

THE STORY OF A GREAT SECRET.

Millions of Mischief.

By HEADON HILL.

Author of "By a Hair's Breadth," "The Duke Decides," "A Race with Ruin," Etc., Etc. "And some that smile have in their hearts, I fear, millions of mischief."—Julius Caesar, Act IV., Scene i.

(Continued.)

Ignoring her profession of probity, I put another question: "Can you give me the present address of a Mr. Danvers Crane, who used to have his letters sent here about two years ago?"

"The response was a blank shake of the head, accompanied by the resumption of her seat and her knitting.

"Come," I persisted. "I am willing to give you a sovereign for the information, and I will promise not to tell the gentleman where I obtained it."

I remembered within the next few days that when I made the offer she looked up quickly, but that her eyes, missing mine as usual, wandered past me to the shop window. When she withdrew them after the lapse of a minute and focussed them as nearly as was possible to her on my face, her manner had undergone a complete change.

"Now you are talking business," she said briskly. "If you will come back in half an hour I dare say I shall have discovered what you want."

Having had nothing to eat since my early lunch at Totland, before joining the boat, I spent the interval at a confectioner's, and on presenting myself at Mrs. Webley's again I found her still in a complacent mood.

"Here is the address, though I don't know whether the gentleman lives there still," she said, handing me a slip of paper in exchange for the sovereign which I tendered so eagerly.

"Can you describe him?" I asked, pausing in the doorway.

But without looking up, Mrs. Webley muttered to her knitting that she could not do that, as she had never seen the gentleman. He had always had his letters forwarded by post.

I was out in the street in a moment, for I could not trust myself to read in that forbidden presence. Scrawled in pencil, this was what met my feverish scrutiny:—

"Danvers Crane, Esq., The Mill House, Chipping Wyvern, Essex."

CHAPTER XIV.

In Peril By Day.

My first sensation on perusing Mrs. Webley's villainous handwriting was one of disappointment. I had hoped that, though she had received the letters addressed to "Danvers Crane," they had been forwarded by her to Roger Marske, in which case I should indeed have gone far towards establishing my solution of Clara Rivington's last utterance.

That that utterance was meant in some way to indicate her murderer I had not the shadow of a doubt, but unless I could trace some connection between her and Roger Marske my reading of the cyptogram was useless for the purpose of clearing Arthur. My lover's sister might have been in correspondence with twenty "Danvers Cranes" without that shedding any light on her mysterious accusation. The poor girl had said nothing about Danvers Crane. Her words had been "Man, mask, Roger."

Still, there was of course the possibility that Roger Marske might be at the other end of the clue in spite of this. To a scheming scoundrel, bent on concealing his identity, a duel use of a false name would have been as easy as a single one. Though why, as Clara Rivington, according to my theory, must have known his real name, there should have been need for concealment in his dealings with Mrs. Webley was beyond my fathoming, and for the present I would not attempt a solution. I would go on, along the only road that had opened to me, on the chance of finding Roger Marske at the end of it. I had lost count of time in the whirl that had encircled me since my arrival at Waterloo, but now I glanced at my watch and saw that it was nearly seven o'clock. It was too late, with all the will in the world, to think of going down to Essex that day to an unknown destination, which might be miles from the nearest station, and to which I was to lose any time in the furtherance of my task. I sought an asylum for the night with our old cook in her Bloomsbury lodging-house. That I received a warm welcome, and lay awake till the small hours thinking of Arthur in his terrible predicament in the company of that hateful Herzog, are mere details which I have no space to dwell upon.

I was up betimes in the morning and, having looked out my route on the previous evening, caught an early train at Liverpool Street for Brentwood. There I ascertained by inquiry at the station that Chipping Wyvern was a mere hamlet three miles away in the heart of the country. As it was a lovely summer day, and I wished to be free to make inquiries before going to the Mill House, I obtained directions from a friendly porter, and set off to walk the distance at my best pace.

For a mile beyond the outskirts of the town I followed the high road, but then I crossed a stile to avail myself on a short cut that had been described to me. Thence onward the path led through waving cornfields and lush-green meadows till I found myself looking down into a valley through which wound a tree-girt stream.

