

The Price of Liberty

OR, A MIDNIGHT CALL

CHAPTER XIX.

The blinds were all down at Longdean Grange, a new desolation seemed to be added to the gloom of the place. Out in the village it had by some means become known that there was somebody dead in the house, either madam herself or one of those beautiful young ladies whom nobody had ever seen. Children loitering about the great lodge-gates regarded Williams with respectful awe and Dr. Walker with curiosity. The doctor was the link connecting the Grange with the outside world.

To add to the gloom of it all the bell over the stables clanged mournfully. The noise made Walker quite nervous as he walked up the drive by Williams's side. Not for a pension would he have dared approach the house alone. Williams, in the seditious and most dilapidated rusty black, had a face of deepest melancholy.

"But why that confound—Why do they ring that bell?" Walker asked, irritably.

"Madam ordered it, sir," Williams replied. "She's queerer than ever, is mistress. She don't say much, but Miss Christiana's death is a great shock to her. She ordered the bell to be tolled, and she carried on awful when Miss Enid tried to stop it."

Walker murmured vaguely something doubtless representing sympathy.

"And my other patient, Williams?" he asked. "How is he getting along? Really, you ought to keep those dogs under better control. It's a dreadful business altogether. Fancy a man of Mr. Henson's high character and gentle disposition being attacked by a savage dog in the very house! I hope the hound is securely kennelled."

"Well, he isn't, sir," Williams said, with just the glint of a grin on his dry features. "And it wasn't altogether Rollo's fault. That dog was so devoted to Miss Christiana as you never see. And he got to know as the poor young lady was dying. So he creeps into the house and lies before her bedroom door, and when Mr. Henson comes along the dog takes it in his head as he wants to go in there. And now Rollo's got inside, and nobody except Miss Enid dare go near. I pity that there undertaker when he comes."

Walker shuddered slightly. Longdean Grange was a fearful place for the nerves. Nothing of the routine or the decorous ever happened there. The fees were high and the remuneration prompt, or Walker would have handed over his patient cheerfully to somebody else. Not for a moment did he imagine that Williams was laughing at him. Well, he need not see the body, which was a comfort. With a perfectly easy conscience he could give a certificate of death. And if only somebody would stop that hideous bell! Someone was singing quietly in the drawing-room, and the music seemed to be strangely bizarre and out of place.

Inside it seemed like a veritable house of the dead—the shadow of tragedy loomed everywhere. The dust rose in clouds from the floor as the servants passed to and fro. They were all clad in black, and shuffled unceasingly, as if conscious that their clothes did not belong to them. Enid came out into the hall to meet the doctor. Her face seemed terribly white and drawn; there was something in her eyes that suggested anxiety more than grief.

"I suppose you have come principally to see Mr. Henson?" she said. "But my sister—"

"No occasion to intrude upon your grief for a moment, Miss Henson," Walker said, quietly. "As I have told you before, there was very little hope for your sister from the first. It was a melancholy satisfaction to me to find my diagnosis confirmed in every detail by so eminent an authority as Dr. Hatherly Bell. I will give you a certificate with pleasure—at once."

"You would like to see my sister?" Enid suggested.

The quivering anxiety was in her eyes again, the strained look on her face. Walker was discreetly silent as to what he had heard about that bloodhound, but he had by no means forgotten it.

"Not the least occasion, I assure you," he said, fervently. "Your sister had practically passed away when I last saw her. There are times when—er—you see—but really there is no necessity."

"Mr. Henson is terribly fastidious about these things."

"Then he shall be satisfied, I shall tell him that I have—er—seen the body. And I have, you know. In these matters a medical man cannot be too careful. If you will provide me with pen and ink—"

"Thank you very much. Will you come this way, please?"

Walker followed into the drawing-room. Mrs. Henson, wearing something faded and dishevelled in the way of a mourning dress, was crooning some dirge at the piano. Her white hair was streaming loosely

over her shoulders; there was a vacant stare in her eyes. The intruders might have been statues for all the heed she took of them. Presently the discordant music ceased and she began to pace noiselessly up and down the room.

"Another one gone," she murmured; "the best-beloved. It is always the best-beloved that dies, and the one we hate that is left. Take all those coaches away, send the guests back home. Why do they come chattering and feasting here? She shall be drawn by four black horses to Churchfield in the dead of the night, and there laid in the family vault."

"Mrs. Henson's residence," Enid explained, in a whisper. "It is some fifteen miles away. She has made up her mind that my sister shall be taken away as she says—to-morrow night. Is this paper all that is necessary for the—you understand? I have telephoned to the undertaker in Brighton."

