who was riding ahead: "See the sun setting behind the hills, sweet love. What redness it doth reflect against the sky! I wot tomorrow will be warmer still."

By now they had reached the open roadway, and the lands of the Mayland estate spread out before them.

"An' there is Elsbeth at the gate," Margaret said, with a happy laugh. "Fie on thee for a foolish old woman!" she called to her in passing, with affectionate gayer. "Hast naught to do but look out for our return?"

Urging on her horse, she galloped toward the house. Suddenly La Fabienne, who rode slowly to look at something by the wayside that attracted his attention, felt the pressure of a hand on his arm. Turning, he saw Elsbeth.

"Sudden misfortune hath befallen us," she said in an agitated whisper. "The servants, even old Giles, have left."

He returned her gaze steadily.

"I the past I have thought his petty spite and covetousness were too small to notice; but, bon Dieu, an he persists in his persecutions I'll have a settling with the fellow."

Then he added in a lower voice: "Twere better, methinks, not to distress thy mistress with this news. Prithee, too much already of unpleasant nature hath happened to grieve her."

His horse cantering up to the doorway where Margaret had pulled rein, letting her animal nibble some grass growing beside the path, he sprang down and assisted her to alight.

"I've called Giles," she said, "but no one answers. Whistle, Godfrey, so that they may know we have returned."

"Sweet, I'll be thy horse boy," La Fabienne caught her horse by the rein. "Elsbeth says thy servants rose against her authority, and she sent them packing. Look not so serious, Margaret," he urged. "We can replace them ere the dawn of another day."

"Elsbeth"—Margaret turned her white face to the old woman and spoke sternly—"speak truth to me, I command it. Did my hirelings leave my house because of any feeling of dislike or aversion to me?"

"Bonny babe, sweet Margaret," cried the old woman tremblingly, "they said—nay, naught against thee so much—but that the cross thou didst wear was papist and wicked, containing evil that wrought harm to others! Happen thou'll take it off, sweet," she added, with hope of encouraging Margaret, "I wot they'd all come back and be glad to serve thee."

The young mistress of the Mayland farm raised her head quickly, and the color that had forsaken her cheeks at the unexpected tidings of her servants' defection returned to them. Her eyes sparkled angrily.

"Elsbeth, an thou say such words thou cannot understand me. I am willing and eager to help these people and to do all for them within my power, but they cannot dictate to me. For shame, Elsbeth! Thou weak and silly old woman, to talk with a coward's tongue!" she exclaimed. "Dost think a woman of the Mayland blood would forgive a faithless, ignorant, disloyal servant who hath spoken ill of her? Forsooth, how long is it since I have come to the pass when I must, at a hireling's command, remove that which I see fit to wear. This is my home—she raised her head proudly—"built by mine own dear grandfather and mine of my very right. I have done no person ill either by thought or deed, and my cousin need not think he can force me from what is mine own. Only this morning I promised myself a speedy departure from this ill fated village, but now methinks to remain a good time longer."

Her head held high, she turned to her lover with a flashing smile.

"Thou'll be my horse boy, Godfrey, in thy satin doublet?"

"Right willingly will I, O proud and beautiful mistress!" La Fabienne, with answering smile, doffed his hat to the ground.

"Then I cannot be unhappy, for did not some wiseacre say 'a man is rich that hath one faithful friend?' Come, lead the horses, and I will follow to assist thee, Godfrey, for I trow thou wouldst a-weary soon with no horse boy about to cast thine imprecations at."

Both laughed merrily at this sally; then, with deep and tender protection, La Fabienne threw his disengaged arm about her.

"Aye, come with me," he said, "though thou'll hinder more than thou wilt help, I warrant thee. But gads, a man can work with a better heart in sunshine than in shadow, and where thou art not, sweet, 'tis always dark to me!"

CHAPTER XVII.

