IN SEARCH OF HIM

by ROBIN GREY

CHAPTER VI.

From the drawing room as they ascended the stairs came a pleasant clatter of teacups, and when they entered they found the family assembled. Mary was pouring out tea; Dr. Stelling, wonderful to relate, had found time to join the cosy circle; Mrs. Stelling sat with her usual pile of clothing for the poor beside her.

There was a cheerful little family chorus.

"Oh, here you are!"—"Well?"

"Well? What have you done, Madge?"

"A cup of tea first, in mercy!" cried Marguerite, sinking on to the hearth-rug and tossing aside her hat.

Five o'clock tea is the time for chatting. All Marguerite's adventures were related, with comments and annotations from Bernard.

"And so Mr. Martineau will let me know when he finds the will," she concluded. "And now I must tell you the bright suggestion which Bruno has just made. One does occasionally get flashes of inspiration, even from a great bear."

"Do you want a flash of hot tea on your nose?" demanded Bernard, who was towering above her.

She laughingly averted her face, holding up her little hands.

The suggestion of advertising in the local papers met with general approval and it was decided that Bernard should insert the advertisement without consulting Mr. Marteau.

"By the way," he said, "what sort of a fellow is Martineau? Laurie used to know a Martineau—a tall fellow with a fair complexion, and slow way of talking."

"Yes, that is very like this man," said Marguerite. "He was nice to talk to. He gave you the idea that he possessed a great deal of character, but I was sometimes not sure whether he was laughing at me or not. The latter part of the time I think he really was interested."

"IT MUST BE A HOAX—IT CAN'T BE TRUE."

"Talking of Laurie—I beg his pardon, Viscount Thornheath," said Mary, "there's another letter from him for you on the mantelpiece, Bernard."

"Oh, Bruno, it's to entreat you to go! You must go!" cried Marguerite.

"Hand it to me, there's a good pater," said Bernard.

"Here's a business-like document as well," observed the doctor, with his spectacles on, as he took another envelope from the mantelpiece.

"Oh, take it away—I know it's a bill—it makes me feel faint!" said Bernard, feebly.

"Why, to whom do you owe money in Lincoln's Inn?" demanded the doctor, turning over the blue envelope. "Messrs. Blade and Skinner, solicitors. Who are they, Bernard?"

"Never heard of them. Give it to me," said Bernard.

The doctor tossed over the letter. It missed Bernard, and alighted on Marguerite's lap. Without promonition of what was to come, she lifted it, and laid it on Bernard's knee.

He was absorbed in the viscount's letter; but in a minute or two he gave it to Marguerite, and casually opened the blue envelope.

Marguerite, who was watching him, saw a burning flush spread over his face. He stared at the paper as if stupefied, then uttered a smothered cry.

"My boy!" exclaimed his mother, looking up.

The color had left his face now—he was pale indeed.

"It must be a hoax—it can't be true," he said, hurriedly, as if he did not know what he was saying. Springing from his seat, he strode to the window, stood there a minute, reading the communication once more straight through. Then the paper fell from his fingers; he turned, leaned his arms on the window frame, and rested his head on them. Mary picked up the letter, and Marguerite read it over her shoulder:

"Lincoln's Inn, Tuesday.

"Bernard Selwyn Stelling, Esq.:

"Sir—We have to announce to you the death of Miss Letitia Clara Selwyn of Selwyn Court, Hants, on the 8th inst., and to inform you that, with the exception of several legacies to old friends and servants, you inherit the whole of her personal and landed property, and all her money, invested in securities which represent an annual income of about twenty thousand pounds, together with the estate and house of Selwyn Court, the whole being bequeathed to you on the sole condition that you add the surname of Selwyn Stelling Selwyn.

"We have the honor, sir, to remain, your obedient servants,

"Blade & Skinner, Solicitors."

The silence in the drawing room lasted for many minutes. At last Bernard roused himself.

"What a coward I am," he said, with a laugh, "to be so upset! Mary, give me that paper. Pater, do you think it's a genuine thing?"

"It certainly seems so," answered the doctor, glancing at the paper. "I remember now that Blade & Skinner were Miss Selwyn's solicitors. It must be genuine."

