

The Fatal Cradle

Otherwise, the Heartrending Story of Mr. Heavysides

By WILKIE COLLINS

"Nonsense!" cried Mr. Jolly. "Ha, ha, ha! You don't mean—oh?"

"That's it, sir, and enough," said the steward's mate in the most positive manner.

"This ship is bewitched," said the captain wildly. "Stop!" he called out, recovering himself a little as the doctor bustled away to the stateroom.

"Stop! If it's true, Jolly, send her husband here aft to me. Dashed if I have it out with one of the husbands!" said the captain, shaking his fist viciously at the empty air.

Ten minutes passed, and then there came staggering toward the captain, tottering this way and that with the rolling of the becalmed vessel, a long, lean, melancholy, light-haired man with a Roman nose, a watery blue eye and a complexion profusely spotted with large brown freckles. This was Simon Heavysides, the intelligent carpenter with the wife and the family of seven small children on board.

"Oh, you're the man, are you?" said the captain.

The ship lurched heavily, and Simon Heavysides staggered away with a run to the opposite side of the deck as if he preferred going straight overboard into the sea to answering the captain's question.

"You're the man, are you?" repeated the captain, following him, seizing him by the collar and pinning him by force against the bulwark. "It's your wife, is it? You infernal rascal! You have committed an act of mutiny, or, if it isn't mutiny, it's next door to it. I've put a man in irons for less. I've more than half a mind to put you in irons."

"As for the punishment you mentioned just now, sir," said Simon, "I wish to say, having seven children more than I know how to provide for and an eighth coming to make things worse, I respectfully wish to say, sir, that my mind is in irons already, and I don't know that it will make much difference if you put my body in irons along with it."

The captain mechanically let go of the carpenter's collar. The mild despair of the man melted him in spite of himself.

"Captain Gillop, this woman, Mrs. Heavysides, can't be left in your crowded stateroom in her present condition," cried Mr. Jolly. "She must be moved off into one of the empty berths, and the sooner the better, I can tell you."

The captain began to look savage again. A stateroom passenger in one of his "staterooms" was aautical anomaly subservient of all discipline. He eyed the carpenter once more as if he were mentally measuring him for a set of irons.

"I'm very sorry, sir," Simon remarked politely, "very sorry that any inadvertence of mine or Mrs. Heavysides'—"

"Take your long carcass and your long tongue forward!" thundered the captain. "Give your own orders, Jolly, my head! I don't know now!"

"Captain Gillop and gentlemen," said Mr. Jolly, wheeling round and addressing his audience with the composure of a miser despair, "that is the scrape, and if you ever heard of a worse one, I'll trouble you to compose this miserable woman by mentioning it immediately."

Captain Gillop looked at Mr. Purling and Mr. Sims. Mr. Purling and Mr. Sims looked at Captain Gillop. They were all three thunderstruck, and no wonder.

"No marks on one or other of them that happened to catch your eye?" asked Mr. Sims.

"They must have been strong marks to catch my eye in the light I had to work by," said the doctor. "I saw they were both straight, well formed children, and that's all I saw."

"I should recommend waking Mr. Smallchild and sending for Heavysides and letting the two fathers toss up for it," suggested Mr. Sims.

"Something must be done," said the doctor. "I can't leave the women alone any longer, and the moment I get below they will both ask for their babies. If the two mothers below get the slightest suspicion of the case as it stands, the nervous shock of the discovery may do dreadful mischief. They must be kept deceived in the interests of their own health. We must choose a baby for each of them when the choice of the mothers are well and up again. The question is, who's to take the responsibility? I don't usually stick at trifles, but I candidly admit that I'm afraid of it."

"I decline meddling in the matter on the ground that I am a perfect stranger," said Mr. Sims.

"And I object to interfere from precisely similar motives," added Mr. Purling.

"Wait a minute, gentlemen," said Captain Gillop. "I've got this difficult matter as I think, in its right bearings. We must make a clean breast of it to the husbands and let them take the responsibility."

Mr. Smallchild happened on this occasion to be "squaring his accounts" with the sea, and the first articulate words which escaped him in reply to the disclosure were an impatient request that they would "pitch him overboard at once and the two babies along with him." Serious reprobation was tried next with no better effect. "Settle it how you like," said Mr. Smallchild faintly. "Do you leave it to me, sir, as commander of this vessel?"

asked Captain Gillop. No answer. "Not a word, sir, if you can't speak," Mr. Smallchild added, his head round as if he were about to fall asleep. "Does that count for anything?" asked Captain Gillop of the witnesses, and the witnesses answered decidedly, Yes.

