

Woman The Mystery

By HENRY HERMAN

CHAPTER XXII.

When they arrived at the chemist's shop they found that the sufferer was still there, lying unconscious in the room at the back of the shop, while the police kept a crowd of gapers at bay outside. Two medical men were engaged in a heated argument about their respective diagnoses of the case, while Henri's room stood by, waiting their decision. Helene and Adams were both well known to the chemist, and obtained immediate admission to the wounded man's presence.

To Adams' experienced eye even the most outward symptoms were at once conclusive. His deadly pallor, his total unconsciousness, his cold, clammy skin, the arms and legs which were bent upon the body, the slow breathing and the transient shivering proved that Henri was suffering from concussion. In addition to this, his right leg was severely injured, his horse having stepped on him, and it was crushed and splintered below the knee.

Adams, who was taken by the Frenchman to be an English colleague, ordered the patient's immediate removal to his rooms at the Hotel Birandot, where he occupied the whole of one floor, and Helene insisted upon herself and Adams accompanying him thither. When the doctors demanded absolute quiet for the wounded man, and forbid all visits, Helene protested.

"He will require a nurse," she pleaded, "and I am a very good one. I have had plenty of experience, and my time is my own. Do let me stay! I will be so careful!"

"For the present, at any rate, my dear," said Adams, "such a thing cannot be. I do not know what can prompt you to your course of action, but I will not ask you to explain."

"You need not," rejoined Helene. "You would not understand my reasons if I gave them to you. But I may come back, may I not?"

The doctors promised that as soon as their patient was in a state to be seen by anybody, permission should be granted to her.

"Perhaps you will tell me, my dear," said Adams, as they were driving back to Helene's mansion, "who is this man in whom you are taking so great an interest? You say he saved your life. How was that?"

"Henry Roberts is Henri Sainton," answered Helene, "who loved me when he was a boy and I a girl, and whom you sent to penal servitude. He is the Louisiana soldier of your battalion who saved me from being murdered by that horrible man outside of the Northern picket lines."

"What!" cried Adams. "Do you mean to tell me that you can bear a kindly memory for the man who, whatever you may say, aided that man Quayle in his attempt upon your life?"

"I remember," was Helene's retort, "that he saved my life at the risk of his own."

There was no further assault after that defense. Adams bit his lip, and when they had arrived at Helene's door, he left her with a simple "Good day, my dear."

A fortnight passed, during which Helene called twice every day at Henri's hotel without being allowed to see him—a fortnight portentous to the fate of Europe. War had been declared against Germany, and all Paris for the moment went mad. As the week wore on, came the news of disaster and defeat, and the foreign residents of Paris commenced to seek safer quarters.

Helene had been untiring in her attendance upon Henri all this while. The injured man had regained consciousness, but the surgeons still forbade all but the most casual conversation. A few weeks more passed, during which Henri rallied slowly, still with Helene as his faithful nurse and attendant.

Then came the news of the disaster of Sedan—MacMahon wounded, his army destroyed or captive, and the Emperor himself a prisoner. All this was swiftly followed by the nation's vengeance in the form of the proclamation of the republic.

Months passed, and Henri was still unable to rise from his couch. The injured leg had been put into a shield of plaster of paris, and motion was forbidden. In the meantime events around and about Paris had proceeded with hurricane pace. The enemy had drawn around the besieged city a line of iron and flame, and the thunders of war crashed and roared from every hillside around the city.

All Helene's friends had left, all except Walter, faithful Walter, who was glad to find an excuse for staying in the acceptance of a temporary post at the British embassy, so that he might remain near the woman he loved so much.

Walter, however, took care not to let Helene know that he was still in Paris. He did not wish to obtrude his presence upon her. His purpose was to watch over her, to protect her, if danger threatened, not to force his suit upon her when she seemed to be so happy in the society of another man.

Winter came on apace, and the terrors of the siege increased, but Helene saw and felt little of these. Being known to be possessed of immense wealth, the proprietor of the hotel in which she lived did his best so that she should feel none of the privations which pressed upon nearly all the population.

No man can be for any length of time in the daily society of a beautiful woman without feeling drawn toward her, and Henri, who first of all looked upon Helene merely as a woman who had betrayed him, and whom he might treat with

such scant honesty as to his mind she deserved, gradually came to look for Helene's visits as for a necessity in his life.

