

A BARTERED LIFE.

BY MARION HARLAND.

INTERNATIONAL PRESS ASSOCIATION

CHAPTER II.—(Continued.)

She had kept her heart alive upon nothing else for eight years—dreams of home, and love, and appreciation; of liberty to speak out what she had never listened since her mother died, and of being once again, joyously and without reserve, herself. There are no harder specters to lay than these same dreams. Memories, however dear and sacred, are more easily forgotten or dismissed, or smothered by the growth of later ones. If she bade them farewell now, it was for a lifetime. "A lifetime!" she repeated, shivering with a sick chill, and crouching lower over the register. "Maybe ten, maybe twenty—who knows but forty years? It is a tedious slumber of one's heart, and a loveless marriage is a loathsome sepulcher for one's better and real self. A lifetime! and I can have but one! But one! If this step should be ruin and misery, there can be no redemption this side of the grave. His grave, perhaps—just as probably mine!"

To-night, this very hour, she must resist the glittering temptation to fore-swear her womanhood, or murder, with her own hand, the dear visions that had come to be more to her than reality. The winter twilight had fallen early. It was the season best loved by her dream visitors. She had not fled in declaring to her inquisitor that she had never been in love, but she confessed that she had equivocated as the shadowy figure of her ideal lover stood beside her in the friendly gloom. Mrs. Romaine would have questioned her sanity had she guessed how the girl had sobbed her griefs into quiet upon his bosom, how talked lowly but audibly to him of her love and the comfort his presence brought. She had never looked into his face, but she should know him in an instant should they two ever meet in the flesh, as they did now daily in spirit. Somewhere in the dim and blessed future he was waiting for her, and she had borrowed patience from the hope. She was to be his wife—the mother of children as unlike the prodigies of repression that lined two sides of her brother's table as cherubs to puppets. She welcomed them to her arms in these twilight trances. They lolled upon her knees, slept in her embrace, strained eager arms about her neck, dappled her cheek with their kisses. Unsubstantial possessions these, but cherished as types of good things to come. Other women had such riches—women with faces less fair and affections less ardent than hers. If the Great Father was good and merciful, and the Rewarder of them who put their trust in Him, a true and loving parent, who rejoiced in the happiness of His creatures—all these must be hers at last. If she resigned them now it was a final separation.

"And I can have but one lifetime," she moaned again. Thwarted and fruitless thus far, but still all she had. The one idea recurred to her with the persistence of a presentiment. The life which God had given, the heart He had endowed!

"If some one, stranger and wiser than I, would only take the responsibility of decision from my soul, would hedge me in on the right and left, I would go forward. As it is, I dare not! I dare not!" She sobbed and wrung her hands in the agonies of irresolution.

"You told Constance about the telegram?" It was her brother speaking in the library below. The sound across plainly through the open register.

"I did. But I regret to say that she is not yet in the frame of mind we could wish her to carry to the interview with Mr. Withers," said Mrs. Romaine. She always expressed herself with deliberate precision even in conjugal tete-a-tete.

"No?" Constance heard the rustle of the evening paper as Charles laid it down, and the creak of his chair as he confronted his wife. "What is the matter?"

"Some overstrained ideas of the beauty and propriety of reciprocal devotion, I believe. She looks for a hero in a husband, and Mr. Withers has nothing heroic in his appearance or composition."

"He is worth more than half a million, all accumulated by his own talents and industry," returned Mr. Romaine. "Constance cannot be such an egregiously simpleton as not to perceive the manifest advantages of this connection to her. I have never complained of the burden of her maintenance, but I have often wondered her own sense of justice and expediency did not urge her to put forth some effort at self-support. There is but one way in which she can do this. She is not sufficiently thorough in any branch of literature, or any accomplishment, to become a successful teacher. In the event of my death or failure in business she would be driven to the humiliating resource of taking in sewing for a livelihood, or to seek the more degrading position of a saleswoman in a store. Her future has been a source of much and anxious thought with me. This marriage would, I hoped, quiet my apprehensions by settling her handsomely in life. If she refuses Withers I shall be both angry and disappointed. She is old enough to leave off school-girl sentimentality."

The listener put out her foot and shut the register noiselessly. She had had a surfeit of disagreeable truth for that time.

