

Woman The Mystery

By HENRY HERMAN

CHAPTER I.

It was in Paris, on the last of those three fatal days in June, 1848, and the Rue St. Jacques was a pandemonium. The whole street was one long line of barricades made of stones, timber, overturned wagons and handcars, barrels, furniture—anything, in fact, desperate men could lay their hands on and pile up high as a breastwork.

Overhead the fierce June sun blazed on a cloudless sky, and the soldiers panting with the parching heat, their faces black with powder, their uniforms torn to shreds. Shirt-sleeved and bareheaded, they fought on, leaving no man alive where they had passed.

While the frantic din roared and crashed in the street below, an old man sat on the top floor of a small, tumble-down building at the back of one of the meanest houses. He was tall and thin. A girl of some sixteen or seventeen summers, as frail in figure as the man, with a face which as yet gave but little apparent promise of a beauty to come but for a curious glitter in a pair of big, deep-blue eyes, crouched in a corner of the room, holding her hands to her ears.

The man rose at last. His right leg was paralyzed, and he dragged it along painfully and awkwardly as he walked. He limped slowly to the closed door, and listened.

"They are coming nearer," he gasped, while his face grew whiter and his eyes glittered feverishly. "They are coming nearer. They will kill me like a dog, like a rat, like a snake!"

The girl rose and went to him and threw her white arms around his neck and clung to him.

"There may be an escape," she whispered, hoarsely. "Surely they will not kill an old man like you, who is unarmed and can do no harm."

"I know better," he growled. "They have not forgotten that my 'Song of the Streets' was sung in every wine shop. They will kill me, and—there, I do not mind. One or two bayonet thrusts, and there will be an end. I have lived long enough in this world; I am tired of being hunted and of dragging myself from cellar to roof, and from roof to cellar."

She clung to him again and kissed his cold lips. An instinctive shudder crept through him at the touch, and he panted, as with one convulsive and nearly agonized clutch he gripped her by the shoulder and looked into her big eyes.

"I am not so very terrible," he questioned, with a feverish tremor. "Am I a wolf or a tiger?"

"No, father, dear," she said; "you are the best and the kindest of men. If you would only confide in me, if you would only tell me why you are always so troubled, why such a load seems always to be crushing you down? And now, in this terrible hour, who knows? There may be hope for you still."

"There is somebody coming up the stairs," he cried, with gaunt terror in every feature. "Go and see who it is."

"It is I—Henri," said a youthful male voice, husky with excitement. "Let me in quick, there is not a moment to be lost."

The girl hastily unlocked and unbolted the door, and a young man, rather short and stoutly built, entered the room. He was a good-looking young fellow, with the careless dash of the French revolutionist written large on his handsome, dark-bearded features.

"I have seen him!" he cried, the moment he crossed the threshold. "That Englishman whom you pointed out to me. He is with the Nationals."

The old man staggered back to his chair, and held on to it, shaking as in an ague.

"How do you know? How do you know it is he?" he gasped.

"I know it is he," retorted the young man, excitedly. "He was not ten paces from me at the barricade by Dumont's butchery, and he glared at me as I fired my pistol at him. I missed him; I wish I had killed him. I have come to tell you, to warn you!"

There was a pause of a few heartbeats' space, during which the old man rocked himself to and fro on his chair, tapping his thin legs with his open palms.

"How long will it be before he will be here?" he asked at last, in a guttural whisper.

"Fifteen minutes, perhaps," was the answer; "perhaps twenty, perhaps half an hour. But he may be here in five, if things go badly."

"Very well," exclaimed the old man. "I am ready. Thank you for having warned me."

The young man gave a glance around the room, and looked at the girl with burning eyes.

"And Helene?" he said, slowly, and with an amazing tenderness; "what about her? Had she not better come with me?" His voice was broken by emotion.

"No!" nearly screamed the old man. "Are you mad? Go with you, to be killed in the street! Why should she go with you? Go away! Leave us! You are wasting your time and mine!"

The young man shrugged his shoulders, and then held out a hand.

"We may never see one another again," he said; "there—good-by."

The old man paused again for a moment or two, and then gripped the outstretched hand nervously.

"You are right," he said. "Henri, I had forgotten. You are a good lad—you always were. We may never meet again. Good-by for this world!"

