

A NIGHT IN AUSTIN FRIARS

BY T. S. E. HAKE.

CHAPTER I.

The gray fog that had sailed up the Thames at sunrise, favoured by wind and tide, had come to anchor over London, and evidently meant to stay. It had gradually transformed itself into a dense mass. During that wintry day—in the City at least—time had got out of joint. The great thoroughfares had become hopelessly congested with heavy traffic. The mails from the country and abroad were considerably delayed. Travellers who had journeyed a thousand miles by land and sea—who calculated to reach their destination at a fixed date—began to peer out of carriage windows in consternation and blank despair. To many it was a serious matter; to some it was even a matter of life and death.

The royal mail from Dover to London was hours overdue. Among the first-class passengers by this train was a young traveller in a fur coat, who sat in a corner of his carriage impatiently consulting his watch. There was a small black valise on the seat at his side, and it seemed obvious that this valise—or, more strictly speaking, its hidden contents—occupied his almost undivided thoughts. His look seldom rested a moment elsewhere. If the valise had been possessed of the power or will to escape him, he could not have kept upon it a keener guard; and when the train at last reached London Bridge, and the traveller stepped into a cab, he grasped the handle of his valise with nervous tension, while in answer to the cabman's stereotyped inquiry, "Where to, sir?" he called out:

"Austin Friars."

At the arched entrance to Austin Friars he dismissed his cab. A few paces and he found himself in an open square. There were mansions on all sides with a distinct look about them of bygone days.

"Ah! that should be the house," he muttered while approaching a big corner mansion. "Bad luck! It's past office hours. But mightn't I find Mr. Grinold still at his desk?"

The house had stone steps, with iron railings that led up on either side to a pair of massive oak doors. These doors shared in common the shelter of a heavy shell-shaped canopy that frowned overhead. Under this canopy there was a gas-lamp; it brightened a limited circle of space, giving a look of intensity to the fog beyond. The traveller mounted these steps and stopped under the lamp. He took a card from his pocketbook. Upon the card was written, "Mr. Gilbert Ringham, British and Cairo Bank." He now glanced with some perplexity at the two entrances, for there was a broad panel between them, upon which was inscribed 13a. It was the address to which he had been directed, without a doubt—13a Austin Friars. But which of the two houses claimed this number? Gilbert Ringham bent down to examine more closely the twin doors.

Upon the left-hand one he discovered nothing, but upon the right-hand door he made out "Anthony Grinold" in faded letters. He was about to raise the knocker, when he noticed that the door stood slightly ajar. "Good luck!" said he. The office was not yet closed, and pushing open the door, which instantly yielded to his touch, he stepped into the hall. It was broad and lofty, and the carved-oak panelling was black with age. Where were a number of doors, as he could just perceive in the dim light, but they were all locked. Ringham mounted to the first floor; he met with the same experience. Mr. Grinold's counting-house was closed for the day. He had arrived too late.

Gilbert Ringham stood at the staircase window, that looked out upon the square, to consider what would be the best course to pursue in order to find Mr. Grinold with the least possible delay. He had come in all haste from Cairo upon an errand that demanded shrewdness and tact. He took the letter of recommendation from his pocket. It was addressed to "Mr. Anthony Grinold, 13a Austin Friars;" and Ringham had been instructed to deliver it to that gentleman. He was to hold no communication whatever on the subject of his errand with any other person or persons. That had been impressed upon him with due emphasis. Would it be feasible to see Mr. Grinold to-night? He put his valise upon the deep window-sill and sat down. Where did Mr. Grinold live? He had not the remotest conception. He would go forth and take every means in his power to ascertain. He must find him to-night.

Seizing the valise and rising hastily, Ringham was about to descend the stairs, when he heard a quick, light footfall upon the stone steps outside, immediately beneath the window at which he was standing. Next moment the front door was pulled to with a loud bang, and the key grated in the lock. A full sense of the mishap was instantly realized. He sprang to the window and tried to force it open; but the framework was old, the bolt rusty and immovable. He peered eagerly into the fog and listened for the footfall on the steps. But no one came in sight, no sound reached his ear.

The canopy that hung over the twin doors was some feet below this staircase window. Could the person who had locked him in be still standing under it? Ringham had raised his hand to tap on the window-pane—to break it if need be—when a girl in a dark cloak and fur-trimmed hat stepped from under the great shell. For an instant she raised her face so that the light fell fully upon it as from a shaded lamp, and then she turned nimbly on her heels and was gone.

