



CHAPTER X.



HE count ordered all preparations consistent with the resources of the chateau to be made for the approaching wedding, and flattered himself that he was very diplomatic in talking confidently before the servants, of the series of festivities which should follow that event. He affected an air of the utmost security, and laid out a score of improvements to be made in the garden, at a period when he meant to be safely landed on a foreign shore. And every few hours he exchanged a knowing nod with M. Pierre, as if gloriating over his wise sagacity. In these preparations, of course, the absence of the most valuable services of silver was discovered, but the wily M. Pierre had forestalled the need of explanation by informing his credulous master that he had taken the precaution, in consideration of the disturbances in other places, to secrete it, and that it should be ready for him at the wedding festival, unless he preferred to have it snugly packed for transportation to the fishing sloop, which last idea the count eagerly seconded. He rode over to Frejus to find some one to perform the ceremony, and on the way thither met a bishop coming to him for protection. He had left Paris expecting to find a relative at Frejus, but every one who held the slightest claim to aristocracy had fled from Paris.

The count received him warmly, and carried him back to the chateau in triumph. Now everything was prepared, only waiting for the bridegroom to be able to perform his share of the ceremony. M. Pierre was ostensibly most active in carrying forward the preparations, but the countess shuddered every time she met his eye. The bishop's presence gave the ladies more excuse for lingering in their own rooms; and it also seemed an opportunity to visit the Little Forest. Therefore, that very evening they stole forth cautiously and went speeding along toward the hollow tree. Before they reached the edge of the wood the form of Emile started up from the hedge which bordered the meadow. He spoke their names eagerly, and dispersed the momentary terror which his sudden appearance had caused.

"Thank Heaven you have come! I was trying to conjure up an opportunity for speaking with you. How proceed matters at the chateau?"

"Why enough, I fear, though the count fancies everything favorable," answered the countess.

"And the overseer?"

"He is there still. The count trusts him implicitly, and has confided to him all his plans of escape."

"Mon Dieu! is the man demented?"

"He will not listen to our remonstrances," answered Felicie, while her mother kept silence.

"Have you told him what you heard?"

"No; though we assured him that we had proof of his treachery. He declared he should go to M. Pierre with our accusations, and we dared not reveal all without first consulting you."

"That was prudent," said Emile, while between his teeth he muttered, "Doll! Milet! brute! the man does not deserve to live." And in a moment he added gravely, "It would be the extinguishment of your best hopes of escape to reveal my presence here, or the locality of the retreat I have provided. I half expected to find you gone; and I fervently hoped it might be so."

"We waited for the Marquis Edward."

"And he arrived two nights ago. Why were you not away before this? Every hour is of priceless value."

The countess sighed heavily.

"He is ill; we are only waiting for his recovery; then the marriage is to take place, and we are to ride directly to the wharf at St. Josephs."

"I wish I knew their plans better; not a soul has entered the woods since I came, and the pikes have been removed. I lost the precious opportunity by my long absence."

"Ah," cried Felicie, "we looked for you so anxiously. We grew so troubled about you."

"I could not come. I have learned a bitter lesson in my absence. I, who held them to my sway before, have found the tide so swollen that it bore me along like a feather. I lifted up my voice for freedom, equality, manhood—did I know they would interpret it lawlessness, demoralization, brutality? Alas! one cannot play with fire without being scorched. My heart has died within me to witness the horrors which reign triumphant, conscious, as I am, that I helped to nurse the spark which has become such a madly devouring element. There is but one voice left me; I must secretly aid all who come within reach of my helping hands."

can reach it you will be safe, whatever happens to me."

"Let us go now; we may have no other opportunity," said Felicie.

They proceeded thither in silence. The countess seemed greatly fatigued and sat down on the ground, while Emile carefully initiated her daughter into the mysteries of the spring cunningly fled into a round excrescence of the bark. Lady Felicie practiced upon it until able to open it instantaneously.

"Now let us hasten back," said the countess, shivering with the chilly night air.

Just as she turned, she paused suddenly, and, extending her hand, said, with grave, solemn sweetness:

"Heaven bless you, Emile, and reward you for all your devotion."

