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The Hidden Hour

BY J. B. HARRIS-BURLAND

CHAPTER V.—(Cont'd.)

"I am sorry to trouble you, Sir Alexander," said Detective-Inspector Ditton, when he was shown into the library, "but we cannot find Mr. Merrington. The servant told us that he had left London in his car, and that he was going to spend the night with a Mr. Ardington, who lives at Dedbury in Kent. Mr. Ardington is on the telephone, and we managed to find his number and get on to him. He said that he had expected Mr. Merrington about eight o'clock, but that he had not arrived."

"I see. And what do you think I know about it?"

"Well, sir, the servant told us you had called and that you'd had a long talk with Mrs. Merrington. And we thought that perhaps she had told you of some change in her husband's plans, and besides, we should like to know whether Mrs. Merrington was—well, quite *compos mentis*, so to speak."

"For a few moments Sir Alexander Bradney was silent. Then he said, 'Sit down, Ditton, and have a cigar.' 'He looked to be on friendly terms with the police, and he knew the detective quite well."

"Thank you, sir," said Ditton, taking a cigar from the case that was held out to him, and biting off the end with a sharp movement of his strong teeth. He was a sturdy fellow of about forty, with a small black moustache and a reddish face.

"May I ask how you come to be mixed up with this?" queried Bradney when the detective had lit his cigar and seated himself.

"The police telephoned to the Yard at once, sir."

"Ah, so bad as that, eh? You suspect suicide?"

"Yes, sir—well, if you could tell me—"

"Certainly," Sir Alexander interrupted. "Mrs. Merrington was quite well when I saw her, but she seemed to be worried about something."

"Ah, that is what we want to know, sir," said Mr. Ditton, taking out his notebook and writing in it. "Worried?"

"Yes—pale and nervous—but mind you, I have never seen her before and she may have been always like that."

"Did she say anything, sir, to lead you to suppose she was worried?"

"Nothing, Ditton—nothing at all. I went there to see Merrington about painting a portrait of my wife. Merrington was away and I had a chat with Mrs. Merrington."

"When did you leave, sir?"

"Oh, at about half-past nine."

"The servant was out, sir, wasn't she?"

"Yes, Mrs. Merrington apologized for that. It appears that the servant goes home every evening from nine to ten. Her parents live close by."

"Yes, so the girl told me, sir. And she was late to-night. She did not return until 10.20. Mrs. Merrington was then apparently dead. She was lying on the drawing-room floor. On a small table near to an arm-chair by the fire there was a wine-glass and a bottle of pink Noveau."

"Deadly stuff," interrupted Bradney, "and very difficult to get now."

"Yes, sir. And it was a claret glass, and there was still some of the liqueur at the bottom of it. At first the servant thought that her mistress was intoxicated."

"Ah, did Mrs. Merrington drink?"

"No, sir—not that we know of—but that was the tea that first came to the servant. She telephoned for a doctor and the doctor sent for the police."

"Why did he send for the police?"

"He came to the conclusion that—"

"I know Mr. Ardington. Shall I ring him up?"

"Yes—please ring him up—very likely I was going to stay with Ardington—I say, this is a queer business. What is the date?"

"January the thirty-first," echoed Merrington. "And my wife's birthday is on June the fourth. Merciful Heavens! I've lost seven months of my life."

"Oh, you'll get your memory back," laughed Trehorn, "even if we have to supply you with an artificial one."

"Now what do you mean by that?" asked Merrington.

"Oh, well—others can fill up the blank for you—construct something like the iron framework of a building, and then by degrees you'll be able to put in all the rest yourself. Now I'll telephone to Mr. Ardington and then send off this wire to your wife. And I shall have to see about the wreck of the car, I suppose."

He left the room, and as he walked down the narrow stairs with his hand on the pitch-pine rail the telephone bell rang, and he hurried into the consulting-room.

