The Price of Liberty

OR, A MIDNIGHT CALL

CHAPTER L.—(Continued.)

"Certain. I heard of it from a man who was with Van Sneck at the time, a man called Merritt."

"James Merritt. Really, you have been in choice company, Miss Lee. Your knowledge of the criminal classes is getting extensive and peculiar."

"Merritt told me this. And an answer came back to Merritt."

"An answer from Mr. Steel?"

"Purporting to be an answer from Mr. Steel. A very clever forgery, as a matter of fact. Of course that forgery was Henson's work, because we know that Henson coolly ordered notepaper in Mr. Steel's name. He forgot to pay the bill, and that is how the thing came out. Besides, the little wad of papers on which the forgery was written is in Mr. Steel's hands. Now, what do you make of that?"

Rawlins turned the matter over thoughtfully in his mind.

"Did Henson know that Mr. Steel would be from home that nignt?" he asked.

"Of course. He probably also knew where our meeting with Mr. Steel was to take place."

"Then the matter is pretty obvious," said Rawlins. "Van Sneck, by some means or other, gets an inkling of what is going on. He wanted money from Henson which he couldn't get, Henson being very short lately, and then they quarrelled. Van Sneck was fool enough to threaten Henson with what he was going to do. Van Sneck's note was dispatched by hand and intercepted by Henson with a reply. By the way, will you be good enough to give me the gist of the reply?"

"It was a short letter from Mr. Steel and signed with his initials, and saying in effect that he was at home every night and would see Van Sneck about twelve or some time like that. He was merely to knock quietly, as the household would be in bed, and Mr. Steel would let him in."

"And Mr. Steel never wrote that letter at all?"

"No; for the simple reason that he never had Van Sneck's note."

"Which Henson intercepted, of course. Now, the mere fact of the reply coming on Mr. Steel's paper is evidence that Henson had plotted some other or alternative scheme against Mr. Steel. How long before the cigar-case episode had you decided to consult the novelist?"

"We began to talk about it nine or ten days before."

"And Henson got to hear of it. Then a better idea occurred to Henson, and the first idea which necessitated getting hold of Mr. Steel's notepaper was abandoned. Subsequently, as you have just told me, the notepaper came in useful after all. Henson knew that Steel would be out that night. And, therefore, Van Sneck is deliberately lured to Steel's house to be murdered there."

"I see," Chris said, faintly. "This had never occurred to me before. Murdered by whom?"

"By whom? Why, by Reginald Henson, of course."

Just for a moment Chris felt as if all the world was slipping away under her feet.

"But how could he do it?" she asked.

"Quite easily. And throw all the blame on Mr. Steel. Look at the evidence he had ready to his hand against the latter. The changed cigarcase would come near to hang a man. And Van Sneck was in the way. Steel goes out to meet you or some of your friends. All his household are in bed. As a novelist he comes and goes as he likes and nobody takes any heed. He goes and leaves his door on the latch. Any money it is the common latch they put on thousands of doors. Henson lets himself into the house and coolly waits Van Sneck's coming. The rest you can imagine."

Chris had no reply for a moment or two. Rawlin's suggestion had burst upon her like a bomb. And it was all so dreadfully, horribly probable. Henson could have done this thing with absolute impunity. It was impossible to imagine for a moment that David Steel was the criminal. Who else could it be, then, but Reginald Henson?

"I'm afraid this has come as a shock to you," Rawlins said, quietly.

"It has, indeed," said Chris. "And your reasoning is so dreadfully logical."

"Well, I may be wrong, after all," Rawlins suggested.

Chris shook her head doubtfully. She felt absolutely assured that Rawlins was right. But, then, Henson would hardly have run so terrible a rish for a little thing like that. He could easily have silenced Van Sneck by a specious promise or two. There must be another reason for——

It came to Chris in a moment. She saw the light quite plainly.

"Mr. Smith," she said, eagerly, "where did you first meet Henson and Van Sneck?"

"We first came together some eight years ago in Amsterdam."

"Would you mind telling me what your business was?"

"So far as I can recollect it was connected with some old silver—William and Mary and Queen Anne cups and jardinieres. We had made a bit of a find that we could authenticate, but we wanted a lot of the stuff, well—faked. You see, Van Sneck was an authority on that kind of thing, and we employed him to cut marks off small genuine things and attach them to spirious large ones. On the whole we made a very successful business of it for a long time."

"You found Van Sneck an excellent copyist. Did he ever copy anything for you?"

"No. But Henson employed him now and again. Van Sneck could construct a thing from a mere description. There was a ring he did for Henson——"

"Was that called Prince Rupert's ring, by any chance?"

"That was the name of the ring. Why?"

"We will come to that presently. Did you ever see Prince Rupert's ring?"

