

table, and who, as she or any one

Six months went by; I had learned two things; first, that Mary Leavenworth loved her position as prospective heiress to a large fortune above every other earthly consideration; and secondly, that she was in the possession of a secret which endangered that position. What this was, I had for some time no means of knowing. But when later I became convinced it was one of love. I grew hopeful, strange as it may seem. For by this time I had learned Mr. Leavenworth's disposition almost as perfectly as that of his niece, and knew that in a matter of this kind he would be uncompromising; and that in the clashing of these two wills something might occur which would give me a hold upon her. The only thing that troubled me was the fact that I did not know the name of the man in whom she was interested. But chance soon favored me here. One day-a month ago now, I sat down to open Mr. Leavenworth's mail as usual. One letter-shall I ever forget it ? ran thus:

Hoffman House, March 1st, 1876. Mr. Horatio Leavenworth-

You have a niece whom you love and trust, one, too, who seems worthy of all the love and trust that you or any other man can give her; so beautiful, so charming, so tender is she in face, form, manner and conversation. But, dear sir, every rose has its thorn

and your rose is no exception to this rule. Lovely as she is, charming as she is, tender as she is, she is not only capable of trampling on the rights of one who trusted her, but of bruising sternest tone that she had irreparably the heart and breaking the spirit of him to whom she owes all duty, honor

If you don't believe this, ask her to her cruel, bewitching face, who and what is her humble servant and yours, HENRY RITCHIE CLAVERING.

If a bombshell had exploded at my feet, or the evil one himself appeared at my call, I should not have been more astonished. Not only was the name signed to these remarkable words, unknown to me, but the epistle itself was that of one who felt himself to be her master, a position which, as you know, I was myself aspiring to occupy. For a few minutes, then I stood a prey of feelings of the bitterest wrath and despair; then I grew calm, realizing that with this letter in my possession, I was virtually the arbitrator of her destiny. Some men would have sought her there and then, and by threatening to place it in her uncle's hand, won from her a look of entreaty if no more; but I-well, my plans went deeper than that. I knew that she must be in extremity before I could hope to win her. She must feel herself slipping over the edge of the precipice, before she would clutch at the first thing offering succor. I decided to allow the letter to pass into my employer's hands? But it had been opened! How could I manage to give it to him in this condition without exciting his suspicion. I knew of but one way; to let him see me open it for what he would consider the first time. So waiting till he came into the room, I approached him with the letter, tearng off the end of the envelope as I came. Opening it I gave a cursory glance at its contents and tossed it down on the table before him. "That appears to be of a private character," said I, "though there is no

sign to that effect on the envelope." He took it up while I stood there. At the first word he started, looked at me, seemed satisfied from my expression that I had not read far enough to realize its nature, and whirling slowly around in his chair, devoured the remainder in silence. One minute, two minutes passed in silence; he was evidently re-reading the letter; he was hurriedly rose and left the room. As he passed me I caught a glimpse of his hope that was rising in my breast.

By following him almost immediately up stairs I ascertained that he went direct to Mary's room, and when in a few hours later the family collected around the dinner table, I perceived, almost without looking up, that a great and insurmountable barrier had been | Eleanore's, but I did not know it till raised betweeen him and his favorite

Two days passed; days that were for me one long and unrelieved suspense. Had Mr. Leavenworth answered that letter? Would it all end as it had begun, without the appearance of the mysterious Clavering on the scene?

Meanwhile my monotonous work went on, grinding my heart beneath its relentless wheel. I wrote and wrote and wrote, till it seemed as if my life ink I used. Always alert and listening, I dared not lift my head or turn my eyes at any unusual sound lest I should seem to be watching. The third night I had a dream; I have already told Mr. Raymond what it was, and oce will not repeat it here. One correction, however, I wish to make in by me in my dream was my ewn. It was that fact which made it so horrible to me. In the crouching figure stealing warily down stairs, I saw as in a glass, the vision of my own form. Otherwise

