

A Foolish Young Man;

Or, the Belle of the Season.

CHAPTER XXXVI.—(Continued).

One instance of this whole-souled devotion and unstinting charity occurred on the third day and brought the tears to her eyes, not only then but whenever she thought of it in the after years. A tiny mite of a baby, only a few weeks old was brought into the ward and laid in a cot not very far from Ida's bed. The nurse and the doctors crowded round it with eager attention. It was watched day and night, if it cried, at the first note of the feeble wail, a couple of nurses flew to the cot and, if necessary, a famous physician was telephoned for; and came promptly and cheerfully. The whole ward was wrapped up in the tiny mite, and Ida leant on her elbow and gazed forward to get a glimpse of it; and felt towards it as she would have felt if it had been a little sick or wounded lamb in Herondale.

"What is the matter with it, poor little thing?" she asked of the sister.

"The spine," replied the sister, bending tenderly over the cot and taking the emaciated little paw in her comforting, ministering hand.

"Will it get well?" asked Ida, quite anxiously.

The sister shook her head.

"Lor' bless me!" said Ida's neighbor, pityingly. "It ud be almost better if the poor little thing died!"

The sister looked up with mild surprise.

"Oh, yes; it can't live longer than three weeks," she said, as easily as if she had not seen a score of similar cases.

Ida laid down, her eyes were filled with tears, her heart filled with awe and wonder. Perhaps for the first time in her life she understood what Charity meant. Here was a wail of the slums, doomed to die in so many weeks, and yet it was the object of the loving devotion of every nurse in the ward, with every comfort and luxury which an age of civilization could supply, and the recipient of the enthusiastic attention of a great surgeon whose name was famous throughout the world.

The woman in the next bed was crying too.

"It makes you think of 'eaven, don't it, miss," she said, with a sniff. "It was right I set all my money to a 'ospital, that I would!"

The speech suddenly reminded Ida of her own poverty, of which she had not thought very much, for the need of money is not felt very keenly in a hospital ward, where everything is "free, gratis, for nothing." The time came, when she was permitted to get up, and nothing could exceed her amazement on finding herself so weak that her legs trembled under her, and the walls and the floor seemed to rock and heave; but in a day or two she was able to walk a little, and she at once begged permission to help nurse the baby.

It was against the rules, but she was very difficult for anyone to resist. Ida when she turned those great violet eyes upon them imploringly; and much to her delight she was permitted to hover about the cot and assist in an unofficial way. When the baby was asleep, which was not particularly often, Ida was permitted to read to some of the patients, and, in fact, make herself generally useful in an unobtrusive fashion.

This was all very well, but the day arrived when she was strong enough to leave the hospital and once more face that world which has been described as the best of all possible worlds, and no doubt is for those who have plenty of money and friends, but which is not far from being the worst of all possible worlds for those who have not. She took five pounds from her little store and went to the sister.

"I am rather poor," she said, with a smile, "and I can't afford more than this. I wish it were a hundred times as much; indeed, no money could repay your goodness and kindness to me, the wonder of which I shall never cease to feel."

The sister looked at her keenly, but said very gently:

"You can put it in the box in the hall when you go, but you will not go today. I will arrange for you to stop until tomorrow; in fact, the baby—none of us could spare you. I want you to have some tea with me in my room to-night and a little talk, Miss Heron."

So Ida turned away quickly, that the sister might not see her tears, and accepted the reprieve.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

The Herons were not very much surprised at Ida's flight, but though John and his wife and daughter were anything but sorry to get rid of her, they were rather uncomfortable, and Joseph, who was in the delirium after his drinking fit, did not make them more comfortable by assuring them that he was perfectly certain she had committed no suicide.

He and his father set out to look for her, but as Ida had left no clue behind, they could find no trace of her, though they procured the assistance of Scotland Yard, and inserted guarded advertisements in the newspapers. John Heron comforted himself with the reflection that she could have come to no harm or they would have heard of it; and at last it occurred to him, when nearly a fortnight had elapsed, that she might have returned to Herondale, probably to the care of Mr. Wordley, and that he had been too indignant to acquaint the Herons with the fact.

"I think I had better run down to Herondale, Maria, and ascertain if the errand and desperate girl has returned there," he said, one morning after prayers. "Seeing that she left my roof in so unseemly a fashion, with no word of regret or repentance, I do not consider that she has any further claim upon me; but I have a tender heart, and on this occasion I will be generous before I am just."

"I am sure she has no further claim upon us," said Mrs. Heron, with a sniff, "and I hope you will make it plain, John, that on no account can we take her back. We have been put to considerable trouble and expense, and I really think that her going without any fuss is quite providential."

