

# STRONGER THAN DEATH OR A RANSOMED LIFE

## CHAPTER II.

Vivian Ardel was full of pity, but mingled with his pity there was something of impatience, even of anger, at this tale of misery, so easily averted.

"What wanton waste," he mused, "of the happy days due to her golden youth!—days never to be recalled or replaced. How may I best redeem from misery this young life that I have saved from death?"

He paced the spacious room rapidly, as was his wont when in deep thought, pausing now and again abruptly to stare out with vacant eyes upon the shining river.

"What can I do?" The question repeated itself insistently again and again in his thoughts, finding no answer. "Mere comfort is easily managed. I can get her to a good school, of course, for a year or two. But, poor child, she has been so lonely! Her nature longs for love and sympathy, and she will droop and pine for lack of them."

"What can I do?" The question began again.

Suddenly an answer came to him, and his face brightened in a moment.

"Yes," he said, "perfect for both. Eva, I know, will gladly consent. But what will John think or say? He must be asked first, of course. But then he is away on circuit at Liverpool. The delay is unfortunate; I will write to him at once."

He sat down at a writing-table, and his pen flew over the paper, but the writing was like copper-plate. One, two, three sheets were rapidly filled in as many minutes, and the letter closed.

He had written the name on the envelope, "John Trevor," and was adding the address when a knock came to the door.

"Come in!" he cried impatiently, glancing back over his shoulder; then suddenly, with a cry of pleasure, he leaped from his seat.

A well-built man of about forty-five years of age, with strong, honest face, clean-shaven, firm mouth, and shrewd, grey eyes, stood at the door.

"You come upon a wish, Trevor," Ardel said, heartily welcoming him. "How curiously those things happen! I was just writing to you; I hadn't finished the address on the envelope."

"May I read it?" Trevor asked gravely.

"May! You must read it at once. It's something I am anxious about."

There was a look of appeal in Ardel's face as the shrewd eyes, well used to documents, ran rapidly over the letter, missing no word. Then the frank, grey eyes were raised to the anxious dark ones with a look of kindly admiration.

"Of course," said Trevor heartily. "I think I can answer for Eva as well as for myself. She wants just such a girl as you describe to help her with the little ones—a girl who would be a companion to her now that I am so much away, a friend, a younger sister; some one she could love. It's Eva's nature to love, as you know. But are you quite sure of this girl's story, Ardel?"

"Quite sure."

"You learned it from—"

"The girl herself."

"I don't understand. You write here she is still unconscious."

"Don't mind understanding then; best believe. Can't you trust me?"

"Of course I can, and do; but I must say, for a sceptic, Ardel, you sometimes manifest a most generous faith."

"You know my creed and practice; be as happy as you can; make others

as happy as you can; for youth and life go by quickly, and never come back. But there is no credit for faith here, Trevor. I believe in the girl because I know."

"And I take your word for her most willingly; so that's settled."

"I hope Eva will be pleased."

"I know she will be delighted. Now it's my turn; I have a request to make too."

"I consent beforehand, whatever it is," said Ardel, smiling. "A request from you is a rarity."

"Mind, I hold you to your word. You dine with Eva and myself at Lavella to-morrow. Have you forgotten that to-morrow is your birthday?"

Vivian Ardel's face darkened ominously.

"I have not forgotten it," he said; "I wish I could. I hate the thought."

His earnestness startled his friend.

"You, of all men, Ardel!" he cried; "whose life is so full of happiness and sunshine. What other thoughts and memories than pleasant ones can birthdays have for you?"

"It is because the road is so pleasant, Trevor, that I hate the milestones. It's because life is so happy that it hurts me to be reminded how much I have already spent—how little is left to spend. But don't mind me; it's a relief to break out like that sometimes. There, the fit is over now. I should be delighted, of course, to spend the day with you and Eva. But my girl—"

"Eva will come to town for her early."

