

THE STORY TELLER

The Conquest of Kit Carow.

By Menhinc Morpew.

"BUT, father, hear me! It is well nigh my life you would rob me of, sir. I have no desire at all to marry—least of all a maid I have never set eyes on."

"Hold thy rebellious tongue, thou malapert! To think that a son of mine should defy me thus!"

"Sir," pleaded the young man hotly, "you cannot think what it is you would have me do. The king wants me to fight for him, and you would have me mate with a roundhead's daughter and bide at home by her side!"

"Ay, I have it!" stormed the old cavalier bringing his fist down on the shining oak table with a force that set the heavy glasses ringing. "Too young to wed, but too old to obey. Too young, forsooth, to make such a match as should secure to your father and yourself after me our lands and fortune, howsoever matters go with king or parliament, but old enough to spend your time with dice and wine at the taverns of Oxford. I will have none of it, boy! Thinkest thou I will be defied by mine own son? Promise me now to ride with me to-morrow and ask the girl's hand of her father or I'll lash every drop of blood out of your body."

"I don't care!" he cried, defiant, his hands clinched by his sides. "Flog me all you will, but I won't be beaten into marrying a girl I know not even the name of!"

This was too much for the fiery old cavalier's patience. Spluttering forth allusions to Absalom and other Scriptural scamps, he seized his son by the collar.

An hour later Kit Carow found himself locked up in an attic and seated on the top of an old chest of prodigious strength, which contained some of the family plate and jewels. It was here that old Sir Christopher stored his most valuable possessions, and it is quite in keeping that he should choose this room as a prison for his son, who was to be made so valuable as the link which bound him to what he feared would be the winning party.

He hurled himself against the door once, twice, thrice. The third time the rusty old bolts, that were not half so strong as they looked, gave way, and Master Kit fell sprawling into the passage.

Free! He got up and walked down to his own room, where he changed his clothes, and, taking the few shillings he possessed, left the house and set out on foot for Oxford.

Two months later Kit Carow was riding from London to Oxford. He had done fairly well for himself since his flight from home. He had obtained a commission in a regiment of horse, and had fought stoutly on several occasions, and now had been chosen for the task of collecting contributions from the royalists in London to aid the exhausted royal treasury in Oxford.

Carew was tremendously proud of being made king's messenger, and, unfortunately, overwhelmed with the weight of his responsibility. He carried £2,000 in gold.

One night before he left London he hid on the hearse-like four poster in the guest chamber, with his legs tied about his body like a miser.

He hid between London and Oxford so guarded by the forces of the king that Carew meant to ride out of Croydon, Donnington castle, then north to Oxford through a forest held by the king.

He made a long journey the first day and by dusk was within a few miles of Basingstoke.

The August evening was hot and oppressive, sheet lightning played over the landscape, and the faraway growl of thunder was almost incessant.

For a few moments he forgot the treasure he carried, until turning the corner of the lane he came upon a swift moving troop. His heart leaped up to his throat. The orange tawney scarfs gleamed in the dusk—parliament soldiers.

A sudden panic took possession of poor Kit. He answered the officer's challenge by a shot and, wheeling about, galloped blindly away.

The roundheads gave chase, and their untired horses soon gained upon the animal that had done a day's journey already. A shot was fired. Kit's horse fell struggling.

He shook himself free and dived into the pine and broom woods—that bounded one side of the road. But it was a poor piece of cover, small, and in some places open. Kit ran, stumbling in the dark, some distance through the wood and then came out into a meadow. He could hear his pursuers shouting and crashing through the wood behind him, but there was no sign of them where he stood.

Ahead he could just descry a dark mass of buildings, a big house, and a wood beyond. He ran across the meadow, the vivid lightning showing up his dark overcoat and accented figure against the sickly green of the

grass. He heard a shout and horses' feet thudding over the turf. Hot and breathless, weighed down by the weight of the gold he carried, he ran, stumbling in his haste, in and out among the farm buildings and the stacks, until he found himself under the walls of the house.

There was no sign of life on the side on which he stood, but there was a great wisteria growing all over the wall, and framed in the thick foliage he saw a window.

He swung himself up with cat-like agility and clambered over the sill.

Something stirred within and at that instant a vivid flash of lightning illuminated the whole room. Then there was darkness. Kit had seen a small bed chamber, all dark, shining oak and stiff, white hangings, a little white bed, with the curtains partly drawn, a young girl's face peering anxiously forth.

What the girl saw was a young man kneeling in the middle of the room, a white, scared face, surrounded by long, tangled, dark hair.

Kit bent down until the hand that held his sword rested on the floor.

"For God's sake, betray me not!" he said in a whisper, shrill in its intense entreaty. "Hide me. Let me bide myself here. I am pursued by soldiers. I bear dispatches and money for the king, and I must not—dare not fall into the hands of those men!"

