Prince Rupert's Ring;

OR, THE HOUSE OF THE SILENT SORROW.

CHAPTER XVIII.—(Cont'd).

Bell bent low partly to examine the patient. If he had made any discovery he kept the fact to himself.

"Looks very young," he muttered.

It was after they left that Cross said: "Look here, Bell, you're a great friend of Steel's. I don't want to get him into any harm, but a day or two ago I found this letter in a pocket-book in a belt worn by our queer patient. Steel says the fellow is a perfect stranger to him, and I believe that statement. But what about this letter? I ought to have sent it to the police, but I didn't. Read it."

And Cross proceeded to take a letter from his pocket. It was on thick paper; the stamped address given was "15 Dowend Terrace." There was no heading, merely the words "Certainly, with pleasure, I shall be home; in fact, I am home every night till 12.30 and you may call any time up till then. If you knock quietly on the door I shall hear you.—D.S."

"What do you make of it?" Cross asked.

"It looks as if your patient had called at Steel's house by appointment," Bell admitted. "It is a bad business, but I assure you that Steel is the soul of honor. Cross, will you let me have that letter for two or three days?"

"Very well," Cross said, after a little hesitation. "Good-night."

Bell went on his way homeward.

"I wonder what Reginald Henson would say if he only knew that I had been to the hospital and recognized our mutual friend Van Sneck there!" he muttered.

CHAPTER XIX.

The expression on Henson's usually benign countenance would have startled such of his friends and admirers as regarded him as a shining light and great example.

"Oh," he said, between his teeth, "you are a clever fellow. And so you have found out where Van Sneck is?"

"Yes," answered Littimer, "when I came here to Brighton I was looking for Van Sneck. I found that he had been here. I discovered that he had left his rooms and had not returned to them. Then it occurred to me to try the hospital. I pretended that I was in search of some missing relative, and they showed me three cases of bad accidents, the victims of which had not been identified. And the third was Van Sneck's."

"Do you know how Van Sneck got there?" Henson asked.

Littimer nodded.

"Give me that black book," Henson said. "Do you know how to work the telephone?"

"I daresay I could learn. It doesn't look hard."

"Well, that is an extension telephone on the table yonder worked in connection with the main instrument in the library. Turn that handle two or three times and put that receiver to your ear. When Exchange answers tell them to put you on to 0,017 Gerrard."

Littimer obeyed mechanically, but though he rang and rang again no answer came. With a snarling curse Henson dragged himself out of bed and crossed the room, with limbs that shook under him.

He twirled the handle round angrily but no reply came. Henson whirled angrily, but he could elicit no response. He kicked the instrument over and danced round it impotently. Littimer had never seen him in such a raging fury before. The language of the man was an outrage, filthy, revolting, profane.

Henson paused suddenly and requested Littimer should help him into bed. He lay back on his bed utterly exhausted by his fit of passion. One of the white bandages about his throat had started, and a little thin stream of blood trickled down his chest.

"What was Van Sneck doing here?" he asked.

"He was looking for the lost Rembrandt."

Henson was so amazed that he had no words for the moment.

"So Van Sneck told you so?" he asked. "What a fool he must have been! And why should he come seeking for the Rembrandt in Brighton?"

"Because he knows it was there, I suppose."

"It isn't here, because it doesn't exist. The thing was destroyed by accident by the police when they raided Van Sneck's lodgings years ago."

"Van Sneck told me that he had actually seen the picture in Brighton."

Henson chuckled.

"'The Crimson Blind' is Van Sneck's weak spot," he said. "The Rembrandt—the other one—is destroyed."

"Van Sneck has seen the picture," Littimer said. "He says he saw it at 218 Brunswick Square."

Henson's knees suddenly came up to his nose, then he lay quite flat again for a long time. His face had grown white once more, his lips utterly bloodless. Fear was written all over him.

"I know the house you mean," he said. "It is next door to the temporary residence of my esteemed friend, Gilead Gates. At the present moment the place is void——"

"And has been ever since your bogus 'Home' broke up. Years ago, you had a Home there. You collected subscriptions in the name of Reverend Felix Crosbie, and you put the money into your pocket. A certain weekly journal exposed you and you had to leave suddenly or you would have found yourself in the hands of the police. You skipped so suddenly that you had no time even to think of your personal effects, which you understood were sold to defray expenses. But they were not sold. Van Sneck got in with the agent and saw the picture there."

"Why didn't he take it with him?" Henson asked.

"Well, that was hardly like Van Sneck. Our friend is nothing if not diplomatic. But when he did manage to get into the house again the picture was gone."

"Excellent!" Henson cried. "How dramatic! There is only one thing required to make the story complete. The picture was taken away by Hatherly Bell."

"That is exactly what did happen."

Henson yawned affectedly. All the same he was terribly disturbed and shaken. All he wanted now was to be alone and to think, so he dismissed Littimer.

"So the danger has come at last," he muttered. "If Bell goes to Lord Littimer with that picture he shakes my power and my position perilously."

He paused, as the brilliant outline of some cunning scheme occurred to him.

