The Price of Liberty

OR, A MIDNIGHT CALL

CHAPTER XLII.

Whilst events were moving rapidly outside, time at Longdean Grange seemed to stand still. The dust and the desolation were ever there, the gloom brooded like an evil spirit. And yet it was but the calm before the storm that was coming to banish the hoary old spectres for good.

Still, Enid felt the monotony to be as maddening as ever. There were times when she rebelled passionately against the solitude of the place. There were moments to her when it seemed that her mind couldn't stand the strain much longer.

But she had hope, that blessed legacy to the sanguine and the young. And there were times when she would creep out and see Ruth Gates, who found the Rottingdean Road very convenient for cycling just now. And there was always the anticipation of a telephone message from Chris. Originally the telephone had been established so that the household could be run without the intrusion of tradesmen and other strangers. It had seemed a great anomaly at the time, but now Enid blessed it every moment of the day. And she was, perhaps, not quite so unhappy as she deemed herself to be. She had her lover back again, now, with his character free from every imputation.

The sun straggled in through the dim, dusty panes; the monotonous voice of Mrs. Henson droned in the drawing-room. It was what Williams called one of the unhappy lady's "days." Sometimes she was quiet and reasonable, at other times the dark mood hung heavily upon her. She was pacing up and down the drawing-room, wringing her hands and whimpering to herself. Enid had slipped into the grounds for a little fresh air; the house oppressed her terribly to-day. The trim lawns and blazing flower-beds were a pleasing contrast to the misery and disorder of the house.

Enid passed on into the shadow of the plantation. A little farther on nearer the wall the dogs seemed to be excited about something. Williams' rusty voice could be heard expostulating with some intruder. By him stood a man who, though fairly well dresseu, looked as if he had slept in his garments for days. There was a dazed, puzzled, absent espression on his face.

"You might have been killed," Williams croaked. "If you hadn't stood still they dogs would have pulled you to pieces. How did you get here?"

"I've lost it," the stranger muttered. "I've lost it somwhere, and I shall have no rest till I find it."

"Well, go and look in the road," Williams, suggested, smoothly. "Nothing ever gets lost here. Just you hop over that wall and try your luck outsude."

Enid came forward. Evidently the intruder was no stranger to her. Williams started to explain volubly. But Enid cut him short at once.

"A most extraordinary thing has happened," she said. "It is amazing that this man should come here of all places. Williams, this is the man Van Sneck.

"What, the chap as was wounded in the hospital, miss?"

"The same. The man is not in full possession of his senses. And if Reginald Henson finds him now it is likely to go hard with him. He must be taken into the house, and looked after until I can communicate with somebody I can trust. Mr. Steel, I think. He must be got back to the hospital. It is the only place where he is safe."

Van Sneck seemed to be looking on with the vacant stare of the mindless. He suffered himself to be led to the house, where he was fed like a child. It was in vain that Enid plied him with all kinds of questions. He had lost something—he would have no peace till he had found it. This was the one burden of his cry. Enid crossed to the window in some perplexity. The next moment she had something else to occupy her mind. Reginald Henson was coming up the drive. Just for an instant Enid felt inclined to despair.

"Williams," she cried, "Mr. Henson is here. On no account must he see our unfortunate visitor. He cannot possibly know that Van Sneck is here; the whole thing is an accident. I am going down into the hall. I shall contrive to get Mr. Henson into the drawing-room. Without delay you must smuggle Mr. Van Sneck into your apartments over the stable. You will be perfectly safe if you go down the back staircase. As soon as the drawing-room door closes, go."

Williams nodded. He was essentially a man of action rather than words. With all the coolness she could summon up Enid descended to the hall. She gave a little gesture of surprise and disdain as she caught sight of Henson.

"So you came down to welcome me?" Enid said, coldly.

A sudden light of rage lit up Henson's blue eyes. He caught Enid almost roughly by the shoulders and pushed her into the drawing-room. There was something coming, she knew. It was a relief a minute or two later to hear Williams's whistle as he crossed the courtyard. Henson knew nothing of Van Sneck's presence, nor was he likely to do so now.

"You are forgetting yourself," Enid said. "How dare you touch me like that?"

"By heavens," Henson whispered, vehemently, "when I consider how I have been fooled by you I wonder that I do not strike the life out of you. Where is your sister?"

Enid assumed an air of puzzled surprise. She raised her eyebrows, coldly. But it needed no very brilliant intelligence to tell her that Henson had discovered something.

"I had only one sister," she said, "and she is——"

"Dead! Rot. No more dead than I am. A nice little scheme you had put up together with that scribbling ass David Steel. But Steel is going to get a lesson not to interfere in my affairs and you are going to get one also. Where is your sister?"