Poor Kit's agonized appeal and his imploring attitude would have touched a heart less sympathetic than that of this Puritan maiden.

"Stay there awhile," she ordered, and discreetly drew the curtains. There was a short interval. Kit knelt motionless, listening to the tramping to and fro of the soldiers in the garden, to movements in the house downstairs, and to a rustling behind the curtains of the bed.

After a moment or two the maiden reappeared, partly dressed and covered in a long gray cloak.

She lighted a candle and drew the curtains over the window. "There is only one hiding place I can think of," she said, softly—"this closet where my dresses hang. See, it runs queerly back in that corner, sir. I trust they will not search this room, but you must be still, for I fear it is my brother's troop that is seeking you. I hear his voice below stairs. Hush! Some one comes!"

She shut the cupboard door upon him and moved away on tiptoe. Kit had barely recovered his scattered self-possession when footsteps were heard in the passage outside the chamber door.

A man's voice called out: "Are you stirring in there, Charly?"

Then the door was opened, and, as well as Kit could judge, two men entered.

"What are you about, girl?" said one, whom by his voice Kit put down as an old man. "Why are you clad thus, and why is your candle alight? Methinks darkness is best for the head-ache."

"I could not sleep because of the storm, father," said the girl. "I have only just lighted the candle. I—I was about to read awhile to drown my foolish fears."

"Daughter Charly," said the old Puritan, with awful severity, "we are searching for a malignant who hath concealed himself hereabouts. Hast thou seen or heard anything of this man?"

"I heard the soldiers in the garden, father."

"She must have been asleep, sir," said a man's voice. "Unless the men mistook the room. But old Duncombe, who knoweth the house as well as you do, swears he saw the fellow climbing over the sill of my sister's window."

"Ay, ay, he was a beautiful faced young reprobate, and so my lady must needs take compassion on him. That is the story, I fancy," said the old man, and he gave a bitter chuckle that sent a shiver of disgust through the listening Kit.

"But if he is hidden here we will soon have him out. Search the room, Godfrey!"

"While you are wasting your time here the man is escaping, brother!" cried the girl in despair. "Bid him go, father, and I will tell you all!"

"Nay, he shall stay!" declared the old man. "Speak, girl; he is thy brother and hath a right to know of this business."

"Then it was I whom they saw entering at the window."

An awful silence followed this terrible statement.

"And whom did you go to meet, madam?" thundered forth the old man.

There was no reply.

"Let me get away from here before I do her an injury! Would to God she had never been born!" Kit heard a husky, unsteady voice exclaim, and footsteps moved towards the door.

In that moment Kit realized that there are things more to be feared than death—the life of one who has failed to act as becomes a man, one who has flinched ignobly at the moment of trial.

The sound of an opening door made father and son pause. Turning round, they saw Kit standing with his back to the cupboard door, his face white as a sheet, and his eyes shining like two stars. He flung his sword from him, and it lay quivering at their feet.

"Take it!" he cried fiercely. "I yield. She never came in at the window. It was I they saw, and she said it to save me."

Charity uttered a cry of despair and leaned sobbing against the window curtains.

"So this is your lover, madam?" began the old Puritan.

"Indeed, I am not!" protested Kit, his face as scarlet as it had been white; "I never saw the girl—I never so much as in this country before. And I do most heartily beg her to forgive me!"

He was terribly confused. The younger man, who was called Godfrey, seemed almost more amused than angry.

"Come, sir," he said to his father, "poor little Charity hath committed no great sin in giving shelter to this young spark. Let us leave her in peace and take our prisoner below."

So Kit was marched off downstairs into a great hall filled with parliament soldiers. Here he was rigorously searched. But he had left the money and dispatches in Mistress Charity's cupboard, so that they found nothing upon him but a few crowns and one letter which he had overlooked in his haste. This note was of no importance to either king or parliament, but it was enough to hang its bearer. It proclaimed the fact that Kit had been in the enemy's quarters without a pass, and, therefore, might be proceeded against as a spy.

If he had not proved an able messenger he was a faithful one, and his captors, finding him stubborn, were the less inclined to mercy.

"A contumacious young malignant, if ever I saw one!" said the old man. "There is no doubt he is on some errand of mischief, a spy most like, and a clumsy one at that. I'll have him hanged, Godfrey. Take him away, men. Lock him up in the cells and set a guard. I'll see him hanged at daylight."

Upon this Kit was pushed away by two troopers and locked up in a little damp cellar.

Now his captors made a strange discovery.

In turning over Kit's letter case the parliament captain noticed some thing written on the leather lining. "Christopher Carew," he read out, and showed it to his father. They looked at each other, and then both burst out laughing.

"Your future son-in-law, sir, I believe?" said the younger man.

"Why, so it is! The boy who wouldn't be beaten into marrying little Charity. What shall we do with him? We cannot hang him."