"That would be perfect. Eva's face and voice will win her heart at once. But are you sure she can come?"

"Certain. She was coming in any case for London shopping, and to carry you off by force, if my diplomacy failed."

Ardel kept his friend for the evening, and they dined luxuriously on a dinner of the host's designing. Trevor enjoyed himself as the ordinary man enjoys good wine and food; but he lacked the keen, appreciative pleasure of the other, whose every sense ministered to his delight.

After dinner they sat smoking at the window, looking out on the moonlit river, on whose dim waters the boats moved hither and thither, phantom-like, trailing black shadows. They smoked for a while in silence—the pleasant, restful silence of close comradeship. Ardel broke it first.

"How did you get back so soon?" he asked. "The assizes are not over."

"No; but I had to leave. You remember I am engaged to defend the young swell Wickham, who is charged with murdering his sweetheart. It's to be tried here in London, but the day is not yet fixed. I came back for that. They gave me an enormous fee in the case, but no fee pays for the worry of mind."

"I should think not; a life in your hands! a man's life, the one priceless, unpurchasable treasure, dependent on you to save or lose! This Wickham, I hear, is young, rich, and handsome, with all the enjoyments of the world before him—or the grave. It's a horrible responsibility, Trevor. Can you get him off?"

"I cannot say. The evidence is circumstantial merely. But I never knew a chain so close and strong—each link welded to the next."

"Is he innocent?"

"I cannot tell you that, either. I think he is. But I always believe my clients innocent while I'm defending them. I couldn't put my whole heart into the defence if I didn't. But in this case the general

current of opinion is strongly the other way."

"Well, I hope sincerely that he will escape."

"If he is innocent, you mean?"

"Innocent or guilty, I hope he'll get off."

Trevor looked at him in surprise, for he spoke very earnestly.

"I cannot understand you at all, Ardel," he said, at last. "I thought, of all men living, you valued human life highest and most abhorred murder."

"So I do; I hate all murders. But I believe I hate judicial murder most of all, as the most deliberate and the most revolting. We cannot get back the life that is lost. Why destroy another, with all its wonders, all its possibilities, for the sake of a mere senseless vengeance? It is such blind savagery, such disgusting presumption, in man to ruin what he is so helpless to restore."

"I feel just like that myself when I see the prisoner in the dock, his face ashen grey and his eyes wild with the agony of fear. Then I would give my own right hand to save him, innocent or guilty. But in cooler moments my reason tells me it is well the murderer should die."

"Don't listen to your reason, then," said Ardel vehemently, "for it is wrong. If a man's heart and brain are sound and work together, his feelings are a better guide than his reason. They are his own real self. You loathe murder; so do I. But that does not justify the murder of the murderer—the cruel, remorseless quenching of that wonderful thing, life. It revolts me even to think of it. Oh, it is a mercy we can but dimly realize what death means. Our life, vigorous in heart and brain, rich in thought and memory, and hope, and keen, conscious enjoyment, recoils at the horrible glimpses it catches now and again of oblivion. If we could but manage to prolong or renew our lives in this beautiful world of ours, we need not envy the myths they call angels."

"Yet you were quite ready to risk this precious life of yours no later than this morning," said Trevor, smiling at this rhapsody of his friend.

"There was no risk; not the very least. I took every precaution against even the passing trouble of a chill. But I'll be quite frank with you, Trevor. I believe even if there were a risk I would have done the same. Didn't I say just now our feelings, our impulses should govern us, and not our reason? It was an overmastering, unreasoning impulse that sent me into the water without thought of danger. I'm glad it is so. Life itself would not be worth having if one lived in constant terror of losing it. It is a delight to me to think that I have given back to this girl her life and youth, with all its possibilities, with all its certainties of enjoyment in this best of all possible worlds. A God—if there were a God—could do no more for her."