Despite his bullying triumph there was something nervous and anxious about the tone of the question. It was not quite like Henson to let his adversary see that he had scored a point. But since the affair of the dogs Henson had not been quite his old self. It was easy to see that he had found out a great deal, but he had not found out where Chris was yet.

"I know nothing," said Enid. "I shall answer no questions."

"Very well. But I shall find out. Accident put me on the trail first. And I have been to see that man Walker. He never saw your sister after her 'death,' nor did the undertaker. And I might have met my death at the fangs of that dog you put upon me. What a fool Walker was."

Enid looked up anxiously. Had Walker said anything about a second opinion? Had he betrayed to Henson the fact that he had been backed up by Hatherly Bell? Because they had taken a deal of trouble to conceal the fact that Bell had been in the house.

"Dr. Walker should have called in another opinion," she said, mockingly.

"The man was too conceited for that, and you know it," Henson growled; "and finely you played upon his vanity."

Enid was satisfied. Walker had evidently said nothing about Bell; and Henson, though he had just come from Littimer, knew nothing about Chris.

"You have made a statement," she said, "and in reply I say nothing. You have chosen to assume that my sister is still alive. Well, it is a free country, and you are at liberty to think as you please. If we had anything to gain by the course you suggest——"

"Anything to gain!" Henson burst out angrily. "Everything to gain. One whom I deemed to be dead is free to follow me to pry into my affairs, scheme, I presume. If you and your sister and Miss Gates hadn't talked so loudly that day in the garden I might not——"

"Have listened," said Chris, coldly. "Ears like a hare and head like a cat. But you don't know everything, and you never will. You scoundrel, you creeping, crawling scoundrel! If I only dared to speak. If I cared less for the honor of this unhappy family——"

"If you could only get the ring," said Henson, with a malicious sneer. "But the ring is gone. The ruby ring lies at the bottom of the North Sea."

Some passionate, heedless words rose to Enid's lips, but she checked them. All she could do now was to watch and wait till darkness. Van Sneck must be got out of the way before anything else was done. She did not dare to use the telephone yet, though she had made up her mind to ask Steel to come over and take Van Sneck away. Later on she could send the message.

Van Sneck had eaten a fairly good meal, so Williams said, and had fallen into a heavy sleep. There was nothing for it but to wait and watch. Dinner came in due course, with Mrs. Henson, ragged and unkept as usual, taking no notice of Henson, who watched her furtively during the meal. Enid escaped to her own room directly afterwards, and Henson followed his hostess to the drawing-room.

Once there his manner changed entirely. His lips grew firm, his eyes were like points of steel. Mrs. Henson was pacing the dusty floor, muttering and crooning to herself. Henson touched her arm, at the same time holding some glittering object before her eyes. It was a massive ruby ring with four black pearls on either side.

"Look here," he whispered. "Do you recognize it? Have you seen it before?"

A pitiful, wailing cry came from Mrs. Henson's lips. She was trembling from head to foot with a strange agitation. She gazed at the ring as a thirsty man in a desert might have looked on a draught of cold spring water. She stretched out her hand, but Henson drew back.

"I thought you had not forgotten it," he smiled. "It means much to you, honor, peace, happiness—your son restored to his proper place in the world. Last time I was here I wanted money, a mere bagatelle to you. Now I want £10,000."

"No, no," Mrs. Henson cried. "You will ruin me—£10,000! What do you do with all the money? You profess to give it all to charity. But I know better. Much you give away that more may come back from it. But that money you get from a credulous public. And I could expose you, ah, how I could expose you, Reginald Henson."

"Instead of which you will let me have that £10,000."

"I cannot. You will ruin me. Have you not had enough? Give me the ring."

Henson smilingly held the gem aloft. Mrs. Henson raised her arm with the dust rising in choking clouds around her. Then with an activity astonishing in one of her years she sprang upon Henson and tore the ring from his grasp. The thing was so totally unexpected from the usually gentle lady that Henson could only gasp in astonishment.

"I have it," Mrs. Henson cried. "I have it, and I am free!"

Henson sprang towards her. With a quick, fleet step she crossed to the window and fled out into the night. A raging madness seemed to have come over her again; she laughed and she cried as she sped on into the bushes, followed by Henson. In his fear and desperation the latter had quite forgotten the dogs. He was in the midst of them, they were clustered round himself and Mrs. Henson before he was aware of the fact.

"Give me the ring," he said. "You can't have it yet. Some day I will restore it to you. Be sensible If anybody should happen to see you." Mrs. Henson merely laughed. The dogs were gambolling around like so many kittens. They did not seem to heed Henson in the joy of her presence. He came on again, he made a grab for her dress, but the rotten fabric parted like a cobweb in his hand. A warning grunt came from one of the dogs, but Henson gave no heed.

"Give it me," he hissed; "or I will tear it from you."