Yet it was truth, every word of it. She was a mean-spirited hanger-on to her brother. She was incapable of earning a livelihood by other means than those he had named. Her mode of life from her infancy had unfitted her for toil and privation, such as must be hers were her plain-spoken benefactor to die to-morrow. Nor had she the moral nerve to defy public opinion, to debar herself from accustomed associations and pleasures by entering the ranks of paid laborers. Hesitation was at an end. The wish that had been almost a prayer in solemn sincerity was answered fearfully soon, and she would offer no appeal. Her destiny was taken out of her hands. There was no more responsibility, no more struggling. Hedges to the right and to the left bristled with thorns, sharp and thick as porcupine quills. But one path lay open to her feet—a short and straight course that conducted her to Elmathan Withers' arms.

CHAPTER III.

ALF past five! I wrote to Harriet to have dinner ready at six. We shall be just in time," said Mr. Withers, as he took his seat in the carriage that was to convey him with his bride to their home.

Constance was jaded by her fortnight's travel, and dispirited almost beyond her power of concealment, but she had learned already that her lord disliked to have whatever observation he was pleased to make go unanswered. "She is your housekeeper, I suppose?" she replied, languidly.

"No—that is—she does not occupy the position of a salaried inferior in my establishment. I must surely have spoken to you of my cousin, Harriet Field."

"Not that I recollect. I am sure that I never heard the name until now."

"Her mother," continued Mr. Withers, in a pompous narrative tone, "was my father's sister. Left a widow ten years prior to her decease, she accepted my invitation to take charge of my house. She brought with her only child, the Harriet of whom I speak, and the two remained with me until our family group was broken in upon by death. Harriet would then have sought a situation as governess but for my objections. She is a woman of thirty-five, or thereabouts, and I prevailed upon her scruples touching the propriety of her continued residence under my roof, by representing that her mature age, even more than our relationship, placed her beyond the reach of scandal. For eighteen months she has superintended my domestic affairs to my entire satisfaction. That I have not alluded directly to her before during our acquaintanceship is only to be accounted for by the circumstance that we have had so many other and more engrossing topics of conversation." He raised her gloved hand to his lips in stiff gallantry, and Constance smiled constrainedly in reply.

His endearments, albeit he was less profuse of them than a younger and more ardent bridegroom would have been, were yet frequent enough to keep his wife in unflinching remembrance of his claims and her duties. He was, apparently, content with her passive submission to these, seemed to see in her forced complaisance evidence of her pleasure in their reception. He was too sedate, as well as too gentlemanly, to be openly conceited, but his appreciation of his own importance in society and in business circles was too profound to admit a doubt of the supreme bliss of the woman he had selected to share his elevated position. Without being puppyish, he was pragmatic; without being ill-tempered, he was tenacious in the extreme of his dignity and the respect he considered due to this. Had her mood been lighter Constance would have been tempted to smile at the allusion to his cousin's age, his own exceeding it by three years, as she had accidentally learned through the indiscretion of a common acquaintance. He was sensitive upon this point she had likewise been informed. She had yet to discover upon how many others.

Most young wives would not have relished the idea of finding this invaluable relative installed as prime manager in her new abode. It mattered little to her. Constance said, still languidly, who ruled and who obeyed. She had given up so much within three months past that resignation had become a habit; sacrifice was no longer an effort. Having nothing to hope for, she could sustain no further loss. How long this nightmare of apathy would continue was a question that did not present itself in her gray musings. Having once conquered Nature, and held inclination under the heel of Resolve, until life seemed extinct, she anticipated no resurrection. She did not know that no single battle, however long and bloody, constitutes a campaign; that length of days and many sorrows are needed to rob youth of elasticity; that the guest who lingers longest in the human heart, clinging to the shattered shelter from which all other joys have flown, is Hope. It is doubtful if she thought with any distinctness at this period. She was certainly less actively miserable than in that which immediately preceded her engagement. That was amputation; this, reactionary weariness. How she

would fare by and by, when the wound had become a scar, she thought of least of all.

It was a handsome carriage in which she rode at the master's right hand. A pair of fine horses pranced before it, and a liveried coachman sat on the box. She had sometimes envied other women the possession of like state. She ought to derive delight from these outward symbols of her elevation in the world. It was an imposing mansion, too, before which the equipage presently paused, and a tall footman opened the front door and ran briskly down to the sidewalk to assist the travelers in alighting. None of her associates, married or single, lived in equal style, she reflected with a stir of exultation, as she stepped out, between her husband and his lackey.

Mr. Withers' address dampened the rising glow.

"This is our home, my dear. You will find no cause of discontent with it, I hope," he said, in benign patronage, handing her up the noble flight of stone steps.

