

Carruthers to apologize to his wife for the desertion of Bridesdale. Then, he sought out Mr. Terry in the garden and smoked a pipe with him, while his new friend, Mr. Douglas, was chatting on the verandah between Miss Carmichael and Miss Graves. Nobody else seemed to want him or care for him; he had even lost his old friend Wilks, who was absorbed in his beloved Cecile. The colonel was as bad with Cecile's mother, and Mr. Errol with Mrs. Carmichael. The Squire was busy, so the veteran and he were left alone. For a time, they smoked and talked, listening all the while, as they could not fail, to the merry badinage of the party on the verandah. At last he could stand it no longer. He rose, bade his companion good-night, and strolled away on to the road. Once out of observation from the house, he walked rapidly to his new quarters. "Is that you, Styles?" asked Mrs. Tibbs, as he entered. He assured the postmistress that he was not Styles, and asked if there was anything he could do for her. "There is a letter here for Squire Carruthers, marked 'immediate,' and they have not been for their mail," she answered. So, sorely against the grain, the lawyer had to take the letter and return with it to Bridesdale. Mr. Carruthers was still in his office. He opened the envelope and read:—

*My Dear Squire,—*

Rawdon and his nephew have broken gaol and escaped. Be on your guard. Will go to you as soon as possible.

Yours truly,

J. HICKEY BANGS.

"This is bad news, Coristine. It seems as if we're never to hear the last o' yon villain."

"I'm at your service, Squire."

"I canna thole to ask the colonel, puir man, to lose his night's rest, an' I'm no ower sure o' his man. Sae, the granther an' I'll watch till it's twal, if you wi' Timotheus 'll relieve us till two o' the mornin'. What say ye to thon?"

"All right, I'll be here at midnight. Could you get me the cartridges out of my knapsack upstairs?"

The Squire produced the cartridges, and the lawyer went back to his post-office quarters.

Punctually at midnight he returned, and relieved Mr. Carruthers in front of the house, while Timotheus took Mr. Terry's place behind. It was after one when he saw a figure, which he did not recognize as belonging to anyone in the house, steal out of the front door with a heavy burden. He ran towards the figure, and it stole, as rapidly as possible, down the garden to the hill meadow. He knew it now, outlined against the heavens, and fired his revolver. He knew that he had hit his man, and that Rawdon was wounded in the body or in the upper part of a leg. Hurriedly he pursued, entering the strip of woodland towards the brook, when something fell upon him, and two keen qualms of pain shot through his breast. Then he lay insensible. Meanwhile, a lithe active form, leaving a horse tethered at the gate, had sprung to meet a second intruder, issuing from the front door of Bridesdale. The opposing forces met, and Mr. Bangs had his hands upon the younger gaol breaker. A loud shout brought Timotheus on the scene, and the prisoner was secured. The household was aroused. The Squire found his office a scene of confusion, his safe broken open, the hidden treasure and many of his papers gone. Inwardly he muttered maledictions on the sentry of the watch, little knowing that the burglars had entered the house while he was himself on guard. In his vexation, and the general excitement, with the presence of Miss Graves and Messrs. Douglas and Bangs, the unhappy lawyer's absence was overlooked. His shot apparently had not been heard. The vicinity of the house was scoured for Rawdon, but without effect. He had got away with his own money and many incriminating papers, to be a continued source of annoyance and danger. Those who gave any thought to Coristine imagined him asleep at the post office, and wondered at his indifference. Chief among them were the dominie and Miss Carmichael. There was little more rest that night in Bridesdale. One villain at large was sufficient to keep the whole company in a state of uncomfortable disquiet and apprehension. It was still dark, when old Styles came to the gate and asked for Mr. Coristine, as he said the crazy woman was at the post office, and Mrs. Tibbs wanted to know if she could have the use of the spare room for the rest of the night. Then the Squire was alarmed, and a great revulsion of feeling took place. The man almost entirely ignored was now in everybody's mind, his name on all lips but those which had been more to him than all the rest.

Stable lanterns were got out, and an active search began. Mr. Terry's practiced ear caught the sound of voices down the hillside, and he descended rapidly towards them. Soon, he came running back, tearing at his long iron grey hair, and the tears streaming from his eyes, to the place where his son-in-law was standing. "Get a shate or a quilt or something, John, till we take it out av that. Och, sorra, sorra, the foine, brave boy!" At once, Mr. Douglas and Timotheus accompanied the Squire to the little wood, and beheld the owners of the voices, Mr. Newcome and his intending son-in-law, Ben Toner.

"Aw niver tetched un, Ben. Aw wor jest goan troo t' bush, when aw stoombled laike over's carkidge and fall, and got t' blood on ma claws," said the former to his captor.

"S'haylp me," replied Ben, "ef I think it was you as killed the doctor, I'd put the barl o' this here gun to your hayd and blow out your brains."