The ceremony was then repeated with Simon Heavysides, who responded, as became so intelligent a man, with a proposal of his own for solving the difficulty.

"Captain Gillop and gentlemen," said the carpenter, with fluent and melodiously politeness, "I should wish to consider Mr. Smallchild before myself in this matter. I am quite willing to

part with my baby, whichever he is, and I respectfully propose that Mr. Smallchild should take both the children and so make quite sure that he has really got possession of his own son."

The only immediate objection to this ingenious proposition was started by the doctor, who sarcastically inquired of Simon what he thought Mrs. Heavysides would say to it. The carpenter confessed that this consideration had occurred him and that Mrs. Heavysides was only too likely to be an insuperable obstacle in the way of the proposed arrangement.

"Very well, gentlemen," said Captain Gillop. "As commander on board I reckon next after the husbands in the matter of responsibility. I have considered this difficulty in all its bearings, and I'm prepared to deal with it. Follow me below, gentlemen, to the steward's pantry."

The witnesses looked round on one another in the profoundest astonishment. "Picked!" said the captain, addressing the steward, "bring out the senes. Put a clean duster in the tray, doctor, and bring the doors of the women bearing anything and oblige me by bringing those two babies in here."

"Oh, sir," exclaimed Mrs. Drabble, who had been peeping guiltily into the pantry—"oh, don't let the little dears! If anybody suffers, let it be me."

"Hold your tongue, if you please, my dear," said the captain, "and keep the secret of these proceedings if you wish to keep your place. If the ladies ask for their children, say they will have them in ten minutes' time."

The doctor came in and set down the clothes basket cradle on the pantry floor. Captain Gillop immediately put on his spectacles and closely examined the two unconscious innocents who lay beneath him.

"Six of one and half a dozen of the other," said the captain. "I don't see any difference between them. Wait a bit, though. Yes, I do. One's a bald baby. Very good. We'll begin with that one. Doctor, strip the bald baby and put him in the senes."

The bald baby protested in his own language, but in vain. In two minutes he was flat on his back in the tin tray, with the clean duster under him to take the chill off.

"Weigh him accurately, Picked," continued the captain. "Weigh him if necessary to an eighth of an ounce. Gentlemen, watch this proceeding closely. It's a very important one."

While the steward was weighing and the witnesses were watching, Captain Gillop asked his first mate for the log-book of the ship and for pen and ink.

"How much, Picked?" asked the captain, opening the book.

"Seven pounds one ounce and a quarter," answered the steward.

"Right, gentlemen!" pursued the captain. "Quite right," said the witnesses.

"Bald child, distinguished as No. 1; weight, 7 pounds 14 ounces (avoirdupois)," repeated the captain, writing down the entry in the logbook. "Very good. We'll put the bald baby back now, doctor, and try the hairy one next."

The hairy one protested also in his own language and also in vain.

"How much, Picked?" asked the captain.

"Six pounds fourteen ounces and three-quarters," replied the steward.

"Right, gentlemen!" inquired the captain.

"Quite right," answered the witnesses.

"Hairy child, distinguished as No. 2; weight, 6 pounds 14 ounces (avoirdupois)," repeated and wrote the captain. "Much obliged to you, Jolly. That will do. In the serious difficulty which now besets us, gentlemen, my decision is as follows: Let us give the heaviest of the two babies to the heaviest of the two women and let the lightest then fall as a matter of course to the other. In a week's time, if this weather holds, we shall all, please God, be in port, and if there's a better way out of this mess than my way, the passengers and lawyers ashore may find it and welcome."

With these words the captain closed his oration, and the assembled council immediately sanctioned the proposal submitted to them with all the unanimity of men who had no idea of their own to set up in opposition.

Mr. Jolly was next requested as the only available authority to settle the question of weight between Mrs. Smallchild and Mrs. Heavysides and decided it without a moment's hesitation. The captain's wife on the independence of the ground she was the taller and stouter woman of the two. Thereupon the bald baby, "distinguished as No. 1," was taken into Mrs. Heavysides' cabin, and the hairy baby, "distinguished as No. 2," was removed to Mrs. Smallchild. Before 7 o'clock Mr. Jolly reported that the mothers and sons, larboard and starboard, were as happy and comfortable as any four people on board ship could possibly wish to be.

In ten days the ship was in port, and the news was broken to the two mothers. Each of the two mothers was a baby after ten days' experience of it, and each one of the two sons was in Mrs. Drabble's condition of not knowing which was which.