"Thank you," she replied, coldly. "It is a part of the price for which I sold myself," she was meditating. "I must not quarrel with my bargain."

Miss Field met them in the hall—a wasp-like figure, surmounted by a small head. Her neck was bare and crane-like; her face very oval, her skin opaque and chalky; her hair black and shining, the front in long ringlets; her eyes jet beads, that rolled and twinkled incessantly.

"My dear cousin!" she cried, effusively embracing her patron's hand and winking back an officious tear. "It is like sunshine to have you home again. How are you?"

"Well—thank you, Harriet; or, I should say, in tolerable health," returned Mr. Withers, magnificently condescending. "Allow me to introduce my wife, Mrs. Withers!"

Miss Field swept a flourishing courtesy. Constance, as the truer lady of the two, offered her hand. It was grasped very slightly, and instantly relinquished.

"Charmed to have the honor, I am sure!" murmured Miss Field. "I trust I see Mrs. Withers quite well! But you, cousin—did I understand you to intimate that you were indisposed?" with strained solicitude.

"A trifling attack of indigestion, not worth mentioning to any ears excepting yours, my good nurse."

Miss Field smiled indulgence in this concession to her anxiety, and Constance, who now heard of the "indisposition" for the first time, looked from one to the other in surprised silence.

"Perhaps Mrs. Withers would like to go directly to her apartments?" pursued Harriet, primly, with another courtesy.

"By all means," Mr. Withers replied for her. "As it is, I fear your dinner will have to wait for her, if, as I presume is the case, you are punctual as is your custom."

"Could I fail in promptitude upon this day of all others?" queried Harriet, sentimentally arch, and preceded the bride upstairs.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

HER CONTRIBUTION ACCEPTED.

Her Brother Paid for it at Advertising Rates.

Here is the amusing experience of an amateur literary aspirant which was told to me a few days ago, says a writer in the New York Commercial Advertiser.

A young woman in New York wrote one day a short skit intended to be humorous. It aroused favorable comment from her circle of friends and she made up her mind that it was good enough to be published in one of the humorous periodicals. Accordingly she submitted it to first one periodical, then another. It was a brief skit, only about fifty lines in all, and, as her brother indulgently said, "couldn't possibly have done any harm." But still the hard-hearted editors failed to see the humor of it and kept sending it back to her. Finally the young author lost heart completely and was about to bury her poor little skit in the depths of her portfolio. Then her brother took pity on her and said:

"Here, give me your skit. I'll get it published or know the reason why."

A week or two later her skit appeared in one of the humorous papers, and the young contributor enjoyed all the delights of first authorship, sending marked copies of the paper to friends, etc., etc. The contribution did not occupy a prominent place. It was among the advertisements, but the author had seen many comings among the advertisements and she was too contented to see her contribution in type to inquire farther. She never knew what that twinkle in her brother's eyes meant and that he had paid full advertising rates to insert her skit in "fifty lines space, single column, one insertion."

Before and After.

"Do you really think he knows very much?"

"My dear, sir; he knows as much as the average politician thinks he knows."

"As much as he thinks he knows before or after the nomination?"

The Finishing Touches.

Husband (to wife in full evening dress)—"My stars! Is that all you are going to wear?"

Wife (calmly)—"All, except the flowers. Which of these clusters would you select?"

Husband (resignedly)—"The biggest."

The man who don't forget anything isn't a going to learn much more.

CHILDREN'S CORNER.

TIMELY TOPICS FOR OUR BOYS AND GIRLS.

Lighting a Fire with Ice—How to Make Big Soap Bubbles—The Game of Ball Is Not a New One—Johnnie's Excuse—How Nobility Is Illustrated.

CHESTNUT burr, with fur, Upon the parent tree, One autumn day was heard to say, To Mr. Bumblebee: "How sad am I, who cannot fly Or run or leap or hop

Like beast or bee, but on this tree Am always doomed to stoop.

"The birds and bees float on the trees, The rabbits leap and run. The nimble squirrels and boys and girls

Indulge in active fun. But day and night I'm stuck here tight, And tho' I long to roam, As you'll perceive, I ne'er can leave My leafy tree-twig home."

A fairy small, who'd chanced to call, O'erheard this fretful talk; She shook her head and gently said: "Your wish to fly or walk

I'll grant you. Which will I do? Just name it and 'tis done." Then cried the burr: "I'd much prefer To be a beast and run."

A gentle wave the fairy gave, Of jeweled wand so small, When with a bound unto the ground The burr was seen to fall.

