

The Price of Liberty

OR, A MIDNIGHT CALL

CHAPTER XXIII.

The expression on Henson's usually benign countenance would have startled such of his friends and admirers as regarded him as a shining light and great example. The smug satisfaction, the unctuous sweetness of the expansive blue eyes were gone; a murderous gleam shone there instead. His lips were set and rigid, the strong hand seemed to be strangling the bedclothes. It wanted no effort of imagination to picture Henson as the murderer stooping over his prey. The man had discarded his mask altogether.

"Oh," he said, between his teeth, "you are a clever fellow. You would have made an excellent detective. And so you have found out where Van Sneek is?"

"I have already told you so," Littimer said, doggedly.

"How many days have you been hanging about Brighton?" Two or three. I came when I heard that Chris was ill. I didn't dare to come near the house, at least not too near, for fear of being seen. But I pumped the doctor. Then he told me that Chris was dead, and I risked it all to see the last of her."

"Yes, yes," Henson said, testily; "but what has this to do with Van Sneek?"

"I was looking for Van Sneek. I found that he had been here. I discovered that he had left his rooms and had not returned to them. Then it occurred to me to try the hospital. I pretended that I was in search of some missing relative, and they showed me three cases of bad accidents, the victims of which had not been identified. And the third was Van Sneek."

Littimer told his story with just the suggestion of triumph in his voice. Henson was watching him with the keenest possible interest.

"Do you know how Van Sneek got there?" he asked.

Littimer nodded. Evidently he had heard most of the story. Henson was silent for some little time. He was working out something in his mind. His smile was not a pleasant one; it was nothing like his bland platform smile, for instance.

"Give me that black book," he said. "Do you know how to work a telephone?"

"I daresay I could learn. It does not look hard."

"Well, that is an extension telephone on the table yonder worked in connection with the main instrument in the library. I like to have my own telephone, as it is of the greatest assistance to me. Turn that handle two or three times and put that receiver to your ear. When the Exchange answers tell them to put you on to 0,017 Gerrard."

Littimer obeyed mechanically, but though he rang and rang again no answer came. With a snarling curse Henson dragged himself out of bed and crossed the room, with limbs that shook under him.

He twirled the handle round passionately.

"You always were a fool," he growled, "and you always will be."

Still no reply came. Henson whirled angrily, but he could elicit no response. He kicked the instrument over and danced round it impotently. Littimer had never seen him in such a raging fury before. The language of the man was an outrage, filthy, revolting, profane. No yelling, drunken Hooligan could have been more fluent, more luridly diffuse.

"Go on," Littimer said, bitterly. "I like to hear you. I like to hear the smug, plausible Pharisee, the friend of the good and pious, going on like this, I'd give five years of my life to have just a handful of your future constituents here for a moment."

Henson paused suddenly and requested that Littimer should help him into bed.

"I can afford to speak freely before you," he said. "Say a word against me and I'll crush you. Put out a hand to injure me and I'll wipe you off the face of the earth. It's absolutely imperative that I should send an important telephone message to London at once, and here the machine has broken down and no chance of its being repaired for a day or two. Curse the telephone."

He lay back on his bed utterly exhausted by his fit of passion. One of the white bandages about his throat had started, and a little thin stream of blood trickled down his chest. Littimer waited for the next move. He watched the crimson fluid trickle over Henson's sleeping-jacket. He could have watched the big scoundrel bleeding to death with the greatest possible pleasure.

"What was Van Sneek doing here?" The voice came clear and sharp from the bed. Littimer responded to it as a cowed hound does to a sudden yet not quite unexpected lash from a huntsman's whip. His manliness was of small account where Henson was concerned. For years he had come to heel like this. Yet the question startled him and took him entirely by surprise.

"He was looking for the lost Rembrandt."

But Littimer's surprise was as nothing to Henson's amazement. He lay flat on his back so that his face could be seen. From the expression of it he had obtained a totally unexpected reply to his question. He was so amazed that he had no words for the moment. But his quick intelligence and amazing cunning grasped the possibilities of the situation. Littimer was in possession of information to which he was a stranger. Except in a vague way he had not the remotest idea what the younger man must not know that.

"So Van Sneek told you so?" he asked. "What a fool he must have been! And why should he come seeking for the Rembrandt in Brighton?"

"Because he knows it was here, I suppose."

"It isn't here, because it doesn't exist. The thing was destroyed by accident by the police when they raided Van Sneek's lodgings years ago."

"Van Sneek told me that he had actually seen the picture in Brighton."

Henson chuckled. The noise was intended to convey amused contempt, and it had that effect, so far as Littimer was concerned. It was well for Henson that the latter could not see the strained anxiety of his face. The man was alert and quivering with excitement in every limb. Still he chuckled again as if the whole thing merely amused him.

