

STRONGER THAN DEATH OR A RANSOMED LIFE

CHAPTER III.

"It is too good of you, Eva," said Vivian Ardel, as he warmly pressed the little hand that was warm in his. "The poor girl has a chance of happiness at last."

It was a sweet face that looked up brightly into his. The eyes were soft brown, and the soft brown hair waved and rippled where it edged the white forehead. Her smile was full of gentle cheerfulness. Beauty and intellect were in her face, but goodness most of all—a man's true helpmate. The slight, fragile figure and the bright face might have been a young girl's, but the calm, mysterious tenderness of motherhood shone in the soft eyes.

Her cheek flushed at Ardel's earnestness. "You make me half sorry, Vivian, that the thing you ask is so pleasant. I should give thanks, not get them. From what you tell me of her, I'm sure that the girl you saved—Lucy is the name, isn't it?—is the very girl I was longing for: a girl to be good to my little ones and make them love her. I'm selfish, Vivian, and want her for myself as well, for it's lonely when John is away, and I'm very hard to please in my friends. Just when the wish was strongest, you, who have given me so much, have given me this too."

"Come and see her, Eva. Mind you promise nothing till you see and speak to her."

"She is wonderfully beautiful," whispered the soft-eyed little mother as she stole into the room and gazed on the face of the young girl, who still slept.

"And wonderfully young to have known such sorrow," Ardel answered.

"And good and true, if looks count for anything," said Eva.

"Now I shall wake her and leave you alone together. After that you shall tell me if you can take her to your heart and home without fear."

He touched the sleeping girl's forehead with his finger-tips, and in a low voice spoke in her ear the one word "awake." Then he passed noiselessly from the room, and the blue eyes opening softly looked straight into the pitying brown. Vague at first was that look of half-conscious questioning in those sad eyes. Eva saw remembrance of what had been dawn slowly in their liquid depths. The pale cheeks flushed, the lips quivered as the poor girl glanced with a quick, frightened look round the luxurious room where she lay. Then her eyes came back to the sweet face that bent over her so pityingly.

"What has happened?" she whispered, so softly that Eva bent closer to hear. "How am I here?"

"Can you remember nothing?"

The gentle voice seemed to give her courage.

"I remember I was very miserable. I must have been mad with misery. I thought I could bear no more. The quiet river tempted me. I remember the cold touch of the water as it closed over me. It was awful. I was frightened; I longed to be alive again. I tried to cry out, but I could not; the water strangled my voice. I tried to pray, but my thoughts all crowded together wildly and were lost. I remember no more."

"No more! You have no memory how you were saved? how you came here?"

The girl yielded to the charm of Eva Trevor's voice and answered her like a child,—

"I seem to have awakened here before just for a moment, to see a man's face bending over me—a wonderfully handsome man, with dark eyes full of pity, like your own. The next moment the face faded into darkness, and I slept again. It was only a dream."

"It was no dream, dear," Eva answered, and she patted the girl's hand caressingly as she spoke. "It was he who brought you here. It was he who saved you from the river, and it is he who is trying to make the life he saved a happy one."

"It was he sent you to me, then?"

"Yes, he sent me to you, my dear."

"Will you call me Lucy?"

"My dear Lucy, he had the right to send. He saved my life as he saved yours from a more insidious death. He gave me happiness as, with God's help, he will give it to you. Can you listen to me for a while? Are you strong enough?"

"I feel quite strong again; only a little frightened. May I hold your hand?"

The hands met and clasped, and so lay white and warm on the soft, white quilt, and Eva went on, her brown eyes brighter with unshed tears,—

"It is good for me to tell and for you to hear. We were three years married—John and I. John was a barrister, briefless almost and without friends. I was a governess when he married me. We were very poor and had a hard struggle to live. Then I fell sick. Two doctors saw me and said I must die, that I could not live a month. Poor John was heart-broken. His last hope was in Dr. Ardel—our friend, yours and mine—the man whose face you saw; the most famous doctor in the world. So John somehow, by starving himself, I'm afraid, scarping together his fee. I was frightened nearly to death as I went into the great man's room. But my fear left me when I saw his face and heard him speak. He cured me within a week, but he would take no fee. I have never had a day's real sickness since, and my eldest boy was born six years ago. But that was not all. He coaxed my whole story from me. After a little he met John too, and liked him, and helped him. Dr. Ardel's good word goes a long way. He is the richest man in London, they say, and the cleverest. The briefs began to flow in on John; he is a Queen's counsel now, and will be soon a judge. We are rich, and have a beautiful place of our own at Lavella, down by the Thames; and you are going there to-day, to stay with us always. That's the whole story, Lucy."

"I stay with you! But you don't know me, or where I came from! I am so stunned I hardly know myself." Then suddenly clear remembrance came, and with it a pang of sharpest pain.