Every test was tried—first, the test by the doctor, who only repeated what he had told the captain; secondly, the test by personal resemblance, which failed in consequence of the light hair, blue eyes and Roman nose shared in common by the fathers and the light hair, blue eyes and no nose worth mentioning being in common by the children; thirdly, the test of Mrs. Drabble, which began and ended in three talking-tomorrow-side and floods of tears on the latter; fourthly, the test by legal decision, which broke down through the total absence of any instructions for the law to act on; fifthly and lastly, the test by appeal to the husbands, which fell to the ground in consequence of the husbands knowing nothing about the matter in hand. The captain's baritone test by weight remained the test still, and here, as I, a man of the lower order, without a penny to lose myself with, in consequence.

Yes! I was the bald-baby of that memorable period. My excess in weight settled my destiny in life. The fathers and mothers on either side kept the babies according to the captain's principle of distribution in despair of knowing what else to do. Mr. Smallchild, who was sharp enough when not senesick, made his fortune. Simon Heavysides persisted in increasing his family and died in the workhouse.

Judge for yourself, as Mr. Jolly might say, how the two boys born at sea fared in after life. I, the bald baby, have seen nothing of the hairy baby for years past. He may be short, like Mr. Smallchild, but I happen to know that he is wonderfully like Heavysides, deceased, in the face. I may be tall, like the carpenter, but I have the Smallchild eyes, hair and expression notwithstanding. Make what you can of that. You will find it come in the end to the same thing. Smallchild junior prospers in the world because he weighed 6 pounds 14 ounces. Heavysides junior falls in the world because he weighed 7 pounds 14 ounces. Such is destiny, and such is life. I'll never forgive my destiny as long as I live. There is my grievance. I wish you good morning.

Character of the Country of Greece.
No organic development in the history of the human mind has been better known or has been richer and at the same time more simple than that of the Grecian genius. Notwithstanding the extent to which the Hellenic population was scattered and the distances which separated the various groups, the evolution, taken as a whole, was governed by the same laws and exhibited the same phases in like order and under like conditions in all the lands in which the Greek language was spoken.

The different strata were like trees of the same species, destined to reproduce the same fruits, the color and taste of which were liable, it is true, to be modified by local influences, but the variations were kept within narrow bounds. So these peoples were kept from greatly diverging by their constant communication with each other, which was aided by the forms and relations of their lands—pronouns jutting out toward one another and frequent islands, so that the sailor between distant ports was hardly ever out of sight of some Grecian headland.

Nowhere else does the Mediterranean offer such a disposition, and there was in this geographical feature a direct provocative of the spirit of adventure.

Sundials in China.
The Chinese have never accomplished anything in the way of making sundials. These devices were introduced to them by the Mohammedans.

There is one in the imperial observatory at Peking more than four feet in diameter. Smaller sundials are often found within the public offices of all those made under the direction of missionaries or their pupils.

From remote antiquity a family named Wang, residing in Hinnighien, has had the exclusive manufacture of pocket compasses, with which sundials are often combined. In most of these a thread attached to the lid of the instrument serves to throw the shadow. They are used in all parts of the empire.

One kind employed by clockmakers for adjusting their timepieces is marked with notches, one for each month in the year, to give the thread a different angle for every month.

A Singular Iron Meteorite.
The University of Wisconsin has come into possession of a unique piece of meteoric iron. The date of its fall is not known, but it was plowed up near Algoma, Wis., in 1887 and until last March remained in the hands of the farmer who discovered it. It is shaped like a shield, 10 inches long by 6 broad and an inch thick in the center. The convex surface is smooth, while the concave side is rough and incrustated with oxide. It is believed that it moved broadside through the air, the convex surface in front. On this surface are strongly marked lines, radiating from a nearly flat elliptical center. The lines deepen as they approach the periphery.

A Journalist on the Rampage.
Rousseau, the originator of the "Comic Tribunaux," amused himself one evening, along with a few friends, in pulling down the signboards and changing their places. Next day he would write in the papers, "When will the prefecture of police rid us of the gang of ruffians that disturb the public peace and annoy our worthy shopkeepers?" The authorities, thus put on their mettle, set a few extra detectives at work, with the result that Rousseau himself was arrested and taken before the commissaire.

"Your name?" inquired that functionary.

"Rousseau."

"Your profession?"

"Actress at the Odéon."

"What did you say?"

"Actress at the Odéon."

"My dear sir, this is not the place to carry on the silly jokes you have been practicing in the streets. You might have to smart for it, you know."

