

# A SIREN'S VICTIMS

By Frances Warner Walker.

## CHAPTER XVI. (Continued)

"I find an item of five thousand dollars, Grace, in your bank account, drawn by you in January. It is so unusual an amount for you to draw out that I wished to ask you something about it. There is no mistake?"

"No mistake, Uncle Edgar; but you must ask me what I did with it. And I should, now and then, draw a large amount of money, you must ask me questions. I believe I want to become a little spendthrift. But, after all, it is quite my own, Uncle Edgar. My drawing it cannot harm you in any way."

"Not me, my child, but yourself. I am struggling to right your estate, and the balance in bank is not always sufficient to admit of such drafts. You shall have every dollar of your income, Grace, my child; but will you not trust me sufficiently to consult me as to the time of your drawing upon it? And let the cheques come through me. I can shift the securities to better advantage."

There was a vibration of pain and reproach in the old man's voice which cut to the very heart of the girl who loved him as a daughter.

She threw herself into his arms and laid her bright head upon his breast.

"You thought I didn't trust you, uncle? Have I not told you, again and again, that all I have is yours? Only let me be extravagant for a little while. I will come to you the next time I need money, and you will not ask me just what I want to do with it, for that is a little secret of my own. But how foolish I am! You never have asked me any questions, and I think, Uncle Edgar, our trust has been mutual. I think you know I would not put my money to any unworthy use."

He stroked the girl's hair and held her more closely to his heart, and as he did so the old regret was strong within him that she was not, in very truth, his daughter—Harry's wife! Perhaps, then, she might have trusted him more fully. Something was amiss, but he had not the right to question her.

She nestled for a few moments in his arms, as she had done long years ago, when, a little child, she had crept upon his knees and hid herself within them; then she sprang hastily up.

"Good-bye, uncle!" she said, lightly, though her voice held the sound of unshed tears. "I had almost forgotten an engagement I made this morning with Mr. Barclay. We are going to the Senate Chamber. Senator \_\_\_\_\_ is expected to speak."

"Mr. Barclay?" she said in the drawing room. "Miss Grace," said Andrew, as he passed the dining room. "I let him in some fifteen minutes ago; but I told him you were engaged with Mr. Reynolds, and he said not to disturb you. Mrs. Reynolds is with him."

If Helen were with him, she need not hurry, was the girl's thought, passing on up the stairs to her own room.

Yet she dared not be alone. The tears were very near her eyes to-day, and should she let one fall there would be plenty more to follow.

Hurriedly dressing and drawing on her gloves as she went, she descended the stairs to the room below.

She called out a gay greeting as she entered it; but no voice responded. She was its sole occupant. Doubtless her guest awaited her in the little music room beyond.

She crossed the floor and raised her hand to the portiere to draw it aside, when Helen's voice transfixed her purpose. It quivered with pain. It held the ring of absolute despair.

"What am I to do, Harvey?" it said. "I cannot go to Grace again."

"You shall not. Leave it to me; but in some way, Helen, this man must be silenced. Leave me to think the matter over. The hound! To come back in his tracks like this!"

"And you will send the money, Harvey? You will not fail?"

"I will not fail. I've that much left of the fifty. By the way, Helen, I've two weeks more of Grace. Within that time, if Grace Hawthorne doesn't promise to be my wife, we'll see this precious husband of yours locked up in state's prison. I rather think that knowledge will induce her to change her mind."

"Oh, Harvey!" Helen interrupted, "is there no other way?"

But, ere he could reply, Grace had called up all her courage, and, waiting to hear no more, she lifted the curtain with her trembling hand and advanced into the room.

"Perhaps I can suggest some other way," she said.

## CHAPTER XVII.

It was as if a thunderbolt had been launched in their midst. A moment, and all seemed lost. That moment passed, Harvey Barclay determined to strike body, and turn his would-be defrauder into an overwhelming victory.

From his face had fallen the mask of friendship which he had forced himself to assume. He could now show himself in his true colors, prepared by any means, fair or foul, to win Grace Hawthorne's hand.

