

A SIREN'S VICTIMS

By Frances Warner Walker.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Day darkened into night, and still Grace Hawthorne kept her watch beside Harry Reynolds' sick bed. Of his wife he never spoke. He seemed neither to miss her nor note her absence. But to Grace, as the hours went slowly by, it seemed strange.

Now and then the sick man opened his eyes with a start, but when his glance rested on her, he closed them again, to fall into a quiet sleep, with a smile about his lips.

He was sleeping when, at 7 o'clock, she stole away from him, only to find the lower part of the house deserted. "Where is Mrs. Reynolds?" she asked Andrew. "Has she gone out again?"

"Mrs. Reynolds went away somewhere this afternoon, I think, Miss Grace," answered the servant. "She had two large trunks carried to the depot, but she left the house herself on foot. She was writing in the library, Miss Grace." The man added, as he noted the amazement on her face, "Maybe she left a message for you."

With a sense of some new trouble in store for her, Grace hurried to the library, and on the mantel shelf found a letter addressed to herself. "It was very short," Helen wrote. "You see I leave the way open for you to win my love, and since I have won mine, I can afford to let my hate die. You and Harry are suited to each other. Forget me, and—good-by!"

Over and over the girl read the hurried scrawl. She failed utterly to comprehend its meaning beyond the fact that Helen had failed in her duty as a wife.

But who was her companion in her flight? Was it Harvey? Was she free? But at what cost, since her freedom brought disgrace to the man she loved!

And however Helen might drag his name into the dust, it could avail her nothing, for was she not his wife?

But how should she break the news to him? How should she tell him that the wife he adored had left him?

Over and over she revolved the question in her mind, as, returning to his bedside, she tried to fill as best she might the place Helen had left vacant.

Her eyes were very heavy and worn next morning with her watch when Andrew brought her Harvey Barclay's card.

She started as her eyes fell on the name. She had been so sure that he had been the companion of Helen's flight. To whom, then, had Helen's note referred?

She went, almost eagerly, to meet him, hoping, through him, to solve the problem.

"Where is Helen?" were the first words of her greeting.

"Helen?" he answered, in amazement. "Why do you ask me for Helen? Is she not here?"

"No, she left the house yesterday. She left this letter for me."

And she held out the paper toward him. His face paled. How far had she betrayed him? But the cloud lightened as one hasty glance told him he had nothing to fear.

"Where can she have gone?" he asked, as if speaking rather to himself than to her. "Where, Grace, she has gone—and with whom?"

"Since you know nothing of her purpose," answered Grace, "she must have gone alone. Thank God for that! Harry has enough to bear without the added torture of the knowledge that she had a companion in her flight."

"He is better?"

"Yes—so much better that every time he turns his eyes toward me I fear he will ask me why Helen does not come; but, strange as it may seem, her name has not once escaped his lips. Uncle Edgar speaks of her constantly, but Harry never. I—What is it, Andrew?"

For the old servant, with horror-stricken face, stood making gestures in the doorway. "Is uncle—"

"No, no, Miss Grace!" gasped the old man. "It's not him. But we've been robbed. It's my day for cleaning and counting the silver, but when I opened the safe I found it nearly empty; and not only the silver, Miss Grace, but the diamonds—"

"You are sure, Andrew, sure?" cried Grace, excitedly.

"Come and look for yourself, Miss Grace."

"Is this house doomed to misfortune?" she asked, wearily. "Send to the police at once, and let one of their most experienced men come here immediately."

"Wait, Andrew," spoke in Harvey. "Before giving the order, Grace, let me speak with you a few minutes alone."

She looked at him in surprise; but, telling Andrew to await further orders, dismissed him from the room.

"You have not guessed the thief?" asked Harvey, when they found themselves alone.

"No! How should I? The servants are old and trusted. I would as soon suspect myself."

"Or—Helen?"

"The name, as he uttered it, was freighted with suspicion. Grace started back, horrified. "Helen!" she gasped.