At this moment there came a double knock at the door, and the servant announced that Mr. Wordley was in the drawing-room. Mr. and Mrs. Heron exchanged glances, and both of them turned rather pale; for John Heron had a very vivid recollection of Mr. Wordley's frank and candid manner of expressing himself. But he had to be faced, and the pair went down into the drawing-room with a long-suffering expression on their faces. Mr. Wordley, however, appeared to be quite cheerful. He shook hands with both of them, and inquired after their health and that of their family quite amiably and pleasantly.

"Most delightful weather, isn't it?" he remarked. "Quite pleasant, travelling. You have a remarkably—er—convenient house, Mrs. Heron; charming suburb; will no doubt be quite gay and fashionable when it is—er—more fully developed. You are looking well, Mr. Heron."

Mr. Heron, who had just been looking at his watch, was feeling a little ill at that moment; for he suspected that the lawyer was only masking his attack, and that he meant to spring upon him presently.

"I enjoy fairly good health, Mr. Wordley, thank you," he said, in his sanctimonious way; "but I have my share of

trials and anxieties in this miserable world."

"Oh, don't call it miserable, on a morning like this," said Mr. Wordley, cheerfully. "My dear sir, there is nothing the matter with the world; it's—er—some of the people in it that try to make it miserable." While he had been speaking, he had been glancing at the door and listening, as if he had been listening and expecting to hear and see someone else.

"The fact is," he said, "I have come up rather suddenly on rather important business; come up without a moment's delay. Where is Miss Ida? I should like to see her at once, please, if I may!"

The faces of the pair grew pallid, and the corners of John Heron's mouth dropped lower even than usual.

"Ida?" he said, in a hollow voice, as if he were confused. "Where is she? Surely you know, Mr. Wordley?"

"I know? How should I know? I came up to see her; not a moment to spare, isn't she here? Why do you both stare at me like this?"

"She is not here," said John Heron. "Ida left our house more than a fortnight ago."

Mr. Wordley looked disappointed and grunted.

"Oh, gone to stay with some friends, I suppose. I'll trouble you to give me their address, Mr. Heron, please."

He rose, as he spoke, as if he meant starting on the moment, but he sank into the chair again as John Heron said in a sepulchral voice:

"I should most willingly do so, Mr. Wordley, but I regret to say I do not know where she is."

"You don't know—where—she is!" said Mr. Wordley, anger and amazement struggling for the upper hand. "What the deuce—I beg your pardon, Mrs. Heron! You must excuse an old man with a short temper and a touch of the gout—but I don't understand you! Why don't you know?"

Mrs. Heron began to sniff, and her worthy husband drew himself up and tried to look dignified, and failed utterly in the attempt.

"Such language—" he began, "contomnd my language, sir!" snapped the old lawyer, his face growing red. "Be good enough to answer my question!"

"Ida left our hospitable roof about a fortnight ago," said Mr. Heron. "She left like a thief in the night—that is to say, morning. I regret to say that she left no message, no word of farewell, behind her. I had occasion to rebuke her on the preceding night, and, following the dictates of an ungodly nature and a perverse pride she chose to leave the shelter of this roof."

Mr. Wordley sprang to his feet, his passion rendering him speechless for a moment. "I beg your pardon, Mrs. Heron!"

"You rebuke Miss Ida! Are you out of your mind? And pray, what had she done?"

"She had been guilty of attempting to ensnare the affection of my son—"

At this moment the door opened and Joseph appeared. Mr. Wordley looked at him.

"Ensnaring the affections of this!" he enorted, with a scorn, which caused Mr. Joseph's immediate retreat. "Oh, you must be out of your mind!"

"Her conduct was reprehensible in other ways," blamered John Heron.

"Nonsense!" almost shouted Mr. Wordley. "I don't want to hear any more of such nonsense. Miss Ida's conduct reprehensible! Why, she couldn't conduct herself in any way than that of a high-bred, pure-minded, gentle-hearted girl, if she tried! You have been entertaining an angel unawares, Mr. Heron—there's a bit of Scripture for you!—you've had a pearl in your house, and it's been cast before!"

"Bless my soul! I'm losing my temper! But, 'pon my word, there's some excuse for it. You've let that dear child leave your house, you've lost sight of her for over a fortnight, and—and you stand there and snuffle to me about her 'conduct! Where is she? Oh, of course, you don't know; and you'd stand there like a stuck pig, if I were fool enough to remain here for a week and ask questions. But I want her—I want her at once! I've got important news for her—news of the greatest importance—I beg your pardon, my dear madame, for the violence of my language—though I could say a great deal more to this husband of yours if I were alone with him. But it's no use wasting further time. I must find her—I must find her at once."