Thus it came quite naturally that Helene's love for Henri raised a harvest of affection on the barren, stony soil of the man's heart. Soon they both got to know that each knew that the other loved him or her.

During all those long, weary months, Walter never once approached Helene. Every day a messenger from the British embassy inquired at the two hotels after Helene and Henri, but the man had strict orders not to mention Walter's name, and Helene thought that Lord Yorley had left instructions at the embassy that she be looked after, and that the British representatives in Paris did their best to carry out Lord Yorley's wishes.

The year 1870 had been terrible enough for poor, down-trodden France, and its encompassed capital, but 1871 added to the horrors. It seemed as if the judgment of an avenging heaven were heavy upon the frailest of the frail among cities. Henri's recovery continued extremely slow. The doctors came every day, and still forbid all exertion.

Thus passed the first month of the new year. Then on a sudden the storm clouds parted asunder, and a streak of blue sky became visible on the political horizon. Paris capitulated to the Germans, and an armistice was signed, with peace, blessed peace, in the near distance.

Adams had left Helene in anger. He never believed that the siege would last for a month, and he dwelt in London eating his heart out with remorse and self-chiding. He had and could have no news from Helene, and he blamed himself for having left her in the hour of peril.

When the news of the negotiations for peace reached London, he packed a handbag, and started for Paris by the night mail. High influence procured him a pass through which he was allowed to enter the beleaguered city among the very first. It was a dark, dull winter morning when he presented himself at Helene's hotel, having learned her whereabouts from the servants at her mansion.

Helene, when Adams' name was given to her, simply muttered, "Oh, what a bore!" and prepared herself to receive her former protector with the best possible grace. The Louisianaian perceived, however, before he had been in Helene's presence many minutes, that he was not overwelcome. Helene's mind seemed to be away somewhere, and he shrewdly surmised that Henri was the cause of it.

The next day was a very bright and sunny one, such as winter in Paris often brings, and the cheering rays streamed through the windows, and made the prisoner of so many days long to be without, in the sunlit gardens which he knew were at the end of the street, anywhere but in the room in which he had been chained to his couch for so many months. But that was impossible yet, although the doctors promised that in a few days perhaps a ride in a carriage might be permitted.

Helene, to alleviate the injured man's disappointment, ordered the attendants to move the sofa to the window, and had Henri carried there. She was about to place a chair for herself at a little distance, when he beckoned to her and said:

"There is room enough, if you will sit here by me. I want you to sit quite close to me, because I want to look into your eyes, and to tell you something I have longed to say to you these days past."

He took her dainty fingers in his hand and pressed them gently while his eyes became troubled, as if for the first time he were afraid to address her.

"I may as well confess my sins to start with," he said, seeing that Helene was silent, "and then, perhaps, I may hope to be forgiven. I will tell you the truth. I hated you, my dear, when you first came here. It had been my intention to humble you, to bring you to my feet, and then to leave your heart to break. I knew not what was in store for me. You came day by day, and you crept into my heart hour by hour, slowly but as surely as fate itself, until now, were you to leave me, I should die of misery. My darling, I love you. I believe that you love me. When I am strong enough and well enough, will you allow me to make you my wife?"

She had turned her face to him as he was speaking, and had gradually drawn closer to him. He was feeble still, but he went forward and put his arms around her neck. She sidled by a gentle movement, and he kissed her. She had answered him by her silent submission, while a joyful tear stole down her cheek.

CHAPTER XXIII.

They determined to be married at the British embassy in a month. As the days passed, every one of which brought Helene's hopes of happiness nearer, the cloud of terror which had hung over faded Paris assumed a new and more awe-inspiring shape.

But a few weeks previously the enemies of France, the Germans, had threatened Paris, and held the population in awe, but now Frenchmen arrayed against Frenchmen, shedding one another's blood, maiming, slaying, destroying. The Prussians stood by, smiling with grim satisfaction, while Frenchmen cut one another's throats. The red flag of the Commune was unfurled, and Helene, sitting in Henri's room, could hear the rattle of the musketry when scores of unarmed, inoffensive citizens were murdered in cold blood.