During that moment of chance Ringham lost his head. Instead of tapping at the window to attract the girl's attention—much less breaking the pane—he had stared out in pure wonder and amaze. What a vision! Did the eyes of man ever before rest upon anything

more beautiful anywhere—least of all in a foggy old City square? It must have been mere fancy—an hallucination—or possibly a spirit of the mist that had haunted this spot in those lonely, marshland days of centuries gone by, before even the Augustine friars came to dwell there.

Meanwhile the staircase had become quite dark. Not only had the fog closed in about Austin Friars; it was night. Gilbert Ringham struck a match, and went down into the hall to make sure that he was actually locked in. All doubt was quickly set at rest; no exit by the front-door was possible. He reascended the stairs with the thought to explore the upper floors. The rooms consisted of attics, as he soon ascertained; and all of the doors of these attics were locked. But in one of the doors he found a key. He hastened to turn this key, though not without a certain sense of trepidation after so many disappointments. The door opened noiselessly, and he went into the room.

Striking another match—he had already nearly exhausted his supply—Ringham made out this room to be a moderate-sized garret. It was furnished as a sort of private office or study. A thick, though somewhat threadbare, Turkey rug covered the centre of the floor. A heavy old-fashioned bureau stood against the wall, opposite the garret window. On either side of a diminutive fireplace there was a cupboard, and Ringham expended a match on each of these in order to examine them minutely. The locks were turned in both of them, the keys gone, and the key-holes blocked with dust and cobwebs. A capacious arm-chair was drawn up near the empty hearth. That chair should be his resting-place for the night. He bolted the door. Then, having contrived to unlock his valise in the darkness, he spread it open upon the rug. And now he lighted the last match. The dim flame lit up for a moment the contents of his valise. The space on one side was filled up with a bundle of foreign bonds, while the other side held a few necessary articles of clothing, a sandwich-box, and a flask of brandy.

The match-light struggled feebly and went out. Ringham groped his way to the arm-chair, having secured the sandwich-box and brandy, and sat down resignedly to consume his frugal supper.

At first he fumed considerably over the situation; but presently, becoming restless and refreshed, he began to take a more philosophical view of things. When entrusted with this parcel of foreign bonds—valued at thirty thousand pounds—he had been ordered to let out no hint that he held them, except to Mr. Grinold in person. Had he not acted with intuitive wisdom and foresight after all? By shouting down to the girl under the lamp to come back and release him, he would have incurred a needless risk. Had she taken alarm and roused the neighbourhood, the truth about his confidential business with Anthony Grinold might have leaked out. With this consoling reflection Gilbert Ringham buttoned his fur coat tightly about him, and presently dropped off into a sound sleep.

The red dawn that looked in at the garret window next morning forced Ringham by slow degrees to open his eyes. For one hazy moment, while blinking at the light, he had no conception of his whereabouts; and then it all came back to him; the closing of the door—the lovely vision under the lamp in the old square—the responsible errand upon which he had come to the house of Grinold of Austin Friars. He rose in haste, glancing round the garret, curious to inspect it more closely by daylight. Of a sudden his eyes rested upon the valise lying agape upon the floor, as he had left it when his last match went out. A ray of sunlight was pointing directly down upon it. The space on one side was empty. The foreign bonds had disappeared.

Ringham's consternation increased to a sense of horror when he came to examine the garret door. The bolt was undrawn; it rested in the socket, precisely as he had adjusted it before unlocking his valise. How could the robbery have been achieved? No possible clue to the mystery presented itself to his distracted mind. He made a thorough inspection of the room, without any reassuring result. The walls were whitewashed and bare, and the flooring was too smooth and securely nailed down to awaken suspicion of trap-doors. The window was festooned with cobwebs and the dust and cobwebs about the locks of the cupboard doors showed no sign of having been disturbed.

Ringham gave up the search in pure bewilderment. He went out upon the stairs; there was some one moving about on one of the floors below, for he could hear the thumping and skirmishing of a broom. It was an opportune moment in which to make an exit. While at the head of the staircase, listening, the bells of the neighbouring church clocks caught his ear; and in the midst of these minor sounds that echoed clearly over the still noiseless City, there boomed forth the great bell of St. Paul's.

"Seven!"

(To Be Continued.)

To insure cleanliness in the handling of bread, the bakers of Berlin put each loaf in a paper bag just after it is baked.

