

# Prince Rupert's Ring;

OR, THE HOUSE OF THE  
SILENT SORROW.

## CHAPTER XV.—(Cont'd)

"When you sent me that note. What you virtually asked me to do was to countenance murder. When I went into the sick room I saw Christiana Henson was dying. The first idea that flashed across my mind was that Reginald Henson was getting the girl out of the way for his own purpose. My dear fellow, the whole atmosphere literally spoke of albumen. Walker must have been blind not to see how he was being deceived. I was about to give him my opinion pretty plainly when your note came up to me. And there was Enid, with her whole soul in her large eyes, pleading for my silence. If the girl died I was accessory after and before the fact. You will admit that was a pretty tight place to put a doctor in."

"That's because you didn't know the facts of the case."

"Then perhaps you'll be so glad as to enlighten me," Bell said.

"Certainly. That was part of my scheme. In that synopsis of the story obtained by the girls by some means, the reputed death of a patient forms the crux of the tale. This supposed death came from the artful use of albumen in certain doses."

"The so-called murder that you imagine you had discovered to-night was the result of design. Walker will give his certificate, Reginald Henson will regard Miss Christiana as dead and buried, and she will be free to act for the honor of the family."

"Well, we have a key to your trouble," said Bell.

"Where, my dear fellow, where?" David asked.

"Why, in the Sussex County Hospital, of course. The man may die, in which case everything must be sacrificed in order to save your good name. On the other hand, he may get better, and then he will tell us all about it."

The cabman was dismissed and the twain turned off the front at the corner of Eastern Terrace. Late as it was, there were a few people lounging under the hospital wall, where there was a suggestion of activity about the building unusual at that time of the night. A rough-looking fellow, who seemed to have followed Bell and Steel from the front, dropped into a seat by the hospital gates and laid his head back as if utterly worn out. Just inside the gates a man was smoking a cigarette.

"Halloa, Cross," David cried, "you are out late to-night!"

"Heavy night," Cross responded, sleepily, "with half a score of accidents to finish with. Some of Palmer of Lingfields private patients thrown off a coach and brought here in the ambulance. Unless I am greatly mistaken, that is Hatherly Bell with you."

"The same," Bell said. "I recollect you in Edinburgh. So some of Palmer's patients have come to grief. Most of his special cases used to pass through my hands."

"I've got one here to-night who recollects you perfectly well," said Cross. "He's got a dislocated shoulder, but otherwise he is doing well. Got a mania he's a doctor who murdered a patient."

"Electric light anything to do with the story?" Bell asked eagerly.

"That's the man. Seems to have wonderfully brilliant intellect if you can only keep him off that topic."

"If he is not asleep," Bell suggested, "and you have no objection—"

Cross nodded and opened the gate. Before passing inside Bell took the rolled-up Rembrandt from his breast-pocket and handed it to David.

"Take care of this for me," he whispered. "I'm going inside. See you in the morning, I expect. Good-night."

David nodded in reply and went his way. There was nobody to be seen anywhere as David placed his

key in the latch and opened the door.

It was with a sense of comfort and relief that David fastened the door behind him. Without putting up the light in the study David laid the Rembrandt on his table, which was immediately below the window in his work-room. The night was hot; he pushed the top sash down liberally.

"I must get that transparency removed," he murmured, "and have the window filled with stained glass."

David idly mixed himself some whisky and soda in the dining-room. He was tired and ready for bed now. He turned down the dining-room lights and strolled into the study. Just for a moment he sat there.

Then he fell into a reverie, as he frequently did. Some little noise outside attracted his attention, the kind of noise made by a sweep's brushes up a chimney. David turned idly towards the open window. David's eyes were keen, and he could see distinctly a man's thumb crooked downwards over the frame of the sash. Somebody had swarmed up the telephone holdfasts and was getting in through the window. Steel slipped well into the shadow, but not before an idea had come to him. He removed the rolled-up Rembrandt from the table and slipped it behind a row of books in the book-case. Then he looked up again at the crooked thumb.

He would recognize that thumb again anywhere. It was flat like the head of a snake, and the nail was no longer than a pea—a thumb that had evidently been smashed at one time. He saw a long, fustian-clad arm follow the scarred thumb, and a hand grope all over the table.

