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The Hidden Hour

BY J. B. HARRIS-BURLAND

CHAPTER III.

Ruth Bradley sat alone in the drawing-room of Dr. Trehorn's house. A fire, but recently lit, gave out no heat, but hissed and crackled as the flames danced up the chimney. The room was small and looked as though it was rarely used. It had the stiff, uncomfortable appearance of a room that is not accustomed to human beings.

Ruth, still wearing her fur coat, sat in an armchair and stared at the fire, and wondered if she had not already come to the end of the road that had seemed so long and so uncertain.

She was tired and her limbs ached, not only from the shock of her fall but from physical fatigue. She had helped Trehorn to lift Merrington into the back seat of the car, and Merrington was a big man. They had only just managed it, and then she had been obliged to put her arm round her lover's neck and keep his head from falling against the cushions. That had been a terrible journey—those two miles from the scene of the accident to the doctor's house.

And yet she had been able to think clearly all the time. She had insisted on the luggage being placed behind the car on the "grid." She had been afraid to leave it by the roadside, where any chance stranger might have found it, not because it might be stolen, but because the trunk and the suitcase were the damning evidence of her guilt. Already she had begun to foresee a situation in which she might be forced to return to her husband.

It had been an easy matter to get Merrington into the house, for the two servants had helped to carry him into the consulting room. And there he now lay, and Dr. Trehorn was with him, and Dr. Trehorn had refused to allow her to remain in the room where he examined the unconscious and fainting patient. And it was almost as though she were a prisoner, as though the long arm of her husband had stretched out and gripped her by the throat, and was now holding her against her will. She seemed to feel his presence in the room. He was laughing at her, mocking her futility, looking at her with eyes that said plainly enough, "You cannot escape me now."

And then there was Paula—she did not like to think about Paula, who had never done her any harm. If Paula's husband were very ill—were dying, Paula would have to be sent for.

Ruth's mind tried to grasp the intricacies of the situation, and failed. She only knew that she loved John Merrington and that she hated her husband. Of Paula she knew scarcely anything at all.

"He is mine," she kept saying to herself. But she knew that she was not speaking the truth. He was not hers, in the sense that he was Paula's. And she could not forget that she herself had tried to persuade him to leave her and spend the night at Dedbury, that she had wanted more time to think before she burnt all her boats behind her.

The door opened and Dr. Trehorn entered the room. "It's all right," he said quickly, as Ruth rose to her feet. "Don't worry. He's come to his senses—nothing really serious—certainly no danger—just a loss of memory—that's all."

"Loss of memory?" queried Ruth. "Yes, doesn't know how he got here, and I told him not to worry and not



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HEALTH SOAP

ISSUE No. 36—23.

to talk. Said something about Paula. You are Paula, I suppose?"

Ruth did not answer the question. "You told him what had happened?" she queried.

"No—I told him to hold his tongue," replied Trehorn.

"Can I see him—now?"

"Yes—there's no harm in that, but he must be kept very quiet. You can just go in and look at him, and say a few words—nothing about the accident, mind you. But you'd better see him, as he asked for you."

Ruth hesitated. And then, as she found Trehorn's inquiring eyes upon her, she said, "Yes, I'd better see him, and I won't talk about the accident."

"Just let him know you're here—that's all."

"Did you tell him—I was here?" said Ruth, speaking very slowly and with an effort.

"No, no. We didn't talk," Trehorn replied, and then, after a pause, "What is wrong, Mrs. Merrington?"

"Ah, he told you his name?"

"No—I saw it on the label of the suitcase. You'd better come at once. I want to give him something to send him to sleep again."

They left the room, crossed the hall, and Trehorn opened the door of the consulting room and stood aside to let Ruth enter. As she crossed the threshold she saw John Merrington lying on a couch, his head bandaged with white linen. Beneath the bandages she saw his eyes fixed on her. There was no gleam of recognition in them. He seemed to be wondering who she was, and what on earth she was doing there.

Ruth moved a little further into the room. But still John Merrington stared at her. His lips did not move. He did not even smile. And then—he wiped his eyes, just as if he did not realize he was bothered with visitors. Her heel, and she walked toward the door behind him.

"He does not know me," said Ruth in a low voice. "Does he remember anything? What does he remember? Does he know his own name?"

She took refuge in the drawing-room. She was face to face with a problem that she could not solve. She wanted to escape the eyes of Trehorn, who was watching her.

