The Price of Liberty

OR, A MIDNIGHT CALL

CHAPTER LI.

Bell's sanguine expectation that Van Sneck would be ready for an immediate operation was not quite correct. As the day wore on the man seemed more feverish and restless, which feverishness was followed by a certain want of strength. After due deliberation Dr. Cross suggested that the operation should be postponed for a day or two.

"The man is out of our hands," he said. "You have identified him, and you desire that he should remain here. It is pretty irregular altogether. And I hope I sha'n't get into trouble over it. Still, in such capable hands as yours——"

Bell acknowledged the compliment with a smile.

"Between Heritage and myself," he said, "we shall pull him through, eh, Heritage?"

The other doctor nodded brightly. For some little time he had been directly under Bell's influence, and that had meant a marvellous change for the better. He had lost a deal of his hesitating manner and was looking forward to the operation with the keenest interest.

"However, I will put you all right," Bell said. "I fancy the time has come when we can confide to a certain extent in Marley. And if the police approve of Van Sneck being here, I don't see that you can say any more."

Cross was emphatically of the same opinion. Later on, in the course of a long interview with Marley, Bell and Steel opened the latter's eyes to a considerable extent.

"Well, I must congratulate you, sir," he said to Steel. "I'm bound t confess that things looked pretty black against you at one time. Indeed, I should have been fully justified in arresting you for the attempted murder of Van Sneck."

"But you never deemed me guilty, Marley?"

"No, I didn't," Marley said, thoughtfully. "I argued in your favor against my better judgment. I gather even now that there is a great deal for me to know."

"And which you are not going to learn," Bell said, drily. "When we have Sneck all right again, and ready to swear to the author of the mischief, you will have to be satisfied."

"That would satisfy me, sir. And I'm glad that cigar-case mystery is settled. You'll let me know how the operation goes on?"

Steel promised to do so, and the two returned to Downend Terrace together. They found Heritage a little excited and disturbed.

"Do you know I have had a visitor?" he exclaimed.

Bell started slightly. He looked just a little anxious.

"I'm going to guess it at once," he said. "Reginald Henson has been here."

"You are certainly a wonderful fellow," Heritage said, admiringly. "Nobody else could possibly have guessed that. He came to see me, of course."

"Oh, of course," Bell said, drily. "Naturally, he would have no ulterior motive. Did he happen to know that we had a kind of patient under the roof?"

Heritage explained that Henson seemed to know something about it. Also, by singular coincidence, he had met Van Sneck abroad. He expressed a desire to see the patient, but Heritage's professional caution had got the better of his friendship for once. Henson had given way finally saying that he hoped to call again later in the day.

"It's a good thing you were firm," Bell said, grimly. "Otherwise there would have been no need for an operation on Van Sneck. My dear Heritage, it's quite time your eyes were opened to the true nature of your friend. Henson watched Steel and myself out of the house. He wanted to see Van Sneck; he has probably known from the first that the latter was here."

"Matter of philanthropy, perhaps," Heritage suggested.

"A matter of murder," Bell said, sternly. "My dear fellow, Van Sneck was nearly done to death in yonder conservatory, and his would-be assassin was Reginald Henson."

"I was never more astounded in my life," gasped Heritage. "I have always looked upon Henson as the soul of honor and integrity. And he has always been so kind to me."

"For his own purposes, no doubt. You say that he found you a home after your misfortunes came upon you. He came to see you frequently. And yet he always harped upon that wretched halluncination of yours. Why? Because you were the Carfax family doctor for a time and at any moment you might have given valuable information concerning the suicide of Claire Carfax. Tell Heritage the story of Prince Rupert's ring, Steel."

David proceeded to do so at some length. Heritage appeared to be deeply interested. And gradually many long-forgotten things came back to him.

"I recollect it all perfectly well," he said. "Miss Carfax and myself were friends. Like most people with badly balanced intellects, she had her brilliant moments. Why, she showed me that ring with a great deal of pride, but she did not tell me its history. She was very strange in her manner that morning; indeed, I warned her father that she wanted to be most carefully looked after."

"Did she say how she got the ring?" Steel asked.

Heritage did not answer for a moment.

"Oh, yes," he said, presently. "She said it was a present from a good boy, and that Reginald Henson had given it to her in an envelope. I met Henson close by, but I didn't mention the ring."

"And there you have the whole thing in a nut-shell!" Bell exclaimed. "Nothing of this came out at the inquest, because the ring story was hushed up, and Heritage was not called because he had nothing to do with the suicide. But Henson probably saw poor Claire Carfax show you the ring and he got a bit frightened; and he kept an eye upon you afterwards. When you broke down he looked after you, and he took precious good caro to keep your halluncination always before your eyes. Whenever he came to see you he always did that."