Lo! there appears eyes, mouth and ears, Four legs, a tail, some feet, (Strange, you'll agree) and then we see A porcupine, complete.

Lighting a Fire with Ice.

If anyone was to tell you that you could light a fire with a piece of ice you'd be very likely to shake your head. But it can be done, and if you have a liking for surprising your friends you can try it—after a little private practice behind the barn. Take a piece of clear ice about an inch thick from the water cooler, whittle it into the shape of a disk and with the palms of your hands melt its two sides convex, thus giving the form of a double convex lens, or burning glass. This you should do with considerable accuracy, and you may have to practice some time before you can accomplish it. When your ice lens is complete hold it where the sun's rays will fall on it and focus them so that they will be directed on a piece of light paper or tinder. A blaze will burst up at once. The experiment works well only when the sun is very bright.

Johnnie's Excuse.

Not far from Boston a little boy named Johnnie, who is only nine years of age, is continually causing amusement by his quaint and original excuses whenever he gets into a scrape. He is never at a loss, and before you speak almost, he interrupts you with an excuse that is so funny that you cannot help laughing and forgiving him. He has been last down to breakfast several times lately, and he was told that the next time it occurred he should go without.

A day or two back he made his appearance when breakfast was half over. "Now, Johnnie," said his mother, "you know what I told you last time you were late."

"Yes, mother; but I could not really and truly be down in time this morning."

"Well, why not?"

"You see, I was half asleep and half awake, and somehow I dreamed that I was at church, and I knew you would not like me to get up during the sermon."

Johnnie did not go without his breakfast that morning.

The Game of Ball.

Ball is by no means a modern game, for it was a favorite pastime of the Egyptians four thousand years ago. It was an outdoor sport as at the present day, and was indulged in not only by men and children, but by women as well. Throwing and catching the ball was regarded as wholly a woman's game, and one method of playing was that the person unsuccessful in catching the ball was obliged to carry the successful player on her back—the victor continuing in this position until she also failed to catch the ball. The ball was thrown by an opposite player mounted in the same manner and stationed at a certain distance. Sometimes three or more balls were thrown in succession, the hands of the player being crossed upon the breast after throwing the ball.

Another game, not altogether a woman's game, was played by throwing the ball to a great height, and catching it like our "sky-ball," and yet another was to throw the ball as high as possible, the opposite player leaping into the air to catch it on its fall before it fell to the ground. The balls generally used were made of leather or skin and sewed with string crosswise in the same manner as our balls are made, and stuffed with bran or husks of corn; others were made of string or of the stalks of rushes plaited together so as to form a circular mass and covered in the same way with leather. Some balls that have been found at Thebes are about three inches in diameter, while others are of smaller

size, made of the same materials and covered, like many used at the present day, with strips of leather cut in rhomboidal shape and sewed together lengthwise and meeting in a common point at both ends, each alternate slip of leather being of a different color.

To Make Big Soap Bubbles.

It is great sport to make soap bubbles, but it is twice as much fun if the bubbles are big ones, strong enough not to break when they are floated on the floor. Bubbles twice as big as your head or as big as the biggest kind of a football can be easily blown by anyone who knows how to mix up the soap-bubble material. To make these big bubbles, take a piece of white castile soap about as big as a walnut. Cut up into a cup of warm water and then add a teaspoonful of glycerine. Stir well and blow from a small pipe. This will make bubbles enough to last all the afternoon. And this is really all you care to make in one day. To make pink bubbles add a few drops of strawberry juice, and to make yellow ones put in a little orange juice.

Nobility Shown by Buttons.

Buttons play an important part in the dress of the Chinese mandarins. Those of the first and second class wear a button of coral red, suggested, perhaps, by a cock's comb; since the cock is the bird that adorns their breast. The third class are gorgeous with a robe on which a peacock is emblazoned, while from the centre of the red fringe of silk upon the hat rises a sapphire button. The purple button of the fourth class is an opaque, dark purple stone, and the bird depicted on the robe is the pelican. A silver pheasant on the robe and a clear crystal button on the hat are the rank of the fifth class. The sixth class are entitled to wear an embroidered stork and a jadestone button; the seventh a partridge and an embossed gold button. In the eighth the partridge is reduced to a quail and the gold button becomes plain, while the ninth class mandarin has to be content with a common sparrow for his emblem, and with silver for his button.

Valorous.

