The Price of Liberty

OR, A MIDNIGHT CALL

CHAPTER XLVI.—(Continued.)

"Are you not going to kiss me, dear?" she asked, sweetly.

Frank Littimer needed no further invitation. It was quiet and secluded there, and nobody could possibly see them. With a little sigh Chris felt her lover's arms about her and his kisses warm on her lips. The clever, brilliant girl had disappeared; a pretty, timid creature stood in her place for the time. For the moment Frank Littimer could do no more than gaze into her eyes with rapture and amazement. There was plenty of time for explanations.

"Let us go into the arbor," Frank suggested. "No, I am not going to release your hand for a moment. If I do you will fly away again. Chris, dear Chris, why did you serve me so?"

"It was absolutely necessary," Chris replied. "It was necessary to deceive Reginald Henson. But it was hard work the other night."

"You mean when I came here and——"

"Tried to steal the Rembrandt. Oh, you needn't explain. I know that you had to come. And we have Henson in our power at last."

"I am afraid that is too good to be true. But tell me everything from the beginning. I am as dazed and confused as a tired man rousted out of a sound sleep."

Chris proceeded to explain from the beginning of all things. It was an exceedingly interesting and exciting narrative to Frank Littimer, and he followed it carefully. He would have remained there all day listening to the music of Chris's voice and looking into her eyes. He had come there miserable and downcast to ask a question, and behold he had suddenly found all the joy and sweetness of existence.

"And so you have accomplished all this?" he said, at length. "What a glorious adventure it must have been, and how clever you are! So is Mr. David Steel. Many a time I have tried to break through the shackles, but Reginald has always been too strong for me."

"Well, he's shot his bolt, now," Chris smiled. "I have just been opening your father's eyes."

Frank laughed as he had not laughed for a long time.

"Do you mean to say he doesn't know who you are?" he asked.

"My dear boy, he hasn't the faintest idea. Neither had you the faintest idea when I made you a prisoner the other night. But he will know soon."

"God grant that he may," frank said, fervently.

He bent over and pressed his lips passionately to those of Chris. When he looked up again Lord Littimer was standing before the arbor, wearing his most cynical expression.

"He does know," he said. "My dear young lady, you need not move. The expression of sweet confusion on your face is infinitely pleasing. I did not imagine that one so perfectly self-possessed could look like that. It gives me quite a nice sense of superiority. And you, sir?"

The last words were uttered a little sternly. Frank had risen. His face was pale, his manner resolute and respectful.

"I came here to ask Miss Lee a question, sir, not knowing, of course, who she was."

"And she betrayed herself, eh?"

"I am sorry if I have done so," Chris said, "but I should not have done so unless I had been taken by surprise. It was so hot that I had taken off my glasses and put my hair up. Then Frank came up and surprised me."

"You have grown an exceedingly pretty girl, Chris," Littimer said, critically. "Of course, I recognise you now. You are nicer-looking than Miss Lee."

Chris put her glasses on and rolled her hair down resolutely.

"You will be good enough to understand that I am going to continue Miss Lee for the present," she said. "My task is a long way from being finished yet. Lord Littimer, you are not going to send Frank away?"

Littimer looked undecided.

"I don't know," he said. "Frank, I have heard a great deal to-day to cause me to think that I might have done you a grave injustice. And yet I am not sure. In any case, it would be bad policy for you to remain here. If the news came to the ears of Reginald Henson it might upset Miss Machiavelli's plans."

"That had not occured to me for the moment," Chris exclaimed. "On the whole, Frank had better not stay. But I should dearly like to see you two shake hands."

Frank Littimer made an involuntary gesture, and then he drew back.

"I'd—I'd rather not," he said. "At least, not until my character has been fully vindicated. Heaven knows I have suffered enough for a boyish indiscretion."

"And you have youth on your side," Littimer said, gravely. "Whereas I——"

"I know, I know. It has been terrible all round. I took those letters of poor Claire's away because they were sacred property, and for no eye but mine——"

"No eye but yours saw them. I was going to send them back again. I wish I had."

"Aye, so do I. I took them and destroyed them. But I take Heaven to witness that I touched nothing else besides. If it was the last word I ever uttered—what is that fellow doing here in that garb? It is one of Henson's most disreputable tools."

Merritt was coming across the terrace. He paused suspiciously as he caught sight of Frank, but Chris, with a friendly wave of her hand, encouraged him to come on.

