Lavender Creighton's Lovers

By OLIVIA B. STROHM

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CHAPTER IV.—CONTINUED

"You are doubly entitled to my gratitude, sir, as being no less an adherent of our enterprise than a champion of distressed females. On my own behalf, I thank you for your zeal and loyalty; on theirs—well, on theirs, I have to ask another favor; 'tis the way of the sex."

His black eyes twinkled merrily, and he took a pinch of snuff. Then blowing some of the particles of powder from his buff waistcoat, he said: "The plight of the lady, Mrs. Creighton, and her daughter, you doubtless know. They cannot continue with us on the river, since their final destination is one of the new settlements in the recently acquired territory—near St. Louis, I believe. Mrs. Blennerhasset has asked my advice; it is, that the ladies be established for the winter at Fort Massac. I think there will be no difficulty in this plan. I am—I am acquainted with the commander." Here Col. Burr cleared his throat, as with tacit deprecation, and took another pinch of snuff.

"In early spring, they can proceed by fixed boat up the river—the Mississippi, Or, in the meantime, if necessity arise, the journey can be made overland. But whatever ultimate plans are decided upon, our present duty is plain. We must provide them with suitable escort." He paused, looking straight at Winslow.

The pause and look were full of meaning, but the younger man ignored both, save by an expression of polite inquiry.

"I think you will agree with me," Burr continued, "that it would be imprudent to leave the ladies at this time in this unsafe country, without one whose sole care would be their comfort. You will also see, that this one must be a gentleman; that he must have courage and address, and above all, must be a person whose company will be agreeable to the ladies in question. You guess my drift, sir?"

"Modesty forbids," and the young man smiled.

"Then, to be direct, let me say that you, of all men, seem best fitted for the charge; if you will undertake it, let me assure you of the gratitude of all concerned."

Winslow drew a deep breath, and in the long pause which followed his eyes gave unseeing about the room. The slight, dark man watching him, read his thoughts, but made no effort to interpret them aloud. At last Winslow spoke: "I am deeply grateful for your confidence, Col. Burr, believe me, I realize the honor. I also realize that hesitation is unchivalrous, but—" a slight pause, then he shrugged his shoulders with ill-concealed impatience, "but all niceties of speech aside, and waiving gallantry, you surely can understand, sir, that I must be disappointed at your command."

"My 'command?'"

"A request from our leader is equivalent to a command; as such I obey it. But frankly state that I am sorry to abandon the quarry—especially now, that the falconer himself is with us."

The leader bowed. "I thank you. Your loyal appreciation makes it hard to part with your services, even temporarily. But we are confronted with a choice of evils. Our chivalry is at stake: it would be a bad beginning to our enterprise were we to fail in duty to women in distress. And I am convinced our duty can be best fulfilled with you their guide and escort."

Winslow shook his head. "Pardon me, but I do not think your choice happy one. It smacks of the heroic, and I—" he glanced at his own slight figure, and threw up his hands with a half-mocking smile. "I am no hero; only a plain country schoolteacher in search of pastures new."

"But you are a brave man, and a gentleman. You have, too, common sense. Valor for valor's sake is obsolete as the shield it accompanied. Of all the synonyms for courage, fortitude is, I think, the best. This, your friends assure me, you possess. Above all, you are particularly congenial to the ladies, and to be frank, the suggestion of your name met with their distant approval."

"That ought to decide the question, if I have a spark of gallantry," Winslow said, lightly.

"Furthermore," Burr continued, "we do not consider that you are giving up the expedition; there will be many opportunities for you to join us later; consider this but a furlough—a release on parole, not a mustering-out." Rising, he added, in low, sibilant tones: "Then we may believe it settled, and the ladies can count upon your services, which, by the way, are not to be underrated. A William schoolmaster with a level head and temper well in hand, is safer guide than a swashing gallant with a too ready sword.

Winslow bowed his thanks, and was about to withdraw, when Aaron Burr stopped him with a slight gesture. "One moment, Mr. Winslow; there is yet another service I would impose; it is a personal favor."

A slight pause followed, which, had Winslow been younger or more enthusiastic, he would have filled with protestations of devotion and pleasure at the prospect of serving the chief. But he only said, "You do me honor, sir," with a grave smile, and waited further instructions.

Burr lowered his voice and stepped closer as he said, "I have been engaged in some correspondence with your commander-in-chief, Col. Wilkinson. Communication with him, however, is difficult, and since what I have written is upon private—I may say, selfish business, I am anxious that the letters fall into no hands but his. Now the favor I would ask of you is the safe delivery of these." He took from the pocket of his waistcoat two bulky envelopes.