"You are quite right there," Heritage admitted. "He mentioned it this afternoon when I said I was goig to take part in the operation on Van Sneck. He asked me if I thought it wise to try my nerves so soon again with the electric light."

"And I hope you told him he was talking nonsense," Bell said, hastily. "There, let us change the subject. The mere mention of that man's name stifles me."

Morning brought a long letter from Chris Henson to David, giving him in detail the result of her recent interview with John Rawlins. There was a postscript to the letter which David showed to Bell with a certain malicious glee.

"A nasty one for our friend Henson," he said. "What a sweet surprise it will be for that picturesque gentleman the next time he goes blackmailing to Longdean Grange."

Bell chuckled in his turn. The net was drawing very close about Henson.

"How is Van Sneck to-day?" David asked.

"Much better," Bell replied. "I propose to operate to-night. I'm glad to hear that your mother is going to be away a day or two longer."

Heritage appeared to be ready and eager for the work before him. A specially powerful electric light had been rigged up in connection with the study lamp, and an operating table improvised from the kitchen. More than once Bell looked eagerly at Heritage, but the latter stood the scrutiny bravely. Once the operation was successfully through Heritage would never suffer from hallucinations again.

"I fancy everything is ready now," Bell said, at length. "After dinner to-night and this thing will be done. Then the story will be told——"

"Mr. Reginald Henson to see you, sir."

A servant looked in with this information and a card on a tray. There was a slight commotion outside, the vision of a partially-wrecked bicycle on the path, and a dusty figure in the hall with his head in his hand.

"The gentleman has met with an accident, sir," the parlormaid said. Henson seemed to be knocked about a great deal. He was riding down the terrace, he said, when suddenly he ran over a dog, and——

"What sort of a dog?" Bell snapped out. "What color and size?"

Henson was utterly taken aback by the suddenness of the question. He gasped and stammered. He could not have told Bell more plainly that the "accident" was an artistic fake.

"You must stay here till you feel all right again," David suggested.

"Stay for the night," Bell growled, sotto voce. "Stay here till tomorrow morning and hear something from Van Sneck's lips that will finish his interesting career for some time. Medical treatment be hanged. A clothes-brush and some soap and water are all the physic that he requires."

Presently Henson professed himself to be better. His superficial injuries he bore with a manly fortitude quite worthy of his high reputation. He could afford to smile at them. But he feared that there was something internal of a sufficiently serious nature. Every time he moved he suffered exquisite agony. He smiled in a faint kind of way. Bell watched him as a cat watches a mouse. And he could read a deeper purpose behind that soft, caressing manner. What it was he did not know, but he meant to find out before the day was passed.

"Hadn't we better send him to the hospital?" David suggested.

"What for?" was Bell's brutal response. "There's nothing whatever the matter with the man."

"But he has every appearance of great pain."

"To you, perhaps, but not to me. The man is shamming. He has come here for some purpose, which will be pretty sure to transpire presently. The knave never dreams that we are watching him, and he hugs himself with the delusion that we take his story for gospel. Fancy a man in the state that he pretends to be in sending his card to you! Let him stay where we can keep an eye upon the chap. So long as he is under our observation he can't do any mischief outside."

There was wisdom in what Bell suggested, and David agreed. Despite his injuries, Henson made a fair tea, and his dinner, partaken of on the dining-room sofa, was an excellent one.

"And now, do not let me detain you, as you have business," he smiled. "I shall be quite comfortable here if you will place a glass of water by my side. The pain makes me thirsty. No, you need not have any further consideration for me."

He smiled with patient resignation, the smile that he had found so effective on platforms. He lay back with his eyes half closed. He seemed to be asleep.

"I fancy we can leave him now," Bell said, with deep sarcasm. "We need have no further anxiety. Perfect rest is all that he requires."

Henson nodded in a sleepy fashion; his eyes were closed now till the others had left the room. Once he was alone he was alert and vigorous again.

"Ten minutes," he muttered, "say a quarter of an hour. A touch, a spot of water, and the thing is done. And I can never be found out."

CHAPTER LII.

Once the trio were in the operating-room Bell gave one rapid glance at Heritage. But the latter seemed to have forgotten all his fears. There was an alert air about him; he was quiet and steady. There was something of the joy of battle in his eyes.

"Now go and fetch Van Sneck in," Bell said.

The patient came at length. Everything was ready. Van Sneck murmured something and looked vaguely about him, like a man suddenly aroused from a deep sleep. But he obeyed quite willingly when Bell commanded him to get on the table. A moment or two later and he was gone under the influence of the ether adminstered by Bell.

A case of glittering instruments lay on the table. The strong electric light was switched on and hung just over the head of the unconscious patient.

