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The Battle for the Cedars.

BY PRESSLY W. MORRIS.

CONTINUED.

WE NOW return to the man left as a prisoner.

Lionel Cashel became conscious of a dull sensation of pain, and then he tried to struggle loose from some power that held him in its bonds. Was he dreaming, or was this fearful oppression real ?

Slowly a sense of his position came to him. He was not dreaming. He realized that he was awake, and bound and gagged. All about him was thick darkness.

"Where am I?" was his mental ejaculation.

Then he remembered his interview with Valasquez; how he had retired to the crimson room; his feeling of security; he had slept. After that all was blank.

But Lionel knew that he was once more in the power of his foe. At that thought he struggled fiercely in his

bonds, and tried to free himself. His efforts were all in vain.

He wearied himself, and was forced to lie still in despair, not knowing for what fate he was reserved. Death in some measure seemed certain, for he felt that he was as helpless as a newborn babe, and Valasquez would never let him escape alive, he knew.

How long he had lain there thinking, when there came a loud noise close at hand that echoed through the apartment, he could form scarcely an idea. At the sound he instinctively tried to cry out, but no utterance could he give forth. That he could not shrick seemed maddening, for he knew not but that the person making those sounds might rescue him.

The echoes died away to quietness,a quiet as profound as that of the grave. What appeared to Lionel a long period of time passed.

I reality it was the space between the departure of Valasquez from the door, and his return with the slave, Varcor. Then Lionel heard the noises made in laying the brick to wall up the doorway. At first he did not comprehend, but presently his horrifled brain took in the fact that he was being shut up between walls. Occasionally he heard a suppressed voice that he knew belonged to Valasquez.

Once more Lionel' struggled to free himself,-struggled fiercely till the cords with which he was bound cut into his limbs. But he did not release himself, and he stopped at last.

He was not aware of it, in his numbed condition, but his powerful struggles had partially loosened the cords that held him, so that his next flerce effort would in all probability give him the use of his limbs.

The work outside went on. It was completed. Lionel heard his enemies depart, and once more silence reigned.

Despair overwhelmed Lionel Cashel. A thousand lights seemed to flash before his eyes. Thrills of agony shot

through his frame.

" Am I dying?" he thought wildly, He gave one last mad effort, and-his hands were freed from the bonds that held them. He felt that he had a new lease of life. He sat up, and tore the gag from his mouth.

Thank heaven!" he cried. Then he unbound his feet, and rose upright. He was so stiff and sore that he could not remain standing at first. But presently he was able to grope his way about the apartment. Lionel thought it must be past morning, long

past, but not a single ray of light entered the room. All was darkness.

Lionel reached the solid walls, and felt about them. What availed it!

He had released himself from a painful position of body; but, farther than that, what availed his freedom from bonds? Was he any nearer to netual liberty? He could not feel that he

"I am shut out from light and life and hope," he cried agonizingly. "Oh the devilish malignity of that villain !"

What should his prison be but a living tomb? He was to die a slow, torturing death between these walls, according to the purpose of Valasquez.

He shouted loudly for help; but the sounds only came back to him, mockings of despair. Long Lionel continued to grope about, but at length he sank upon the floor, hungry, fatigued, and utterly despairing.

Sleep overcame bim, and for some hours he lay locked in its embrace. He awoke to renew his groping about the walls.

"Would be continue that, only to drop down exhausted at last, and die?" he asked himself.

Probably his action was instinctive, like that of the prisoned bird that flutters its wings against the bars of its cage. Perhaps he had given over all hopes of escape; but for all that, he could not lie down calmly and perish!

But Lionel Cashel was not to die in this manner.

At last a secret that the false master of The Cedars had never discovered, of which he had no idea, was made apparent. Lionel's blind gropings were not in vain! Suddenly there was a harsh grating sound, and he felt the rush of

He had troubled a spring, and had caused a square in the seemingly solid wall to swing away. After that it was but the work of an instant to find the aperture.