"I always said she would do something for you, Bernard, my darling!" said his mother, the tears rolling down her cheers.

"Mother—my beloved old mater, don't cry," pleaded Bernard, now himself again. "It was a knock-down kind of announcement, wasn't it? But I took it like a fool! There is no need to cry. If this letter be true, this is your last week in this dingy hole! A fortnight more sees us—where? In El Dorado, I think."

The reaction had come.

"Marguerite"—he caught her in his arms—"do you hear? Do you understand what has happened to me? Twenty thousand a year! I simply can't believe it." He released her and went over to his mother again. "Oh, they'll discover a later will, or something!" he cried. "I shall wake up to find that this is all a delusion. It can't be true! Madge, do you remember what we talked of as we came home today?"

"Yes, Bruno," she said, tremblingly; her head was reeling with the shock of the news. The words of the letter seemed burnt on her brain. She forced her quivering lips into smiles of congratulation, but could hardly command her voice; and she stole away at the earliest opportunity into her own little room to cry. She had swiftly realized what this change would mean. Twenty thousand a year!

"It is cruel," she cried. "One thousand would have more than contented him—have made him rich! But this—this—it lifts him out of our reach altogether! I know it—I feel it. At first he will be unchanged—he will load us all with presents, he will share his good fortune so generously with us. But afterwards there will come a time when he will look upon all the beautiful distinguished women who will smile upon him, and he will think in bitter sadness—"I am bound in honor to Marguerite—poor, nameless, homeless Marguerite!" He will wonder whether all his grand friends will visit his obscure wife. Wife—oh, that dreadful word! Am I a wife already? It hardly matters now, for I will never be Bernard's. No; that money—that fatal money—means our last good-bye. I will say nothing to him. I would not grieve him—not for worlds. But I feel better now that I have realized it."

She sat up, pushed back her hair, and rested her clasped hands on her knee.

"Why did I go to the lawyer's today?" she sighed. "If I had only waited a few short hours I might have kept my money in my pocket. What does it matter to me who I am? I only know that I shall never be Bernard's wife!"

CHAPTER VII.

When the door closed upon Marguerite Lilbourne, as she left the lawyer's office in Lance Lane, Valdane Martineau walked up to it and turned the key in the lock. Then he went back to the table, sank down in the large armchair, leaned his arms on the blotting paper which covered the desk, and dropped his head upon them.

What was there in Marguerite's artless narrative that could have so deeply shaken the habitual composure of this man of the world?

The bowed head did not stir for upwards of half an hour. Valdane Martineau was alone in the company of a thousand evil thoughts, the phantoms of a discreditable past.

Presently he raised his head, the powerful hand which lay on the desk was clinched, and through his set lips came one word:

"Traitor!"

He pushed back his chair, and began to pace the room as if rest were impossible to him.

"That she should have come to me, of all men in the world!" he said aloud. "Talk of poetical justice—talk of the irony of fate! Ye gods, that she should come to me for her rights."

There was a pause. He went to the window and gazed blankly out, then struck the woodwork with a force that shook it.

"I can't do it," he muttered between his clenched teeth—"no man could do it! But I'll have my revenge on him," he cried, with a sudden inspiration, and, darting back to the desk, he seized a pen and began to write:

Sir—Three years and six months ago, when I was a penniless adventurer, you tempted me, and I fell. It may be as well that I recall to your mind the exact terms of the conspiracy. You informed me that you had a niece—orphan daughter of your only sister. This child was heiress to an enormous fortune, and you were her sole guardian. By the terms of her father's will you were to have entire control over her during her minority, and if she married against your wish before she attained the age of 21, the whole of her money came to you. Your suggestion to me was that I should go through the form of marriage with your niece, apparently without your sanction, in order to enable you to claim the money due to you in that case. You represented to me that your niece was mad—hopelessly out of her mind—and that on that account I should do her no harm by going through this form, as nobody else would ever be likely to marry her. There could be, you represented, no difficulty in the matter, as the young lady in question was to all appearance quite sane and perfectly docile and submissive. At the church door my part of the contract was to cease. You undertook to provide for her future; all I had to do was to go through the marriage ceremony. For this service you offered me a bribe that dazzled me. I was half mad with difficulties, penniless, in debt. I urged, however, that the step you wished me to take would hamper my future, as I could ask no other woman to be my wife so long as this poor girl lived. This was just what you wanted—to secure my secrecy; so long as I kept secret the fact of the conspiracy, you kept secret the fact of my marriage. I was to sign a false name in the register, and there would be nothing to witness against me—nothing to damage my future career.