"You hold the sponge," Bell whispered to David. "There will be very little blood. I like to have a man with me who has coolness and courage. Oh, here is the spot. Feel the depression of the skull, Heritage. That is where the pressure lies, and no larger than a pea."

Heritage nodded, without reply. He took up the knife, there was a flash of steel in the brilliant light and a sudden splash of blood. There was a scrape, scrape that jolted horribly on David's nerves, followed by a convulsive movement of Van Sneck's body.

"Beautiful, beautiful," Heritage murmured. "How easily it comes away."

Bell was watching in deep admiration of the strong hand that was yet light as thistledown. The big electric light flickered for just a moment, and Heritage stood upright.

"Don't be a fool," Bell said, sternly. "It's a mere matter of current." Heritage muttered that it must be. Nevertheless it had given him quite a turn. His face was pale and his hand shook ever so slightly. The knife was cutting deep, deeper—

A snarling oath broke from Bell's lips, as the light flickered again and popped out suddenly, leaving the whole room in intense darkness. Heritage cried aloud. David felt a hand guiding his fingers to the patient's head.

"Press the sponge down there and press hard," Bell whispered. "It's a matter of life and death. Another minute and Van Sneck would have gone. Heritage, Heritage, pull yourself together. It was no fault of yours the light went out—the fault is mine."

Bell stumbled down the kitchen stairs and returned with a candle. The electric lights were out all over the ground-floor with the exception of the hall. One of the circuits had given out completely as sometimes happens with the electric light. Bell leapt on a table and he was dragging the long spare flex from the impromptu operating-room to the swinging cord over the hall lamp. With a knife he cut the cord loose, he stripped the copper wires beneath, and rapidly joined one flex to the other.

"It's amateur work, but I fancy it will do," he muttered. "Anyway, that rascal is powerless to interfere with the circuit that controls the hall light."

Snap went the hall switch—there was a sudden cry from Heritage as the big lamp over the head of Van Sneck flared up again. Bell raced into the study and shut the door.

(To be Continued.)

Though icebergs sometimes rise to a height of 200 feet above the sea-level, eight-ninths of their total height is below the water. During the Challenger Arctic expedition an iceberg three miles in length was seen.

YOUNG FOLKS

A FELLOW'S MOTHER.

"A fellow's mother," said Fred the wise,
With his rosy cheeks and his merry eyes,
"Knows what to do if a fellow gets hurt
By a thump, or a bruise, or a fall in the dirt.

"A fellow's mother has bags and strings,
Rags and buttons, and lots of things;
No matter how busy she is, she'd stop,
To see how well you can spin your top.

"She does not care—not much, I mean,
If a fellow's face is not always clean;
And if your trousers are torn at the knee
She can put in a patch that you'd never see.

"A fellow's mother is never mad,
But only sorry, if you are bad;
And I tell you this, if you're only true,
She'll always forgive you, whate'er you do.

"I'm sure of this," said Fred, the wise,
With a manly look in his laughing eyes;
"I'll mind my mother, quick, every day,
A fellow's a baby that don't obey."

AN HONEST BOY.

Jamie Norris was a little Scotch laddie, who came all the way from his far away home—beyond the ocean—to his uncle's home in America, alone. He was only eight years old, when a low fever carried off both father and mother in a single week. After they were buried, neighbors wrote to Jgmie's uncle and asked what was to be done with the orphaned boy. "Tag him for Baxter, Illinois, U.S.A., and ship him by express to me," was the reply. So after a fortnight's journey he reached the station to which he had been shipped and was taken in charge by his uncle, who was waiting for his arrival.

Jamie was homesick and tired after his long trip, but he was a brave little fellow and winked back his tears when his aunt kissed him and welcomed him to the prairie home. There were three children in the Norris home, Bruce, aged eleven; Francis, ten; and little Jean, about Jamie's own age.

It was on Saturday that he completed his long journey, and on Monday he went with his cousins to the village school. The boys laughed at his Scotch plaidie, and mimicked his Highland brogue, but he walked off, knowing very well that he was too small to defend himself from their rudeness, and that it was better to endure their taunts quietly than be worsted in a fight.

In the evening when the roll was called, Jamie observed that most of the scholars answered "merit," a few said "demerit" when their names were called, but not understanding what they meant by the answers, when it came to "Jamie Norris," he simply replied "Here," as he had been accustomed to do in the school across the big waters.

"Are you 'merit' or 'demerit?'" asked the teacher, glancing up from her daybook; and when Jamie said that he did not know what was meant by these answers, she explained: "If you have not whispered one word during study hours, answer 'merit,' but if you have, 'demerit.'"

"Then I'm 'demerit,'" replied Jamie, "for I whispered several times."

"How often?" questioned the teacher.

"I don't know," Jamie returned, quietly.