He found the opening abundantly large for him to crawl through. He raised himself slowly to it, and in another moment was out of the prison

Lionel looked about. A short distance away, he saw outlined a faint square of light. He made his way to it, and found it to be, as he had supposed, a window. It looked out upon the grounds behind the stone mansion.

Lionel returned to the secret door. He closed it, and that which had been intended for his tomb was sealed again. He cautiously removed the sash of the window. Just to one side of it were the clambering branches of a huge grape-vine. It took Lionel but a few seconds to lower himself to the earth.

It was night, and it had been twentyfour hours, fully, since he had been carried from the crimson room by his

All was quiet. The stars twinkled in the heavens. The great mansion stood outlined against the sky. Not even a breeze rustled the foliage of the trees. How fearfully calm the scene was!

"Heaven cannot always smile on that villain," thought Lionel. "His day of doom will come some time."

It was the wedding eve of Victoria De Vere and Vincent Sherwood. The De Vere magsion was brilliantly lighted, and it was a gay scene on which the lamps shone. There was quite a crowd of people, some of them from the neighborhood, but most of them invited from Baltimore. The false master of The Cedars was in attendance. It was part of a plot that he should be there. Otherwise his anger at Barbara Lindsley would have kept him away.

The solemn ceremony that made the twain one flesh had occurred at the appointed hour.

The guests presently repaired to the dining-room, where a sumptuous repast was awaiting them of which they proceeded to partake. It was nearly finished when Valasquez, glancing down the long table, beheld a face that startled him some.

"I am a fool still," he thought. "I saw that man once before, and let his resemblance to him frighten me!"

But after supper Valasquez sought out Robert De Vere. "You have a guest here whose name

I wish to know," he said. "Well ?" Robert returned.

" He is a tall man, and has a long red beard. Do you remember him?"

"Yes; his name is Victor." "From where?" continued Valusquez. "Oh! there he is now."

"The same," said Robert. "He is from Baltimore, I believe, Mr. Cashel. To tell the truth, I know very little about him. He is a friend of Miss Lindsley. Shall I introduce you?"

"It is not necessary," replied Valas-

A few feet away, Victor turned to one side. To all appearances he bad not seen the false master of The Cedars.

Victor continued on through the parlors, making his way slowly through the gay and fluttering assembly. Evidently, he was searching for some one. It was Barbara Lindsley; and he discovered her presently, unattended.

"Miss Lindsley," he said, "will you promenade with me on the plazza?" "Certainly," Barbara replied.

"I will not promise to remain out here long, Mr. Victor," she said gayly, when they reached the plazza.

For a full minute Victor did not speak, Barbara keeping silent too. Of what was this silence augury?

Suddenly Victor laid his hand upon the one resting so lightly upon his

arm. "Miss Lindsley, I was not without an object in wishing you to come out here," he said, while his voice trembled a little; "an object of the very greatest importance to me."

The girl's heart throbbed with delight. That beginning could lead in but one direction.

"Miss Lindsley you know but very little about me," Victor continued, "Perhaps you consider me as merely an adventurer. Still"-

"No, not that, Mr. Victor," Barbara said. "Please do not speak so."

"I am under a cloud at present," proceeded Victor, feeling that he was making a stammering effort; "but I hope and believe it will clear away ere long."

If a man's success in love affairs depended on the cleverness with which he could express himself, how ill the best men would fare! Victor paused, seemingly at a loss how to continue.

"Go on," whispered Barbara softly. What a blessed ald were those two little words!

"Oh Miss Lindsley!" Victor said passionately, "I love you with all my that you love me; but, if you feel that there is a possibility of your ever doing so, please tell me that I may hope."

"Mr. Victor, you may hope," said Barbara. The two stood there, uttering no other

word. Victor felt the hand that he held in his tremble a little. And that clasping

of hand was enough for them then. "Let us go in," whispered Barbara presently. "We shall be missed."