win this coveted creature for my n? Was the death of her uncle the dge that was to spen the impassible between us? I began to think it which could make this the only path to my elysium; even went so far to picture her lovely face bending grate-fully towards me through the glare of a sudden release from some emergency in which she stood. One thing was in which she stood. One thing will sure; if that was the way I must go, I had at least been taught how to tread it; and all through the digry, blurred day that followed, I saw as I sat at my work, repeated visions of that stealthy, purposeful figure stealthat stealthy, purposeful figure stealing down stairs and entering with uplifted pistol into the unconscious presence of my employer. I even found myself a dozen times that day turning my eyes upon the door through which it was to come, wondering how long it would be before my actual form would pause there. That the moment was at hand, I did not imagine. Even when I left him that night after drinking with him the glass of sherry mentioned at the inquest, I had no idea the hour of action was so near. But when, not three minutes after going up stairs, I caught the sound of a lady's dress rustling through the hall, and listening, heard Mary Leavenworth pass my door on her way to the li-brary, I realized that the fatal hour was come; that something was going to be said or done in that room which would make this deed necessary. What? I determined to ascertain, Casting about in my mind for the means of doing so, I remembered that the ventilator running up through the house, opened first into the passage way connecting Mr. Leavenworth's bedroom and library, and, secondly, into the closet of the large spare room adjoining mine. Hastily unlocking the door of the communication between the rooms, I took my position in the closet. Instantly the sound of voices reached my airs; all was open below, and standing there, I was as much an auditor of what went on between Mary and her uncle as if I were in the li-

had been the result of impulse rather than love, that she regretted it, and desired nothing more than to be free from all obligations to one she would fain forget, and be again to her uncle what she was before she ever saw this man. I thought, fool that I was, it was a mere engagement she was alluding to, and took the insanest hope from these words, and when in a moment later I heard her uncle reply in his forfeited her claims to his regard and favor, I did not need her short and bitter cry of shame and disappointment, or that low moan for some one to help her, to sound his death knell in my heart. Creeping back to my own room I waited till I heard her reascend, then I stole forth. Calm as I had ever been in my life, I went down the stairs just as I had seen myself do in my dream, and knocking lightly at the library door, went in. Mr. Leavenworth

brary itself. And what did I hear?

Enough to assure me my suspicions

were correct; that it was a moment of

vital interest to her; that Mr. Leaven-

worth, in pursuance of a threat evident-

ly made some time since, was in the act of taking steps to change his will,

and that she had come to make an

appeal to be forgiven her fault and re-

stored to his favor. What that fault

made of Mr. Clavering as her husband.

I only heard her declare that her action

was, I did not learn. No mention was

was sitting in his usual place writing. "Excuse me," said I as he looked up, "I have lost my memorandum book, and think it possible I may have dropped it in the passageway when I went for the wine." He bowed, and I hurried past him into the closet. Once there, I proceeded rapidly into the room beyond, procured the pistol, returned, and almost before I realized what I was doing, had taken up my position behind him, aimed and fired. The result was what you know. Without a groan, his head fell forward on his hands, and Mary Leavenworth was the virtual possessor of the thousands she coveted.

My first thought was to procure the

letter he was writing. Approaching the

table, I tore it out from under his hands, looked at it, saw that it was, as I expected, a summons to his lawyer, and thrust it into my pocket together with the letter from Mr. Clavering which I perceived lying spattered with blood on the table before me. Not till this was done did I think of myself or remember the echo which that low, sharp report must have made in the house. Dropping the pistol at the side of the murdered man, I stood ready to shrick to any one who entered that Mr. Leavenworth had killed himself. But I was saved from committing such a folly. The report had not been heard, or if so, had evidently failed to create an alarm. No one came, and I was left to contemplate my work undisturbed, and decide upon the best course to be taken to avoid detection. A moment's study of the wound made in his head by the bullet convinced me of the impossibility of passing the affair off as a suicide, or even the work of a burglar. To anyone versed in such matters it was manifestly a murder, and a most deliberate one. My one hope, then, lay in making it as mysterface in the mirror. The expression I | ious as it was deliberate, by destroying saw there, did not tend to lessen the all clew to the motive and manner of the deed. Picking up the pistol, I carried it into the other room with the intention of cleaning it, but finding nothing there to do it with, came back for the handkerchief which I remembered having seen lying on the floor at