* * * * *

Reginald Henson struggled out of bed and into his clothing as best he could, rang the bell, and after a time Williams appeared.

"You are to go down to Barnes and ask him to send a cab here as soon as possible," Henson said. "I have to go to London by the first train in the morning."

Williams nodded. Henson dressed at length and packed a small portmanteau and then crept downstairs to the library. He proceeded to make a minute inspection of the telephone. He turned the handle just the fragment of an inch and a queer smile came over his face. Then he crept as silently upstairs, opened the window of the bathroom quietly, and slipped on to the leads. There were a couple of insulators here, against the wire of one of which Henson tapped his knuckles gently. The wire gave back an answering twang. The other jangled limp and loose.

"One of the wires cut," Henson muttered. "I expected as much. Madame Enid is getting a deal too clever."

He staggered into a room and dropped into a chair. Then he dropped off into a kind of dreamy state, coming back presently to the consciousness that he had fainted.

Meanwhile Frank Littimer had joined Enid in the drawing-room.

"So you have been seeing Reginald," she said. "What did he want to use the telephone for?"

"I don't know."

"I know. I had a pretty shrewd idea what our cousin was going to do. Frank, it would have been far wiser if you hadn't come."

"I know it," he said. "I hate the place and its dreadful associations."

"Henson comes when he can and makes our lives hideous to us."

"I fancy I shook him up tonight," Littimer said, with subdued triumph. "He seemed to shudder when I told him that I had found Van Sneck."

"You have found Van Sneck!" she whispered. "Where?"

"Why, in the Brighton Hospital. Do you mean to say that you don't know about it, that you don't know that the man found so mysteriously in Mr. David Steel's house and Van Sneck are one and the same person?"

"It had not occurred to me," she said. "But you were foolish to tell Reginald."

"Not a bit of it. Why, Henson has known it all along. Reginald Henson——"

Littimer paused, open-mouthed; for Henson, dressed for the journey, had come quietly into the drawing-room.

"I fear I startled you," he said, with a sardonic smile. "Come, young man, we are going. The cab is at the gate."

The last words were flung at Littimer with contemptuous command and Littimer slunk away out of the house, Henson following between his victim and Williams.

"We are going to Littimer Castle," said Henson, when the lodge gates were passed.

"Not there," Littimer groaned—"not there, Henson!"

Henson pointed towards the cab. "Jump in!" he ordered.

CHAPTER XX.

Lord Littimer was a man of moods and contradictions, changeable as an April sky, and none the less quick-tempered and hard because he knew that everybody was terribly afraid of him.

Sometimes he would be quite meek and angry under the reproaches of the vicar, and yet the same day history records it that he got off his horse and administered a sound thrashing to the village poacher. Sometimes he got the best of the vicar, and sometimes that worthy man scored. They were good friends, these two, though the vicar never swerved in his fealty to Lady Littimer. But nobody seemed to know anything about that dark scandal. They knew that there had been a dreadful scene at the castle seven years before, and that Lady Littimer and her son had left never to return. Lady Littimer was in a madhouse somewhere, they said, and the son was a wanderer on the face of the earth. And when Lord Littimer died every penny of the property, the castle included, would go to her ladyship's nephew, Mr. Reginald Henson.

There are few more beautiful places in England than Littimer Castle. The house stood on a plateau with many woods behind, and in front a sea cliff.

Inside the palace was a veritable art gallery. There were hundreds of pictures and engravings there.

Lord Littimer had many hobbies, but his pictures and prints were the great amusement of his lonely life.

His lordship passed along a corridor towards the great oriel window at the end. At a table in the window a girl sat working a typewriter. The typewriter and secretary business was a new whim of Littimer's. He wanted an assistant to catalogue and classify his pictures and prints, and he had told the vicar so. He wanted a girl who wasn't a fool, a girl who could amuse him and wouldn't be afraid of him, and he thought he would have an American. To which the vicar responded that the whole thing was nonsense, but he had heard of a Boston girl in England who had a passion for that kind of thing and who was looking for a situation of the kind in a genuine old house for a year or so. The vicar added that he had not seen the young lady, but he could obtain her address. A reply came in due course, a reply that so pleased the impetuous Earl that he engaged the applicant on the spot. And now she had been just two hours in the house.

"Well," Littimer cried, "and how have you been getting on?"

Miss Christabel Lee looked up, smilingly.

"I am getting on very well indeed," she said. "Do you know, I fancy you and I are going to manage very well together?"

"Oh, do you? They say I am pretty formidable at times."

"I shan't mind that a bit. You see, my father was a man with a villainous temper. But a woman can always get the better of a bad-tempered man. Have you a sharp tongue?"

"I flatter myself I can be pretty blistering on occasions," Littimer said, grimly.

"How delightful! So can I. You and I will have some famous battles later on."

Littimer smiled and nodded. The grim lord of the castle was not accustomed to this kind of thing, and he was telling himself that he rather liked it.

"And now show me the Rembrandt," Miss Lee said, impatiently.

Littimer led the way to a distant alcove lighted from the side by a latticed window. There was only one picture in the excellent light there, and that was the famous Rembrandt engraving. The Florentine frame was hung so low that Miss Lee could bring her face on a level with it.