Immediately below me lay a cluster of cottages, which I recognized from the description as Chipping Wyvern, but they were some little way from the stream, nor was there any house among them where a gentleman would be likely to reside or even to lodge. Shifting my gaze to the left, however, I discerned the peaked gables of a roof rising over the popular hall a mile from the hamlet. A glint of silver among the trees showed that the building stood on the bank, and was probably the Mill House.

Descending the hillside, I struck a lane which brought me to the cottages, and an inquiry at the first one I came to proved the truth of my conjecture. "I do hope you're going to take the Mill House, miss," said the honest countrywoman who gave me the information. "We want some gentfolks in it again to buy our eggs and poultry. There's been no living in it since four years come Christmas."

"Four years!" I exclaimed in astonishment. That put the clock back to two years before Clara Rivington had been posting letters to Mrs. Webley's to be forwarded to Danvers Crane. It was inconceivable that they should have been sent to an empty house.

"Yes there's been no tenant in the Mill House all that while," the woman proceeded as if it were a personal grievance. "The last was Sir Charles Darlington, who took it while he had the Abbey Farm shooting one season."

"Then it isn't furnished?" I asked. No, there was nothing in the house my informant said, and had not been since the few things Sir Charles had hired in Brentwood had been removed at the end of his tenancy, and she did not believe that it was so much as locked up. If I wanted to look over it I should probably be able to walk right in.

Thanking the woman, I continued my way along the lane, determined, having come so far, to explore the address given me by Mrs. Webley. I could not believe that that eminently business-like female, used as she was to the forwarding of letters, could have made a mistake, though why she should have purposely sent me on a wild-goose chase was another shaft from the quiver of mystery-tipped arrows which Fate seemed to be aiming at me. And how, I asked myself, supposing that Mrs. Webley desired to mislead me, came she to have the name of a long unoccupied house so pat to her requirements?

No sense of personal danger to myself occurred as I tried to solve the question while walking along the

lonely lane. All my indignation, if I had been sent on a fool's errand, would be for the hindrance it would be to Arthur's cause, but I do not think I should have turned back could I have foreseen what awaited me in the desolate building that now loomed through the trees ahead. For then I might have known that the errand might be that of a fool, but that it led me far in the direction I wanted to go.

When I reached the palings separating the premises from the road I saw that they consisted of two portions—an ancient mill with granaries and store-rooms attached, and a dwelling-house that had formerly been the residence of the miller. The latter part of the rambling pile was externally in a fair state of repair, but the mill had been allowed to fall into the last stages of decay. Of the motionless, weed-grown wheel but a few rotting blades remained, the others having dropped one by one, during half a century of disuse, into the turbulent mill-race, whose waters sagged and gurgled amid the slimy masonry.

Making my way along the neglected path through the wilderness of a garden, I tried the front door, and, as I had been led to expect, found it unfastened. The sudden change from the sunlight of the June day to the gloom of the dark passages blinded me for the moment, but, wishing to be undisturbed, and knowing that I should soon get accustomed to the chastened light, I closed the door behind me and walked at haphazard into a room on the left. Save for the mouldy blind that veiled the window there was nothing to be seen but the bare walls.

Returning to the passage, I went on to the room behind on the same side, and I had no sooner opened the door and stepped in than I experienced two surprises in quick succession. The window in this apartment was not only uncurtained by a blind, but it was wide open, and leading to it in a straight track across the dusty floor, there were the prints of a man's boots. I had hardly begun to ask myself what this meant, when, without any preliminary sound to warn me, the room door was shut on me and the key was turned in the lock.

Rushing to the window, I only needed a glance to tell me that I was a prisoner. Swift and silent, flowing with the strength of great depth towards the race, the mill-stream actually washed the walls of the house, cutting off all retreat.

I ran back to make a frantic, but vain attack on the locked door, and as my puny blows fell on the age-blackened panels I distinctly heard a resending foot-fall, soft and cat-like, in the passage outside.

Was my unseen captor going away without a word, leaving me with the alternatives whether to starve or drown?

(To be continued.)

AN OPEN SECRET.

Only the manufacturers know the secret of making "SWISS FOOD." Few however don't know that it is the best breakfast cereal. P. McIntosh & Son, Millers, Toronto.

Ellis—I know I'm not good looking, but people forget my face when I sing. Stella—is your singing as bad as that?