"Hallo," he said, lifting the receiver from its hook. "Yes, I'm Trehorn—oh, that's you, Ardington, is it? I was just going to ring you up. Yes, Merrington is here—My God, that's terrible!—No, of course Merrington can't—"

go up to London, and the news had better be kept from him—The police, did you say? You'd better come round here at once. I'm blessed if I know what to do in the matter. I tell you the man can't be moved for a month, and if he's told, it'll probably kill him. Come round here, that's a good chap—Eh, what's that you say—a lady in the car with him?—Nonsense. You're talking rubbish—absolute rot. Yes, that'll be best; come along at once."

Dr. Trehorn may not have been a very brilliant young man, but he was cool and level-headed, and he understood his business. His immediate business was to look after his patient and restore Merrington to health. Beyond that, always thinking of Merrington in the first place, his business was to keep his word to the unknown woman who had thrown herself upon his mercy. He saw, clearly enough, that the fact of Merrington's wife being dead would not in any way solve the problem of the "eternal triangle," for in this case it had not been a triangle. From what the woman had said he had gathered that she was married and that she had gone back to her husband.

He filled his after-breakfast pipe, lit it, and looked at the clock. At ten o'clock he usually started out on his rounds. But to-day he would have to leave the house a little later—perhaps he would not be able to leave it until nearly noon.

"The house will have to be guarded like a fortress," he said to himself. It would have been easy enough to guard it if the police had not been dragged into the matter. But the whole situation had changed.

"Suicide," he thought, "possibly murder—no, not Merrington, someone else."

It seemed impossible to him that Merrington could have murdered his wife. That face, so gentle, and so strikingly beautiful, was not the face of a murderer.

He stretched out his hand and rang the bell. The house-parlmaid, a grey-haired woman of fifty, came into the room. She had entered his father's service at the age of twenty-five and had worked for the family ever since. The cook was a few years older and remembered when he had been born. Could he rely on these two women to see him through a difficulty that did not in any way threaten his own happiness?

(To be continued.)

The World's Book-Shop.

Have you ever wondered how many books there are in existence? On the average, two hundred thousand volumes are published each year throughout the world, and, as eight and a half million books appeared last century, one can obtain a fairly good idea of the size of the world's book-shop. Adding together the number of volumes published in each century since printing was invented, the astonishing total of sixty millions is reached. The amount of energy, time, paper, and printer's ink which have been expended on these books is incalculable.

A great many of these publications are worth more than their face value and pounds, and the total value of the world's book stocks must run into many millions. Stacked together, they would form a fair-sized mountain, the ascent of which would take several hours.

The three largest libraries in the world are the British Museum Library, which has four million volumes; the Bibliotheque Nationale, at Paris, which has three millions; and the Library of Congress, Washington, with just half a million less. Thus, between them alone, these three great institutions possess nine and a half million books of all kinds.

Man's Days.

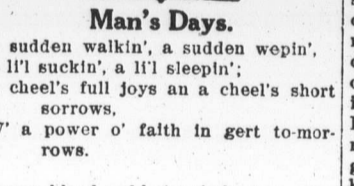
A sudden walkin', a sudden weepin',
A'll suckin', a'll sleepin';
A cheel's full joys an' a cheel's short sorrows,
W' a power o' faith in gert to-morrow.

Young blood red-hot an' the love of a maid,
One glorious day as'll never fade;
Some shadows, some sunshine, some triumphs, some tear,
An' a garterin' weight o' the flyin' years.

Then old man's talk o' the days be hind 'e;
Your darter's youngest darter to mind 'e;
A'll dreamin', a'll dyin';
A'll low corner o' earth to lie in.

—Eden Phillpotts.

When the price of good tea is high, many poor cheap teas are offered to the public. Those who buy them learn to their sorrow that price does not indicate their cost. To the pound more satisfying and flavory cups can be brewed from a fine tea like "SALADA," hence its real economy in use.



The Champ Wiggler

Turtle—"So you were in a pretty tight hole?"

Snake—"Yes, but I managed to wriggle out of it!"