He held her hand in his just a brief moment, then dropped it without a word. The countess drew Felicie's arm within hers and hurried away, nor cast a single backward glance. They were just in season to escape detection, and had hardly removed their wrappers when the count burst in upon them.

"To-morrow night, Felicie, my love!" exclaimed he. "The Marquis Edward improves rapidly, he declares himself convalescent, and insists that there be no further delay. So get out your finery to-morrow. He will not see you till you are dressed in your bridal garments. It's a pity the wedding must be such a paltry affair; but we'll celebrate it in worthy style when we return again to France. But be sure you look a little like a Languedoc. After all, the dress can be quite as pretty as if you had a dozen corbellees from Paris. There's plenty of rich lace in the wardrobe, and the diamonds will brighten all. I want Edward to remember his bride as a charming picture, though there be no guests nor festival."

"And you intend to proceed at once to the vessel?" asked the countess.

"Yes, immediately."

"Grant me this favor as a bridal gift, mon pere," exclaimed Felicie, the tears rushing to her eyes; "let M. Pierre believe we are not to go until the night after."

"Foolish child! are those tears?"

"I am so terribly afraid of that man, mon pere; promise, I beseech you!"

"Why not? I will not mention another word to him—are you content? Once safely at sea, we shall forget all these horrors."

"Thank you, oh, thank you, papa, it is such a relief."

He did not disclose the fact that he had just come from M. Pierre and had discussed the whole arrangement freely. And so, believing M. Pierre in ignorance, and conscious of Emile's vicinity, mother and daughter slipped peacefully through the night.

CHAPTER XI.



ALTHOUGH apparently very quiet, the next day was really a busy and anxious one at the chateau. Edward was up and dressed in a clean, fresh, well-stocked wardrobe, quite early in the day; but he preferred not to see his bride until the marriage vows were exchanged—on the ostensible plea of reserving all his strength free from excitement, but in reality from a disinclination he could not overcome. The countess, herself, dressed her daughter in the feeble white robes, nor would allow another hand to touch a single fold. She lingered fondly over the task, reluctant to finish, and even Felicie was obliged to say, with a blush and a smile:

"There, there, mamma! I am sure it is all complete now—you could not be more particular if there were a thousand guests to behold me!"

But the countess smothered a wave of hair here, brushed out a tumbled founce, readjusted each spray of the orange crown, and finally removed the diamond ornaments entirely and replaced them with her own rich set of milky pearls.

"My father will not approve!" whispered Felicie.

"For this once, no matter; he will not have time to allude to it. The pearls are so much prettier. Now is my darling a fairly looking bride, indeed. Surely Edward will open his heart to her at once."

"Ah, it is for him you are so fastidiously particular tonight. I had forgotten, almost, what it meant for me, this wedding—I only have rejoiced because it was the gateway for our escape from this wearing life of suspense."

"Wearing, indeed!" reiterated the countess, and putting her hand hastily to her side, she turned deathly pale. Felicie sprang forward in alarm.

"What is it, my mother? are you faint? are you ill?"

"No, no, it is nothing, it will pass in a moment."

And as she had said, the spasms passed away in a few moments. The daughter was scarcely reassured, when the count's voice was heard at the door.

"Come, loiterers, we are waiting for you."

The countess seized Felicie's hand, and bent forward to press a solemn kiss upon her lips.

"The Holy One forever bless my good and worthy daughter!"

The deep pathos of the tones brought the tears to her eyes, but there was no time to give answer, for the count unlocked the door, and led her

from the room down the staircase, where a few of the servants stood to look at the bride and wish her happiness. The countess followed them. What a strange, dismal bridal it seemed! the silent house, the anxious faces, the secret uneasiness of all parties hardly concealed beneath the mask of smiles.

As the bride entered the little oratory, the bishop came forward to meet her. With a fluttering color on her cheek Felicie glanced around in search of the bridegroom. She saw a slender figure at the window, but M. Pierre's square shoulders concealed his face. Edward had been sitting by the window, and he had not turned his head, yet, to take his first view of his affianced wife; when suddenly M. Pierre blew a shrill blast upon a whistle he had been holding nervously in his hand.