Walker hastened to assure the girl that what little further formality was required he would see to himself. All he desired now was to visit Henson and get out of the house as soon as possible. As he hurried from the drawing-room he heard Mrs. Henson crooning and muttering, he saw the vacant glare in her eyes, and vaguely wondered how soon he should have another patient here.

Reginald Henson sat propped up in his bed, white and exhausted. Beyond doubt he had had a terrible shock and fright, and the droop of his eyelids told of shattered nerves. There was a thick white bandage round his throat, his left shoulder was strapped tightly. He spoke with difficulty.

"Do we feel any better this morning?" Walker asked, cheerfully.

"No, we don't," said Henson, with a total absence of his usual graciousness of manner. "We feel confoundedly weak, and sick, and dizzy. Every time I drop off to sleep I wake with a start and a feeling that that infernal dog is smothering me. Has the brute been shot yet?"

"I don't fancy so; in fact, he is still at his post upstairs, and therefore—"

"Therefore you have not seen the body of my poor dear cousin?"

"Otherwise I could have given no certificate," Walker said, with dignity. "If I have satisfied myself, sir, and the requirements of the law, why, then, everybody is satisfied. I have seen the body."

Technically the little doctor spoke the truth. Henson muttered something that sounded like an apology. Walker smiled graciously and suggested that rest and a plain diet were all that his patient needed. Rest was the great thing. The bandages need not be removed for a day or two, at the expiration of which time he would look in again. Once the road was reached in safety Walker took off his hat and wiped the beads from his forehead.

"What a house," he muttered. "What a life to lead. Thank goodness I need not go there again before Saturday. If anybody were to offer me a small glass of brandy with a little soda now, I should feel tempted to break through my rule and drink it."

Meanwhile the long terror of the day dragged on inside the house. The servants crept about the place on tiptoe, the hideous bell clanged out, Mrs. Henson paced wearily up and down the drawing-room, singing and muttering to herself, until Enid was hysterical. It was one of Margaret Henson's worst days.

The death of Christiana seemed to affect her terribly. Enid had watched her in terror. More than once she was fearful that the frail thread would snap—the last faint glimmer of reason go out for ever. And yet it would be madness to tell Margaret Henson the truth. In the first place she would not have understood and on the other hand she might have comprehended enough to betray to Reginald Henson. As it was, her grief was obvious and sincere enough. The whole thing was refinedly cruel, but really there was no help for it. And things had gone on splendidly.

Henson was powerless to interfere and the doctor was satisfied. Once she had put her hand to the plough Enid's quick brain saw her through. But she would have been hard put to it to deceive Henson under his very nose without the help of the bloodhound. Now she could see her way still farther. She waited nervously for a ring from the lodge-gates to the house, and about four o'clock it came. The undertaker was at the gates waiting for an escort to the Grange.

Enid passed her tongue over a pair of dry lips. The critical moment was at hand. If she could get through the next hour she was safe. If not—but there must be no "if not," she told herself. The undertaker came, suave, quiet, respectful, but he dropped back from the bedroom door as he saw two gleaming

amber eyes regarding him menacingly.

"The dog loved my sister," Enid explained, quietly. "But he has found his way to her room, and he refuses to move. He fancies that we have done something with her. Oh, no, I couldn't poison him! And it would be a dreadful thing if there were to be anything like a struggle here. Come, Rollo."

Evidently the dog had learned his lesson well. He wagged his great tail, but refused to move. The undertaker took a couple of steps forward and Rollo's crest rose. There was a flash of white teeth and a growl. At the end of half an hour no progress had been made.

"There's only one thing for it," Williams suggested, in his rusty voice. "We can get the dog away for ten minutes at midnight. He likes a run then, and I'll bring the other dogs to fetch him, like."

"My time is very valuable just now," the undertaker suggested, humbly.

"Then you had better measure me," said Enid, turning a face absolutely flaming red and deadly white to the speaker. "It is a dreadful, ghastly business altogether, but I cannot possibly think of any other way. The idea of anything like a struggle here is so abhorrent. And the dog's fidelity is so touching. My sister and I were exactly alike, except that she was fairer than me."

The undertaker was understood to demur slightly on professional grounds. It was very irregular and not in the least likely to give satisfaction.

"What does it matter?" Enid cried, passionately. She was acting none the less magnificently because her nerves were quivering like harp-strings. "When I am dead you can fling me in a ditch, for all I care. We are a strange family and do strange things. The question of satisfaction need not bother you. Take my measure and send the coffin home to-morrow, and we will manage to do the rest. Then to-morrow night you will have a four-horse hearse here at seven o'clock and drive the coffin to Churchfield Church, where you will be expected. After that your work will be finished."

