

STRONGER THAN DEATH OR A RANSOMED LIFE

CHAPTER I.

"Mad from Life's history,
Glad to Death's mystery
Swift to be hurled,
Anywhere, anywhere
Out of the world."

As he glided on swift, smooth wheels along the broad Embankment from Westminster towards the City his eyes lit for a moment on the figure of a young girl walking close to the river wall far on in front of him. It was a casual, almost an unconscious glance. She caught his eye because she was so strangely out of keeping with the glad June morning. The air was brisk and the sky blue. The beautiful world looked its best. In the gardens to the left children sported, and sparrows chirped, and flowers bloomed; on the right the bright river rippled and smiled in the sunshine. But in every line of that dropping figure misery made itself felt. She was, in appearance, little more than a child. The shabby black dress clung close to her slender form, and a thick coil of yellow hair hung disordered over her shoulder. She walked swiftly, yet falteringly, with sudden stops and quick glances at the water. All this the keen, dark eyes of the man noticed half-consciously as he closed in on her at the rate of ten yards a second.

Ten seconds more and he had gone by, and she in the same moment had died; on so slight a thing life hangs. But suddenly, just as he was close behind, the girl swung herself over the low wall of the Embankment, and went down with a splash into the water.

He dropped off behind his bicycle at the spot where she had vanished; his spinning pedal grated harshly on the kerbstone, and he was over the Embankment wall so swiftly after her that it seemed but one plunge. He saw the dark outline far down dimly through the water and struck out for it. The limp figure yielded lightly to his touch as he went plunging up to the surface of the river. Luckily the tide set strongly, and a dozen strong strokes with the quick current carried him to the landing-stage of the steamboats close at hand.

A human cargo had just been landed there; and a cheer broke out as he reached the stage with his burthen, and a score of willing hands were stretched to help him. But he needed no help. Little as a cat he clambered on to the stage, making nothing of his burthen. With strength and dexterity combined he pushed or edged his way rapidly through the crowd, still carrying the limp, light form, from which the water dripped.

A crowd had already gathered outside, and there was another cheer as he came upon the footway. His tall figure showing clear over the throng, he raised his hand and beckoned to a passing hansom. In an instant it dashed smoothly up to the kerbstone beside him, scattering the crowd recklessly to right and left.

"To the hospital, sir?" said the driver, as the unconscious girl was lifted to the seat.

"No; the Cecil Hotel, as fast as you can drive."

He stepped in beside his charge, and they were whirled away, the crowd still cheering, and the inevitable policeman showing in the distance—late.

The hansom dashed headlong from the busy street into a quiet courtyard, an oasis of rest in the very

heart of strident London. All round the place were men and women lazily breakfasting, chatting, lounging, or smoking in the shady verandah. Every eye was turned on the hansom that charged furiously in and pulled up sharp, with a scramble and scuffle of wheels and hoofs, at the hotel door.

They saw a tall man leap out dripping wet with a girl dripping wet in his arms. He tossed the driver a sovereign, and disappeared into the hotel. Yet not so fast but he was recognized by the fashionable crowd that clustered in the verandah or loitered round the door.

"It's Dr. Vivian Ardel," said an American, clean-shaven and long-faced, who was dawdling over his breakfast in the verandah to the right of the entrance. "The smartest man in London, I reckon; gives our Edison fits."

"And the richest," added his placid, commonplace wife. "They say he's worth as many millions as he can count on his fingers."

"And the handsomest," cried the dainty daughter, sparkling with vivacity. "I saw him last week, when he'd what you call 'carried his bat' at Lords. The people were cheering like mad, and he looked just too fetching in flannels."

Meanwhile Dr. Vivian Ardel, careless of comment, with his helpless burthen went up the broad, shallow steps of the great marble staircase two at a time. At the second landing he came face to face with the head-chambermaid, a stout, middle-aged woman, who stared in open-eyed bewilderment at the dripping man and the dripping woman in his arms.