It is a curious fact that the women of Manchuria, China, are forbidden by imperial edict to bandage their feet into little feet. The Manchus are the strong governing race in China, and the fanciful might hold that there was some connection between the stout stride of its women and the stout hearts and strong bodies of its sons.

HOW SHE WON.

CHAPTER XI.—Continued.

When dressed that night for the ball, she looks very unlike a village maiden who would be overwhelmed by the condescension of any Lord of Burleigh however lofty his station, or who would pine away.

"Nearth the burden of an honor, Unto which she was not born."

She wears the famous Leigh saphires, and her rich satin robe is of the same deep hue, chastened by draperies of fine white lace caught up by natural flowers. Her hair is braided high up behind her coronet, and her neck and arms are gleaming with jewels. She looks like a queen in her own right. Any man might be proud to win her love, or even her hand.

The duchess comes forward to meet her with outstretched hands, and stooping, kisses her solemnly on the brow. To the onlookers it is as though a seal had been set upon her, that from this time she is received into the bosom of that august family which for centuries past has ruled the country with a rod of iron.

To Lady Leigh the demonstration is eminently distasteful, and she shrinks away from the caress with an impatient movement of disdain.

"Dancing has not commenced," says the duchess, graciously; "we have only waited for you."

"You are very good."

Guessing nothing from the coldness of the reply or thinking perhaps that it arises from the dignity and nonchalance which she has so often admired as signs of her favorite's high breeding, and good taste, her grace goes on unsuspectingly.

"I believe my son is wishing to engage you for this dance. I hope he will not be disappointed."

Lady Leigh's next words admit of no mistake.

"I shall be very happy to dance with Lord Downe later on in the evening; at present I dare say he has older and more important friends to engage his time, and I shall sit out the first few dances."

The Duchess of Downshire is dumfounded, and follows Lady Leigh's retreating figure with angry amazed eyes. Her son, with his vision somewhat cleared to the truth, makes the best of his way after her, determining to put his fate to the test at once.

"Did you mean more than you said just now?" he asks, anxiously, as he reaches her side, lowering his voice so that others may not hear.

"I meant all I said," she answers, impressively.

"I scarcely understand."

"Will you force me to explain?" "I should not like to lose what I am so wishful to win for the want of a few plain words."

He might guess from her manner that there is no hope; but until now everything has combined to prove to him that he is invincible, and he cannot learn a contrary lesson all at once. His plain face becomes excited into positive good looks at this prospect of being thwarted. It is the newest sensation she could have provided for him.

"If I had danced the first dance with you, Lord Downe, it would, in the circumstances, have been construed into an acceptance of your addresses. It would have been unfair to let you for a moment suppose that such a thing might come to pass."

Her face is a pained crimson as she speaks, and his tones are as low and as earnest as her own when, after a short pause, he answers her again.

"And your decision is final?"

"Quite."

Then seeing that it is his pride, not his heart, that is hurt, she adds, kindly:

"Do not trouble about it; it will all come right, and no one knows what has passed between us. Do not blame me for the publicity. I only heard the rumor to-night for the first time. Let it rest, now, and people will forget."

"I shall not forget. I shall remember your goodness always. Do you think I do not see how generously you have acted in sparing me the pain of making a proposal only to be rejected? Most women would have enjoyed the triumph—most women would have accepted me, whether loving me or not."

"Do you think so ill of us, indeed, we do not deserve it!"

"Then the bitterness is permissible on your part only?" with a meaning smile.

A beautiful blush suffuses her face.

"I have foresworn my unphilanthropic tenets. I do believe in the goodness of men at last."

"Happy man who has taught you faith!" he says, gallantly, and, with a low bow, moves away.

The ball goes on, and it is at its height when Colonel Dare enters the room with Mr. Meade.

"They are nice rooms for dancing; it is a pity they are so seldom used," says Colonel Dare, looking round him.

"They would not be open now were it not for Lady Leigh."

"Why is that? How do you mean?" sharply.

"She is engaged to marry Lord Downe, and this is the evening of betrothal, I believe. The Downshires are of German extraction, and think an engagement is binding as the marriage vows."

Colonel Dare winces, but makes a bold effort to hide how hard the blow has struck.

"It might be awkward if that idea became general. Lovers' vows are usually made to be broken."

But the cynicism does not impose upon the acuteness of the Heathen Chinese. "I believe you were taken yourself with the beautiful 'shy widow.' Why did you leave Leigh Park?" he inquires, bantering.

"Shy widow?"

