

# Prince Rupert's Ring;

OR, THE HOUSE OF THE  
SILENT SORROW.

## CHAPTER I.

David Steel dropped his eyes from the mirror and shuddered as a man who sees his own soul bared for the first time. Steel had seen murder in his eyes.

Three years before David Steel had worked in an attic at a bare deal table, and his mother had £3 per week to pay for everything.

Now he was the most popular novelist in England, living in most luxurious quarters. In two years he would be rich.

And yet he was ruined. Within twenty-four hours everything would pass out of his hands. All for the want of £1,000! Steel had earned twice that amount during the past twelve months. Within the next twelve months he could pay the debt three times over.

And all this because he had become surety for an absconding brother. Steel had put his pride in his pocket and interviewed his creditor, a little, polite, mild-eyed financier, who meant to have his money to the uttermost farthing. At first he had been suave and sympathetic, until he had discovered that Steel had debts elsewhere, and then—

Well, he had signed judgment, and to-morrow he could levy execution. Within a few hours the bottom would fall out of the universe so far as Steel was concerned. Within a few hours every butcher and baker and candlestick-maker would come abusively for his bill.

Steel had not told anybody yet; the strong man had grappled with his trouble alone. Had he been a man of business he might have found some way out of the difficulty. Even his mother didn't know. She was asleep upstairs, perhaps dreaming of her son's greatness.

David lighted a cigarette and paced restlessly round the dining-room, then sat down to think. The clock had just struck twelve when the telephone bell rang. Jeffries of the Weekly Messenger, of course. Jeffries was fond of a late chat on the telephone. Steel wondered grimly, if Jeffries would lend him £1,000. He flung himself down in a deep lounge-chair and placed the receiver to his ear. By the deep, hoarse clang of the wires, a long-distance message, assuredly.

"From London, evidently. Hello, London!"

"Is that you, Mr. Steel? Are you quite alone? You are not busy to-night?"

"I'm not very busy to-night," Steel replied. "Who is speaking to me?"

"That for the present we need not go into," said the voice. "You are quite alone?"

"I am quite alone. Indeed, I am the only one up in the house."

"Good. So your mother is asleep? Have you told her what is likely to happen to you before many hours have elapsed?"

"I have told nobody as yet," Steel said. "Who are you?"

"That in good time. But I did not think you were a coward."

"No man has ever told me so—face to face."

"Good again. I recognize the fighting ring in your voice. Now, somebody who is very dear to me is at present in Brighton, not very far from your own house. She is in dire need of assistance. You also are in dire need of assistance. We can be of mutual advantage to one another."

"What do you mean by that?" Steel whispered.

"Let me put the matter on a business footing. I want you to help my friend, and in return I will help you. If you will promise me to go to a certain address in Brighton to-night and see my friend, I promise that before you sleep the sum of £1,000 in Bank of England notes shall be in your possession."

"I am asking you to do no wrong. You may naturally desire to know why my friend does not come to you. That must remain my secret, our secret. We are trusting you because we know you to be a gentleman, but we have enemies who are ever on a watch. All you

have to do is to go to a certain place and give a certain woman information. Are you agreeable?"

The voice was almost pleading. "You have taken me at a disadvantage," Steel said. "And you know—"

"Everything. I am trying to save you from ruin. You know that Beckstein, your creditor, is absolutely merciless. He will get his money back and more besides. On the other hand, you have but to say the word and you are saved. You can go and see the Brighton representatives of Beckstein's lawyers, and pay them in paper of the Bank of England."

"If I was assured of your bonafides," Steel murmured.

"I have anticipated that question. What time have you?"

Steel responded that it was five-and-twenty minutes past twelve.

"You can hang up your receiver for five minutes," the voice said. "Precisely at half-past twelve you go and look on your front doorstep. Then come back and tell me what you have found. You need not fear that I shall go away."

Steel hung up the receiver and waited five minutes, then went to the front door step. Some black object with shining points lay on the white marble breadth of the top step. A gun-metal cigar-case set in tiny diamonds.

The novelist fastened the front door and staggered to the study. A pretty, artistic thing such as David had fully intended to purchase for himself. He had seen one exactly like it in a jeweller's window in North Street. He had pointed it out to his mother. Why, it was the very one! David had had the case in his hands and had reluctantly declined the purchase.

He pressed the spring, and the case lay open before him. Inside were twenty-five Bank of England notes for £10 each—£250!

David took down the telephone receiver.

"Are you there?" he asked. "I—I have found your parcel."

"Containing the notes. It is the same cigar-case you admired so much in Lockart's the other day. Well, we have given you an instance of our sincerity. But £250 is of no use to you. Beckstein would not accept it on account—he can make far more money by 'selling you up.' It is in your hands to procure the other £750 before you sleep. Now, are you going to place yourself entirely in my hands?"

"I will do exactly what you tell me," Steel said.

"Spoken like a man," the voice cried. "Come, time is getting short, and I have my risks as well as others. Go at once to Old Steine. Stand on the path close under the shadow of the statue of George IV, and wait there. Somebody will say 'Come,' and you will follow. Good-night."