So they went in, a new-found happiness in each heart. Victor could not appropriate Barbara, and he was content to let her mingle with the other guests.

A few hours sped. Barbara wondered if the master of The Cedars was watching her; for it appeared to her that she could not get out of his view. Yet he did not approach near enough at any time to converse with her.

At length, feeling that his very gaze was hateful, and anxious to get out of his sight if only for a few moments, and wishing also to be alone with her happiness for a short time, Barbara sought the conservatory, which was near. A colored lamp cast a dim light around. Barbara found the place deserted, and she seated herself on a rustic bench, while the spicy fragrance of the flowers refreshed her senses.

Scarcely, however had she taken her seat, when she heard a step, and the false master of The Cedars entered.

"Fairest of the flowers, Miss Lindsley," he cried.

"Mr. Cashel, compliments are unnecessary at present," said Barbars, as she rose to go.

"Stay, Miss Lindsley," the man said, in a low, smooth tone; "I wish a word with you. I beg your pardon for what I said that was offensive the other day. If you will promise to say nothing about my proposal, I will give you my word to trouble you no more on that sutject."

"Your request is a strange one," the

girl said freezingly. "However, I will state, for your satisfaction, that I have not mentioned it nor do I expect to."

In view of a wicked plan that he had devised, those were the very words that the villain wished to draw from the girl. He had realized that he should scarcely dare put his plan in execution if she had mentioned to any one his proposal and her refusal. But she had acted in that matter as he had hoped and believed she would, and he felt that he could proceed without any danger of suspicion falling upon him.

Barbara turned away. As she did so Valasquez sprang forward, and, seizing her, placed his hand over her mouth. She tried to scream, but could not; for that cruel presure kept her silent.

"Silence, or you shall die!" hissed the villain in her ear.

Barbara sank cold and white in his

She had fainted with fright. He tied a handkerchief about, her mouth, and with another bound her hands. Then he lifted her, and carried her out into the night.

There was no moon, and clouds were salling across the heavens. It seemed as though nature, even, was favoring the dark plans of the villain.

Valasquez was in the rear of the De Vere residence, and evidently there was nothing to hinder him from carrying away Barbara Lindsley. He hastened rapidly along. Suddenly he darted away from the house into the shadow of some trees. He paused beneath one with low branches. The mournful cry of the whip-poor-will sang out upon the night air.

The sound was a signal. It was answered, repeated, and answered again. Then a crouching figure crept up to Valasquez. "Varcor," he said in a cautious whis-

"Massa Cashel," was the equally cautious reply.

'Here she is, Varcor. Be careful." And Varcor, the slave, received Bar-

bara Lindsley in his arms. In a few minutes, Valasquez was back in the brilliantly lighted parlors. He entered from the plazza. His absence

had not been noticed by any one. "I scarcely dared hope for such success," was his triumphant thought as he mingled in the gay scene. "I feared fate would give me no opportunity to accomplish my purpose; but I could have wished for no better luck. If I had had the arranging of it all beforehand, I could not have managed matters better.'

The bride and groom were, according to arrangement, to depart for Baltimore on a train at a little past midnight, most of the guests accompanying them. It was not till preparations began to be made for this departure, that the absence of Barbara Lindsley was discovered.

At first no great alarm was felt, for it was thought that she would yet appear in time.

But she had utterly disappeared, and no trace could be found of her about the residence or grounds.

"What can have become of her?" was the question that was asked frequently, but remained unanswered.

The Baltimore guests could not remain, and took the train at the appointed hour, pale with alarm at the startling and tragical termination of the evening's gayeties. Of course, Victoria and her husband did not now dream of leaving.