"It is all part of the game," she said. "I sent for our friend Merritt, but when I did so I had no idea that Frank would be present. Since you are here you might just as well stay and hear a little more of the strange doings of Reginald Henson. The time has come to let Merritt known that I am not the clever lady burglar he takes me for."

Merritt came up doggedly. Evidently the presence of Frank Littimer disturbed him. Chris motioned him to a seat, quite gaily.

"You are very punctual," she said. "I told you I wanted you to give Lord Littimer and myself a little advice and assistance. In the first place we want to know where that gun-metal diamond-mounted cigar-case, at present for sale in Rutter's window, came from. We want to know how it got there and who sold it to Rutter's people. Also we want to know why Van Sneck purchased a similar cigar-case from Walen's of Brighton."

Merritt's heavy jaw dropped, his face turned a dull yellow. He looked round helplessly for some means of escape, and then relinquished the idea with a sigh.

"Done," he said. "Clear done. And by a woman, too! A smart woman, I admit, but a woman all the same. And yet why didn't you——"

Merritt paused, lost in the contemplation of a problem beyond his intellectual strength.

"You have nothing to fear," Chris said, with a smile. "Tell us all you know and conceal nothing, and you will be free when we have done with you."

Merritt wiped his dry lips with the back of his hand.

"I come peaceable," he said hoarsely. "And I'm going to tell you all about it."

CHAPTER XLVII.

There was an uneasy grin on Merritt's face, a suggestion that he did not altogether trust those around him. Hard experience in the ways of the wicked had taught him the folly of putting his confidence in anyone. Just for the moment the impulse to shuffle was upon him-

"If I say nothing, then I can't do any harm," he remarked, sapiently. "Best, on the whole, for me to keep my tongue between my teeth."

"Mr. Henson is a dangerous man to cross," Chris suggested.

"He is that," Merritt agreed. "You don't know him as I do."

Chris conceded the point, though she had her own views on that matter. Lord Littimer had seated himself on the broad stone bench along the terrace, whence he was watching the scene with the greatest zest and interest.

"You imagine Mr. Henson to be a friend of yours?" Chris asked.

Merritt nodded and grinned. So long as he was useful to Henson he was fairly safe.

"Mr. Merritt," Chris asked, suddenly, "have you ever heard of Reuben Taylor?"

The effect of the question was electrical. Merritt's square jaw dropped with a click, there was fear in the furtive eyes that he cast around him.

"I read all about Reuben Taylor in one of our very smart papers lately," Chris went on. "It appears that Mr. Taylor is a person who nobody seems to have seen, but who from time to time does a vast service to the community at large. He is not exactly a philanthropist, for he is well rewarded for his labors both by the police and his clients. Suppose Mr. Merritt here had done some wrong."

"A great effort of imagination," Littimer murmured, gently.

"Had done something wrong and an enemy or quondam friend wants to 'put him away.' I believe that is the correct expression. In that case he does not go to the police himself, because he is usually of a modest and retiring disposition. No, he usually puts down a few particulars in the way of a letter and sends it to Reuben Taylor under cover at a certain address. Is not that quite correct, Mr. Merritt?"

"Right," Merritt said, hoarsely. "Some day we shall find out who Taylor is, and——"

"Never mind that. Do you know that the night before your friend Mr. Henson left the Castle he placed in the post-bag a letter addressed to Mr. Reuben Taylor? In view of what I read recently in the paper alluded to the name struck me as strange. Now, Mr. Merritt, is it possible that letter had anything to do with you?"

Merritt did not appear to hear the question. His eyes were fixed on space; there was a sanguine clenching of his fists as if they had been about the throats of a foe.

"If I had him here," he murmured. "If I only had him here! He's given me away. After all that I have done for him he's given me away."

His listeners said nothing; they fully appreciated the situation. Merritt's presence at the Castle was both dangerous and hazardous for Henson.

"If you went away to-day you might be safe?" Chris suggested.

"Aye, I might," Merritt said, with a cunning grin in his eyes. "If I had a hundred pounds."

Chris glanced significantly at Littimer, who nodded and took up the parable.

"You shall have the money," he said. "And you shall go as soon as you have answered Miss Lee's questions."

Merritt proclaimed himself eager to say anything. But Merritt's information proved to be a great deal less than she had anticipated.

"I stole that picture," Merritt confessed. "I was brought down here on purpose. Henson sent to London and said he had a job for me. It was to get a picture from Dr. Bell. I didn't ask any questions, but set to work at once."

"Did you know what the picture was?" Chris asked.