"Steady there, Ardel," interposed Trevor, gravely. "Be content to work under God. If it gives happiness to help others," he went on, with deep feeling in his voice, "you should be the happiest man on God's earth to-day."

"I am, Trevor, no man happier. All my life things have gone well with me. I have health, wealth and success. Better still, I have that keen relish for all forms of enjoyment alike—the simplest and the highest—which makes mere living to me a continual delight. But now and again, and more often of late, the thought grips my heart that I must die and lose all. This hand"—he laid a strong, shapely hand on the table—"must turn into foul clay. This body of mine be crawled over by worms. I—Vivian Ardel—I that now speak to you with all my senses, thoughts, hopes, with my all-abounding consciousness of life, will be no more than a few spade-fuls of dull earth. The thing seems horrible, incredible; yet I know it must come."

"Why trouble with such thoughts? You are still young in years; you are younger than your years. A long and happy life stretches out before you."

"Why trouble? Because I cannot help troubling. The thought of death begins to force itself upon me. The best half of my life is gone. I will be thirty to-morrow. I have twenty years more. After fifty the wine of life is gone and only the lees remain. You see, I have made careful calculation of my treasure."

"Don't frighten a fellow, Ardel. Remember I'm not so far off from fifty myself. Surely a man can make himself comfortable after fifty?"

"Comfortable, yes; and even happy, after a fashion."

"I mean to be as happy as I can I assure you, while I live, if I should, as I hope, live to a hundred."

"But the shadow of the approaching doom will grow daily heavier as it draws nearer and nearer. As it is, I feel I have climbed the hill, and my thoughts, in spite of me, run on before to the bottom, where death waits, inevitable. Those few pleasant hours you and I have spent together have brought us nearer to it."

"You don't believe in another and better life, Ardel, worse luck for you. I am not what you call a religious man myself, but that hope is firm in me."

"No, I don't believe in a better life. I don't want a better life. I can conceive none better. To live this life in this world for all time

is the utmost limit of my desire."

"Have you forgotten your Swift and his immortal, decrepit, miserable struldbrugs?"

"Swift was a very clever fellow, but the argument he embodied in his struldbrug was no more than an ingenious sophistry. Immortals couldn't grow old. Eternal decrepitude is absurd. Immortal youth is the only immortality that is conceivable. To stop the wear and tear of the body in youth, or renew its forces, is the only way to live for ever."

"You surely don't believe in the elixir of life?" broke in Trevor, laughing.

"No; I had some notions of that kind when I was a boy of fifteen. I even went through the old books and tried all the old experiments and some new ones. But I quickly grew out of that folly, of course. The thing is utter folly. That so many clever men believed in it and spent their life in pursuit of it is only a proof how intense and overmastering was the wish that mastered their reason and compelled belief."

"The very best of those human clocks which we call our bodies is made to go for a hundred years or so. It runs down in the end, and we cannot wind it up again. The machinery is worn out. We can make it last a little longer by care, or a great deal shorter by carelessness. But we cannot alter the works or renew them. We can prevent the machine breaking down, but we cannot stop it from wearing out. I myself have found effective remedies for most of the diseases our flesh is heir to. It is possible, I believe, to find remedies for them all. But for old age there is no cure."

"Then there is no way out of it?" Trevor had been gradually captivated, in spite of himself, by his friend's earnestness and by the eternal interest of the subject. "We must endure what we cannot cure."

"I am not so sure of that," answered Vivian, with a strange look in his dark eyes. "We may perhaps borrow what we cannot make. But that is only a vague dream that haunts me at odd times; born, I dare say, of the intense longing for life."

"How the time has gone by!" he broke off abruptly; "in another hour I will be thirty years of age—another year of life gone. You must look sharp, Trevor, to catch your train. Eva will be anxious."

"I have half an hour yet, and can do it in twenty minutes. But I am glad you spoke. How time flies!"