If honeyed words failed to reach her ear, then he would utter threats. What mattered the means, so that he accomplished the end? And Helen must stand by passive, while he won the race.

Grace's movement had been bold, but for the instant it had exhausted all her strength. The room grew dark. She closed her eyes and leaned upon the piano for support. A moment, and the weakness passed.

For too many weeks she had felt the breeding of the tempest to shrink from the bursting of the storm.

She raised her head proudly and let her clear gaze search Harvey Barclay's face. His eyes, in turn, met hers.

"Will you repeat to me what I overheard a few moments ago, Mr. Barclay?" she asked. "I cannot believe that my own ears did not deceive me."

"I would fain have repeated it under different conditions, Miss Hawthorne," he replied, throwing into his voice an

accent of tender regret; "but since an accident has betrayed to you the resurrection of my heart's dearest wish, I cannot relegate the phantom back to a grave in which it refused to sleep. Its love so far removed from friendship that I must plead for yours in vain?"

He came forward to take her hand, but she drew back, coldly, while over Helen's face, forced looker-on to so unexpected a scene, swept a flood of crimson, followed by a deathly pallor. Her eyes blazed, her lips quivered. She appeared about to speak, but Grace gave her no time.

"So the mask has fallen?" she said, slowly, "and this is what your plea of friendship meant. But it is not of myself I would speak. It is of—Oh, Helen!" turning toward her with a gesture of mingled grief and outraged anger, "what does this man mean?"

For a moment she hesitated. For a moment she was tempted to avow the truth, in her bitter, jealous wrath; but not thus could she gain her end. The pause gave her time to recover herself.

"It means, Grace," she answered, Harry owes Captain Barclay a large amount of money lost at play. There are other debtors less merciful than he. I have asked him to satisfy their demands. Only Harry must not know—must not suspect his agency. Oh, Grace, be not too hard! Pity his weakness, and my wretchedness!"

"Trust me, Helen, for both. Why have you not trusted me more fully? But does not Mr. Barclay accompany his willingness to act in your behalf with threats uttered against Harry and against me? And why, and how, so long as a dollar of my fortune remains to me, can he be threatened with a prison?"

And she shuddered as she forced herself to utter the last word.

"I fear, Miss Hawthorne, that Mr. Reynolds has made himself amenable to the laws in ways all unsuspected by you," interrupted the young officer, "for your sake I would save him from the consequences of his own rashness. I spoke impulsively just now. I was mad with anger against him, and rebellion at my own impotence to convert ice into the flame of feeling. Moreover, I had reason to suspect, on Mr. Reynolds' part, a feeling which might lead him to undermine me in your esteem. For your sake, and the sake of his suffering wife, I was willing to aid him to the full extent of my power; and while asking no appreciation of my services, I at least deserved that it should not be met by a dislike threatening to become active hostility. You, who have already helped him so largely, Miss Hawthorne, should understand his fatal weakness without forcing me to put it into words in my own self-exposure."

"Oh, Grace!" burst in Helen, "do not let Harry know what you suspect! It would drive him to desperation. Besides, he told me to-day that he had found a way out of the difficulty, and promised never again to yield to temptation."

"And he trusts me so little!" said the girl, sadly—"so little that he shuts me out from his confidence, refuses to accept my aid."

It was Harry's voice that called from the hall. With one glance toward Harvey Barclay—a glance half-imporing, half-commanding—the wife hastened from the room. Grace turned to follow her, but Mr. Barclay made a quick movement to arrest her purpose.

"Don't go!" he said. "I must speak with you. I told you once, if you needed a friend, to come to me. Oh, Grace, can you not understand that it is because I see the shadows creeping so thickly about you, that I long to offer you closer protection than the claim of friendship will permit me to assume? My child, you do not know how sorely you stand in need of a strong arm and loyal heart. Will you not accept mine? May I not once again sue for the most precious gift Fortune could grant me?"

"Your tone is somewhat different, Mr. Barclay, from that which promised, not many minutes since, to bring me to terms," answered Grace, with quiet, cutting scorn. "But whatever tone you might assume," she continued, firmly, "my answer could not fail to be the same. I must decline the honor that you would confer upon me."