"Show me to a vacant bedroom," he said, in that clear, low tone which begets obedience; "get hot-water bottles and flannels, and a flask of brandy. Quick, woman! it's a matter of life or death!"

Very softly he laid his burthen down on the deep velvety carpet of the room. The water streamed from her in little ponds and rivulets, or stood out in bright round beads on the thick tufts of the carpet. As she lay there, with the damp garments clinging to her motionless form, to an inexperienced eye she was quite dead. Her body and limbs were limp as a newly-shot bird's. Her face wore death's color; there was no breath from her lips or motion at her heart.

But Dr. Ardel did not despair. In his dark eyes there was a resolute confidence of one who has often battled at close quarters with death, and won. He plucked a plump velvet cushion from the couch and set it under the girl's shoulders, so that the body lay in a slight slope on the floor. Then he put back the thick dank coils of dead gold hair that fell across her face, and pressed the white cheeks gently with his fingertips till the small blue lips opened, the double row of narrow white teeth unclenched, and the tongue's tip showed. Leaning over the body, he firmly pressed her elbows to her sides, and slowly raised her arms till they were extended at full length over her head. Again and again, smoothly and slowly, the motion was repeated with patient persistence.

The chambermaid came softly into the room, laden with hot-water bottles, flannels, and brandy-flask.

"Take off her boots and chafe her feet," Dr. Ardel ordered, without ceasing a second from his work.

The woman had been a nurse in her time. With the quick masonry

of the hospital these two knew each other in a moment, as officer and soldier know each other in mufti. She obeyed at once, quietly and dexterously, crouching on the carpet with the little naked feet, pure and chill as white marble, in her lap.

Up and down, up and down the limp arms moved a score of times at least in a minute and a half, and still the girl lay to all seeming dead. But the doctor's quick eye saw a change. His head went down close to her left side, and his ear, sensitive as a hunted hare's, rather felt than heard a faint pulsation like the quiver of a thread.

Steadily they worked on, those two, in silent, patient conflict with threatening death, so silently that the ticking of the doctor's watch was the only sound heard in the room.

Then his finger-tips touched the girl's slim wrist, and he broke the silence at last,—

"The brandy, nurse."

With his fingers still on her pulse he let a dozen drops of the strong spirit trickle from the spoon through the blue lips. Yes! the threadlike quiver was more perceptible, and a faint glow like the flickering rose tint in the heart of an opal showed waveringly in the white cheek.

Hospital discipline had hitherto kept the nurse silent, but now the woman in her conquered the nurse.

"Is she dead, doctor?" she asked, with a gasp of intense eagerness.

"No; nor like to die, I hope. Get her to bed now as quickly as you can; light the fire in the room and set the hot-water bottle at her feet. I will return in twenty minutes. Will that give you time enough?"

"Plenty, sir; a quarter of an hour will do."

He paced up and down the corridor impatiently, and was back in the room sharp at the appointed time.

A warm fire blazed cheerily in the room and the girl was in bed, the nurse standing beside it.

"Conscious yet?" he asked abruptly.

"No, doctor; showed no sign of life."

Again he let the brandy trickle slowly through her lips. The faint rose tint grew steadier on her cheek and the pulse beat more evenly at his finger-tips. As he bent over her the eyelids raised without warning, and eyes blue as forget-me-nots looked straight into his own; vaguely at first, but remembrance and misery dawned slowly in their translucent depths and her whole body quivered as though with pain.

The pain in her face shadowed the dark eyes that gazed upon her, so keen was his sympathy. A faint pitiful moan was heard, and her lips moved in vain attempt to speak. Then his face suddenly took on a look of command. Once, twice, three times his hands moved in rapid passes before her eyes. Remembrance and pain died at once out of her face; softly the lids began to droop till the long dark lashes rested on the white cheeks and she lay placid and motionless.

"Sleep!" he said softly, with his lips close to the shell-like ear that peeped from the thick clusters of yellow hair. "Sleep!" and the answer came back faint and far-away from the mystic region of dreams—"I sleep."