Adams had gone away, flatly refusing to assist at the ceremony, either as witness or as friend. There was nobody left but Walter to stand in the place of father

or brother for Helene, and Walter, true to the last, accepted the post of torment. His position at the embassy made the task a trifle easier for him, but the bitterness of it had to be tasted, none the less. At last the morning of the 14th of April, the day appointed for the wedding, dawned. At 11 o'clock they were to be married at the British embassy.

It was noon, and the fateful ceremony was over. Henri and Helene were man and wife according to English law. Walter had stood by with an icy tooth gnawing at his heart and tearing at it, but he had borne himself like a man, and the worst of the pain was past. There was to be a simple luncheon, only Henri, Helene, Walter and eight or ten intimate friends joining in it.

Helene had gone to her room, in the company of two or three ladies, to change her dress, and the gentlemen were in the dining room when on a sudden the room was invaded by a dozen or more guards, fully armed, headed by a man whose gold-laced cap indicated an officer's rank, although his blue blouse, his drink-sodden face, his whole appearance, indicated a drover or a butcher. The gentlemen in the room all rose in surprise. But they were not long left in doubt about the reason of the intrusion.

"We have caught you at last," said the officer, blinking and hiccupping as he went on. "Citizen Henri Sainton, who calls himself monsieur—mark you," he said, turning to his soldiers—"mark you, Monsieur Henri Roberts. This fine monsieur is a French citizen, and, what do you think? He grows rich—millions and millions of francs—and he does not give his poor country a thought. He neither serves his country, nor does he pay. Therefore, Monsieur Henri Sainton," with an emphasis on the monsieur, "we will take you to prison and the Commune will decide what shall be done with you."

"I have served my country," cried Henri, rising in anger. "I have served the cause of French liberty, when you were probably hiding behind casks. I fought for the Reds in '48, and I was shot and sent to the galleys for having done so. And now you come and tell me that I have not done my duty to the Commune."

"You can explain all that to the General when you see him," hiccupped the Communist. "But I warn you, Citizen Henri Sainton, that he is not a credulous kind of man, if you make your tale not very plausible he will have you shot for lying. He is very quick-tempered, and he is nasty when he is angered."

"You surely see, sir," interposed Walter, "that this gentleman is an invalid. It has been impossible for him to join the army or the Commune either for months past, because he has been confined to his room."

"The citizen can explain all he wants to the General. He can urge any excuse he likes. I don't think it will help him much. I am in a hurry, and if you please, Citizen Henri Sainton, we will go away together."

Resistance was, of course, useless, and Henri submitted quietly, while two sullen-faced fellows, their semblance of uniforms stained with blood, took him, one by either arm, and pushed him roughly along, as he was not yet active enough to proceed at the pace they required.

They were already on the landing when Helene came flying down the staircase. She saw at a glance what had occurred, and, with a womanly disregard of consequences, she darted upon the soldiers who guarded her husband and flung herself between them.

"Who is that woman?" cried the officer.

And Henri replied: "She is my wife." "I don't care whether she is your wife or your daughter, or your mother, or your grandmother. Push her back, some of you! And bring this man along."

One of the villains gripped Helene's arm and dragged Henri away from her. She had been brave enough years ago, when her own life was in danger. But now, with her heart throbbing for the man who held her hope of happiness on earth, calm reason seemed to be dashed from her, and Helene felt herself staggering.

Then all grew dark around her, and for the space of a second or two the poor woman stood with raised arms wildly writhing in the air. Then she fell forward, being caught by Walter, who had stepped forward in the nick of time.

CHAPTER XXIV.

It was that awful week in May, 1871, which Frenchmen to this day call "the terrible week." Paris was in flames. A cloud of smoke and a canopy of fire hung over the doomed city. All night the sky had been one lurid crimson sheet, and even the rising king of day had not been able to entirely chase away the blood-red hue of the firmament.

Barriade after barriade was taken by the soldiers of France, who paid with their blood the price of the rescue of an awe-stricken populace. The revolutionists who had intended to make Paris their booty and France their plaything were being driven from street to street, from barricade to barricade, from house to house, until at last only the northeastern portion of the city remained in their clutches. But they did not mean to die without revenging themselves upon the innocent, helpless beings whom they held as hostages.

Nigh on three hundred prominent citizens, headed by the Archbishop of Paris and the vicar general of the diocese, had been imprisoned as hostages. As bit by bit of Paris was wrenched from the hands of the Communards, these were taken to the prison of La Roquette, Henri among them.