Glancing at the address, Winslow said, "I am to deliver these at a given time?"

"I hope you will not have to deliver them at all," was the surprising answer. Then Burr explained: "I expect—I hope to meet Col. Wilkinson at Natchez, or near there. I shall do so if our plans have not miscarried. But he may not have received my instructions; he may yet be in St. Louis, or he may stop at Fort Massac while you are there. In the event I do not meet him, I wish him to have this packet. I expressly desire, too, that nobody else see it; in the hands of the enemy these letters might do me harm."

This speech, delivered rapidly, dramatically, was not without its rousing effect. Winslow carefully transferred the letters to an inside pocket of his waistcoat, and said, cordially, "These are safe with me. And now one question—if it so chance that Col. Wilkinson is not in St. Louis, or from any cause, I find it impossible to deliver them in person, am I to intrust them to anybody else?"

"Under no circumstances, sir," Burr instantly replied, and looked with strange meaning straight into the eyes of his messenger.

Winslow returned the gaze for a moment in silence; then, with flattering assurances of esteem and gratitude, Col. Burr dismissed him, and the interview as over.

Alone, Winslow felt a strange sinking of the heart; it was as though the door were shut upon all his hopes, leaving the future a blank. Then swept over him a feeling half pity, half affection, for the lonely woman thrown thus upon his care. The girlish beauty of the one, and the restful, spiritual charm of the other pleaded bravely against present hopes. Besides, there came the soothing thought that whatever befell, whatever he missed, this was none of his choice; no alternative had been given him; in decency he could not have refused the trust.

"So, after all, I am to be a chevalier! A Don Quixote reincarnate in a nineteenth century domino! My shield, a windmill above a schoolhouse on a field argent!"

He strolled on deck, his spirits almost buoyant. In his philosophy regret had no place—nor, indeed, had enthusiasm. To whichever side the doubtful scale turned he lent purpose and energy. "After all," he thought, "the thing we do is seldom our affair—it is the doing that rests with us."

Before the departure of the boats next day, Aaron Burr lined his followers up on the bank and addressed them in his most eloquent fashion. He admitted that his policy had not been fully outlined to them, but he enjoined patience and hope. The uncertainty of affairs in the south, he said, made final arrangements impossible. Alluding to his arrest on Blennerhasset island, he said:

"Events have transpired which make caution doubly needful. Above all, I urge you to trust me—to have faith in the ultimate success of the expedition. Ours is a high emprise, worthy the souls that follow it. Forward, and may the fortune that favors the brave be ours."

Magnetized by the force of Burr's presence, and alive to the futility of objection at this late day, no opposition was raised, no demand made for more explicit information. Three cheers were given for their leader—less, however, from enthusiasm than in the effort to fan their waning ardor. For the scene was cold and bleak and dreary enough, and as Lavender languidly said, "everybody whistled to keep up his courage."

When the flotilla reached Fort Massac there was no trouble from the militia stationed there. No message had been received of their expected arrival, no orders to detain them. On the contrary, Aaron Burr was greeted with marked attention, which was extended to all of his party. Before leaving the fort, he had an interview with the commander, from whom he won promises of hospitality for those left under his protection.

"I shall esteem it a personal favor, Col. Mitchell, if you will treat the ladies and their escort as your guests for a few weeks—or until such time as they see fit to continue the way."

Under the spell of the speaker's voice and eyes, the commander did not inquire—even of himself—the reasons for complying, nor the possible advantage there might be in conferring the "personal favor." He promised, and the two men took snuff together, the one amiable, condescending—the other admiring, reverent.

Late in the day the boats, with Burr and the Blennerhassets in the lead, proceeded down the river, leaving a forlorn little group to wave farewells from the wharf.

Winslow stood apart, his own disappointment was swallowed up in sympathy for the helpless loneliness of the women at his side. He looked at Lavender as she stood—one arm about her mother's waist, the white face peering from its scarlet hood, and his heart was curiously lightened. After all, he could join the expedition later, and—and, he was not alone.

Soon the boats were lost to view—not a ribbon of foam on the fickle water marked their course—the river was shrouded in a mist that seemed to rise from the under-world.

They turned to seek shelter within doors, when suddenly Lavender asked: "What is that sliding over there?" and she pointed to where, on a fallen tree, by the river's brink, sat a woman—her back toward them. Angular shoulders enveloped in a blanket shawl and a head swathed in a red bandana kerchief, like a bloody bandage, were outlined against the gray walls of the fort.