"Yes, Grace. I have no doubt it was she who, in her desperation, committed this theft. If you send for a detective, her flight of yesterday must be made public. Doubtless the man's suspicious will fall upon her. It seems to me better to submit to the loss."

"Wait!" cried the girl. "My head is reeling. I cannot think."

"But I must think for you, Grace. I will tell Andrew to say nothing for the present of this discovery. But I must have authority to act, Grace, you must redeem your word to me at once. You must, this very day, become my wife!"

"To-day! It is impossible! No!

Harry and Uncle Edgar both need me sorely. I cannot desert them!"

"You shall not. You shall stay and nurse them; but I, your husband, will stay with you. It is necessary, dear, believe me—if you would escape further trouble, the party who holds the new note you signed insists upon your guardian's signature as well. As a married woman, your husband is your guardian, and you will have saved Harry Reynolds from the distance he so richly deserved."

"And to do this I must marry you?"

Fear, repugnance, almost horror, were in her tone.

But, though the man's words were not tatter.

Once his wife, he could defy the world, and now his all was staked upon her consent.

"I cannot!" she said. "Oh, Mr. Barclay, release me from this hated bond—escape of an adventurer to drag the Reynolds name into the dust."

"An adventurer! Thus you speak of Helen—you, who were her friend—you, whom she loved?"

"She deceived you, Grace. She loved not me, but the man who has shared her flight and her booty. If she told you otherwise, she did it to serve some purpose of her own. But we are waiting time, Grace. Do you consent? Will you be my wife to-day, before the sun sets?"

"Yes," she answered, in a voice bereft of hope. "What matter the hour for the sacrifice? At 5 o'clock, Mr. Barclay, we will be married, by Uncle Edgar's bedside. I will go now to prepare him."

"But nothing he can say shall turn you from your purpose—you promise this?"

"At 5 o'clock I will be ready; but you will be the husband of a woman whose heart is dead, Mr. Barclay, and who shrinks even from the touch of your hand."

"I shall marry the woman I love," he replied.

He took a step toward her; but she drew back, and motioned to the door.

With rage in his heart but a smile on his face, he obeyed the gesture that she made, and left her to her misery.

CHAPTER XXXV.

In the chill of the morning of the new day, Helen Reynolds stood on the steamer's deck, as it moved slowly from its moorings and was towed into the channel by the tiny tug, which seemed a very toy beside its huge proportions. Her face was very pale, but there was a light in her eyes long foreign there, as though they held a waking dream of hope and happiness.

She had but from her all whispers of remorse. She had lulled the sharp pangs of a conscience which sin had not yet wholly killed.

For the first time in many years she had brushed the cobwebs from her heart, and let it glory in the light the dust had hidden from it.

A new life was opening to her—a life whose key-note was love. She would atone to Harvey for all that he had given up for her sake. She would make his world, as he should make hers.

The dock they had just left was growing misty in the distance. She never doubted that he was on the brave ship which was to bear them both to other shores.

She smiled as she looked down at the water, in expectation that any moment he would steal up behind her and whisper her name, in accents of love, in her ear.

A hand fell on her shoulder, but the touch was harsh, not gentle.

She turned. Once more she and Tom Windom stood face to face.

She neither moved nor cried out. In that moment she knew that she was betrayed, and betrayed by the man she loved.

That one fleeting atom of time was an eternity, which concentrated into itself the suffering which might atone for every sin, even in her cruel life.

Her face hardened and became rigid as stone; her eyes met his, but they were lustreless and expressionless. The color faded from their golden glory, and left them pale and hollow.

She had purposely chosen a spot on the deck with no one near. For the moment they were secure from interruption.

On the man's face was a pitiless triumph, and in his eyes the greed of the tiger about to spring.

"So you expected to escape me?" he said, at last, breaking the awful silence. "Well, I am here, my lady. We will make the trip together. I have long thought a sea voyage would be beneficial to my health."

"How did you know?"

Her voice, as she spoke the question, held the sound of a once clear bell, which had been broken, and now rings out discordant and metallic.