The captain thought for a minute before answering.

"Do you desire this marriage heartily, sir?"

"Ay, boy, of course I do. When once Charity is wedded to this lad our fortunes are safe, whether king or parliament win the day—if so be that the young man behave himself as a dutiful son-in-law."

"In that case it would be as well to give him some reason to think kindly of us. We must not use force, sir."

Then they brewed a plot that had its effect as follows:

Kit had lain on the cold floor and raged his heart out for an hour or so for self-pity, and in misery at the idea that those who had dispatched him on this fatal journey, knowing nothing of his fate, would perhaps give him credit for having absconded with the money.

Then he thought of the beautiful Puritan girl who had so bravely tried to save him, and at last fell asleep—to awake presently and find Mistress Charity standing by his side.

"Awake, sir," she said, in a low voice, the sweetest he had ever heard, Kit thought. "I have come to set you free. See, here is the gold and the letters. When I heard they found nothing upon you I knew you must have left them in the cupboard. My father knoweth naught of these. But this is a letter from my father. He bade me tell you that he wishes you no harm. He would fain have entreated you more gently, but he feared to be suspected by his men of betraying the interests of the parliament."

Kit's face, indeed his whole bearing, plainly showed his admiration and heartfelt gratitude. Blushing furiously he stammered forth his confused boyish thanks to the composed maiden, who, one year his junior in years, was at least ten years his senior in everything else.

"Come, sir," she said, smiling a little. "I will show you the way out of the house. Only we must take care to arouse none of the soldiers."

A few moments later Kit found himself outside in the garden, his thanks cut short by the barring of the little door by which he had made his exit.

The thunder had passed away. It was dark and raining hard. He groped his way to the high road and then set off as fast as his legs would carry him, bent on putting as much distance as was possible between himself and his late captors before daylight.

A few days later old Sir Christopher Carew was sitting sadly over his wine. He had realized by this time that the son he had alternately petted and bullied was all the world to him.

"I was too hasty," thought the poor old man. "The boy has a good heart. If only I could have had patience enough to reason with him! Or perhaps I ought to have let him see the girl before I ordered him to wed her." These indulgent cogitations were interrupted by Kit himself, who, shamefaced and excited, flung himself down on his knees by his father's side and covered his hand with kisses.

"Father, forgive me. I have seen Mistress Charity Warren. She is more beautiful than—I can express. And she is brave and infinitely kind. I will ride with you to Basingstoke to-morrow, or this minute, if it pleases you, sir. If I have your pardon, I have no other desire than to be her servant."

Flattery.

Miss Pechis—I have already said "no" to you, Mr. Vere. I don't seem to be able to make myself plain, although I have tried—

Percy Vere—Ah! you couldn't do that no matter how you try, Miss Pechis. "Well—er—of course, I shall always be glad to have you call upon me, Mr. Vere."—Philadelphia Press.

A PROPOSAL OF MARRIAGE.

As It Might Be If the Girls Were Bohemian and Brave Enough for the Brace.

While she waited for him she took in with a tender sympathy and amusement the meager comforts of his small parlor, relates the New York Times. The table, littered with newspapers and magazines, the dust in the corners, the chimney-piece cluttered with stray pipes, tobacco jars, a shoebrush, Poor's Manual, a nicked alarm clock, a beer mug. It all seemed to her so pathetically, so helplessly masculine. She made a pretty picture of what she could do with these same rooms with Derby furniture, dimity curtains, a pink dado, and an art rug.

"How at home he would be here!" she thought. "How he would adorn and brighten it!"

She heard his step. He came in, smiling, shy, conscious, but with a certain manly reserve which she thought charming. Her fine, strong face was aglow with tender resolution as she held out her hand.

"I've come in for a cupful of tea," said she, brightly. "Will you give me some?"

"I believe you'd rather have a cocktail," said he, admiringly.

"I'll take anything you'll give me," she returned, laughing, "so long as you will let me stay and talk to you."

He busied himself with the ingredients of this innocent refreshment, and as she watched him she thought how gracefully and easily he performed all the little elegant offices of home. With such a companion, could she dread the future? The sense of possession was strong in her.

"Here's to another one!" he cried gayly.

"With you," returned she, meeting his gaze.

He was evidently not quite at ease; he made a pretense of rearranging the shades; his agitation pleased her.

"You always look so well in a shirt waist," she said, approvingly. "How do you manage it?"

"Well, usually—" he began demurely; then they both laughed. It was so easy, so natural, for her to feel at home with him.

"Do you know," said she, resting her foot on one knee and clasping her ankle with her hand in a way she had when she was serious. "I've been thinking a good deal of your life and mine, and that's why I've come to you to-day. You are so strong and fine, and yet so helpless. I know I haven't got much to offer you. I went on ardently, gravely; "you might do ever so much better than to marry a poor young stenographer like me. But, oh, I love you so, Jack! I've got a little—I'll have more by and by. Won't you let me love you and care for you and work for you?"

