

# A BARTERED LIFE.

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### CHAPTER III.—(CONTINUED.)

"Perhaps it would be better for me not to change my dress, if I am likely to infringe upon the dinner hour," said Constance, at her chamber door.

"Oh, I do not think my cousin would approve of that!" exclaimed her emphatic conductress. Then she amended her inadvertence. "Of course, Mrs. Withers is the proper judge of her own actions, and I would not appear to dictate, but my cousin is punctilious on some points, and the matter of ladies' attire is one of these. I have known him so long that I am conversant with all his amiable peculiarities. I am confident he would be pleased to see Mrs. Withers assume the head of her table in full dinner toilet. But as I remarked, I do not presume to dictate, to advise, or even suggest. Mrs. Withers is undisputed empress here." Having run trippingly through this speech, she inflicted a third remarkable courtesy upon the novice, and vanished.

"She is underbred and a meddler," decided Constance, while she made a rapid toilet. "I hate to be addressed in the third person. I thought it a form of speech confined, in this country, to kitchen maids and dry goods store clerks."

Before she could invest herself in the dinner dress that lay uppermost in her trunk the bell rang to summon her to the evening meal, and three minutes thereafter the footman knocked at her door with the message that Mr. Withers had sent for her.

"I shall be down directly. Tell him not to wait for me," she said, hurriedly. She did not expect to be taken at her word, but upon her descent to the dining room she beheld her husband seated at the foot of the board and Miss Field at the head. The latter laid down the soup ladle and jumped up, fustily.

"Here she is, now. I resign my chair to one who will fill it more worthily than I have ever done."

"Keep your place, Harriet!" ordered her kinsman. "Mrs. Withers will waive her claims on this occasion, since she is late," designating a chair at his left as that intended for Constance's occupancy. "We would have waited for you, Constance, had I been less faint and weary. My physician has repeatedly warned me that protracted abstinence is detrimental to my digestion. Harriet, here, understands my constitution so well that I am seldom, when at home, a sufferer from the twinges of dyspepsia, that have afflicted me in my absence."

"Those horrible public tables," cried Harriet. "I assure you I never sat down to a meal when you were away without sighing over your evil plight in being subjected to the abominable cookery and intolerable hours of hotels."

"I did not know you were a dyspeptic," observed Constance. "You seemed to enjoy good health during our tour."

"That was because Mrs. Withers does not yet comprehend your marvelous patience—the courage with which you bear pain, and the unselfishness that leads you to conceal its ravages from the eyes of others," explained Miss Field, ogling the interesting sufferer, who was discussing a plate of excellent white soup with a solemnly conscious air. "Now that you are safe under your own roof, we will soon undo the mischief that has been done. You do not know what a prize you have won, Mrs. Withers, until you have seen him in the retray of home. His virtues are such as flourish in perfection in the shadow of his own vine and fig-tree; shed their sweetest perfume upon the domestic hearth."

"As you perceive, my good cousin's partiality for me tempts her to become poetically extravagant in her expressions," Mr. Withers said to his wife, in pretended apology, looking well pleased, nevertheless.

"I could not have a more patient auditor than Mrs. Withers, I am sure," rejoined Harriet. "Mrs. Withers will never take exception to my honest enthusiasm."

### CHAPTER IV.

CONSTANCE answered by her stereotyped, languid smile, wondering only at the complacency with which a man of her spouse's years and shrewdness hearkened to the bold flattery of his parasite.

The exhibition ceased to astonish her before she had lived in the same house with the cousins for a month. Within the same period she was gradually reduced to the position of a cipher in the management of the establishment. After that first day Miss Field had not offered to abdicate the seat at the head of the table, except at the only dinner party they had given. Then the handsome Mrs. Withers appeared in pearl-colored satin and diamonds as the mistress of ceremonies to a dozen substantial citizens and their expensively attired wives, endured the two hours spent at table, and the two duller ones in the great parlors, where the small company seemed lost and everybody talked as if afraid of his own voice. She was no gayer than the rest by the time the entertainment was half over. The atmosphere of respectable stupidity was infectious, and this pervaded every nook of her new home. In her brother's house she had

had young visitors, and there was, at the dulllest, the hope of release to console her. Now she was "settled in life," could sit down with idle hands and spend her days in contemplation of her grandeur. She had married well. Nobody looked askance at her when old maids were the subjects of pity or ridicule. The most censorious could not couple her name with the dread word "dependence." She had no household cares. Mr. Withers and Miss Field relieved her of all such.