The girl had been standing in a corner of the room silently, and as the young man turned round she looked at him with a world of pleading in her big eyes. He

stepped to her and kissed her on the forehead without another word.

"Good-by, Helene," he whispered. "When I am dead you will perhaps think of me now and then. Good-by!"

With that he rushed out, and the girl instinctively closed the door again and bolted it.

CHAPTER II.

The old man sat silently for half a minute's space after Henri had left the room and his eyes wandered hither and thither round the place, as if searching for a solution of a puzzle which worried him.

"I have it!" he exclaimed at last, rising excitedly. "You must not remain here. I know a way."

The room was a tiny one, barely ten feet square, and even part of that space was rendered useless by the slanting of the garret roof. There was but one little window high up in the wall, and it could only be reached by standing on a chair. Even that was shattered, and the light entered but sparsely.

"Open the shutter there," said the old man quietly—so quietly now that the difference of tone sounded remarkable even to Helene, who was habituated to his changes of moods. "Look out cautiously. See if you notice smoke across the unfinished building opposite, or signs of fighting."

Helene brought a stool and stepped on it, and peered out between the partly opened shutters.

"They have passed the house in the other street, father," she said. "They are fighting perhaps fifty yards away."

"Thank heaven for that!" exclaimed the old man. "There is time to save you yet."

He limped toward the trunk that stood in the corner, and took from it a coil of rope.

"Take this, my girl," he said. "You must get into the store closet. The little window there is at the side and sheltered from view by the projection of the main building. You can get out that way unobserved. You are light and lithe and can lower yourself with this to the roof of the shed below. Is there anybody in the yard?"

"Nobody," said the girl; "not a soul."

"I cannot do it myself," he went on, calmly. "I am too old, and I am a cripple; but you can get away in that manner. When you are on the roof of the shed you can let yourself down from that into the yard. After that you can make your way out into the street as soon as it is safe. They won't hurt a girl like you, but they would kill me like a dog."

"But, father," pleaded the girl, "I do not want to go away. I do not want to leave you. I want to stay here with you."

"Nonsense!" he answered. "That would be sinful. That would be horrible. You will have to get away, and when you are safe in the street, go straight to Mr. Adams. You have only to tell him that I sent you, and he will take care of you."

"Mr. Adams?" asked the girl. "That American who came here last week?"

"The same. You know where he lives. You took a message from me to him. Now run, my child," and he coiled the rope round her waist. "There," he said; "you will be able to use it more easily in this way. You will get away all right."

She clung to him still and kissed his white face.

"I do not want to go," she begged.

"I really do not want to go," she begged.

"You must," he retorted, "you shall—"

And he pushed the girl gently resisting toward the store closet. On a sudden, however, a quiver of anguish convulsed his features, his eyes stared wildly, and he gasped as his lips opened and closed in mute, feverish agitation. He staggered forward and reached out a wildly fumbling hand, crying:

"Stay! I cannot let you go like that. There is not a moment to be lost, and I must tell you before I die."

She turned to him with a blank dismay in her eyes, while his voice became hoarser, and his breathing more painful.

"You are very ill, father, dear," she cried.

"That's just it," he said, "that's why I called you back. You call me father. Let me confess it—it is better thus—I am not your father. Do not look at me so accusingly."

The girl retreated step by step to the wall, and stood there with an outstretched arm on either side of her, staring at the old man in an awe-stricken amazement.

"Yes," he said more quietly, "I am not your father. I have even been accused of having murdered your father."

Helene gave a shriek and gripped her hair in both hands.

"Do not think so ill of me," he went on. "Do not think that the charge was true. I did not murder him. He had wronged me—he had bitterly wronged me—he had robbed me of the woman whom I loved better than myself. He had robbed me of all earthly happiness, of all hope, of all light or life, but I did not kill him. We had a quarrel. It was on the cliff side, and he stumbled and fell over into the sea and was drowned, and they said I had murdered him, but I did not. They hunted me from town to town, from house to house, from forest to swamp, but I escaped them; and more than that, I brought you with me, you, his child, the child of the woman I adored; tender and dainty, but so brave, that as she was lost to me, I determined to keep you by my side as a soothing remembrance of a love that was strange."