She bent forward. She put her hand on his knee.

The young man looked at her for a moment; there was a light in his soft eyes that told his secret but too well. She held out her arms. He sank gratefully into them.

"Do you love me?" she persisted.

"I adore you," he whispered. "But, oh, dear," he said, timidly, "you'll be gentle with me always, won't you? You'll remember I am a man, and not a woman like you, out in the world? We men have our little weaknesses, too," he added, with a coquettish glance at the cocktail glass.

"Your weaknesses?" she cried, mockingly. "What are mine?"

"Indeed, I don't know," answered he, he, truthfully.

"Oh, you darling!" she exclaimed, rapturously. "You'll be just the sweetest husband in the world."

Next day she braced the firm for a raise in salary on the ground that a married woman was always entitled to more pay than a bachelor girl.

FUN FOR THE BABOONS.

Young Ostriches on South African Farms Afforded Them Something to Play With.

Some 30 years ago, when ostrich farming had become established on a firm and paying basis in South Africa, the parties who had embarked in the propaganda of these birds had to face a curious difficulty, says an exchange. Although lions, leopards and, to some extent, even jackals and hyena dogs, had, by 1869, in large part disappeared from Cape Colony, the country still abounded in small, indigenous animals, the most numerous being the dog-faced baboons, which are the most crafty, mischievous, troublesome members of the quadrumania. They soon proved a worse enemy to the young and growing ostriches than all the prowling leopards or jackals that occasionally invaded the ostrich farming districts. Not that they killed or ate the young ostriches or even robbed the nests, but the industry had barely started before these baboons were seized with an irresistible desire to harass and play with the young birds, just as mischievous city children unused to farm ways would harry a barnyard full of chickens. They would chase the young birds until they dropped dead of fright or exhaustion. At other times they would catch and pluck out their feathers or play with them, allowing the young birds to run a few steps, then recapturing them and subjecting them to all manner of rough handling.

Broken China. Superintendent—We are likely to have a brisk sale of chinaware this year, Mr. Tiler.

Poorwalker—What makes you think that?

"I see it stated that long, flowing sleeves are coming into fashion."—Boston Transcript.

Servant Girls Popular. Minor officials and railway employees in Germany seek their wives by preference among servant girls.



Miss Gannon, Sec'y Detroit Amateur Art Association, tells young women what to do to avoid pain and suffering caused by female troubles.

"DEAR MRS. PINKHAM:—I can conscientiously recommend Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound to those of my sisters suffering with female weakness and the troubles which so often befall women. I suffered for months with general weakness, and felt so weary that I had hard work to keep up. I had shooting pains, and was utterly miserable. In my distress I was advised to use Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, and it was a red letter day to me when I took the first dose, for at that time my restoration began. In six weeks I was a changed woman, perfectly well in every respect. I felt so elated and happy that I want all women who suffer to get well as I did."—Miss GUILA GANNON, 355 Jones St., Detroit, Mich., Secretary Amateur Art Association.

It is clearly shown in this young lady's letter that Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound will certainly cure the sufferings of women; and when one considers that Miss Gannon's letter is only one of the countless hundreds which we are continually publishing in the newspapers of this country, the great virtue of Mrs. Pinkham's medicine must be admitted by all; and for the absolute cure of all kinds of female ills no substitute can possibly take its place. Women should bear this important fact in mind when they go into a drug store, and be sure not to accept anything that is claimed to be "just as good" as Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, for no other medicine for female ills has made so many actual cures.

How Another Sufferer Was Cured.

"DEAR MRS. PINKHAM:—I cannot praise your wonderful remedies enough, for they have done me more good than all the doctors I have had. For the last eight years and more I suffered with female troubles, was very weak, could not do my housework, also had nervous prostration. Some days I would remain unconscious for a whole day and night. My neighbors thought I could never recover, but, thanks to your medicine, I now feel like a different woman."

"I feel very grateful to you and will recommend Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound to all. It has now been four years since I had the last spell of nervous prostration. I only weighed ninety-eight pounds at that time; now I weigh one hundred and twenty-three. I consider your Vegetable Compound the finest remedy made. Thanking you many times for the benefit I received from your medicine, I remain, yours truly, Mrs. J. H. FARMER, 2809 Elliott Ave., St. Louis, Mo."

Remember Mrs. Pinkham's advice is free and all sick women are foolish if they do not ask for it. She speaks from the widest experience, and has helped multitudes of women.

\$5000 FORFEIT if we cannot forth with produce the original letters and signatures of above testimonials, which will prove their absolute genuineness. Lydia E. Pinkham Med. Co., Lynn, Mass.

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