And the mistress of the mansion was left to her own devices? By no means. If her husband were fastidious, he was also tyrannical. He dictated not only what dress his wife should appear in daily, but also what laces and ornaments she should sport; at what hours she should take the air; whom she must visit and whom invite; what songs she should sing to him when he asked for music in the evening, and when the day should close—the day so wearisome in its similitude to all that had preceded and those which should follow it.

"My cousin is a man with aspirations above the frivolities of fashionable life, and excitement is injurious to his health," Miss Field notified the bride that day after her home-bringing. "I fear Mrs. Withers will tire of the even tenor of our way."

"I like quiet," Constance replied. But she did not mean stagnation. She was married in April, and on the first of July the trio removed to Mr. Withers' country seat. Here Constance was to find that the dead level of her existence had yet a lower plane of dullness. There was not a neighbor within four miles, hardly a farm house in sight.

"We recruit here after the dissipation of the winter," Miss Field said, enjoyingly. "The solitude is enrapturing. One can sleep all day long if she likes."

This proved to be her favorite method of recuperating her exhausted energies. Mr. Withers, too, liked a post-prandial siesta, "prescribed by his physician as eminently conducive to digestion." Constance was not more lonely when they slept than when they were awake. The horrible sterility of her life was not to be ameliorated by their society. If commonplaceness was a crime, Mr. Withers and his cousin were offenders of an aggravated type. Harriet's affectations and Elnathan's platitudes were to the tortured senses of the third person of the party less endurable than the cicada's shrill monotone through the hot summer day, and the katydid's endless refrain at night. Her chains, which had hitherto paralyzed her by their weight, began to gall and fret into her spirit. She grew unequal in temper, nervous and restless, under the restrictions imposed by her spouse. An insane impulse beset her to defy his authority and set at naught his counsels; to rush into some outrageous freak that should shock him out of his propriety and provoke the prudish toad eater to natural speech and action.

This madness was never stronger than on one August afternoon when she escaped from the house, leaving the cousins to the enjoyment of their recuperative naps in their respective chambers, and took her way to the mountain back of the villa. She had never explored it, tempting as was the shade of the hemlocks and pines that grew up to the summit, and the walls of gray rock revealed through the rifts of the foliage. A current of fragrance, the odor of the resinous woods, flowed down to greet her ere she reached the outskirts of the forest, and the lulling murmur of the wind in the evergreen boughs was like the sound of many and wooing waters. The tender green tassels of the larches tapped her head as she bowed beneath their low branches, and the wide hemlocks were spread in benediction above her. She was alone with nature—free for one short hour to think her own thoughts and act out her desires. She laughed as a bushy cedar knocked off her hat at the instant that she tore her dress upon a bramble.

"They are leagued with my legal proprietor in the commendable business of repressing the lawless vagaries of those who cannot get their fill of natural beauties through the windows of a state chariot. But I shall have my frolic all the same."

Another and a higher peak tempted her when she had sat for awhile upon a boulder crowning the first, revelling in the view of valley and hill, including the basin in which nestled the house, and the plain opening eastward toward the sea and civilization. The second height was precipitous, in some places almost perpendicular. From treading fearlessly and rapidly from crag to crag, she came to pulling herself up gravely banks by catching at the stout underbrush, and steadying herself among rolling stones by tufts of wiry grass. But she kept on, and forgot aching feet, scant breath and blistered hands when she stood finally upon a broad plateau hundreds of feet above the house, that had dwindled into a toy cottage, and the envolving plantations of trees like patches in an herb garden.

"This is life!" she cried out in a sudden transport, and she sat her down upon a cushion of gray moss in the shadow of a cedar, to gaze and wonder and rejoice.

She made a discovery presently. A spring, clear and impetuous, burst from between two overhanging rocks,

and chose the shortest route to the valley, babbling with all its little might. It was joined, before it had gone many feet, by other rivulets, and from a point midway in the descent, where the cliffs were steepest, came up the shout of a waterfall. This, and the tireless murmur of the evergreens, made up the music of this upper sanctuary, until Constance's voice rose from the rocky table, sweet, full, exultant:

"The wild streams leap with headlong sweep

In their curbsless course o'er the mountain steep;

All fresh and strong they foam along,

Waking the rocks with their cataract song.

