|{{{{</u>|}}}}}}}}}

CHAPTER V—Continued.

Mrs. Best was sitting on the corner of the table, evidently drunk; she was not dressed as I had seen her before but rather as a weak imitation of Miss Milne: her exact position in the estab-Hishment I discovered later was, to use her own words, that of "Miss Milne's chap-er-on." About the room stood many empty beer and spirit buttles, and in the cold gray dawn of the morning and the semi-darkness resulting from the much-broken, muchstuffed window, the scene, taken as a whole, was not invigorating.

As I entered the room, Miss Milne

turned her head mechanically toward me, stared for a moment, and then resumed her previous attitude. Mrs, Best was the first to break the

silence. "You've got your wish, you see," the said, "What wish?"

"You said you 'oped it would go, and it's gone." When did it die?"

"After the first dose. Good medi-eine, that. Ha! ha! I'll keep the rest for myself; it may come in 'handy." The woman's brutal insinuations stung me to the quick, but to make any reply was useless; so turning to Miss Milne I asked her what hour the child died. At first she made no effort to answer me, nor any movement: then I took two steps nearer her and repeated my question. She swung suddenly around, and with the stiffest

possible bow, said:
"I regret I am unable to tell you;
in fact, I know nothing whatever
about it." "Indeed, this is rather a serious

"I quite agree with you, Dr. Rigby. By the way, you saw the child yourself last night, and sent. I be-Heve, some drugs. May I ask at whose

"Certainly. Mrs. Carpenter heard of its whereabouts, and asked me to see it, as it needed, she thought, some

"I'm sure I'm indebted to Mrs. Carpenter"; then after a pause: "And also to you. However, I'm afraid you can be of no further assistance to us. and it's a great shame to detain you at this hour."

This was said with firm, cold polite ress and a movement as if to show me the door. There seemed nothing for it but to go, and yet to leave her in that predicament with a half-drunk-em companion, and a dead child that needed some attending to, was out of

But I can't leave you in this condition, Miss Milne; you must let me do something for you. What about the child? What about the burying of

"I can't say that I have; you see, has come upon me rather suddenly and I'm not versed in the de-tails of funerals." Then with a faint smile: "They are out of my line: follow if only you will take me to preservation of evidence of each fact, and the preservation of evidence of each particular fact, and the preservation of evidence of each particular fact, and the preservation of evidence of each particular fact, and the preservation of evidence of each particular fact, and the preservation of evidence of each particular fact, and the preservation of evidence of each particular fact, and the preservation of evidence of each particular fact, and the preservation of evidence of each particular fact, and the preservation of evidence of each fact, and the preservati bors will be able to direct me. We your part. Go the way you are going the secured for me a chart of the secured for me and where will it lead you. To a life the mere incident of your being known as

for it but to go; and I went home and every wish of your heart satisfied." sat down in the cold dining-room and felt miserable.

CHAPTER VI.

"This is quite an unexpected pleasure, Miss Milne. I thought you were never coming to my house again."

This was said to her as I entered the surgery a fortnight after the death and burial of her child. She had come for my astonishment, was dressed respect myself for you as no other woman atily, as of old.

here. I can hardly realize myself in as I had never seen her before. There decent society—as I suppose you would call it—and amid its humdrum people. I feel as much as Mr. Stanley would probably feel after returning from the center of Africa. I feel that I've been traveling, exploring, prospecting, as they say in gold-mining countries. But

you: I am far more interested than you think in your welfare."

"Are you? How much are you? I know the kind of woman you want me to be. Now, how much would you sacrifice to see me that kind of woman?"

you could ask of me. You saved, or helped materially to save my life."

her feet, and staggering to the mantel-piece, leaned on it, hiding all but a lit-tle of her face, and what I saw was "Why is it impossible?" "Miss Milne, what on earth do you

mean? I-I ruined your life, I-"Yes, you!" Then drawing herself up to her full height, and a deathlike pallor over her face as the only symptom of excitement, she continued: "Yes, you! I—I. Mary Milne, was born a good girl of good parents, and given a heart and capacity to love beyond most women. I, of all my brothers and sisters was the one chosen fit to fight."