"As many as two?" urged the teacher.

"More than that," said Jamie.

"Three, four, or five?" asked Miss Ray.

"More than that," was the answer.

"Six, eight or ten times, I suspect."

"I didn't know the rule, and so didn't keep count."

"Then I'll have to give you zero," said the teacher, sternly. "You ought to know not to whisper in school, even if you were not told."

"You're a gilly to tell," said Bruce on the way home in the evening.

"But I did talk, ever so much," insisted Jamie. "What else could I do but tell?"

"Why, answer 'merit' like the rest of us, of course. The teacher didn't see you, and it'll spoil your report dreadfully. Just think of it! zero the first day. Father will think it is awful. He always wishes us to get 'merit.'"

"Not if you do not deserve it," Jamie returned. "And I can't see what difference it makes whether the teacher saw me or not. I saw myself, and that's the same."

"No it isn't," contradicted Bruce. "That sort of whispering doesn't count, and in the future answer like I do. Why, we all do that kind of talking: Making signs and writing notes aren't talking."

"But they are breaking the rule, and that's the same," persisted Jamie. "I'll try to keep from breaking the rule after this, but if I forget, I'll not answer 'merit.'"

And he held to his Scotch resolution despite the twitting of the scholars about his soft conscience and big "demerits." If he whispered or did things against the rules, he did not call them by some other names, or try to sneak out of them, and yet despite his poor report the teacher said he was one of the quietest, most obedient pupils in the school. His lessons were always well prepared, though it was a matter of regret that no honors went his way.

A series of prizes for high standing in classes and best reports in conduct were to be distributed on the closing day of the term, and, as usual, much interest was felt in the outcome of the contest.

In the award, Jamie's name was not mentioned at all, but after the result of the winter's contest had been announced, and the prizes distributed, the president of the board, who had been spokesman on the occasion, said, "I have another prize to bestow to-night; one not mentioned in the list of honors. It is a gold medal and it goes to Jamie Norris, the boy who always prefers 'demerits' to untruths, and in consequence carries away a report below the average, though according to the teacher's estimation in both work and conduct he stands higher than any other pupil in school."

PRACTICE DEEP BREATHING.

An Essential Method if You Would Retain Your Health.

A great deal is being written and taught concerning the vital importance of correct breathing in the cult of health and beauty. In every public school the pupils are being taught correct or deep breathing, and it is impossible to estimate the lives that will be prolonged and saved, as well as the enjoyment of life, the beautifying of faces and the development of symmetrical figures that will certainly follow the knowledge and application of the rules for deep breathing and the distribution of the oxygen inhaled in all parts of the lungs.

The Hindus describe many forms of correct breathing. They preach the gospel of the breath of life and lay enormous stress on the importance of the proper performance of this essential function. The complete breath is an exercise everyone should practice. It is described as follows in a little book recently published called "The Science of Breath."

1. Stand or sit erect. Breathing through the nostrils, inhale steadily, first filling the lower part of the lungs, which is accomplished by bringing into play the diaphragm, which descending exerts a gentle pressure on the abdominal organs, pushing forward the front walls of the abdomen. Then fill the middle part of the lungs, pushing out the lower ribs, breast bone and chest. Then fill the higher portion of the lungs, protruding the upper chest, thus lifting the chest, including the upper six or seven pairs of ribs. In the final movement the lower part of the abdomen will be slightly drawn in, which movement gives the lungs a support and also helps to fill the highest part of the lungs.

At first reading it may appear that this breath consists of three distinct movements. This, however, is not the correct idea. The inhalation is continuous, the entire chest cavity from the lowest diaphragm to the highest collarbone being expanded with a uniform movement. Avoid a jerky series of inhalations, and strive to attain a steady continuous action

SENTENCE SERMONS.

Truth abhors tricks.
Love needs no label.
The upright go right up.
Helpfulness is happiness.
Strength has little need of style.
Information precedes reformation.
He makes no mark who has no aim.
The future holds no failures to the eye of faith.
Fast living makes fast links in the devil's chain.
God measures by motives; men, by mistakes.
God never forgets the man who forgets himself.
A man's prospects depend on the things he respects.
There is good in all to the man who is altogether good!
It takes many new beginnings to make a glorious ending.
A man is not a saint because he can tell the difference between a good sermon and a poor one.
The square man is never looking for a crooked opening.
Loyalty to the lessons of the last year leads to success in the new.
God knows the way to your door if you know the way to his poor.
Take stock of your mercies, and you will find your miseries have taken flight.

Boss—"What time is it, Pat?" Pat—"Shure it's after three, sor." Boss—"After three? Why, I thought it was only a little past two." Pat—"Faith, an' when it's past two isn't it after three, thin, though, begorra, it has not quite caught up wid it yit."