A dozen wild faces leaped up at every window, brawny fists dashed the glass into fragments, while the burly figures leaped in upon them from all sides. Edward was felled to the floor by the first blow. With a wild cry of terror, the count turned to his trusted overseer. The villain smiled grimly and drew a pistol. One brief instant was it given to the wicked man to realize his own folly and his servant's treachery, the next he fell a corpse at the feet of his daughter.

Felicie's wild shriek rang through the room. She strove to reach her mother, ere a brutal arm with its uplifted pike should fall—saw the lifted form suddenly sink back and herself sank fainting to the floor. Reviving, she was conscious of a fierce affray going on at the chateau, and she herself lying amidst the cold corpses of her friends. She crept hastily as her weakness would allow to her mother's side, and anxiously listened for a throb of breathing at her lifeless heart. All in vain. And yet, there was no sign of a blow or wound. Remembering how she had fallen ere the pike descended, the poor child had a dismal comfort in believing her heart had broken at the sudden shock.

Suddenly now came the remembrance of her own hapless condition, and the danger of M. Pierre's return with those brutal ruffians. The new thought gave her strength. Hastily disengaging a black cloak from the shoulders of the murdered bishop, she wrapped it over her white robes, leaped hastily through a broken window, and darted like a frightened fawn past a man pacing to and fro, as if guarding against the approach of friend and foe. She knew he saw her, and in a moment heard his plunging steps following. But terror and despair gave her fleetness. She knew the path well and though every now and then her lace founces caught upon briar and bush, she tore them off with frantic hands, and went leaping forward. She stumbled twice and fell headlong—but sprang up again like a deer, and at length gained the wood. It was easier to elude him here; she darted in and out among the trees, until she was sure her dread pursuer had lost the track. She heard his muttered curses as he blundered around, and lightly as a fairy she flew on to the blessed relief at hand.

She gained the tree, pressed the spring with desperate hand, and rushed in. A cold chill sank upon her heart; it was empty. Where, oh, where, was Emile? Was there no friend left her? She sank shivering upon the earthy floor, and buried her head in her hands. She could not think over, then, all the anguish that had fallen upon her—the terrible bereavement of the past hour; parents, bridegroom, home and friends, all stricken from the hand that seemed to hold them so securely. Her brain whirled, a terrible sickening fear took possession of her—that M. Pierre would find out her retreat, or drag her forth, or that Emile was killed also, and she should perish there of starvation. These absorbed every faculty, and crouching and listening, she survived two hours of almost intolerable agony. Another hour would have turned her brain; before its expiration, a rapid step came bounding to the tree, the door was swung open, and Emile's voice cried frantically:

"Lady Felicie, Lady Felicie! are you here?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Disposal of Sewage in Birmingham. One of the worst features under the old management was the disposal of the sewage. By way of remedy two systems have found adoption. Under one the health committee collects the refuse of the houses, and either destroys it or turns it into fertilizers. This is more offensive and less successful than it might be made, but is apparently a necessity until the pan system has been abandoned. A sewage farm of nearly 1,300 acres has been developed several miles from the city, some 400 feet lower in elevation. The sewage, first mixed with lime to prevent too rapid decomposition and to assist in the precipitation of the solid matter, is passed through a series of depositing tanks, during which process the mud is removed. The remainder is dug into the land, one-third of which is dealt with each year, the effluent being discharged in a harmless state into the river Tame. Upon the other two-thirds are grown early vegetables, and grain and hay for cows kept for milk and market. The net annual cost to the city is about £24,000.—"An Object Lesson in Municipal Government," by George F. Parker, in the November Century.

Bankrupt British Poets. A peer who becomes bankrupt is disqualified from sitting in the house of lords.

"Folks dat is allus lookin' foh trouble," said Uncle Eben, "hab jes' one ting ter brag 'bout. Dey don't hardly ober git disappinted."—Washington Star.

TALMAGE'S SERMON.

"NARROW ESCAPES" LAST SUNDAY'S SUBJECT.

From the Following Text, Job xiv, 20: "I Am Escaped With the Skin of My Teeth"—The Text as It May Be Applied to Our Lives in This Age of Progress.



OB had it hard. What with boils, and bereavements, and bankruptcy, and a fool of a wife, he wished he was dead; and I do not blame him. His flesh was gone and his bones were dry. His teeth wasted away until nothing but the enamel seemed left. He cried out, "I am escaped with the skin of my teeth."

