

TRUE TO HIS WORD.

A NOVEL.

CHAPTER IX.—(Continued.)

"There's a second appeal to your hard heart," said Jack, who had by no means recovered his usual equanimity; he was exceedingly annoyed by Litton's determination not to sell his picture, which he ascribed to morbid vanity. "If it's from the Trustees of the National Gallery, I do hope you will reconsider your objections."

"It is not from the Academy," said Walter scrutinizing the envelope attentively. "It seems to me a lady's hand."

"Then I'll be off," replied Pelter, not sorry for once to leave the society of his friend. "I hope it is not from Nellie Neale, to announce to grandmamma her intention of committing suicide for love of her venerable relative. I saw her yesterday as I passed her father's stall, and she looked ill enough and wretched enough for anything. What with his Red Riding-hoods, and his pictures that are not to sell," growled Jack as he descended to his own den, "I believe the lad is half cracked."

At any other moment this reference to Nellie Neale's altered looks would have aroused Walter's keenest sympathy, but as it was, the words fell almost unheeded upon his ear. The idea had suddenly seized him that the note which he held in his hand was from Lotty herself, wrung from her, perhaps, by some extremity of poverty or sorrow. It was to the last degree unlikely that she should write to him, but it was possible; and if she had done so, her need must be great indeed. He had witnessed her signature on the occasion of her marriage, and her handwriting was something like that in which the address of the note was written. The communication had reference to his picture, after all:

DEAR SIR,—I wish to know what price you have put upon your picture entitled "Supplication," 2940 in the Academy catalogue? I made inquiries of the clerk in charge, who will doubtless have communicated with you; but in order that no mistake may occur in the matter, I have ventured to thus address you personally. I am very anxious to become the purchaser of the work in question. Yours obediently,

ROBERT BURROUGHES.

The hair was the hair of Esau, but the words were unmistakably Jacob's: the name, that is, was a man's name, but the handwriting, and especially the style, were beyond doubt those of a lady. Even Walter, who was by no means well versed in business matters, was struck with the imprudence of the words "I am very anxious to become the purchaser," addressed as they were to one who had placed no figure upon his goods. It would have been a very strong temptation to most people to ask a fancy price. If, instead of asking a hundred pounds, he were to ask double the money, it was quite possible he would get it. And two hundred pounds, as Walter confessed to himself, would be very useful to him. The fifty pounds he had lent to Selwyn he never expected to see again, nor even wished to do so—except so far as its repayment would have been proof of his friend's prosperity; but the loan had left the balance at his banker's very low, so low that he had not re-engaged Red Riding-hood's services for several weeks, though he really had had occasion for them, and, what was more, felt she needed the money. As to what Pelter had said about her falling in love with him, the more he had thought of it the more ridiculous the notion had appeared to him. Nellie was an excellent sitter, and used to his ways, and he was fully determined to employ her again, when he should be once more in funds. Yes, two hundred pounds would set him up for the next six months very comfortably; he might ask this Mr. Burroughes for even more, perhaps. Finally, he sat down, and wrote a note, acknowledging, in courteous terms, the compliment Mr. Burroughes had paid him, and expressing regret for the trouble to which that gentleman had been put, but explaining that the picture was not for sale.

Then, late as it was, he went out, and posted the letter; not that he was afraid of being argued out of his determination by his friend, for he was tolerably certain that Pelter had said his last word upon the matter, but because he had doubts of his own firmness, if he should suffer his mind to dwell on so tempting an alternative. He felt that it would be for his happiness to keep the picture, yet also for his disadvantage.

CHAPTER X.

THE UNKNOWN PATRON.