Helene passed her days in endeavoring to beseech the granite hearts who governed Paris for mercy for her husband. Her nights were endless hours of agony of waiting, when heaven seemed to have closed its portals to her prayer, and even her scalding tears left her heart shivering, frigid as ice.

When at last the crashes of the cannons of the regulars, and the volleys of their rifles, told her that the end was

coming, a new dread sprang upon her. What if the revolutionists were to carry out their threats to murder those poor men whom they held as hostages?

She flew to the Conciergerie, and arriving there just in time to see a score or so of open carts, guarded by a motley crew of soldiery, being taken along the road by the Seine. In answer to her question whether the miserable wretches were being taken, she was told to La Roquette. To La Roquette! That surely meant death.

La Roquette was the prison of the condemned. The guards pushed her roughly back, when she attempted to get near poor Henri. He saw her from the distance of a dozen paces, and smiled sadly and kissed his hand to her.

Once more she hastened to the Hotel de Ville, where for the nonce she found one of the Central Committee, more light-hearted or more reckless than the rest.

"So your husband is at La Roquette," he said, "and you want to go to him there, my pretty lady. We will show you that we are gentlemen, and that we do everything we can to please pretty ladies. You shall go and see your husband. I wish I were he."

The paper was signed and in Helene's hands. She reached La Roquette, and her pass procured her entrance. She had to wait hours, however, before she was allowed to see Henri.

At last one of the keepers came and called her name, "Citizensess Sainton!" and after tramping with the man up staircases and through corridors which seemed to her to be without end, she was thrust into a big room with bare stone walls, and two little windows guarded by bars of forbidding strength.

There were other ladies there as heart-broken, as sorely stricken as herself, seated with their husbands on the rough wooden benches. Henri met her, and she sank into his arms like a stone that is dropped into the water. Cold as ice, and seemingly lifeless, he clasped her to his breast.

"Don't grieve for me, my dear," he said. "I know what is going to happen to me, and I am prepared. But you must not suffer for having joined your fate to mine. This will soon be over, and then you can go away to your own country. I know there are other men who love you, perhaps quite as well as myself—perhaps better, if that be possible—and one of these will make you happy."

"No," she said, "surely they would not dare to murder you. You have done no wrong."

"That is no reason," he replied. "I am rich, you see, and that is my crime. My wealth brought me the happiness of your love, alas! to be lost so soon."

Thus they sat, hand in hand, for an hour perhaps, she leaning her wet cheek against his, he comforting and soothing her in her sorrow. Then the jailer came again, and told her that the time of the visit was over, and that she must go.

"Let me stay only a little while I pray you, let me stay!" she pleaded.

The man replied that it was impossible. The others all left the room by twos and twos, the men to return to their cells, the women to go forth into the burning city. One of the officers of the jail returned at last with the jailer, and found Helene with Henri.

"You must really go, citizensess," he said. "When the door of this corridor closes, you will no longer be able to leave. Make your choice. Go! For you can only stay here as a prisoner."

"Good!" replied Helene, rising with the dignity of a captive queen. "Close the door. I will stay as a prisoner."

Monday had passed, and Tuesday was gone, and it was Wednesday evening. Huddled in one corner of the prison yard stood some four or five score doomed men, while a little further away a company of Communist infantry were drawn up facing the high gray-stone wall of the yard.

An officer called out a list of names, commencing with that of the Archbishop of Paris, and following it up with those of about a score of ecclesiastical dignitaries.

The archbishop, still in a portion of his robes, bare-headed and smiling calmly like a martyr of old, walked slowly to the wall, and placed himself there. The others followed in his footsteps, and a row of priest-martyrs faced the muskets. The archbishop was standing with one hand raised, blessing his murderers, when—

"Ready! Fire!" cried the officer. And the score or so were dashed to the ground by the iron ball, while the gray stones were bespattered with red blotches.

Another list of names—Henri's name this time among them. Helene, who had been standing with Henri, clasping hand in hand, clung to him. A soldier gripped her by the neck, and flung her aside, as if she were a log.

Half stunned and sorely hurt, Helene dragged herself to her feet and flew to where her husband was standing among the pile of the dead, and locked her arms around his neck.

"Citizensess!" cried the officer. "Out of the way, or it will be your own fault!" "I shall stay here with my husband, and die with him here," was Helene's calm reply.