(To be continued.)

SERUM FROM SERPENTS

Said to Be An Absolute Cure for Hitherto Incurable Leprosy.

New Orleans Special to New York Tribune: Dr. Isidore Dyar, a well-known physician and an expert on leprosy, has reached some remarkable results regarding that terrible disease, and has effected two positive cures. The antidote to the leprous poison Dr. Dyar found in a serum compounded by Dr. Calmette, a French chemist. The serum was made by the Frenchman from the venom of serpents and was designed solely as a cure for snake poison, which it did accomplish. The serum is now in wide use in India. Dr. Dyar visited Dr. Calmettes laboratory in Paris, and brought away some of the serum, having even then a vague clew to his recent discovery. It appears that among the traditions of the leper colony in Louisiana was one that several lepers who had been bitten by venomous snakes were cured. Dr. Dyar applied the serum to five cases of leprosy in New Orleans, and in two of the cases absolute cures were effected. In two other cases there was a marked improvement, and the cases were lost sight of, so that the final result was not known. In the fifth case the man's system proved repellent to the poison, and the change was for the worse rather than the better. Dr. Dyar has been consulted, it is reported, by the United States government as to the establishment on one of the Sandwich islands of a national leper hospital, to which all the lepers of Louisiana and other states will be sent.

What the Minister Said.

Jingso—"What did the minister say when the plate came up?" Hingso—"He said he wouldn't mind so much if the buttons were all alike."—Syracuse Herald.

The strongest sentiment of the Turk is his reverence for his mother. He always stands in her presence until invited to sit down—a compliment he pays to no one else.

IN SEARCH OF HIM

by ROBIN GREY

CHAPTER VII.—(Continued.)

Well, I consented; I everlastingly disgraced myself by becoming a party to an infamous conspiracy. I give you due credit for the way in which you worked it—for the address with which you transported your niece to Torquay and daily absented yourself that I might go through the farce of my clandestine wooing. I heard, too, that your indignation when you arrived at the lodgings and found your niece gone was a very fine piece of acting. As for me, I fulfilled my part of the contract precisely as agreed. I took my poor helpless little wife to a certain room in a certain hotel, went out, as if to ascertain the times of the trains, caught the express to London, with your check in my pocket, and, as I thought, washed my hands of the whole affair. According to our agreement you were to send some one to fetch Miss Lilbourne from the hotel, and see to her future yourself.

Today I learn, for the first time, that you did not fulfil this last condition. You were not only a traitor to your niece—you were a traitor to me. You left to probable want and misery a young and helpless girl who was not responsible for her actions.

Allow me to remark that, though I always considered you a thorough blackguard, in this you have exceeded all the vileness of which I ever thought you capable.

I have the pleasure to inform you that your niece is now restored to her right mind, that she is under the protection of a gentleman and his family in London, that she has her wedding ring, retains a distinct impression of her marriage, and that they are absolutely determined to sift the whole affair to the bottom.

I now ask whether you are prepared to make restitution to your niece of the fortune you fraudulently took from her. I shall expect an immediate and direct reply, and beg you to observe that I mean business. It will be quite fruitless for you to attempt to leave England, as you know I now have both the means and the will to prevent it. I add no threats, but, expecting an immediate and direct reply, I remain, your declared enemy. VALDANE MARTINEAU.

AN INSANE FEELING OF INDIGNATION FILLED THE HEART OF THE INTRUDER.

