

The Price of Liberty

OR, A MIDNIGHT CALL

CHAPTER XXI.—(Continued.)

"Was it not possibly changed there David?"

"No, because of the initials I had scratched inside it. And beyond all question that case—the same case, mind you, that I picked up on my doorstep—was purchased by the man now lying in the hospital here from Walen's, in West Street. Now, how was the change made?"

"If I could only see my way to help you!"

"The change was made the day you bought the case. By the way, what time was it?"

"I can't tell you the exact time," Ruth replied. "It was on the morning of the night of your adventure."

"And you kept it by you all the time?"

"Yes. It was in a little box sealed with yellow wax and tied with yellow string. I went to 219 after I had made the purchase. My uncle was there and he was using the back sitting-room as an office. He had brought a lot of papers with him to go through."

"Ah! Did you put your package down?"

"Just for a moment on the table. But surely my uncle would not—"

"One moment, please. Was anybody with your uncle at the time?"

Ruth gave a sudden little cry.

"How senseless of me to forget," she cried. "My uncle was down merely for the day and, as he was very busy, he sent for Mr. Reginald Henson to help him. I did not imagine that Mr. Henson would know anything. But even now I cannot see what—"

"Again let me interrupt you. Did you leave the room at all?"

"Yes. It is all coming back to me now. My uncle's medicine was locked up in my bag. He asked me to go for it and I went, leaving my purchase on the table. It is all coming back to me now. When I returned Mr. Henson was quite alone, as somebody had called to see my uncle. Mr. Henson seemed surprised to see me back so soon, and as I entered he crushed something up in his hand and dropped it into the waste-paper basket. But my parcel was quite intact."

"Yellow wax and yellow string and all?"

"Yes, so far as I remember. It was Mr. Henson who reminded my uncle about his medicine."

"And when you were away the change was made. Strange that your uncle should be so friendly with both Henson and Bell. Have they ever met under your roof?"

"No," Ruth replied. "Henson has always alluded to Dr. Bell as a lost man. He professes to be deeply sorry for him, but he has declined to meet him. Where are you going?"

"I am going with you to see if we can find anything in the waste-paper basket at No. 219. Bell tells me that your servants have instructions to touch no papers, and I know that the back sitting-room of your house is used as a kind of office. I want, if possible, to find the paper that Henson tried to hide on the day you bought the cigar-case."

The basket proved to be a large one, and was partially filled with letters that had never been opened—begging-letters, Ruth said. For half an hour David was engaged in smoothing out crumpled sheets of paper, until at length his search was rewarded. He held a packet of notepaper, the usual six sheets, one inside the other, that generally go to correspondence sheets of good quality. It was crushed up, but Steel flattened it out and held it up for Ruth's inspection.

"Now, here is a find!" he cried. "Look at the address in green on the top: '15, Downend Terrace.' Five sheets of my own best notepaper, printed especially for myself, in this basket! Originally this was a block of six sheets, but the one has been written upon and the others crushed up like this. Beyond doubt the paper was stolen from my study. And—what's this?"

He held up the thick paper to the light. At the foot of the top sheet was plainly indented in outline the initials "D. S."

"My own cipher," David went on. "Scrawled in so boldly as to mark on the under sheet of paper. Almost invariably I use initials instead of my full name unless it is quite formal business."

"And what is to be done now?" Ruth asked.

"Find the letter forged over what looks like a genuine cipher," David said, grimly.

CHAPTER XXII.

Bell followed Dr. Cross into the hospital with a sense of familiar pleasure. The cool, sweet smell of the place, the decorous silence, the order of it all appealed to him strongly. It was as the old war-horse who sniffs the battle from afar. And the battle with death was ever a joy to Bell.

"This is all contrary to regulations of course," he suggested.

"Well, it is," Cross admitted. "But I am an enthusiast, and one doesn't often get a chance of chatting with a brilliant, erratic star like yourself. Besides, our man is not in the hospital proper. He is in a kind of annex by my own quarters, and he scoffs the suggestion of being nursed."

Bell nodded, understanding perfectly. He came at length to a brilliantly-lighted room, where a dark man with an exceedingly high forehead and wonderfully piercing eyes was sitting up in bed. The dark eyes lighted with pleasure as they fell upon Bell's queer, shambling figure and white hair.

"The labor we delight in physics pain," he greeted with a laugh and a groan. "It's worth a badly twisted shoulder to have the pleasure of seeing Hatherly Bell again. My dear fellow, how are you?"

The voice was low and pleasant, there was no trace of insanity about the speaker. Bell shook the proffered hand. For some little time the conversation proceeded smoothly enough. The stranger was a good talker; his remarks were keen and to the point.

"I hope you will be comfortable here," Bell suggested.

A faint subtle change came over the other's face.

"All but one thing," he whispered. "Don't make a fuss about it, because Cross is very kind. But I can't stand the electric light. It reminds me of the great tragedy of my life. But for the electric light I should be a free man with a good practice to-day."

"So you are harping on that string again," Bell said, coldly. "I fancied that I had argued you out of that. You know perfectly well that it is all imagination, Heritage."

Heritage passed his left hand across his eyes in a confused kind of way.

"When you look at one like that I fancy so," he said. "When I was under your hands I was forgetting it. And now it has all come back again. Did I tell you all about it, Cross?"

Bell gave Cross a significant glance, and the latter shook his head.

"Well, it was this way," Heritage began, eagerly. His eyes were gleaming now, his whole aspect was changed. "I was poor and struggling, but I had a grand future before me. There was a patient of mine, a rich man, who had a deadly throat trouble. And he was going to leave me all his money if I cured him. He told me he had made a will to that effect, and he had done so. And I was in dire straits for some ready cash. When I came to operate I used an electric light, a powerful light—you know what I mean. The operator failed and my patient died. The operation failed because the electric light went out at a critical time."

"People said it was a great misfortune for me, because I was on the threshold of a new discovery which would have made my name. Nothing of the kind, I deliberately cut out the positive wire of the electric light so that I should fail, and so that my patient might die and I might get all his money at once. And he did die and nobody suspected me—nobody could possibly have found me out. Then I went mad and they put me under Bell's care. I should have got well, only he gave up his practice and drifted into the world again. My good, kind friend Reginald Henson heard of my case; he interested some people in me and placed me where I am at present."

"So Reginald Henson knows all about it?" Bell asked drily.

"My dear fellow, he is the best friend I have in the world. He was most interested in my case. I have gone over it with him a hundred times. I showed him exactly how it was done. And now you know why I loathe the electric light. When it shines in my eyes it maddens me; it brings back to me the recollection of that dreadful time, it causes me to—"

"Heritage," Bell said, sternly, "close your eyes at once, and be silent."

The patient obeyed instantly. He had not forgotten the old habit of obedience. When he opened his eyes again he looked round him in a foolish, shame-faced manner.

"I—I am afraid I have been rambling," he muttered. "Pray don't notice me, Bell; if you are as good a fellow as you used to be, come and see me again. I'm tired now."

Bell gave the desired assurance, and he and Cross left the room together.

"Any sort of truth in what he has been saying?" asked the latter.

"Very little," Bell replied. "Heritage is an exceedingly clever fellow who has not yet recovered from a bad breakdown some years ago. I had nearly cured him at one time, but he seems to have lapsed into bad ways again. Some day, when I have time, I shall take up his case once more."

"Did he operate, or try some new throat cure?"

"Exactly. He was on the verge of discovering some way of operating for throat cases with complete success. You can imagine how excited he was over his discovery. Unfortunately the patient he experimented on died under the operation, not because the light went out or any nonsense of that kind, but from failure of the heart's action owing to excitement. Heritage had had no sleep for a fortnight, and he broke down altogether. For months he was really mad, and when his senses came back to him he had that hallucination. Some day it will go, and some day Heritage will take up the drooped threads of his discovery and the world will be all the better for it. And now, will you do me a favor?"

"I will do anything that lies in my power."

"Thee be good enough to let me have a peep at the man who was found half-murdered in my friend David Steel's conservatory. I'm interested in that case."

Cross hesitated for a moment.

"All right," he said. "There can't be any harm in that. Come this way."

Bell strolled along with the air of a man who is moved by no more than ordinary curiosity. But from the first he had made up his mind not to lose this opportunity. He had not the remotest idea what he expected to find, but he had a pretty good idea that he was on the verge of an important discovery. He came at length to the bedside of the mysterious stranger. The man was lying on his back in a state of coma, his breath came heavily between his parted lips.

Bell bent low partly to examine the patient, partly to hide his face from Cross. If Bell had made any discovery he kept the fact rigidly to himself.

"Looks very young," he muttered. "But then he is one of those men who never grow any hair on their faces. Young as he looks, I should judge him to be at least forty-five, and if I am not mistaken, he is a man who had heard the chimes at midnight or later. I'm quite satisfied."

"It's more than I am, Cross said, when at length he and his visitor were standing outside together.

"Look here, Bell, you're a great friend of Steel's, whom I believe to be a very good fellow. I don't want to get him into any harm, but a day or two ago I found this letter in a pocket-book in a belt worn by our queer patient. Steel says the fellow is a perfect stranger to him, and I believe that statement. But what about this letter? I ought to have sent it to the police, but I didn't. Read it."

And Cross proceeded to take a letter from his pocket. It was on thick paper; the stamped address given was "15, Downend Terrace." There was no heading, merely the words "Certainly, with pleasure I shall be home; in fact, I am home every night till 12.30, and you may call any time up till then. If you knock quietly on the door I shall hear you.—D. S."

"What do you make of it?" Cross asked.

"It looks as if your patient had called at Steel's house by appointment," Bell admitted. "Here is the handwriting. Subsequently the poor fellow is found in Steel's house near-by murdered, and yet Steel declares solemnly that the man is a perfect stranger to him. It is a bad business, but I assure you that Steel is the soul of honor. Cross, would you be so good as to let me have that letter for two or three days?"

"Very well," Cross said, after a little hesitation. "Good-night."

Bell went on his way homeward with plenty of food for thought.

He stopped just for a moment to light a cigar.

"Getting towards the light," he muttered, "getting along. The light is not going to fail after all. I wonder what Reginald Henson would say if he only knew that I had been to the hospital and recognised our mutual friend Van Sneek there!"

(To be Continued.)

SHE WENT DOWN.

The man with the bronzed face and the rolling gait was entertaining an attentive circle of acquaintances, when Mr. Jones edged up just in time to hear the words, "And so the ship went down with all of us on board."

"She went down?" asked Mr. Jones excitedly.

"Yes, sir," smiled the bronzed-faced man. "She sank slowly but surely, and scarcely a ripple was left to mark the spot where she had sunk."

"But where were you?"

"In the captain's cabin."

"And couldn't you get out?" again questioned Mr. Jones.

"Why, no. I never thought of getting out," was the cool answer.

"Oh, I suppose it was all so unexpected?"

"No. We knew she would go down."

"And how did you escape?"

"I didn't have to escape."

"How's that?" Mr. Jones inquired.

"If the ship sank with all on board, and there was no chance for you to escape, how do you expect us to believe your story when we see you sitting here alive and well?"

"It was a submarine boat," explained the man with the bronzed face.

THE ORIENT OF TO-MORROW.

There Will be Splendid Opportunities for Trade.

According to a report of the Swiss consul-general in Yokohama, no one would have dared ten years ago to predict Japan's wonderful development. In 1893 its foreign trade was about \$93,500,000; in 1903, \$303,500,000. The bank deposits of Tokyo in 1895 amounted to less than \$18,500,000; in 1903 they had risen to \$66,500,000; those of Osaka amounted to \$5,000,000 in 1893 and to \$38,500,000 in 1903.

The same surprises await one in connection with Manchuria and Korea. That there is room for European products there is proved by Japan's marvelous progress and development. Manchuria, properly administered, is as susceptible of progress and development as was Japan. The same is true of northern China, with its rich resources in minerals, particularly coal. I was often surprised on my trips through Manchuria and Siberia to find the facility with which the Chinese take to trade and manufacturing, particularly when the policy pursued by those in charge was such as to encourage efforts.

Splendid results await anyone who will give the material furnished and to be furnished by China good leadership. The Chinaman is the very best kind of a colonist. All he asks is to be let alone. He overcomes every lingual difficulty; he is a splendid worker, retail merchant, hand worker, or servant; and he is naturally honest. The large commercial cities, Colombo, Singapore, Siam, Saigon, Haifong, Hongkong, Shanghai, Kiau-chau, are striking examples of what the peace-loving Chinese can accomplish.

Here in the East trade would be impossible but for the Chinese. Even in Japan the Chinese have made themselves indispensable. What is true of the English, French, and German spheres of influence in the East is just as true of the regions presided over by Russia. The life of Port Arthur, Dalny, Nicolajewsk, Vladivostok, Harbin, Chaborowsk, and Blagovestchensk depends upon the activity of the Chinese inhabitants. The final result will, however, depend upon the type of men who assume the lead when peace is again restored. More merchants will want to come here from the West. The efforts of the great powers to secure a place for their agents in the East is easy to understand. Progress and prosperity will go along faster under the aegis of the West than they ever would were the initiative efforts left to the East. China's opposition to strangers, to new trade forms, to railroads, is confined to China proper. Where the Chinaman is a stranger, an immigrant, a colonist, he is far more pliable and adaptable than any other. Thus the fundamentals upon which a foreign trade may be built up are in the East. Everybody is getting ready to be on hand.

England and the United States are ready to follow in the footsteps of Japan, knowing full well that first come will be first served. The opening up of Manchuria and Korea is a foregone conclusion, let the war end as it will. Japan, victorious, is bound to be the leading nation in the East. The balance of power in the Orient will be at Tokyo rather than at Peking. Japan, victorious, means the removal of the last barriers to the Island Empire's marvelous progress in commerce and manufactures. Once the land of Japan is able to be freely bought and owned by the stranger within her gates, capital will flow into her banks and thence into her factories, mines, etc.

RUSSIANS AND ENGLISH.

Every Englishman who has traveled in Russia knows how agreeable the people of that country usually are. They are delightfully sociable and obliging. It is a curious fact that in ordinary circumstances they are most attracted by the English and Americans. They are not nearly so much in sympathy with the character of their French allies, whose frivolity and cynicism are not always appreciated by the sombre, religious Muscovites. The antagonism of the Russian towards England is simply political, not racial.

HEIRS APPARENT.

There are fifteen thrones in Europe, and eight now promise to pass from father to son. These are Great Britain, Germany, Denmark, Portugal, Greece, Norway and Sweden, Bulgaria and Russia. The Sultan may be succeeded by a brother, and the King of Spain by a sister. The King of Italy's heir is his cousin, and the Emperor of Austria, the King of the Belgians, and the King of Roumania look to nephews, while Holland has no visible successor at present.

Hostess—"You appear to be in deep thought, Tommy." Tommy—"Yes, in. Manma told me if you asked me to have some cake I was to say something, and I've been here so long now I forgot what it was."

Counsel—"What is your age, madam?" Witness—"I only know from what I've been told, and you just told me that hearsay evidence was not valid in court."

YOU MUST NOT HESITATE

THIS WILL HELP YOUR WILL POWER.

Many Able People Are Kept Down Through Their Inability to Decide.

Have you a strong will?

The great demand of to-day is for the strong, vigorous, positive man—the man who not only makes up his mind, but does so with firmness, and when he has considered all the circumstances and conditions of the matter he is called upon to decide, does so once for all, and then throw it off his mind. Such a man usually has superior executive ability. He can not only make a programme, but he can also carry it out. He can not only decide upon a course; but he can also execute it to a finish.

If you are a vacillator, if you have acquired a habit of hesitating, or of weighing and considering and reconsidering, never quite knowing what you want, you will never be a leader. This is not the stuff of which leaders are made; for whatever else a leader may lack, he knows his own mind. He knows what he wants, and makes straight for it. He may make mistakes, he may fall down now and then; but he gets up promptly and always pushes on.

HOW TO GET ON.

The man who decides quickly can afford to make mistakes; for no matter how many he makes, he will get on faster than he who is timid, vacillating and so afraid of taking a wrong course that he dares not start out to do anything. Those who wait for certainties, or stand on the brink of the stream waiting for somebody to push them in, never reach the other shore.

One of the most pitiable objects in the world is the man who is forever hanging trembling in the balance, who never knows which way to turn, who is the prey of conflicting opinions, and the victim of the greatest pressure, who follows the counsel of the last man who advises him, who moves along the line of least resistance, and who does not feel within himself the power to decide things. The very reputation of being cursed with a yielding disposition, of being easily moved from your conviction, or of being unstable in your opinions is fatal to all confidence—to credit.

MAKE UP YOUR MIND.

A great many people seem to have a mortal dread of deciding things. They don't care to take the responsibility, because they don't know what it may lead to. They are afraid that if they should decide upon one thing to-day, something better may turn up to-morrow, and cause them to regret their first decision. These habitual waverers so completely lose their self-confidence that they do not dare to trust themselves to decide anything of importance. Many of them ruin naturally fine minds by nursing the habit of indecision.

Your judgment must dwell in the depths of your nature, like the calm waters in the depths of the sea, out of the reach of the waves of emotion, passion, or mood, or the advice or criticism of others, and beyond the reach of superficial disturbance. This is the kind of judgment that is always sought in any matter of weight or importance—one which is beyond the reach of the influence of anything but the right.

ARE YOU ONE?

Thousands of people to-day are struggling along in mediocrity with ability enough to have taken them to the heights where excellence dwells, but for one lack in their nature—ability to decide quickly and finally.

Tens of thousands of young people with good health, good education, and good ability, are standing on the edge of a bridge, at life's crossing. They hope they are on the right way, they think they are, and yet they do not dare to burn the bridge they have just crossed. They want a chance for retreat in case they have made a mistake.

If indecision runs in the blood you inherit, arouse yourself and strangle this insidious foe before it saps your energy and ruins your life chance. Do not wait until to-morrow, but begin to-day. Compel yourself to develop the opposite quality by the constant practice of firm decision.

SUCH GOOD FRIENDS.

Jack (meeting a friend who is walking rapidly along the street)—"Hullo, Charlie! Why this terrible rush?"

Charlie—"I am walking fast to keep that fellow Staggs from catching me up. He's an awful bore."

Jack (meeting Staggs, who is walking slowly)—"Hullo, old fellow, why are you dawdling along in this way?"

Staggs—"To keep from catching up with Charlie Johnson. He's the worst bore I know."

NOT SUFFICIENT EXCUSE.

Magistrate (to an old offender)—"Why did you scale the window of this building?"

Prisoner—"There was a paper pasted on the window which was broken, and I climbed up to read a story printed on it."

Magistrate—"Yes, but why did you break in the window?"

Prisoner—"To read the continuation on the inside your worship."