He drew a letter from his pocket and held it toward her.

It made his triumph greater to show her that some fancied friend had betrayed her.

Her eyes fell on the page, and part of his thirst for vengeance was sated, as he saw the look which crept over her pallid face.

Spite of the disguise in the handwriting, she recognized it instantly. It was the proof of her betrayal.

She saw it all now. She had played into Harvey Barclay's hand. There was nothing now to prevent his marrying Grace Hawthorne.

The thought sent the blood once more coursing through her veins, and roused her from this dull apathy of horror which had paralyzed every sense.

"Well," she said, wretching her white lips in a ghastly smile—"well, you have won, Tom Windom, and I have lost. Your rambler's luck has returned to you."

"And I will keep it; for I will keep

you. Never again shall you escape me."

"Do you know who warned you?"

It was her turn now to strike. "No; but I'll remember him if he ever reminds me of my obligation."

"You're not likely to forget him. You owe him another debt, too. Shall I tell you that debt's nature? When I left you, six years ago, Tom Windom, you thought it was Henry George who persuaded me to break away from your tyranny and put my beauty to better account. Henry George never interested himself enough in my behalf. I was nothing to him—nothing. Do you wish to know who the man was? Tom Windom, it was the writer of the letter you have just shown me. He wanted you and me both out of the way, and he has made us both his tools."

"His name?"

The voice was low and husky; but each letter held a lifetime of concentrated hate.

"His name?" She paused and smiled. "Harvey Barclay is his name," she said.

There was a commotion at the other end of the ship. The pilot was about to return to shore.

Before she had divined the purpose, he grasped her arm in a grip of steel. "Come!" he said, "we go back with him. I have sworn my debt should never remain unpaid. It will pay it before the sun goes down!"

She struggled to free herself, but he bore her to the side of the ship.

"We must return!" he called out. A few questions, a few words of explanation followed, and the pilot consented to receive his unexpected freight.

The man was the first to make the descent into the boat.

Helen followed; but, as she stepped upon the plank, with a sudden wrench, she wrested her hand from Tom Windom's hold.

Those looking on were unable to determine whether accident or design caused her foot to slip, but, without a cry, she fell into the waters and the waves closed over her head.

A sailor, standing on the deck above, sprang overboard to her rescue.

He declared afterward that, when he could have saved her, she wrenched herself free, and, to save his own life, he was compelled to swim to the surface.

When the body rose again, life was extinct, and the pilot-boat now solemnly received the dead.

As Tom Windom looked down at the beautiful dead face, his own features grew like marble; but, farther than that, he made no sign of sorrow, or raised no voice of lament.

It was 5 o'clock of the same day when a carriage, containing two men, stopped before Edgar Reynolds' door.

One wore the garb of a clergyman, and one was in ordinary dress. The manner of the latter was nervous, and his face, as the light fell upon it, was very pale.

Andrew opened the door, as if expecting them.

"Miss Grace is in Mr. Reynolds' room," he said. "Will you walk up?"

As they ascended the stairs she came forward from the door of the chamber at the farthest end of the hall.

She was dressed in black, and her face was deathly white.

"Uncle Edgar refuses to see you, Mr. Barclay—refuses to witness our marriage. It must take place in the library."

"The minister was about to speak, but she checked him."

"I am of age," she said, "and I marry Mr. Barclay of my own free will. Will you let the ceremony take place at once? I must return to my uncle. This excitement has been most hurtful to him."

The little group silently descended the stairs, she preceding them.

A sudden loud peal at the bell started them all. The house had been so quiet since all this misfortune had fallen upon it, that any sound seemed a precursor of fresh evils.

"Come, come!" called Harvey. "Let us go into the library and have this over!"

But already Andrew had thrown open the door.

The clergyman and Barclay entered the library. Grace went forward as a man entered the hall. She recognized him instantly as the man who had so rudely accosted Helen one afternoon in the carriage. Helen had explained to her that he was one of Harry's creditors.