Valasquez played his part well. He seemed anxious and excited about Barbara, but still he did not earry his acting far enough to cause suspicion that it was

"The last I beheld of her," he remarked to Robert De Vere, seemingly incidentally, "was to see her go out on the piazza with that stranger whose name is Victor, as you informed me this evening,"

"With that tall, red-whiskered fellow who you said was from Baltimore. I have not noticed either one of them since."

"With whom?" eried Robert.

"By heaven! Cashel," cried Robert excitedly. "I have not beheld him for some time, either. If he has wrought any harm to her he shall rue it." "But I can scarcely lay her disappear-

ance at his door," Robert added. "He seemed too frank and noble to be guilty of such a crime."

But Victor had disappeared, too, as

well as Barbara, and his absence was not in his favor at that.

The hours of the night wore away, and still there was no sign of Barbara Lindsley.

What could be done? Literally, noth-

Poor Victoria's bridal eve was clouded by the darkness of this mystery. She, poor girl, wept long and violently on her young husband's breast. What dreadful secret might be hidden under Barbara's disappearance! Perhaps, O dreadful thought! she had been murdered, and was lying somewhere under the black night, cold, and stained with

But Victoria's paroxysm of fright and grief passed away after a while, and she became calm enough, but was pale and

The fact that no idea could be formed as to what had become of Barbara, rendered his disappearance the more sad to her friends. The very mystery of her fate would cause the imagination to conjure up possibilities the most torturing.

Morning dawned. Henri Valasquez went to The Cedars. What could be done? Must Barbara's

friends sit calmly down and await a development? Would the mystery ever be explained?

The girl might as well have been carried to an invisible world by some strange power, for all the conjecture that could be made of her whereabouts. "I shall go to Fairmount and notify

the sheriff of Barbara's disappearance, Robert answered. "Perhaps the officers of the law may be able to aid us in our search for her." And, after partaking of a hasty break-

fast, he mounted a horse, and rode rapidly away toward Fairmount. Reaching the town, he performed the duty he had imposed upon himself, and then sought out the Mountain City House, the best hotel in the place.

"Has a young man by the name of Victor been stopping here lately?" he asked of the clerk.

" He has," was the answer. "Where is he now ?"

"He went to Baltimore this morning, on the 3.30 express." This seemed to Bobert De Vere a con-

firmation of the vague suspicion he had before entertained. He had been mistaken in Victor, he feared. After all, he was a villian, and to him could be traced the cause of Barbara's disappearance.

"What could be his object ?" was the query that suggested itself to Robert. Several possibilities suggested them-

selves. The most plausible idea was that Victor had been Barbara's suitor, and had been refused. Then, -ah! if his suspicions were correct, this then was easily followed to a conclusion. "I will follow him to Baltimore," was

him, and if he or any of his tools have abducted or otherwise harmed her, let them beware!" As these thoughts passed through his mind, Robert had been standing in the

Robert's hasty thought. "I will pursue

office of the hotel. "When is there another train for Baltimore?" he now asked of the clerk.

" At eighteen minutes past ten,-about an hour hence," was the reply. Robert wrote a note explaining his coutinued absence, and gave it to the sheriff, whom he found upon the eve of departing with s posse for the scene of the mystery. Of course, Robert had no

intention of detaining him from proceed-

ing. All means possible must be used for the discovery of Barbara. The train thundered along at the appointed moment, and soon Robert was going as rapidly toward Baltimore as

steam and iron could bear him. Mr. Victor had gone to Baltimore, as the clerk had stated; but when Robert De Vere had nearly reached the city a train passed speeding westward swiftly. Victor was on the train. He was accompanied by a couple of experienced

detectives. But he knew naught of the disappearance of Barbara Lindsley.

. The motion of a carriage, and the cool night air blowing upon her, brought Barbara Lindsley to consciousness. She opened her eyes to find herself bound hand and foot, with a bandage tied over her mouth. At first she thought she was in total darkness, but she soon perceived an opening ahead, and, outlined in that, the head and shoulders of a man. To be continued.