

Bound by a Spell

CHAPTER XXV.—(Continued.)

"One day he asked permission to take me with him to see the horticultural show, at Bury. I did not wish to go. I always had a strange feeling, almost amounting to a dread, of being left alone with him; but I would not have mentioned it for the world. Grandfather, however, thinking that it would please me, gave a ready assent.

"In the exhibition we met a very disagreeable-looking old lady, who was introduced to me as Mrs. Humphries, and who invited us home to dine with her. She was accompanied by a young lady, with remarkably red hair, and strange-looking eyes, whom she called Judith.

"We went, Cousin John and I, home with them to a large brick house in a retired part of the town. After dinner Cousin John and the young lady, whom he called Miss Porter, began to talk about mesmerism. I had never heard of it before—did not know the meaning of the word. Suddenly she turned to me, and asked me how I should like to be mesmerized. I answered that I did not know what it was. 'Oh, it's the strangest sensation in the world,' said John.

"After some little persuasion, I consented, but very unwillingly. Then they took me into a dark room. Miss Porter sat down in a chair. On the wall at the back was hung a black curtain, and around her shoulders was draped a black cloth. Upon the table in front of her was a lamp, in which was fixed a powerful reflector, that threw a dazzling light upon her face. She seated me opposite to her, and bade me fix my eyes upon hers. I did so. Never can I forget the effect. I was once taken to a wild beast show. The glare of her wide, distended eyes was exactly like that which I had seen there in the tiger's. It fastened upon mine, and held them fascinated. I had no power to shift them, and as I gazed, spellbound, upon hers, they gradually dilated until they seemed to be two enormous globes of fire, suspended in utter darkness. Then I lost all recollection.

"It appears that while in this condition you are compelled to answer truthfully any question put to you, and to execute upon waking any promise you may have promised to perform while in the mesmeric state. I believe that in my trance they extracted from me every particular of my uncle's will.

"When I awoke I found myself in the dining room, lying upon a sofa, and Mrs. Humphries holding a vial to my nose. I felt very weak, and strangely dazed. Cousin John made very light of the matter—said that I had got frightened, and fainted away, and impressed upon me that I must be sure not to speak of it to grandfather. And I did not.

"I cannot dwell upon the dreadful story. After this he found ways and means to subject me again and again to this terrible influence. I grew pale and emaciated; my nerves were shattered, my memory was almost destroyed, and a kind of stupefaction seized upon my brain. Night and day, sleeping or waking, those awful globes of fire glared at me out of the darkness. It was killing me, as slowly and surely as the deadliest poison could have done. My grandfather was in a troubled state of mind. Physicians were brought; they pronounced my complaint to be a gradual softening of the brain.

"In the meantime, I was restrained from divulging the truth by threats from Cousin John—threats not only against myself, but against my dear grandfather. What torture could have exceeded what I then endured? But I could not reason. I had not the power to make one effort to free myself from the hideous thralldom; and at last I became utterly passive.

"One day, I was seized with a resistless impulse to steal my grandfather's keys, go to the cabinet, seek for the secret drawer, take out the will and carry it to Cousin John. Then I knew that such an act had been imposed upon me by those terrible eyes in one of my trances. All day I fought against it; but an invisible power seemed driving me on. Suddenly, the thought flashed upon me that I would run away—fly from all, everything. The instant it occurred, I acted upon it. I ran up into my room, opened my desk, took out all the money I had saved, and while my grandfather was taking his after-dinner nap, stole out of the house—not thinking, in my haste, even to put a hat on. It was quite dark, and no one observed me. I went on, taking no heed of my whereabouts, until I found myself in the streets of Bury.

"I had crept under the old Norman gateway, where you saw me. I remembered that I had once chanced to see the city road pointed out from a spot very near to where I stood. When you left me, I took that road. That night, or, rather, towards morning, I slept in a wood. For a long time I dared not inquire my way, nor, until I was half dead with exhaustion, did I venture to buy food.

"After terrible hardships, I reached Ipswich. There I purchased new clothes and took the train to the city. Although I had still money in my pocket when I arrived, I began to think of how I should get my living.

"But did you not think of writing to your grandfather—of telling him all you had suffered?" I interrupted.