Her heart sank as she saw him. Had he come at such a time as this to assert his claims? And how could she silence him? At this moment she could not command a dollar.

Giving him no time to speak, she came quickly forward.

"You have come for money?" she said. "Will you not take my word that all you claims shall be paid in full, if you will but wait? Mr. Reynolds is very ill! He cannot now be disturbed."

"Mr. Reynolds?" echoed the man. "My errand is not with him nor his; it is with the man who has murdered all my happiness. Aye! I loved her once, though I didn't know how to be gentle, and though I was sometimes cruel; and one night, while I was sleeping, she stole from my side and ran away with the fiend who tempted her to leave me. It's he I'm looking for! What is Mr. Reynolds to me? A name! She never cared for him!"

"Was the man mad?" wondered Grace. "I do not understand you," she said, aloud. "Of whom are you speaking?"

"Of the dead!" he answered, in a hollow whisper. "Of her who was alive this morning; who yesterday stood, perhaps, where you are standing now!"

"Not—Not Helen?" gasped the girl.

"Yes, Helen!" he replied. "But not Helen Reynolds—Helen Windom. She was my wife! Do you hear?—my wife. Here is the certificate of our marriage! We were married ten years ago!" pulling a yellow, faded paper from his pocket as he spoke. "She was my wife as tight as the law could bind her to me, and she ran away from me for him. She was to have met him on the steamer this morning, but he deserted and betrayed her. I read it all in her eyes, when she handed his note back to me. She—she was drowned in stepping into the pilot boat in which we were to return. They call it an acci-

dent, but I—I know the truth! I saw the smile on her face when she went down! What do you think I let her die for, and play it out her part, if I didn't hope through it, to track him? Well, he's traced his rooms. They told me I should find him here. Where is he?—I have no time to lose!"

Pouring out his story, the man paid no attention to Grace, as she strove to comprehend his words, and stood in vain for support.

Impatient of his delay, a voice called her name, and Harvey stepped from the library to the hall.

Tom Windom's glance fell on him. One stride brought it him to his side. Evidently his hand fell upon Barclay's shoulder.

"Come with me!" he whispered. "She has sent for you. You will be with her within the hour!"

Unsuspecting of anything but the danger of losing only that! He dared to disobey the two men left the house.

The clergyman, who had been bidden to await his return, remained two hours, and then Grace dismissed him.

Next morning he knew that his waiting must have extended to eternity, for, stretched on the floor of his own room, Harvey Barclay's dead body was found, a ghastly knife wound in his heart; but of his murderer the authorities could discover no clue.

OWN PIER XXV.

A year later, and in the library of the old house, Grace Hawthorne sat alone, as she sat when first we saw her. The city had rung with a terrible tragedy, in which Helen Windom had played so sad a part; but no stain rested there by the Reynolds' occupation, for she never had right or title to the Reynolds name.

Recovering from that short but severe illness, Harry Reynolds had gone abroad.

For a year Grace and her guardian had lived in the old house alone. All the truth was known now. The notes were paid, and Grace had learned that Harry's house was clear as the crystal dew of the early morning. He had been betrayed more cruelly than she.

She could forgive all to others; but to herself she could never forgive her doubt of him, though proof of his guilt had seemed mountain-high.

Sometimes, now, in the dusk, the form of an exquisitely beautiful woman would seem to lift through the halls, or the echo of a ghostly voice to ring through the empty chambers.

"He can never return to it! He can never bear it!" sighed the girl, and hid her face from the shadow.

Her hands fell. "Harry!" she answered—"Harry!" even as she had spoken it in that long-ago time.

But she believed that only her imagination had breathed her name.

But out of the shadow strode a tall form, and then she knew that what she had feared would never come to pass already was attained. Harry had returned.

Crossing to where she sat, he knelt in front of her, and clasped in his hands her little, trembling hands.

"Grace!" he said. "My child—my love! Because once I plucked the nightshade, with the rose ever elude me? I love you! Oh, my darling! In the first month of my banishment, I learned to know myself. Grace, tell me, has the knowledge come too late?"

