

STRONGER THAN DEATH OR A RANSOMED LIFE

CHAPTER VII.

The brilliancy of Trevor's cross-examination was the talk of the town for a week, and of the profession for a year. He himself felt like an impostor, but he could not clear himself of the glory of the achievement. Ardel had pledged him to secrecy, and, apart from that pledge, he knew it would be impossible to explain to his learned brethren the highly unprofessional methods by which innocence was vindicated and guilt brought to justice.

There was no man, however, to whom he insisted on telling the truth and the whole truth, without consulting his friend.

About a week after Vivian Ardel was lazing in his study over a volume of the original edition of "Pickwick," for the abounding physical vitality in Dickens' novels always had a special attraction for him. By turns the busiest or laziest of men, who did his work or his idling thoroughly and with his whole heart, he was absorbed in the enjoyment of his book when his servant handed him a card, on which he read the name "Mr. Edgar Wickham."

He could hardly recognize the splendid young fellow that a minute later followed the soft-footed servant into the room.

Ardel had last seen that handsome face haggard with a horrible fear, then dazed by a sudden, unlooked-for escape; now it was all aglow with youth, and health, and happiness.

"May I ask, sir," he began courteously, but a little coldly, when the youth cut him short. He stepped across the room with impulsive eagerness, hand outstretched, cheeks flushed, and eyes shining gratefully.

"Forgive me, Dr. Ardel," he said, "Mr. Trevor has told me everything. I don't know how even to begin to thank you. When all my so-called friends forsook me, you, a stranger, drew me out of the very pit of hell. You don't know, you cannot know, from what you saved me. No one knows how horrible death is that has not stared it in the eyes for days, as I have."

The healthy glow on his cheek faded at the mere remembrance of his long agony, and Ardel, for a moment, seemed to get a glance at the face he remembered in the dock, and knew him in that glance.

He clasped the young man's hand with hearty sympathy.

"I think I can understand," he said, in a low voice that shook with feeling, "I put myself in your place."

"No; no one can understand it who has not been through with it himself. My whole life and soul revolted against death, to which I was driven headlong. It was not the pain or the shame of it I regarded in the least; it was extinction—the being blotted clean out of existence, as though I had never been. That thought was with me night and day; sometimes in dull, aching apathy; sometimes it came sharp as a pang of physical pain, and made my blood freeze in my veins, and the cold sweat broke out all over me."

"You don't believe in a future state?" Ardel asked. The question slipped from him instinctively.

"I thought I did before this. I went to church and said prayers, and all that sort of thing; and when friends and relations died spoke about meeting them again. But when it came to my own turn, these empty formalities were of no avail. I looked straight into the void gulf of death, and I could see nothing beyond. But don't let us talk of what is passed and over. You have given me back my life, and the savour of it is the keener and more exhilarat-

ing from having come so near losing it."

"But death still waits for you, only a little further off," said Ardel, with a curious persistency.

"I don't think of that; I don't want to think of it; and I could not think of it if I wanted to. I feel my life fervent and glowing; I feel I shall live for ever. I won't question the folly of the thought, it is enough for me to enjoy it. But I am wearying you when I should be thanking you. What kind thought prompted you to save me? Why did you come between me and my fate?"

"Because I am human, like yourself. Because our common enemy, the one only real one—y whom, like you, I loathe, and fear, threatened you so close."

"But how came you to believe me innocent, when the whole world believed me guilty?"

"I did not believe you innocent—no, no; sit down; there is nothing to be angry at. Remember I knew nothing of you but what the evidence told me. I neither believed nor disbelieved. Innocent or guilty, I wished to save you. A life for a life, the law says. But the poor girl was dead; your life could not bring back hers. The law has no power over life except to destroy it. A death for a death is mere blind savagery masquerading as justice."

"But you believe me innocent now?" the young man said earnestly.

"All the world believes you innocent now," Ardel answered kindly; and a cloud lifted from Wickham's face.

"Well, doctor," he said, "I won't intrude upon you further. But I could not rest till I thanked you. Some day, who knows? I may have a chance of proving my gratitude."

He rose up as he spoke, but Ardel put his hand in friendly fashion on his shoulder.

"No, no," he said, "Now that we have met we must not part so easily. If I had known Trevor meant to tell you, I should have stopped him. But I am glad to see you, all the same. I should like to have a chat with you about your strange experience, if it does not hurt too much. The subject has a fascination for me. Can you dine here to-day?"

"Very sorry, but I'm engaged to Trevor. I'm going down to his place for a week or so. He has been more than a friend to me through all this trouble. Mine is a very lonely life, you must know, doctor. I have not got a relative in the world. The men I thought friends deserted me when the pinch came. But Trevor has been like a father to me through it all."