"(To be continued.)"

He knelt down and dragged himself to her, and slung to her garments.

"I have been a father to you, have I not?" he went on, with hot fervor. "Have I not given you bread of my bread, most of my meat? Have I eaten a crust without sharing it with you? Tell me, that I may die in peace."

The girl stood there with a face as white as the man's, her eyes nearly starting from their sockets, her lips blanched. Finally she came to him quietly, took his hand between her two hands and kissed him on the forehead.

"I do not know what to do," she said, softly and tenderly. "I do not know what to think, but that you have been like a father to me I can swear. Must I leave you now? Must I go away from you now, when you are in such dreadful danger? Why should I not share it as you shared it with me?"

He looked at her as if his heart were bursting with a secret still concealed. A flash of yearning despair gleamed in his eyes, and in another moment he might have spoken again. But the crashes and the roar in the street outside increased on a sudden, and from the yard came the hoarse shouts and cries and piercing yells and muffled groans, the fury of the victors and the anguish of the dying.

"Away!" he cried, madly; "away! They will be here in another moment. Away!"

Helene stood looking at him for two or three seconds' space, but he clutched her by the shoulder and pushed her into the store closet. He slammed the little door, and immediately pushed a heavy trunk against it, piling another one on that, and throwing a rug over the whole, so as to hide the door as much as possible.

He listened for a while, and even amid the din he thought he could hear the girl's movements as she unfastened the tiny window and crept out on to the roof. Then all was lost to him amid the awful noise in the yard below.

He stood for a second or two, as if undecided what to do; then, with a sudden impulse, he lifted up one of the planks of the floor, and looked down into the dark space below. By kneeling and stretching out an arm he reached a square packet, weighing some three or four pounds.

He cut the string with his knife and opened the paper. It contained gunpowder. That done, he stretched out his arm again, and touched three or four other packets, and thus assured himself of their place—simply inserting his knife in each, and ripping them partly open.

Then he replaced the packet which he had taken out, and scattered part of the loose gunpowder near it and around it between the rafters close to the other packets. After that he rose, and limping to a little chest of drawers in the corner, took from it a cotton fuse, about three or four yards in length. He cut a piece from this, and inserted it well among the loose gunpowder, pulled the end of the fuse through a hole in the floor close to his own chair, and taking a handful of matches from his pocket, sat himself down and waited, while a calm smile settled on his face.

"I shall die," he said, "as I had hoped, in harness, and with my secret locked in my heart. He has discovered me at last, then. He can come as soon as he likes, Mr. Walter Gladys—the Honorable Walter Gladys; the golden bird has flown away, and he will be able to recommence the hunt—that is to say, if he be alive."

He feebly clapped his hands, and listened, with body forward, bent for the sounds on the staircase. The roar below continued, and he drew himself up, breathing a heavy sigh.

"Her brother's son!" he muttered; "Lord Yorley's son, Agatha's nephew, and Helene's cousin. Another of the brood who sold my love away from me and afterward hunted me over the face of the earth. So he is intent on finding her," he sneered; "so noble-minded, so disinterested! Helene's millions, Helene's lands—they offer no attraction. Of course not! Master Walter is only impelled by pure love for his fair, his wronged cousin! Ha! ha! He will not find her. She shall not be contaminated by the gold which broke my life in two, which wrecked all my hopes. For gold her mother was bartered away from me. She shall be untouched by the curse. He knows her not, has never seen her since she was a baby. Now she is free, and I can trust the man to whom she goes to guard her against that crew for all the world."

CHAPTER III.

The face of the teeth barricade in the Rue St. Jacques was silent; no more flashes of musketry, no more puffs of smoke. Every one of the defenders lay behind the barrier of stones, dead or dying. A little further up the street another crowd of desperate men stubbornly awaited the charge of the National Guards, who swarmed over the barricades with hard-set lips, and bayonets red with human blood.

"On!" cried the captain. "Down with them! Kill the dogs!"

And they swept on, smashing away at the doors of houses, bursting in shutters with the butt-ends of their muskets, rushing upward and onward, and pinning the unfortunate wretches whom they found against the walls like so many flies.

Two men charged among that furious crowd, both of them eager to reach the heart of the fight, both of them rushing onward, sword and pistol in hand, but neither of them really bloodthirsty at heart nor cruelly disposed to their fellow creatures.