Of the fashion and appearance of Mr. Walter Litton's studio I have already spoken, though not at length: it was unnecessary to do so, since it was very much like other painting apartments of young gentlemen in his profession who have not as yet found themselves famous. It was dirty and dingy where the light fell upon it, and dirtier and dingier where it did not. The "slavery" in the Beech street lodging-house had not much time to spare for cleansing operations, and still less inclination for them; she excused herself for all neglect upon the ground that "them artists did not like having their things meddled with," and she did not run counter to their wishes in that respect. The bedrooms were not much better looked after than the sitting-rooms, with one exception; that of Walter Litton's "was spick and span" as to order and cleanliness, and withal so prettily furnished that it had obtained from Mr. John Pelter the somewhat contemptuous title of "the Bower." But the slavery had little to do with the Bower, which was "looked after" by an occasional retainer of Litton's own—an ancient charwoman, who came in once a week to make "a thorough turn-out," as she expressed it, of

that apartment, and to dust its somewhat elaborate furniture.

"Mark my words, Litton," Jack once observed, while eyeing superciliously the shining wardrobe, the dressing table with its snowy covering and the various little knick-knacks which adorned the chamber of his friend—"you will marry early." He had uttered it in a tone of mournful conviction, as though he had said: "You will die young." He thought that all these things were signs of a domestic turn of mind in Walter, and presages of the matrimonial yoke; whereas they were perhaps but the result of a longer home experience (short as it had been) than poor Jack had had, and of a university education. The contents of Mr. Pelter's studio ran over, as it were, into his sleeping apartment, in which were to be found various early efforts of his genius, which not even the picture dealers would regard with any favor, huddled together, like sheep in a storm, with their faces to the wall. Now, Walter's "Bower" did not smack of "the shop" at all: its only pictures were a small portrait of his mother and two engravings, one of his old college and one of the head of that royal and religious foundation, an austere unlikable man, who had never looked kindly upon the young fellow, nor, indeed, in his own opinion, had had cause to do so, since Litton had "only not disgraced himself" by taking an ordinary degree; but still, for the sake of old times, there the hard old scholar hung. As Walter lay in bed that morning thinking, his eye lit upon this portrait, and straightway his thoughts wandered to that time when the work of life had not begun. It had been an unreal time perhaps; a world quite different from the great work-a-day one; his judgment had been less mature than it was now; he felt, for instance, that Jack Pelter had more true grit in him, more bottom under the rough ruddle than perhaps any of his then companions; but some of them had been very bright and dear to him, one of them especially; a man not dear to him now: he felt that, in spite of himself, though he was neither envious nor jealous of him. He had never had much respect for Reginald Selwyn, but respect had not been so necessary a component of friendship as it had become now; he had loved him as an elder brother, without the insight into his character that such consanguinity compels. All that was over now; and why? He did not answer that question to himself, although he put it; but his thoughts somehow wandered back to the subject they had started from, and which had even mingled with his dreams—his picture in the Academy. On the whole, he did not regret that note he had posted over night to Mr. Burroughes of the Regent's Park. He heard his friend splashing in his bath in the room below, and afterwards whistling, as his custom was, over his careless toilet. Jack's good humor had doubtless returned to him long ere this, but still he would say nothing to him about that tempting offer. He would keep his own counsel, and let him suppose the letter had been a billet-doux, a dun, a challenge—what he pleased, in fact, so long as his guess was wide of the mark. When, however, he descended as usual to breakfast with his friend, and found him frank and hearty as ever, his conscience smote him for his reticence; and he had, it is true, already one secret of his own into which Jack had not been permitted to look—namely, his tenderness for Lotty—but that was an affair as private, and almost as sacred, as his prayers; whereas this offer for his picture he felt to be almost a common property between them, for, without Jack's advice, he would never have sent it to the Academy at all: they had consulted together over it, both as to its price and its merits, and not a few of the latter had, he confessed to himself, been owing to the other's suggestions. A certain sense of ingratitude, and also the knowledge that there was something about which they could not converse, weighed upon Walter's spirits, and he was not himself that morning. It was quite a relief to him to escape from Jack, and find himself in his own room alone. If he had had a model before him, he could perhaps have compelled his own attention to the canvas, but as it was, it was distracted by other thoughts: he made up his mind that he would call at the cobbler's that very day, and engage Red Riding hood, if, indeed, she was well enough to resume her sittings. He could not quite recall what Pelter had said about her, though he knew there was something wrong. His whole mind was confused and jaded, and incapable of effort. Perhaps it was that glass of malt liquor which, contrary to his habit, he had taken after breakfast that morning, for the sake of good fellowship and to make up to his beer-drinking friend for other shortcomings. At eleven o'clock the slavery brought him a letter—not on a silver salver, genteel reader, but in her damp red hand—and she grinned as she delivered it: like the last, it was in a lady's hand, but it was not on that account that she grinned, for she did not know one handwriting from another.