Mr. Leavenworth's feet. It was Miss I had used it to clean the parrel; then the sight of her initials in one corner so shocked me I forgot to clean the cylinder, and only thought of how I could do away with this evidence of ner handkerchief having been employed for a purpose so suspicious. Not daring to carry it from the room, I sought for means to destroy it, but finding none it deep down behind the cushion of one

compromised the matter by thrusting of the chairs, in the hope of being able to recover it some time next day, when blood went from me with every drop of an opportunity would be given to burn it. This done, I reloaded the pistol, locked it up and prepared to leave the room. But here the horror which usually follows such deeds, struck me like a thunderbolt and made me for the first time uncertain in my action. I locked the door on going out, so I should never have done if I had been regard to it. In my statement to him In the full possession of my faculties. I declared that the face of the man whom I saw lift his hand against my employer was that of Mr. Clavering. I it was too late, for there before me, candle in hand, and surprise written on every feature of her face, stood Hannah, one of the servants, looking at me. "Lor, sir!" she cried, but strange to say, in a low tone; "where have you been? You look as if you had seen a ghost!" And her eyes turned suspic-

we seen if you will come down stairs," I whispered, "the ladies will be dis- plish turbed if we talk here," and smoothing my brow as best I could, I put out my hand and drew her towards me. What my motive was I hardly knew; the action was probably instinctive, but when I saw the look which came into her face as I touched her, and be alacrity with which she prepared to follow me, I took courage, remem the one or two previous tokens I had had of this girl's unreasonable susceptibility to my influence; a susceptibility which I now felt could be utilized and made to serve my purpose.

Taking her down to the parlor floor

I drew her into the depths of the great

drawing room and there told her in the

least alarming way possible what had

happened to Mr. Leavenworth, She was of course intensely agitated, but she did not scream-the novelty of her position evidently awing her as much as it bewildered-and greatly relieved, I went on to say that I did not know who committed the deed, but that folks would declare it was I if they knew I had been seen by her on the stairs with the library key in my hand. "But I won't tell," she whispered, trembling violently in her fright and eagerness. "I will keep it to myself. I will say I didn't see anybody." But I soon convinced her that she could never keep her secret if the police once began to question her, and following up my argument with a little cajolery, succeeded after a long while in winning her consent to leave the house till the storm should be blown over. But that given, it was some little time before I could make her comprehend that she must depart at once without going back after her things. Not till I brightened up her wits by a promise to marry her some day, if she only obeyed me now, did she begin to look the thing in the face and show any evidence of the real mother wit she evidently possess-

her Miss Mary sent me. But I can't get there to-night." I immediately set to work to convince her that she could. The midnight train did not leave the city for half an hour yet, and the distance to the depot could

ed. "Mrs. Belden would take me in."

said she, "if I could only get to R-.

She takes everybody in who asks her;

and she would keep me, too, if I told

be easily walked by her in fifteen minutes-But she had no money! I easily supplied that. And she was afraid she couldn't find her way! I entered into minutest directions. She still hesitated, but at length consented to go, and with some further understanding of the method I was to employ in communicating with her, we went down stairs. There we found a hat and shawl of the cook's which I put on her, and in another moment we mere in the carriage yard. "Remember, you are to say nothing of what has occurred, no matter what happens," I whispered in parting injunction as she turned to leave me. "Remember you are to come and marry me some day" she murmured in reply throwing her arms about my neck. The movement was sudden and it was probably at this time she dropped the candle she had held unconsciously clenched in her hand till now. I promised her, and she glided out of the gate.

Of the dreadful agitation that followed the disappearance of this sirl can give no better idea than by saying I not only committed the additional error of locking up the house on my re-entrance, but omitted to dispose of the key then in my pocket, by flinging it into the street, or dropping it in the hall as I went up. The fact is, I was so absorbed by the thought of the langer I stood in from this girl, I forgot everything else. Hannah's pale face, Hannah's look of terror as she turned from my side and flitted down the street, were continually before me. could not escape them; the form of the dead man lying below was less vivid. It was as though I were tied in fancy to this woman of the white face fluttering down the midnight streets. That she would fail in something-come back or be brought backthat I should find her standing, white and horror-stricken on the front steps when I went down in the morning, was like a nightmare to me. I began to think it must be so, that she never would or could win her way unchallenged to that little cottage in a distant village; that I had but sent a trailing flag of danger out into the world with this wretched girl-danger hat would come back to me with the