(To be Continued.)

RICHES IN THE OCEAN.

London Lancet Says Sea Holds 100,000,000,000 Tons Gold.

Old schemes for extracting gold from sea water die hard, but while there has been some dealings in the shares of the latest syndicate formed thus to obtain the precious metal, few people in British Stock Exchange circles are disposed to regard the venture as more than a scientific experiment.

Now, the suggestion for collecting gold from the sea comes from rather a remarkable quarter—namely, the London Lancet, in which an article holds out most marvelous encouragement to the company promoter.

The article says the estimate that a ton of sea water contains approximately one grain of gold, the yield would amount to something like 200 tons of gold per cubic mile, and as the volume of the world's ocean is estimated at 500,000,000 cubic miles the total possible yield of gold would be no less than 100,000,000,000 tons.

The Lancet goes on to observe it should be borne in mind, however, that the original observations as to the sea containing gold were made on waters which wash the shores of a gold-bearing country—namely, New South Wales.

"Still time, no doubt," it continues, "suffices to effect the uniform distribution of the mineral salts of the sea, althaugh the composition of sea water varies with the locality from which it is taken.

"We should have thought that an eminently practical experiment in this direction before now would have been undertaken by the great steamship companies. Most steamships are equipped with electric instalation and it would be quite an easy matter for them to start a system of electroplating while at sea, without interfering seriously with the progress of the ship.

"A couple of large copper plates suspended in the sea and connected with dynamos would serve as electrodes and collect gold contained in the sea water during a voyage. At the end of the vayage the plates could be examined for gold, and some practicability of recovering the metal would be gained.

"If it proved that the steamship companies could add to their equipment an effective electrical gold dredger they possibly might be induced to cheapen the passenger rates according to the success of the system."

MEAN THING.

"You know," said Miss Kreech, after her solo, "I intend to go abroad to finish my musical education."

"Why not finish it right now," suggested Miss Cadley, "and save the expense?"

BRITISH COLUMBIA.

Canadian Rockies Not So High as Was Thought.

In no part of the world excepting Alaska has there been more rapid progress in geographical exploration in the past few years than in British Columbia. The latest facts concern a number of new passes through the Rocky Mountains.

Some readers may be surprised that there should be anything left in British Columbia to discover. The fact is that the Government surveys are yet far from covering the larger part of that big region. The fine geographical work that a missionary has recently been doing shows that there are still opportunities for discovery in this part of the Dominion.

Father Morice, whose mission station is on the shores of Lake Stuart nearly in the centre of the Province, has been travelling many hundreds of miles in a canoe, mapping all the streams, lakes, mountains and valleys in the upper basin of the Netchakhoh River. A fine map of his discoveries, which has just been published by the Neuchatel Geographical Society of Switzerland, shows many details that have been seen on no previous map. Lake Morice, for example, which is not found on the latest atlas sheets of British Columbia, is fifty miles long, and 777 feet deep.

The new passes in the Rockies have been studied by a party of Grand Trunk Pacific engineers who have been engaged in the work about a year. A newspaper has reported that this party has discovered the Smoke River, Porcupine, Red Deer, Wapiti and Pine River passes, but this statement is not quite correct.

All these great passes through the Rockies to the north of the Canadian Pacific Railroad have been known to exist for some time, but the engineers have been the first to study them in detail, and they now report that they are all available for railroads, that the gradients on the east are very gentle and that some of the passes are wide enough for double tracks.

The scheme of the Canadian Pacific Railroad was laughed at as impracticable until the great gateway through Kicking Horse Pass was discovered. It is now known that further north there are several other passes lower than those which the Canadian Pacific uses and that they will amply suffice for all of Canada's railroad needs through the mountains.

Explorations of the past few years show that the old ideas of the heights of the leading peaks of the Canadian Rockies were much exaggerated. Peaks still appear on some of the maps as from 15,000 to 17,000 feet above the sea.

Dr. Hector recently wrote that probably none of the mountains of British Columbia rises above 13,000 or 13,500 feet. Outram, Collie and about a dozen other men have within the past ten years ascended many of the high peaks of the Canadian Rockies and made observations to ascertain their altitude. The result is a decided decrease in the previously accepted altitude of a number of the highest mountains of these ranges.

CAPE-CAIRO LINE.

Good Progress Towards Union Being Made.

In a description of the progress which is being made with the Cape to Cairo telegraph, a writer in the Glasgow Herald states that the line has now reached Udjidji, the capital and chief town of German East Africa, which is on the eastern shore of "Lake Tanganyika." For the moment construction work is suspended while the route northward is carefully surveyed and the sections of the line that have been erected are got into thorough working order. From a purely commercial point of view the line is fully coming up to, if not exceeding, the expectations that were formed concerning it. When the work of construction is recommenced the route will probably be along the eastern shore of the Victoria Nyanza, and will then strike due north to the town of Rosares, which is the southernmost point of the Soudanese telegraph system. A junction will be effected here between the two lines, and the scheme for a "Cape to Cairo" telegraph will then be an accomplished fact.