"Why, I never heard the postman's knock, Jenny," said Walter kindly.

"It tain't the postman," said she, stuffing the end of her apron into her mouth, to stifle a giggle; "it be an ever-so-big footman, with a white head with an illigant split in it and a bell rope at his shoulder."

"That's called a shoulder knot, Jenny. Ah, very good!—he had rapidly cast his eye over the contents of the letter—"tell him to wait, and I will write an answer."

His tone was careless, but the note had, in fact, surprised him very much. It came from the same address as before, and was in the same hand:

"DEAR SIR,—it began—"I am in receipt of your letter, in which you state that your picture is not for sale. At the risk of being deemed impertinent, I write to you once more to express a hope that you may be induced to reconsider this decision. That the work is meritorious as a painting, I have no doubt; but its artistic merits, if I may say so without offence, are its least attraction in my eyes; I have quite another reason for wishing to possess it. It is difficult, impossible, indeed,

to explain this by letter; but if your resolve not to part with it is capable of change, I would earnestly entreat you to give me a few minutes' conversation upon this subject. I am confined to my house by a severe attack of gout, else I would do myself the honor of calling on you; but as that is impossible, might I ask the favor of your looking in on me, at any hour you please to name—this day, if possible? The bearer will await your reply. Yours faithfully,

ROBERT BURROUGHES.

The gout from which this gentleman was suffering was certainly not in his hand, for the writing was firm and distinct, though very feminine in its character. Walter felt so curious about the whole affair that he had almost a mind to summon the ever-so-big footman with the bell rope, and question him about his master; but such a proceeding would, to say the least of it, have been undignified. Jack had often warned him never to express surprise with respect to any application for a picture, "however much and naturally you may be yourself astonished at it." Though he had been so self-willed and obdurate in this particular affair, Walter was not blind to his own interests in a general way, nor less desirous of making his way in the world than any other young fellow. So he wrote a polite note to say that he would do himself the pleasure of calling at Willowbank that afternoon, at three o'clock, and despatched it by the white-headed footman.

Then a sudden impulse moved him to run down-stairs and place both the letters of Mr. Burroughes in the hands of faithful Jack, and he obeyed it.

"My dear Watty," said the other, looking not at them, but at him, with his kind eyes, "are you sure you are right about this? You are not going to make me your confidant, I hope, because you think I am huffy and vexed with you? That is all over and gone, as far as I am concerned."

"I daresay I seemed foolish and impracticable," answered Walter, "but I really had my reasons."

"And, very likely, sufficient ones, my lad. I don't say that your resolution to keep your picture was no business of mine, for what concerns you must needs concern me, but I feel that I was dictatorial about it."

"Not a bit, Jack. Please, don't say another word about it."

"But these letters—there are some things, Watty, you know, that one should not tell even to one's friends, for the sake of others—are you sure I have a right to see them?"

"Certainly you have, since I give them to you. It's the funniest thing that ever happened, you will say."

"Are they from a woman, Watty?" inquired Jack, still hesitating.

"Not they, though the handwriting looks like it. They're all about that picture, from a Mr. Robert Burroughes."

Jack read them carefully, but without the smile that Walter had expected to see illumine his jolly face.

"There's something wrong here, my lad," said he gravely. "These letters are not from a man, in my opinion; they're from a woman; and she doesn't want your picture at all."

"What the deuce does she want, then? You don't mean to say that she wants me!—that she has fallen in love with your humble servant, as you always said little Red Riding-hood would do! You will make me a coxcomb," Walter was not a coxcomb, but he did remember how Selwyn had said: "My aunt has fallen in love with you," on his first meeting with that lady, and also the attention she subsequently paid to him at Penadon."