The head turned at Lavender's exclamation, and white eyeballs, and whiter teeth, shone from an ebony frame, as the woman rose and approached slowly. "Good evenin', y'all," America said calmly, and in reply to their startled question she explained:

"Yo see, it wuz dis a-way. Missy lowed she warn't gwine ter hab 'ell a-stollin' and a-mollin' 'bout no woman ter he'p."

"Yes, but why did you surprise us? Why slip away so mysteriously?"

"La, chile, massa wouldn't a' gibben me up, so at de las' minute missy done sen' me. She say she'll fin' plenty niggahs, 'hat she's gwine."

"How could you slip off without being seen?"

America gave an unctuous chuckle. "Fore God, I done knip'd dat no-count niggah on de slang plank. Yo' he k'ist it, up 'n shuk a rabbit foot in he face, and kin' o' mumbled some hoodoo talk. He jes' rustle like bones, and I run by 'thoutes a word. Dat's me, gilong!"

And thus, a second time, America had her way.

CHAPTER V.

A few weeks passed in monotony at the fort—a monotony wherein was much time for futile planning and idle speculation.

The novelty of the situation and the natural effervescence of her spirits made Lavender gay and light-hearted, in spite of the anxious waiting. But to her mother it was irksome; a period of unrest, and carking care. Her health, too, showed signs of decline, and she felt already the unwholesome breath of the swamp land.

For Winslow, the days dragged in a way that required all his philosophy to bear. Ordinarily, quiet, even dulness, appealed to his student nature. But for this Burr expedition he had nerved himself to a point of unwonted energy; had summoned all his forces against the time for telling work—for endurance. And all for what? For a time of idle waiting—of inaction by the chimney corner of a stranger! He was thrown little in Lavender's society; the officers of the garrison showed her much attention, and in their favor he obscured himself. His attitude was that of the guide, the elder brother, and bore no trace of the warmer admiration openly avowed by the others. He made himself had no part in this arrangement, and if in her heart she wished it otherwise, she acknowledged the weakness to none.

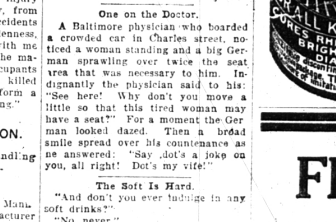
Early in February there came unpleasant news to the fort. The Burr expedition was not a success—something had happened, but definite facts could not be ascertained.

Winslow was in a fever of anxiety and suspense. Ugly rumors were circulated; there was talk of treachery to the government. "Traitor" and "conspiracy" reached his ears from time to time. To Winslow's inquiries the commander responded that he had received no positive information, but believed the boats, with their men, and even the chief himself, had been detained in the south. "Probably but a temporary check," he concluded, suavely. For Winslow's connection with the affair was well known, and the colonel's words were meant to spare his feelings. But Winslow left his presence with a pang of anxiety all the sharper than his fears were half defined. He could only console himself with the reflection that, whatever had occurred was doubtless such an ordeal as had confronted Burr at Nashville, and his own party on Blennerhasset island. In either case, he could not press his inquiries upon the people about him—they had no sympathies in common with the expedition. On the contrary, if aught, however imaginary, threatened the government, theirs was the first duty to protest; they could not be expected to countenance anything which gave the slightest room for suspicion. And he, and the ladies with him, were guests—bound to respect feeling or prejudice on the part of those whose hospitality they shared.

Matters developed, and were brought to a crisis on the occasion of a ball in the commander's quarters.

A raw, blustering day had settled into a foggy, starless night, when the little company assembled for the frolic. The low-ceiled dining-room was thrown open and decorated with holly and mistletoe. About every pillar and above the rough rafter hung festoons of evergreen jeweled with berries, red and white.

In gratification of Lavender's whim, Mrs. Creighton had allowed her to wear the gown in which she, a belle of Philadelphia, had danced at the Meschianza. The once stately folds



"I LEAVE THE TIME AND PLACE TO YOU, SIR," HE SAID

were limp, and the white silk was a faded yellow, but it would ever be treasured in memory of an event which, but to recall, made her heart throb with pride. She was a girl again—tasted again the triumphs of that night, when Lavender courteseied before her.

"Behold the Blended Rose," she said, with mock dignity, strutting about in the fanciful costume. The loose pelonaise and long flowing sash gave an added queenliness to her slender figure, and beneath the queer head dress of lace and feathers her eyes beguiled attention. Her beauty and striking attire won instant homage, and she was surrounded by a bevy of admirers.

Mrs. Creighton was gallantly escorted to the head of the old-fashioned reel by the commander himself.

