

After the Ball;  
OR,  
The Mystery Solved  
at Last.

CHAPTER XXII.  
(To be Continued.)

Although it has taken some minutes to describe the position of affairs, Carlotta's keen eyes took it in a moment, and in another had determined what to do.

Springing to the window, she unfastened the grapping irons, and heard the ladder fall to the ground. Then turning, faced the burglar, who, with a fearful imprecation ground out from beneath his teeth, had leaped to his muffled feet.

"Only speak a word, or screech, and I'll shoot yer, hang me if I don't!" he croaked, hoarsely.

"I don't intend to," she said; "that is, at least, if I do not change my mind. You can fire if you like. The consequences are very easily told. The house would be alarmed—it is waiting now for my signal; the ladder has gone; escape would be out of the question."

Bill, the burglar, stood in amazement; his keen brain had taken in the sense and truth of her words at once.

Lowering his pistol, he said, huskily:

"Well, you are a cool un, miss, and there was a tone of admiration in his words and a light in his eyes that made the belle almost smile. "P'raps you'll tell me what you're goin' to do?" he growled, fingering the pistol, but not offering to raise it again.

"That depends upon what you have done," said Carlotta. "Have you injured that cabinet?"

Bill stared. It was getting too hot. This woman, whom he could have strangled with a clutch of his dirty hands, or shot by a curl of his strong fingers, was beating him at his own game! How beautiful she looked too! He was beginning to feel ashamed of himself, and with a shake like a dog, advanced a step.

"No foolery," he croaked. "I'm not a-goin' to stand it. Get out o' the way and let me take the swag, or—" and he raised the pistol again.

Carlotta stretched out her hand, and caught the bell rope.

"Ah, you want me to ring, I see," she said, feeling her courage fast ebbing away, yet all the more determined that she should not see it.

"No—no!" cried the man. "I—" "Stand back, then, and put down that pistol!" said Carlotta, in a firm voice of command.

Bill hesitated for a second; then, with an emphatic consignment of her eyes and limbs to a warm climate, laid the pistol on the table.

"There!"

"Now," said Carlotta, at that moment noticing a jewel box lying on the floor, with its lid torn open and sides broken in. "Now, pick up that box, and put back the things you have taken from it."

Bill, the burglar, eyed her for a moment with sullen eyes, but a movement of the hand which held the bell-rope decided him.

Slowly he picked up the box, and, unbuttoning his coat pocket, noiselessly plucked forth, as if he were plucking out his heart, the heap of glittering gems.

"Have you anything else?" asked Carlotta, sternly.

"No!" snarled the man.

"Very well," replied Carlotta. "Now, there is a five-pound note; take it and go. If it is any use, I will ask you to repay me for saving you from transportation by trying—trying, mark me—an honest life, but I'm afraid it would be waste of words and time. Take the note and go."

How to avoid  
Operations

These Three Women Tell How They Escaped the Dreadful Ordeal of Surgical Operations.

Hospitals are great and necessary institutions, but they should be the last resort for women who suffer with ill peculiar to their sex. Many letters on file in the Pinkham Laboratory at Lynn, Mass., prove that a great number of women after they have been recommended to submit to an operation have been made well by Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound. Here are three such letters. All sick women should read them.

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—Mrs. FRED BEHNKE, Marinette, Wis.

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—Mrs. THOS. DWYER, 989 Milwaukee Ave., East, Detroit, Mich.

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—Miss IRENE FROBLICHER, 1223 Manhattan St., North Side, Bellevue, Pa.

If you would like special advice write to Lydia E. Pinkham Med. Co., (confidential), Lynn, Mass. Your letter will be opened, read and answered by a woman and held in strict confidence.

And she held the crisp piece of paper toward him.

The man stood stock-still, and gazed at her as if he doubted his senses.

"Is it all square?" he gasped.

"I do not understand you," said Carlotta, calmly. "If you mean am I playing you false, you know I am not; I could have done it long ago had I wished. Take this and go; I cannot answer for their waiting much longer."

Bill came forward and took off his cap; it was thoughtlessly done, and he paid for his compelled reverence, for with the cap off tumbled the mask.

"Ah!" he cried, his disclosed face turning white. "You'll know me—you'll split on me."

"Another word like that and I ring," said Carlotta. "I have given you my promise that you shall go unharmed, and I shall keep it."