ANOTHER spell of scorching heat swept over the mountain so intense that men and women could scarce exert themselves to move, and found existence endurable only in the shelter of their homes, afraid to venture out in the scorching rays of the sun, and the sheep and cattle, stretched out on the ground under the trees, lay, with closed eyes, panting, not caring to eat. The people, sighing and praying for relief, told each other significantly that such scorching air was a curse put upon them. But one night, whether it was in answer to their prayers or the curse was lifted, the leaves began to rustle on the trees, and suddenly a breeze sprang up from the northwest, bringing in its wake a cool breath that fanned the awful heat away, and the mountain folk awoke in the morning refreshed and strengthened to set about with energy to accomplish tasks that had of necessity been neglected during the excessive heat.

La Fabienne and Margaret Mayland, having grown weary of the enforced inactivity, rode away gayly from the door shortly after the noon hour of that first cool day, with Gaston for a guide, to view some waterfalls in a small hamlet toward the west that the latter had discovered in his wanderings and which his master had expressed a desire to see. As they found much of interest and beauty in the mountain scenery to take their attention and oc-

cupy their time, the sun had set and the approach of twilight was at hand when they rode wearily up to the house, demanding supper from the pleased and expectant Elsbeth, who was waiting at the door.

The loiterers usually standing about the village hostelry, the Sign of the Red Heart, taking advantage of the absence of La Fabienne, also his man Gaston, now talked together loudly and with great earnestness of the lad Christopher's tragic death; also other

evil happenings that had occurred in the village of late. One or two men, more excited than the rest, threw out their arms wildly, with angry and vindictive gesticulation, as they harangued the others, and above their heads, as if with a desire to be heard, the time worn, weather beaten old square of wood, with a red heart painted upon it, that from long years of exposure to the elements was now dull and faded, swung and creaked noisily on the iron bar over the door of the tavern from which it was suspended.

Josiah Taunston, riding toward them, drew rein as he reached the door and called loudly for a tankard of ale. The idlers grouped about him eagerly. "Hast heard the news, master?" asked one.

"What news?"

"The latest report of the devil's handwork in our affairs; that is all," another man interposed hastily. "Of a truth thou hast heard."

"Nay, I ha' not," he answered sharply. "But after Adam's grandson's wicked murder naught of bad tidings could surprise me. What's amiss now?" Several of the bystanders struggled to get nearer the horse in a position to tell the story, but the first speaker, taller and quicker of speech than the others, commenced the narrative.

"Thou hast heard, w' all of us, that good Widow Dawson's babe, that for a week past on account of the heat lay ill of a fever which the leech said could be easily cured, of a sudden took a fit last night 'n' died. The poor dame is prostrate and sweareth that black arts were practiced on her child, as just before it was resting quietly, when—the man's voice fell into a whisper—"suddenly the mother was aroused by weird noises 'n' fearsome rappings on the door. All of a tremble, she opened, but no one was there. Then, with a great noise, the lattice blew in, a white sheet was waved before her eyes, smoke 'n' the stench of sulphur burning filled the room, 'n' when all was cleared away she found her innocent babe in a fit a-dying on the bed."

The men fell back, pale faced and awe stricken, looking at each other with open mouths. Taunston took the tankard and quaffed of the ale, then from his high place on his horse addressed the crowd with great impressiveness.

"The time hath come, good neighbors, when we must act," he declared. "It is useless longer to deny that wicked happenings occur here daily; that Satan, dissatisfied with the righteous and pious conduct of this God fearing community, hath entered into compact with one who shall be nameless and hath chosen to exercise his malevolent influence through her agency. Enough of evil hath been wrought already," he cried fiercely.

Old Adam, the goldsmith, opening his door at the sound of the loud talking, peered forth and when he saw Josiah Taunston ran to the spot, pushed his way through the crowd and, falling on his knees beside the horse, threw his apron over his face, crying out: "Oh, Master Taunston; oh, good Josiah, give me comfort in my hour of trial or I must go mad w' thinking on it! My grandson Christopher! The little lad left me by my dying daughter Betsy, struck to his death and his soul carried away in peals of thunder by the devil! Oh, lackaday! Woe is me! God ha' mercy!"