There has been some difference of opinion about this passage. St. Jerome and Schultens, and Doctors Good and Poole and Barnes have all tried their forceps on Job's teeth. You deny my interpretation, and say, "What did Job know about the enamel of the teeth?" He knew everything about it. Dental surgery is almost as old as the earth. The mummies of Egypt, thousands of years old, are found to-day with gold filling in their teeth. Ovid, and Horace, and Solomon, and Moses wrote about these important factors of the body. To other provoking complaints, Job, I think, has added an exasperating toothache, and putting his hand against the inflamed face, he says, "I am escaped with the skin of my teeth."

A very narrow escape, you say, for Job's body and soul; but there are thousands of men who make just as narrow escape for their soul. There was a time when the partition between them and ruin was no thicker than a tooth's enamel; but, as Job finally escaped, so have they. Thank God! thank God!

Paul expresses the same idea by a different figure when he says that some people are "saved as by fire." A vessel at sea is in flames. You go to the stern of the vessel. The boats have shoved off. The flames advance; you can endure the heat no longer on your face. You slide down on the side of the vessel, and hold on with your fingers, until the forked tongue of the fire begins to lick the back of your hand, and you feel that you must fall, when one of the life-boats comes back, and the passengers say they think they have room for one more. The boat swings under you—you drop into it—you are saved. So some men are pursued by temptation until they are partially consumed, but after all get off—"saved as by fire."

But I like the figure of Job a little better than that of Paul, because the pulpit has not worn it out; and I want to show you if God will help, that some men make narrow escape for their souls, and are saved as "with the skin of their teeth."

It is as easy for some people to look to the Cross as for you to look to this pulpit. Mild, gentle, tractable, loving, you expect them to become Christians. You go over to the store and say, "Grandson joined the church yesterday." Your business comrades say, "That is just what might have been expected; he always was of that turn of mind." In youth, this person whom I describe was always good. He never broke things. He never laughed when it was improper to laugh. At seven, he could sit an hour in church, perfectly quiet, looking neither to the right hand nor the left, but straight into the eyes of the minister, as though he understood the whole discussion about the eternal decrees. He never upset things nor lost them. He floated into the kingdom of God so gradually that it is uncertain just when the matter was decided.

Here is another one, who started in life with an uncontrollable spirit. He kept the nursery in an uproar. His mother found him walking on the edge of the house-roof to see if he could balance himself. There was no horse that he dared not ride—no tree he could not climb. His boyhood was a long series of predicaments; his manhood was reckless; his mid-life very wayward. But now he is converted, and you go over to the store and say, "Arkwright joined the church yesterday." Your friends say, "It is not possible! You must be joking." You say, "No, I tell you the truth. He joined the church." Then they reply, "There is hope for any of us if old Arkwright has become a Christian!" In other words, we will admit that it is more difficult for some men to accept the Gospel than for others.

I may be preaching to some who have cut loose from churches, and Bibles, and Sundays, and who have no intention of becoming Christians themselves, and yet you may find yourself escaping, before you leave this house, as "with the skin of your teeth." I do not expect to waste this hour. I have seen boats go off from Cape May or Long Branch, and drop their nets, and after awhile come ashore, pulling in the nets without having caught a single fish. It was not a good day, or they had not the right kind of a net. But we expect no such excursion to-day. The water is full of fish, the wind is in the right direction, the Gospel net is strong. O thou who didst help Simon and Andrew to fish, show us how to cast the net on the right side of the ship.

Some of you, in coming to God, will have to run against skeptical notions. It is useless for people to say sharp and cutting things to those who reject the Christian religion. I cannot say such things. By what process of temptation, or trial, or betrayal, you have

come to your present state, I know not. There are two gates to your nature; the gate of the head, and the gate of the heart. The gate of your head is locked with bolts and bars that an archangel could not break, but the gate of your heart swings easily on its hinges. If I assaulted your body with weapons you would meet me with weapons, and it would be sword-stroke for sword-stroke, and wound for wound, and blood for blood; but if I come and knock at the door of your house, you open it, and give me the best seat in your parlor. If I should come at you now with an argument, you would answer me with an argument; if with sarcasm, you would answer me with sarcasm; blow for blow, stroke for stroke; but when I come and knock at the door of your heart, you open it and say, "Come in, my brother, and tell me all you know about Christ and heaven."