My eye bears a glance like the beam on a lance

As I watch the waters dash and dance.

I burn with glee, for I love to see

The path of anything that's free!

I love—I love—oh, I love the free!

I love—I love—I love the free!

"The skylark springs with dew on his wings,

And up in the arch of heaven he sings—

"Tra-la-tra-la!" Oh, sweeter far

Than the notes that come through a golden bar.

The thrall and the state of the palace gate

Are what my spirit has learned to hate."

The strain ceased abruptly, and, in place of the rapt musician, borne above the power of anything woe to crush and petty vexations to sting, a woman grovelled upon the mossy cushion, weeping hot, fast tears, and beating against the rough rock with a child's folly of desperation the white hand that wore the badge of her servitude.

What was she but a caged bird, bidden to preen its feathers and warble the notes its master dictated between golden bars? A slave to whom state and thrall meant one and the same abhorrent thing? What had she to do henceforward with dreams of beauty and freedom—she, who had signed away her liberty of spirit and person, voluntarily accepting in their stead the most foul captivity a pure and upright woman can know? She felt herself to be utterly vile—plague-spotted in soul and flesh in the lonely sublimity of this mountain temple—a leper, condemned and incurable, constrained to cry out at the approach of every passer-by, "Unclean! unclean!" It would have been better for her to beg her bread upon the doorsteps of the wealthy, and, falling that, to die by the wayside with starvation and cold, than to live the life of nominal respectability and abundance, of real degradation and poverty, which were now hers.

The tears were dried, but she still sat on the gray carpet, clutching angrily at it and the wild flowers peeping through the crevices of the rock, rending them as passion had torn her; her bosom heaving with the unspent waves of excitement and a mutinous pout upon her lips, when a crackling among the brushwood thrilled her with an uncomfortable sensation of alarm.

Before she could regain her feet or concert her scheme of defense or flight, the nearest cedar boughs were pushed aside, and a man stepped into the area fenced in by the hardy mountain evergreens. With subsiding fears, as her quick eye inventoried the various particulars of his neat traveling suit, gentlemanly bearing, pleasant countenance and deferential aspect toward herself, Constance arose, visibly embarrassed, but dignified, and awaited his pleasure. The stranger betrayed neither surprise nor confusion. Walking directly up to her, he removed his hat, bowing low, with a bright, cordial smile. "Unless I am greatly mistaken I have the pleasure of seeing my brother's wife. And you are more familiar with my name and my handwriting than with my face, I am Edward Withers!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

**Coining of Pennies.**  
It is not generally known that all the minor coins of base metal, such as pennies and nickels, are made at the Philadelphia mint, and that nearly 100,000,000 pennies are coined there every year. This large number is occasioned by the fact that thousands of pennies are lost annually, and the government has some difficulty in maintaining a supply. The profit of the government on their manufacture is large. The blanks for making them are purchased for \$1 a thousand from a Cincinnati firm that produces them by contract. Blanks for nickels are obtained in the same way, costing Uncle Sam only a cent and a half a piece. Gold is coined in Philadelphia and San Francisco. Not enough of it comes into the mint at New Orleans to make the coinage of it worth while. Gold pieces are the only coins of the United States which are worth their face value intrinsically. A double eagle contains \$20 worth of gold without counting the one-tenth part copper.

**Retrgrading.**  
Lord Nocoont (proudly)—"I can trace my descent from William the Conqueror." Cynicus—"You have been a long time on the downward path."—Truth.

**Good Advice.**  
"Mr. X—has threatened to kick me next time he meets me in society. If I see him walk in what should I do?" "Sit down."—Standard.

**Gormandizing Insects.**  
The caterpillars are great eaters, the different species consuming from five to twenty times their own weight of food each day.

## DR. TALMAGE'S SERMON.

Washington, Nov. 22, 1896.—A resounding call goes out in this sermon of Dr. Talmage. If heeded it would be revolutionary for good. His subject is, "Young Men Challenged to Nobility," and the text: 2 Kings 6:17: "And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man."