John Heron was as red as a turkey cock and gasping like a cod out of water.

"This gross and unseemly attack is only excused by your age—"

"Confound my age!" exclaimed Mr. Wordley. "Let me tell you, sir, your age does not excuse your conduct, which has been that of a heartless and sanctimonious fool. When I gave that dear child into your care, I had misgivings, and they are fully justified. Word that I had never lost sight of her! The dearest, the sweetest and best—Oh, let me get out, or I shall say something offensive."

As he made for the door, John Heron cleared his throat and stammered.

"I will forgive you, sir. You will regret this exhibition of brutal violence, and I shall put up a prayer for you."

"Don't you dare to put up any prayer for me!" cried Mr. Wordley. "I should be afraid something would happen to me, I

need not ask why she left your house. It's quite evident enough I've nothing more to say to you."

"One moment," said John Heron, with an attempt at dignity; "perhaps you will be good enough to inform me of the nature of the communication that you have for my cousin Ida."

Mr. Wordley looked as if he were going to choke.

"No, I will not, sir!" he at last responded. "I will tell you nothing—excepting that I hope and trust I may never see your sanctimonious face again. Good-morning! Good-morning, madame!"

He was outside Laburnum Villa with the velocity and force of a whirlwind, and was half-way on his road to the station before he could get his breath or regain his self-possession. Being a lawyer, he, of course, went straight to the police; but he was shrewd enough not to go to Scotland Yard, but to the police station near the terminus; for it seemed to him that it would be easier to trace Ida from that spot.

Fortunately for him, he found an inspector in charge who was both intelligent and zealous. He listened attentively to the detailed statement and description which the lawyer—calm enough now—furnished him, and after considering for a minute or two, during which Mr. Wordley waited in a legal silence, asked: "Young lady any friends in London, sir?"

Mr. Wordley replied in the negative.

"Think she has gone to a situation?"

"No," replied Mr. Wordley; "she left suddenly; and I do not know what situation she could find. She is a lady, and unaccustomed to earning her bread in any way."

"Then she has met with an accident," said the inspector, with an air of conviction.

"God bless my soul, my good man!" exclaimed Mr. Wordley. "What makes you think that?"

"Experience, sir," replied the inspector, calmly. "Have you any idea how many accidents there are in a day in London? I suppose not. You'd be surprised if I told you. What was the date she was missing?"

Mr. Wordley told him, and he turned to a large red book like a ledger.

"As I thought, sir," he said. "Young lady knocked down by a light van on Good Street, Minorities. Dark hair, light eyes. Height, five feet nine. Age, about twenty-one or two. Name on clothing, 'Ida Heron.'"

Mr. Wordley sprang to his feet.

"It is she!" he exclaimed. "Was she much hurt, is—she alive—where is she? I must go to her at once."

"London Hospital," replied the inspector succinctly, as he turned to a subordinate. "Call a cab!"

It was not a particularly slow hansom, and it did not take very long to get from the police station to the hospital; but to Mr. Wordley the horse seemed to crawl and the minutes to grow into days. He leapt out of the hansom, and actually ran into the hall.

"You have a patient—Ida Heron"—he pated down the hall porter.

The man turned to his book.

"Yes, sir," he said. "Discharged yesterday."

Mr. Wordley staggered against the glass partition of the porter's box and groaned.

"Can you tell me—" he began. "Has she left any address?—I—I am her solicitor—Ernest Gray being hired. I want her particularly."

The porter looked at him sympathetically—the very body is sympathetic at a hospital, from the head physician and that pious lady, the matron, down to the boy who cleans the brass plate.

"Won't you sit down, sir," he said. "The young lady was discharged yesterday, and I can't tell you where she's gone, in fact, though I remember her being brought in—run-over case—I don't remember her going out. Perhaps you'd like to step upstairs and see the sister of the ward she was in, the Alexandra?"

While he was speaking, and Mr. Wordley was trying to recover command of himself, a slim black-clad figure came down the hall, and pausing before the large tin box provided for contributions, dropped something into it. Mr. Wordley watched her absently; she raised her head, and he sprang forward with "Miss Ida!" on his lips.

Ida uttered a cry and staggered a little; for she was not yet as strong as the girl who used to ride through Herondale, and Mr. Wordley caught her by both hands and supported her.

"Thank God! thank God!" was all he could exclaim for a minute. "My dear child! my dear Miss Ida! Sit down!"

He drew her to one of the long benches and sat down beside her. To his credit, he it stated, that the tears were in his eyes, and for a moment or two he was incapable of speech; indeed, it was Ida, who, woman-like, first recovered her self-possession.