"Bless you, yes; it was a Rembrandt engraving. Why, it was I who in the first place stole the first Rembrandt from his lordship yonder, in Amsterdam. I got into his lordship's sitting-room by climbing down a spout, and I took the picture."

"But the other belonged to Van Sneck," said Chris

"It did; and Van Sneck had to leave Amsterdam hurriedly, being wanted by the police. Henson told me that Van Sneck had a second copy of 'The Crimson Blind,' and I had to burgle that as well; and I had to get into Dr. Bell's room and put the second copy in his portmanteau. Why? Ask somebody wiser than me. It was all some deep game of Henson's, only you may be pretty sure he didn't tell me what the game was. I got my money and returned to London and till pretty recently I saw no more of Henson."

"But you came into the game again," said Littimer.

"Quite lately, your lordship. I went down to Brighton. I was told as Bell had got hold of the second Rembrandt owing to Henson's carelessness and that he was pretty certain to bring it here. He did bring it here, and I tried to stop him on the way and he half killed me."

"Those half measures are so unsatisfactory," Littimer smiled.

Merritt grinned. He fully appreciated the humor of the remark.

"That attack and the way it was brought about were suggested by Henson," he went on. "If it failed, I was to come up to the Castle here without delay and tell Henson so. I came and he covered my movements whilst I pinched the picture. I had been told that the thing was fastened to the wall, but a pair of steel pliers made no odds to that. I took the picture home and two days later it vanished. And that's all I know about it."

"Lame and impotent conclusion!" said Littimer.

"Wait a moment," Chris cried. "You found the diamond star which you pawned——"

for to say as you've forgotten that."

"I have forgotten nothing," Chris said, with a smile. "I want to know about the cigar-case."

Merritt looked blankly at the speaker. Evidently this was strange ground to him.

"I don't know anything about that," he said. "What sort of a cigar-case?"

"Gun-metal set with diamonds. The same case or a similar one to that purchased by Van Sneck from Walen's in Brighton. Come, rack your brains a bit. Did you ever see anything of Van Sneck about the time of his accident? You know where he is?"

(To be Continued.)

TIMING BANANAS.

It is generally known that bananas are shipped while yet green and unripe, but few are aware of the careful and elaborate time calculations required in setting out the plants and cutting off the fruit in order to insure the arrival of the bananas in proper condition at their dertination. When a plantation is begun, the young plants are set out at certain intervals, so that they will produce at regular prefixed times during the year. A certain number of days before the arrival of a steamer the green fruit is cut, and a close calculation of the time that will be consumed in the voyage must always be made, else the bananas will be spoiled. Fruit steamers carry steam-heating apparatus to insure a uniform temperature throughout the voyage. The ripening is calculated to occur only after the fruit has reached the retail dealer.

Susie (at her music lesson)—"I'd like to catch an old air I heard in the music-room last night." Professorm"What air was that?" Susie (demurely)—"Oh, it was a millionaire."

The Dominion Permanent Loan Company

Fourteenth Annual Report.

The Fourteenth Regular Annual Meeting of the Dominion Permanent Loan Company was held at the Offices of the Company on Wednesday, March 1st, 1905. A large number of Shareholders were present.

The President, the Hon. J. R. Stratton, occupied the chair. Mr. T. P. Coffee, Vice-President, was requested to act as Secretary.

The President presented the following report of the Directors for the year ending December 31st, 1904:

Your Directors are pleased to be able to state that active and profitable employment has been found for the funds of the Company during the past year, the demand for satisfactory loans being sufficient to call into requisition the available funds of the Company.

The earnings for the past year have enabled the Company to declare and pay dividends amounting to $69,134.14, and to permit of the transfer of $45,000 to the Reserve Fund of the Company. After payment of such dividends and the addition to the Reserve Fund of $45,000 and the writing off of $1,444.54 off office furniture and premises, there remains to be placed to the credit of Profit and Loss the sum of $20,684.68.

Your Directors are pleased to be in a position to congratulate the Shareholders upon the gratifying results of the operations of the Company during the past year, and have also pleasure in testifying to the general efficiency character of the services rendered by the officials, agents and staff of the Company.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

J. R. STRATTON,
President.

The Dominion Permanent Loan Co., Toronto.

Statement of Account for Year Ending Dec. 31st, 1904.

ASSETS.

Mortgages and other Investments		$3,158,933 72
Real Estate		24,528 82
Office Premises and Furniture		12,293 00
Sundry Accounts		2,250 66
Imperial Bank and Cash on hand		59,508 63
		$3,257,513 83

LIABILITIES.