"How time flies!" echoed his companion gloomily. But the cloud lifted in a moment. "Remember, Trevor," he said with a smile, as he bade his friend good-night in the courtyard, "I shall expect you and Eva here at two o'clock."

"Two o'clock, we shan't fail," Trevor cried, as he leaped into his hansom, and was whirled away through the noise and glare of the crowded streets.

(To be continued.)

## SHAKY NERVES.

Sufferers from Nervous Troubles Are In a State of Continuous Torture—Suggestions as to How the Trouble Can be Overcome.

When your nerves are shaky your self-control is shattered—your will power is broken. Sudden sounds startle you; your temper is irritable; your hands tremble; there is weakness in your knees; your skin is pale and parched; you are restless at night and tired when you wake. It all comes from nervous exhaustion, perhaps due to overwork and worry, late hours, hot days, and want of blood. Dr. Williams' Pink Pills is the only cure. They make new, rich blood. They brace up jangled nerves and strengthen tired backs. They give health and energy to dull, weary, despondent men and women. Strong proof is offered in the case of Mrs. Wm. Westcott, of Seaforth, Ont., who says:—"For a long time my health was in a bad state. I was subject to headaches, dizziness and nervous exhaustion. My appetite was poor, and I was so badly run down I could not stand the least exertion. I tried several medicines and consulted different doctors, but they did not help me any. One of my neighbors strongly urged me to try Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, and before the second box was finished the turning point for the better had been reached, and by the time I had used a half dozen boxes, to the surprise of my friends and neighbors I was again enjoying good health, and have since been strong and well. I do not know anything to equal Dr. Williams' Pink Pills when the system is run down."

What the pills have done for others they will do for you, if you will give them a fair trial. Sold by all medicine dealers, or sent post paid at 50 cents a box or six boxes for \$2.50, by addressing the Dr. Williams Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont.

## SOME FAMOUS BUTCHERS.

Many Great Men Where Connected With the Trade.

It may be consoling to historians to know, as an interesting historical fact that their trade has perhaps given birth to greater men than any other occupation in life. In ancient times we find that in Athens, Lysicles, one of the greatest politicians in that great city, was a butcher and cattle dealer. Caius Terentius Varro, the Roman Consul, a man of extraordinary eloquence and ability, was unanimously elected by the Romans to command an army of 120,000 men to fight Hannibal, but who was defeated by him at Cannae in 117 B.C., was the son of a butcher. When the celebrated White Ship went down with the future King of England, in 1120, one man alone, Berold, a butcher of Rouen, was saved.

Cardinal Wolsey, Lord High Chancellor of England and Papal Legate to Henry VIII., was the son of an Ipswich butcher. The sons of the greatest noblemen in the land were his servants, and he ruled England for twenty years.

The immortal Shakespeare, the greatest poet the world ever knew, was likewise the son of a butcher and draper, and was even, when young, apprenticed to the trade for a while.

Daniel Defoe, author of "Robinson Crusoe," was a butcher's son; so too was Mark Akenside, M.D., author of "Pleasures of Imagination." Father Hoffbur, whose miracles are widely known in Austria, and who was a particular friend of the Emperor, was a butcher in early life.

Dick Turpin, the noted highwayman, Arthur Orton, the Tichborne claimant, and Dick Short, the noted Cork Fenian, were all butchers, as was also Legendre, the famous Paris patriot of the Revolution.

## SICKLY BABIES.

Weak, sickly babies are a great trial to mothers. They need constant care both night and day and soon wear the mother out. Baby's little stomach is the cause of most of the trouble; it is very weak, and in consequence very easily upset. Baby's Own Tablets will cure all baby troubles. They are mildly laxative and give prompt relief. Concerning Mrs. R. J. Balfour, Omeme, Ont., says: "I have used Baby's Own Tablets for stomach troubles and constipation from which my little girl suffered and they entirely cured her. They produced sound, refreshing sleep, and I regard them as indispensable in any home where there are little ones."