"Even though you knew that the honor of the Reynolds name hinged upon you?"

No whit higher was Harvey Barclay's voice as he put the question, no shade paler his already pale face; but an evil light glimmered in his eyes, and about his mouth were drawn hard, resolute lines.

A cold shudder passed over Grace, but she did not betray the momentary "Oh, you have thrown aside your false colors, Mr. Barclay," she said, with a smile of irony. "You return to threats. But threats will not sully an old, untarnished name, and, though Harry may have been weak, he has placed no stain upon his escutcheon which may not be wiped away or forgotten."

"You think so? You are wrong. But I forget. It is not your name. Why should you care what stain it bears?"

"It is dearer, for dearer to me than my own," retorted the girl passionately. "There is nothing I would not do to save it from disgrace, should disgrace threaten it!"

"Nothing, Grace?" replied the man, the old tenderness creeping back into his tone. "Well, suppose I tell you that disgrace threatens—not from afar, but close, close at hand; disgrace I can help ward from it on one condition—I need not repeat it—will you listen then more kindly to my prayer?"

"Your prayer!" she echoed, scornfully. "Rather put it, the terms of your bargain, I am rich, Mr. Barclay. What money is needed to buy the secret you pretend to hold—the power you pretend to have?"

"Not all your money, thrice told, can buy it," he answered, with the first

touch of heat that he had shown. "Listen to me, Grace Hawthorne. You think it is your money that I want. I will not deny to you that it was, at first, the gliding of the frame that drew me to the picture, but now it is that within the frame I wish. I love you. You have it in your power to make me a better, truer man! Marry me, and I will strain every nerve in the effort to be worthy of you—to shake off my old self, and teach you the lesson your now scorn. It is for you to make or mar me. My fate is in your hands."

"I cannot accept such fate, Mr. Barclay. I do not, can never love you. To-day has taught me to distrust you. I do not know what your dark threats may mean, but I cannot believe that the honor of an old name can hang upon the simple yea or nay of a girl's caprice."

"Your decision is irrevocable?"

"Is irrevocable."

"So be it," he replied. "When next we meet it is you who may plead to me. Remember always that I would have averted this trouble if I could. As it is, I wash my hands. Let Harry Reynolds' creditors come swarming to their story into the ears of the old man who holds so high the honor of his name. They are gambling debts—debts of honor, so-called. I wonder will you so consider them?"

Impetuously Grace stepped nearer, and laid her hand upon her tormentor's arm.

"What sum is needed to quiet these men?" she asked.

"Ha! ha!" he laughed. "So you would shield him? Why should you shield Helen Reynolds' husband from the consequences of his own act? Because you love him; because it is his shadow that stands between us two. You can understand now the only terms on which I would avert his fate. He is my rival. Deny it if you dare!"

"He is my brother," she replied; "but she had grown white to the very lips."

The last bitter shaft had sped to its mark. It revealed to her what hitherto she had refused to acknowledge to herself.

She turned as she spoke and walked swiftly from the room; but this time Harvey Barclay made no further movement to detain her. He could afford to let the poison work. It required time to prove its potency. He had little fear that it would fail.

A low cry from Helen startled her. She glanced toward her, only to find her face grow suddenly white, and fixed upon a hunted look of fear, fixed on some object near.

Her own gaze followed them. The object was a man. He motioned the coachman to stop as her glance fell upon him.

The driver drew rein, turning, as he did so, to his young mistress for approval of the act.

The stranger approached the carriage.

"You've agreed to my terms?" he asked, insolently, neither touching nor lifting his hat as he spoke.

Helen Reynolds' will did not fail her now. She drew herself up haughtily, defiantly. She knew not what his next words would be, but she would give no outward sign of the terrible fear which was gnawing at her soul, lest the beautiful fabric of respectability she had reared with such infinite cost, should be razed to the ground.

"Yes, I have agreed," she replied.

"You're not lying? It's all right?"

"It's all right," she answered.

"Well, give my compliments to him," he said. "You needn't add my thanks."

And, turning upon his heel as abruptly as he had approached, he walked away.

