

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.)  
CHAPTER XV.  
In Peril By Night.

To say that I was alarmed by the sudden swoop upon me of an unseen enemy at the Mill House at Chipping Wyvern would fall very short of describing my first sensations. I am no heroine and I have no desire to pass as one, but I was really more angry than frightened for myself in the minutes that succeeded my entrapping. The mere fact of my having been entrapped showed that I had been recognized by someone as a dangerous adversary, and that someone could be no other than Roger Marske. I had already reason to believe that he suspected me of espousing Arthur's cause, and, though I had thought that I had shaken off his pursuit, the state of his conscience, if guilty, would account for his appearance on the scene to which my interest alone would lead me. Yet if it was so, the woman at the cottage must have been wrong in saying that the Mill House had been so long unoccupied, and Marske must have resided there, or had his letters sent there, at a much later date than she had mentioned. The logical conclusion that I had successfully established a connection between Roger Marske and Clara Rivington filled me with an elation which only wore off when I saw how impotent I was to make use of it. I should be just as dangerous to my captor a year hence as to-day. My temporary detention would yield him no security, and, lonely as was the situation of the old house, he could not hope to keep me prisoner there for ever. He must have followed or preceded me thither with the fell design of silencing me once for all, and I was not intended to leave the place alive.

I went back to the window in the hope that a closer examination of my surroundings would reveal some means of escape overlooked in my first alarm. But no; the strong current of the mill-stream surged beneath me, the walls of the house seeming to rise from the very brink of the natural bank. There was not foothold for a mouse between the damp brickwork and the fast-flowing flood, which would have carried any but the strongest swimmer into the millrace long before the opposite bank, forty feet away, could be reached. For me even the attempt was hopeless, for I could not swim at all.

I turned my attention next to the more distant prospect from the window, without meeting any encouragement there. From the opposite bank the ground rose quickly, limiting my horizon to a hedge which

formed the sky-line two hundred yards up the hillside, and as the field was covered with growing corn, scarcely yellowed as yet, no one to whom I could appeal for assistance was likely to come within hearing. A month later the harvesters would be busy there, but where then should I be?

On the chance that there might be another window parallel with that at which I stood, and to which at the risk of drowning I could swing myself, and so reach an unlocked room, I leaned out and scanned the wall to the right of me. Yes, there was a window—I could see its projecting sill—but it was so far away as to preclude all idea of reaching it as safely.

I turned to the other side, and here though there was no window at all between me and the tumble-down annex that had contained the machinery over the water-wheel, my despairing scrutiny was arrested by an object within touch of my hand. It was a metal rain pipe, running down from the eaves into the stream, and, as a forlorn hope, might be used as a means for climbing to an upper window or to the roof.

I was just twisting my body, so as to gaze upwards along the course of the pipe, when a rushing wind seemed to pass close to my face, and simultaneously two sounds, the lesser almost drowned by the greater, caused me to jump back into the room. The one was the splash of a bullet as it plunged into the mill-stream below, the other was the report of a pistol fired from the window immediately over me.

Someone, with murderous intent, had shot at me from the room above. The rustic hamlet of Chipping Wyvern did not seem such a harmless place as when I had first looked down into the picturesque valley an hour ago. I told myself hysterically, as I leaned against the wall trying to save myself from fainting with fear of that invisible foe upstairs.

The shock lasted longer than I liked, and when it passed I knew for the first time in my life the meaning of the word "nerves." I am ashamed to say that for a little while the dread of present circumstances overmastered the greater tragedy of my lover's dire peril, and the tremendous issues of which, apart from his own danger, he was the focus. That I was only a girl, shut up in a solitary house, uninhabited except by myself and a ruthless assassin bent on taking my life, must be counted to me as an excuse. For five minutes I had no ears but for possible sounds in the room overhead, no eyes but for the smiling cornfield opposite the window.

But as I slowly recovered my

scattered senses, and with them my scanty stock of courage, I remembered the trifling importance of my own danger compared with the results dependent on my safety. If that stealthy, lurking adversary succeeded in taking my life, not only would Arthur be a doomed man, but on his final repudiation of it some less scrupulous tool would be found for carrying out the murderous plot against the Prime Minister. The thought appalled me—that my slender chance of escape was all that stood to avert a great national calamity.

Not that I needed any such excitement to make me strain every sense to ensure self-preservation. My Arthur's liberty and good name demanded it, the more so that my assailant's desperate endeavour to silence me pointed to the guilt of the man with whom Arthur's sister had corresponded through the medium of the Notting Hill news vendor. Actual proof, indeed, I had not yet obtained, even as to the identity of "Danvers Crane," but that would be furnished by the first glance I got of the man who had shot at me from the upper window.

But how was I to free myself, and in such a manner, that in gaining freedom I gained also a sight of my enemy? The thing seemed impossible. The room door was of massive oak, but had it been the flimsiest jerry-builder's article there was not a single piece of furniture to use as a batter-ram. On the other hand, the mill-stream presented an impassible barrier, to say nothing of the certainty that I should be fired upon again if I so much as put my head out of window. For one wild moment I thought of the chimney, but inspection showed it to be impracticable.