"You had better go to him," she cried piteously. "He may have fainted. Don't say anything about me—yet. He did not recognize me. You saw that, didn't you?"

Trehorn smiled kindly. "Please don't distress yourself," he said in his quiet, gentle voice. "There's nothing to be worried about—just a temporary loss of memory. I dare say you have not been married very long. And Paula?"

"I'm not Paula," Ruth replied. "He is thinking of another woman. Please go to him, and if he asks who I am—" She paused, and her cheeks grew hot with shame. There was an awkward silence, and then Trehorn said quietly.

"I shall not answer any questions. I don't suppose he will ask any. For all he knows you might be my wife or my sister."

He left the room, and Ruth knelt down by the fire, and held out her hands to the warmth. She was shivering with cold. Her body seemed to be numb with cold. It was not until a few minutes had passed that she was able to think clearly again. And then she saw that she had come to the end of the road. Her lover did not remember her, but he remembered Paula. She did not know the extent of the gap in his memory, but at any rate it included the first time he had ever set eyes on her. For him, at present, she did not exist at all.

But Paula was a reality to him, and no doubt it was the Paula whom he had loved when he had married her—not the Paula he had ceased to love. The doctor had said that he would regain his memory. But when? But where? Dare she wait, even for a single night? A week, several weeks, several months might elapse before John Merrington knew her again. An unbearable situation had been created—a situation that she could never have imagined.

She looked at the clock on the mantelpiece and saw that it was five minutes past nine. She would have to decide quickly if she was still to save something out of the ruins of her life. Paula would have to be sent for in any case. There was no doubt about that. And she, Ruth Bradley, would have to return to London. Surely it would be better to return now—go back to her husband, just as if nothing had happened. That might be possible, but only with the help of Trehorn. She would have to take the doctor into her confidence, throw herself on his mercy, and implore him to lie on her behalf.

"Later on," said Ruth to herself, "when Jack has recovered his memory—I must wait—for the present all this—has come to a dead end." Her

mind flashed quickly back over all that had happened since she had left the house to go to the theatre. So much trouble had been taken to conceal her plans—to cover up her tracks—that it was almost as though she had anticipated some disaster from which it might be possible to retreat with safety. And Merrington himself, either by design or accident, had actually taken the car along the road to Dedbury, where he was supposed to be staying the night.

The door opened, and Trehorn entered the room. "He asked no questions," he said. "He was asleep. I shall have a bed made up for him in the consulting room, and I dare say to-morrow we can move him upstairs. Then he looked inquiringly at Ruth.

"I—I want to tell you everything," she said after a pause. "But I want to ask you a question first. Can I get back to London to-night by half-past eleven?"

Dr. Trehorn glanced at the clock. "Yes," he replied. "There is a train at ten o'clock. It's very slow, and it will get you into Charing Cross at a few minutes past eleven. I can drive you to the station if you like. You need not tell me anything—except his address."

He spoke slowly and awkwardly, and he did not look at Ruth as he spoke. His face was very red and he was obviously ill at ease.

"I must tell you something," she faltered. "I—I want you to help me. You have been so kind—I feel as if I can trust you. This—this incident is over. It is necessary—for the happiness of—of four people—that—that two of them should know nothing about it. Would it be possible to—keep me out of the matter altogether?"

Trehorn hesitated. Then he said, "Yes—so far as I am concerned."

"I—I am very grateful—I shall be grateful to you all my life."

"But there will be the servants," he continued. "I shall have to make it plain to them that you—well, that you—just helped me to get him into my car—and that you did not know him—I might even do more. They were my father's servants and would do anything for me. But—this Paula?"

Ruth covered her face with her hands. For a few moments her courage failed her. Then she said:

"Paula is his wife. He—he was going to spend the night with a friend at Dedbury—a Mr. Ardington."

"Oh, I know old Ardington," laughed Trehorn. "Yes, yes, old Ardington. Perhaps I'd better send round there and tell Ardington."

"No," said Ruth sharply. "Oh, please—you must realize—how could he have told you he was going to stay with Mr. Ardington when he has lost his memory?"

"By Jove, I hadn't thought of that," and after a pause, "but I should have thought of it. You must trust me to think of everything. You do trust me, don't you?"

"Yes," she replied dutifully. But she saw that there was even danger in the kindly friendship of this young doctor.