One of them was a broad-chested, straight-limbed young fellow of about four and twenty, fair-haired and blue-eyed; a set of white teeth shone beneath a stubby reddish mustache, his color barely distinguishable amid the grime of powder and dirt with which the whole face was besmeared.

(To be continued.)

Many a man who is willing to do good is unable to make good.

Topic Lines

The game of chess is included in the curriculum of Russian schools.

Women have been doing some of the scene painting at the Imperial Theater, London, lately.

By Lord Kitchener's orders soldiers who fall victims to phthisis are now sent home from India.

Geese are driven to the great Prague fair with their feet incased in tar boots to prevent injury.

The cost of living has doubled in Spain in the last few years, and emigration is increasing rapidly.

Automobile trains are to be run on wagon roads in German East Africa as feeders to the railway lines.

On the night of Sept. 27 a ten-foot shark chased 30,000 herrings into the nets of a Dublin trawler and was caught himself.

The progressive policy of the Ameer includes the appointment of women doctors at Cabul and the use of electric power in his gun factory.

The engines of the first steamer that ever crossed the Atlantic have been recovered off the coast of Cork, after more than fifty years' immersion.

Thorverton Church, Devon, England, was recently used as a storehouse for whisky which had been taken from the village inn during a fire.

A London newsboy, 12 years old, attempted suicide by cutting his throat with a pocket knife because he had sold only 4 cents' worth of papers and did not dare go home to his father with less than 25 cents.

In England the best remedy for farm depopulation is held to be small farm holdings. It is stated that whenever a large farm is divided into small holdings the demand for the land usually far exceeds the supply.

The greatest possible number of leap years will occur in the twentieth century, the year 1904 being the first one, and every fourth year following up to and including 2000. In the same century February three times will have five Sundays—in 1920, 1948 and 1976.

The custom of marrying girls when they are mere children of nine or ten years is increasing rather than decreasing in Bengal and other parts of India. The resulting racial degeneration is becoming so obvious that laws have been passed in several regions forbidding the marriage of girls under fourteen.

Louis Tas, one of the best known diamond brokers, estimates the output of the De Beers mines annually at \$10,000,000, and of other mines at \$4,500,000. Add to this the cost of labor, the profits of the syndicates, etc., and he thinks that the annual output of diamonds is worth about \$35,000,000.

A Monroe County man who invested \$29 in sheep last fall has sold \$227 worth of wool, has 143 lambs that will average eighty pounds when ready for market, which at 4 cents a pound makes them worth \$572. Total income from his flock of sheep, \$799, and he still has the sheep. Not one of them has got away from him.—Kansas City Journal.

Probably the first treaty of peace to be typewritten is the South African peace document. The signatures of the Boer leaders form an interesting part of it. They are all in different styles. Louis Botha's is described as being in fine hand, and though the others are somewhat rougher, Delarey's is the roughest of all. He has spelled his name split into three syllables, de la Rey. Christian de Wet is also spelled with a small d.

The English Church Missionary Society calls attention to the fearful ravages of pestilence in several countries in which its agents are at work. In Uganda the sleeping sickness has desolated Busoga and the northern shores of the Victoria Lake, and is fast depopulating the Sese islands. The plague in the Punjab has been claiming as many as 20,000 victims in a month, while cholera, which has laid thousands low in Palestine, is now raging in Persia.

OUR WONDERFUL FRUIT CROP

It Now Amounts to Over One Hundred Millions Annually.

The census statistics of 1900 show that the fruit crop of the United States now ranks as one of the eight most important agricultural products of the country, thus: Corn, \$828,258,320; hay, \$484,256,846; cotton (including cottonseed), \$870,708,746; wheat, \$309,945,120; oats, \$217,068,584; potatoes, \$118,263,814; vegetables, \$113,871,842; fruit, \$92,301,703. As 1899 produced a light crop of apples and peaches, the normal value of the fruit crop certainly exceeds \$100,000,000.

The census reports show a number of interesting things concerning this fruit crop. There are over 2,700,000 acres in orchard fruits, and no branch of agriculture has made the gains that fruit growing has in the last decade.

