STRONGER THAN DEATH

OR

A RANSOMED LIFE

CHAPTER V.

"Welcome, Ardel; never more welcome," said John Trevor, as his friend walked abruptly into his chambers on a hot August afternoon. The lawyer was at his desk: before him was a huge volume of foolscap, with parchment hinges, which he was reading diligently, crossing and scoring, and underlining with a stumpy blue pencil as he read. A number of briefs were scattered round on the table, floor, and chairs, the red tape strings still untied.

"This is a professional visit," said Ardel. "I saw you yesterday in the street. You looked worn out and worried, so I came here."

"I am worried," Trevor answered, "that's all. I thought I was case-hardened against the advocate's fever. It's a juvenile disease, generally cured by the first dozen briefs. But I've got it badly this time. It's the case of a young fellow named Wickham."

"The murder case?"

"Yes, the murder case. I forgot I told you about it."

"Nearly four months ago, at the Cecil. Don't you remember? But it was just coming on then. I have been to Japan and back since, and it's coming on still."

"Oh! there has been adjournment after adjournment, while the Crown fished up more and more evidence. The delay has helped to work me up to fever heat. So strangely has the case got on my nerves, and brain, and head, I sometimes feel as if it were my own life I was fighting for?"

"Any hope for the young fellow?"

"There seems none. The evidence is the most deadly of all—circumstantial. Every strand of it is twisted into a rope for his neck. I have tried my best, and can find no flaw or break anywhere. Yet he is so earnest for his life, so insistent on his innocence, so piteous in his appeals, that I am miserable at my own helplessness. Young, rich, and handsome, with all his life before him, it is hard to leave it by the road of the gallows; it is horrible, if he is inocent."

Vivian Ardel's face grew very grave. "I don't wonder at you" he said shortly. "It is horrible. Even to think of death is always horrible. But such a death, in the midst of life, staring the doomed man in the face with an awful certainty of its victim——"

He broke off abruptly with a shudder, his strong imagination had made the case his own.

"Can nothing be done to save him?"

"Nothing, I fear. Nothing, at least, that I can do. I have ransacked the case thoroughly, and I can find no hope anywhere. I may make a little footy law point here and there, but the chain of evidence is as strong as steel."

"Can I be of any use?"

"You! You don't mean it. This thing is not in your line, Ardel."

"Everything is in my line, especially when there is a life to be saved."

"Would you read the brief?"

"Certainly, if you will let me; and I should like to be present at the trial, if it can be managed. Reading men is more 'in my line,' as you call it. But I must not forget my first business. It's your physician speaks now. Start off at once for a good ten miles' walk. It's a pity you don't cycle. Get the fresh air into your blood and the worry out of your brain, and leave me alone for a couple of hours with those papers. I want work. You may lock the door after you, if you like. I shan't stir till you return."

When Trevor got back with bright eyes and clear color from his walk, Ardel was not at the desk or papers, but leaning back in the great easy chair, motionless, and so absorbed in thought he did not hear him enter.

"Well!" said the lawyer; "have you found light?"

"A glimmer; still, I may be able to force the shutters and let the day in. When does the trial begin?"

"Next Saturday, at the Central Criminal Court. But have you nothing to say to me now about the evidence?"

"Nothing until I have more to say. Don't overwork yourself, Trevor, and don't despair. I shan't miss this trial."

A week later, when "The Queen against Edgar Hardy Wickham" was called, the court was crowded to the doors, for the trial was the sensation of the hour.

The judge was a grave, strong-faced man, clean-shaven and firm-lipped, with a reputation of forcing his way through all obstacles to the truth, and carrying the jury with him; the best man in the world for an innocent person to be tried before, and the worst for a guilty.

In that court, full of callous spectators, one man, at least, watched the prisoner with an intense sympathy that was akin to pain. The watcher sat in a dark corner far from the dock. But the prisoner, though he could not see him, grew uneasy under those intense eyes that shone out of the dusk, and shielded his face with his hands as from a strong light. Then Vivian Ardel shifted his position a little and faced the witness-box. So absorbed was he in his own thoughts and task that he was unconscious of the interest that he was himself creating. For women's quick eyes had found him even in the shade. The famous hypnotic doctor, athlete, inventor, millionaire was one of the few men in London who could distract the eyes of fashionable ladies from that handsome young murderer they had come to see.

The young face in the dock was indeed handsome—and horrible. Horrible in the look of abject fear on every line of it. The dark eyes had the piteous glare—half fierce, half frightened—of a wild animal trapped; the upper lip drawn tight showed a narrow line of teeth tight clenched.

The jury are sworn without a challenge on either side. The prisoner pleaded "Not guilty" in a faltering voice; then slowly and solemnly the Attorney-General, Sir Frederick Percival, began his opening statement for the Crown.