"Forget your sorrows," he whispered back. "Sleep a restful sleep till I tell you to awake."

She breathed a gentle, placid little sigh and nestled her cheek cosily to the yielding pillow; her breath came soft and slow, and her sweet lips parted in a happy smile.

Pity, keen almost to pain, was in Vivian Ardel's heart as he gazed on her.

Piles

To prove to you that Dr. Chase's Ointment is a certain and absolute cure for each and every form of itching, bleeding and protruding piles, the manufacturers have guaranteed it. See testimonials in the daily press and ask your neighbor what they think of it. You can use it and get your money back if not cured. 60c a box, at all dealers or EDMANSON, BATES & Co., Toronto.

Dr. Chase's Ointment

"Poor child!" he said softly; "so young, so beautiful, with life stretching long before her, how she must have suffered to seek death willingly! Stay with her, nurse," he said to the woman who stood by silently. "Let her have a little milk every half-hour till I return. She will take it without waking. Above all things, she needs rest."

"But doctor," the woman protested, "I must first—"

"I will see to that," the doctor interposed. "I am going straight to the manager."

Without a word more the nurse set busily, obediently to her task. There was much whispering and turning of heads in the great hall of the hotel as he walked through to the manager's room. Even in the biggest hotel in Europe, Dr. Vivian Ardel was a personage, and a vague version of the rescue had already been buzzed about the place.

"Certainly, doctor," the manager said courteously, in reply to Dr. Ardel's explanation and request. "It shall be exactly as you desire. I will see to it myself."

"Can you telephone to my place at once for a change of clothes, and have them sent up to whatever bath-room they give me?"

"I'll have it done at once. Do you know, your bicycle has just come in. The caddy went back for it."

"I'm glad of that. There was a little device of my own attached which I should not like to lose. Will you kindly have it put by carefully, and give the man who brought it a

sovereign. I will stay on here for a little to look after my patient. I can have a bedroom and sitting-room I suppose?"

"Of course. Your usual rooms." Dr. Ardel emerged radiant from his bath, every nerve tingling, every vein warm with vitality, a superb picture of vigorous manhood.

The cold plunge into the Thames, the long wait in his wet clothes, had not hurt him in the least.

The waiter showed him his sitting-room, and he hastily penciled a luncheon menu, at once choice and substantial. Then, when the man left the room, he plunged into a huge easy-chair at the bow window, and looked out on the Thames, lost in thought.

"Why did she do it?" he pondered; "how could she do it? She must have suffered terribly; that, at least, is plain, when she went to grim, black death for relief. She had got these two most precious things—life and youth—and she tried to fling both away. A dozen seconds more and it was all over; her young life had gone out like the flame of a quenched candle, lost for ever in blank darkness, leaving no trace behind. Yet she cannot be more than sixteen years of age. She had the best of her youth, the best of her life before her, and she freely forfeited both. I have given her both back by the stretching out of my hand—how I wish I could do as much for myself!"

The thought seemed to sting him to sudden impatience; he leaped up from his seat and paced the floor rapidly a dozen times, and paused abruptly before a great mirror that almost filled one wall of the room from floor to ceiling.

"I look the same," he said. "There is not a grey hair or a wrinkle. Yet the best of my life is gone for ever. The intoxicating, exuberant delight of youth is lost to me, and old age creeps on, with inevitable death behind. But gloomy thoughts won't help or hinder. Let me enjoy life as it goes, for death ends all."

The soft-footed waiter stole into the room, and noiselessly as the genie in an Eastern story set the lunch on the table.

It was an exquisite lunch—exquisitely cooked and served. Vivian Ardel enjoyed the dainty viands and delicate wines with the keen appetite of health and the fastidious palate of the epicure.

He threw up the window, lit a cigar, and dropped again into his easy-chair. The sky was still cloudless and the sunshine bright on the river. The summer air breathed softly into the room. His thoughts ran in the same current as before. What a pleasant, beautiful world it is! how happy is our life in it! how full of varying delight, if it could only last! So his thoughts ran incessantly on the two great problems—life and death.