Steel would have said more, but the tinkle of his own bell told him that the stranger had rung off. He laid his cigar-case on the writing-table, slipped his cigarette-case into his pocket, satisfied himself that he had his latchkey, and put on a dark overcoat. He closed the front door carefully behind him and strode resolutely into the darkness.

## CHAPTER II.

David walked swiftly along, his mind in a perfect whirl. Save for an occasional policeman the streets were deserted and nobody saw him as he hurried on and took a position in the shadow of the statue. From the dark foggy throat of St. James' Street came the tinkle of a cycle bell. Then the cycle loomed in sight; the rider, muffled and humped over the front wheel, might have been a man or a woman. As the cyclist flashed by something white and gleaming dropped into the road, and the single word "Come" was spoken.

It was only a plain white card that lay in the road. A few lines were type-written on the back of it:

"Go along the sea front and turn into Brunswick Square. Walk along the right side of the square until you reach No. 219. You will read the number over the fanlight. Open the door and it will yield to

you; there is no occasion to knock. The first door inside the hall leads to the dining-room. Walk into there and wait. Drop this card down the gutter just opposite you."

David read the directions once or twice carefully. He made a mental note of 219. After that he dropped the card down the drain-trap nearest at hand. A little way ahead of him he heard the cycle bell trilling as if in approval of his action, and as he hurried up North Street, along Western Road, and finally down Preston Street, he could hear the tinkle of the cycle bell. But not once did he catch sight of the shadowy rider. His heart was beating a little faster as he turned into Brunswick Square.

He finally stopped before one of the big houses where electric lights were gleaming from the hall and dining-room windows. The rest of the house lay in utter darkness.

There was nothing abnormal about the house, nothing that struck the adventurer's eye beyond the extraordinary vividness of the crimson blind. The two side-windows of the big bay were evidently shuttered, but the large centre gleamed like a flood of scarlet overlaid with silken sheen.

He walked up the marble steps. The door opened noiselessly and Steel closed it behind him. A Moorish lantern cast a brilliant flood of light upon a crimson carpet, a chair and an empty oak umbrella-stand. Beyond this there were no atom of furniture in the hall. It was impossible to see beyond the dining-room door, for a heavy red velvet curtain was drawn across.

He passed into the dining-room and looked eagerly about him. The room was handsomely furnished, if a little conventional—a big mahogany table in the centre, rows of mahogany chairs upholstered in morocco, fine modern prints, most of them artist's proofs, on the walls. A big marble clock, flanked by a pair of vases, stood on the mantelshelf. There were a large number of blue vases on the sideboard.

The room was most brilliantly lighted both from overhead and from the walls. On the shining desert of the dining-table lay a small, flat parcel addressed to David Steel, Esq. The novelist tore off the cover and disclosed a heap of crackling white papers beneath. Rapidly he fluttered the crisp sheets over—seventy-five Bank of England notes of £10 each. It was the balance of the money.

Click, click, click. Three electric switches were snapped off almost simultaneously outside, and the dining-room was plunged into pitchy darkness. Steel instantly caught up a chair. He was no coward, but he was a novelist with a novelist's imagination. As he stood there the sweetest, most musical laugh in the world broke on his ear. He caught the swish of silken drapery and the subtle scent that suggested the fragrance of a woman's hair.

"Pray be seated, Mr. Steel," the silvery voice said, "Believe me, had there been any other way, I would not have given you all this trouble."

"I make no further apology for dragging you here at this time. We knew that you were in the habit of sitting up alone late at night, hence the telephone message. You will perhaps wonder how we came to know so much of your private affairs. You see, we were not quite certain that you would come to our assistance unless we could find some means of coercing you. Then we go to one of the smartest inquiry agents in the world and say: 'Tell us all about Mr. David Steel without delay.' In less than a week we know all about Beckstein."

"A fortnight ago last Monday you posted to Mr. Vanstone, editor of the Piccadilly Magazine, the synopsis of the first four or five chapters of a proposed serial for the journal in question. You open that story with a young and beautiful woman who is in deadly peril. Is not that so?"

"Yes," Steel said, faintly. "But how—?"

"Never mind that, because I am not going to tell you. That woman is in a frightful fix. There is nothing strained about your heroine's situation, because I have heard of people being in a similar plight before. Mr. Steel, I want you to tell me truthfully and candidly, can you see the way clear to save your heroine?"

The question came eagerly, almost impudently. David could hear the quick gasps of his questioner, could catch the rustle of the silken corsage as she breathed.

"Yes," he said, "I can see a brilliant way. But you—"

"Thank Heaven! Mr. Steel, I am placed in exactly the same position as the woman whose story you are going to write. For the love of Heaven hold out your hand to save a lonely and desperate woman whose only crime is that she is



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rich and beautiful. I have helped you—help me in return."

It was some time before Steel spoke.

"It shall be as you wish," he said. "I will tell you how I propose to save my heroine. Her sufferings are fiction; yours will be real. But if you are to be saved by the same means, Heaven help you to bear the troubles that are in front of you. Before God, it would be more merciful for me to be silent and let you go your own way."