Sir Frederick Percival was the most dangerous of prosecutors by reason of his transparent impartiality. He never pressed a point against a prisoner; he never shirked a point in his favor. He simply gave the facts fair play. He let them tell their own story and make their own arguments. He never prosecuted a man whom he did not believe to be guilty, and he had a wonderful way of impressing his own belief on the jury.

"My Lord and Gentlemen of the Jury," the Attorney-General began, "this is indeed a terrible charge that we have met to investigate, and not lightly to be believed true of any man. It will be a happy privilege for you if you can set the prisoner free by your verdict. No man will rejoice more than myself should I fail to convince you of his guilt. It is my duty only to set the facts clearly before you, and yours to consider and decide. The responsibility of that decision is yours, not mine.

"The prisoner at the bar is young and wealthy. He has known how to enjoy his wealth, but there is no insinuation here that he has abused it. Such an insinuation would be false if it were made.

"About nine months ago he was captivated by the personal attractions of the ill-fated Miss Bessie Blythewood, for whose murder he is now upon his trial.

"It was an honorable love he professed for her, and it appears to have been passionately returned by the object of his affections. From first to last—I wish you to understand this—from first to last there is no hint on which even malice could fasten against the honor of the man or the virtue of the woman.

"She was an actress of undoubted talent, rapidly rising in her profession. She sacrificed its triumphs for his sake without a sigh. There will be a long correspondence before you, from which you may learn the tenor and progress of their courtship."

There was a rustle of pleasant anticipation amongst the ladies in the gallery as this announcement was made.

"It is enough for my present purpose that their marriage was arranged. The prisoner was and is, as I have said, a man of wealth; the girl was an orphan, whose sole income had been derived from the profession which she had abandoned at his desire. It is right to say the prisoner made fitting, and even generous, provision for the comfort of his future wife. He rented for her a suburban villa—Laburnham Lodge—where she lived pending the marriage, with Miss Rebecca Blythewood, her aunt. Miss Blythewood will be one of the chief witnesses for the prosecution, and you will also have before you a model of Laburnham Lodge, which, as the Crown alleges, was the scene of the murder.

"For the present it will suffice for you to remember that Laburnham Lodge is a detached, two-storey villa, standing in its own lawn, about a hundred yards from the public road. On the second floor, with one large French window looking out towards the road, is the drawing-room, where the poor girl's body was found, shot through the head."

"The prisoner," Sir Frederick continued, in the same voice, calm and inexorable as fate, "lived in a furnished flat at Curval Crescent, nearly three miles away. But in the first ardor of their affection they were constantly together. Yet, as is the custom with lovers, their letters were as numerous as their interviews. To these facts Miss Rebecca Blythewood, whose bereavement will, I am sure, secure for her your sympathy, will be called upon to depose.

"The young people, as I am instructed, went to various places of public amusement together, and enjoyed themselves as young people will to the end of time. But let me repeat, and I am sure that my learned friend who appears for the prisoner will bear me out, both before and during her engagement with the prisoner Bessie Blythewood's character was above reproach."

Again the Attorney-General paused for a moment, and John Trevor nodded his head in full concurrence.

"But, gentlemen, as unfortunately too often happens, the man's hot love burned itself away. He grew at first neglectful, then unkind. As the man's love cooled the girl's kindled to a fiercer flame. She was quick-tempered, as well as warm-hearted, and undoubtedly angry words and letters at this stage passed between them. However, as I have already said, you will have the correspondence before you, and it is from that, and not from any observations of mine, your conclusions must be drawn.

"There is one letter, however, which I now hold in my hand, to which I must entreat your earnest attention, so vital is its importance in the case. It is a letter from the murdered girl, apparently written in reply to a communication from the prisoner desiring to break off the engagement. That document is not forthcoming, but it is only fair to the prisoner to say that from the reply he seems to have offered to make very generous provision for the lady as a condition of his release.

"Her letter to which I have referred was found torn to fragments in the prisoner's waste-paper basket. It has been most skillfully put together by an expert in those matters, and we can prove beyond doubt or question it is the handwriting of the murdered girl.