"I want to do all I can for you," Trehorn continued, "for all of you. I want to put this—this mistake right. Please don't tell me anything more."

"I—I don't know what to do when he wakes to-morrow morning. I only know that I found him on the road. I will keep you out of it altogether. You understand that. And I dare say, one of these days, you'll be glad that a tire burst. It's possible you will be glad."

Ruth burst into tears. She herself was uncertain whether the bursting of that tire had ruined her life or saved it from disaster.

(To be continued.)

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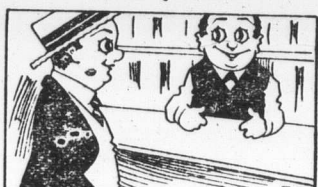
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(To be continued.)

The flavor of tea deteriorates rapidly if the tea is exposed to the air. You should never, therefore, accept bulk tea when you can buy "SALADA," which is sealed in airtight aluminum to preserve its delicious freshness.



Evidence Too Strong.

"So they convicted your friend of selling bad butter? Was there no way for him to get out of it?"

"No; the evidences was too strong."

Minard's Liniment for Dandruff.



A VIEW FROM AUSTRALIA

Humanity—"See, she is sinking! Are you not going to help?"

Uncle Sam—"Don't fuss, sis—the body will drift to the shore."

—From the Sydney Bulletin.

About the House

SEVENTY.

The laughing welcome on Julia's lips died unspoken at sight of Maisie's face. For after a bewildered glance at her Maisie stared past her down the street, and her eyes were sharp with anxiety.

"What is it, Maisie? Has Benjie run away? Can't I hunt for him?"

"Oh, Benjie's all right," Maisie replied. "I didn't mean to be rude, Julie. Do come in. You see, I've been expecting Aunt Rebecca for the last two hours. She's been gone since ten o'clock, and I'm so worried!"

"Good for Aunt Rebecca!" Julia retorted. "I hope she's having a great old time. She must need it if you watch over her like that."

"But, Julia, she's seventy!" Maisie's voice was full of consternation.

"What's seventy if you don't feel it? Aunt Rebe has all her faculties and more interest in life than half the people you know. Do let her alone, Maisie!"

"But she may get run over! You don't seem to realize—"

"As far as automobiles are concerned, seventy isn't half so dangerous an age as seven. I've known at least two old ladies who counted hospital experiences the great adventures of their lives! Don't rob your aunt of any fun that's coming to her!"

"Julia Durant, you're positively flippant!"

"Not inside, Maisie; truly, I'm not. I'm just thinking how I'd loathe being watched and worried over!"

"There she comes at last!" cried Maisie, running to the door.

Aunt Rebecca came in; her hair was disordered and her hat awry, but her eyes were bright, and there was a happy color in her face. And then at Maisie's greeting all the happiness fell from her like a garment.

"Aunt Rebe, where have you been? I've been nearly wild!"

"It was such a nice day," Aunt Rebecca pleaded, "I thought I'd just run out to 'Liza Saunders. I was so glad I did, for she's had such a hard winter—"

But Maisie was not at all interested in 'Liza Saunders. "You go right upstairs and lie down till dinner," she ordered. "Be sure to cover yourself up."

"But I ain't tired a mite," her aunt protested. "I feel freshened up. All the light had faded from her eyes."

"Maisie," Julia said abruptly, "I'm going to take Aunt Rebe home for the night. We'll be back sometime! You needn't worry; if we die, we'll die together!"

"But you haven't room," Maisie protested.

"I'll make room!"

Ten minutes later Julia and Aunt Rebecca were headed for the subway.

"Aunt Rebe," the girl said to her solemnly, "can you sleep on a couch? And go to a show to-morrow? And—"

The sudden flooding joy in the old lady's face brought tears to Julia's eyes. "I'll never tell her she's old," she vowed to herself. "Never, never! Not if she lives to be a hundred!"

PLANNING THE LAYETTE.

My three young sons have necessitated my obtaining considerable miscellaneous information concerning a layette.

I have always preferred a simple, practical outfit, as it is less wearing on the mother to prepare it, and is so quickly outgrown.

The money saved this way can be much more advantageously used for a skillful doctor and nurse, a two weeks' complete rest for the mother, and the advice of a food specialist for the baby's feeding if the mother is unable to successfully feed her baby. The baby's life and future health are too important to neglect giving him the best possible start.

Three of each of the following articles are necessary, four would be

safer in case daily washing were delayed.