"No, Walter; I don't seriously think Miss Nellie has done that, although I fear there is something amiss with her in that way; and if she were, the misfortune would be almost wholly on her side; but if this—this communication should be what I suspect it is, the misfortune would be on your side."

"You must have been reading the adventures of Mr. Tom Jones, or Mr. Gil Blas, of late, Jack."

"No; but I have been reading human nature—though not the best side of it, perhaps—for more years than you have. I could tell you a story of real life that mates with that of the Lady Clara Vere de Vere of your favorite poet; only with a difference. I could tell you, I say—and here Jack began to pace the room with rapid strides—"of a young fellow still in his teens, for whom a great lady once entertained a great passion. Perhaps she would have married him, if she could; perhaps she only persuaded him that such was her desire. She wrote to him, sometimes by the post, sometimes by just such a wonderful footman as I saw here in our passage this morning; she invited him to her house. She flattered, fondled, spoiled him. He was a lad like yourself, ingenious, high spirited, with a future—a great future, as he thought, poor devil—before him. She was older than he, though she did not look it, and she had more than twice his wits. It was an unequal match in more senses than one, and the weaker one went to the wall. There are some things, as I have just said, that it is well for a man to be silent about, even to his best friend, but I will tell you this much: that woman ruined the lad. He did not cut his throat, you understand, like 'young Lawrence'—it would have been better for him, perhaps, if he had—but he lost all he had: his heart, his hopes, his faith; she killed him."

"He is dead, then?" said Walter gravely.

"Yes; he died years and years ago, God help him! It is not a pleasant story," continued Pelter, after a pause; "but I have told you it, because I don't want you to perish in the same pitfall. Of course, I may be all wrong in supposing that there is any risk. Most people will laugh at such a danger, which seems to them imaginary, will call it ridiculous, impossible and the like; and perhaps it would have been impossible in their case; but most people are fools. Such things, it is true, don't happen often, but they do happen."

It would have been easy enough for a much duller man than Walter Litton to perceive that Pelter had been speaking of himself: his bitter excited tone, his looks, his very gait, as he walked hastily to and fro, as if impatient of the folly he described, betrayed it.

But for this, Walter himself would have ridiculed the story, and did ridicule it even now, so far as it had application to his own position. That Mr. Robert Burroughes should turn out to be a middle-aged lady of high rank, who had fallen in love with him, unknown to himself, tickled his sense of humor; if it was so, it seemed to him that the Bee

(and it was a very large one) impressed upon her envelopes was also in her bonnet—that she must be mad.

"But you would not wish me to cancel my appointment at Willowbank?" inquired he, and his eye twinkled with fun in spite of himself, "for I have made one for three o'clock."

"Of course not. But remember my story, and forget, please, that it was I who told it."

"I will," said Walter, made serious by his friend's unwonted tone, which was at once abrupt and pathetic. It was evident that, in this case, good advice had cost the giver something.

"No," continued Pelter in his old manner; "I daresay your visit will turn out to be commonplace enough. Mr. Burroughes is, doubtless, only an eccentric old fellow, who takes fancies to pictures, and doesn't care what he gives for them. Your refusal to part with yours has probably whetted his appetite, and may turn out to be the happiest fluke for you."

"Thank you for the compliment. If he had taken a fancy to one of yours, you would not have set it down to his eccentricity, I'll warrant, Mr. Pelter."

And so they parted, not to meet again till just as Walter was starting on his mysterious errand.

"You see, I have got myself up, Jack, to the best of my ability," said he, smiling, "in case Mr. Burroughes should turn out to be a countess."

"Quite right," returned the other dryly. "I have been to the Academy, and the man tells me that it was a lady who asked the price of your picture; moreover, I have looked in the blue book, and no such person as Burroughes lives at Willowbank, Regent's Park."

"Then, perhaps, after all, it is a hoax," said Walter, with an air of very considerable disgust.

"No, no; that footman could never have demeaned himself by mixing himself up with anything of that sort. I should as soon believe that the Lord Chancellor played leap frog on the woollack. Good bye, and luck be with you."