Winslow, alone, felt neglected—ill-at-ease. Foreboding was beginning to shroud every hour. Solitude was his chief, anxiety for his own fortunes and that of the ladies committed to his charge, occupied his mind to the exclusion of such trivial affairs as a dance, a sprig of mistletoe, or even the smiles of a maid. Once, as he stood apart from the crowd, Lavender passed in the whirls of the dance. Her eyes as they met his for an instant held a challenge, and her feet in the spangled shoes, twinkling under the short petticoat, seemed daring him to follow. He watched her every motion with engrossing interest, even while her beauty, her imperious, care-free manner, angered him. What right had she to be gay and happy when there was so much to dread in the uncertain future?

[To Be Continued.]

A Martinet.

Peppery Captain—"The first man who speaks I punish! Even if it is not the one!—Punch.

BEFORE THE CRASH

SENSATIONS OF OCCUPANT OF RUNAWAY AUTOMOBILE.

Sense of Personal Injury Secondary to That of Control of Machine —Terrific Transit Checked.

"In reading of the many automobile accidents I used to wonder what were the sensations of the occupants of a machine just before the crash, assuming that they lived to relate their feelings," remarked a well-known Washingtonian whose new electric auto has been his delight and the admiration of his friends, says the Star.

"I now know; my machine is in the shop, which is usually the first pleasant experience a new owner has with his car, but luckily for me I am not in the hospital, though it came very near being No. 23 with me. While coming down a hill in the outskirts of the city a few evenings since I applied the brake to slow up. When I say I applied the brake I mean that I followed the instructions in applying the brake. I knew that there was a brake on the machine, of course, for I used it, and since the machine didn't respond my first thought was that the brake had gone off visiting some other brake on the night before and had unkindly forgotten to return home. As the car gathered momentum going down the incline, and the wheels began to spin around like buzz-saws working overtime on a rush order, I realized that the brake had sulked and refused to do duty. The next thought which chased through my mind was to keep the car in the center of the road, provided the steering gear didn't go on a strike for more wages and less hours of labor. The next sensation was a realization that the steering gear would hold to its job and not be led astray by the sulky actions of the recalcitrant brake. In that fleeting second of time this sensation was positive and distinct, and I noted instantly an inspiration of confidence on my part.

"Down at the foot of the hill was a telegraph pole about a mile high, the cement abutments of a bridge which looked as big as the treasury building, a road that seemed to turn off at a sharp right angle, and a large touring auto on the level stretch of the main road that appeared like a huge battleship getting into action to ram. Not being yet hardened to auto accidents, and their pleasing incidents, I wondered if I could perform the acrobatic feat of hitting all the obstructions in succession and putting them out of business seriatim, or whether I would do the flying trapeze leap for life, skip over them in turn, and succeed in getting around that right angle corner which was becoming sharper with every second of my flight.

"I never thought that anything on wheels could go down an inclined plane like that car of mine and not go up in spontaneous combustion from the heat of friction. My next realization was that I had reached the bottom of the hill; that the sharp right-angle developed into an easy turn, and that the wheels had held true and not 'skidded.' My machine butted its nose into an accommodating embankment without half the damage I expected, and I escaped personal injury.

"From the start to the finish of that exhilarating and happily not injurious ride I did not have that terrible sense of impending personal injury with its possibility of broken bones or loss of life which one would think a preliminary in such instances; my mind was entirely on the car and its control, the sense of personal injury was secondary. I should say, from my experience, that such accidents come with such terrific suddenness, as would have been the case with me had my wheels 'skidded' and the machine overturned, that the occupants are either spilled out or are killed almost before the mind can form a realization of what is happening."

PATERNAL SUPERVISION.

Points of Interest in the Handling of Labor in German Communities.

Consul Harris, writing from Mannheim, quotes a German manufacturer whose products go to all quarters of the globe, and whom he heard say that it was not their patents, nor their technical force, but their workmen which gives them a commanding place in this trade. Although German wages are low, Mr. Harris enumerates some of the advantages which German laborers enjoy, as follows:

"Many German concerns own dwelling houses, and rent them to workmen at actual cost. They provide restaurants and meals at actual cost, furnish fuel at wholesale cost, give transportation in whole or part to employes living at a distance, pay pensions in certain cases, and work people's reading rooms, baths, hospitals, savings banks and cooking schools for girls are maintained.