Mothers from all parts of Canada write in favor of Baby's Own Tablets, proving the claim that they are the very best medicine for all the minor ills of infants and young children. Guaranteed to contain no opiate. Price 25 cents a box at all druggists or direct from The Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont.

## INSULT TO INJURY.

A postcard has just arrived Vienna which took nearly six years to travel from Lemberg, a distance of about 500 miles. The postal rates on inland cards having in the meantime been raised, the Postoffice actually fined the receiver double the deficiency in the postage.

# Emaciated By Kidney Disease

Suffered Greatly From Backache, Sleeplessness and Headache—  
Now Enthusiastic in Praising Dr. Chase's Kidney-Liver Pills.

One feature of kidney disease is the gradual loss of flesh and wasting away of the tissues of the body. Slowly and surely the victim feels strength and vigor ebbing away and realizes his awful condition. The following letter suggests a remedy which has brought back health and happiness to thousands of sufferers from kidney disease.

Mr. William E. Halditch, Port Robinson, Ont., states:—"I was for several years a great sufferer from kidney trouble from which dread disease I am now happily free. I had all the usual symptoms in an aggravated degree and at times was completely incapacitated with pains in the back, biliousness and headache. I had little or no appetite, insomnia resulted and my condition was really wretched. I became emaciated and grew despondent and hopeless of relief as I had taken treatment from doctors to no avail.

"Finally on the advice of a friend,

I began using Dr. Chase's Kidney-Liver Pills, and, after using a few boxes I was again enjoying health and vigor as the worst symptoms had entirely passed away. When I think of my present good health in comparison with my miserable condition of three years ago I would not go back to my former state for any amount of money. I may be considered enthusiastic over Dr. Chase's Kidney-Liver Pills, but, considering the benefit derived from them, I have every reason to be."

Acting, as they do, directly on the liver, kidneys and bowels, Dr. Chase's Kidney-Liver Pills insure purity of the blood, good circulation and perfect condition of the digestive organs. One pill a dose, 25 cents a box, 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 of his remedies.

**DR. A. W. CHASE'S 25c. CATARRH CURE**  
Is sent direct to the diseased parts by the Improved Blower. Heals the ulcers, clears the air passages, stops droppings in the throat and permanently cures Catarrh and Hay Fever, Blower free. All dealers, or Dr. A. W. Chase Medicine Co., Toronto and Buffalo.

## WIFE HE CELEBRATED.

An old Britisher who had been an officer in our army was a well-known character in the Western city in which he resided. Although he had lived in the city for twenty years, his dislike and contempt for the land of the Stars and Stripes, its people and its Government, were public property. He lost no opportunity, in fact, of showing his contempt.

Great surprise, therefore, was felt among the citizens when, on the morning of the fourth of July, the house of the Britisher was seen to be dressed in flags from roof to basement. A brass band played upon the balcony and a dozen servants were firing off crackers. A huge crowd gathered, and thinking the Englishman had repented of his dislike to America and was joining in with Americans in honoring the day on which they became independent of Britain, they cheered him vociferously.

Finally, a newspaper man rushed forward and exclaimed, "Well, major, so you've come to think well of the Stars and Stripes, eh?" "Nary bit of it," was the retort; "this little show of mine is got up to celebrate the day on which the old country got rid of you!"

## PIGSKIN CYCLE TIRES.

Mr. John Muir, of Leith, Scotland, announces that he has invented a process whereby tanned pigskins are made available as a substitute for rubber for tires. The pigskins so treated are stated to wear longer than rubber, and Mr. Muir is said to have sold the American rights of his process for \$5,000,000.

## VERY PRECIOUS.

The German Emperor has sent to the Hohenzollern Museum at Berlin a small piece of bark, which, as is announced by the label attached to it, was used by His Majesty to bird the Empress' arm in the absence of medical aid when Her Majesty met with an accident in Gruenwald on March 27th last, through falling from her horse.