The man continued to grovel on the ground, rocking to and fro, moaning forth his sorrow, and Josiah, pointing his long finger at him, addressed the now increasing assemblage.

"Look ye on this man," he cried, "his heart bleeding and broken, the mainstay of his old age cruelly taken from him, and all because we have too long dallied with the evil influences that have of late been so strongly brought to bear upon us. Look on this man, I say! Dost want the same to happen to ye all? Matthew Clines"—he singled out one man with his finger—"how knowest thou that thy turn may not come next? Wilt wait, refusing to believe until thou seest thy maid Dorothy riding away in a cloud of smoke on a witch's broomstick?"

"Nay, nay," groaned the man sullenly.

"I call on ye not to be deceived by a fair face, rich dress and a kindly manner! Such deep arts are ever employed by our worst enemy, Satan, when he hath his blackest crimes in meditation. Thou knowest, men, to whom I make inference? 'Tis the woman Margaret Mayland that I do publicly accuse!"

He paused for a moment to emphasize his words, then continued with a great seriousness, shaking his head in the manner of one who had abandoned all hope. "With prayer and protestations my good mother and I have urged this woman to change her ways, to destroy the evil cross that is but a witch mark invented by the devil for his purposes, one touch of which will bring a man to fell disaster. Men and brothers," he cried, "she would not hear us! She coldly turned us from her door and then in her wickedness set our sheep a-dying; but, being our kinswoman, we bore all patiently and said naught. Now, my judgment tells me that too much harm hath been done already. Here before ye all I repudiate this woman. I renounce kinship to her!"

The crowd, now having assumed much larger proportions, took up the cry of hate and bitterness.

"Good man! Good man Josiah! He doth renounce his cousin!" one cried.

"Down, down with the woman who weareth Satan's cross!" said another. "We ha' borne too much a ready!"

"Hanging is the only way to put an end on it," cried old Adam tearfully, wiping his eyes.

"Witchcraft is the very blackest crime against God, the saints and the people!" proclaimed Josiah Taunston dramatically. "Such wickedness cannot be choked out. Burning—burning at the stake—is the punishment our clergy and elders have ever meted out as of sufficient suffering to expiate this hideous crime."

Then, seeing his listeners were roused to an unusual height of fury, he cried in a louder voice: "My men, to the town house! Call the council for a meeting! We must act ere our own souls, caught in the talons of the devil's claws, are rendered incapable to invoke God's vengeance."

Turning his horse's head, he led the way, followed by an excited throng of angry men.

In the meantime Mistress Taunston, whose reputation for piety and her well known willingness to offer spiritual consolation to the afflicted brought her to many besides of both sick and dying, had been at the cabin of the Widow Dawson, and as the sun was slowly sinking down below the hills she came through the forest on her way home. Hearing the sounds of approaching footsteps, she raised her head and saw approaching Margaret's woman Elsbeth, who when she had advanced a few steps paused and, glancing about in all directions, called in shrill tones the little dog Biddy, that had evidently strayed away. If she saw Margaret's aunt coming toward her ever having had an interchange of hard words there was a deep feeling of hatred lying in the hearts of these two women for each other, and, although on occasions they had met with civil greetings, an underlying spirit of enmity between them was apparent and had grown lately into such proportions that at their last meeting the women had passed without recognition.

So today, with her head held high and a forbidding expression on her grim countenance, Mistress Taunston approached. The path at that point was rocky and narrow, so that in order to proceed one of them had to stand dangerously near the edge to let the other pass. Elsbeth, walking slowly, continued to look as if she saw no person in her way and called the lost dog's name with a great show of anxiety. Bristling with defiance and wearing her most scornful bearing, the Puritan woman came on until, reaching Elsbeth, who still refused to see her, she paused and, drawing her scant skirt of gray homespun very close about her, with an appearance of making a great effort not to let her clothing touch the other's, endeavored to pass.

Turning suddenly, Elsbeth confronted her so unexpectedly that the stern faced dame lost her balance and would have fallen had she not clutched the trunk of a tree for support. All the hatred in Elsbeth's heart for her companion blazed forth in her eyes as she looked at her.