"Well, I did. It was in Amsterdam again about a year later than the time I mentioned just now. Henson brought the real ring for Van Sneck to copy. Van Sneck went into raptures over it. He said he had never seen anything of the kind so beautiful. He made a copy of the ring, which he handed back with the original to Henson."

Chris nodded. This pretty faithful copy of the ring was the one that Henson had used as a magnet to draw Lady Littimer's money and the same one that had found its way into Steel's possession. But Chris had another idea to follow up.

"You hinted to me just now that Henson was short of money," she said. "Do you mean to say he is in dire need of some large sum?"

"That's it," Rawlins replied. "I rather fancy there has been some stir with the police over some business up at Huddersfield some years ago."

"A so-called home both there and at Brighton?"

"That's it. It was the idea that Henson conveyed to me when I saw him at Moreton Wells. It appears that a certain Inspector Marley, of the Brighton Police, is the same man who used to have the warrants for the Huddersfield affair in his hands. Henson felt pretty sure that Marley had recognised him. He told me that if the worst came to the worst he had something he could sell to Littimer for a large sum of money."

"I know," Chris exclaimed. "It is the Prince Rupert's ring."

"Well, I can't say anything about that. Is this ring a valuable property?"

"Not in itself. But the loss of it has caused a dreadful lot of misery and suffering. Mr. Smith, Reginald Henson had no business with that ring at all. He stole it and made it appear as if somebody else had done so by means of conveying the copy to the very last person who should have possessed it. That sad business broke up a happy home and has made five people miserable for many years. And whichever way you turn, whichever way you look, you find the cloven foot of Henson everywhere. Now, what you have told me just now gives me a new idea. The secret that Henson was going to sell to Lord Littimer for a large sum was the story of the missing ring and the restitution of the same."

"Kind of brazening it out, you mean?"

"Yes. Lord Littimer would give three times ten thousand pounds to have that ring again. But at this point Henson has met with a serious check in his plans. Driven into a corner, he has resolved to make a clean breast of it to Lord Littimer He procured the ring from his strong box and then he makes a discovery."

"Which is more than I have. Pray proceed."

"He discovers that he has not got the real Prince Rupert's ring."

Rawlins looked up with a slightly puzzled air.

"Will you kindly tell me what you mean?" he said.

"It was a forgery. Van Sneck made a copy from a mere description. That copy served its purpose with a vengeance, and is now at the bottom of the North Sea. I need not go into details, because it is a family secret, and does not concern our conversation at all. At that time the real ring came into Henson's possession, and he wanted a copy to hold over the head of an unfortunate lady whom he would have ruined before long. You told me just now that Van Sneck had fallen in love with Prince Rupert's ring and could hardly bear to part with it. He didn't."

"No? But how could he retain it?'

"Quite easily. The copy was quite faithful, but still it was a copy. But secretly Van Sneck makes a copy that would deceive everybody but an expert, and this he hands over to—"

"To Henson as the real ring," Rawlins cried, excitedly.

Chris smiled, a little pleased at her acumen.

"Precisely," she said. "I see that you are inclined to be of my opinion."

"Well, upon my word, I am," Rawlins confessed. "But I don't quite see why——"

"Please let me finish," Chris went on, excitedly. "Reginald Henson is driven back on his last trenches. He has to get the ring for Lord Littimer. He takes out the ring after all these years, never dreaming that Van Sneck would dare to play such a trick upon him, and finds out the forgery. Did you ever see that man when he is really angry?"

"He is not pretty then," Rawlins said.

"Pretty! He is murder personified. Kindly try to imagine his feelings when he discovers he has been deceived. Mind you, this is only a theory of mine, but I feel certain that it will prove correct. Henson's last hope is snatched away from him But he does not go straight to Van Sneck and accuse him of his duplicity. He knows that Van Sneck stole the ring for sheer love of the gem, and that he would not dare to part with it. He assumes that the ring is in Van Sneck's possession. And when Van Sneck threatened to expose part of the business to Mr. Steel Henson makes no attempt to soothe him. Why? Because he sees a cunning way of getting back the ring. He himself lures Van Sneck to Mr. Steel's house, and there he almost murders him for the sake of the ring. Of course, he meant to kill Van Sneck in such a way that the blame could not possibly fall upon him."

"Can you prove that he knew anything about it?"

"I can prove that he knew who Van Sneck was at a time when the hospital people were doing their best to identify the man. And I know how fearfully uneasy he was when he got to know that some of us were aware who Van Sneck was. It has been a pretty tangle for a long time, but the skein is all coming out smoothly at last. And if we could get the rung which Henson forced by violence from Van Sneck——"

"Excuse me. He did nothing of the kind."

Chris looked up eagerly.