"Mr. Wordley! Is it really you? How did you know? How did you find me? I am so glad, oh, so glad!" She choked back the tears that sprang to her eyes and forced a laugh; for again, woman-like, she saw that he was more upset than even she was. He found his voice after awhile, but it was a very husky one.

"My dear girl, my dear Miss Ida," he said, "you are not more glad than I. I have been almost out of my mind for the last few hours. I came to London all in a hurry. Most important news—went to your cousin's!—Oh, dear! what a fool that man is! Heard you had run away—not at all surprised. Should have run away myself long before you did. Came up to London in search of you—just heard you'd gone from here."

"I ought to have gone yesterday," said Ida, "but they let me stay."

"God bless them!" he panted. "But how pale you look—and thin. You've been ill, very ill; and you've been unhappy, and I didn't know it. What a fool I was to let you go! It was all my fault! I ought to have known better than to have trusted you to that sanctimonious idiot. My dear, I've great news for you!"



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"Have you?" said Ida, patting his hand soothingly—she had caught something of the gentle, soothing way of the sister and nurse. "Must you tell me now? You are tired and upset."

"I must tell you this very minute or I shall burst," said Mr. Wordley. "My dear child, prepare yourself for the most astounding, the most wonderful news. I don't want to startle you, but I don't feel as though I could keep it for another half-hour. Do you think I could have a glass of water?"

The porter, still sympathetic, at a sign from Ida, produced a glass of water and discreetly retired.

"Now," said Mr. Wordley, with intense gravity, "prepare to be startled. Be calm, my dear child, as I am; you see I am quite calm!" He was perspiring at every pore, and was mopping his forehead with a huge silk handkerchief. "I have just made a great discovery. You are aware that Herondale, the whole estate, is heavily mortgaged and that there was a foreclosure; that means that the whole of it would have passed away from you."

Ida sighed.

"Yes, I know," she said, in a low voice. "Very well, then. I went over to the house the other day to—well, to look out any little thing which I thought you might like to buy at the sale—"

Ida pressed his hand and turned her head away.

"It was a sad business, sad, very sad! and I wondered about the place like a—like a lost spirit. I was almost as fond of it as you are, my dear. After I had been over the house I went into the grounds and found myself in the ruined chapel. Donald and Bess followed me, and Bess—what a sharp little thing she is, bless her!—she began to rant about, and presently she began to dig with her claws in a corner under the ruined window. I was so lost in thought that I stood and watched her in an absent kind of way; but presently I heard her bark and saw her tearing away like mad, as if she had found a rat or a rabbit. I went up to where she was clawing and saw—what do you think?"

Ida shook her head and smiled.

(To be continued.)

THE RUSSIAN SOLDIERS.

Remarkable Spirit of Army Described by English Observer.

In a lengthy review of the earlier operations on the battlefields of Russian Poland and Galicia, Prof. Bernard Pares, the British official correspondent with the Russian forces, gives a sketch of the spirit which he says pervades the Russian army. After referring to the confidence of the Russians in their artillery and their lack of respect for the rifle-fire of their opponents, Prof. Pares continues:

"But the most impressive thing

of all is the extraordinary endurance of the men in the trenches. It is an ordinary experience for a man to be from five to eight days in a pouring rain, almost or sometimes altogether without food, and then perhaps to rush on the enemy, to fall and see half of his comrades fall, but the rest still going forward. Or perhaps he lies on the field through the night and then is carried to a hospital to lose a limb. In spite of this, such men are not only patient and affectionate to all who do anything for them, but really cheerful, contented and often literally jovial, and in no doubt of the ultimate issue.

"The spirit of the Russian army draws everything to it, so that no one seems to feel he is living unless he is getting to the front. The talk of all those who are already at work whether officers or men, is balanced and confident, and all the little comforts are shared up simply, as among brothers.

"All the life of Russia is streaming into the war, and never was the Russian people more visible than it is now in the Russian army."

Contrary to the general idea, Prof. Pares says that the cavalry played but an insignificant part in the fighting in Galicia. He says the Ruthenian troops in the Austrian army were in a very difficult position. In several cases they fired into the air, and the attacking Russians sometimes did the same, whereupon, he says, numbers of the Ruthenians would come over to the Russians, who considered themselves at home in this part of Galicia. The Cossacks, who were preceding the army, offered little violence in this field says Prof. Pares, though sometimes they were led to adopt drastic, but not necessarily violent, measures in dealing with certain hostile inhabitants of the district.

"You are going to the dogs!" "Sir, that is a cur-sory remark!"

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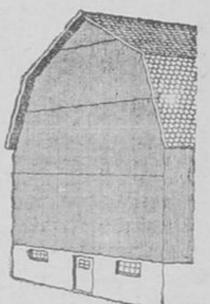
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