"Oh, no; I dared not. In the first place, I felt that a wicked creature they had made of me—how I had betrayed his confidence—how I had almost become a thief; and I knew that if I went back to him to-morrow, the same thing would begin over again. For while they knew my whereabouts, no earthly power could protect me from the influence of those awful eyes. My grandfather would think me dead—my cousin would inherit all his wealth, and I should be safe; and so I resolved that henceforth I would live unknown, and that not even my name should ever pass my lips.

"And how did you obtain employment?" I asked.

"Well, people had always praised my drawings, and paintings, and needlework

very much. Seeing such things exposed for sale, suggested the idea of offering some of my own work. I found a ready sale, and so I have gone on ever since. And now you know my history."

"Have you seen your cousin John since you have been in this house?" I inquired.

"Yes," she answered, shuddering. "This evening, as I was sitting at the window watching the sunset, I heard my door open, and there, standing upon the threshold, I turned and saw him and that awful woman. I screamed with terror, and then the room seemed to swim round, and I almost fainted."

"And what did they want of you?"

"Cousin John pretended to be very much in love with me, and proposed that we should marry. He said that he had come from my grandfather, who was very angry at my flight, and who would never forgive me but upon those terms; but that if I consented, we should at once return to Rose Cottage, and all would be forgiven."

The door was suddenly burst open. Judith appeared.

CHAPTER XXVI.

With a faint cry, Clara shrank back, shuddering, whilst I stood motionless for a moment, transfixed with dismay, gazing upon our mutual enemy.

"My appearance seems a pleasure more startling than agreeable," said Judith, with that stinging irony that was to me worse than her most fiendish mood. "One would suppose you were about to leave the house without one word of adieu to your host or hostess. But we do not part with our guests so easily."

Instinctively I had drawn near to Clara, as though I would protect her. She had sunk into a chair, trembling, not daring to cast a glance at Judith, who had now advanced into the room.

"You do not seem to be aware, Miss Clara, that this gentleman and I are well acquainted. He has not told you of our connection, I presume?"

"No, no; for heaven's sake, do not tell her, if you have any mercy, I implore you!" I interrupted, throwing myself upon my knees before her.

I might as well have pleaded to a hungry tigress. Without deigning to notice my supplication, she still went on, in the same strain of cold-blooded mockery. "Perhaps you are not aware that this lover of yours is my husband!"

For a moment Clara looked stunned, bewildered, unable to realize the idea those words contained; but as I made a movement towards her, she uttered a low cry, and shrank cowering into a corner.

"No, no!" I exclaimed, in a voice of anguish.

was it to me now who knew that she was my wife! Had she desired it, I would have led her through the public streets, and have proclaimed the fact to every passer-by. If I could save Clara by such a now trifling sacrifice, it would be at least some reparation for my cruel conduct to her.

When our bargain was concluded, she lay down upon the sofa; I sat still in the same position upon the bed, with my elbows resting upon my knees and my face buried in my hands; and thus the broad daylight saw me as it tried to struggle through the curtained window.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Utterly worn out, I was just sinking into a dozing sleep, when I was roused by the hateful tones of Mr. Porter's voice greeting his daughter, as she sat at breakfast in my room. Another enemy added to the number that encompassed me!

He quickly turned to me and began, in his usual hypocritical snuff, "I hear that it hath pleased Providence to put you in a fair way of recovery. So you thought to get off, Master Silas, did you?" he said, with a satyr-like leer upon his face; "but Judith has laid her runaway husband safely by the heels this time."

About 12 o'clock that same morning there came a knock at the door. It was the nurse; there was a whispered conversation, and then Judith came up to me—I was sitting before the fire in an easy chair—and said, quietly, "Madame Berne, the woman whom I told you was coming to-day, is here; remember your promise, and I will remember mine."

In a few moments there came into the room a tall, iron-looking woman, Judith's father, cringed, and fawned, and leered, and snuffed. But Judith stood with her hand resting upon the table, cold and defiant, never deigning to her visitor even a salutation.

"And you are Silas Carson?" she said, fixing upon me a strangely intense look.

"That is the name I am known by," I answered.

"And is this woman your wife?" she asked, pointing to Judith.

I paused for a moment. I could feel Judith's fevered eyes were upon me; then I answered quietly, "She is."

Madame Berne paused again, and turned her cold glance upon her; it was met by one as fearless as her own.