This letter was written as fast as the pen could traverse the paper. When it was sealed and stamped, the writer paused. He had very little doubt that, with the influence he possessed, he could compel Daniel Brandon, Miss Lilbourne's uncle, to disgorge at least what remained of poor Marguerite's fortune. But at what cost? He dropped his head between his hands and thought long and desperately. The money could not possibly be restored without his name appearing. He would have the bitter humiliation of confessing that it was he who had deprived Marguerite of her liberty, and that his sole motive had been a bribe. He would have to make restitution and then have the marriage set aside on the plea of the bride's having been unfit to enter into any contract at the time. His cheeks burned with digrace at the thought. Could he bear the disgrace of it? Worst of all, could he bear Marguerite's eyes turned upon him in scathing horror and contempt? Springing up, he paced the room again with restless feet.

"Atone—atone!" cried conscience. "It is all that remains to you. Give back the money that you received for that shameful piece of work. Set Marguerite free—free to marry some one whom she loves!"

He caught his breath and leaned against the wall; he looked the picture of misery. He thought of the daily visits he paid Marguerite at Torquay—how the sad eyes brightened at his coming: how she would kiss the flowers he brought her, how she watched for him at the window. She would have followed him to the world's end then—now she had no recollection of having seen his face! He recalled the tears when he used to leave her, the clinging arms around his neck, the soft lips on his cheek—the one word which she understood in those days was "Good-by!"

"Oh, thank heaven, I was always gentle to her!" he groaned.

Slowly again he approached the table and saw there was something shining there. It was her wedding ring which she had left behind. With a sudden, uncontrollable impulse he snatched it up and pressed it to his lips, then paused, aghast at his own action, and blushed like a girl. He held the golden circlet almost reverently in his hand a moment, staring at it; then he put it into his waistcoat pocket, caught up the letter he had written, and tore it across and across, scattering the fragments about the room in his excitement. What was Lady Mildred to him now? He felt that he had never loved her. He laid a peremptory hand on the bell.

"Smiles," he said, as that worthy appeared, "search Mr. Leroy's safes for a copy of the will of George John Lilbourne, and let me have it as soon as you find it—the first thing tomorrow morning. I am going now."

"Yes, sir."

Valdane took his hat and hurried out; even the air of Lance lane seemed reviving after what he had just passed through. His face was hard and resolute; for a time the struggle was over.

"Heaven forgive me if I use deceit," he said; "but I mean, if human effort can accomplish it—I mean to win my own wife!"

CHAPTER VIII.

There was little outward change in Doctor Stelling's house to tell of the tremendous social revolution which had so altered the destinies of the dwellers therein.

Valdane Martineau, walking up to it on the last day of August, noted that a hansom cab was waiting at the door, and presently two servants appeared, carrying down the steps a gentleman's portmanteau, gun, tennis racket, et cetera. Evidently a departure of some sort was at hand.

He addressed one of the servants.

"Is Miss Lilbourne at home? Can I see her?"

"Yes, sir; walk in, sir, please."

Mr. Martineau walked in accordingly; the girl threw open the surgery door, evidently under the impression that that room was vacant, and the visitor walked straight in, then stopped short with a sudden exclamation.

A pretty tableau was arranged in the window. Marguerite was in the arms of a tall handsome young man in traveling dress. She was crying bitterly, and at the moment of Valdane's inopportune entrance Bernard was in the act of kissing away her tears.

An insane feeling of indignation filled the heart of the intruder, and he with difficulty restrained himself from crying out: "Confound you, sir, let go of my wife!"

He checked himself just in time, managed to get out an "I beg your pardon," and beat a hasty retreat.

The two parted instantly; Bernard was the first to recover himself. He walked forward, hurriedly took Marguerite's hand, murmured "A last goodby, my darling—I shall lose my train," and went out into the hall. She followed him, not even heeding the presence of Valdane; stood on the threshold, biting her lip to keep down her tears, and waved him sweet farewells with her little hand.

The young lawyer stood irresolute. He could hardly hope for an interview in this state of Miss Lilbourne's emotions—he had not sufficiently realized before the existence of a tangible rival. Sadly he admitted that young Stelling was a far handsomer man than he. At this moment Marguerite darted by him and ran quickly up the stairs.