"Fear not for thy clothing," she cried angrily, "or that contact with my scall harm thee! Lud! E'en I were pith 'n' thou wert covered with art, it would not show on thee, thou art so black in wiles and wickedness."

"Beware, woman, how thou talkest to thy betters!" fairly shrieked the other in outraged tones.

"Forsooth, I'll ha' my say, now I have thee cornered"—Elsbeth's black eyes snapped dangerously—"an' for once thou'll hear the truth. Fool that thou art to think our Margaret hath no protectors!" she exclaimed derisively.

"Dost think, dullard, that Sir Godfrey La Fabienne suspects not thy son's vile schemes to get his cousin's estate, his deep laid plots to force her from the village as a polluted thing, so that he—her next of kin—may ride in and take possession?"

"'Tis false!" shrieked Mistress Taunston in wild anger. "Make way, woman, or it will be worse for thee!" Elsbeth did not move.

"Methinks 'twere well to warn thee," she continued, "else in thy greed and ignorance thou'll go too far. Sir Godfrey La Fabienne is a nobleman of much wealth, hath influence at the French and English courts, and with both Puritans and papists his wishes have great weight."

"Ha, is't so?" The dame laughed scornfully. "Thy cavalier may have influence at the English court in all else but matters pertaining to the black art and witchcraft. His majesty hath spoken, and the fiat hath gone forth that all such shall be brought to trial and executed quickly. Oft and many times he hath so expressed himself, being a godly man and pious, so hope not for his interference. Now it is my turn to warn thee." She raised a finger and pointed it at Elsbeth solemnly. "Before you sun just fading from our sight doth fall again tomorrow even, thou

and thy flogging had better begone."

Her manner betrayed such conviction and evil portent that Elsbeth's heart sank within her, although her face retained its expression of indifference and defiance. She drew aside to let the other pass, saying coldly:

"Take heed how thou dost persecute Margaret Mayland further, and rely not too strongly on thy delusion of having the king's favor. That is all I have to say to thee."

Then she walked on calmly, calling in shrill tones to the straying dog.

To be Continued.

All in the Family.

"My watch," said the young man with the cerulian tie, "is what might be properly called a family watch."

"How's that?" queried the inquisitive person.

"Well, you see, my 'uncle' has it now," explained the young man.

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Travelers Guide.

CENTRAL RAILROAD OF PENNA.

Condensed Time Table effective Nov. 23, 1904.

READ DOWN		STATIONS		READ UP	
No. 1	No. 3	No. 6	No. 2	No. 6	No. 2
A. M.	P. M.	A. M.	P. M.	A. M.	P. M.
7:10	6:45	BELLEFONTE	9:20	5:10	9:40
7:25	6:55	Lock Haven	9:35	4:55	9:55
7:40	7:10	Williamsport	9:50	4:40	10:10
7:55	7:25	Scranton	10:05	4:25	10:25
8:10	7:40	Carthage	10:20	4:10	10:40
8:25	7:55	Conowingo	10:35	3:55	10:55
8:40	8:10	Belleville	10:50	3:40	11:10
8:55	8:25	Belleville	11:05	3:25	11:25
9:10	8:40	Belleville	11:20	3:10	11:40
9:25	8:55	Belleville	11:35	2:55	11:55
9:40	9:10	Belleville	11:50	2:40	12:10
9:55	9:25	Belleville	12:05	2:25	12:25
10:10	9:40	Belleville	12:20	2:10	12:40
10:25	9:55	Belleville	12:35	1:55	12:55
10:40	10:10	Belleville	12:50	1:40	1:10
10:55	10:25	Belleville	1:05	1:25	1:25
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12:40	12:10	Belleville	2:50	0:10	3:10
12:55	12:25	Belleville	3:05	0:00	3:25
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1:55	1:25	Belleville	4:05		4:25
2:10	1:40	Belleville	4:20		4:40
2:25	1:55				