Grace's face was equally pale with Helen's, as, motioning the coachman to drive on, she turned to her for some explanation of the strange scene.

"It is one of Harry's creditors!" gasped the unhappy woman, whose self-control had now forsaken her.

And with a long, deep shudder as she spoke, her head fell back among the cushions of the carriage, and she swooned away.

At a scud of wheels, Harry, opening the door, came down the steps to assist the door, came down the steps to assist them to alight.

Never, thought Grace, indignantly, had she seen him look younger, handsomer—never did care seem so remote a burden.

"At last!" he cried, gaily. "I was growing impatient for your coming."

He paused abruptly.

Something in Grace's eyes hushed his further utterance. It seemed to them were burning some bitter reproach.

"Your wife has fainted!" she said, curiously.

"Helen?" he questioned, in quick alarm, yet even in that moment wondering at the strangeness of the manner with which she broke to him such news. "What has happened?"

Grace vouchsafed no further reply. But as he lifted his still unconscious wife in his arms and bore her into the house, another scornful glance from her blue eyes flashed into his.

A few moments only had elapsed before Helen lifted her eyelids and looked about her with a frightened glance.

"But only her husband was beside her."

"What happened, dear?" he asked, when she had more fully recovered.

"Grace seemed, I fancied by her manner, to hold me in some way responsible. Had you been relating my manifold sins until you awakened her indignation, and are they of omission or commission, dear?"

"Neither," she answered, wearily, and with a touch of petulance in her manner. "You have no sins except to bear the burden of mine. Harry, would you be glad if you had never seen me? Would you be glad to waken some day and find it was a dream, and that I was not your wife?"

He bent and hushed her lips with kisses.

"My darling, I have never ceased to be thankful to God for the great gift of your love!" he said, earnestly. "Are you not well, dear? Would you like to go away? Shall I take you abroad?"

The idea burst upon her like a gleam from Heaven.

Abroad—away from all this trouble—away from the spectre of the past—away from—

Her thought checked itself.

Away from Harvey! Ah, could she bear that? Did not one touch of his hand, one low whisper from his lips, atone to her for all she suffered for his sake?

No, no—she could not go; and yet to stay, when any day, any hour, Tom Windom might tear the mask from her face and show her as she was!

"Let us go—let us go!" she cried, in the revulsion wrought by this awful fear. "We cannot go to soon. Tomorrow, Harry—let us sail to-morrow!"

He took up a paper from the table near his hand.

"The Servia sails a week from Thursday, April third," he answered. "We will go in her."

Helen shuddered as he named the date, for on April 3 the note indorsed in Grace Hawthorne's name fell due.

"You will go with us, Grace?" asked Harry, as they discussed the plan next morning, at the breakfast-table.

"I cannot leave uncle," answered the girl, with a glance of deep love toward the old man, and bravely concealing the sinking at her own heart, as she thought how desolate the house would seem during the long months of his absence.

It almost seemed to her as though his very fault, and the fact that in some measure she could guard him from its consequences, had endeared him to her; and since Harvey Barclay had so cruelly wrested the covering from her poor little secret, and so ruthlessly let in the glaring light of day, to serve Harry, however unconsciously to him that service was performed, rendered her burden lighter and eased the ceaseless pain at her heart.

"But you will go to New York at least? You will bid us bon voyage from there? You and father both will come?"

"Shall we, uncle?" asked Grace, smiling.

"If you postpone it a week," he answered. "Otherwise I cannot. It seems to me, I can hardly realize it yet; but next week there are some important interests of Grace's at stake, and I cannot leave. By-the-way, my boy, what funds will you need? I must arrange for them."

"None, father," replied Harry, lightly. "I've had a little windfall of my own of late."

And he rose from his seat and crossed to the mantel to find a match and light the cigar he placed carelessly in his mouth.

Grace watched him with a contraction at her heartstrings which brought acute physical suffering.

How could he speak like that in the presence of his wife—the woman whose

sufferings must be so keen in her full knowledge of his fault?

And his tone was so light, so careless. He looked so handsome, so free from care. A smile was on his lips and in his eyes. It was almost as if he gloried in his wrong-doing!