An hour later he found the girl still sleeping and the nurse reading at the window. She rose and stood before him demurely with folded hands as he entered.

"I shall not require you for half an hour, nurse," he said, and she left the room, glad of the respite.

As the door closed behind her he turned to the bed with a purpose in his eyes. Yet he paused for a moment or two irresolute.

"Is it fair?" he asked himself, "to capture the secrets of her life while she lies there helpless and unconscious? To unveil her soul as the penitent's before the priest?" He looked again at the sleeping girl.

"An innocent young face," he mused, "that speaks of life and heart innocent and pure. Sorrow, not shame, has brought her to this pass. It will be less pain to tell her story thus, and I must know all, that I may help her as I wish to help her."

He touched her forehead lightly with his finger-tips, and a slight quiver passed through her body at his touch.

"Do you hear me?" he asked, in clear, low voice; and the answer came back clear and low, "I hear."

"Tell me your name and age?"

"Lucy Ray; not quite sixteen."

"Where have you lived before you came to London?"

"In Kent, close to Canterbury."

"Tell me of your life?"

"My father was a doctor. We were very happy in our little home, but he died last year of a fever caught from a poor patient. His death left us lonely and very poor, and we came to London, mother and I, to earn our own bread. We wanted to teach music, for we could both play and sing, but no one would hire us. It was a heart-breaking failure. Our little stock of money slowly drained away. Mother grew white and worn. At last I got a place as governess, and the people were pleased and kind to me at first, and said I was clever and taught well, and life looked a little brighter.

"But after six months there was a change. The only son came back from college. He was very gay and pleasant-spoken, and for a while the house was brighter for his presence. Above all things, he loved to come to the nursery or school-room to play with his little sisters. But one day his mother found him there, and was strangely angry. She turned him out of the room, and then said things, of which I only vaguely guessed the meaning, that made me hot with shame. I went back to mother and told her, and she was angrier than I was, and pitied me, and cried over me, and we were al-

AFTER OTHER HELP FAILED

Dr. Williams' Pink Pills Restore a Young Lady to Full Health and Strength.

Doctors and nurses recommend Dr. Williams' Pink Pills because they have seen their wonderful power to make new, rich, red blood, and to cure all diseases due to poor blood or weak nerves. Dr. Williams' Pink Pills are not a common medicine. They do not purge and weaken. They contain no poisonous drugs. They are safe, sure, simple, stimulating and scientific. That is why these pills should be taken by all who are weak, bloodless, nervous, and sickly. Here is a bit of very positive proof of the wonderful power to conquer disease which Dr. Williams' Pink Pills possess; Miss Esther E. Lewis, Lynn, N. S., says: "At the age of sixteen my health failed me completely. At that time I was attacked by la grippe, which was followed by measles, from the after effects of which I was left in a deplorable condition. I became very pale, suffered from headaches, dizziness and want of appetite. I tried several medicines, but they did me no good; on the contrary I was growing weaker and finally became so bad that I would take spells of unconsciousness lasting from fifteen minutes to an hour at a time, and I had become so weak that I could hardly move about. At this stage I was advised to try Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, and I have good reason to bless the day I began their use. I had only taken them a few weeks when I began to recover and under their continued use for some time longer I fully regained my former good health. I will be glad if my experience will be of benefit to some other poor sufferer."

When buying the Pills see that the full name, "Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People," is printed on the wrapper around each box. Sold by all dealers or sent by mail at 50 cents a box or six boxes for \$2.50 by writing the Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont.

most happy together. But the money I had earned slipped away, and I could earn no more; and we had very little food, and mother faded slowly, growing every day paler and thinner. Yesterday she died.

"Then I was very lonely and miserable, and had no one to turn to for help or hope. A woman who lived in the house, a young woman, came to me and whispered vile things of her own life, and frightened me. I had no means to live. I was longing to be with mother and father, at rest. At most it was only a few days more life, a few days of misery; and I thought the good God would pardon me, I had suffered so much. I was half mad with grief and hunger when I went down to the river. I had heard it was an easy death, but I was frightened at the look of the water, and I walked a little way by the riverside trembling. Then all at once courage came to me, and I climbed over and leaped in."