One point only could I congratulate myself—that if I could not get away, neither, unless he had a boat, of which there was no sign, could my would-be slayer get at me. The stream, while it was my obstacle, was also my safeguard on one side, and on the other a pair of stout bolts kept him out. Perceiving them when the door had first been shut on me, I had promptly shot them home in their sockets.

On my remembering that first thrill of discovery that I was not alone in the house, the question occurred: why had not the wretch killed me when he stole to the door to close and lock it? I had been within a few feet of him then, with my back to the door. The answer, to my mind, seemed a simple one, and confirmatory of my suspicions. He had not used his pistol on me then because, with all chances in his fav-

or, there was yet the one chance... but even at that awful moment a triumph compensated me in some measure for the ordeal I was undergoing—the triumph so dear to a woman's heart, which, in happier circumstances, she phrases in the well-worn commonplace; "I told you so."

Above the hiss and roar of the now raging flames a man shouted from further down the passage: "Good-bye Miss Chilmark! The choice is with you—fire or water. So much for un-called-for interference."

(To be continued.)

### A JUDGE'S FALLACIES.

Judge Daniels, a United States Court Commissioner in Wisconsin, is quoted as saying that "the American dollar is the armor from which glance all the darts of the modern cupid, and is of the opinion that the high wages paid to girls and women for labor is a cause for the falling off in marriage. Judge Daniels sees in this a proof that matrimony was never the culmination of love, but the inevitable result of the dependence of women upon the sterner sex for support." He anticipates that with continued prosperity in the country matrimony will become a thing of the past. If the judge is serious he is a poor student of the woman nature, writes Henry P. Harris in Madam for January. He should know that a genuine love takes no thought of the financial side of a proposed matrimonial alliance. He should learn that there are few women who would not gladly give up their high wages and good positions in obedience to the call of love. The yearning for home life and the tender ministrations of affection are ever present in their hearts. Then again, Judge Daniels ought to know that high wages for women are rare—most of them are underpaid, and one of the chief reasons is that employers discount the possibility of matrimony and know by experience that "Cupid darts" do pierce even the adamant walls of business life. It is unfortunate that a man occupying a position so high as that of Judge Daniels should publicly proclaim so low an ideal of marriage as is indicated in the above quotation. What is needed at this time is strong and hopeful expressions on the marriage question, and optimism which will inspire respect for the institution and supply a vision of its spiritual character.

### A HEARTY OFFER.

Three brothers had met to make arrangements for celebrating the golden wedding of their beloved parents, and after a prolonged discussion and praise of the worthy couple who had done so much for them, Tom, the elder brother, said that he would pay for hire of a hall, and provide the supper. Jack followed by declaring he would give a purse of gold. Then after a long pause, Tom said: "An' what are ye gaun to do, Sandy?" "A well," came the reply, "on sic an important occasion I dinna like to be ahint my neighbors, an' I'll be delighted to provide th' grace at th' supper."

### WHERE IT STRUCK.

An Irishman, who was a member of a trades-union, fell into bad health for a long time. Two of the members of the Society were deputed to take him to town to be examined by a physician. After being admitted to the physician's house, the patient was asked his name. "Patrick, your honour." "Well, Patrick, where did the pain strike you first?" "Arrah! doctor, dear, is it where did the pain strike me first? Sure it struck me on the top of the bank going down to our yard, and not a step further could I go for the life of me, so I turned and walked home!"

### TOMMY'S EXPERIMENT.

Tommy's father and mother are both very proud of their hopeful's thirst for knowledge. But there are times when they feel impelled to the conclusion that the little fellow carries the thirst to extremes. One of these occasions occurred the other evening, when Miss Passee stayed to dinner.

As soon as Tommy had finished his second piece of pie and had given up hope of obtaining a third he asked to be allowed to leave the table for a moment. Permission was granted him, and he slipped out of the room. In a few seconds he returned with the dainty Dresden clock from the parlour mantelpiece.

"Gracious child!" exclaimed the mother, "what mischief are you up to with that clock?"

"Goin' to try 'speriment," replied Tommy with importance.

Miss Passee tittered.

"The dear little fellow is going to try an experiment!" she gushed.

"How clever of him."

While Miss Passee was speaking Tommy had carefully placed the clock on the table in front of her, with a mysterious gesture he laid his finger on his lips and enjoined silence. No one stirred.

After about two minutes Tommy's strained expression relaxed, and he clasped his hands in exultation.

"It goes!" he cried triumphantly.

"Tommy's father said nothing, but looked apprehensive.

"Of course, it goes, child," laughed Miss Passee. "What made your father think it wouldn't?"

"Well," replied the little fellow simply, "he said your face would stop a clock!"

### A LOST CROWN.

In the "Letters and Recollections of Sir Walter Scott," just published, there are many anecdotes which the "Wizard of the North" was in the habit of telling his visitors. One refers to an English party who visited Bannockburn and had the field of battle pointed out to them by a local blacksmith. The man carefully avoided every allusion which would wound English feeling. On parting the visitors offered him a crown piece for his trouble but he put it back with a proud smile. "Excuse me, gentlemen," he said, "the English have paid too dear already for Bannockburn."

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