Minard's Liniment Heals Cuts.

About the House

THE SECRET OF TRUE MOTHER-LOVE.

"My dear," said one woman to another, "I hear your son is going to be married. Your poor heart must be broken."

The mother laughed. "I am not an object of pity," she said; "I am a subject for congratulation."

"What!" cried the first woman. "Do you mean to tell me that you are willing to give up your only child to another woman?"

"Willing and glad," replied the mother, "for I want my son to be happy."

"Children are ungrateful creatures," said the first woman, bitterly. "We spend our lives toiling and sacrificing for them, and as soon as they are big enough they leave us. I remember when your husband died, we wondered how you would get along. Well, you did, by working your fingers to the bone."

"You went without everything yourself, but your boy was always fed and clothed, and by hook or crook you put him through school. Now he forsakes you for a pretty girl. I say his duty is to you. He has no right to marry as long as you live."

"Nonsense," replied the mother. "I did my duty to my child, but am I a female Shylock to exact a pound of flesh in payment for having taken care of him while he was young and helpless?"

"I know there are mothers who think that their children belong to them body and soul, and that they have a perfect right to exact any sacrifice of them. I have known talented women who have been balked in their ambitions by tyrannical and exacting mothers, and I have seen pretty girls grow into faded old maids nursing neurotic mothers who would not employ an attendant."

"And I've known more than one whining old woman who kept a bachelor son dancing attendance upon her, and who told you how it would have killed her for her son to marry; how she made him promise he would never leave her; how she broke off a love affair that he had in his youth, and how she knew he was so much happier with her than he would have been with a wife, because no wife would have been as particular about cooking the things he wanted as she was personally. I feel that I could be a wicked thing that I should not marry. He is to be a family man, the sort of man who would never be happy living in clubs, playing cards, and listening to men's gossip for a lifetime. He must have his own home, his own wife and children, and I would be worse than a fiend if I kept him from the sweetness of a wife's love and companionship, and the joy of feeling his baby's arms about his neck."

"My son loves me. We are unusually companionable. I am an old and experienced housekeeper. Doubtless I make him far more comfortable than his young wife will. But I am not foolish enough to think that my home is really home for him, or that a mother's love takes the place of a wife's love."

"And so, while he is young and capable of loving and inspiring love, I desire to see him marry. Nothing brings out all that is best and strongest in a man as does having a wife and children dependent on him. Nothing spurs on a man's ambition so much as desiring to get the best for those he loves. I want my son to marry because I love my sex, and I want to present to some girl the best gift on earth—a good husband."

WINTER BOUQUETS.

Even though Mrs. Farmer neglected to plant her everlastings, or straw flowers, last spring, she need not have to go without her winter bouquet if she is willing to go to a little trouble.

Whereas the city sister must go out and buy hers, the country woman may find material to make as attractive ones in the woods and hedgerows.

One of the prettiest I ever saw was made of the common milkweed. After the pod has shed its seed, or is about to do so, the plant should be cut, taking most of the stalk, which afterward may be discarded if found too long. The plants should then be hung, heads downward, in a cool dark place to dry. When "the last rose of summer is faded and gone" bring them out to the light, and with water colors paint the inside of the open pod. A delicate rose-pink blends beautifully with the soft gray of the pod, but other colors may be used to carry out any particular color scheme. Combined with evergreen or, if that is not to be had, with artificial green, they make a bouquet fit to grace any part of the home.

In many localities a plant known as everlasting grows wild. This may be dried in the same manner as milkweed and, when the time comes to make the bouquet, may be dipped in a solution of good dye to make it any desired shade. Dry again and combine with green. The blossoms are small, borne in clusters, and if dyed blue resemble the fringed gentian or wild aster of summer time.

The cat-tail, which grows profusely in marshy places, is another good one. It must be cut before fully ripe to insure against its shedding, and dried according to the rule for the others. A coat of clear varnish or shellac is

further guarantee against shedding and detracts nothing from its attractiveness. Do not neglect to gather an armful of pussy willows or catkins next spring. Dried before they become too ripe, they will keep several seasons, if a new supply is not to be had.