"This is the picture that was stolen from you?" she asked.

"Yes, that's the thing that there was all the fuss about."

"When an attempt of that sort is made it is usually followed by another," said the girl, "sometimes after the lapse of years. Anybody getting through that window could easily get the frame from its two nails and take out the paper.

"Take my advice and make it secure. The panels behind are hard wood—thick black oak. Lord Littimer, I am going to get four brass-headed stays and drive them through some of the open ornamental work into the panel so as to make the picture quite secure. It is an iron frame, I suppose."

"Wrought-iron, gilt," said Littimer. "Yes, one could easily drive four brass-headed stays through the open work and make the thing safe. I'll have it seen to."

But Miss Lee insisted that there was no time like the present. She had discovered that Littimer had an excellent carpenter's shop on the premises; indeed, she admitted to being no mean performer with the lathe herself. She flitted down the stairs light as thistledown.

"A charming girl!" Littimer said, cynically. "I wonder why she came to this dull hole? A quarrel with her young man, perhaps."

Christabel came back presently with hammer and some brass-headed stays in her hand, and Littimer watched her. He saw the nails driven firmly in and finished off with a punch so that there might be no danger of hammering the exquisitely wrought frame.

"There," she said, "a carpenter could have done no better."

"You don't know our typical carpenter," Littimer said. "Here is Tredwell with a telegram. For Miss Lee?"

Christabel glanced at the telegram and slipped it into her pocket. Littimer walked away at an intimation that his steward desired to see him.

Instantly the girl's manner changed. She glanced at the Rembrandt with a shrewd smile that meant something beyond a mere act of prudence well done.

(To be continued.)

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On the Farm

SETTING MILK FOR CHEESE.

The proper method of setting the milk after it has been ripened to the necessary degree of acidity depends upon the temperature of the milk and the strength of rennet used. The ideal temperature seems to be from 84 to 86 degrees, preferably the former; too high temperature causes the curds to harden too quickly with loss of fat, and low temperature requires longer time for a proper degree of hardness or a soft cheese or curd will be the result. It must be borne in mind that we must have a uniform temperature throughout the vat of milk.

The amount of rennet to use depends upon its strength, the temperature and acidity of the milk, and the kind of cheese to be made; from 2 to 4 ounce per 1,000 lbs. of milk may be used; it should coagulate the milk sufficiently for cutting it from 20 to 35 minutes after adding. The rennet should be diluted with about forty times as much cold water before adding to the milk; this allows it to be well stirred into the milk before coagulation begins. Always use a rake to stir rennet in with; a dipper can be used and is preferred by many makers. After stirring the rennet in, it is wise to keep the surface of the vat gently agitated to prevent cream rising, being sure to stop all motion before coagulation begins. Whenever possible, it is wise to cover the vat to exclude cold air, flies and dust. Close watch should be kept to note the condition so that the cutting may be begun at the proper time.

Great care should be taken to stir the rennet evenly throughout the whole vat, as uneven coagulation causes excessive loss of fat and casein as well as imperfect texture and body.

No maker should ever attempt to stir the rennet in the vat when he has other work that calls his attention before the stirring process can be completed; it would not cause so much loss to leave the vat and delay the adding of the rennet until such time as he can give the vat the necessary time and attention. More loss of fat and casein is caused by the makers in this stage of cheese making than any one is aware of. The temperature at which the cheese may be cured should also be considered and the amount of rennet to use; for a quick ripening at high temperature more rennet may be used, but for ripening at about 55 degrees to 60 degrees, use not more than 2 1-4 ounces of rennet.—R. C. H. Fowler in the New York Produce Review.

WORD WITH DAIRY FARMERS.

The outcome of every man's business, his profession and finally himself individually, depends very much upon how he looks at himself, s Hoard's Dairyman. What . . his standards in the conduct of his work? How does he honor himself and his life work in his mind? We do not know how much conceit or vanity he may have, but rather how much honest pride does he take in the profession he follows? There is a most powerful influence for good or ill in this question. One of the most powerful causes for poor, shiftless farming, miserable, low-grade cattle, run down farm, and all the long train of evils that attend in the wake of such things is to start with a low-down standard of what the farmer ought to be.

There is the beginning of the trouble. "He takes no pride in his farming," is the verdict. Go where you will that sort of a farmer barely exists. He never makes money in farming nor does he win credit. That is the reason why we have to ask the question that stands as the caption to this short article. Depend upon it, that the outcome of every farmer's life either in riches, or honor, or respect among his fellow men, will hang very largely upon the way that question is answered. Human nature is very queer. We have known some very unworthy, shiftless farmers who talk loudest about the rights and the honor of the farmer. It was to be found in their case in what they said, not what they did. One of the surest ways to make money in farming is to take an honest pride in the conduct of the farm.

It's always the bottom dollar that counts.

"But, dad," pleaded the son, "she's a nice girl. What's your objections to my marrying? You were young yourself once." "Don't remind me of it," said the father, overcome with emotion. "It was then that I met your mother."

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