"Don't let that man go," said the Squire to Toner.

"Ain't that what I come all this way fer?" answered the lover of Serlizer.

The Squire and the veteran, with terrible mental upbraidings, raised the body from its bed of leaves and wood-mould, and placed it reverently upon the sheet, which it stained with blood at once. Then, while the colonel held one lantern and Wilkinson the other, Mr. Douglas and Timotheus took the other corners of the simple ambulance, and bore their burden to the house. In his own room they laid Rawdon's victim, removed the clothing from his wounds, washed away the clotted blood, only to despair over the flow that still continued, and rejoiced in the fact that life was not altogether extinct, when they handed him over to the care of the three matrons. While the colonel was sending Maguffin in search of the doctor, the voice of Squire Halbert was heard in the hall, saying he thought it must have been Miss Carmichael who had summoned him, at any rate it was a young lady from Bridesdale. He stanchd the bleeding, administered stimulants, and ordered constant watching. "The body has suffered terribly," he said, "and has hardly any hold upon the soul, which may slip away from us at any moment." The good doctor professed his willingness to stay until the immediate crisis from loss of blood was overpast. To all enquiries he answered that he had very little hope, but he sent the kind ladies away from the death-like chamber, and established himself there with Wilkinson, who would not leave his friend.

The light of a beautiful Sunday morning found Miss Du Plessis, Miss Halbert, and Miss Graves in bitter sorrow, and little Marjorie beside herself with grief. The very kitchen was full of lamentation; but one young woman went about, silent and serious indeed, yet tearless. This was Miss Carmichael. The doctor had come down to breakfast, leaving the dominie alone with the patient, when she took a tray from Tryphena, and carried up the morning repast of the watcher. Then, for the first time, she got a sight of the wounded man, whose eyes the doctor had closed, and whose jaw by gentle pressure he had brought back, till the lips were only half parted. She could hardly speak, as she laid a timid hand on her late principal's shoulder, directing his attention to the breakfast tray. "Look away, please, for Cecile's sake if not for mine," she managed to stammer, and, as he turned his head aside, she flung herself upon her knees beside the bed, and took the apparently dead man's hand in her own, covered it with tears and kisses, and transferred the ring she had once worn back to her own hand, replacing it with one of her own that would hardly slip down over the bloodless emaciated finger. Quietly she arose, and noiselessly left the room, when the dominie returned to his watching and administration of stimulants. When she came down stairs, outwardly calm but looking as if she had seen a ghost, everybody, who was in the secret of past days, knew, and respected her silence. Even Mr. Douglas, who had thought to improve his distant cousinship, read there the vanity of all his hopes, and bestowed a double share of attention upon Miss Graves, charming in her genuine sorrow over her considerate employer. Nobody cared to go to church, but the good Squire pointed out that few could be of any service at home, and that, if ever they had need of the comforts of religion, it was at such a time. So Mr. Perrowne and Mr. Errol each received a quota of grief-stricken worshippers from Bridesdale, and, at the close of their respective services, mingled heartfelt expressions of sorrow with theirs. The clergymen declined to intrude upon the saddened household, until they could be of some service, so the worshippers returned as they went.

Mr. Bangs and the doctor were the lights of the dinner table, their professional acquaintance with all sorts of trouble hindering them from being overcome by anything of the kind. The former had sent for Mr. Rigby, and had placed the two prisoners in his charge, thus releasing Timotheus and Ben Toner. The latter reported that his patient was restored to animation, but this restoration was accompanied with fear and delirium, the effects of which on a rapidly enfeebled body he greatly dreaded. If he could keep down the cerebral excitement, all might be well, and for this he depended much on the presence with the sufferer of his friend, Mr. Wilkinson. Just as he said this, the dominie's voice was heard calling for assistance, and the doctor and the Squire sprang upstairs. The patient had broken his bandages, and was sitting up fighting with his attendant, whom in his delirium he identified with Rawdon. It was almost ludicrous to hear him cry, as he clutched at Wilkinson's throat: "Ah, Grinstuns, you double-dyed villain, I've got you now. No more free circus for you, Grinstuns!" With difficulty the three men got him down, and bandaged him again; but his struggles were so violent that they feared for his life. He recognized none of them. Little Marjorie heard his loud shouts, and ran to save her friend from his murderers, as she thought them to be. The Squire would have repelled her intrusion angrily, but Doctor Halbert said: "Come, little girl, and tell your poor friend he must be quiet, if he wants to live for you and the rest of us." It is hard to say what prompted her, but she took out a little tear-soaked handkerchief and laid it on Coristine's shoulder, calling, "Eugene, you silly boy." The silly boy closed his staring eyes, and then opened them again upon the child. "Is that you, pet Marjorie?" he asked feebly; and she sobbed out: "Yes, Eugene dear, it's me; I've come to help you to get well."