"No, we will not end this discussion. most women. I, of all my brothers and sisters, was the one chosen fit to fight I have shown you but one side of the my way, and I fought my way and won, without effort and honestly, the love and respect of all I came in contact with, until—I'll cut it short—I met a devotion that will follow if you act and a less pleasing one. I have offered you myself, my energies, my life, and a devotion that will follow if you act with until—I'll cut it short—I met with a demon, a devil, a hell-begotten devil in priest's clothing, and he—what does he do? He uses the rights and privileges of his church to unlock my heart, and in the confessional lays bare all its secrets, its strength and its weakness—and all for what? That he may lay them and me on the altar of his sensuality, and—for a moment's pleasure, sacrifice them."

Miss Milne grew desperate as she thought of her wrongs, and spoke out with an entire vigor begotten of the memory of them.

All devotion that will follow if you accept my offer. Now I will you something else. But first, will you favor me so far as to resume your scat?"

I obeyed like a child this desperate woman, and reutrned to the table, and leaning my head on my hand, looked her in the face. 'Twas well I did, for the marvelous changes of expression that followed each other during the next ten minutes were terrible to behold and added tremendous emphasis to all she said.

"What I have to tell you now, Dr.

with an entire vigor begotten of the memory of them.

"Ugh!" she continued, as she stamped her foot—"ugh! Should I not have been justified in declaring eternal war against the whole of your sex? But what do I do? I take my fate bumbly, I accept the loss of the best half of me and live for the rest, I and Arthur settle down to a half existence, You are not omnipotent."

phasis to all she said.
"What I have to tell you now, Dr. Rigby, is what will follow if you do not accept my offer. In the first place. It you do not marry me, you shall marry no one else."

"Miss Milne, what do you mean? You are not omnipotent."

カモモモモモモモモ・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・ when you come—yes, you need not look up surprised; I do not blame you; your intentions were all good, but the results were all bad—you come, and you know what you did—I told you cnce—you awakened all my old better You made me love you, love you with the desperation of one's last hope. caught at your love as a drowning scul at a straw. I saw in it a possibility of restoration to a better and a

fuller life. I found I was not dead, nor any part of me. Then came the news of your engagement, and with it the death of my last chance; then followed what you call my fall, what I call my grand protest against the in-famous order of things, involving my damnation here and hereafter; then the birth of that child, that child whose withered, wrinkled face seemed to be the record of my destiny written small, then its welcome death; and what followed? Well, I do not want to be pedantic or to tire you, but with that child's death came a reawakening of my dreams, a resurrection of what I might have been, and with that hope

Miss Milne paused here to take breath, and the silence that followed was painful in the extreme. All this was so new to me, so startling, that no answer was possible and any remark out of place, and so I sat and listened.

the thought of you.

"You are not the man I ought to love," she continued. "You are not the strong man I want—you're a weak character, but—but I love you. It must have been that I needed help and sympathy, and you gave it to me, or that with the better half of me died my self-control. It doesn't matter. I loved you, and with that love there came, in the stillness of the night and through the dark gloom of the life I was leading, a picture of what was even now possible if only you would return my love. This grew upon me day by day, until my gay dresses and gayer life were no longer possible, and so I went back to my old dresses and my quiet life; but the passion grew stronger and stronger, until it drove me here to learn my fate. You're start'ed-you think me an unnatural woman-I cannot help that. A woman fleeing from a life of misery, with the devil at her back, does not pause to ask if the road she is traveung is the

road of escape?" you expect of me? Are you mad? You the series of trials by which it has pleased Providence to visit me. "I do know it, and to whom? To

weak little-"Miss Milne," I shouted, "not an other word of her! How dare you!" "I dare anything, everything, but I H? All that wants seeing to. Have will not speak of her again: I will—if only you will sit down again and not look at me so"—for I had risen to my feet, and with arms folded across my breast, stood staring at this mad woman-"I will only talk of myself, only tell you as best I can of all that will This was said with much more authority, and now there was nothing my hand in yours, and you shall have

> She paused a moment for breath, and then, in a lower tone, but with the same firm voice, she continued: "I am no ordinary woman."

"Indeed you are not." "If you mean that for satire I can only say this is neither the time nor the occasion for satire. I repeat, I am no ordinary woman. I can love as no other woman can love, and I can fight something-what, I knew not-and, to for you, work for you and sacrifice

"So I expected; and to tell you the truth, I don't know myself what I've tome for. It's strange to come back pelled to look up at her, and I saw her was about her face and attitude an air of firm nobility that testified to her capacity to be all she said and do all she promised.