"Monsieur le commissaire," said Rousseau, "the pretty women at the Odéon theater are not to be prevailed upon to take the parts of old ladies, and the manager has decided to engage a few gentlemen for the purpose, and I am among the number. I was therefore quite correct in saying that I am an actress at the Odéon."

And the commissaire gravely wrote down, "M. Rousseau, actress at the Odéon."—Magazin des Familles.

He Spoke Too Quick.
A certain well known Frenchman, an octogenarian, spent most of his time in his young days in Paris hunting up valuable books among the second-hand bookshops. He rarely came across a "find," but his fervor never abated. He was a bachelor and for a housekeeper had an extremely plain woman, who, however, had caught from her master the taste for old books and occasionally came home with an armful when she had been marketing. One day the housekeeper appeared with a parcel of books wrapped in paper and asked her master to look at them. Among the rubbish was a small volume bearing in red characters, "What have you paid for this?" The master gazed after looking at the title page. "Thirty sous for the lot," the servant replied. "But, my good woman, this book alone is worth 10,000 francs!" the bibliomane went on and the moment after regretted the unwise speech. The woman pricked up her ears, and in vain did the master try to recall his remark. "I'll give you 100 francs for it," he said. "But monsieur said just now it was worth 10,000," "I'll give you 500," "No, no," "Seven hundred and fifty." But it was no use, and, to make a long story short, the

master married the dame in order to obtain the first edition of the "Hep-tameron" (1559).

The Abbey's Funeral Roll.
Some notable names have been added to the roll call of the abbey under Dean Bradley. Charles Darwin, Arch-bishop French, himself once dean of Westminster; Robert Browning, Alfred Tennyson and William Ewart Gladstone are among the names that have been added to the burial roll of the abbey under Dean Bradley's supervision, and nobody will quarrel with this. It will surprise many people perhaps to know that only ten persons have been buried in the abbey in the last twenty years and that only two of these were women, Lady Louisa Percy and Mrs. Gladstone. These, with two poets, two architects, an archbishop, a scientist, a queen's printer and a statesman, complete the roll of the great dead who have been buried in Westminster abbey since Dr. Bradley became dean.—St. James' Gazette.

KILLED TWO IN A HURRY.
Only Quick Shooting Saved "Big Jim" From Sudden Death.

"Talking of duels which occurred during the early days in California just after gold had been discovered and the only law was the rapid fire derringer," said an old timer, "reminds me of the story told me by my father, who was a forty-year, of how 'Big Jim' Robinson, a terror of the mining camps, one time killed two men without rising from a card table and while one man was standing behind him. He did it, too, without turning round."

"It appears that Robinson and three other men were playing cards. Although a tough proposition and a man killer by nature, Robinson was by no means a card sharp and hated one worse even than an Indian, which he preferred killing to eating breakfast. Now, the three other men at the gaming table were sharps of the first water. At first Robinson won considerably, and the others pretended to complain of their own ill luck. Finally, however, luck seemed to turn, and the game went wrong against Robinson."

"Robinson began to suspect that he was being duped and finally caught them in the act of receiving a sign from a fifth party standing directly behind his chair and where he could see his hand. Without saying anything Robinson slipped his hand down into his back pocket and managed without attracting attention to draw his gun and lay it across his knees."

"A little later in the game his chance came. He held four kings and staked high on it. His opponent, sitting directly opposite, however, won out with four aces. That was all right; but, unluckily for the sharps, one of them accidentally dropped on the table a fifth ace. That showed Robinson clearly that extra cards were being run in on him, and without rising he accused his partners of cheating. Every hand went immediately to the hip pockets, and a minute later a lively fight would have probably ensued. Suddenly Robinson's derringer rang out with two shots. The man opposite slid down under the table without a groan, and the man behind Robinson dropped to the floor. Quick as a flash Robinson had shot them both, one of them unseen and both without aiming. The suddenness of the move took the fight all out of the other two players, and at Robinson's command they dropped their guns and put up their hands."

"The curious part of the shooting was this: Robinson realized that if he shot the man in front, who had his revolver partially drawn, his pal behind would shoot him in the back; so without aiming Robinson fired at the one in front and by a quick backward movement fired over his own shoulder without looking at the man behind. As though to prove his suspicions, a loaded weapon was found in the hands of both the dead gamblers. You can imagine how quickly Robinson's mind must have taken in the situation and how well he acted in his own defense."

—Washington Post.

His Record Book.
In a case which was being tried the other day in a Vienna law court a captain who drove a one horse chariot was called as a witness. To test the trustworthiness of the evidence he was



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