"Thank you, Marjorie; have I been sick long?"

"No, just a little while; but the doctor says you must be very very still, and do just what you're told. Will you, Eugene?"

"Yes; where's your cousin, Marjorie?"

"Can you turn your head? If you can, put it down, and I'll whisper something in your very own ear. Now listen! don't say a word till I come back. I'm going to bring cousin Marjorie to you." Then she slipped away out of the room.

"Doctor," said the Squire in a shaky voice, "we had aa better gang awa ooto' the room till the meetin's owre." So the three men withdrew to the hall as the two Marjories entered.

"Eugene," whispered little Marjorie, "have you been good while I was away, and not spoken?"

"Not a word, Marjorie," breathed rather than spoke the enfeebled lawyer.

"I have brought cousin Marjorie to you. You must be very good, and do all she says. Give me your hand." She took the limp hand, with the ring on the little finger, and placed it in her cousin's; then, with a touching little sigh, departed, leaving the two alone. Their hands lay clasped in one another, but they could not speak. His eyes were upon her, all the fierce light of delirium out of them, in spite of the fever that was burning in every limb, resting upon her face in a silly wistful way, as if he feared the vision was deceptive, or his prize might vanish at any moment. At last she asked: "Do you know me, Mr. Coristine?" and he murmured: "How could I help knowing you?" But, in a minute, he commanded himself, and said: "It is very kind of you to leave your friends and come to a stupid sick man. It is too much trouble, it is not right, please go away."

"Look me straight in the face, Eugene," said Miss Carmichael, with an effort. "Now, tell me, yes or no, nothing more, mind! Am I to go away?" As she asked the question, her face bent towards that of the sufferer, over which there passed a feeble flush, poor insufficient index of the great joy within, and then, as they met, his half-breathed answer was "No." She commanded silence, shook up his pillows, bathed his forehead, and in many ways displayed the stolen ring. He saw it, and, for the first time, perceived the change on his own hand. Then, she ordered him to go to sleep, as if he were a child, smoothing his hair and chanting in a low tone a baby's lullaby, until tired nature, with a heart at peace, became unconscious of the outer world and slumbered sweetly. On tiptoe, she stole to the door, and found many waiting in the hall for news. Proudly, she called the doctor in and showed him his patient, in his right mind and resting. "Thank God!" said the good man, "he is saved. We must come and relieve you now, Miss Carmichael." But she answered: "No, my place is here. If I want assistance I will call my uncle or Mr. Wilkinson." Doctor Halbert told the joyful news to the Squire and the assembled company. The clergymen would not arrive till tea time, so Mr. Carruthers, as the priest of the family, gathered the household together, and, in simple language but full of heart, thanked God for the young life preserved. The doctor went away home, but without Miss Fanny, and, as he drove off, remarked to the Squire, significantly: "There is no medicine in the world like love," a sentiment with which the Squire thoroughly agreed.

The evening was a very pleasant one. Messrs. Errol and Perrowne rejoiced to hear the good news from the sick room, and Mrs. Carmichael gave the former to understand, in a vague, yet to his intelligence perfectly comprehensible, way, that the assurance of her daughter's future happiness would remove a large obstacle in the way of her becoming the mistress of the manse. Mr. Perrowne appreciated Dr. Halbert's consideration in leaving his daughter at Bridesdale. The Du Plessis quartette were even farther advanced than the Carmichael four; and consequently Miss Graves was left to the entertainment of Mr. Douglas. The patient upstairs awoke, feeling very stiff and sore, but quite rational, and almost too happy to speak, which was a good thing, as his strength was that of a baby. He had to be lifted and turned, and propped up and let down, which the Squire generally did for him, under the head nurse's instructions, received from the doctor. Then he had to be fed, and begged to have his moustache curtailed, so as to facilitate the task. Two little hands, a comb, and a pair of scissors went to work, and, without annihilating the hirsute adornment, so trimmed it as to reveal a well-curved upper lip, hitherto almost invisible. It is astonishing what a sense of proprietorship this "barberous operation," as she termed it, developed in the heiress, who thought more of it than of her prospective thousands. It was past ten o'clock before she consented to yield her post to the devoted Wilkinson, who already began to look upon her as a sister, and to whom she gave directions, with all the gravity and superior dignity of an experienced nurse. The colonel would willingly have taken his turn in the sick room, but Mr. Terry, Mr. Douglas, and the Squire insisted on relieving him. Mr. Bangs was away with Ben Toner and two guns hunting for the Grinstun man. The watchers got along very well through the night, with the exception of the veteran, who was a little too liberal in the application of stimulants, which led to a reappearance of fever, and necessitated his calling in the aid of the ever-willing and kindly Honoria. Both the clergymen had volunteered to sit up with him, whom they were proud to call their friend, but it was not considered fair to impose upon them after the labours of their hardest day.

(To be continued.)