CHAPTER XI.
BARGAINING.

At a little before three o'clock—for, though an artist, he was punctual, and even methodical, in his habits—Walter Litton presented himself at the lodge gate of Willowbank. A carriage drive that wound among a pretty shrubbery just clothed in its first summer tints, so as to suggest the notion of extent to what was—for London—in reality a considerable frontage, led to the entrance door of the mansion; its principal windows, however, looked upon a smooth, shelving lawn, which sloped down to the water, and was, even at that season, gay with parterres of flowers. To left and right of it were more shrubberies, interspersed with some fine if not stately trees; nor was there anything to suggest that the place was within miles of the great metropolis, except that solemn, far-off roar, which might well be taken for the murmur of the summer sea; so like it was, indeed, that, for a moment, Walter's thoughts flashed to Penadon Hall, where that sound was never unheard; albeit no two places could, in other respects, be more dissimilar than the Hall and the spot in which he now found himself. There the poverty of the tenant had compelled neglect; whereas here the most perfect neatness and completeness that money could insure were evident on all sides. The carriage sweep might have been made of cayenne pepper, so bright and delicate was the gravel of which it was composed; the grass that fringed the laurel beds might have been cut with a razor; and every shrub and flower looked as though it had been the gardener's peculiar care. So rare, too, seemed many of them that it would not have surprised him if each had had a ticket appended to it, as at Kew, explaining its name and habitat. His ring at the front door was answered by a stately personage of ecclesiastical, nay, episcopal type, who appeared to regard his having come on foot as quite phenomenal. He looked to right and left of his visitor through the glass door before he opened it, in obvious search after the usual equipage.

"Is Mr. Burroughes within?" inquired Walter, not a little amused by this expressive pantomime.

"Mr. Burroughes?" repeated the man in a doubtful tone.

"Then it is a hoax," thought Walter. "Yes, I received a letter this morning," said he aloud.

"O yes, sir; it's quite right," interrupted the other, as if recollecting himself. "Mr. Litton, I believe! My master is expecting you."

He led the way through a hall of marble, in which stood two colossal vases of great beauty and some statues of life-size, which Walter's hurried glance perceived were of no mean merit, into a sitting room looking on the lawn, and then withdrew. It was a small apartment, but very richly furnished and those with whom newness is not a bar to admiration, in excellent taste. The walls were covered with books, in bright but not gaudy bindings; the floor was of polished oak and bare, except in the centre, which was covered by a rich carpet, in which the feet sank as in luxuriant moss; the furniture was also of oak, but of the most modern—that is, of the comfortable make. Next the window was a table rather out of character with its surroundings, for, though of polished and well-kept appearance, it was, in fact, a plain office desk of deal, such as a merchant's clerk might work at in the city. It was laden, however, with accessories, whose splendor was greatly in excess of their use; in particular, upon a golden tripod were a watch, a weather-glass, and a thermometer, all made of the same precious metal. The singularity of this ornament attracted Walter's attention, and upon the foot of it he read inscribed, along with the date of a few months back, the words "To our dear papa, upon his birthday."

"Good heavens," murmured Walter to himself, "perhaps there are two countesses!"

At that moment the door opened, and there limped in a short, stout man, by no means so important-looking as the butler, but with an air of proprietorship, nevertheless, about which there could be no mistake. "Mr. Litton, I believe?" said he, without offering to shake hands. "Be so good as to take a seat," and he himself, not without difficulty and much help from his stick, contrived to get into an arm-chair. His face was flabby rather

than fat, with very little color, and shewed signs more of care than thought; his tone was peevish, and his manner somewhat uneasy, not such as is usually worn by a man of great substance in his own house.

"You have come about that picture in the Academy?"

"I have; or, rather, you requested me to come about it, Mr. Burroughes," answered Walter with some dignity.

"Well, well; it is all the same. I am not Mr. Burroughes, however; my name is Brown—Christopher Brown." And the little man drew himself up stiffly, as though the name ought to be an impressive one.