"The sum of \$2,500 a year is settled upon you as an annuity," she said, again turning to me as the door closed upon Mr. Porter. "It will be paid you quarterly, on personal application, by Messrs. Fogie & Quick. Your wife"—there was a strange emphasis upon the word—"communicated with me through those lawyers; and as I was informed that you were too ill to attend at their office, I have come here to judge, as far as I am able, whether you are the man you pretend to be."

"Have you no wish to inquire into your parentage, Silas?" said Judith, speaking for the first time.

"It will be useless if he has," answered Madame Berne, freely; "he will never know it."

As she turned to leave the room, another figure appeared upon the scene—Montgomery was standing in the doorway. She started back, with a look and gesture of loathing; but the next moment drew herself up, with the same frigid, passionless look upon her face as before.

WICKLY'S WOODS

CHAPTER X.—(Continued.)

She could not believe it. This man who had stood Sunday after Sunday in the little white church, and had talked so earnestly of the after life in relation to the infinitely smaller questions of this life! This man who had first given her so lofty a perception of the character and person of his principal, by revealing a surprising breadth and depth in himself!

It could not be that he could sink away from all of them for the base purpose of perfecting a villainous scheme to rob the people among whom he had lived continuously for nearly half a year; and whose kindly acts of confidence, trustful hospitality had fallen about him like the dew of heaven, as he had said.

It had been said that she had become his only defender. But she could do no less than believe that the assistant and confidante of Prof. Huntley could be nothing less than a sincere and honorable man in all his dealings.

But why! why! could he not come to her and tell her all? He had shown, and had spoken in hundreds of ways an admiration and fondness for her that had given Sandtown the undoubted right to say that he was "head-over-heels in love with her."

She had been jestingly cruel to him in that respect, it is true! But he knew that was because of her love for the man who was his master and employer. How could the slave and the hireling expect more of her?

But at last it was daylight, and Mrs. Redden was calling them to breakfast.

"Conrad is his a good spell ago," Mrs. Redden said in explanation of the absence of the head of the house from the head of the table. "H-yur, Miss Weekly! you set right down in this chair close to the stove. Hit's kine uh damp on chilly this mornin'. Lizzy, you set down there. Your young un hearty, un kin stan' the damp better'n your mammy. How did you sleep?" I was certain at your bed last night. Hit's been so sweltry for the last three-four weeks. You take cream un sugar both, don't yah? I do! I don't want'n no coffy less hit's got good fraish cream un sugar, both. Hup yourself to the fry, Lizzy, un pass it to your mammy. That salt-rius bread haint as fraish uh hit ort to be! When did you first noose anything outen the way with John Miss Weekly?"

"Never till yesterday morning, after we had heard the news of the bank breaking," said Mrs. Wickly, who was sitting at the right of her friend and neighbor, trying very hard to show her appreciation of the friendly offices of the kind-hearted old Hoosier woman, by nibbling a very little at almost every bit of delicacy that was heaped in almost unlimited variety and profusion upon her plate.

"Well, well, I do say! Why, I see to Conrad two weeks ago, Miss Weekly, 'They's some-h'n the matter with Squar Weekly. He's a do-un work at he'd ortn't to do,' s'at. I nudder see a man a do-un un weeman's work, but some-h'n wrong." Why, I'd git down un crawl on my han's un knees, Miss Weekly, 'fore I'd uvver then a lettun Conrad go out un milk one uh ar cows. He haint nudder done no weeman's work sent him un we went together, so he haint. Why, when Lum that was a baby—

"Now, mother," said Columbus Redden, warningly, "please don't say anything about that interesting period of my existence, on this occasion, will you? I don't care for those reminiscences myself, having heard them twice a week for, say fifteen years."

CHAPTER XI.

Columbus glanced a little confusedly at Lizzy Wickly. His mother paused in the very act of cutting her fried ham, and sat ominously stiff with both arms extended and the knife and fork held ready to resume operations as soon as she could get sufficient command of herself to turn her head away from the direction of Columbus Redden's chair toward her own plate.

"You don't k-yur! Huh! Well, I reckon you don't k-yur. Hit haint been no trouble to you, ef hit has been to me, uh! Hit's mighty fine to have some body to work fur yah! un sen' you to college, un pay fur your size-gation so your kin set rou' un make fun uv the way your mother un your father talks. At's about whus size-gation's good fur, Miss Weekly! Hit's a good thing you ain't got no boys to raise un aige-ate! A g-yur! haint a go-un to set up un meck fun a thur mother's way a talkun right to thur faist."