"Oh! mother! mother!" she wailed out, and a wild passion of weeping choked her voice.

"Don't," whispered Eva softly; "you will break her heart even in heaven. I am a mother, and know. You will meet her again, Lucy, where there is no pain of grief."

"I must go to her now at once. She lies there dead and lonely. Oh! how could I leave her!"

But Eva laid a restraining hand on hers and spoke to her calmly, though the tears silently coursed down her own cheeks. "Lie still and

listen to me, Lucy. Your mother lies in her quiet country grave, by your father's side, close by the church where they prayed together. Hereafter we will come, you and I, to lay flowers on their graves, when your sorrow is less keen, and I have learned to love her memory for your sake."

"But who did this? Who could know to do it?"

"He knew, Lucy. He knows your whole story. Don't ask me how he knows. This morning he saw your mother laid in her quiet grave. To-day he has asked me to help to make your life happy. I am here to try."

"It is too good of him; too good of you."

"Not of me, Lucy. I would do anything for Vivian Ardel. But I'm doing nothing for him now. He has got me the very girl I was longing for. I know we will be friends if you will come to me. Our Lavella is a pretty place close to the river, and then there are the children. Willie is six, and Harry nearly three, and my little niece, Jeanette, a two-year-old, dimpled little darling. You like children, I hope."

"I love them."

"Then it's settled, dear; you will come to me. You are Vivian's latest gift, and I will love you for his sake and for your own. Oh! you poor, poor darling! What misery you must have gone through!"

She stooped down impulsively and kissed the young girl on the lips, and with that kiss a life-long friendship was pledged between those two.

"Now, Lucy, do you feel strong enough to dress? I'll help you. We are to lunch here with Dr. Ardel at three, and afterwards we go down together to our place. Are you strong enough?"

"Oh! I feel quite strong. I seem to have got new life from the long rest. But—"

"I know, dear. Everything is quite ready. There were your old things to go by, and I did a little shopping this morning. I came up to town early on purpose, and I'm sure they will fit nicely—mourning, of course; I knew you would want mourning."

Lucy looked more lovely than ever in a dress of plain black cashmere, that fitted closely to her slim figure, with no touch of color except the soft frill of muslin that circled her white throat.

Eva's deft fingers wove her glossy hair into a gold coronet, gloriating, as women will, in its weight and thickness.

Lucy was very shy at lunch. As Vivian Ardel took the little hand whose touch was as satin, he felt it tremble in his own, and the words of thanks faltered on her lips. But her frank blue eyes were eloquent of gratitude. She was very shy in the train which carried them in a quick forty minutes' run to Lavella; shy and silent as they walked together to the house along a pleasant pathway by the river's edge.

But when they reached the house, while the men passed through the hall to a sitting-room on the right, Eva, beckoning to Lucy, stole up a flight of shallow carpeted stairs, opened a door softly on the first landing, and stood looking with beaming face on the living picture within. Lucy crept as softly behind her, and peeped over her shoulder, and then her shyness vanished in a moment.

"Oh!" she said eloquently.

Eva turned and looked at her, and saw her face bright with admiration and tenderness, which the mere sight of children wakes in the true woman's heart, and was well satisfied.

It was indeed as pleasant a sight as ever gladdened a mother's eyes. The nursery was a large room full of air and light, with a great bow window that looked wide over a delightful prospect of meadow, wood, and water. The walls were papered with pretty pictures of nursery rhymes—Jack and Jill in Kate Greenaway costumes tumbled downhill between disconsolate Bo-Peep and exultant Jack Horner. But prying little eyes and busy fingers had found the weak spots in the paper, and torn it in strips from the walls, cutting off here the head of a giant, and there the wing of a fairy.

The three little delinquents were at the moment in the room, absorbed in their several occupations, unconscious of the eyes that looked in upon them so lovingly. In one corner the six-year-old boy, brown-haired and brown-eyed, like his mother, was cuddled up in an impossible attitude, reading intently in a big-lettered book with appalling realistic illustrations of the "buggy-buggy" exploits of Jack the Giant-Killer.

In the middle of the floor the two little toddlers were together. The baby girl, a lovely little creature, with brisk, black eyes and curly black hair, and cheeks like the damask rose, was tenderly nursing a grotesque Dutch doll, whose round wooden head was piebald with paint. The boy, a sturdy young Saxon of three, blue-eyed, and flaxen-pated, wanted the head of the Dutch doll for a drum-stick. A row was imminent, when the mother's voice made itself heard at the door.

"Jen," "Willie," "Harry," and book and doll and drum went down together on the floor, and there was a wild stampede to the mother's arms.

"My good little Jenny! my own big, bold boys! There, that will do; that will do. Look what I have

brought you. This is your new Aunt Lucy, come to stay with us always. Mind you are good to her, and love her very much, or I will take her away again!"