One morning in Dothan, a young theological student was scared by finding himself and Elisha the prophet, upon whom he waited, surrounded by a whole army of enemies. But venerable Elisha was not scared at all, because he saw the mountains full of defence for him, in chariots made of fire, drawn by horses of fire—a supernatural appearance that could not be seen with the natural eye. So the old minister prayed that the young minister might see them also, and the prayer was answered, and the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he also saw the fiery procession, looking somewhat, I suppose, like the Adirondacks or the Alleghanies in autumnal resplendence.

Many young men, standing among the most tremendous realities, have their eyes half shut or entirely closed. May God grant that my sermon may open wide your eyes to your safety, your opportunity, and your destiny!

A mighty defence for a young man is a good home. Some of my hearers look back with tender satisfaction to their early home. It may have been rude and rustic, hidden among the hills, and architect or upholsterer never planned or adorned it. But all the fresco on princely walls never looked so enticing to you as those rough-hewn rafters. You can think of no park or arbor of trees planted on fashionable country-seat so attractive as the plain brook that ran in front of the old farm-house and sang under the weeping willows. No barred gateway, adorned with statue of bronze, and swung open by obsequious porter in full dress, has half the glory of the old swing gate. Many of you have a second dwelling-place, your adopted home, that also is sacred forever. There you built the first family altar. There your children were born. All those trees you planted. That room is solemn, because once in it, over the hot pillow, flapped the wing of death. Under that roof you expect to lie down and die. You try with many words to tell the excellency of the place, but you fail. There is only one word in the language that can describe your meaning. It is home.

Another defence for a young man is industrious habits. Many young men, in starting upon life in this age, expect to make their way through the world by the use of their wits rather than the toil of their hands. A boy now goes to the city and falls twice before he is as old as his father was when he first saw the spires of the great town. Sitting in some office, rented at a thousand dollars a year, he is waiting for the bank to declare its dividend or goes into the market expecting before night to be made rich by the rushing up of the stocks. But luck seemed so dull he resolved on some other tack. Perhaps he borrowed from his employer's money drawer, and forgets to put it back, or for merely the purpose of improving his penmanship, makes a copy of a merchant's signature. Never mind; all is right in trade. In some dark night there may come in his dreams a vision of the penitentiary; but it soon vanishes. In a short time he will be ready to retire from the busy world, and amid his flocks and herds cultivate the domestic virtues. Then those young men who once were his schoolmates, and knew no better than to engage in honest work, will come with their ox-teams to draw him logs, and with hard hearts to heave up his castle. This is no fancy picture. It is everyday life. I should not wonder if there were some rotten beams in that beautiful palace. I should not wonder if dire sickness should smite through the young man, or if God should pour into his cup of life a draught that would thrill him with unbearable agony; if his children should become to him a living curse, making his home a pest and a disgrace. I should not wonder if he goes to a miserable grave, and beyond it into the gnashing of teeth. The way of the ungodly shall perish.

My young friends, there is no way to genuine success, except through toil, either of head or hand. At the battle of Crecy, in 1346, the prince of Wales, finding himself heavily pressed by the enemy, sent word to his father for help. The father, watching the battle from a windmill, and seeing his son was not wounded and could gain the day if he would, sent word, "No, I will not come. Let by my own life I should write another 'Inferno'?" But if you are resolved to live a life such as God and good men will approve, do not let it be a vague dream, an indefinite determination, but, in your mind, or upon paper, sketch it in all its minutiae. You cannot know the changes to which you may be subject, but you may know what always will be right and always will be wrong. Let gentleness and charity and veracity and faith stand in the heart of the sketch. On some still brook's bank make a lamb and lion lie down together. Draw two or three of the trees of life, not frost-stricken, nor ice-glazed, nor wind-stripped, but with thick verdure waving like the palms of heaven. On the darkest cloud place the rainbow, that pillow of the dying storm. You need not print the title on the frame. The dullest will catch the design at a glance, and say, "That is the road to heaven." Ah, me! On this sea of life, what innumerable ships, heavily laden and well rigged, yet seem bound for no port! Swept every whither of wind and wave, they go up by the mountains, they go down by the val-

leys, and are at their wits' end. They sail by no chart, they watch no star, they long for no harbor.