To the Public:		
Deposits and Accrued Interest		$ 212,816 70
Debentures and Accrued Interest		1,603,020 83
		$1,815,837 53
Surplus—Assets over Liabilities		1,441,676 30
To Shareholders:		
On Capital Stock	$1,223,241 71	
Contingent Fund	5,964 68	
Reserve Fund	160,000 00	
Unclaimed Dividends	50 07	
Dividends payable Jan. 3, 1905	31,735 16	
Balance of Profit and Loss	20,684 68	
	$1,441,676 30	
		$3,257,513 83

PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT.

Dr.

Interest on Debentures and Deposits	$ 87,177 51
Written off Office Furniture and Premises	1,444 54
Dividends	69,134 14
Transferred to Reserve Fund	45,000 00
Balance Profit and Loss	20,684 68
	$223,440 87

Cr.

Balance December 31, 1903	$ 9,089 91
Interest, Rent, etc., after payment of expenses, including salaries, Directors' fees, government taxes and fees	214,350 96
	$223,440 87

AUDITOR'S CERTIFICATE.

We have examined the Cash Transactions, Receipts and Payments, affecting the accounts of the assets and investments for the year ended December 31st, 1904, and we find the same in good order and properly vouched. We have also examined the Mortgages and Securities, representing the assets and investments set out in the above account, and we certify that they were in possession and safe custody as on December 31st, 1904.

(Signed) HARRY VIGEON,
(Signed) O. M. HUDSON, } Chartered Accountants.

Toronto, February 11, 1905.

On motion of Mr. Stratton, seconded by Mr. Karn, the above report was unanimously adopted.

The following Directors were then re-elected: Hon. J. R. Stratton, President Trusts and Guarantee Company; D. W. Karn, President of the D. W. Karn Company, Woodstock; C. Kloepfer, Manufacturer and Director Traders Bank, Toronto; T. P. Coffee, and F. M. Holland, Toronto.

At a subsequent meeting of the Directors Hon. J. R. Stratton was re-elected President and Mr. T. P. Coffee Vice-President.

THE MASTERY.

To lose self-control is to lose the key to any situation. No man who cannot hold himself in hand can expect to hold others. It has been well said that, in any discussion or disagreement with another, if you are in the wrong, you cannot afford to lose your temper, and if you are in the right, there is no occasion to. Or, as a lawyer, has wittily put it, 'possession is nine points of the law; self-possession is ten.'

PEOPLE WHO RADIATE CHEER.

Who can estimate the value of a sunny soul who scatters gladness and good cheer wherever he goes, instead of gloom and sadness. Everybody is attracted to these cheerful faces and sunny lives, and repelled by the gloomy, the morose and sad. We envy people who radiate cheer wherever they go and fling out gladness from every pore. Money, houses and lands look contemptible beside such a disposition.

WISHING.

"That hateful Mrs. Nexdore remarked to me to-day," said the pretty young wife, "that 'beauty is only skin deep.'"

"Come now," replied her shrewd husband, "what are you leading up to?"

"Well, I was just going to say I'd like to have a little of it that was sealskin deep."

A SENSE OF PROPRIETY.

"You wouldn't sell your vote, would you?"

"No, suh," answered Mr Erastus Pinkley. "But if a gemmen what's runnin' foh office was to give me two dollahs, common gratitude would make me vote foh him."

HARD WORK.

Stinjay—See here, when are you going to pay me back that dollar you borrowed—

Borroughs—Why, man alive, I earned that dollar. I had to work with you for a couple of hours before I got it out of you.

Professor—"If a person in good health, but who imagined himself ill, should send for you, what would you do?" Medical Student—"Give him something to make him ill, and then administer an antidote." Professor—"Don't waste any more time here; put up your brass name-plate."

Friend—"You've never been called in consultation, have you?" Young Doctor—"No; but I'd like to be. It's nice to charge ten times as much as the other doctor for saying that you don't know any more about the case than he does."

"Oh, well," remarked the rejected suitor, "there are just as many good fish in the sea as ever came out of it." "Yes," agreed the damsel, "and there are not so many fishermen to-day as there were yesterday." "I don't understand you." "One of them," she explained, as she showed him a written proposal, "dropped me a line this morning."

The adoring mother surveyed her small son with an admiring eye. "I don't know what to do with my Willie," she said to her next-door neighbor, "he has such a large head!" The neighbor had children of her own and was both resourceful and nimble-tongued when it came to paying off old scores. "If there is any danger of his toppling over you might weight his feet," she said, thoughtfully.