"Yes, that is the name I gave her. Tell me, Dare—did she ever find you out?"

"I would rather not speak about it, Graver, and—hush! here she comes."

"Let me present you in your proper

person," says Mr. Meade, impulsively, and scarcely knowing what he does, Colonel Dare nods compliance.

"Lady Leigh, may I introduce a friend to you—Colonel Dare."

She turns pale, but is too proud to show a sign of the confusion she feels. Her composure is perfect and her manner that of a lady who sees a stranger for the first time.

"May I have the honor of this next dance?"

Colonel Dare speaks so humbly that she is disarmed and murmurs an assent. In another moment they are passing on together, her hand resting lightly on his arm, leaving the Heathen Chinese chuckling.

"Lady Leigh, I believe I have to congratulate you. Is it not so?"

"On what, Colonel Dare?"

"On your engagement to Lord Downe. You have my sincere hopes for your happiness."

"Thanks for the good wishes; they are always acceptable. But the conjecture is a false one—I am not, nor never shall be, engaged to marry Lord Downe."

"Ah!"

There is a deep-drawn breath, and then a long silence, which she is the first to break, with a laughing light in her eyes, and mimicking his rather stiff and pompous tones.

"Colonel Dare, I believe I have to condescend to you."

"On what, Lady Leigh?" he answers, light-hearted enough, now that he knows the falseness of that report, to enter into her humor.

"On the shortness of your memory. It is not so very long since we last met, and yet the other day—"

He inclines his head to her level as she pauses, and his tones are very low when he replies:

"I could only have one reason for that, Lady Leigh. I did not wish to compromise you by admitting, that there had been a previous acquaintance. Was I very wrong?"

"No, very right. You are always right," she exclaims, quickly, and then adds, "I want you to forgive me for so much, Colonel Dare."

"Won't you cry quits?" he asks, gently. "I, too, was so much to blame."

"You saved my boy's life. You must have thought me a monster of ingratitude to forget that."

"You know well what I thought, and think still—that Lady Leigh is the most perfect woman to which the world can lay claim," he answers, simply.

He has led her into an empty conservatory, where the flowers are full of fragrance, and a cool night air is blowing in. Some minutes they stand there, musing. Then he speaks again.

"When may I come back—and teach Rollo?"

The question, in its full significance, falls on Lady Leigh's ears like a strain of sweetest music, and she turns away her face lest he should see the sudden light that has brightened it at his words.

"You will have to teach me, too," she whispers, shyly.

"I will teach you both, dear Jenny."

"How did you know my name?" she asks, trying, with a woman's perversity, born perhaps of cowardice, to defer a little longer the end that is coming fast.

He draws a book from his breast coat pocket and opens it at the written superscription.

"I have had it all the time," he exclaims, and then again he says very earnestly, "Jenny, darling, Jenny, when will you come to me to be taught the lesson that only love can teach?"

She does not speak even then, but she turns and hides her face on his shoulder, and he is more, far more than content. Lady Leigh's sore and wayward heart has found its master at last, and she is not too old to begin life again under these new and happier circumstances.

"What will they say?" she asks, after awhile, clasping her hands in pretty dismay. "What will they say at this sudden ending of a romance of which they have not seen the beginning?"

"Let them say what they will. I care not, so that you are mine."

"But there is Rollo. He may refuse his consent, and then—"

"And then I must marry you without it," he answers, laughing, seeing no fear of that. "Be content, sweet, there is no escaping from the bondage of love, it will hold you too tightly, too close."

She lifts her face to his, and smiles fearlessly into his passionate eyes.

"Let it be as I wish this once, until I take up my vows of obedience. Court me over again, dear, because the world is so censorious, and I should not like our happiness spoiled by its spite. Besides—looking down demurely—"I shall not be sorry for the reprieve."

He folds her tenderly in his arms.

"Let it be as you wish—to the last, Shy Widow!"

The End.

SEVEN HUNDRED YEARS OF COAL.

According to the most authentic history of the coal trade, last year marked the seven hundredth anniversary of the use of coal as fuel. Taking the most moderate estimate of the antiquity of man, and considering the fact that the coal was always here, it appears that we were a long time in availing ourselves of this most valuable asset which nature placed at our disposal. Many civilizations flourished and died out without its use, and it may be said that its potentialities, as a factor in the progress of mankind, were never realized fully until the present century. Up to its dawn aside from the warming of the body and the cooking of food, little importance was attached to the fuel question. For these purposes a few fagots or billets of wood sufficed. But in time we discovered that in the fire there was a giant a thousand times more powerful than the feeblest monsters of antiquity.