first burst of morning light! But even these thoughts faded after while, before the realization of the peril I was in as long as the key and papers remained in my possession. How to get rid of them! I dared not leave my room again, or open my window. Some one might see me and remember it. Indeed I was afraid to move about in my room. Mr. Leavenworth might hear me. Yes, my morbid terror had reached that point-I was fearful of one whose ears I myself had forever closed, imagined him in his bed beneath, and wakeful to the least sound. But the necessity of doing something with these evidences of guilt finally overcame this morbid anxiety, and drawing the two letters from my pocket -I had not yet undressed-chose out the most dangerous of the two, that written by Mr. Leavenworth himself, and chewing it till it was mere pulp, threw it into a corner; but the other had blood on it, and nothing, not even the hope of safety, could induce me to put it to my lips. I was forced to lie with it clenched in my hand, and the flitting image of Hannah before my eyes till the slow morning broke. have heard it said that a year in heaven seems like a day. I can easily believe it; I know that an hour in hell But with daylight came hope. Wheth-

er it was the sunshine glancing on the wall made me think of Mary and all I was ready to do for her sake, or whether it was the mere return of my natural stoicism in the presence of actual necessity, I cannot say. I only know that I arose calm and master of myself. The problem of the letter and key had solved itself also. Hide them? I would not try to! Instead of that, I would put them in plain sight, trusting to that very fact for their being overlooked. Making the letter up into ighters, I carried them into the spare oom and placed them in a vase. Then, taking the key in my hand, went down stairs, intending to insert it in the lock of the library door as I went by. But Miss Eleanore descending almost immeliately behind me, made this impossible. I succeeded, however, in thrust-ing it without her knowledge, among the filagree work of the gas fixture in the second hall, and thus relieved, went lown into the breakfast room, as self-

to the key which I held in my I met her eye, which for a wonder turned upon me as I entered, I could almost have laughed, thinking of the deliverance that had come to her, and self to be the man who had accom-

Of the alarm that speedily follow

and my action at that time and afterwards, I need not speak in detail. I behaved just as I would have done if I had had no hand in the murder Indeed, I tried to forget I had. Even forbore to touch the key or go to the spare room or make any movement which I was not willing all the world should see. For as things stood; there was not a shadow of evidence against me in the house, neither was I, a hard-working, uncomplaining secretary, whose passion for one of his employer's nieces was not even mis-trusted by the lady herself, a person to be suspected of the crime threw him out of a fair situation. So I performed all the duties of my position summoning the police, and going for Mr. Veeley, just as I would have done if those hourse betweenmy leaving Mr. Leavenworth for the first time and going down to breakfast in the morning had been blotted from my con-

And this was the principal upon which I based my action at the in-quest, I resolved to answer all queries put me, as truthfully as I could; the great fault with men situated as I was usually being that they lied too much, committing themselves on unessential matters. But alas in thus planning for my safety, I forgot one thing, and that was the dangerous position in which I should thus place Mary Leavenworth as the one benefited by the crime. Not till the inference was drawn by a juror, from the amount of wine found in Mr. Leavenworth's glass in the morning that he had come to his death shortly after my leaving him, did I realize what an opening 1 had made for suspicion in her direction by admitting that I had heard a rustle on the stair, a few minutes after going That all present believed it to have been made by Eleanore, did not reassure me. She was so completely disconnected with the crime I could not imagine suspicion holding to her for an instant. But Mary-if a cur-

tain had been let down before me, since developed, I could not have seen you my say or do !" more plainly what her position would be, if attention were once directed towards her. So in the vain endeavor to cover up my blunder, I began to lie. Forced to admit that a shadow of disagreement had been lately visible between Mr. Leavenworth and one of his nieces, I threw the burden of it upon Eleanore, as the one best able to bear it, adding to this, denial of the fact that any letter had been received by Mr. Leavenworth which could in any way tend to explain the crime. The consequences were more serious than I anticipated. Direction had been given to suspicion which every additional evidence that now came up, seemed by some strange fatality to strengthen. Not only was it proved that Mr. Leavenworth's own pistol had been used person then in the house, but I my- But recall now was impossible. little while before, how to load, aim and fire this very pistol—a coincidence