One of the servants came to him.

"Miss Lilbourne will see you in five minutes, if you'll take the trouble to wait, sir."

He was ushered into the dining-room, and sat down; the place was shabby, but comfortable; the carpet was worn, but the bookshelves were well stocked—it was evidently the abode of cultured and refined people. One or two excellent engravings were on the walls—the window-boxes were full of mignonette.

Punctually at the expiration of the five minutes Marguerite came in. Her eyelids were still red, and she carried a handkerchief in her hand; but she was quite composed. She wore a white dress, clean and fresh, and he thought he had never seen anything so sweet and gracious as she looked that day.

He was very pale as they shook hands, and blundered into an apology for disturbing her; a subject she dismissed with a wave of the hand.

"You have brought me the will to look at?" she questioned, seating herself near him at the corner of the table.

For answer he produced the document, keenly watching the flush which came into her face.

"'My wife's only brother, Daniel Brandon!' Why, that was my uncle—Uncle Daniel—I remember that now! Of course he was Uncle Daniel! Wait." She half started up, and paused, but sat down again disappointed. "I thought just then that I had remembered the name of—of the other one, you know."

"But you cannot?" Fixing his eyes upon her, he held his breath.

"No," she answered sadly, "I cannot," and continued her reading of the will. "Daniel Brandon of Rue Parisienne, Liege. That does not help much. It does not give his English address," she said disappointedly.

"No, that is a drawback certainly, but we can try Liege. His business may be there," suggested Valdane, feeling more and more a traitor as he recalled the fact that Daniel Brandon's business had failed, and that he himself had left Liege ten years ago.

Marguerite went on reading.

"Ah," she cried at length, "here is daylight on the subject at last! So my father left me money, and it was to go to my uncle if I married against his will. Oh, I have been nobly treated, have I not, Mr. Martineau?"

"You have been terrible wronged," he said in a low voice.

She knitted her brows; evidently she was trying to understand.

"It seems—it seems— I have it!" she cried at last. "This man—this creature who married me"—Valdane winced—"was nothing but a tool—a thing bribed by my uncle to do his work, paid by Daniel Brandon to go through the farce of marriage with me, in order to get at my money!"

"You have quick intelligence, Miss Lilbourne. I think it very likely you are right."

She looked straight into his face with her large searching eyes.

"I have also come to the same conclusion," he replied in a low voice.

She read to the end, and pushed away the will with a deep sigh.

"If I had my rights, I should be a rich woman," she said.

"You would. May I say how earnestly I trust you may obtain your rights?"

She looked up at him—a strange, puzzled look.

(To be continued.)

Bret Harte and "Little Breeches."

From the San Francisco Argonaut: Bret Harte is so frequently complimented as the author of "Little Breeches" that he is almost as sorry it was ever written as is Col. John Hay, who would prefer his fame to rest on more ambitious work. A gushing lady, who prided herself upon her literary tastes, said to him once: "My dear Mr. Harte, I am so delighted to meet you. I have read everything you ever wrote,but of all your dialect verse there is none that compares to your 'Little Breeches.'" "I quite agree with you, madam," said Mr. Harte, "but you have put the little breeches on the wrong man."

One Exception.

He—To hear you tell it, one would think I never told a single truth before we were married. She—Well, you did prevaricate to a considerable extent, but I'll give you credit for having told me the truth once. He—Indeed! And when was that, pray? She—When you proposed. Don't you remember, you said you were unworthy of me?

The Irony of Fate.

"Count, why did you marry that pale, thin girl, when you might have had her plump, rosy-cheeked sister?" "Well, I tell you. I was sinking of—what call him—zees probairb: 'Of two evils choose ze least.' And now her fazaire has failed! Ah, mon Dieu! Zees provairb ees one—what you call him—fake!"—Chicago Times-Herald.

From Different Points of View.

The Minister—I trust, my friend, your lines are cast in pleasant places. The Poet—Well, that depends on whether you would call waste baskets pleasant places or not.

"We used to think men had to climb to fame." "Don't they?" "No. Hobson dived." "That's so." "And Funston swam."