Listen to two or three questions: Are you as happy as you used to be when you believed in the truth of the Christian religion? Would you like to have your children travel on in the road in which you are now traveling? You had a relative who professed to be a Christian, and was thoroughly consistent, living and dying in the faith of the Gospel. Would you not like to live the same quiet life and die the same peaceful death? I hold in my hand a letter, sent me by one who has rejected the Christian religion. It says: "I am old enough to know that the joys and pleasures of life are evanescent, and to realize the fact that it must be comfortable in old age to believe in something relative to the future, and to have faith in some system that proposes to save. I am free to confess that I would be happier if I could exercise the simple and beautiful faith that is possessed by many whom I know. I am not willingly out of the church or out of the faith. My state of uncertainty is one of unrest. Sometimes I doubt my immortality, and look upon the death-bed as the closing scene, after which there is nothing. What shall I do that I have not done?" Ah! scepticism is a dark and doleful land. Let me say that this Bible is either true or false. If it be false, we are as well off as you; if it be true, then which of us is safer?

Let me also ask whether your trouble has not been that you confounded Christianity with the inconsistent character of some who profess it? You are a lawyer. In your profession there are mean and dishonest men. Is that anything against the law? You are a doctor. There are unskilled and contemptible men in your profession. Is that anything against medicine? You are a merchant. There are thieves and defrauders in your business. Is that anything against merchandise? Behold, then, the unfairness of charging upon Christianity the wickedness of its disciples. We admit some of the charges against those who profess religion. Some of the most gigantic swindles of the present day have been carried on by members of the church. There are men standing in the front rank in the churches who would not be trusted for five dollars without good collateral security. They leave their business dishonesties in the vestibule of the church as they go in and sit at the communion. Having concluded the sacrament, they get up, wipe the wine from their lips, go out, and take up their sins where they left off. To serve the devil is their regular work; to serve God a sort of play-spell. With a Sunday sponge they expect to wipe off from their business slate all the past week's inconsistencies. You have no more right to take such a man's life as a specimen of religion than you have to take the twisted iron and split timbers that lie on the beach at Coney Island as a specimen of an American ship. It is time that we draw a line between religion and the frailties of those who profess it.

Do you not feel that the Bible, take it all in all, is about the best book that the world has ever seen? Do you know any book that has as much in it? Do you not think, upon the whole, that its influence has been beneficent? I come to you with both hands extended towards you. In one hand I have the Bible, and in the other hand I have nothing. This Bible in one hand I will surrender forever just as soon as in my other hand you can put a book that is better.

I invite you back into the good old-fashioned religion of your fathers—to the God whom they worshipped, to the Bible they read, to the promises on which they leaned, to the crosses on which they hung their eternal expectations. You have not been happy a day since you swung off; you will not be happy a minute until you swing back.

If, with all the influences favorable for a right life, men make so many mistakes, how much harder is it when, for instance, some appetite thrusts its iron grapple into the roots of the tongue, and pulls a man down with hands of destruction? If, under such circumstances, he break away, there will be no sport in the undertaking, no holiday enjoyment, but a struggle in which the wrestlers move from side to side, and bend, and twist, and watch for an opportunity to get in a heavier stroke until with one final effort, in which the muscles are distended, and the veins stand out, and the blood starts, the swarthy habit falls under the knee of the victor—escaped at last as "with the skin of his teeth."

The ship Emma, bound from Gottenburg to Harwich, was sailing on, when the man on the look-out saw something that he pronounced a vessel bottom up. There was something on it that looked like a sea-gull, but was afterward found to be a waving handkerchief. In the small boat the crew pushed out to the

wreck, and found that it was a capsized vessel, and that three men had been digging their way out through the bottom of the ship. When the vessel capsized they had no means of escape. The captain took his knife and dug away through the planks until his knife broke. Then an old nail was found, with which they attempted to scrape their way up out of the darkness, each one working until his hand was well-nigh paralyzed, and he sank back faint and sick. After long and tedious work, the light broke through the bottom of the ship. A handkerchief was hoisted. Help came. They were taken on board the vessel and saved. Did ever men come so near a watery grave without dropping into it? How narrowly they escaped—escaped only "with the skin of their teeth." There are men who have been capsized of evil passions, and capsized mid-ocean, and they are a thousand miles away from any shore of help. They have for years been trying to dig their way out. They have been digging away, and digging away, but they can never be delivered unless now they will hoist some signal of distress. However weak and feeble it may be, Christ will see it, and bear down upon the helpless craft, and take them on board; and it will be known on earth and in heaven how narrowly they escaped, "escaped as with the skin of their teeth."