When I was on the Zulu frontier (said a traveler recently) I stopped for a week with a native, a splendid fellow, who had a fine farm. Among other animals, he had a young bull called Hulo, which he and his children fondly believed could vanquish any beast on earth. Hulo was a great pet, and not in the least vicious, so I was surprised on the second evening of my stay, to see Hulo sniffing the air and pawing the ground in evident rage. I was about to ask what it meant when out of the forest came an ugly rhinoceros. My host and I hurried for our guns, and Hulo dashed at the beast with dauntless courage. A rush, a crash, and the bull was hurled twenty feet. Fortunately, the horn of his enemy had not caught him, and the first rush had taught him a lesson. His horns were like sharp swords, but the hide of a rhinoceros is remarkably thick, and the young bull soon showed signs of fatigue. So he resorted to strategy, and dodged behind his clumsy foe, giving him vicious stabs in the thighs. This was rapidly weakening the rhinoceros, and just at this time we found some steel bullets (lead bullets having no effect on this animal), and quickly completed the work Hulo had begun. Then the bull stood on the carcass and bellowed his joy.

He Resigned.

In the early days of Pony, a mining camp in Montana, the post-office consisted of an old tea box, into which all the letters were dumped, the citizens helping themselves. There were only forty citizens in Pony, and there being no money in the office, it was with considerable difficulty that the storekeeper was persuaded to accept the postmastership.

One day a stranger rode into camp and called on the postmaster.

"Don't you know," he began, stertally, "that it is illegal to allow people to pick out their own letters like that?"

"Waal, stranger," said the postmaster, "I don't know that it is any of your business how this office is run."

"But I am a United States post-office inspector."

"In this case," said the postmaster, "we will finish up this post-office right now."

He took the tea box, placed it in the middle of the road, and with a good run, kicked it clear across the gulch.

"Now then," he resumed, "you go right back to Washington and tell the department from me that the accounts are closed and the postmaster of Pony has resigned."

A Large Family.

Patsy Dooly was a very poor arithmetician, and was puzzled by a great many questions of numbers which did not enter other people's heads. One day a new acquaintance remarked in his presence:

"I have eight brothers."

"Ye have eight brothers?" said Patsy. "Then I suppose every wan o' taim his eight brothers, too?"

"Certainly."

"Arrah, thin," said Patsy, "how many mothers had the sixty-four o' ye?"

Say This Quickly.

Naval expressions are generally noted for their peculiar aptness and brevity. There is, however, one nautical term which for length almost rivals the longest Greek expression. It is the "starboard-foretopmast-studding-sail-boom-topping-lift-jigger-fall."

One of Grossmith's Jokes. Mr. George Grossmith occasionally permits himself some relaxations from his labors in amusing the public. The other evening, at a big "at home," he got behind the supper table in line with the waiters and tried to look as like one as possible. Presently there approached him a military looking old gentleman. Taking up a wine glass, he extended it to the supposed waiter, saying, "Will you please give me a glass of champagne?"

"No, Sir," said Grossmith, assuming an air of righteous indignation, "I certainly will not. You have had more than is good for you." The guest stared in amazement, put down the empty glass and walked off—Weekly Telegraph.

A Handsome Monument. A Budapest correspondent of the Philadelphia Ledger says: "The monument to Empress Maria Theresa which is being erected at the ancient coronation city of Presburg, on the Danube, will be one of the handsomest raised to commemorate the millennium. The elaborate work it has engaged is approaching completion, but the executive committee fear that the date fixed for unveiling will have to be postponed until the spring of next year."

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In Merry England. Indianapolis Journal: "Why," asked the visiting American, "why do you fellows always turn to the left on the road?" "Because," said the resident Englishman, "it is right."

Eight days afterward the true-born Briton suddenly scandalized the congregation by laughing aloud in the midst of services. It had dawned on him that he had made a pun.

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On Growing Old. They say I am growing old because my hair is silvered, and there are crow's feet on my forehead, and my step is not so firm and elastic as before. But they are mistaken. That is not me. The knees are weak, but the knees are not me. The brow is wrinkled, but the brow is not me. This is the house I live in. But I am young—yonger than I ever was before.—Guthrie.

When bilious or costive, eat a cascade candy cathartic, cure guaranteed. 10c, 25c.

A Moving Motion. "Girls of the jury," exclaimed the counsel for the defense, "we are guilty of murdering our husband and four children, but we plead extenuation." We look perfectly lovely in black."

It was evident that the twelve good women and true were profoundly moved.—Detroit Tribune.

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