"The Crimson Blind" is Van Sneek's weak spot," he said. "It is King Charles's head to him. By good or bad luck—it is in your hands to say which—you know all about the way in which it became necessary to get Hatherly Bell on our side. All the same, the Rembrandt—the other one—is destroyed."

"Van Sneek has seen the picture," Littimer said, doggedly.

"Oh, play the farce out to the end," Henson laughed, good-humoredly. "Where did he see it?"

"He says he saw it at 218, Brunswick Square."

Henson's knees suddenly came up to his nose, then he lay quite flat again for a long time. His face had grown white once more, his lips utterly bloodless. Fear was written all over him. A more astute man than Littimer would have seen the beads standing out on his forehead. It was some little time before he dared trust himself to speak again.

"I know the house you mean," he said. "It is next door to the temporary residence of my esteemed friend, Gilead Gates. At the present moment the place is void—"

"And has been ever since your bogus 'Home' broke up. Years ago, before you used your power to rob and oppress us as you do now, you had a Home there. You collected subscriptions right and left in the name of the Reverend Felix Crosbie, and you put the money into your pocket. A certain weekly journal exposed you, and you had to leave suddenly or you would have found yourself in the hands of the police. You skipped so suddenly that you had no time even to think of your personal effects, which your understandings were sold to defray expenses. But they were not sold, as nobody cared to throw good money after bad. Van Sneek got in with the agent under pretence of viewing the house, and he saw the picture there."

"Why didn't he take it with him?" Henson asked, with amused scorn. He was master of himself again and had his nerves well under control.

"Well, that was hardly like Van Sneek. Our friend is nothing if not diplomatic. But when he did manage to get into the house again the picture was gone."

"Excellent!" Henson cried. "How dramatic! There is only one thing required to make the story complete. The picture was taken away by Hatherly Bell. If you don't bring that in as the denouement I shall be utterly disappointed."

"You needn't be," Littimer said, coolly. "That is exactly what did happen."

Henson chuckled again, quite a parody of a chuckle this time. He could detect the quiet suggestion of triumph in Littimer's voice.

"Did Van Sneek tell you all this?" he asked.

"Not the latter part of it," Littimer replied, "seeing that he was in the hospital when it happened. But I know it is true because I saw Bell and David Steel, the novelist, come away from the house, and Bell had the picture under his arm. And that's why Van Sneek's agent couldn't find it the second time he went. Check to you, my friend, at any rate. Bell will go to my father with Rembrandt number two and compare it with number one. And then the fat will be in the fire."

Henson yawned affectedly. All the same he was terribly disturbed and shaken. All he wanted now was to be alone and to think. So far as

he could tell nobody besides Littimer knew anything of the matter. And no starved, cowed, broken-hearted puppy was ever closer under the heel of his master than Littimer. He still held all the cards; he still controlled the fortunes of two ill-starred houses.

"You can leave me now," he said. "I'm tired. I have had a trying day, and I need sleep; and the sooner you are out of the house the better. For your own sake, and for the sake of those about you, you need not say one word of this to Emid Henson."

Littimer promised meekly enough. With those eyes blazing upon him he would have promised anything. We shall see presently what a stupendous terror Henson had over the younger man, and in what way all the sweetness and savor of life was being crushed out of him.

He closed the door behind him and immediately Henson sat up in bed. He reached for his handkerchief and wiped the big beads from his forehead.

"So the danger has come at last," he muttered. "I am face to face with it, and I know I should be. Hatherly Bell is not the man to quietly lie down under a cloud like that. The man has brains, and patience, and indomitable courage. Now, does he suspect that I have any hand in the business? I must see him when my nerves are stronger and try and get at the truth. If he goes to Lord Littimer with that picture he shakes my power and my position perilously. What a fool I was not to get it away. But, then, I only escaped from the Brighton police in those days by the skin of my teeth. And they had followed me from Huddersfield like those cursed bloodhounds here. I wonder—"

He paused, as the brilliant outline of some cunning scheme occurred to him. A thin, cruel smile crept over his lips. Never had he been in a tight place yet without discovering a loophole of escape almost before he had seen the trap.

A fit of noiseless laughter shook him. "Splendid," he whispered. "Worthy of Machiavelli himself! Provided always that I can get there first. If I could only see Bell's face afterwards, hear Littimer ordering him off the premises. The only question is, am I up to seeing the thing through?"

(To be Continued.)

THE SCRIPTURAL HABIT

GIVING OF TITHES INCREASES RICHES.

Prosperity in Increasing Measure to Those Who Give Systematically.

A collection of printed matter on the subject of giving, found in the library of an up-to-date clergyman, offers a new and practically unworked field to the disciple of "new thought." It touches upon the subject from sides in which there is an element of interest to the business man, and to the speculative student, as well as to the religious devotee.