Walter did not remember to have heard of the name, and he resented this behavior of its proprietor extremely. "I can only deal with principals," said he, his indignation leaving him no choice of words, and causing him to use a conventional phrase, which had really but little meaning, and of which he repented immediately. The reply, however, seemed to please his companion well enough.

"That's a very sensible observation, young man, and shews you have some knowledge of business. However, I am the principal in this case; Mr. Burroughes is the Co., and no consequence. It is I who wish to buy your picture. You don't seem to be in a hurry to part with it—that is very sensible too. We are never in a hurry to part with anything in the city—if we can help it. That is what we call 'standing out.'"

Walter bowed stiffly; he was not quite sure what the stout gentleman meant, but he had a strong suspicion that he was drawing a parallel between Art and sordid Trade.

"I do not quite comprehend your meaning, Mr. Brown."

"I mean—this question resolves itself, suppose, like all other questions, into two pregnant words, How Much?"

"Not quite," returned Walter coldly, that had been the case, I should have named my price for the picture, and then you might have taken it or left it, as you chose."

"You must be in independent circumstances, young man," observed the other sarcastically. "And yet Beech street is no very highly rented locality, I believe."

"Perhaps not; and yet, if you visited in Beech street, I should behave to you like a gentleman, sir," cried Walter, seizing his stick.

"Highly tight! Don't fly into a passion, Mr. What's-your-name; I didn't mean to offend you. Sit ye down, sit ye down, and us discuss this matter in a quiet, sensible manner."

"I had rather stand," said Walter; "the you."

"Well, well; as you like. I wish I could stand as well. Come, let us say fifty pounds. You are a young man, a very young man. George! I wish I was half as young. Have got your way to make in the world. When I was your age I didn't get fifty pounds for a week's work, nor yet five. My time not so valuable."

"Perhaps not, sir," answered Walter hotly, "and I hope it is not very valuable now, you are wasting it. I wish you a very good morning," and he moved towards the door.

"Why, how much do you want?" cried old gentleman, slewing round upon his heels so as to face his companion. "I'll give a hundred pounds. You are certainly not mous enough to refuse a hundred pounds!"

"Famous or not," answered Walter, incensed, "you shall not have it for money; and he laid his hand upon the

(To be Continued.)

A Man Half Dressed Rushes Frenetically to Catch a Train.

Quite recently the passengers of G. T. R. East bound train, as it stops at Morrisburg, Ont., were astonished to see an elderly man rush at full speed down the road towards the station. As he neared it, it was seen that he was so dressed, suggesting to all the fact that he had hurriedly risen from his bed, and in great dread of being left behind perseverance and speed saved him just as it was moving off, and getting under the significant word "safe" was soon comfortably seated and began to finish his dressing. He was evidently satisfied and pleased that his expectations would be realized, and reached his destination, and that all was well.

The writer was a passenger on this train and witnessed the incident, and after thought of that word "safe," as the car was reached.

There are men and women to be seen from a physical standpoint are or clothed, half prepared, and who are in on in the vain hope of accomplishing the multifarious duties of this eventful day.

Their physical condition certainly includes the possibility of any sufferer benefit themselves or others. They are weakened from disease of some kind and while in this condition they are able to cope with their stronger and healthy brethren in the battle of life.

They do not stann "safe" on the running train of time; their exit made uncertain to themselves. Nervous, sleepless, weak and irritable suffer hourly from the cruel pangs of peptic or Chronic Indigestion; or martyrs to Kidney disease and L. L. plain, while multitudes are miserably happy owing to an imperfect circulation and their whole system is full of and poisonous blood.

True perseverance is necessary, such sufferers to gain the goal of perfection—perfect health. Like the passenger reaching the railway to must press forward, and grasp the only life giving remedy, carry them safely over the rocks of disease.

That remedy sure and unfailing Celery Compound, and is the only one in the world that can restore the great nerve system upon a sound and healthy body. Celery Compound is rapidly becoming a great popular family remedy; it stands without a peer for the relief of disease; and to such a high has its fame and credit been advanced, now the best physicians on this continent, prescribe it, and its general use in all climates.