"Curse me," a foggy voice whispered hoarsely. "It ain't here. And the bloke told me—"

David grabbed at the arm and caught the wrist in a vice-like grip. Instantly another arm shot over the window and an ugly piece of iron piping was swung perilously near Steel's head. Unfortunately, he could see no face. As he jumped back to avoid the blow his grasp relaxed and the man escaped. All David could do was to close the window and regret that his impetuosity had not been more judiciously restrained.

"Now, what particular thing was he after?" he asked himself. "But I had better defer any further speculations on the matter till the morning. I'm as tired as a dog." But there were other things the next day to occupy David's attention besides the visit of his nocturnal friend. He went early to the residence of Ruth Gates, to whom he told all he had learned of his midnight visit to 218 Brunswick Square.

"Our common enemy," said David, "is Reginald Henson."

"A man who stands wonderfully high in public estimation," said Ruth. "There are thousands and thousands of people who look upon him as a great and estimable creature. He gives largely in charities, he devotes a good deal of his time to the poor. My uncle, who is a good man, declares Reginald Henson is indispensable to him."

"And, of course," said David, "I have seen that you have carried out part of my plot. Christiana Henson is legally dead. But won't you tell me how those girls got hold of my synopsis?"

"That came about quite naturally. Your synopsis and proof in an open envelope were accidentally slipped into a large circular envelope used by a firm of seed merchants and addressed to Longdean Grange, sent out no doubt amongst thousands of others."

"But I am sorry I ever touched the thing, for your sake."

The last words were spoken with a glance that set David's pulses beating. He took Ruth's half-extended hand in his, and it was not withdrawn.

"Don't worry about me," he said. "I shall come out all right in the end. Still, I shall look eagerly forward to any assistance that you can afford me. For instance,

what hold has Henson got on his relatives?"

"That I cannot tell you," Ruth cried. "You must not ask me."

"If you could only tell me where those bank-notes came from! When I think of that part of the business I am filled with shame."

"No, that must be a secret. But as to the cigar case,—"

"Would it not be easy to settle that matter by asking a few questions?"

"The more questions I ask the worse it is for me. The cigar-case I claimed came from Walen's, beyond all question, and was purchased by the mysterious individual now in the hospital. I understood that the cigar-case was the very one I admired at Lockhart's some time ago, and—"

"If you inquire at Lockhart's you will find such to be the case."

"So I did," he said. "And was informed in the most positive way by the junior partner that the case I admired had been purchased by an American called Smith and sent to the Metropole after he had forwarded dollar-notes for it."

Ruth rose to her feet, her face pale and resolute.

"This must be looked to," she said. "The cigar-case sent to you on that particular night was purchased at Lockhart's by myself and paid for with my own money!"

## CHAPTER XVI.

The blinds were all down at Longdean Grange, a new desolation seemed to be added to the gloom of the place. Out in the village it had by some means become known that there was somebody dead in the house.

"Why do they ring that bell?" Walker asked, irritably, as he walked up the drive.

"Madam ordered it, sir," Williams replied. "She's queerer than ever. Miss Christiana's death is a great shock to her."

"And my other patient, Williams?" he asked. "How is he getting along? Really, you ought to keep those dogs under better control. Fancy a man of Mr. Henson's high character and gentle disposition being attacked by a savage dog in the very house!"

"That dog was so devoted to Miss Christiana as you never see, sir," said Williams. "And he got to know as the poor young lady was dying. So he creeps into the house and lies before her bedroom door, and when Mr. Henson comes along the dog takes it in his head, as he wants to go in there. And now Rollo's got inside, and nobody except Miss Enid dare go near. I pity that there undertaker when he comes."

Walker shuddered slightly, as he entered the house. In the hallway he met Enid.

"I suppose you have come principally to see Mr. Henson?" she said. "But my sister—"

"No occasion to intrude upon your grief for a moment, Miss Henson," Walker said, quietly. "As I have told you before, there was very little hope for your sister from the first. It was a melancholy satisfaction to me to find my diagnosis confirmed by so eminent an authority as Dr. Hatherly Bell. I will give you a certificate at once."