The bewildered young man responded that things should be exactly as the lady required. He had seen many strange and wild things in his time, but none so strange and weird as this. It was all utterly irregular of course, but people after all had a right to demand what they paid for. Enid watched the demure young man in black down the corridor, and then everything seemed to be enveloped in a dense purple mist, the world was spinning under her feet, there was a great noise like the rush of mighty waters in her brain. With a great effort she threw off the weakness and came to herself trembling from head to foot.

"Courage," she murmured, "courage. This life has told on me more than I thought. With Chris's example before me I must not break down now."

(To be Continued.)

BITS OF WISDOM.

Only the heartless are hopeless. There is no short cut to happiness. A little silence may save a lot of sorrow.

When love labors it needs no foreman.

Too many men reckon time by pay-days.

Repentance cannot tear up the roots of the past.

There is no joy gained except where joy is given.

The opportunity is always ripe for the man who is ready.

A man's success depends on what he does with his failures.

Judge a man's success by the methods he used in succeeding.

Extravagant speeches are often very economical with the truth.

No man reaches the stage of triumph by the steps of trial.

It would be lovely if others estimated us as we estimate ourselves.

Nobody makes any particular progress by patting himself on the back.

A man often thinks the fellow who does not agree with him a fool.

Always think before you speak. Before you write, think a long time.

If you cannot please yourself you will never be able to please anyone else.

It is a pity that when people reach the age of discretion they do not stay there.

So many people waste time! Do you do it? Do you talk, and talk about nothing?

A man who talks so loudly about himself is often like thunder. Big noise, no damage.

No matter how silly a woman may be, she can always find a man who will let her make a fool of him.

Sorrow makes friends of people that never would be friends with the light of happiness shining around them for ever.

The girls who are chasing a man should see the warning in the face of a woman who has caught one.

How we all dislike the child that has its own way and is impudent! All of us need a great deal of training.

The man who is always hoping for the best may never reach it, but he has a happy time whistling on the way.

We are not always on the bright side of life, but we really need the darkness sometimes—for resting purposes.

It is a blessing for the happy home that husbands and wives do not always know exactly what each thinks of the other.

ALONG A RAY OF LIGHT

WIRELESS TELEPHONE IS NOW A REALITY.

A Wonderful System That Outshines Marconi's Great Discovery.

Telephoning along a ray of light! It seems incredible, but it has been accomplished.

Science has harnessed to this old world many helping steeds, but none more wonderful than this, delightfully simple though it appears to be. You can stand beside a telephone transmitter, "ring up" a neighbor or a distant friend with an electric flash, and swiftly comes to you along a similar streak of light his reply.

Marconi's triumph is hardly more marvellous. He has dispensed with wires in telegraphy; the scientists who have been experimenting with photophony, or radiophony, as the transmission of sound by means of light is sometimes called, have been equally successful, and have added another to the great discoveries of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

How is it done? It all hinges upon the peculiar property of selenium of altering its resistance in the light. A plain mirror is arranged to reflect a beam of light upon a selenium cell in circuit with an ordinary telephone receiver at the receiving end.

USE OF THE MIRROR.

The mirror, which serves as a telephone diaphragm, is placed in front of a resonating chamber and a mouthpiece, so that the slightest sound makes it vibrate, and thus alter the intensity of the beam of light.

These changes in the beam of light affect the selenium in the receiver and so the message finds its way through space.

It is to be bell that the credit of the discovery is due. In 1880 he devised the "photophone," and subsequent experimenters all acknowledge their indebtedness to him. The German Government granted a substantial sum of money to a young Berlin scientist, Ernst Ruhmer, who had already carried out successfully experiments, proving his ability, under varying atmospheric conditions, to transmit articulate sound across water over distances ranging from a mile to nine and a third miles, the messages being satisfactorily received and understood.

Earlier experimenters had succeeded in transmitting sound for the briefest distances. Ruhmer had his eye on a system which would be of commercial value. He discovered that selenium is sensitive to other than red and yellow rays—to blue, violet, and ultra-violet, or invisible rays—otherwise it would have been impossible to use the apparatus when the sun was shining. He also found that the distance over which the message could be transmitted depended largely on the size of the mirror used.

A receiving station was erected on the Kaiser Wilhelm Tower in Grunwald, and tests were made on a dull and foggy evening between the transmitter on a small launch and the station, a distance of four and a third miles. Though the mirror was small and the light imperfect, the message was distinctly understood. With a larger mirror much larger distances were successfully "bridged."

WONDERFUL SYSTEM.

The reader may wonder what are the advantages of this system of wireless telephony over the ordinary system. There are three, at any rate. Messages can be sent more rapidly than at present; replies to messages received can be sent instantaneously, and perfect secrecy is assured. The disadvantage of the system is that the distance to which messages can be transmitted is limited. Sanguine investigators assert, however, that it will be effective for a distance of a hundred and fifty miles.