A month later, and the dream of Edgar Reynolds' life met its fulfillment. His name was restored to him, and Grace was, indeed, to him a daughter—Harry's wife—and the ghost was banished from the old halls, and the voice echoed in the chambers no longer empty.

The trail of the serpent had glided through them, and was gone; but its sting had failed to kill happiness, and its poison had been rendered harmless. The nightshade had faded and died, but on Harry Reynolds' faithful heart the rose will live and bloom, until God's hand shall stop to pluck and plant it in a fairer garden.

(The End.)

KNOW HOW TO MANAGE.

She Weeps for \$50 When She Wants a Bonnet—And Such a Lovely Bonnet!

"Oh, dear!" sighed the pretty caller, as she viewed her friend's new bonnet, fresh from the store, "I wish my husband would allow me to buy such a lovely bonnet."

"He would, my dear, if you knew how to handle him," answered the lady of the house.

"No; it's a waste of words to try and talk with him," said the pretty caller, with another sigh. "I saw a dream of a bonnet down town the other day, and the price was just what you say you gave for yours—\$5. But when I mentioned the price my husband flew into a rage, and declared that \$10 was every cent he could advance to me to buy a bonnet with, and if I couldn't make that do I would have to do without."

"Exactly," commented the lady of the house, dryly. "You can't expect any other treatment when you approach your husband like that. My husband acts just the same way when I ask him for money. But this creature called 'man' is very easily handled if you go about it in the right way. Now, when I saw this bonnet down town I made up my mind that I would be the happy possessor of it, so that night, after supper, I began going into raptures over a bonnet that I had seen while shopping, the price of which afterthought, that I had quite made up my mind to buy it."

"What!" roared my husband, "\$50 for a bonnet? I guess not! You'll have to put up with \$25, and not a cent more do you get!"

"As that was exactly the amount that I wanted, I am afraid that the tears that I shed were somewhat forced. But I gained my point, and that was what I was after."—Detroit Free Press.

Suspected II.

Cashier—I can't honor your check, madam; your husband's account is overdrawn.

Woman—Huh! Overdrawn, is it? I suspected that something was the matter when he signed this check without waiting for me to go into history.—New York Weekly.

SHE WAS GLAD TO HEAR IT.

Wife Was Glad to Know Her Husband Was Comfortably Located for the Night.

A party of young men were taking dinner, a few nights ago, at a fashionable cafe, when one of them, who is somewhat of a jester, called the waiter and said:

"John, go and call Main —. If a woman answers it it will be my wife. Tell her that I instructed you to say that I am in the police station for a few hours, and will not be home to-night. Understand me, sir?"

John winked a couple of times in a knowing way, bowed deferentially, and suggested:

"Supposing—"

"Supposing nothing, sir. If she asks who is talking, tell her it is the turnkey at the Central station, and she'll never know who told her the lie."

The waiter shambled away, and was presently seen to be having a good deal of fun with himself. The jester inferred that he might have something to do with the case, and called him over.

"What's amusing you, John?"

"Wouldn't like to tell you, sir; at least, right here."

"I guess these fellows understand. Let 'er go!"

"Missus says to tell her husband she is glad he is so nicely located for the night. She knows where he is for once."—Cleveland Leader.

But His Suite Enjoyed It.

An amusing story is told of Li Hung Chang in connection with his visit to Europe in 1896. Out of respect to the memory of Gen. Gordon, the chancellor placed a wreath at the foot of the monument in Trafalgar Square. The Gordon family were desirous of showing their appreciation of this act, and at last one of Gordon's nephews, a great lover of dogs, hit upon the idea of sending Li Hung Chang a prize bulldog of which he was the owner. The bulldog was sent just as Li Hung Chang was returning to his own country. A few months later a letter was received from the chancellor, in which he thus expressed his thanks:

"I was much touched by the splendid present you were good enough to make me; the beast was magnificent. Unfortunately, my digestion is not equal to such a delicacy, but my suite enjoyed it thoroughly."—Chicago News.