"Darling Devil (it runs), How can you be so cruel. In spite of all, I love you better than my own life. Let that be the answer when you ask me to give you up to a rival, for I'm sure some other girl is at the bottom of this treachery of yours. How often have you sworn that you loved me, only me, and told me I must never doubt your love. I cannot think you were a liar all the time. If you ever loved me, your love will come back, and I will wait for it; yes, I will wait. But don't try me too far. I will be patient with you, and loving with you, but I will never give you up, never. I would sooner die; that's nothing—I would sooner see you dead. Don't drive me to desperation. The offer you make of this house and an income to keep it up I refuse with scorn. I won't sell my love for money. I hold you to your pledge. I will disgrace you before the world if you dare to break it. I'll make your name a laughing-stock through London. It shall be love or revenge. Let it be love, darling. You will never find another to love you as I do. Remember how happy we were in those old days. I will be a good, true wife to you, Edgar, and will never weary and worry, if you will only try to love me a little. It was not so hard once. Ever your loving Bessie.

"When the prisoner got that letter he was at breakfast in his chambers, and with him a college friend, Mr. Wheeler, who will tell you how that letter was received. Gentlemen, Mr. Wheeler is an unwilling witness, to his credit be it said, a most unwilling witness. He has a harsh and ungracious duty to discharge. But the law demands the truth from him, and in that witness-box you will have the truth. He must tell you that the prisoner was seized with a sudden transport of fury when he read the letter. He ground his teeth together, he tore the paper into fragments and stamped on it, and he used these words—terribly significant words, remembering what afterwards transpired—'That girl will drive me to murder yet.'"

The silence was like death in the crowded court, only the scratching of the judge's pen was heard as he took a note of the fatal words.

Sir Frederick continued:— "On more than one occasion the prisoner was heard using language almost as violent regarding the poor girl, notably by his old and faithful servant, Robert Weevil, whose evidence on another branch of the case is, as you will presently see, of the most vital importance.

"The letter I have read for you is dated the 9th April. All that day, as Miss Rebecca Blythewood will tell you, the deceased was hysterically excited. I assume that the defence in this case will be some theory of suicide, and I feel, therefore, constrained in the interest of the prisoner to make this point clear.

"On the morning of the next day, the 10th of April, Miss Bessie Blythewood complained of a headache. She sent her aunt into the city for a certain specific she was in the habit of using, on the pretence that she could not spare the servant. But her aunt was no sooner out of the house than she gave the servant a half-holiday. The girl left her quite alone. That was about nine o'clock in the morning. Only one person saw Bessie Blythewood alive afterwards, and that person, the cogent evidence will, I fear, coerce you to believe, is the unhappy prisoner at the bar. Of the interview between them we have no direct evidence to offer. What happened in that lonely house during the hour and a half that elapsed before Miss Rebecca Blythewood's return we can only gather by inference. But it is inference so clear and strong, leading so directly to the door of truth, that we cannot miss our way.

(To be continued.)

Women Have Kidney Disease

And Often Make the Mistake of Attributing the Resulting Backache to Other Causes

Dr. Chase's Kidney-Liver Pills

Many women have kidney disease and do not know it. They confuse the symptoms of kidney disease with those of ailments of a feminine nature. We would warn you against this danger, as a few days' neglect of kidney disease may mean years of suffering.

Pains in the small of the back or weakness and lameness of the back are the most marked symptoms of kidney diseases; others are loss of flesh, dry, harsh skin, deposits in the urine, swelling of the feet and legs, severe headaches, stiffness and soreness of the muscles, rheumatic pains, cold chills in back and loins, scalding, painful urination, weariness and despondency.

There is, we believe, no preparation extant which affords such prompt relief for backache and the other distressing symptoms of kidney disease as Dr. Chase's Kidney-Liver Pills. That this preparation is a thorough cure is evidenced by the scores and hundreds of statements which are received at these offices from reputable people in all walks of life.

Mrs. W. Wilkins, Henry street, Belleville, Ont., states:— "I suffered a great deal with pains in the small of the back caused from kidney trouble. Whenever I stooped I could scarcely rise again, the pains were so great. The disease became so severe that it affected my general health, and I was becoming very much run down. Since using Dr. Chase's Kidney-Liver Pills I can say that my trouble has entirely disappeared. I can speak in the highest terms of this medicine from the way it acted in my case."

Dr. Chase's Kidney-Liver Pills, 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 are on every box.

BABY'S VITALITY.

The vitality of infants and young children is at its lowest point during the hot weather. More children die in summer than at any other season. This is because the little ones suffer more from bowel troubles, are nervous, weak, sleepless and irritable. Prompt action often saves a valuable little life, and troubles of this kind can be promptly met and cured by giving the little ones Baby's Own Tablets, which should be kept in every home ready for emergencies. These Tablets speedily relieve, and promptly cure all stomach, bowel and other hot weather ailments, and give sound refreshing sleep. Mrs. P. Ferguson, 105 Mansfield street, Montreal, says: "My baby was attacked with dysentry and was hot and feverish. I gave him Baby's Own Tablets and they promptly cured him. Before this he had been rather delicate, but since using the Tablets he has been better and stronger in every way."