The installation of wireless telephones on the ships of our navy would, one would think, be of the greatest value, especially at night. Absolute secrecy would be insured, and that, in conjunction with the rapidity with which messages can be sent, ought to render them especially useful.

The admiral could give his orders quickly to the ships of his fleet and without fear of their being read by any hostile or passing vessel.

And on land the cost of a wireless telephone is small enough to warrant its introduction and popular use for short distances.

Undoubtedly this gift of science is a valuable one, and before the world is much older we may see flashing across our cities and over the sea shafts of light bearing our messages and enquiries.

SWALLOWS AND MICROBES.

Swallows and other migratory birds invariably shun those places which are in the slightest degree infected by noxious microbes. Thus they are never to be found in districts when cholera, yellow fever, the plague, and other epidemic diseases prevail. The districts which they select as their temporary homes are in all respects the most healthy that can be found. It is evident from this that persons who are afraid of catching cholera, or other infectious diseases ought not to live in places which are shunned by these birds.

A BRIDE YET NOT A BRIDE

UNUSUAL INCIDENT AT A MARRIAGE CEREMONY.

Irish Woman Changed Her Mind and Would Not Sign the Register.

It is recognized as a woman's privilege to change her mind, and perhaps the most remarkable instance on record comes from a village in County Derry, Ireland, where a girl has gone through the marriage ceremony and then refused to sign the register or to consider herself bound in any way to the disconsolate bridegroom.

The couple became engaged some time ago, and apparently were perfectly happy. When, however, the engagement was announced and preparations were made for the wedding the young woman began to show signs of fickleness. Difficulties were placed in the way of fixing a day, and the utmost endeavors of parents and friends had to be added to the persuasions of her lover to induce her to consent to be married. But eventually the marriage morning arrived, and the wedding party, with a large number of friends, went to the church.

The ceremony proceeded without hitch until the bride was asked in the usual form if she would take "this man" for her husband. The clergyman's question elicited no response. Instead, the woman fidgeted and looked confused, while a buzz of excitement ran through the congregation.

SEPARATED IN THE CHURCH.

In the Irish Presbyterian Church there is no set form of reply to this question. Any method of signifying assent is accepted, and the minister, who thought that the bride was merely nervous, repeated his question gently. This time there was an inclination of the head, which he took for an affirmative. Others present, however, subsequently declared that it was immediately followed by a negative shake.

Be this as it may, the clergyman saw only the affirmative nod and the ceremony proceeded. The ring was placed upon the bride's finger, and everything proceeded without unusual incident to the end.

But when the register had to be signed the bride absolutely refused. She declared that she was not married, that she had never promised to take the man for her husband, and that she could not and would not sign the register. Husband, relatives and clergymen failed to induce her to relent, and eventually, after some hours of fruitless attempts at persuasion, the party broke up, the bride's section going in one direction and the groom and his friends in another.

A NICE LEGAL DILEMMA.

The clergyman then found himself in a peculiar position. In the eyes of the Church the marriage ceremony had been completed and the couple were man and wife. Legally, however, the contract was incomplete. He could not decide whether the woman was maid or wife, and accordingly sought the aid of the Registrar-General to decide the point.

He suggested that the marriage certificate might be made out with the endorsement, "Mrs. ——— refuses to sign the register." The Dublin officials found the point too fine for them, and instructed the minister to do as he suggested, substituting the word "female" for "Mrs. ———."

Thus the highest officials are unable to decide whether the young woman is married or single. She herself, however, has no doubt upon the question and persists that she was never married.

OLD GREEK CALENDAR.

Ancient time-keeping has received new light from two remarkable stones lately unearthed by the German explorers on the site of the old Ionic port of Miletus. These stones are the remains of calendars, of which one is shown to date from 109A.D. The year was divided into twelve zodiacal signs, and against each month the motion of the remaining signs was given, with a note predicting the weather. On the left side were thirty holes, a wooden peg being moved forward one hole each day, thus giving the astronomical date. The new find has made clear the meaning of parapegma, or peg calendar, a name by which other stones have been rather mysteriously known.

CHINESE SLAVERY.

China is the great slavery country of the world. Of a population of 400,000,000 there are slaves to the number of 10,000,000. Every family of means keeps its girl slaves, and a man's position is usually gauged by the number he keeps. At any age from three to fifteen girls are sold, seven or eight being the age at which most change hands. The girls are purchased to do housework, it being cheaper to buy than to hire. Slaves vary in price; \$10 is about the average, but much depends on the girl's appearance. A good-looking girl will fetch \$20, or even \$40.

SNAKES IN INDIA.

About 400,000 snakes are killed every year in British India. The fees paid as rewards annually for the destruction of beasts of prey and venomous snakes by the Government of India amount to about \$100,000.