AN HOUR IN HADES.

The Story of Two Letters.

For many minutes Philip Watson had sat motionless at his desk, in the cozy, well-lighted library of a handsome cottage in the suburbs of a western city, staring dumbly at the closely-written pages of a letter that lay open before him. He had read and re-read it until every word was seared into his brain. It seemed too horrible, too monstrous to be true. It must be a dream, a hideous nightmare of the imagination. He would awaken soon and find her still there—the bonny, wee bride he had taken to his heart and home only a short twelvemonth before.

His Florence gone and left him—deserted him for another man? