

The Snake Scotched AND Justice Done.

CHAPTER XXIII.
(Continued)

"I don't want no company," sobbed Ada; but she came to the door, and when she saw Ralph her pretty little face brightened. "Oh, it's the Big Man!" she said, with sudden cheerfulness.

"Come along, little woman, let's keep each other company," said Ralph, with his infectious smile; and before the nurse had left them the child was sitting on Ralph's knee and completely engrossed in a wonderful rabbit, which, though composed only of his handkerchief, actually pricked up its ears, cleaned itself with its paws, and nibbled at her frock. It was not only a wonderful rabbit, but it had apparently a most romantic history, which Ralph told in a manner so captivating that Ada leant her head against his breast and gazed up at him with all her little soul enthralled.

When the nurse returned she found Ralph seated on the stairs with the child asleep in his arms.

"She's just gone off," he whispered, stopping her profuse thanks. "I'll carry her in, if you'll let me: it's a pity to wake her."

He carried her into the room and laid her down on the cot, and the nurse followed him out to express her gratitude.

"I'm sure it's very kind of you when he arrives. It's wonderful how she's took to you, for Miss Ada is rather particular in her likes and dislikes."

Ralph smiled at the dubious compliment, and, lighting his pipe, went out with a lighter heart than he had owned since he had left Lynne.

The next day, when he returned from work, the child was waiting for him at the top of the stairs, and leapt into his arms with that abandon which is simply irresistible to a man with Ralph's tenderness of heart.

"Ave you dot the rabbit, Big Man?" she asked, wistfully, as she clung round his neck.

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The nurse came out and scolded her for worrying the gentleman, but Ralph begged that she might come into his room while he had his tea, at which not only a rabbit but a barndoor fowl put in an appearance.

From that day the child and he were fast friends; and he looked forward to seeing her elfish form on the stairs waiting for him, and still more for the loving embrace with which she welcomed him. Gradually, as the nurse's confidence increased, the two became so necessary to each other that Ralph often, in the evening, took Ada for a walk. They would saunter along, the child clinging to his hand, through the big thoroughfares, Ralph, with his pipe in his mouth, pointing out the objects likely to be of interest to a child, and answering her innumerable questions. How great a comfort and consolation her love and companionship were to the broken-hearted man no pen could set down. It is possible they saved him from utter despair.

One day he succeeded in finding a vessel that would take him, and he was trying to break the news of their approaching parting to Ada, when she startled him by saying:

"My papa's coming to-morrow. I'm so glad; aren't 'oo? I 'ope 'oo'll be as fond of him as 'oo are of me, Big Man. 'Oo are fond of me, aren't 'oo?"

"Very," said Ralph. "And so papa is coming? I'm very glad, for your sake; though I'm afraid we shan't see so much of each other—Look at the soldiers, Ada! They're going down to the bank to take care of all the money there."

"Is all the money dere?" she asked, after she had stared at the guard marching past them. "Praps that's where papa's money is. He said he'd lost nearly all of it. Do 'oo think he'll find it dere?"

"I hope so," said Ralph. "And now I think we'll have to turn back. We'll just get a packet of that special chocolate of yours, eh, Ada; and then we'll toddle home."

His heart ached not a little that night, for he knew that he should lose his little companion; and, sure enough, next evening there was no Ada to welcome him on the stairs. He heard a man's voice mingling with hers in the next room to his and knew that her father had arrived. Although he himself was to start in three days' time he felt as if he had been bereaved, and thought, as he knocked out his pipe and prepared for bed, that he was doomed to lose everything he loved.

Veronica also reached London in due course; and she also had plenty of time for reflection during the journey. In the enthusiasm of her love for Ralph she had fled from the Court with the intention of following him; but, long before the train had reached the terminus, she realised that it was easier to resolve than to accomplish. In the first place, she was not sure that Ralph would go to Australia, or that he would go at once; and, supposing he had gone, she did not know which part he would ship for. But her earlier knowledge and experience of London stood her in good stead and she was not daunted by the difficulties in her way.

It seemed to her that the best

thing she could do would be to go back to her old rooms in Camden Town, where she was known; and she was getting into a cab when a voice spoke her name. She looked round and saw a young girl who had been a fellow lodger of hers. At sight of her, Veronica's heavy heart leapt—And yet she had almost forgotten the girl's name! But in that moment of loneliness in the midst of the great crowd it came back to her as readily as if days instead of years had passed since she and Martha Ludlow had dwelt together in the grimy lodging-house of Camden Town.

"Martha!" she cried, holding out her hand. "Is it really you?"

The girl shook hands and eyed her with friendly surprise. "Lor, now, to think of meeting you, Miss Gresham! Why, I thought you'd gone away to live with some swells, and that I shouldn't set eyes on you again."

"But you have, you see," said Veronica, as cheerfully as she could. "I have come to live in London again. I am going back to the old place; will you come with me? Jump in!"

Martha laughed, the Cockney laugh of pleasant cynicism. "Why, what's the use of going there!" she said. "It's pulled down and turned into a shop; the whole row is, long ago."

Veronica looked dismayed. "Oh, then I—I don't know where to go!" she said almost to herself.

Martha's sharp eye scanned her narrowly.

"If you ain't too particular, you might come with me," she said. "I'm living in Sowerby Street; it's near here, and there's a vacant room—a couple of 'em, if they're good enough. Anyhow you'll have to make up your mind pretty quick if you don't want the cabman to have a fit."

Veronica nodded in her quick way. "I'll come. Jump in!" she said.

In less than ten minutes they had reached the house. It was in a poor but decent street, and the two girls struck a bargain with the landlady, and Veronica, almost breathless with the speed with which Circumstance had taken her in hand, found herself tenant of two rooms in No. 6 Sowerby Street, S. W.

As the girls sat over their tea in Martha's room, it was Martha who talked, and she related her uneventful life, since she had last seen Veronica, in a quick and hurried manner, as if she did not want Veronica to think there was any necessity for confidences on her part. But while Martha was explaining that she was working at a factory close by, Veronica had been considering how much she could tell of her past life, and at last said, with a touch of color in her face:

"And now I ought to tell you

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all that has happened to me. But I can't, Martha!" "I'm sure I don't want you to, Miss Gresham," Martha put in. "I always knew you was a lady, one of the swells, and I thought you'd gone to live with rich and high-born people, like you read of in the novelettes, you know. Thinking of you going away like you did, I've often thought after all there may be some truth in them."

"Yes, I have been living with rich people," said Veronica; "but I have left them and am quite poor again. See, that's all the money I have."

She displayed her purse, but without producing the effect she, with her recent acquaintance with wealth, had expected.

"Lor, why, it's a fortune! And I was going to ask you if you'd care to go to the factory with me!" exclaimed Martha. "But, goodness! you're a regular Cressies!"

"But I don't want to spend this," said Veronica. "And I shall be very glad if you can get some work for me to do at home. Do you think you can? You know that I am tolerably quick with my needle."

(To be continued.)

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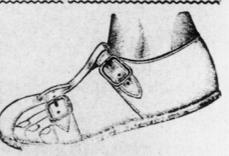
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Not only have you guided our spiritual matters with such discretion that nothing seemed to have been left undone but you also have been the means through your zeal and earnestness of obtaining for us with some assistance that we may have given you almost a new parsonage and an entirely new hall—including an association room and school—which is deserving of very great credit both to our church and our town.

We have had confidence in you for almost any emergency in connection with your duty that could arise and when request was made for a special sermon, address or lecture, we knew that when you had undertaken it the right person was in the right place.

We are fully aware too that being with us so long that you knew every member from the oldest to the youngest and when your presence was needed for prayer, comfort and consolation, you, if possible, were always at the right time and at the right place.

It is no wonder then that when we come to realize all this that we feel your departure from us so keenly. Your estimable wife, too, Mrs. Colley, will we trust share with you in the praise that we feel we must give as she also has worked for us in season and out of season in ways that we could scarcely expect having put herself oftentimes to great inconvenience for the sake of us and our church.

We therefore, dear sir, must ask you both to please accept our heartfelt gratitude for what you have done for us and we trust that wherever you may go and into whatever corner of the Lord's Vineyard you may be placed you will meet with unbounded success, and that God's blessing may rest on you and be with you carrying you through your ministerial work always helping and assisting you to engage in it and with the same zeal and earnestness as you were wont to do it here.

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Truly and faithfully yours,
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GEORGE CROCKER,
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Carbonar, Sept. 2nd, 1912.

To the Churchwardens and Members of St. James', Carbonar.

My dear Friends,—Thank you most sincerely for your very kind address, and thank you also, who have contributed to the purse. Your words and your gift, come I am sure, from very warm hearts.

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