These Tablets can be given with an absolute certainty that they will do good to all children from a new born upwards. They contain no opiate or poisonous "soothing" stuff. Sold by medicine dealers or mailed at 25 cents a box by writing direct to Dr. Williams Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont.

LIVES OF ANIMALS.

Animals vary greatly in the length of their lives. Elephants, eagles and parrots may celebrate their hundredth birthday, but our domesticated beasts are thought to be aged when they have reached a quarter of a hundred. A horse is old at 20, a donkey at 25 and a cat or dog at 15. The span of existence alloted to insects is shorter still, the fly and the butterfly commonly enjoying but one summer of vigorous life, and then being taken off by the cold, if they are not previously snapped up by a bird.

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. 60c a box, at all dealers or EDMANSON, BATES & Co., Toronto.

Dr. Chase's Ointment

EXPLORING THE DEPTHS.

STRANGE THINGS DISCOVERED AS WORK GOES ON.

Underground Rivers Enter the Sea at an Enormous Depth.

In the work of exploring the depths of the sea, of mapping out the ocean floors so that the geography of the land covered with water shall, in time, come to be as well known as the geography of the land that is dry, the United States and Great Britain are the leading spirits, and by them nearly all the work in this direction is accomplished.

England's hydrographic surveys, which she is prosecuting constantly in all parts of the world, are conducted by the British Admiralty.

In the United States the same work is divided between two bureaus—the Hydrographic Bureau and the Navy Department and the Coast Survey Bureau of the Treasury Department.

The Coast Survey does all the work along the coasts, as far out to sea as the hundred fathom curve—that is, out to a depth of 600 feet. Deep-sea work and work in foreign waters is done by the Hydrographic Bureau.

Not only are the ocean floors mapped out, but tides, and those great rivers flowing through the ocean, and known as currents, are studied and a vast amount of data collected concerning their habits and physical characteristics.

MANY CURIOUS THINGS

are discovered as the work goes on. Among them is the discovery that there are underground rivers, which sometimes enter the sea at a depth of more than 600 feet. It has been shown that more than one-half of the sea-floor lies at a depth of about 12,200 feet, or less than three miles. But 43 localities have been found where the depth is much greater.

Some of the latter are mere holes, while others cover considerable areas. One vast "deep," as these depressions in the open ocean-bed are called, lies in the South Atlantic, and covers an area of about 7,000,000 square miles, or 7 per cent. of the surface of the globe. The Indian Ocean is a great place for "deeps," 24 out of the known 43 lying at the bottom of that body of water.

All the continents seem to be resting on a sort of terrace, the sea-floor sloping away from the coast gradually at a depth of 600 feet, and then dropping rapidly to a depth of 6,000 feet.

It has been proved that variations of temperature, caused by seasons, do not extend deeper than 600 feet Below that the temperature never varies from one year's end to another. The ocean depths are regions of low temperature. It is estimated that 94 per cent. of the entire sea-floor is

BELOW 40 DEGREES.

At the bottom of the Indian Ocean it is 35 degrees, and the same temperature prevails in the South Atlantic and parts of the Pacific. The temperature is higher at the bottom of the North Atlantic and over a large part of the floor of the Pacific.

This low temperature is supposed to be caused by the sinking to the bottom of the cold water poured out from the Polar regions, which, after reaching the bottom, spreads out over the ocean floors.

And the ocean depths are places not only of cold, but of darkness, for the rays of the sun are wholly absorbed in passing through the layers of water, and cannot penetrate to the lower regions. Although marine plants have been brought up from surprising depths, it is estimated that 93 per cent. of the ocean floor is entirely devoid of plant life.

LORD SALISBURY.

Lord Salisbury has so greatly improved in health, says a London correspondent, that Walmer Castle is being prepared for his reception. It is expected that he will make a prolonged stay at his delighful marine residence, which, although within a few yards of the sea at high water, has a large old-fashioned garden in which absolute shelter can be found in the wind. The ex-Premier has the use of the castle, of course, by virtue of his office of Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. The apartment which he uses as a study is the one in which Lord Nelson and the Duke of Wellington had an interview before the future hero of Trafalgar joined the fleet assembled in the historic Downs. This was the only meeting between Nelson and Wellington.

BEATEN ON OWN GROUND.

The workmen of Germany are not the greatest European beer drinkers. Their average consumption per day is two quarts a head, while in England the average among the same class is slightly larger.

Wife: "George, this burning of the candle at both ends means an untimely grave. It is nearly twelve o'clock. Come to bed." George: "But I'm doing this night work in order to find money enough to buy you a birthday present." Wife: "Well, if you will persist in working, of course, I can't stop it. Good-night, dear."