"We will dine together all the same if you don't mind," said Ardel, smiling. "I think I may safely invite myself to Lavella. I owe Trevor a visit for many a day. When and how do you mean to go down?"

"I was thinking of going down on my bicycle. But, of course, if you—"

"You cannot do better. It's not quite thirty miles, and a road like asphalt the whole way. I'll pilot you, if you don't mind; I generally ride down. We can send our things by train, and wire Trevor to have them taken from the station."

For both men it was a very pleasant two hours' ride to Lavella. Wickham possessed what was specially attractive to Ardel—a power of enjoyment abounding and intense. It was a quality of Ardel's own nature, though by no means the highest, vividly reproduced in the younger man. For mere intellectual pleasure, the delight of research and knowledge

of reason, or imagination, Wickham—unlike Ardel—had little zest. But to all enjoyments that came through the senses he was keenly alive.

"Isn't it glorious?" he said, as they glided out clear of the great town down a smooth decline of the long, white road, while the soft autumn air—though there was no breath of wind stirring—blew freshly in their faces. He tilted the light straw hat back from his forehead, and the breeze of their own motion rippled his wavy curls of chestnut hair, while his eyes wandered delightedly over the fair scenes that went swiftly by as they rode. Here a slim church spire pierced through the trees; there a pretty villa made a vivid dot of red or white on the green country side. Far off the fair flowing Thames edged the landscape with silver.

Wickham sipped the pure air as a connoisseur sips wine.

"I could shout with joy," he said, turning a radiant face to Ardel, who eyed him closely, sharing his delight.

"There is a wild rapture in my very blood. The world never before seemed so lovely to me. I suppose it was because I came so near losing it."

"Have you got all taste of the bitterness of that thought out of your mind?"

"Quite; the rapture of the escape repays me for everything."

"But—"

"There is no 'but'; you cannot sadden me now. It is true wisdom to only greet the devil when you meet him. There is no devil but death, and I have given death the slip."

"For a time," said Ardel.

"For ever," cried Wickham laughing. "I feel that I am immortal. What more can man desire? Why let dismal thoughts spoil our lives?"

"Who can escape them?"

"I for one. I have the blessed gift of forgetfulness. I think of nothing that doesn't please me. I bury fears and foreboding out of sight and out of mind. I never knew pain or sickness. I never as much as thought of death until the thought was forced on me. That ghastly terror was horrible. But it is gone, clean gone. I have got my life back, and will enjoy it without thought of the future."

"That thought will force itself on you as you grow older."

"Never, never. I know my own nature, and I tell you—never. I will help myself to all the good things that come in my way. As the years take one form of enjoyment away, I will look out for a new one to replace it."

"I would give much for your temperament," said Ardel.

"Sorry I cannot part with it to oblige you. I want it for my own use," the other answered with a smile.

Then there was silence for a few moments and the bicycles flew.

Presently Wickham wiped the moisture from his forehead, and his breathing quickened with the strain.

"Would you mind easing a little up this hill?" he said to his companion.

"I rather fancied myself on the wheel, but you put me to shame."

"It's not fair to let you think so. I can ride pretty hard at a pinch, but I am not riding hard now."

"Then I'd like to know what you call scorching," panted Wickham jerkedly. "Just now we were doing at least twenty miles an hour."

"I had help that you hadn't. I was scarcely pedalling at all."

He slipped his feet from the pedals to the rests as he spoke, and still the machine glided swiftly and smoothly beside Wickham's up the steep incline.

"Electricity," said Ardel quietly, in reply to the other's look of blank amazement. "You see that little ebony case, like a round, black ink bottle, there in the middle of the front axle? It is a primary battery, and develops sufficient electricity to work a steam engine for a day. By this little button here in the handle I can switch it on to the gearing at the crank."

"Why, this is a miracle!"

"Not in the very least. It's as simple as kiss hands. When I once got hold of the main idea it was quite easy to work it out in detail. You see, electricity has neither weight nor bulk, which is an advantage when you want to pack it up tight."

"Still, it's the invention of the century!" cried Wickham, with unabated amazement, his breath coming back a little as they shot over the brow of the incline. "It's what every one has been trying for and failing to hit. You have patented it of course?"

"Not yet."