The average consumption of beer in Munich is four steins a day for each man, woman and child.

HEART WEAKNESS.

MUST BE TREATED IN TIME OR ENDS IN CERTAIN DEATH.

Some of the symptoms are Palpitation After Slight Exertion, Sometimes Severe Pains, Dizziness and Fainting Spells—It Can Be Cured.

From the Echo Plattsville, Ont.

The Echo has read and has published many statements from people who have been cured of various ailments by the timely and judicious use of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People, but never before have we had such personally convincing proof of their efficacy as in the case of Mrs. George Taylor, who with her husband and family reside in this village. To an Echo reporter Mrs. Taylor gave the following history of her illness and cure, and asked that it be given the widest publicity, so that others might be benefited: "I am thirty-two years of age," said Mrs. Taylor, "and in 1888 my husband and myself were living on a farm in Perth county, and it was there I was first taken sick. The doctor who was called in said I was suffering from heart trouble, due to nervous debility. All his remedies proved of no avail, and I steadily grew worse. The doctor advised a change, and we moved to Moncton, Ont. Here I put myself under the charge of another physician, but with no better results. At the least exertion my heart would palpitate violently. I was frequently overcome with dizziness and fainting fits. While in these my limbs would become cold and often my husband thought I was dying. I tried several medicines advertised to cure troubles like mine, but with no better results, and I did not expect to recover, in fact I often thought it would be better if the end came, for my life was one of misery. We moved back to the farm, and then one day I read the statement of a lady who had been cured of similar troubles by the use of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, so I said to my husband that I would try this medicine and it seemed to me that it was my last chance. Before the first box was finished I felt an improvement in my appetite and felt that this was a hopeful sign. By the time I had used three boxes more my trouble seemed to be entirely gone, and I have not felt a single recurrence of the old symptoms. Since moving to Plattsville, I have used two boxes and they had the effect of toning up the system and curing slight indispositions. Today I am a well woman and owe my life to Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, and to me my restoration seems nothing short of a miracle. I was like one dead and brought back to life, and I cannot speak too highly of this medicine, or urge too strongly those who are afflicted to give it a trial."

It has been proved time and again that Dr. Williams' Pink Pills cure heart troubles, nervous debility, rheumatism, sciatica, St. Vitus' dance and stomach trouble. They make new blood and build up the nerves, restoring the glow of health to pale and sallow faces. Be sure you get the genuine as there is no other medicine "the same as" or "just as good" as Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. If your dealer does not have them they will be sent post paid at 50 cents a box or six boxes for \$2.50 by addressing the Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont.

THE NEW GERMAN SABBATH.

Quite Unlike the Thing Canadians Suppose It to Be.

Remember the Sabbath day. In Berlin one is not very likely to forget it. When we read the newest police regulations affecting the outer observance of Sundays and holy days, one feels that the Scotch Sabbath is not in it. It is the Glasgow Sunday of Rob Roy when a man might be arrested for idling in kirk time. The first restrictions quoted seem mild, perhaps even salutary. All noisy trades and callings are forbidden during the hours of morning service so far as they interfere with the Sunday rest. The beer waggon may not wag, and the roll waggon may not roll, the furniture van must not rumble down the peaceful streets, and people may not change houses on Sunday morning. But who that could pay his rent would want to? Soon, however, we come to a stricter ruling. On Sundays, days of penitence, and through passion week, private festivities are forbidden if they interfere with such days. Into the house, the police don't exactly intrude, but if the different flats fail to agree on the question then the police right comes in again. And finally, here is the gem of the whole document. People are graciously permitted to tend and water their flowers in their gardens and balconies on any hour of Sunday except the hours of morning divine service—then they may not. The moral of it all seems to be—either go to the church or keep safely in bed.

A BETTER ARRANGEMENT.

Mr. Miserly Skinner—What's your terms?

Dr. Killquick—Fifty dollars if I save you; nothing if you die.

Mr. Miserly Skinner—Make it vice-versa and neither of us will miss the money.

JUST BEFORE THE FIGHT.

Tommy—Pop, what is the lull before the storm?

Papa—The honeymoon, my son.

CORRECT PRESCRIPTION.

I shall prescribe a bicycle for you, Mrs. Frankstown, said Dr. Pellet to his patient, after an examination.

(Good!) replied Mrs. Frankstown, and it must be a chainless bicycle, of course.