"You don't happen to have any girls, mother," retorted Columbus Redden, smiling in a very self-possessed and exasperating way.

"I wish to thur lan! I had g-yuris, Instad a the kine uv a boy I've got. So I do! Whur did you stay so late last night, my larkey? I want to know some-h'n 'bout whur you put in so much time. So I do!" broke in Mrs. Redden, in a fury.

unpicturesque, and even cavalierly, draped as they were, in variously colored horse blankets and linsey counterpanes, whose variegated colors and cunningly woven ornamentations are marvels of the ancient housewifely skill in many Indiana homes. And very efficient "water-proofs" they were, too; the fine long wool of which they were closely woven "shedding" the water of an ordinary rain and the coldest wind of any winter day in a manner that secured the wearer from those inclemencies of the weather to a very satisfactory degree indeed—considering all things.

Directly after breakfast Columbus Redden donned his own long-coated overcoat, and with an umbrella in his hand and his pantaloons turned up at the bottoms until his neat fitting calfskin boots showed to advantage, had gone cautiously out of the front yard into the side lane, and stepping on bunches of grass and chunks of firewood and large chips as a sort of disconnected pounce, he passed scatheless over the waters that had spread about the level of the fields of corn and the narrow lane—and so joined the procession of wayfarers going to Sandtown.

Conrad Redden did not come home to dinner, and supper was upon the table and waiting at that, when he finally made his appearance.

"What in the wurl's kep' yuh this way, Conrad? Why, I 'lowed some-h'n must a happened to yuh, reise yuh 'ben home to dinner, shorely," Mrs. Redden said as Conrad hurriedly jerked his chair up, and nodded to his two guests, who were already seated in obedience to the urgent request of their kind-hearted hostess.

"I sposed you give Lum a purty good raku-un, did yah?" he said, winking slyly at his two guests and beginning to pile eatables upon his plate, and to hurry the dishes around in a way that indicated the extreme pangs of hunger. "Hit don't do no good, ole woman. Jis' w'ell let the boy 'lone. I'll git him a plaist on the bank when hits fixed so hit kin open agin, un when a new un starts. He don't want to farm ut. Un I don't blame him. He's got a size-gation soce he kin meck a livun without work. Un uv course no feller's a go-un to work ef he kin hep ut. But I've got to eat, un hurry back to town to-night. I'm needed up there."

"What fur, Conrad?" said his wife, pausing again with her arms extended, the points of knife and fork resting ominously upon her plate, while her face was turned with fixed scrutiny toward that of the head of the house. "What you needed up thur fur? You haint a go-un a step to town, ef they's go-un to be a rukus up thur now."

"They haint a go-un to be no rukus up town if I kin hep ut. I don't know whur'er I ken or nut. But I've kine a kept ut down all day. But they's a lot a the Dikkees un the Sparkes un the Ellets un the Shipleys, un I don't know who oftun Big Rattlesnake Crik, jist come on, this evenun. Un they're fur hounun that feller Mason up. Un he'll be hoast up, too, ef I can't keep up down."

"Is Mr. Mason in town?" Lizzy asked. She did not know what it was to be "hoast up," but she knew enough about the impetuous people upon the Big Rattlesnake Creek to know that he was menaced with a real danger. And the very uncertainty of its nature made it perhaps more threatening—more to be dreaded.

"I don't know jist whur he is at. He's some'r's up awn your lan' I think. Camped up there, so I h-yeran. They's two companies uv railroad fellers up thur watchin one another, I low. You see they both was want your lan' Lize! Un this feller Mason's gut some-h'n to do with ut some-way aruther. Un one company's tryin to sk-year thur un, un hit's a tryin to sk-year thur. Un so they have ut."

CHAPTER XII.

There was perhaps as much of ill omen in "Conrad" Redden's information as to make Mrs. Redden visibly uneasy, and so, by natural and obvious processes, to communicate her uneasiness to one of her two guests, at least.

Mrs. Wickly, perhaps, having no other sorrow pressing upon her save the one involved in her husband's enforced absence on account of his dreadful malady, had, even in that, some return of satisfaction.

