THROUGH FIRE AND WATER

A Tale of City Life.

By FREDERICK TALBOT.

CHAPTER VIII.

"For look you, Sir, you know not which way you shall go."

"I'm glad I've seen you before I went in," said John, beginning hurriedly to speak before Edward could get a word in edgewise, and while he was yet hesitating to encounter the cruel task before him. "I'm glad I've seen you; because it's probable I may save a very painful scene—a scene that would be very painful to me, I assure you; yes, indeed, very painful. I assure you I will feel it very much." Here John's face assumed an expression of extreme sensibility and self-conscious pathos.

"What do you mean?" cried Edward, hoarsely.

"Well, my dear Sir, I've been thinking very painfully over the matter—very painfully too, I might say," said John, throwing a rapid glance at Edward to see how he took it; "and I have, very reluctantly indeed—in fact, with great violence to my own feelings (feelings as you know, a man of very tender feelings)—but I have come to the conclusion, therefore, as you may know—"

"Well," said Edward, looking in a dazed way at his face. "Well?"

"That it won't do. My engagement with your sister must be broken off. I don't know how I shall bear it, indeed, for I was very deeply attached to her—very. A most excellent young woman, and calculated to make any one happy and comfortable in the highest degree. I can't tell you how I feel the disappointment; but there are considerations which have weighed more with affection; there's the duty I owe my parents and—and my profession. All my prospects in life depend upon them, all my chances of the living of Pumptirisini, besides the legacy I'm sure to have. Now, Edward, as a disinfol son, I ask you, how can I go against that?"

"You told us your father approved," said Edward, in a faint voice. He realised the situation now. He saw the ruin of the man at whose feet they must crawl, whose money and forbearance they were bound to implore!

"So he had, in a way. I hadn't given him all the particulars, and perhaps I wasn't explicit enough as to your position, and so on. But when my father had had my letter—Sir Pantlin Jones, you know, merchant and member of Parliament—when they came to see the house you lived in, and all that; and really it hadn't seemed to me you cared much to look at it; I see that it would be a descent now, wouldn't it, from Sir Pantlin Jones of Pumptirisini to Sides of Ebbefleet Wharf? Well, I told them your father was a wharfinger, but I didn't think that was the reason of my godfather. I begged of them to see Lucy, who is such a sensible girl that they couldn't help being pleased with her. But it was no use. He's so impatient, is Sir Pantlin. Well, I'm sorry, I'm really glad it's have as a lodger the son of the architect. She was just a cheerful young lassie; she attended a Welsh chapel, whence was served a distillation of all the strong faiths in which her ancestors delighted. All my prospects in life depend upon them, all my chances of the living of Pumptirisini besides the legacy I'm sure to have. Now, Edward, as a disinfol son, I ask you, how can I go against that?"

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"Oh, he said that, did he?" cried Edward, white with suppressed passion, his sense of helplessness and humiliation making his rage glow all the more fiercely. "And what did you say?"

"What could I say, my dear fellow? I did try to explain that they were pipes and tins, and not bricks and mortar; but he would in, and that very respectable people sold such things in London; but it was not a normal object."

"Then you mean to say—"

"I want you to take this letter to your sister. Break it to her as gently as you can, my dear fellow, for I dare say she'll feel it much as I do. I dare say she'll feel it much as I do. I'm sure I can't stand that this is final, and ask her to pity you.

"Pity you, you infernal scoundrel!"

"What!" shouted John.

"The word, coward, I repeated!"

The word roused all the fiery blood of the Welshman. With the back of his hand he smote Edward on the mouth, and his a moment his lips were streaked with blood. With the rapidity of lightning Edward returned the buffet with a left-handed blow, delivered so straight and true that, as Jones threw back his head to avoid it, it fell upon him just under the right eye, so that he dropped heavily to the ground.

The scuffle had fallen over in the scuffle, all was silent after the first crash of the fall of the man, and all was dark.

"John?" cried Edward, in alarm. "John, have I hurt you? where are you? what are you doing? Speak to me, for Heaven's sake, speak!"

There wasn't a word in reply. Not a sound to be heard, except the howling and scratching of the big dog up stairs.

"John! John! John!" Edward, stooping over him, and taking hold of his arm, "what have I done to you?"

The arm dropped down limp and flaccid. There was no flutter of breath or whisper of life in the heart beneath. With trembling hands Edward felt for the match-box, and proceeded to strike a light. The match flared, and he saw it. His hands were wet with some viscid field; he couldn't wipe it off. He could not see the blood, the flame of the candle disclosed the body of Jones lying prone and motionless, the blood welled in a small pool beneath the head had struck against the triangular edge of the iron rim. It was impossible to tell how Mr. Morris. He should have gone out of a strong man's body on such small provocation. I wonder if he was in; he should be sorry to answer present. But it was awful, too, to see the stillness of the body, there was a tremulous flutter of the nether lip for a moment—we is the sign of returning life? No; nothing the last sensation of expiring pain. For after that the features took a terribly set and ghastly look. It was plain that only the master Death can limn.