The little girl came at once to Lucy, and kissed her and nestled in her arms; but the boys hung back, shyly at first. But when Lucy picked up the disregarded drum from the floor and beat a rapid roll on it with her finger-tips, the flaxen-headed youngster crept close to her side. For a moment there was danger of the revival of the doll and drum crisis, but an amicable compromise was arrived at, and a leg, instead of a head, was sacrificed for a drum-stick. The limb was duly wrenched from its socket, the wooden-headed lady submitting to the operation with a broad, unchanging smile. Her little mistress pulled the dress down to conceal the mutilation, and everybody was satisfied.

The elder boy, meanwhile, had crept back to his book. Lucy glanced over his shoulders at the big print and gruesome pictures, and presently, by a word or two, won his heart as a kindred spirit thirsting for the blood of poor dull blundering giants. But when she picked up Grimm's Fairy Tales from a neighboring shelf and began reading softly, the giant-slaying Jack was in turn abandoned. She was eagerly installed in the easy chair, and with the little girl on her knee and the two boys pressing close to her side, she read, in a low, sweet voice, the wonderful story of "Snow-White and Rosy-Red" and "The Vicious Dwarf and the Kind-hearted Bear." A beautiful picture the four eager faces made; so the happy mother thought as, with a sigh of supreme satisfaction, she stole from the room.

The two men were standing at the drawing-room window, looking out across the green strip of sloping lawn, with its flowers and flowering shrubs, at the bright river, scarcely a hundred yards away; when she came quietly behind them. They turned at the sound of her step, and saw her face beaming.

"They love her already, and she loves them. Listen!"

The shrill treble music of children's laughter made itself heard through the half-closed doors of the nursery.

"You are my good angel, Vivian," Eva said. "God sent you to make my life happy."

"If there is a God," Ardel said softly to himself; yet not so softly but Eva caught the words, and the joy died away in her face.

But later on, when they all sat together at dinner, the vivacious Lucy of the nursery was a shy school-girl again. One quick, half-frightened glance she gave at Vivian Ardel, a glance which only Eva noted. After that she sat with eyes cast down, and spoke when spoken to, timidly, as one who feared the sound of her own voice.

Not so Willie Trevor, the brown-eyed six-year-old, who, as Ardel's godchild, had been allowed a seat at the table for the occasion. He was full of childish prattle of the great things he meant to do in the world—slaughtering, for the most part, when he was a "big man."

"But, Will," his father said, "I saw you run away from the turkey-cock the other day. That wasn't like your friend Jack the Giant-Killer, you know."

"You forget, pappy," the little fellow answered triumphantly, "Jack was past seven years old when he killed the giants, and I am only just six." To which argument, of course, no reply was possible.

To Vivian Ardel, who sat beside him, the boy confided in detail his plans of life. They were varied and confused, but plenty of killing was common to them all. He had not quite decided whether he would be "a blood-stained pirate" or a conqueror, he said.

"A pirate, Will," said Ardel, with a grim smile. On the whole, it is the decider of the two."

(To be continued.)

COULD NOT SLEEP,

ON ACCOUNT OF HEADACHES AND PAINS IN THE SIDE.

The Sad Condition of a Bright Little Girl Until Dr. Williams' Pink Pills Came to Her Rescue.

Many young girls, seemingly in the best of health, suddenly grow listless and lose strength. The color leaves their cheeks; they become thin, have little or no appetite, and suffer from headaches and other bodily pain. Such was the case of Bessie, youngest daughter of Mr. Chas. Colbigh, Eaton Corner, Que. Speaking of his daughter's illness and subsequent cure, Mr. Colbigh says: "Up to the age of eleven, Bessie had always enjoyed the best of health and took great pleasure in out-of-door play. Suddenly, however, she seemed to lose her energy; her appetite failed her; she grew thin and pale; slept badly at night, and complained of distressing headaches in the morning. We thought that rest would be beneficial to her, and so kept her from school, but instead of regaining her strength, she grew weaker and weaker. To make matters worse, she began to suffer from pains in the side, which were almost past endurance. At this stage we decided to try Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. After a couple of weeks, the good effect of this medicine was decidedly apparent. Bessie became more cheerful, her step quicker, her eyes were brighter and she seemed more like her former self. We continued giving her the pills for several weeks longer, until we felt that she had fully recovered her health and strength. I honestly believe had it not been for Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, our daughter would not have recovered her health and strength, and I shall always have a good word to say for this medicine."