The engineers of the line are, however, faced with a difficulty in their preparations for carrying it forward to Udjidji, inasmuch as the country for a distance of 100 miles through which the line would have to pass is very swampy, and quite unfit for the erection of a telgraph wire. It was at first thought that a wide detour would have to be made at this point in order to escape this region, but latterly other councils have prevailed, and a much more daring experiment is likely to be tried. This is the installation of the Marconi system of wireless telegraphy in order to bridge over this inhospitable delta country. This combination of an African jungle swamp with the latest triumph of scientific discovery reads very strangely, but it is only another instance of the onward march of civilization through what were until a comparatively few years ago the unknown parts o the earth.

MICE AND RATS MIGRATE

THE WANDERING WAYS OF WILD LIFE.

Facts About the Remarkable Migration of the Lemmings.

The fable of the country mouse and the town mouse has a foundation in fact. Mice occasionally migrate in large numbers when food grows scarce, and travel considerable distances to fresh houses. Farmers in a part of Perthshire, Scotland, had a good reason to become aware of this fact when, a couple of years ago, vast swarms of mice invaded their cornfields at harvest time.

But the mouse only travels when it has to. The rat, on the contrary, seems to take a yearly outing, in very much the same fashion as do human beings. Rats are the most migratory creatures in the world. Whole troops of rats leave the towns at the end of summer, and spend a month or two in the country, apparently in order to enjoy the change of food which the country affords at that time of year in the way of fresh fruit and grain. Before the cold weather sets in they are all back in their old quarters.

Reindeer migrate with the same regularity as swallows. They move south when winter sets in, but as soon as ever the snow begins to melt they travel steadily north, sometimes for as much as a thousand miles.

A RACE FOR DEATH.

To end a holiday by deliberate suicide is so strange a phenomenon that for a long time naturalists looked upon the stories of the migration of the lemmings as an improbable fiction. Yet the facts are beyond dispute. At irregular intervals these rat-like creatures start out from their homes in the fastnesses of Northern Scandinavia in huge droves, numbering tens of thousands, and travel steadily southwards. Death pursues them in a hundred forms. Hawks and other birds of prey hover above them. Foxes, wolves, and man decimate them. Thousands are drowned in rivers. Yet the rest struggle on until they reach the sea. They do not stop. They plunge in, swim out, and struggle on, until at last their strength fails, and they drown. Not one ever returns from this journey of death.

This extraordinary migration of the lemmings has long been a puzzle to naturalists. One curious explanation that has been offered is that the little beasts, stimulated by inherited instinct, are striving to reach long-lost winter quarters in the lost Continent of Atlantic, which now lies deep buried beneath the waters of the Atlantic Ocean.

Who would dream of a crab travelling any considerable distance? Yet recent investigation shows that crabs go right out to sea in winter, and only come in to shore again when spring returns. At Beadnell, near the Ferne Islands, 124 marked crabs were liberated in October, 1902. Twelve have since been recaught. One of these was picked up less than a year later only seven miles south of Aberdeen!

INSECT INVADERS.

If it were not for the migrations of fish, our food supply would suffer severely. Each year the herrings come down from the unknown North past our coasts, and are caught in their millions. Curiously enough, during the past few years the shoals have been taking each year more and more northerly tracks, and there is a great discussion as to whether they are permanently altering their route.

Salmon, of course, go up rivers every year to lay their eggs. The sea-trout, the sturgeon, the sea-lamprey, and the eel all act in the same fashion.

Insects, too, migrate at times in immense numbers. Every year, during the month of June, the dwellers in Panama see vast flights of butterflies move across the isthmus from east to west. If a wind arises, whole flights are blown out to sea, and drowned in millions.

Ants of some kinds are tremendous travellers. In Africa, when the driver ants bear down upon a village, the negroes run for their lives.

The violet land-crab of the West Indies usually resides inland; but once a year it travels down in clothing armies to the sea.

FIVE HUNDRED "V. C.'s."

There are five hundred heroes of all ranks in the British regular army who have attained the distinction of the Victoria Cross, that simple decoration "for valor" which is universally regarded as of incomparable value and significance. It is claimed for the 24th Regiment, known as the South Wales Borderers, that it stands at the head of the entire British army in the number of winners of the Victoria Cross, which it has produced. It has sixteen names on the glory roll as against, to take the next highest figures, fourteen of the Rifle Brigade and thirteen of the King's Royal Rifles

She—"I have been suffering dreadfully lately with shooting pains in my face." He—"You may have been using too much powder."