Edward held his face between his hands. What was the guilt that had passed between him and the man who had put him off in a manner from all hope and manner of life? Had the curse, then, indeed descended upon him, this fatal, irrevocable curse? No, it was an evil dream, a vision of the night, despite his horror upon his hands—blood!

"Edward," cried a sweet, soft voice, the voice of his betrothed to him from afar, "are you there? Where is John?"

"I don't know, Ned."

Between all his past life, bright and honourable, and the dark, dismal chasm yawning into, nor ever had the invisible barrier, these words, the words of the unhappy prototype of all blood-stained men—"I know not.

CHAPTER IX.

"Pass my soul! how full of choler I am, and thirsting of blood."

The Reverend John Jones had occupied lodgings, during the time he had been in charge of the parish of St. Saviour's, in Finsbury Grove, a locality, he it said, much more airy and cheerful than Pimlico. It was hardly he matched that the tenant of the house was a Welshwoman. Her husband was a little shadowy man, who was spoken to some slate company in North Wales. She herself was a buxom woman, clever, tidy, and very clean. Her lodgers really did to have as a lodger the son of the architect. She was not a chorevumen herself; she attended a Welsh chapel, whence was served a distillation of all the strong faiths in which her ancestors delighted. All my prospects in the respected much the dignitaries of the Establishment. Little Evan Morris, her husband, was a shocking radical—would have people vote against their landlords, and generally fly in the face of all the established order; but Gwen was a careful, prudent woman, who looked forward to returning to Pumptirisini some day, and despised such vagaries.

The archdeacon was a tall, bony man, who always wore a black frock coat, which looked, seemed glossy enough in Wales, but, somehow or other, looked rather dusty in London—he seemed like a black sheep, which was a perpetual black band, also harbouring the dust. He had a brown, weather-beaten face, dark vague eyes; a pleasant smile was generally hovering about his mouth. Sir Pantlin Jones was a second but fresh looking apple face, were always a gray suit and a blue bird's-eye neckcloth, tilted a little in his gait, and swore sonorously.

"Dis-ear, it's the archdeacon and Sir Pantlin!" cried Mrs. Morris, as she opened the door. "Well, indeed, and who would have thought of seeing you? Come in, do!"

"We've come to breakfast with my son," cried the archdeacon, after he had shaken hands with Mrs. Morris. "We're not pitying you out in any way, I hope!"

"Same o' goodness, no; but—" Here Mrs. Morris coloured, looked, and she fell into a state of great perplexity. "Come in, do, and sit down!" she cried at last, her face clearing for a moment as she led the way into the sitting-room. She carefully dusted the seats of two chairs with her apron, and left her guests to their own devices, while she proceeded to take counsel of her thoughts.

John Jones, her lodger, had not come home the night before. She didn't think much of that; he might have stopped out with some friends. Mrs. Morris knew the ways of young men too well to feel decided alarm. But his father—could he not be sorry? And Mrs. Morris, who was a good, kind, her careful ways, were always on the side opposed to law and authority. No, the thought of her lodger and her son by special messenger to Ebbefleet Wharf, saying that the Reverend John Jones's father had come to breakfast, as asking if he had been staying there for the night, or if Mr. Hales knew where he was. It would take twelve days! What will be the end of it! Where would they all be at the end of twelve days?

CHAPTER XI.

"Hey, you ancient stone, thou tender babe."

At eleven o'clock on that morning, Edward Hales issued from the postern-gate of Ebbefleet Wharf. He looked pale and haggard, and cast an uneasy glance up and down the street as he went out. He turned eastward, and passed up a succession of narrow streets, in which the combined flavour of oranges, red-herring, fresh and hippered fish, mingled with tarry ropy odours from the docks, and the ever-present Cockney smell, through swarms of costermongers, crowds of porters and loafers, lounging in and out among drays and lorries, whose heavy hoves made the pavements ring with the resonance of their iron hoofs. The noise, the smell, the noise and confusion, he came to a quiet thoroughfare, great, with lofty houses, with a hollow cement, numerous carts and vans, waiting for their morning loads.

Edward Hales paused for a moment opposite a tall house, with three battlements and battlements, and looked up at the name and the Tower, about whose battlements and battlements the light danced in the morning sunlight. The flag of England dropped half-way down on the staff, betokening the death of one of her sons, and the Tower, with soldiers, while visible here and there, between the crenellations of the walls, the sentinels, lounging, the black muzzle of the glinting bayonet of the sentry, caught the sunlight, and flashed it back, as if it struggled forth from its encompassing vapours.