Dr. Williams' Pink Pills will cure all troubles that arise from poverty of the blood or weak nerves. Among such troubles may be nervous anaemia, headache, neuralgia, erysipelas, rheumatism, heart ailments, dyspepsia, partial paralysis, St. Vitus' dance, and the ailments that render miserable the lives of so many women. Be sure you get the genuine with the full name "Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People," on the wrapper around every box. Sold by all medicine dealers, or sent by mail, post paid, at 50c per box, or six boxes for \$2.50, by writing direct to the Dr. Williams' Medicine Company, Brockville, Ont.

IN HIS NATIVE TONGUE.

Prince George's Experience With a Horse.

Ten or twelve years ago the present Prince of Wales visited Lisbon. He was then Prince George, "seeing the world" and having all sorts of experiences, delightful and absurd. At Lisbon a great review was held in his honor.

During the passage of the army Prince George's horse became unruly and the crowd, edging nearer, made the situation an uncomfortable one. The prince spoke to his steed, at first gently and then forcibly, but without avail. Then he gave up, and exclaimed:

"Oh, you poor brute! I suppose you don't understand English, and I can't talk to you in Portuguese."

The horse curveted again, and the prince was nearly unseated. Then he heard a voice within a yard of him say, in perfect English:

"Pardon me, your royal highness, but perhaps I can be of some assistance."

The prince looked round, and saw a youth in the black gown and shovel-hat of an English college. In his surprise he exclaimed:

"And who are you?"

"I am an Englishman, studying here at the English college, your royal highness, and I thought if you would allow me to abuse your horse in Portuguese, it might quiet him, and incidentally relieve your royal highness's feelings."

They tried the plan, and it worked admirably. The horse, hearing a language he knew, imbibed a few ideas from it, and concluded to profit by them.

WHAT A MOTHER SAYS.

"It gives me great pleasure to say a good word for Baby's Own Tablets. At the age of two months my baby was greatly constipated. He could not digest his food and screamed incessantly. I was almost in despair, but since giving him the Tablets he has been well and is growing splendidly." Such is the testimony of Mrs. S. Craig, 329 Bathurst street, Toronto, and thousands of other mothers speak in a similar strain.

Summer is here and mothers should take special pains to guard their little ones against illness. At this season infant mortality is at its greatest; colic, diarrhoea and summer complaints can be guarded against and prevented by the use of Baby's Own Tablets. Keep a box in the house—they may save your little one's life. Sold by druggists or may be had by mail, at 25c a box by addressing The Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont.

Dreadful Case of Itching Piles

Doctor Wanted to Burn the Skin With a Red Hot Iron—Patient Was Cured by DR. CHASE'S OINTMENT.

Mr. Alex. McLean, Tarbot Vale, N. S., writes—"For two years I worked as sectionman on the Dominion Coal Company's Railroad between Sydney and Glace Bay, N. S., and during that time was exposed to all sorts of weather. Gradually my health failed, and I became a victim of protruding piles. At first I did not know what my ailment was, but consulted a doctor, and though he treated me for piles, they only grew worse.

"I was forced to give up work and return to my home. My suffering could scarcely be described. I could not walk or lie down, but while the rest of the family was sleeping I would be groaning and aching from the excruciating pains.

"Again I decided to consult a doctor. This one stripped me, and said the piles would have to be burned with a red-hot iron. I shivered at the thought of burning the flesh, and told him I could not think of undergoing such an operation, so he gave me some salve, which he charged me two dollars, but it did not do me any good.

"I was in a desperate condition, and had about given up hope of ever being freed from this dreadful suffering when a friend told me about Dr. Chase's Ointment. He said he had seen so many cases that it had cured that he would pay for it himself if it failed to cure.

"My experience with Dr. Chase's Ointment is that the first application did me more good than did the two doctors, and it has made me as well and as free from piles as any man. Since being cured I worked during the winter in the lumber woods and experienced no return of my old trouble. I am not putting it too strong when I say that Dr. Chase's Ointment was worth \$100 a box to me. You are free to use my testimonial for the benefit of others, as I feel it my duty to make known this great ointment."

Dr. Chase's Ointment, 60 cents a box, at all dealers, or Edmansons, Bates and 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.

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 neighbors what they think of it. You can use it and get your money back if not cured. See a box at all dealers or EDMANSON, BATES & Co., Toronto.

Dr. Chase's Ointment

MATTERS MATRIMONIAL.

In Denmark a girl of twelve and a boy of fourteen can marry. In most places the limit for age is eighteen for men and sixteen for women. In Germany a man can only contract marriage before his twenty-first year when he is specially declared of age, and this can only be done when he has completed his eighteenth year. In several parts of America it is unlawful for white persons to marry black ones. The law of France is specially notable for stipulating about the legal rights of each party, and the relations of each to the earnings of the other. It is literally true that the man who marries a French woman becomes by French law liable to be called upon for the support of his wife's near relatives if they are in need. The relations created by a betrothal in Hungary are expressly declared to have no right to demand the conclusion of a marriage.