

"A few days after this I came suddenly upon Father Mactane quietly leaving a room on the first floor, with his eternal breviary. He started when he saw me. The start would have been imperceptible for most men, even of the profession, but for me it was as patent and as suggestive as a three-foot jump into the air.

"Ah! Mr. Max," he said. "It's you, is it?"

"He pointed over his shoulder to the door behind him.

"As the song has it, 'All the ould sinners are wishful to pray wid me,'" he whispered.

"You're a good man, Father Mactane," I said, with a laugh, "and the sinners are lucky."

"They are that," he answered. "And I've got one or two more to see before dinner, so I'll be going on."

"Don't let me hinder you from your good works," I said.

"I took the nearest way to the office, where I found the manager.

"If you've got a minute to spare, Mr. Irvin," I said, "will you go to No. 97 on the first floor and ask—who is No. 97 on the first floor, by the bye?"

"The Duchess of Gratz," he answered. "A Hungarian Princess."

"I know," I said, "an old sinner."

"On the contrary—he took me up with some warmth—'young, pretty and pious.'"

"Then one part of my information at least is incorrect," I answered, "and perhaps the other is too. Well, I will stay in the office, and perhaps you will go up to No. 97 and ask Her Grace if she—if she—yes, if she has said her prayers to-day. Or, if you like, ask her whether she dines here to-night. Ask her something."

"The manager looked at me as if I were mad.

"She always dines here," he murmured.

"It's all right," I said. "But you must not waste time. We have not got too much of it. Dinner is in half-an-hour."

"Mr. Irvin shrugged his shoulders, and went off. I posted myself in the passage in such a way that no one could come in or go out without passing within an arm's reach of me. In a minute the manager came down.

"There's no one there, he grumbled, with a puzzled look. 'I went into all the rooms.'"

"I wanted to make quite sure," I said. "Well, now, there are three things to do. First, send my card to Scotland Yard. Second, wait here for an instant while I go into the dining-room. Tell me who passes in the meanwhile. If Father Mactane comes down, keep him in conversation a minute or two."

"I went into the dining-room, which was quite empty, and with my pocket-saw cut three-quarters of the way through a back leg of Father Mactane's chair. Then I rejoined Mr. Irvin in the hall.

"No one has passed," he reported.

"Very good. Now I will relieve you here. The third thing you have to do is to follow the Duchess of Gratz up to her rooms when she comes in and request her to examine her jewel-case immediately. You needn't tell her about the 'old sinner.'"

"Here she is," said Mr. Irvin, as a very pretty and distinguished-looking young lady came across the hall. He went with her, and came down in a few minutes.

"Diamond earrings," he whispered to me, with a sob. "I'm ruined!"

"Not a bit of it," I answered. "Don't fuss. When two friends of mine come to see me station them handy for your office, and leave me the office clear at, let us say, ten minutes past eight. I want striking room."

"The gong sounded, and Father Mactane came down, genial, smiling, bowing all round. I was waiting at his chair. I pushed it in behind him, and, in doing so, kicked away the weakened leg. Father Mactane went sprawling to the ground, the breviary escaped from his hands and a most unclerical expression from his lips.

"Sh!" I whispered. "What an example for the ould sinners!"

"Faith! you're right," he answered.

"He grabbed his breviary, before I could give it to him, but I had learned what I wished to. I had listened to the fall of the book and knew that there was a hollow in it somewhere.

"Dinner went off quietly enough, and at the end I whispered to Father Mactane: 'Could you give me five minutes in the office?'"

"He looked at me sharply, then nodded, and followed me into Mr. Irvin's room. I shut the door behind us.

"What is it now?" he asked.

"I am curious," I answered. "I should so much like to see that breviary of yours."

"Ye vagabond!" he cried. "I thought that was what you were up to. And how's this, Mr. Max?" he asked, whipping out a revolver—the one I keep as a memento of him.

"In a minute the weapon was flying harmlessly out of his hand, and he was rubbing his wrist. 'That's how it is, Father Mactane,' I said.

"Ye've broken me ar-r-m, ye dirty blackgaird!" he cried.

"I've two men handy," I remarked.

"Ah! then I give in," he replied.

"That was how I got one of the cleverest dodgers in London, Captain Grensley. Half of the breviary was hollow, and there we found the earrings. Of course, Mr. William was an accomplice; that little comedy was arranged to put me off the track. But it had just the opposite effect, you see."

"How did you send that revolver flying so neatly?" I asked.

"With my foot," said Mr. Max. "You see, Captain Grensley, I know all about the French method of boxing, and was smart with my feet once. I am not so bad even now. Look here—and here—and so—and——"

The door opened, and Doidge appeared with the tea-tray.

"Oh, monkey-tricks, eh?" he said, sniffishly. "Well, you'll take a hinterval for refreshment, at any rate, I s'pose?"

A Prisoner of Hope*

A NEW SERIAL STORY.

By MRS. WEIGALL

Resume: Esther Beresford is a beautiful and charming girl, who has lived in England with her French grandmother, Madame de la Perouse, and has taught music in a girls' school. Her step-mother's sister, Mrs. Galton, appears on the scene and it is arranged that Esther is to go out to Malta to join her father and step-mother. But before her departure, Geoffrey Hanmer, an old friend, declares his love for Esther who promises a future reply to his proposal. She embarks with Mrs. Galton and her two exceedingly disagreeable daughters. Captain Hethcote and Lord Alwyne, two fellow-passengers admire Esther extremely, and Mrs. Clare-Smythe, a cousin of the latter also seeks her friendship. The Galtons become vulgarly jealous of Esther's popularity. The "Pleiades" reaches Gibraltar at sun-rise and some of the passengers are on deck for the sight. At last they arrive at Malta, and Esther looks forward to meeting her father. Her father's household is uncongenial, but Esther makes a friend of her youngest step-brother, "Hadji Baba." Her step-mother, "Monica," is disposed to be kind and rejoices when Esther goes to dinner at the "Palace." Lord Francis Alwyne's attentions flatter the girl who enjoys the gay life of Malta exceedingly. Attracted solely by his wealth and position, she finally becomes betrothed to Lord Francis. "Hadji Baba" is taken ill and Esther refuses to leave

him. Madame Perouse becomes anxious over Esther's happiness and Geoffrey Hanmer decides to leave for Malta, hoping to help the girl whom he still loves. In the meantime, Esther has broken her engagement with Lord Francis, in consequence of the latter's resentment of her unselfish devotion to her little brother.

CHAPTER XII.

"Unless you can muse in a crowd all day, on the absent face that fixed you,
Unless you can love as the angels may, with the breath of heaven betwixt you:
Unless you can dream that the faith is fast, through believing and unbelieving,
Unless you can die when the dream is past, oh! never call it loving."

IT was the dead of night when little Hadji Beresford died, and, seeing that he was so much weaker, and they knew the end was coming, his father and the nurse had sat up with him for several hours to share