SALESMEN WHO KILL MUCH TIME. Haunt Their Offices When They Should Be Hustling Business

"A good many salesmen begin to waste time as soon as they roll out of bed in the morning," says Worthington Holman in December issue of System. "It takes them longer to get a-going on a day's work than it takes a played out freight engine to start a train of 40 coal cars on an up-grade. The conscientious study of this, these men bestow on the morning newspaper at breakfast would make the proof reader's inspection seem like a mere casual glance."

"Now, prolonged study of the newspapers in the morning never helped a salesman to secure a collection of customers' autographs in the lower right hand corner of his order blanks. A glance over the headings and the reading of an article here and there is all that is necessary to keep an intelligent man in touch with progress. There's only one worse place than the breakfast table to spend an hour or two reading a paper or discussing its contents, and that's down at the office."

When a salesman hits his office in the morning he ought to grab his sample case and fly out again as a rubber ball bounces out of a barrel. The place for him to put in his time is where the money is—among his possible customers. His chances for making money are all outside his door. He should get out on the street and stay there—unless he can bring a customer to the office with him.

"Yet the average salesman haunts his office as if he were tied to it with a string. His first act on his arrival in the morning is to anchor himself at his desk and plunge into a mass of details. A clerk at \$7 or \$8 a week would relieve him of all this work and sift the mail matter that comes in so that only essentials would be called to his attention. The extra commission he could earn in the time would pay the clerk's wages and leaves a good sized balance to salt down in the bank. But the salesman can't see it. He never has done this, so why should he make a change now? The good old way is good enough for him—the same old gait is fast enough—a quiet, easy jog like that of grandfather's mare. What's an hour or two in a whole day? The salesman lights a good cigar and wades through the mail—all of it—business letters, personal letters, advertising pamphlets, stray magazines—everything that he finds on his desk.

"Then he answers a few telephone calls, writes a couple of personal letters, asks a friend who drops in how he liked the show the night before and gets his opinion of the weather, converses at length with Tom, Dick and Harry, who call to ask him to buy something or do something or to sell something and hears the court house clock clang out nine long strokes before he finally puts on his

hat and goes out to make some money.

"Only two hours gone! But two hours spent in learning new sales arguments every morning would have transformed that agent inside of six months into a selling wizard, able to coax money out of a customer's pockets as easily as Herr Herman draws rabbits and coon babies out of a top hat. The loss of two hours a day means before the end of the year two whole months crossed off the calendar and the loss of two months chit'er commission. Sitting in an office chair ought to be a dull sort of amusement to a man who is losing money. But a good many salesmen seem to be fitted out with an abnormal sense of humor.

"Your time is your capital, your stock in trade. It is the only kind of capital that costs you nothing to get and everything to lose. The successful salesman hoards minutes and hours as a miser hoards gold. The spendthrift of time is a sure candidate for failure. Boring crawfishes have ruined more dykes than sudden tempests. It is the little things that count. The loss of 10 minutes here, an hour there, a day there, will sink any man's ship of success in the end. The salesman who lets the habit of killing time fasten on him is assassinating his main chance of getting on in the world."

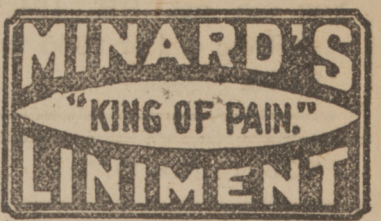
A LITTLE GIRL'S THANKS.

A little girl recently had a new picture book presented to her. She was still in the first joyous pride of possession, when a visitor came to call on her mother. The lady was shown into the room where the little girl was reading her book. "What a beautiful book you have there!" said the lady. Now it happened that the weather was very dull. "Won't you bring your book nearer the window?" said the visitor. The child did so. Just then the sun burst through the clouds and flooded the room with a brilliant light. The little girl lifted up her eyes towards the sky, and said politely, "Thank you, God. Now we can see quite nicely."

THE RURAL EMPORIUM.

"I don't know of another place on the face of the earth where it's easier to trade than 'tis at H. Price's store, over 't Squantum," said Uncle Nimrod Tarry, with his accustomed phlegm. "While it's about as seldom as hens' teeth that you can find just what you want there, you can 'most always find what you don't want—and at fair and livin' prices, too."

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