Around the dry and arid fane of the Tower is a little belt of shrubbery and grass. To this the citizens of London, and those to which the inhabitants of the neighbouring square are allowed to use. Edward passed through the gate, and, leaving the shrubbery, where leaves, even now, were drooping, and the grass was scorched and withered, he emerged on a sandy ground. Nevertheless, this had been before now the trysting-place of Edward's ancestors. He, too, had been summoned to meet her at nine o'clock this Monday morning.

"I thought you were in Margate, Patty, till I got your note just now."

Edward spoke in a dull, mechanical tone; his soul was away. He might move hither and thither, his mind would still be in the narrow precincts of Ebbefleet Wharf. Patty, in a moment, noticed his gloom.

"Yes, I was, Edward," she said. "What is the matter? you look so pale."

"Oh, I'm pretty well," he replied, with a forced laugh. "Why, what is, I'm a little sedgy, that's all."

"The reason is asked you to meet me," said Patty, with dignity—her pride had taken alarm at Edward's cold manner, "I reason I asked you to meet me here was to put you on your guard."

"Against what?" cried Edward, with a start.

"Against Billill. He is your enemy, and I am afraid he means mischief over you."

Edward ground his teeth.

"I wish he would let me know any thing about Billill!" he cried angrily.

Patty smiled; she didn't mind his anger, or, at least, she thought she didn't. I had to walk with him yesterday morning. Indeed, he wouldn't let me go alone. Well, one of—He, Billill, offered you marriage!" cried Edward.

Patty nodded, and went on:

"I refused him, and then he asked about you; said then, of course, I should be sorry to hear that you were a fool, and couldn't take care of yourself, much less of any body else. He said he was your master, Ned; and—you master's be angry—that you would be in prison before long. And then he said, if I did not call him a liar; and he laughed, and took out his pocket-book, and showed me a paper, a bill, he said, he was to it; and I couldn't believe my eyes, and then he shut up his book with a snap, 'Like that,' he said, 'I'll do for your Master Edward!' Oh, Edward, the very clerk of that bill—I saw his name—Samuel Sides—for a moment, but came back to London by the next train, and I went almost to your house, and I saw you let down by a hackney, and ask for you—I didn't like to, Ned; oh, I felt so wretched, and I was afraid to see you, and I passed somebody coming along, and I was quite dark, so I stepped into the next entry, thinking it was you, but I was so without any fear; and it wasn't you after all, but the curate of St. Saviour's; and she was crying, and I had to stay for her to come after him quickly, running, trying to overtake him, and I couldn't leave her alone."

Edward gave a groan. Oh, if she had only stopped him!

"I wanted to stop you, and finding you had a visitor, a friend, I didn't like to ask for you, Ned, for I was afraid some time hoping he or you might come out; but he never came out, Ned.

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"And then somebody spoke to me, some gentleman, and I thought I could write, and sent you a note instead that morning. And now you know all, and be careful, Ned. Mind you keep out of the way, for I think it would break my heart to see you in prison."

"Patty," said Edward, in an thought striking him, "are you as true as steel, as brave as a lion? Are you to be trusted with a life?"

"Try me!" cried Patty, with a curl of the lip and a flash of the eye.

They whispered together long; and when they had finished, Patty's face was as pale as Edward's. Then they parted, for a time, at a moment, and went their ways.

Edward took a cab to Fenchurch and Broth that morning, saying that he wasn't well, and would take his holiday a week sooner than he had intended, and having obtained his master's leave, he went into the yard, in a pipe, and Joseph, evening his sister was out; and gave out without leaving any message. The disquieted him. Where was she he? Had she gone to Bill's Inquiest? for him. Why? Could he be? A detective, perhaps? Patty was a resolute girl, he might be, there would surely be a little respite, an hour or two of liberty, a little place of refuge, where he could escape the chillness and black-ness of night succeeds.

There was a ring at the bell—a short, quick ring. Edward went to the gate. A respectable-looking man stood there.

"Mr. Edward Hales is?" he said.

"I am Edward Hales."

"Oh, the Lord! have a word with you!"

"Certainly. Come in."

He ushered the man into the yard.

"I have a paper here for you," the man whispered, in a wink. "Bill of Billill. Not know, I dare say."

"Yes, it's all right," said Edward; "there's nothing to be to say, is there?"

"Oh no! all right. Good-day."

"Good-day."

"Victoria, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Queen, Defender of the Faith, to Edward Hales of Ebbefleet Wharf, in the County of the City of London, We warn you that, unless within twelve days after the service of this writ on you (inclusive of the day of such service), you obtain leave from one of the Judges of the Courts at Westminster to appear, and do within that time appear in our Court of Common Pleas, in an action at suit of William Billill, the said William Billill may proceed therein to judgment and execution. Witness Sir William Bulloys, Knight, at Westminster, the sixth day of October, in the Year of Our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Sixty-four."