The acreage and percentage of gain for the different varieties of deciduous fruit are: Apples, 2,000,000 and 68; peaches, 1,000,000 and 217; prunes and plums, 307,800 and 334; pears, 117,000 and 246; cherries, 110,400 and 112; apricots, 50,000 and 217.

Twenty-four of the States report a fruit crop, exceeding \$1,000,000 in annual value, California leading with \$21,700,000. New York is second with \$10,500,000. Illinois fifth with \$3,800,000, and Florida twenty-first with \$1,100,000. Maine, with its apples, is on the list in normal years, and Delaware with its peaches. Georgia will soon be added to the list, as its peach industry is rapidly growing. The low rank of Florida is due to repeated frostings of its orange trees.

In apples Missouri leads all the States with an acreage of 200,000. New York is second with 150,000 acres, and Illinois third with 131,000 acres. Several of the States show a tremendous per cent of increase, as Arkansas and Nebraska, 300 each; Washington, 900; Alabama, 250; Colorado and Wyoming, 2,500; Idaho, 1,000; Montana, 5,000; Minnesota, 500; Utah, 700, and New Mexico, 1,200.

Michigan leads in peaches, and is third in cherries and pears. Kansas, which is sixth in apples, leads in cherries, with Pennsylvania second. California leads in pears, with New York second. Illinois ranks nineteenth in peaches, sixth in cherries, and ties with Pennsylvania for seventh place in pears.

California leads in prunes and plums, with 98,000 acres. Oregon is an easy second, Illinois is seventeenth, with 5,700 acres, California has a practical monopoly of apricots, 42,000 acres; olives, 15,000 acres, and figs, 1,900 acres.

California also dwarfs its only competitor in the orange and lemon industry, Florida. The figures are 56,500 acres of oranges and 15,000 of lemons, as against 25,000 acres of oranges in Florida and 225 acres of lemons.

California thus bears off the palm as a fruit-producing State, leading in oranges, lemons, figs, olives, apricots, pears, prunes and plums, and ranking high in peaches and apples. As orange growing in Florida is the only fruit production that shows a decrease, and as all other orchard crops show a tremendous increase in ten years, it is likely that on the showing of the next census fruit will no longer be at the bottom of the list of eight principal agricultural products.

WHAT MADE THE SCRATCHES.

The summer visitor had driven in to the New Hampshire village with one of the selectmen of the town and his wife. The better half was a plump, good-hearted soul, until recently quite contented in her rural prosperity; but lately, stirred up by the influence of a woman's club which held weekly readings of papers on subjects ranging from "The Contribution of Charles II to Religion" to "The Married Woman in Political Reform," she had become ambitious for "culture." Her last plunge had been into geology.

"John," said she, "you see that flat ledge of rock that lies bare on the road?"

"I suppose you're going to tell me that it's an extinct volcano," interrupted her husband, who had become familiar with his wife's latest interest.

"Of course I ain't," said she, sniffing at his sarcasm. "I wanted you to see those grooves and scratches, but I know knowledge ain't acceptable to you, you are welcome to remain in ignorance. I shan't interfere."

"Well, I see the scratches on the rock—what of 'em? Are they the foot prints of a prehistoric rattlesnake?"

"There! I knew you wouldn't know. Those are glacial scratches. When the glaciers came down over New England they moved slowly and ground the loose rocks across the flat surfaces making those scratches and grooves. Once right here there was a sheet of ice two hundred feet thick—"

"See here, Marthy," said her husband, "I don't care how much you think things like that, but don't you go telling 'em to the folks here. Those who happen to believe it would be misinformed, and it would be your fault. Those who had any sense would know we never had a winter such as you speak of—not in a thousand years."

His wife sat up straight in indignation. "John Stubbs," said she, "you just turn your back on learning! I believe you'd rather not know any education. I want you to understand I don't speak about a thousand years—it was a million years ago, I guess, that those scratches were made."

"No, it wa'n't," replied her husband, quietly. "Those scratches was made when we moved the Baptist meeting house in eighty-seven!"—Youth's Companion.

Comparing Experiences.

"Yes," said the giraffe, "I've got a sore throat. Can you imagine anything worse than that?"

"Well," replied the crocodile, "I had my feet frostbitten once."—Philadelphia Ledger.