Many years ago word came to me that two imposters, as temperance lecturers, had been speaking in Ohio, in various places, and giving their experience, and they told their audience that they had long been intimate with me, and had become drunkards by dining at my table, where I always had liquors of all sorts. Indignant to the last degree I went down to Patrick Campbell, chief of Brooklyn police, saying that I was going to start that night for Ohio to have those villains arrested, and I wanted him to tell me how to make the arrest. He smiled and said: "Do not waste your time by chasing these men. Go home and do your work, and they can do you no harm." I took his counsel, and all was well. Long ago I made up my mind that if one will put his trust in God and be faithful to duty, he need not fear any evil. Have God on your side, young man, and all the combined forces of earth and hell can do you no damage.

And this leads me to say that the mightiest defense for a young man is the possession of religious principle. Nothing can take the place of it. He may have manners that would put to shame the gracefulness and courtesy of a Lord Chesterfield. Foreign languages may drop from his tongue. He may be able to discuss literature, and laws, and foreign customs. He may wield a pen of unequalled polish and power. His quickness and tact may qualify him for the highest salary of the counting house. He may be as sharp as Herod and as strong as Samson, with as fine locks as those which hung Abalom, still he is not safe from contamination. The more elegant his manner, and the more fascinating his dress, the more peril. Satan does not care for the allegiance of a cowardly and illiterate being. He cannot bring him into efficient service. But he loves to storm that castle of character which has in it the most spoils and treasures. It was not some crazy craft creeping along the coast with a valueless cargo that the pirate attacked, but the ship, full-winged and flagged, plying between great ports, carrying its millions of specie. The more your natural and acquired accomplishments, the more need of the religion of Jesus. That does not cut in upon or hack up the smoothness of disposition or behavior. It gives symmetry. It arrests that in the soul which ought to be arrested, and propels that which ought to be propelled. It fills up the gulleys. It elevates and transforms. To beauty it gives more beauty, to tact more tact, to enthusiasm of nature more enthusiasm. When the Holy Spirit impresses the image of God on the heart he does not spoil the canvass. If in all the multitudes of young men upon whom religion has acted you could find one nature that had been the least damaged, I would yield this proposition. \* \* \*

Many years ago I stood on the anniversary platform with a minister of Christ who made this remarkable statement: "Thirty years ago two young men started out in the evening to attend the Park theater, New York, where a play was to be acted in which the cause of religion was to be placed in a ridiculous and hypocritical light. They came to the steps. The consciences of both smote them. One started to go home, but returned again to the door, and yet had not courage to enter, and finally departed. But the other young man entered the pit of the theater. It was the turning point in the history of these two young men. The man who entered was caught in the whirl of temptation. He sank deeper and deeper in infamy; he was lost. That other young man was saved, and he now stands before you to bless God that for twenty years he has been permitted to preach the Gospel."

"Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

### WORTH KNOWING.

Locusts are doing much damage to the crops in Argentina.

The army of India now numbers 280,000 men, of whom 180,000 are native soldiers.

Chichester cathedral, England, is 411 feet in length, 151 feet wide and 271 feet high.

Next year is the centennial of the stovepipe hat, which first came into common use in Paris.

Two wealthy Hebrews of Bagdad now own all that remains of the ancient town of Babylon.

Three hundred thousand tons of vegetables, valued at \$25,000,000, were sold in the city of Paris in 1895.

Six couples living within a circuit of one mile at Milford, N. H., have celebrated their golden wedding anniversaries.

A floral bicycle was the funeral tribute recently made by a Lewiston (Me.) household for bereaved bicyclist friends of a young man who had lived there.

Wicks—I heard a pretty compliment to Hamlin, the actor, to-day. Squeezicks says he possesses the art which conceals art. Hicks—That's a fact. You'd never know he had any.—Boston Transcript.

"There doesn't seem to be much of a demand for seats to this performance," said the star. "No," said the manager, as he ran over a bundle of dead-head applications; "nothing but requests."—Washington Star.

"Dearest" He stopped reading his paper long enough to ask what his bestest little wife might want. "When they mark the dollars down to 53 cents, will it be every day or only on Fridays?"—Indianapolis Journal.