mischlevous enough to have been of the devil's own making. Seeing all his, my fear of what the ladies would admit when questioned, became very great. Let them in their innocence acknowledge that upon my ascent. Mary had gone to her uncle's room for the purpose of persuading him not to carry into effect the action he contemplated, and what consequences might not ensue! I was in a torment of apprehension. But events of which I had at that time no knowledge, had occurred to influence them. Eleanore, with some show of reason, as it seems, not only suspected her cousin of the crime, but had informed her of the fact, and Mary, overcome with terror at finding there was more or less circumstantial evidence supporting the suspicion, decided to deny whatever told aganst herself, trusting to Eleanore's generosity not to be contradicted. Nor was her confidence misplaced. Though by the course sne thus took. Eleanore was forced to deepen the prejudice already rife against herself, she not only forbore to comtradict her cousin, but when a true answer would have injured her, actually refused to return any, a lie being something she could not utter, even to save one especially endeared to her. This conduct of hers had one effect

upon me. It aroused my admiration and made me feel that here was a woman worth helping if assistance could be given without danger to myself. Yet I doubt if much would have come of my sympathy, if I had not perceived by the stress laid upon certain well-known matters, that actual danger hovered about us all, while the letter and key remained in the house. Even before the handkerchief was produced, I had made up my mind to a:tempt their destruction, but when that was brought out and shown, I became so alarmed I immediately rose and making my way under some pretense or other to the floors above, snatched the key from the gas fixture, the lighters from the vase, and hastening with them down the hall to Mary Leavenworth's room, went in under the expectation of there finding a fire in which to destroy them. But to my heavy disappointment there were only a few smoldering ashes in the grate, and thwarted in my design, I stood hesitating what to do, when I heard some one coming upstairs. Alive to the consequences of being found

in that room at that time, I cast the lighters into the grate and started for the door. But in the quick move made, the key flew from my hand and slid under a chair. Aghast at the mischance, I paused, but the sound of approaching steps increasing, I lost all control over myself and fled from the room. And indeed I had no time to lose, I had barely reached my own door when Eleanore Leavenworth, followed by two servants, appeared at the top of the staircase and proceeded towards the room I had just left. The sight ressured me; she would see the key and take some means of disposing of it; and indeed I always supposed that she did, for no further word of key or letter ever came to my

This may explain why the questionpositon in which Eleanore soon ound herself awakened in me no greater anxiety. I thought the sus-picions of the police rested upon noth-ing more tangible than the peculiarity of her manner at the inquest, and the discovery of her handkerchief on the scene of the tragedy. I did not know the crime. But if I had, I doubt if 1 should have pursued a more differe

course. Mary's peril was the one thing capable of turning me, and she did not appear to be in peril. On the ntrary, every one by common consent seemed to ignore all appearance of guilt on her part. If Mr. Gryce whom I soon learned to fear, had given one sign of suspicion, or Mr. Ray-mond, whom I speedily recognized as my most persistent though unconsclous foe, had betrayed the least distrust of her, I should have taken warning. But they did not, and fulled into a false security by their manner, I let the days go by without suffering any fears on her account. But not without many anxieties for myself. Hannah's existence precluded all sense of personal security. Knowing the determination of the police to find her, I trod the verge of an awful suspense continually.

forcing itself upon me that I had lost, instead of gained, a hold on Mary Leavenworth. Not only did she evince the utmost horror of the deed which had made her the mistress of her uncle's wealth, but, owing as I believed to the influence of Mr. Raymond, soon gave evidence that she was losing to a certain extent, the characteristics of mind and heart which had made me hopeful of winning her regard by my action. This revelation drove me almost insane. Under the terrible restraint forced upon me. I walked my weary round in a state of mind bordering on frenzy. Many and many a time hae I stopped in my work, wiped my pen and laid it down with the idea that I could not repress myself another moment, but I have always taken it up again and gone on with my task, Mr. Raymond has sometimes shown his wonder at my sitting in my dead employer's chair. Great heaven! it was my only safeguard. By keeping the murder constantly before my mind, I was enabled to re-