He was sharp upon him, then, this Billill. Moreover, he was a man of his word. Twelve days! Nevertheless, he was now by special messenger to Ebbefleet Wharf, saying that the Reverend John Jones's father had come to breakfast, as asking if he had been staying there for the night, or if Mr. Hales knew where he was. It would take ten minutes to run to Lower Bridge street and back. In the meantime her lodger's friends must wait patiently.

This they did at first, looking at the engraving on the wall of Hilborough, of Aberdovey Pier; a distempered view of the flag of Maples, with the schooner Mary Ann, port of Aberystwith, Thomas Jones, master, 110 tons register, floating, thence in great pride; a small portrait of Parch. Evan Evans a shining light of the Calvinist faith; and a large one of Sir Watkyns, his lady, his horse and a few favourite hounds, grouped in a conspicuous point of honour over the fireplace. Sir Pantlin was become impatient and rang the bell. Nobody answered it, and then he began to swear. The archdeacon pulled him up sharply.

"Do you remember in whose presence you are? Come, come, Sir Pantlin," he said, "it may be all very well at Pumptirisini, but it won't do in London."

"Dat's nothing to dis," said Sir Pantlin, "of a story my grandfather used to tell. Glad then me, yetlaw, dere shall be?"

For here the door opened, and a young girl ran in, fair to see, but very white and agonizing. She came up to his father (to John's father), and took him by the hand.

"You are John's father, I know. Oh, tell me where he is! Where did you leave him?"

"Why, he's here, of course; these are his rooms. Bless me, what—"

"Indeed he's not here, archdeacon; he didn't come home last night, and I sent to Mr. Hales's to see if they knew where he was. This is Miss Hales, carinl sewyl!" cried Mrs. Morris, appearing hot and flustered, her bonnet askew, and leaving the door behind her.

"How very unaccountable!" cried the archdeacon. "He left us in Piccadilly at eight o'clock last night, saying that he was going home, and asked us to breakfast with him at nine. What can be the matter? Not any, young lady, that you have seen or heard nothing of him?"

"Only the hell!" cried Lucy; "only the hell! I heard his ring at the door, but there was nobody there when I came out, and I meant I feared that something had happened."

Lucy began to sob.

"I can't understand it," said the archdeacon, turning quite pale and flaccid. "What shall we do?"

"Stay, here is an open letter," cried Sir Pantlin, "lying on the table. Read it, Jones; it may throw light upon the affair."

The archdeacon took it up and read it. It was the letter advising the loss of the dishonour of the bill to which his name had been forged.

The father groaned heavily; for the moment he thought that all was explained—that his son, in consequence of embarrassments of which his father was ignorant, had either absconded or committed suicide; but, hastening again at the letter, he saw that there was written across it in his son's unlily scrawl, "This is either a stupid hoax or a base forgery."

"I think," said the archdeacon, looking round wildly—"I think we'd better send for the police. Don't go, young lady; we shall require your assistance."

"Yes," cried Sir Pantlin. "Run, Mrs. Morris, give my compliments—Sir Pantlin's compliments—Sir Pantlin of Pumptirisini, his compliments—to the nearest magistrate, and request that he will do me the favour to place the services of his most experienced detectives and active officers at my—at Sir Pantlin's—disposal. Do you hear, Mrs. Morris?"

"Oh yes!" cried Lucy; "he has come to some harm. Oh, do run for the police! I will go too; I will go and look for him."

They couldn't stop her. She ran out quickly.

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PACIFIC RAILWAY POLICY.

DR. TUPPER'S SPEECH.

The following is a full report of Dr. Tupper's speech, delivered last week, on the motion for the second reading of the Pacific Railway Bill:—He said he was sure the House would regret very much that a measure of such vital importance at this late period should be before Parliament for consideration had not been placed before the House at an earlier period of the Session, so that it might have received the attention commensurate with its great importance. He was no doubt that this bill brought them face to face with the most important question that had come before the Parliament, a question in comparison with which all others were dwarfed into insignificance. He might fairly assume that they might differ as to the mode in which the Pacific Railway could be most accomplished, there could be no doubt entertained by any person that the project proposed in this measure was one, on the wise solution of which depended the life or death of Canada. (Hear, hear.) Questions of a great and important constitutional character, questions of great importance as between the Dominion and the Mother Country from time to time occupied the attention of Canadian statesmen, and it was matter that there was no difference of opinion, in the House or in the country, as to the importance of the Pacific Railway could be so accomplished, there could be no doubt entertained by any person that the project presented