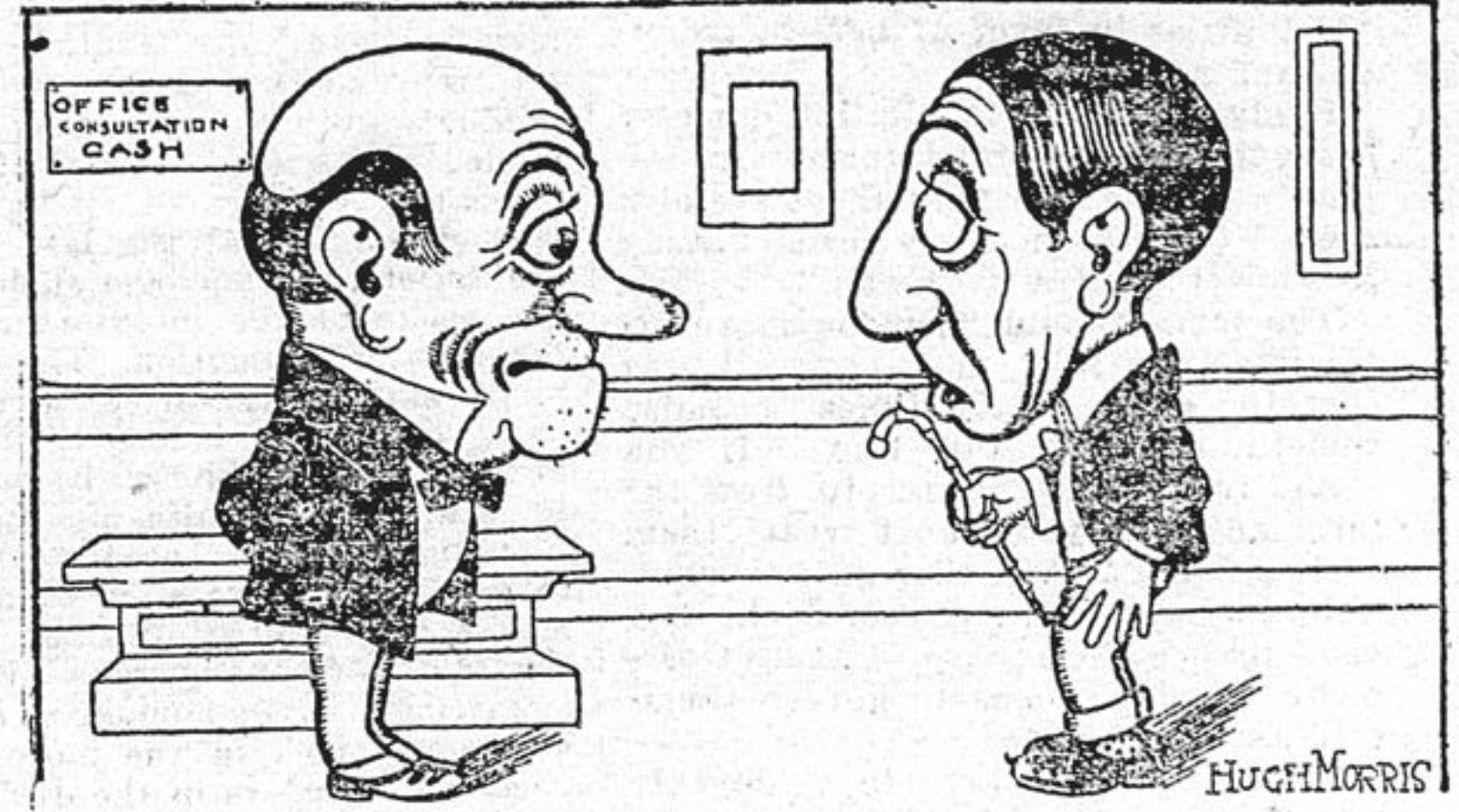
"Not yet! Some other fellow may step in. The thing seems perfect. It is worth a million of money at least. You may adapt it to a flying machine."

"I have adapted it to a flying machine. But then, I don't want a million of money. I have more money than I can spend in the time I have got to spend it. If I could buy time with money, it would be quite another matter."

"By Jove!" cried Wickham, in amazement. "Well, I have myself got what many people would call lots of money. But I could do with lots more. If you cannot buy time, you can buy enjoyment. There is nothing I would not sell for money, if the price was big enough."

Ardel looked at him hard for a moment, and then startled him by an extraordinary question.

"Nothing, you say. Would you sell your youth?"



Cholly Oumpleigh—I say, Doc, don'tcherknow, my eyes are weak. Dr. Krusty—No wonder. They're in a weak place.

CAUSED BY THE HEAT.

A Rash on Baby's Skin That Often Alarms Careful Mothers.