"The annual report of the imperial insurance department for 1905, recently submitted to the reichstag, shows the sums paid to beneficiaries under the compulsory insurance laws in force for the protection to workmen. For accident injuries $32,415,000 was paid to 1,024,773 persons injured, or their dependents, an average of practically one out of every 60 of the total population of the empire. Sick and indigent persons received last year $38,080,000. Annuities were granted to 145,412 persons. To these sums is to be added $40,460,000 paid yearly from the local sick funds (krankenkasse) throughout the empire as sick benefits, burial charges, etc., making a total of about $111,860,000 annually paid as benefits under the workmen's insurance laws now in force. During the same year 200 concerns employing labor paid in gifts to workmen and in permanent funds and other provisions for their welfare, apart from wages, $27,608,000."

Lots to Talk About.

"You two girls do seem to get along so well together. You must like the same things, don't you?"

"Not entirely, but we both hate the same people."—Cleveland Leader.

QUEER DOINGS OF MEN.

A man will always stir his coffee before drinking it. This is very foolish—he should taste it first to see if it needs stirring.

A man subjects the point of his pen to careful scrutiny before commencing to write a letter. A woman starts right off—jabs her pen in the inkpot and straightway begins to scribble as if her life depended on it.

Few men open their personal correspondence without looking at the postmarks to see the time of posting. Women on the other hand, tear open the envelope at once—they are in too much of a hurry to waste any time.

It is the man who lets out secrets—not by telling them, but by ill-timed silences. He does worse—by refusing to gratify the curiosity of his questioners he invariably causes them to jump to conclusions much more damaging than the truth of the matter.

It is the man who reads with his back to the light, holding his book in one hand. Herein lies wisdom. A woman rests her book on the table and leans both elbows thereon. But the foolishness of the man's act lies in the fact that he is seeking comfort and seldom takes this position because it is the most scientific one. Of course, he finds it isn't comfortable—his arm aches after the first ten minutes, whereupon he puts his book down and remarks he is going out.

One on the Doctor.

A Baltimore physician who boarded a crowded car in Charles street, noticed a woman standing and a big German sprawling over twice the seat area that was necessary to him. Indignantly the physician said to his: "See here! Why don't you move a little so that this tired woman may have a seat?" For a moment the German looked dazed. Then a broad smile spread over his countenance as he answered: "Say, dot's a joke on you, all right! Dot's my vife!"

The Soft Is Hard.

"And don't you ever indulge in any soft drinks?"

"No, never."

"Why not?"

"They're too hard on my stomach."—Chicago Tribune.

There may not be more than two inch-s of strawberries, but think of the size of the box with the lumber higher every day.—Detroit Free Press.

THE DOCTOR'S WIFE

Agrees with Him About Food.

A trained nurse says: "In the practice of my profession I have found so many points in favor of Grape-Nuts food that I unhesitatingly recommend it to all my patients.

"It is delicate and pleasing to the palate (an essential in food for the sick) and can be adapted to all ages, being softened with milk or cream for babies or the aged when deficiency of teeth renders mastication impossible. For fever patients or those on liquid diet I find Grape-Nuts and albumen water very nourishing and refreshing. This recipe is my own idea and is made as follows: Stir one teaspoonful of Grape-Nuts in a glass of water for an hour, strain and serve with the beaten white of an egg and a spoonful of fruit juice or flavoring. This affords a great deal of nourishment that even the weakest stomach can assimilate without any distress.

"My husband is a physician and he uses Grape-Nuts himself and orders it many times for his patients.

"Personally I regard a dish of Grape-Nuts with fresh or stewed fruit as the ideal breakfast for anyone—well or sick." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

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FOREIGN FINANCE.

Great Britain's public revenue in April, the first month of the fiscal year, amounted to £18,895, and expenditures, £21,360,261.

New capital issued in London from January 1 to May 5, amounted to $288,788,915, as against $434,216,505 in the same period in 1905.

Total operations of the Bank of Japan in the year 1905 amounted to $14,578,127,060, an increase of $3,744,106,420 compared with 1904.

The annual report of the Banque de Paris for 1905 shows that net profits amounted to only 10,804,883 francs, against 19,411,421 francs in 1904.

A loan of 100,000,000 francs will be shortly put on the Paris market for the French colonies in West Africa. The greater part is intended for Senegal and the Upper Niger, to improve the navigation on the two rivers.

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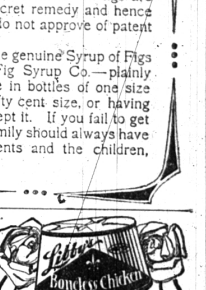

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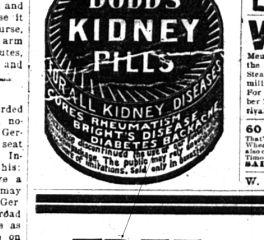

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