Always, always, had he been like this, when she had believed him to be all that was honest and true?

She shuddered as her heart gave answer to the question.

Helen rose and followed him to where he stood, and as he struck the match she rested her hand a moment on his shoulder, and whispered a few words in his ear.

"Don't postpone our trip, Harry," she said earnestly. "I am superstitious of any delay."

"Foolish girl!" he answered, tenderly, but aloud; and, as he spoke, he slipped his arm about the small, beautifully-rounded waist. "I think we must go on the third, father," he continued. "But we'll take Grace with us, and after we leave she will stay with the Edwards until you can come over for her."

"No; I will remain with uncle. You see," she added, with a forced smile, "this is really to be your wedding trip, and I hardly think I shall be missed."

And then, lest something choking in her throat should escape her self-control, she hurried from the room.

One by one the days before the time set for their departure flitted by. They seemed all too short for the many preparations for so hasty a journey; but Time avenged itself by the long night hours which both women passed in restless wakefulness.

Little did Harry reckon, as he lay quietly sleeping, that beside him his wife lay with wide-open eyes and hands tightly clasped, as though to crush back the storm of emotion and fear at war within her.

Sometimes she was tempted to waken him and say she would not go. Once she called him aloud by name; but when he wondrously responded to an unknown note of terror in the voice which had aroused him from his sleep, the face of the man who had accosted her in the square seemed to float before her; a mocking laugh of triumph to ring in her ear; and she answered only that she had started from a dream, no shuddered as his tender, reassuring kiss fell upon her beautiful and lying lips.

At last the morning dawned that was to see them on the first stage of their journey—the morning of April 2d.

They were to remain that night in New York. The steamer sailed at 4 the following morning.

(To Be Continued.)

**GOT ON THE WRONG TRAIN.**

What a Farmer From Farmersville's Condition Was of Consequences in Travel.

The old man was notably nervous as he wandered from one car to another, and was becoming observed of all the passengers. The train was well on its way when he stopped the blue-coated official and seriously inquired:

"Whar in thunder is th' eatin' car? I'm sorter hungry."

He was told there was no dining car on the train.

"Hm!" leisurely responded the old man. "Wal, then, whar is th' keer that ye jist loll around in an' twist an' turn 'chever way ye please? I know all about these things, ye know, an' ye kaint fool me."

"We have no Pullman," said the attendant.

"Wal, bust my suspenders, whar's ye're le'made stan'?"

"No such thing aboard."

"An' no bootblack?"

"No, sir."

"Hate teh ask ye if ye hev a barber aboard?"

The conductor said something about the advisability of people carrying their own shaving utensils, whereat the old farmer blurted out:

"Wal, dash my buttons, I've got on the wrong train. They tote me this was an accommodation train."—Detroit Free Press.

**His Opinion of an Author.**

"Your remarks on Hall Caine's recent issue," writes a bank manager in the Isle of Man, "recall a conversation I once had with two old friends of mine, a farmer and his buxom wife, who live within a few miles of Greeba Castle, our great Manx author's residence. Hall Caine had just taken up his abode in the new house, and I started the conversation by saying to the farmer and his wife:

"So you have the great Hall Caine near you now?"

"Farmer and Wife—'Aye, man.'

"Farmer's Wife—'And what tremendous style they are keeping. It's amazing.'

"Farmer—'And what's he doing for a living, Mr.—?'"

"Bank Manager (greatly astonished)—'What! don't you know he's a popular author?'"

"Farmer—'And what's that?'"

"Bank Manager—'Why, he writes successful books.'

"Farmer (with a fine show of contempt)—'The lazy beggar!'"

"I need hardly say," concludes my correspondent, "that I collapsed."—Pittsburg Dispatch.

**"Are You Asleep, Miss?"**

"Are you asleep?"

It appears that this apparently harmless question constitutes a punishable offense when addressed to a telephone employee. A gentleman at Carlsruhe, impatient of a telephonist's delay, cried: "Are you asleep, miss?" whereupon he was prosecuted and fined \$1 upon her for offering an unjustifiable insult. He has appealed from the sentence by the magistrate, and, happily for him, there are judges at Berlin.—Le Gaulois, Paris.