"Your father would never have dreamt of such a thing as mortgaging your land without your permission, Lizzy, if he had not been actually insane then," she said, as the two undressed for bed, leaving Mrs. Redden trying the front door to see if it had unlocked itself within the last ten minutes. "What a great pity such a dreadful disease cannot be known in time to prevent it, like other diseases."

"You remember that he was wakeful, mother. He slept very badly for weeks," Lizzy said, thinking of her own wakeful nights of late.

"Yes, but we thought he was only studying about the fortune that we have been making fun of him about. Poor man! I wonder how he is faring? I wonder if they are kind to him? Mr. Redden assured me that they would treat him very kindly. But I'm afraid they won't understand him."

her only hope of sleep lay in tiring herself thoroughly by walking, across, dressed herself, and slipped noiselessly down stairs, intending to go through a side hall and let herself out on the long sheltered south porch where she might walk and walk until she was tired enough, without disturbing any one.

In fact, there was very little danger of being heard, once she succeeded in reaching the long, wide-roofed and latticed porch, cut off as it was from all the sleeping apartments, so far as she knew. But scarcely had she reached the foot of the stairway, when the "front door" opened, disclosing Mrs. Redden also dressed and holding a candle in her hand.

"Is that you, Lizzy? Ef I'd a ben shore you was awake, I'd a ben upstairs after you to go with me. I can't stand any longer. Some-h'n must a happened, un Conrad wouldn't a staid out this big show! I wish you'd put awn this big show! over your head, and come along. Ah yur shoes all right! I've got a pair a good uns h-yur of yourn wout keep the worter out."

"Mine are proof against any moderate amount of water, Mrs. Redden. And besides, it doesn't hurt me in the least to get my feet wet."

"Oh, dear! I dasn't to get mine the least bit wet. Las' fall I got one foot wet en a puddle, out en the cow yard, un hit thode me into a chill un I had the fevers fur three-four weeks. Better slip this linsay sk-yurt over your white drest. White shows too much after night. There, lemmy pin ut good un tight, soce you kin climb rou' en ut ef you want to, thout ut drappun offun yuh."

Lizzy had not had time to offer any objection, if she had really thought of objecting to this short and usually safe walk to town. For in those days the women of Indiana were safe anywhere, for many and cogent reasons. There were no tramps. And besides, women were strong and courageous by reason of the hard work they did with their hands; and so were able to make a good defense of themselves if needs be.

This endowed them with a courage that women lack in later days. For, after all, what we call courage is simply confidence in one's own powers, physical or mental.

The man who knows or deems himself deficient in such physical or mental powers as are to be called into action in any emergency, is necessarily a coward. The man who is confident is also brave.

"What if mother should wake while we are away, Mrs. Redden? Oughtn't I to wake her and tell her?" Lizzy said as the two stood at the front door.

"Oh, we won't be gone no time at all. But maybe you better write a little note un leave ut by the can'te h-yur awn the stan'. She'll be shore to see ut ef she gits up. I'd hate to wake 'er outen sich a good sleep as she's a haven jist now. Got a pencil? H-yur's some paper."

The ever ready and capable old Hoosier woman had found a scrap of foolscap paper where she had put it among the leaves of a large history of the world, that, along with some almanacs and a book on "The Horse," constituted the whole library of the Redden family, save the big, brown-backed leather Bible out of which Conrad Redden "loved to read out loud" on a Sunday afternoon when he had tired himself with a walk around the farm to see if the "army worm" and the "fly" were making their annual incursions in their usual force.

Lizzy rapidly wrote a few lines, explaining their temporary absence by saying that she had gone with Mrs. Redden at 11 o'clock, to ascertain what had detained Mr. Conrad Redden so long, and that she would be back very soon.

(To be continued.)

A LIBRARY 8,004 YEARS OLD.

Tablets Taken from One at Nippur Date Back 7,000 B. C.

The oldest city public library in the United States is that of Boston, which was founded in 1851, says the New York Mail. That makes it very old, according to our standards. But Prof. Angelo Hilprecht of the University of Pennsylvania has been examining a library, and a public library of some sort, which is a little older than that. It consists of a mass of documents, inscribed in cuneiform letters on tiles, in a wing of the temple of Baal at Nippur, the ancient Babylonian city which lies between the Tigris and the Euphrates.