You said just now," she continued that you would grant anything I could ask, because you were interested in I am wasting your time."
"Not at all; I am really glad to see you in your practice. Now, I want no reward for the little I have done; I am not pleading on these grounds, but for the good of both of us, perhaps the very lives and destinies of both of us." I rose from the chair, and, with as much composure as I could assume

"I would sacrifice almost anything walked to the door. Holding the han-by could sak of me. You saved, or die of it in my hand, I said: "Miss elped materially to save my life."

"And as a return you ruined mine!"

As Miss Milne said this she rose to be productive of no good. What you

"Why is it impossible?"
"In the first place, I do not feel in the least inclined to break off my engagement; in the second place, I could Yes, you!" Then drawing herself not consistently, with what is due to

Tam sufficiently so for that. I don't v. HEPP. waste my breath in idle threats. I say again, you shall marry no one but

I sprang to my feet, and was about to speak, when, with a movement of her hand, she silenced me and said: 'Now, let there be no misunderstanding—I offer you myself, and with it prosperity and happiness, or a life of absolute isolation and failure. for you to chooss. Now we will close this interview." And with a bow she left me. Before closing the door, she added: "You had better take a couple of days to decide. Shall I call again or will you write?"
"I will write," was all I could say:

and the door closed and she was gone Of the next two hours I have no rec election. I sat there bewildered and lumfounded. I don't think I had any faith in this woman's threats; it was impossible she could do me any harm or prevent my marriage; and yet what a desperate creature she was! Was anything impossible for her? CHAPTER VII.

The morning following this memorable interview with Miss Milne found me wearied, haggard and downcast. I sat over my untasted breakfast in state of unconsciousness; my mind wandered from topic to topic, but could

settle itself on nothing.

In the evening a double rap announced the arrival of the last post. went to the door myself and took a letter directed to me in a woman's hand—a bold, firm hand that was entirely unknown to me. I went back to the dining room, and read as follows:

"Doctor Rigby: Sir-I ought not to trouble you at this time, when you must be thoroughly busy preparing for your approaching wedding (which I hear is arranged for the 14th inst.) But an my letter is upon a purely business matter, that I think had much better be settled before than after that event, you will. I am sure, forgive me.

"A Series of misfortunes has, during the last few months, combined to involve me in a good deal of debt. I alude to the failure of my business, the board and lodging of Arthur at Brigion, the Illness and death of my poor baby, the purchase of mourning, and the extra nourishment necessary to sustain me through those trials.

"More than that, I have through hem become involved in another way, You remember at your suggestion, Mrs. Best, my good nurse, was induced to leave her home and undertake the care of me, and by so doing she sacrificed er connection, and with it her source of income. It is only right, therefore, that I should see her in some way proded for.

"Now, had my health and strength ermitted me to undertake some occupation, and so support myself and her, would not have thought of troubling conventional one, but only-is it the But the fact is, my constitution has been more or less ruined through

"Under these circumstances I have had to look around to see from whom I had a right to expect help. And as you were the cause of all my late misfortunes, and as there is none other to whom I can apply. I think you will agree with me that I am justified in

troubling you. "Of course, the evidence of your be ing personally interested in the removal of my little one is purely circumstantisl; but then my own thoughtful care of each particular fact, and the mere incident of your being known as a constant visitor of mine, coming and coing from my house at all hours of the day and night, your lavish distribution of money, clothing, and luxuries of the good order, are quite minor de-tails, and from a legal point of view of not much value; but, added to the remark about the undesirability of saving the child made to my nurse and others, the fact of your sending the medicine from your house, and (if you will not think me uncomplimentary) a certain similarity in the cast of features, they give me, with the heavier and more important items of evidence, documentary, analytical, and other, quite sufficient to instify my claim unon you to the minds of any impartial

"The cause of justice does not render it necessary that I should make any heavy call upon your purse; I can lighten your responsibilities and your anxieties without materially injuring your income: but that this may be done peaceably and without further shock to the feelings of either of us. it is necessary that it be done at once M. MILNE." and with few words. I am sir. ently yours.

(To be continued.)

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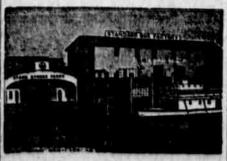
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