**"It's an Ill Wind," &c.**

Dr. Bill (gleefully)—I've made over \$500 during the past three weeks setting broken bones, alone.

Friend (astonished)—Indeed! How do you account for such an epidemic?

Dr. Bill—Why, in last month's Kind Ladies' Journal there was an article entitled, "How to Build a Shanty in a Tree."—Puck.

**Her Wifely Encouragement.**

Mrs. Gayne—My husband gave up all his expensive habits a short time ago. Miss Bright—And how did his economical reform work?

"First-rate, my dear, while it lasted. He saved up enough money the first week to buy me a new hat."—Smart Set.

**Alry.**

"You know," said Senator Sorghum, reprovingly, "I told you what I wanted from you was a good, breezy speech."

"Well," answered the professional orator, "I really thought that was what I gave you. Nearly everybody who heard it said my arguments were only wind."

—Washington Star.

**Exhibits at Paris.**

There is a large exhibit from this country at the Paris exposition which will prove very interesting to all, but no more so than the news that the famous American remedy, Hostetter's Stomach Bitters will cure dyspepsia, indigestion and constipation. To all sufferers a trial is recommended.

**An Inducement.**

Agent—Like some awnings, mum? We fit and fix 'em cheap.

Housewife—I don't want awnings. They keep out the sun, and we get little enough sunshine as it is.

Agent—You need never use 'em, mum. They'll roll up.—New York Weekly.

**Best for the Bowels.**

No matter what ails you, headache to a cancer, you will never get well until your bowels are put right. CASCARETS help nature, cure you without a gripe or pain, produce easy natural movements, cost you just 10 cents to start getting your health back. CASCARETS Candy Cathartic, the genuine, put up in metal boxes, every tablet has C. C. stamped on it. Beware of imitations.

**The Road Clear.**

Tramp—Madam, have you an ax? Lady of the House—No.

Tramp—Have you a saw? Lady—No; I have no saw.

Tramp—Then give me a little something to eat, please.—Harlem Life.

**Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup.**

For children teething, softens the gums, reduces inflammation, allays pain, cures whooping cough, croup, and all the ailments of infancy.

**The Viewpoint of Experience.**

Newlywed—Does your wife ever threaten to go home to her mother?

Oldboy—Why, my boy, I wouldn't consider that a threat.—Smart Set.

**Jell-O, the New Dessert.**

pleases all the family. Four flavors:—Lemon, Orange, Raspberry and Strawberry. At your grocers. 10 cts. Try it today.

**A Straight Tip.**

Visitor—What's become of old Sam Dungs?

Longshoreman Billy—Dead, sir—died of 'art disease. A visitor gave 'im a shillin' very sudden. My 'art's werry strong, sir.—English Fun.



Many a woman, sick and weary of life, dragged down by weakening drains, painful irregularities, depression, and the hundred and one ailments which affect women only, has found in Pe-runa a bright star of hope, which has changed her misery to joy, her suffering to health.

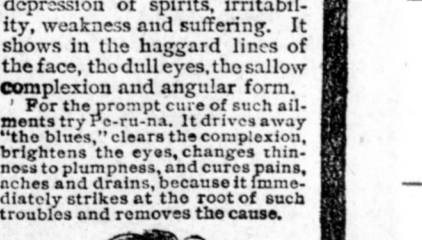
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The majority of weaknesses which make woman's life a burden, spring from a simple cause. The mucous membrane which lines the pelvic organs becomes weakened and inflamed owing to strain, cold, overwork, etc. This causes catarrhal congestion, inflammation, painful irregularities, depression of spirits, irritability, weakness and suffering. It shows in the haggard lines of the face, the dull eyes, the sallow complexion and angular form.

For the prompt cure of such ailments try Pe-runa. It drives away "the blues," clears the complexion, which lines the eyes, changes thinness to plumpness, and cures pains, aches and drains, because it immediately strikes at the root of such troubles and removes the cause.

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