For the business man there is a tabulated record of results believed to have hinged upon the principle of worldly prosperity accruing to the "tither." In addition to the old appeal, given in the form of a complete collection of all scriptural commands, promises, and instances upon the subject, there is kept a record of modern instances in which the practice has been coincident with increasing prosperity. Names of well known men of practical affairs respected by the business world are quoted as having had increase of riches coincident with what is known as the "scriptural habit of giving." In many cases the good fortune is attributed by the beneficiary solely to the habit and with others who are more conservative and two are believed to be at least closely involved.

GIVES TITHES FROM FIRST.

One of the examples quoted is of a millionaire soap manufacturer of world wide reputation. He started to London upon his business career as a boy with all his worldly possessions in a bundle, and his sole capital a knowledge of soapmaking. Because of an incident upon the way he became so profoundly impressed with a belief in the principles of tithing that with his first earnings he proceeded to carry it into effect. So far from abandoning the practice—as is usually the case—when the business man achieves a large capital, the habit was continued in increased ratio through all the ascending heights to riches, which soap accomplished for this manufacturer. The literature in which this incident is included treats the subject from the novel standpoint that it is a matter of indifference whether it was mostly the tithes that proved the royal road to riches, or the soap. That somewhere between the two, it lay in a course from which the tithing system was never absent is the fact that is pointed out. This, as well as other incidents, is presented as coinciding with the scriptural promise rather than fulfilling it.

Records of an American league are also given in which each member not only gives his tenth but submits an annual report of his business prosperity. The results, said to surprise even the most sanguine believers in the worldly prosperity of tithes, show only two or three out of thousands who do not report largely in-

creased business prosperity. The books of the old South church of Boston, which have carefully preserved names of donors and the amount given by each for the last fifty years are also called in as evidence. Worldly prosperity is attested here by the names of many who began giving at that early period who are still giving and whose sums have increased from year to year. The names of several of the largest givers are to be found on the list fifty years ago, when they commenced giving small amounts.

STOPS SPENDTHRIFT.

Explanations of the practical effect of this system of giving offer an attractive field of speculation to the students who explain governing causes and effects scientifically. First, it is pointed out the most emphatic direction is that it shall be systematic. This not only does away with foolish and irrational giving, but of spending also, and can only result in the salvation of the spendthrift. Second, those who follow it are obliged to keep a careful system of monetary records. The business man who follows it knows what he is doing from week to week and from month to month, so that he can never fail for a large amount. His knowledge of his affairs, self-denial, and systematic payments are bound to win success for him. Third, it gives a strong motive for enthusiastic work for those who haven't it for any other cause. Tithes, so it is stated, and it appears not without reason, invariably become enthusiastic givers and so become enthusiastic workers.

One of the cases found in the records is the sworn statement of such an extravagant measure of success of a business house which tithed its profits, aside from the giving of its personal members, as could only open it to the suspicion of being a clever advertisement if printed in any way but the semi-private character of these records. As it is, the 400 per cent. profits which were reached, were given as "testimony" to the direct fulfillment of the challenge: "Bring ye all the lilies into the storehouse and prove me now wherewith—"

It is also a significant fact that while this collection of literature comprises the whole gamut of facts and material for what is known as modern methods of preaching, as well as "modern thought" out of deference to the spirit of altruism, it is only selected from advisedly and held as a source of reference rather than exhortation.

LETTUCE AND ROSY CHEEKS.

Hints to Wives for the Improvement of Husbands.

If a wife wants to see her husband's cheeks become rosy she is advised by a writer on diet to give him two heads of lettuce a day, and to give him a portion of lettuce with poached eggs every night for six weeks. The writer gives these hints on how to prepare this magic maker of resolute tinted masculine cheeks:

If you break the heads, cut the leaves from the lettuce heads and throw them for some time before serving into the water, for washing and cleansing, the best part will be lost. The lettuce heads should be washed whole and cut and prepared shortly before serving in order to retain all nourishing substances.

Variety in food does not necessarily mean a great variety at any one meal, nor does it mean rich pastries and indigestible stuffs. A meal of two or three articles is really better than a great number, but each meal should be different from the other. Breakfast, dinner and supper should consist of different articles of food, and these be varied from day to day. A variety of wholesome foods well cooked is needed. The sensible housewife is the one who does not serve to husband and children the things day after day until their appetites are cloyed, and their stomachs go on a strike. The food should vary from season to season, from day to day, from meal to meal.

Eat meat, eat fish, eat vegetables, eat fruits, eat cereals, but do not try to eat them all in one day. Remember your body is made up of many different elements, and it is best nourished by many different kinds of food.