"Would you like to see my sister?" Enid suggested.

"Not the least occasion, I assure you," he said.

Enid led the way to the drawing-room where the doctor signed the certificate. Mrs. Henson was crooning some dirge at the piano. Presently the discordant music ceased, and she began to pace noiselessly up and down the room.

"Another one gone," she murmured; "the best-beloved. Take all those coaches away, send the guests back home. Why do they come chattering and feasting here? She shall be drawn by four black horses to Churchfield in the dead of the night, and there laid in the family vault."

"Mrs. Henson's residence," Enid explained, in a whisper. "It is some fifteen miles away. She has made up her mind that my sister shall be taken away as she says—to-morrow night. Is this paper all that is necessary for the—you understand? I have telephoned to the undertaker in Brighton."

Walker hastened to assure the girl that what little further formality was required he would see to himself. All he desired now was to visit Henson and get out of the house as soon as possible.

Reginald Henson sat propped up in his bed, white and exhausted. Beyond doubt he had had a ter-

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rible shock and fright, and the droop of his eyelids told of shattered nerves. There was a thick white bandage round his throat, his left shoulder was strapped tightly. He spoke with difficulty.

"Has the brute been shot yet?" he asked.

"No," the doctor answered, "he is still at his post upstairs, and therefore—"

"Therefore you have not seen the body of my poor dear cousin?"

"Otherwise I could have given no certificate," Walker said. "I have seen the body."

Henson muttered something that sounded like an apology. Walker smiled graciously and suggested that rest and a plain diet were all that his patient needed. Then he hurried away.

The death of Christina affected Margaret Henson terribly. Enid watched her in terror. More than once she was fearful that the last faint glimmer of reason would go out for ever. And yet it would be madness to tell Margaret Henson the truth. In the first place she would not have understood, and on the other hand she might have comprehended enough to betray to Reginald Henson. The whole thing was refinedly cruel, but really there was no help for it. And things had gone on splendidly.

The undertaker came at four o'clock but he was easily disposed of, Enid telling him of Henson's experience, and saying it was impossible for any one to enter the room.

"My sister was exactly my size," said Enid. "Take my measure and send the coffin home to-morrow, and we will manage to do the rest. Then to-morrow night you will have a four-horse hearse here at eleven o'clock, and drive the coffin to Churchfield Church, where you will be expected. After that your work will be finished."

The bewildered young man responded that things should be exactly as the young lady required. He had seen many strange and wild things in his time, but none so strange and weird as this.

(To be continued.)

### SENTENCE SERMONS.

If you try to do all the good that needs to be done you will soon lose heart for doing any good.

The good Samaritan saves his sermons until after the work of succor.

If you set your heart on gold you can get it, but you can never satisfy your heart with it.

Some preachers who delight in hurling anathemas at heretics wonder why a teamster should want to swear.

When all men wish you with the angels you may be sure you're far from them.

Smooth people who hope to slide into heaven find that the skids run the other way.

The strength and sweetness of friendship depends on sincerity tempered by sympathy.

Perhaps it is his sense of humor that prevents many a man from taking himself as seriously as he wants other people to.

The average saint is apt to look to the average man like a decrepit old gentleman rebuking a boy for climbing trees.

A Quebec shoe-dealer recently received the following order from a French-Canadian customer: "You will put some shoe on my little families like this, and send by Sam Jameson the carrier: One man, Jean St. Jean (me), 42 years; one woman, Sophie St. Jean (she), 41 years; Hermedes and Lenore, 19 years; Honore, 18 years; Celina, 17 years; Narcisse, Octavia, and Phyllis, 16 years; Olive, 14 years; Philippa, 13 years; Alexandre, 12 years; Rosina, 11 years; Bruno, 10 years; Pierre, 9 years; Eugene, we lose him; Edouard and Elisa, 7 years; Adrien, 6 years; Camille, 5 years; Zoel, 4 years; Joseph, 3 years; Moise, 2 years; Muriel, 1 year; Hilaire, he go barefoot. How much?"

Many men give themselves away when they try to save themselves.

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