There are others who in attempting to come to God, must run between a great many business perplexities. If a man go over to business at ten o'clock in the morning, and come away at three o'clock in the afternoon, he has some time for religion; but how shall you find time for religious contemplation when you are driven from sunrise to sunset, and have been for five years going behind in business, and are frequently dunned by creditors whom you cannot pay, and when from Monday morning until Saturday night, you are dodging bills that you cannot meet? You walk day by day in uncertainties that have kept your brain on fire for the past three years. Some with less business troubles than you have gone crazy. The clerk has heard a noise in the back counting-room, and gone in, and found the chief man of the firm a raving maniac; or the wife has heard the bang of a pistol in the back parlor, and gone in, stumbling over the dead body of her husband—a suicide. There are men pursued, harassed, trodden down, and scalped of business perplexities, and which way to turn next they do not know. Now God will not be hard on you. He knows what obstacles are in the way of your being a Christian, and your first effort in the right direction he will crown with success. Do not let Satan, with cotton bales, and kegs, and hogheads, and counters, and stocks of unsalable goods, block up your way to heaven. Gather up all your energies. Tighten the girdle about your loins. Take an agonizing look into the face of God, and then say, "Here goes one grand effort for life eternal," and then bound away for heaven, escaping "as with the skin of your teeth."

This world is a poor portion for your soul, oh, business man! An Eastern king had graven on his tomb two fingers, represented as sounding on each other with a snap, and under them the motto, "All is not worth that." Apollonius Coelius hanged himself because his steward informed him that he had only eighty thousand pounds sterling left. All of this world's riches make but a small inheritance for a soul. Robespierre attempted to win the applause of the world; but when he was dying, a woman came rushing through the crowd, crying to him, "Murderer of my kindred, descend to hell, covered with the curses of every mother in France!" Many who have expected the plaudits of the world have died under its Anathema Maranatha.

Oh, find your peace in God. Make one strong pull for heaven. No half-way work will do it. There sometimes comes a time on shipboard when everything must be sacrificed to save the passengers. The cargo is nothing, the rigging nothing. The captain puts the trumpet to his lip and shouts, "Cut away the mast." Some of you have been tossed and driven, and you have, in your efforts to keep the world well night lost your soul. Until you have decided this matter, let everything else go. Overboard with all those other anxieties and burdens. You will have to drop the sails of your pride, and cut away the mast. With one earnest cry for help, put your cause into the hand of him who helped Paul out of the breakers of Melita, and who, above the shrill blast of the wrathful tempest that ever blackened the sky or shook the ocean, can hear the faintest imploration for mercy.

I shall close this sermon feeling that some of you, who have considered your case as hopeless, will take heart again, and that with a blood-red earnestness, such as you have never experienced before, you will start for the good land of the Gospel—at last to look back, saying, "What a great risk I ran! Almost lost, but saved! Just got through, and no more! Escaped by the skin of my teeth."

Practical Christianity.

Rev. J. H. Duncan of Watkins, Kan., dismissed his congregation Sunday, and leading them to a wheat field, directed and worked with them in stacking Farmer Rappley's wheat. When the minister, who had already commenced the services, noticed a storm approaching, he slowly closed his open Bible and said, "Brethren, I believe in worshipping God, but a heavy rain is coming up and Neighbor Rappley's wheat is in danger, we will close the sermon and help him stack it."

True Heroism.

A Wellsville, N. Y., woman, carrying a baby in her arms, stepped upon the railroad track in front of an approaching train to rescue her pet dog. She and the child will die, but the pampered pride of the household escaped without the loss of a single curl in his lovely caudal appendage. The days of heroic deeds are not yet passed.