During the summer months a rash often appears on the face, neck and body of babies and small children which is liable to alarm the careful mother. It is due to the excessive heat, and, while not dangerous, is the cause of much suffering. Immediate relief is given by dusting the eruption liberally with Baby's Own Powder, which may be had at any druggist's, but to cure the trouble a medicine must be given that will cool the blood of the little sufferer. Baby's Own Tablets will be found a positive blessing in such cases and will soon restore the clearness and beauty of baby's skin. Mrs. Clifton Cuyler, of Kincairdine, Ont., says: "My baby had a rash break out on her face and all over her body. I gave her medicine, but the eruption never left her until I gave her Baby's Own Tablets, and after using them a short time the rash entirely disappeared. I have also given her the Tablets for constipation with the best of results: they act gently but promptly, and always make baby quiet and restful. I think the Tablets a splendid medicine for young children." Baby's Own Tablets may be had from all druggists Own Powder at the same price. If you prefer to order direct they will at 25 cents per box, and Baby's be sent post paid on receipt of price by the Dr. Williams' Medicine Company, Brockville, Ont.

IN THE SCIENTIFIC WORLD.

Radium, when brought near a diamond in the dark, will make it sparkle. Paste diamonds are not so affected.

Sir W. Ramsay and Prof. Soddy have found distinct evidence of the presence of helium in the spectra of gases emanating from radium bromide. Present observations, therefore, indicate that radium shines largely by the light of the rare gas helium which it evolves.

The production of nitric acid by electro-chemical methods is a new process that promises extensive changes in our agriculture. At Niagara experiments have been conducted successfully in producing commercial nitric acid by using a high tension current in an air chamber, by which a yield of one pound of nitric acid is obtained for every seven horse power hours.

The greatest successes in the electrical transmission of water power have been made in the United States. The maximum distance over which power is transmitted is from Colgate to San Francisco, 220 miles, with a loss of 25 per cent. At Colgate the body of water is small, but the fall is 1,500 feet.

FROM THE CENSUS BUREAUS.

Every Frenchman is born with a debt of \$150 on his shoulders.

France spends 35 per cent. of her resources on military preparations.

Fifty years ago the population of England and Wales was divided equally between city and country; now 77 per cent of it is urban.

When accomplished, the Romanization of the Japanese language will put the final touch of victory to the revolution begun forty years ago.

In Russia 2,810 men in every million are annually called into the army; in Germany 4,120; in France 5,520. To get so large a number of Frenchmen weaklings have to be taken. This makes the mortality in the French army three and half times that of the German army.

"Mamma, what would you do if that big vase in the parlor should get broken?" said Tommy. "I should spank whoever did it," said Mrs. Banks, gazing serenely at her little son. "Well, then, you'd better begin to get up your muscles," said Tommy, gleefully, "cos papa's broken it."

A certain grocer enjoys the unenviable notoriety of selling the worst goods in the district; but he has not recovered from the shock he got the other day, when a little girl came into the shop and said:—"My ma sent me for two ounces of yer best tea for to kill rats with, an' a pound of yer finest ham, an' be sure to cut it in thick slices, because it's to sole an' heel my dad's boots."

Piles
To prove to you that Dr. Chase's Ointment is a certain and absolute cure for every and every form of itching, bleeding and protruding piles the manufacturers have guaranteed it. See for yourselves 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. All dealers or EDMANSON, BATES & Co., Toronto.

Dr. Chase's Ointment

A Lasting Cure of Itching Piles.

A Chronic Case of Unusual Severity and Long Standing Cured by
DR. CHASE' OINTMENT.

Piles, or hemorrhoids, are small tumors, which form in and about the orifice of the rectum. They are caused by an enlarged and inflamed condition of the veins, which are very numerous in this portion of the body. Piles frequently attack women during the expectant period or after childbirth.

Any form of piles causes dreadful suffering on account of the itching and burning which accompany them. One can scarcely walk at times, and during the night, when the body gets warm, suffering is intense.

Mr. Alex. McLaughlin for 30 years a resident of Bowmanville, Ont., writes:

"For twenty long years I suffered from itching piles, and only persons who have been troubled with that annoying disease can imagine what I endured during that time. About 7 years ago I asked a druggist if he had anything to cure me. He said that Dr. Chase's Ointment was most favorably spoken of, and on

his recommendation I took a box. After three applications I felt better, and by the time I had used one box I was on a fair way to recovery. I continued the treatment until thoroughly cured, and I have not suffered any since. I am firmly convinced that the ointment made a perfect cure.

"I consider Dr. Chase's Ointment an invaluable treatment for piles. In my case I think the cure was remarkable when you consider that I am getting up in years, and had been so long a sufferer from this disease."

Dr. Chase's Ointment is the only absolute and guaranteed cure for every form of piles. It has a record of cures unparalleled in the history of medicine. 60 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.