"Oh," she cried, "have you more to tell me, then?"

"Nothing authentic." Rawlins said; "merely surmise. Van Sneck is going to recover. If he does it will be hard for Henson, who ought to get away with his plunder at once. Why doesn't he go and blackmail Lord Littimer and sell him the ring and clear out of the country? He doesn't do so because the ring is not in his possession."

"Then you imagine that Van Sneck——"

"Still has the ring probably in his possession at the present moment. If you only knew where Van Sneck happened to be."

Chris rose to her feet with an excited cry.

"I do know," she exclaimed; "he is in the house where he was half murdered. And Mr. Steel shall know all this before he sleeps tonight."

(To be Continued.)

TEACUP PHILOSOPHY.

An expert is a man who does not get confused when cross-examined.

A fault which humbles a man is of more use to him than a good action which puffs him up with pride.

The young lady who is receiving attention from a young man will do well to inquire if his mother gets any.

It is better to right your wrongs while they are young and tender than to nurse them until they are old and tough.

Every man thinks every other man has his price.

He who takes good care of the days need give himself no worry over the year.

A woman cannot understand why her husband has to work so hard to make both ends meet, when he is so much cleverer than other men.

HAVE A HOBBY.

Hobbies are among the best things in life. They promote health, peace, and happiness, helping one, as they do, to forget sorrow. Any decided interest in life, whether it is dignified by the name of an occupation or is simply an enthusiasm, is eminently desirable. "I have never seen a genuine collector that is not happy when he is allowed by circumstances to gratify his tastes," said a student of human nature, "and hobbies should always be encouraged. It is a curious phase of our humanity that we will work diligently to make provision for our material needs when we are old, and quite neglect to store up mental resources that will interest and amuse us in our old days."

POPE REDUCES EXPENSES.

Pope Pius goes on as he began, preaching and practicing the simple life. He has been reducing display on the one hand and salaries on the other. This, as may be imagined, is not quite satisfactory to the hosts of persons employed about the Vatican. While thus discouraging luxury the pontiff remains as affable and accessible as ever to friends of former days.

DEATH RECEIVES SHOCK

NEW INVENTION FOR DISPELLING FOG.

New Triumph of Sir Oliver Lodge —Nature of the Apparatus.

Napoleon's dictum that nothing is impossible, may be claimed as the watchword of science.

The most recent triumph of science is the discovery of a method of dispelling fogs. What this means may be understood when it is mentioned that, under heaven, no greater danger exists, than fog, to travel either on sea or land. During last year alone, nearly 700 lives were lost on this continent in collisions that were caused by fog.

According to the current Pearson's Magazine experiments have been made in England to prove that fogs may be made to melt by electricity being discharged into the air.

CREDIT OF DISCOVERY.

The credit of the discovery is due to Sir Oliver Lodge, principal of Birmingham University, who recently succeeded in dispersing a fog by electricity, for a space of from five hundred to eight hundred feet.

The apparatus he employed, resembles in some respects the sending instrument used in wireless telegraphy, comprising a dynamo for generating the electric current, a transformer for converting the electricity thus obtained into a high pressure, and an interrupter for shooting the high-tension electrical energy into the air, which it does, much after the manner of a hose projecting water into a burning building.

BACK TO TYNDALL.

The history of this apparatus goes back to Tyndall, the well-known physicist. In one of his experiments Tyndall heated a common poker red-hot, and then, raising a cloud of dust by shaking a box full of it, he brought dust and poker into contact.

The result was that the dust-laden air was cleared away around the hot iron for several inches. The dust was not burned up, but the heat seemed to repel the minute particles, driving them from it in every direction.

INTERESTED IN DUST.

Later Lord Rayleigh, another physicist, became interested in dust, and as a result of several experiments, discovered that a piece of ice acted also as a repelling force. He also found that an electrically charged stick of sealing wax, if held near a fountain where the water fell as a fine mist, the little globules of water cohered and made larger drops.

Sir Oliver Lodge accepted the results of these experiments, but went a step farther. He wanted to know the why and the wherefore of them.

SIR OLIVER'S CONCLUSIONS.

After much investigating, he concluded that the motive force that projected the dust, was electricity.

A new experiment was now tried. A box was filled with smoke instead of dust. Inside the box was a metal plate which was connected by a copper wire with an electric machine. The electricity was turned on, and the smoke was sent scurrying off, not a vestige remaining.

A glass bell-jar was next substituted for the box. The bell-jar was equipped with two upright rods, one terminating in half a dozen sharp points, the other in a brass ball. Wires led to an electric machine.

JAR WAS FILLED.

The jar was filled successfully with lead and zinc fumes and aqueous vapor, and in each case electrification was followed by precipitation.