"I remember the rush through the air. I remember the chill touch of the water. I remember no more till I opened my eyes for a moment—it seemed in a strange, large, handsome room. A man was hanging over me whose eyes seemed—"

But now the clear, commanding whisper broke in on her words—"Sleep," and the half-finished sentence died upon her lips, and with a contented little sigh she passed again into a deep, dreamless, hypnotic slumber.

He took the little hand in his own. The soft, warm touch of it told its story of reviving health and strength, and the pulse beat easily and steadily in the slim blue-veined wrist.

Just then a tap came to the door and the nurse entered.

"I hope I have not stayed too long away, sir?"

"You are in good time, nurse. She will sleep all night as she sleeps now, and I will see her early in the morning. You can take your own rest without fear."

(To be continued.)

SATISFIED MOTHERS.

When sales are large and increasing, when customers are satisfied to the extent of continuing to buy the same remedy, then it must be admitted that the remedy has real merit. Baby's Own Tablets occupy this enviable position. Mothers having once tried them seldom fail to duplicate the order—no other remedy for children can truly claim as much. Concerning the Tablets Mr. C. W. Stradford, (general dealer), North Williamsburg, Ont., writes: "Baby's Own Tablets have a large sale, and every purchaser is more than satisfied. We use them for our baby and have found them all that is claimed for them."

Baby's Own Tablets cure colic, indigestion, constipation, diarrhoea, simple fevers and all the minor ills of little ones. They make baby bright, active and happy and a joy to the home. Sold by druggists or will be sent by mail at 25 cents a box by writing the Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont.

"Well, I got rid of that life insurance agent in short order," savagely remarked Mr. Higgsworthy. "You didn't insult him, did you?" asked his wife. "Insult him? No! I gave him my application for a policy blame him!"

THE RESTORATIVE POWER of DR. CHASE'S NERVE FOOD

Illustrated in the Case of Mrs. Turner, Who Was Thoroughly Restored By the Use of This Great Food Cure.

The human body is composed of certain elements, such as iron, potash, lime, soda, magnesia, etc., and nature replaces wasted cells and tissues by extracting these elements from the food we eat. Consequently errors in diet, insufficiency of food or failure of the digestive organs to properly perform their work are among the most usual causes of disease.

Once the system is weak, run down or exhausted the natural process of reconstruction is tediously slow, usually slower than the wasting process, and the end can only be physical bankruptcy and collapse.

It is just at this point that Dr. Chase's Nerve Food proves its wonderful power as an assistant to nature. This great food cure contains in condensed pill form the very elements required by nature to revitalize and build up the system. These immediately enter the blood stream, and through the medium of the circulation of the blood and the nervous system carry strength and vigor to each and every organ of the body.

Mrs. F. Turner, 336 Aylmer Street, Peterborough, Ont., and whose husband is employed at the Hamilton foundry, states:

"For some months past I found myself growing very nervous, and gradually becoming a victim of sleeplessness and subject to frequent attacks of nervous headache. About six weeks ago I began using Dr. Chase's Nerve Food and cannot speak too highly of this medicine. I can sleep well now, the headaches have entirely disappeared, and I believe that my system generally has been much improved by the use of this treatment."

Nervous prostration and exhaustion, headaches, dyspepsia, dizziness, fainting spells, paralysis, locomotor ataxia, feelings of weakness, depression and despondency are readily overcome by this treatment, working, as it does, hand in hand with nature. Though gradual, the results are all the more certain and lasting, and by noting your increase in weight you can prove to your satisfaction that new, firm flesh and tissue is being added. Dr. Chase's Nerve Food fifty cents a box, six boxes for \$2.50. At all dealers, or EDMANSON, BATES & Co., Toronto. To protect you against imitations, the portrait and signature of Dr. A. W. Chase, the famous receipt book author, are on every box.