HER POWER NOT EFFECTIVE.

In a most informing review of the war in Manchuria, Thomas F. Millard speaks of the Siberian-Manchurian Railway as "a vital factor in the situation," for it is the only feeder of the Russian army as long as Japan retains control of the sea. After an observation of three months he finds that the daily average capacity of this one-track railway for the transportation of troops is only a little more than four hundred men, with their equipments and supplies. On the basis of Mr. Millard's estimate, the capacity of this railway under its Russian administration would be only 140,000 soldiers, with their equipments and supplies, in a whole year. Such an addition to the fighting strength of the Russian army in Manchuria, the size of which at the opening of the war was vastly exaggerated in the public reports, would not be sufficient to enable the Russians to make an aggressive campaign against the Japanese.

After an absence of 100 years, sharks have again made their appearance in the Baltic.

YOUR HEART AFFECTED?

More People Than Are Aware of It Have Heart Disease.

"If examination were made of everyone, people would be surprised at the number of persons walking about suffering from heart disease." This startling statement was made by a doctor at a recent inquest at Yarmouth, Eng., and, according to a London heart specialist, is in a certain degree correct.

"I should not like to say that heart disease is as common as this would imply," said the expert, "but I am sure that the number of persons going about with weak hearts must be very large. But this is not disease of the heart, which, I believe is really uncommon.

"Hundreds of people go about their daily work on the verge of death, and yet do not know it. It is only when the shock comes that kills them that the unsuspected weakness of the heart is made apparent.

"Many think their hearts are affected, however, and have really nothing the matter with them at all. There are a great many people who never fail to go out without their name and address somewhere upon them and a phial of brandy ready for emergencies, and yet they never need them.

"Some of these people will even carry written instructions in their pockets as to what is to be done with them when the expected seizure comes.

"One middle-aged lady I know was so confident that her heart was liable to sudden failure that she never went anywhere without her brandy phial, and got her husband to tell everybody she knew what to do if an attack came.

"Curiously enough, it was the husband who died from sudden heart failure. The wife died years afterwards from another disease.

"But undoubtedly heart weakness, not disease, is more prevalent now-a-days. I should think that the stress of living, the wear and rush of modern business life—particularly the five minutes' meal followed by a rush for the train—have a lot to do with heart trouble. And I am sure that heart weakness caused by over-smoking is on the increase."

A MARRIAGE TANGLE.

Mother and Daughter Were Both Married to the Same Man.

Rarely has a more complicated matrimonial tangle come before the courts than that which engaged the attention of the Aldershot County Court judge the other day. A remarkable feature of the case was that a woman and her daughter had gone through the marriage ceremony with the same man.

The facts came out in an action brought by Mrs. A. G. Fitzgerald against George Knight, telegraphist at the head-quarter office of the First Army Corps at Aldershot, for the recovery of £10 due to her under a deed of separation.

Mrs. Fitzgerald, it appeared, married Knight about twenty-two years ago. She had then just returned from India with her two children, believing her first husband was dead. Knight was then in the army. Before the marriage took place Mrs. Fitzgerald told him the story of her previous marriage.

Some years later her daughter left her. Recently Knight discovered by means of an advertisement that his wife's former husband was alive when he married her, and also by the same means discovered the whereabouts of the missing daughter.

The daughter was reunited to the family, and soon afterwards Knight caused Mrs. Fitzgerald to sign a separation agreement, by which he was to pay her so much a week. Shortly afterwards her daughter and Knight left the house, and she then discovered that the former had had a child by Knight, and that he had married her.

In the agreement, which Mrs. Fitzgerald said she had not read, was a clause to the effect that if she interfered with Knight the allowance would cease. All she had done was to go to her daughter to induce her to come back to her.

The judge, the Hon. Arthur Russell, characterized Knight's action as the most disgraceful thing a man could do, and told him that Mrs. Fitzgerald could molest him as much as she pleased, as far as he was concerned.

Judgment was given for Mrs. Fitzgerald with costs, amid loud applause.

IT PAYS TO BE GOOD.

Under the will of Mrs. Marianna A. Ogden, who died at Lenox, Mass., on September 23rd, nearly \$600,000, besides much real estate, is disposed of. The testatrix leaves \$200,000 to Arnot Ogden Memorial Hospital, Elmira, N. Y., and \$5,000 to the Southern Tier Orphans' Home, Elmira. The bulk of the property in personal estate is bequeathed to her sister, Fannie A. Haven, and her real estate is divided between her and her brother, Matthias H. Arnot. There is also a bequest of \$5,000 to a nephew on condition that he does not drink until he is 21, and an additional \$5,000 should he abstain from drink and also from the use of tobacco until he is 25 years old.

It is easier to start some men talking than it is to stop them.