From these experiments it was accepted as certain that electricity would have a commercial value in the dispersing of fogs; and also that by discharging electricity into a cloud by means of a kite or balloon, rain could be made to fall.

Sir Oliver proposes to erect on either side of the River Mersey a number of fog-dispelling stations but instead of supplying energy from hand-operated electric machines, he would use the regulation dynamo, which would be connected to a high-tension transformer—an apparatus that changes the low pressure current into one of enormously high pressure, and at the same time produces large quantities of electricity, for electricity is like water, in that there may be a large or small amount under a high or low pressure.

NOT BEAUTIFUL.

A mother was overheard telling her little boy that if he continued being naughty she would die and never come back any more. With the innocency of babyhood, he threw his arms about his mother's neck and promised to be good. He would not have been a natural child if he had not forgotten all about it, as he did in a few moments, and this time the mother closed her eyes and feigned the deathlike sleep. The little one made every effort to arouse his mother, and again repeated his promise of being good. At this she opened her eyes, and the pleasure of the child knew no bounds. Many mothers have done the same thing; but it is not beautiful to act a lie.

HEALTH

HOW TO AVOID THE GRIPPE.

A great many people have formed the habit of alluding to every little cold as an "attack of grippe." It sounds much more important, but happily, it is often not true. Any one who has once had a real attack of grippe is in small danger of mistaking any lesser complaint for it. It is true that it has many of the signs of the so-called cold in the head, but added to these there is a prostration, an aching, a poisoning of the whole system of which plain influenza is fortunately not capable Every year there is more or less grippe, ranging from the really appalling epidemic of thirteen years ago, when the old and the feeble succumbed in hundreds. to a limited number of fairly light cases here and there.

Much of the spreading of the grippe is by quite unnecessary contact. It is only fair for grippe patients to isolate themselves for a few days and consider themselves contagious objects. Promiscuous kissing, which is always foolishness, is a crime during a grippe epidemic. The patient should stay in one room in the care of a physician until active symptoms have subsided.

Much can be done to avoid this dread disease in other ways than by shunning the sufferers. This is not always feasible, anyhow, while people ride in close cars and mix with their fellows in restaurants, shops and theatres, where the germ can be appropriated at any moment. The surest way of avoidance is by keeping the system in good condition. The grippe germ is just like any other disease germ in this: that it needs a weakened point for its assault.

If people spend hours in close, overheated places, and then face the keen outside air without proper protection in their clothes or proper precautions as to correct breathing, they are already prepared for their attack of grippe.

Wet feet are a most useful ally of this trouble, and should never be risked in young or old. Most persons have heard of the man who wrote to the Times that he had discovered that wet feet were the sole cause of influenza, and was answered by the man with two wooden legs who had grippe five years in succession. Although too much stress can hardly be placed on the importance of warm, dry feet, the case is unfortunately not quite so simple. There are many ways in which grippe can acquire a hold if one is ready to catch it. Strengthen your fortress with a threefold wall—eat right, breathe right, sleep right. Only so shall disease find you scatheless.

SIMPLE HOME REMEDIES.

Several years ago one of the old school physicians who had never lost a case of pneumonia where the patient was under 60, said that he attributed his success largely to the timely use of soap poultices, which were made by having the soap very hot, then thickening with bran. In these days, when so few, even among the farmers, make soft soap, a poultice nearly as good can be made by using a weak lye, in place of the soap. To make the lye, pour boiling water over wood ashes. At most drug stores an alkaline poultice can be purchased ready prepared, which is similar to the soap poultices of former years. In cases of extreme tenderness, cracker crumbs can be used in place of the bran, making it far lighter.

Sometimes it is difficult to wring cloths out of water sufficiently hot to attain the desired result. One way is to place the cloth to be wrung inside of a dry towel, and then twist at the ends. A wringer may be used, but the best is to use a steamer. If possible, have a small oil stove near to the patient's bed, and on it place a basin of boiling water, and over this set the steamer. The first time, the cloths will need to be wrung out of the water, but after that, all that is necessary is to place them in the steamer.

The remembrance and use of the simple ready-at-hand remedies may prevent a severe illness, but greatly to be avoided is the self-administration of drugs. No matter how much common sense and self-reliance we may have, the most of us know absolutely nothing of the real effects of the various drugs upon the system. As for myself, I should pity even a sick cat who was compelled to lap up any medicinal doses of my compounding.

TURKISH PRINTING OFFICES.

All printing establishments in Turkey, according to a new law, may have only one door, and that opening on to the street. Windows must be covered with close-meshed wire-netting, so that no papers can be handed through. A statement must be made a year in advance of the amount of ink required, which will be supplied by the State A specimen of everything printed is to be kept and must be shown at any time to a police inspector on pain of a fine.