## CHAPTER III.

David was silent for some little time.

"Well?" the sweet voice in the darkness said, impatiently.

"Believe me, I will give you all the assistance possible. If you would only turn up the light—"

"Oh, I dare not. Some day, perhaps—"

The speaker stopped, with something like a sob in her throat.

"We are wasting precious time," she went on, more calmly. "I had better tell you my history. In your story a woman commits a crime; she is guilty of a serious breach of trust to save the life of a man she loves. By doing so she places the future and the happiness of many people in the hands of an abandoned scoundrel. If she only manage to regain the thing she parted from, the situation is saved. In my situation, I hastened everything and risked the happiness of many people for the sake of a little child."

"If you publish that story you go far on the way to ruin me. Daily your books are more widely read. My enemy is a great novel reader. You publish that story, and what results? You not only tell that enemy my story, but you show him my way out of the difficulty, and show him how he can checkmate my every move. Perhaps, as I have escaped from the net—"

"You are right," Steel said promptly. "The story shall not be published. And now you want me to show you a rational and logical, a human way out. My heroine parts with a document which the villain knows to be a forgery. Money cannot buy it back because the villain can make as much money as he likes by retaining it. He does as he likes with the family property; he keeps my heroine's husband out of England by dangling the forgery and its consequences over his head. What is to be done? How is the ruffian to be bullied into a false sense of security by the one man who desires to throw dust in his eyes?"

(To be continued.)

## POTASH USES UP LIME.

When potash salts are applied to a soil the potash enters into combination with the soil lime, and is converted into a form in which it is available for the crop, but it is also a form in which a portion of both that potash and the lime is apt to be lost in the drains. Hence it has been said that potash uses up lime, and lime uses up potash.

It is for this reason that farmers who are in the habit of applying potash salts in liberal quantities to their crops, such as regular growers of potatoes and mangolds should be careful every few years to give a dressing of lime, otherwise the crop may suffer from a deficiency of this constituent.

In addition to being a necessary plant food, lime also exercises an important ameliorating influence on the physical condition of the soil, breaks up stiff clay soil, and helps to bind light open soil. It neutralizes the action of acidity of soils, and helps the disintegration of organic substances. Lime discolorously employed, is one of the most useful friends of the farmer.

It is better to misunderstand some people than to understand them.

## On the Farm

### CALF FOOD SUBSTITUTES.

A bulletin issued by the Cornell Experiment Station gives the results of two years' experiment with substitutes for milk and skim milk in calf feeding. The report states that during the test the calves were first given whole milk, but after a couple of days this was replaced by skim milk, with which they were also fed a mixture of maize, oats, bran, and oil meal, of which they were given as much as they would clean up, hay being available all the time. At the end of thirty days the calves were able to do without skim milk at all, and this point is emphasized in the report as being the lesson taught by all the American research into the subject. But while it is perfectly possible to do without any skim milk after the calf is a month old, when the milk is available it forms a leading portion of the best and most economic food for rearing calves.

The ordinary dairy calf (of the Shorthorn type), it is asserted, fed on skim milk, hay, and grain, should, according to the best investigations yet made, reach a live weight of 500 lbs. at five months, and the gain should be made at the rate of from 4c to 5c a day. The nearest substitute to this food in point of cost per daily gain, produce a gain of 11-4 lbs. per day at a cost of 6c to 61-2c. This was dried skim milk powder, fed as a substitute for skim milk until the calf was five months old. Bowel troubles are a source of much bother and loss in calf-rearing, and in these experiments they were entirely prevented by giving a tablespoonful of soluble blood meal with each feed. This, we are told, is really blood from a slaughter-house, dried and ground to a powder. Since this is comparatively inexpensive, it is believed that a wider use of it might be profitable.

### FACING COWS IN OR OUT.

The pro and con of this question will last for a long time. But Hoard's Dairyman thinks that in a climate where the cows have to be stabled and fed 200 days in a year, the paramount question is, which is the most sanitary, which is the best for the purposes of ventilation. On this point we have no hesitation to declare our preference for the facing out system. Under the King system of ventilation which is the most perfect the fresh air comes direct to the cow's nostrils and the manure is most readily removed daily, as it should be. The barn or stable should be 36 feet in width. This gives the most economic use of lumber and arrangement of feeding alley, stall room and driveway between the cows. It is well to be governed in this particular by the paramount question, ventilation and ease of keeping the stable clean and wholesome.

### One Type of Woman.

There is one type of woman whose thought of self is almost heroic. She is the one who, seeing a long line of persons waiting at a window, goes up to the head of the line and edges her way in. I have sometimes asked such women if they would like the right of suffrage, and they have said they would not, so it does not always indicate a "strong mind." But think how easily such a woman could vote, even though the polls were crowded. She would seize a ballot, brush aside the mere men who were in her way and, marching into the booth, deposit her vote—as inevitable as the sunrise or sunset or any of the phenomena of nature.

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