Not Amused.

Uncle Jabez—Oh, no. Everybody ain't laughin' at Reuben for buyin' the green goods. He wishes everybody was.

Uncle Hiram—How's that?

Uncle Jabez—Well, his wife ain't—Puck.

Office Excitement.

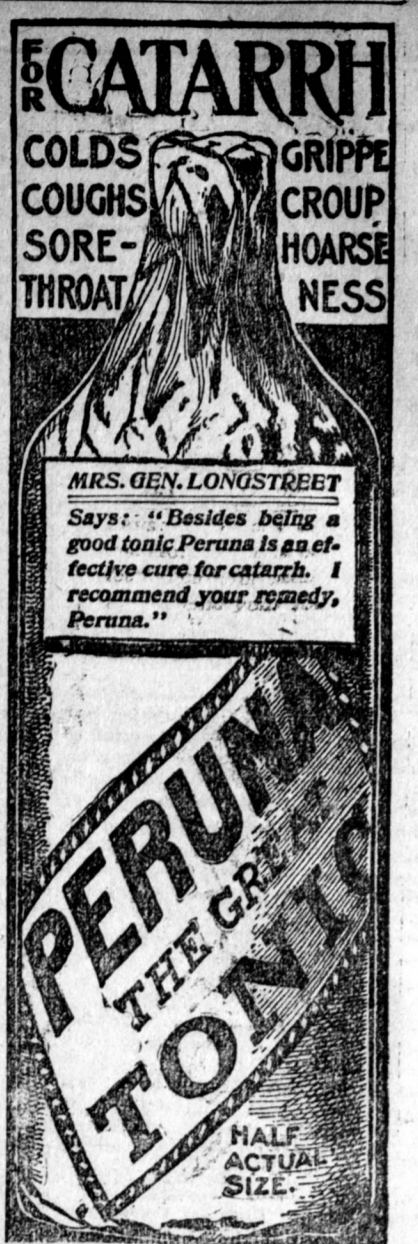
"Did the boss have a good vacation trip?"

"I guess so. He must have spent an awful lot of money, for since he came home he's taken a whack at every salary on the place."—Indianapolis Journal.

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Mrs. J. A. Ferre, who resides near 905 Main Street, Hartford, Conn., says:

"My daughter Lulu became very ill with St. Vitus' dance over a year ago. She became so bad that she lost the use of her right arm and side, and we thought at one time she would lose her right tongue was almost paralyzed. She was so bad she could not feed herself, and at such a time she would get so nervous I had to sit and hold her. I tried several doctors, but they did not do her any good. I did not find anything that would help her until I tried Dr. Greene's Nervura blood and nerve remedy. She is now, by the use of this medicine, entirely cured."

C. H. Bailey, Esq., of Waterbury, Vt., writes:

"I am more than glad to write about my little daughter. Until a short time ago she had developed St. Vitus' dance. It was pronounced by the attending physician to be a very severe attack. The mouth would be drawn spasmodically far to one side, the hands and arms were restless and constantly twitching. Her limbs also were weak, her ankles bent under her so that it was almost impossible to walk. She was so nervous that she would scream almost like a maniac and then have fits of crying. After two months' treatment without a cure, I concluded to try Dr. Greene's Nervura blood and nerve remedy. Three bottles entirely cured her. She is now thirteen years old, and has been well ever since, and to-day is a picture of health."

Mrs. J. Learmonth, of 776 Broadway, South Boston, Mass., says:

"At ten years of age my daughter became affected with a nervous condition which soon developed St. Vitus' dance. It was pronounced by the attending physician to be a very severe attack. The mouth would be drawn spasmodically far to one side, the hands and arms were restless and constantly twitching. Her limbs also were weak, her ankles bent under her so that it was almost impossible to walk. She was so nervous that she would scream almost like a maniac and then have fits of crying. After two months' treatment without a cure, I concluded to try Dr. Greene's Nervura blood and nerve remedy. Three bottles entirely cured her. She is now thirteen years old, and has