"You're a lady, a queen, 'ang me!" cried the man, with enthusiastic admiration. "Miss, I wouldn't touch a hair of yer head; I never meant to s'wep me. Put the note away, chuck it in the fireplace. I won't touch it—Well, if yer insist upon it, I will, but I swear I'll keep it as a token of this 'ere night and you, miss; and if you should ever want a friend to give you a hand in anything of this sort, or leastways anything rough and ready, I'm yer man, s'wep me. Ask for Cribby Bill at the 'Spotted Calf', White Chapel, and you'll soon hear o' me. Good-by, miss; I can manage to get down by the window, no matter if I break my neck; good-by, miss, and Heaven bless yer."

Thus saying, and without adding the authority for his belief that he had a right to command the benediction, the bullet head of Cribby Bill disappeared beneath the ledge, and Carlotta fell in a half swoon against the cabinet she had so bravely protected, murmuring:

"Thank Heaven! if it had not been for this I should have gone mad!" Gold! yellow, glittering, precious gold!

What we should have any friends if we should never have any need of them?  
—Timon of Athens.

her coronet—"

"I came to disturb you with this letter," said Chudleigh, not able to bear more, and he laid it on the table. "It is a notice from the solicitors. Two weeks only remain."

Sir Fielding shrank back into his chair.

"Two weeks!" he repeated. "Longer than that, surely, Chud. Two weeks! What is to be done?"

Chudleigh shook his head.

"I am at a loss, sir," he said. "We can scarcely hope to raise the money, and, if not, the hall—"

Sir Fielding held up his white hand tremblingly.

"Don't say it, Chud. Bad enough to know it, to think of it, without giving it tongue."

Chudleigh sighed, and there followed a minute's silence, Sir Fielding shrinking into his chair with his hand before his face.

Presently, with a suddenness that startled Chudleigh, he said:

"Chud, I'll try the Folly."

Chudleigh started, and crimsoned.

"There is no other course," he added, though interrogatively.

"I know of none," said Chudleigh.

"Then I will go," said Sir Fielding, nervesing himself to a fit of energy, and rising from his chair.

"At once, sir?" with inward longing to postpone the trial he knew it would be for his father.

"Ay, at once, Chud; at once," replied Sir Fielding, brokenly. "Delays are dangerous. It is the last moment, or nearly so; besides, Chud, it will cost me as much to do it a week hence as it does now."

"Let me go with you, sir," said Chudleigh.

"No, no," replied Sir Fielding, though reluctantly. "I'll go alone. I don't think I could bear you to hear me asking him."

He rang the bell for William, his valet.

Chudleigh, when Sir Fielding had left the room, sank into the straight-backed chair beside the window, and stared moodily across the park.

Strange! the blow had fallen very lightly upon him; his poverty did not seem so bitter now. He forgot, or did not know, that despair deadens the heart and numbs the senses.

Meanwhile, Sir Fielding, with bent head and heavy hand upon his carved stick, was walking across the park, on his way to ask for a loan from the cotton spinner whose existence a few months back he had refused to recognize.

"He will think," he murmured, "that I have accepted his friendship as a lead up to this. Ah! what would I do—what would I not suffer to have the golden years back again! I might have worked this money out of the estate. Might! might! What is the use of might? My opportunities have been spent and lost among the dry records of the past. Books bring comfort, they say; they have brought ruin to me. At least, but for them I might have staved it off, and still handed down the hall as a heritage to my children," and thinking thus, the old aristocrat bowed his head still lower to hide the tears that fell upon his white frilled shirt.

He had reached the corner of the road that branched off to the rectory, and, with the intention of cutting his way short by going through the rectory wood, had opened the gate, when the owner, followed by Tigris, the dog, strode from among the trees and swung it back for him.

(To be Continued.)

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**War News**

Messages Received Previous to 9 AM

THE CAMPAIGN IN MESOPOTAMIA

LONDON, Feb. 23.

The present British operations in the Far East are having a decided effect on the general situation by preventing the Turks from sending troops to join their allies on the European front, according to General Maurice, chief director of military movements. Our recent operations near Kut-el-Amara and on the Sinal Peninsula, said General Maurice, are having an important bearing upon the general situation by preventing the condition prevailing last year, when we gave the Turks a chance to send troops to their allies on the eastern front. The conditions are now reversed. The Turks not only are unable to despatch such reinforcements to Europe, but are compelled to draw on their available resources to enable them to hold their positions at Kut and Sinal. General Maier at Kut-el-Amara has been making a wide swing with his left, pivoting on his right which remains slanting at Sannayat. His advance has been steady resulting in the taking of line after line followed by successful actions. Delia Akent in the big bend of the Tigris has been cleared of the enemy and we are now in a position to enter Kut-el-Amara. On the right at Sannayat the Turks occupied a narrow front protected by the river on one flank and by a marsh

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**Hirt**