HOLDERS FOR BIRTHDAY CANDLES.

I am anxious to tell the readers of my recent discovery. Perhaps some of you have made a similar one. Last Thursday was my little son, Jerry's, seventh birthday. To hold the family custom, he must have a birthday cake with candles. When I came to make the cake I found I had the candles but no candle holders.

As the candles had to be lighted, the wax would run down and mingle with the frosting, and this would not do at all. Having some marshmallows in the house, I used these for holders, and they answered the purpose very well. With cake coloring I marked the face on each marshmallow, placing the candle in the mouth, much to the amusement of my little son.—Mrs. F. W.

A NEAT AND SERVICEABLE APRON.



4090. Percale with facings of linen as here depicted. Black sateen with prettiness would be attractive, as would also crepe with trimming of a contrasting color or with rick rack for a finish.

The Pattern is cut in 4 Sizes: Small, 34-36; Medium, 38-40; Large, 42-44; Extra Large, 46-48 inches bust measure. A Medium size requires 4½ yards of 36-inch material.

Pattern mailed to any address on receipt of 15c in silver or stamps, by the Wilson Publishing Co., 73 West Adelaide St., Toronto. Allow two weeks for receipt of patterns.

THERE IS NO WORSE TEA.

When Mary Antin was a little girl in Russia she was sent by her mother who kept a shop to deliver a package of tea to a customer. It was her first important errand—so we learn from her autobiography, which the Atlantic Monthly prints—and, like most children in such circumstances, she was filled with a sense of her dignity and importance. As it proved she was more dignified than diplomatic.

It was, she writes, a good-sized expedition for me to make alone, and I was not a little pleased with myself when I delivered my package of tea safe and intact into the hands of my customer.

But the customer was not pleased at all. She sniffed and sniffed; she pinched the tea; she shook it all out on a table. "Na, take it back," she said in disgust; "this is not the tea I always buy. It's a poorer quality."

I knew that the woman was mistaken. So I spoke up manfully. "Oh, no," I said; "this is the tea my mother always sends you. There is no worse tea."

Nothing in my life ever hurt me more than the woman's answer to my argument. She laughed; she simply laughed. But even before she had controlled herself sufficiently to talk I understood that I had spoken like a fool and had lost for my mother a customer.



Where Do You Taste?

If asked what part of the body you taste with, you might answer: "With the mouth." But try an experiment. Put a fragment of salt into your mouth, placing it between the teeth and the cheek. Until it dissolves it has absolutely no taste at all.

The fact is that the sides of the mouth are insensible to certain substances, such as salt and vinegar. The tongue is really the main organ of taste. All those substances which have an aromatic taste, such as spices and coffee and wine, can only be appreciated by the front half of the tongue.

A piece of sugar applied to the tip of the tongue tastes extremely sweet. Try it on the back of the tongue, and it is almost tasteless.

With many other foods the case is reversed, and it is the back part of the tongue and the mouth in which they are properly appreciated. A few experiments will prove to you that taste is strangely localized in the mouth.

When Love Says "Don't."

Don't mail that scolding, bitter letter which you write in an angry mood, and which gives you a feeling of spiritual satisfaction because you thought you had done a smart thing and were going to "get square" with someone who had insulted you—burn it. There is a better way, love's way. Try it.

Don't say the mean thing you have been planning to say to someone you think has been mean to you. Instead, give him the love thought, the magnanimous thought. Say to yourself, "He is my brother. No matter what he has done, I can't be mean to him. I must show my friendliness, my magnanimity to this brother."

Minard's Liniment for Dandruff.

Huge Forest.

The island of Madagascar has a belt of forest 20 miles deep which completely encircles it.

The Danube is navigable in its entire course through Hungary.

The figure 8 was the perfect number of the Pythagoreans, who said it represented the beginning, middle and end.

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