Flannel bands; skirts; pinning blankets; flannel skirts, "Gertrude" style; wrappers or nightgowns buttoning in back; stockings; booties; warm jackets or sweaters; three dozen diapers, twenty-seven inches square, will be required; so will nainsook skirts and dresses; a cap, cloak; blankets; pads, and a small hot-water bottle.

Some points in baby's care I have been most watchful of:

No pacifiers or soothing syrups. Find the cause of its discomfort; warm water enemas offer wonderful relief for gas pain.

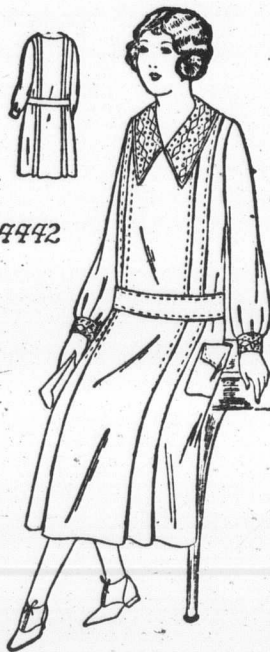
See that baby has at least one good bowel movement each day. The same rule for nursing mothers.

Regular feeding hours for baby. No excitement and unnecessary handling.

In changing and dressing baby I put him on a softly padded card table, slipping his skirts and dress up over his feet.

As scrupulous cleanliness as possible in the personal care of the baby; handling utensils for his feeding, and particularly the hands of whoever cares for him.—Mrs. G. C.

A PRACTICAL ONE-PIECE MODEL FOR THE GROWING GIRL.



4442. Linen or ratine, with embroidery or contrasting material for collar and cuffs, would be good for this style. The closing is at the left side under the plait.

This Pattern is cut in 3 Sizes: 12, 14 and 16 years. A 14-year size requires 4 1/2 yards of 40-inch material. Collar and cuffs of contrasting material require 3/4 yard 40 inches wide.

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 pattern.

HINGED VERANDAH FURNITURE.

Verandah days are invariably the busiest days on the farm. And looking after verandah furniture is just one more task. That is why hinged furnishings, especially for the side or back verandah, prove so convenient. They also save space.

A table hinged to the wall makes a handy place to do sitting-down kitchen tasks or to hold the sewing materials in the afternoon. It is well to have it large enough to hold Sunday-night lunches.

Seats at either end of the verandah that let down are generally handier than stationary benches, as they are out of the way when not needed and shed rain and snow better than benches. Another advantage of hinged furnishings is that they are always ready for use—no storing away in the fall until spring comes.

CAN GREENS FOR WINTER USE.

To can kale or greens for winter use, one should be rather careful with every detail as a very poisonous bacteria forms sometimes. To prepare the greens for canning, wash them carefully in cold water and blanch 4 to 5 minutes in boiling water. This allows them to shrink so that they may be packed very easily in the jars. The jars should be well filled, but not too firmly packed as they may not be thoroughly sterilized in the centre of the can if the mass is too firm. To each quart jar add one teaspoon salt and what other seasoning desired, chipped beef or other meat; then adjust rubbers in position and take one turn back. Process them three hours in hot water bath, or 60 minutes under 10 lbs. of steam pressure.

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A universal custom that benefits everybody.
Aids digestion, cleanses the teeth, soothes the throat.

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THE FLAVOR LASTS

Scaling Ships by Machinery.

Scaling ships' bottoms by machinery is the latest labor saving practice devised to aid "those who go down to the sea in ships." Ever since the advent of iron and steel hulls, one of the meanest jobs faced by Jack is cleaning the vessel's underwater section when the ship is placed in dry dock. Hammers with chisel like heads, wire brushes and even cold chisels have been laboriously welded to clean off marine growths, rust and the old paint.

Now comes the ship scaling machine run by compressed air and looking very much like the pneumatic riveters so painfully familiar to city folk who live near modern building operations. By its use, one man with a scaling machine can do as much in a day as could six men with the old time methods and do a better and cleaner job at that. Gauze goggles are needed, however, in operating the ship scaler, because it works so fast, that bits of metal, rust and paint fly about in a veritable shower. Another modification of the machine is run by electricity.

Minard's Liniment Heals Cuts.

Pert Clerk.

Customer—"I'd like to try on that pair of shoes in the shoe case."
Clerk—"Better try 'em on out here, lady; 'tain't big enough."

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