Without a second's pause the officer again cried, "Ready! Fire!" All was over. Henri and Helene fell together, hand in hand.

(The end.)

Tied and Untied.

There is a tied in the affairs of men; That tied is frequently the marriage knot.

There is an untied just as surely when The work of the divorce court hits the spot.

—Illinois State Journal.

A Poor Strategist.

"How does Mrs. Closer stand in the smart set?"

"She lacks strategy." Twice I have arranged to have her jewels stolen and returned, but she put me off each time."—Detroit Free Press.



Meat Pie.

An old way of making "English meat pie" is to take finely chopped cold beef, put in a deep baking dish a layer of the meat, stew lightly with breadcrumbs, season highly with salt, pepper, butter and a few drops of onion juice; repeat the process till the dish is full or your meat used up. Pour over it a cup of stock or gravy, or, lacking these, hot water with a teaspoonful of butter melted in it; on top a good layer of breadcrumbs should be put and seasoned and dotted with butter. Cover and bake half an hour; remove the cover and brown.

Plum Pudding.

Cream half a cup of butter with a cup of granulated sugar, add a half-pound of powdered suet, five beaten eggs, a cup of milk and a teaspoonful of orange juice. Mix together a cup, each, of seeded and halved raisins and cleaned currants, and half a cupful of minced citron. Dredge these thoroughly with flour, add to the batter and stir in a quarter teaspoonful, each, of cloves, nutmeg and cinnamon—all powdered. Last of all, beat in a quart of flour, turn into a large mold and steam for six hours.

Orange Marmalade.

Slice and seed, without peeling, two dozens oranges. Mix with them two sliced lemons, cutting all very thin. Measure the juice and add enough water to make a quart and a pint of liquid. Put into a stone vessel, cover, and stand all night. Put into a preserving kettle, bring slowly to the boil, and simmer until the peel is tender. Stir in a pound of sugar for every pint of juice and boil until the skin looks clear. Take from the fire and, when cool, put into glasses.

Old-Fashioned Jumbles.

Half a pound of butter, nine ounces of flour, one teaspoonful of vanilla, half a pound of powdered sugar, and three eggs. Beat the butter to a cream; add the sugar gradually, beating until very light. Now beat the eggs all together, add the butter and sugar, and vanilla, and then the flour, sifted. Beat the whole well. Drop in spoonfuls on a lightly-buttered pan and bake in a moderate oven.

Prune Marmalade.

Take six fine, large cooking apples, pare, plunge in cold water, then put over the fire together with the juice of two lemons and a half pound of sugar. When stewed, split and stone two and a half pounds of prunes and stew with the apples, taking care that there is sufficient water to keep them from burning. When thoroughly cooked, beat it through a strainer and turn into jars to keep for use.

Corn Puffs.

To the contents of one can of corn, add separately the beaten yolks and whites of four eggs and mix gently; add a little salt and cayenne pepper and just enough flour to mix well. Drop in spoonfuls into a buttered frying pan and fry. Serve very hot.

Squash Pie.

One and one-half cupfuls of squash, two cupfuls of boiled milk, with butter the size of a walnut melted in it, four eggs beaten slightly, one cupful of sugar, one-half teaspoonful of extract of almond. This makes two pies baked on deep plates.

Household Hints.

To cool off a hot oven set a pan of cold water in it.

Kitchen floors painted with boiled linseed oil are very easily cleaned.

Bread boards should be scrubbed with sand or salt to keep the wood a good color.

Covers of lard pails are useful to put under pots and pans when the stove is too hot.

To clean gas fixtures, rub them with cut lemons, and then wash the juice off with hot water.

If soot falls on the carpet cover it thickly with dry salt. Then sweep it up quickly and it will leave no stain.

Use soapy water for making starch. The linen will have a glossier appearance, and the iron will not be so apt to stick.

The most satisfactory method of sprinkling clothes is to use a good whisk broom kept expressly for that purpose.

To clean black cloth mix one part of spirits of ammonia with three parts of hot water. Apply with a sponge, and rinse off with clean water.

If, in covering a kitchen table with oil cloth, a layer of brown paper is put on first, it will prevent the oil cloth cracking, and make it wear three times as long.

Cakes burn because the heat of the oven is not reduced after the cake is risen. They do not require a very hot oven and the oven door should not be open for the first twenty minutes.