Meantime the wretched certainty was

strain my disappointment at its failure to bring me the reward I anticipated. At last there came a time when my agony could be no longer suppressed. Going down the stairs one evening with Mr. Raymond, I saw a strange gentleman standing in the receptionroom, looking at Mary Leavenworth in a way that would have made my blood boil, even if I had not neard him whisper these words, "But you pictured with the future as it has are my wife and know it, whatever

It was the lightning-stroke of my life. After what I had done to make her mine, to hear another claim her as already his own, was stunning, maddening. It forced a demonstration from me. I had either to yell in my fury or deal the man beneath some tremendous blow in my hatred. I did not dare to shriek, so I struck the blow. Demanding his name from Mr. Raymond, and hearing that it was, as I expected, Clavering, I flung caution, reason, common sense, all to the winds, and in a moment of fury denounced him as the murderer of Mr Leavenworth. The next instant I would have given

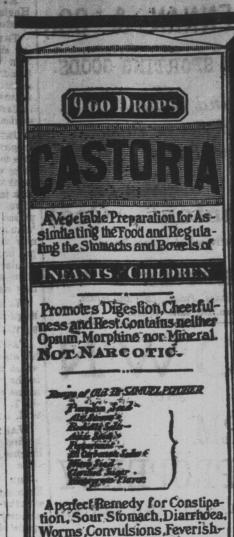
worlds to recall my words. What had I done but drawn attention myself in thus accusing a man against whom in the assassination, and that too by a nothing could of course be proved ! self was brought to acknowledge that | after a night of thought I did the Eleanore had learned from me only a next best thing, gave a superstitious reason for my action, and so restored myself to my former position without eradicating from the mind of Mr. Raymond that wague doubt of the man, which my own safety demanded. But I had no intention of going any further, nor should I have done so if I had not observed that for some reason Mr. Raymond was willing to suspect Mr. Clavering. But that once seen, revenge took possession of me, and I asked myself if the burden of this crime could be thrown on this man. Still I do not believe that any results would have followed if I had not overheard a whispered conversation between two of the servants, in which of the murder, but was not seen to leave it. That determined me. With a fact like that for a starting point, what might I not hope to accomplish? Hannah alone stood in my way. While she remained alive I saw nothing but ruin before me. I made up my mind to destroy her and satisfy my hatred of Mr. Clavering at one blow. But how? By what means could I reach her without deserting my post, or make away with her without exciting fresh suspicion? The problem seemed insolvable; but Trueman Harwell had not played the part of a machine so long without result. Before I had studied the question a day, light broke upon it, and I saw that the only way to accomplish my plans was to inveigle her into destroying herself.

No sooner had the thought matured than I hastened to act upon it. Knowing the tremendous risk I ran, I took every precaution. Locking myself up in my room, I wrote her a letter in printed characters-she having distinctly told me she could not read writing-in which I played upon her ignorance, foolish fondness and Irish superstition, by telling her I dreamed of her every night and wondered if she did of me, was afraid she didn't, so enclosed her a little charm which if she would use according to directions (which were that she should first destroy my letter by burning it, next take in her hand the packet I was careful to enclose, swallow the powder accompanying it, and go to bed) would give her the most beautiful visions-The powder was a deadly dose of poison and the packet was as a forged confession falsely cr. Henry Clavering. Enclosing al Ithese in an envelope in the corner of which I had marked a cross, I directed it, according to agreement, to Mrs. Bel-

den and sent it. Then followed the greatest period o pense I had yet endured. Though I had purposely refrained from putting my name to the letter, I felt that the chances of detection were very great The last departure from the course had marked out for her, would prove fatal. If she opened the enclose packet, or mistrusted the powder; took Mrs. Belden into her confidence, even failed to burn my letter, all would be lost. I could not be sure of her or know the result of my scheme except through the newspapers. Do you thing I kept watch of the countenances about me? devoured the telegraphic news, or started when the bell rang? And when a few days since I read that short paragraph in the paper which assured me that my efforts had at least produced the death of the woman I feared, do you think I experienced

But of that why speak? In six hours had come the summons from Mr. Gryce, and—Let these prison walls, this confession itself, tell the rest, I am no longer capable of speech or

(Concluded on page 7.)



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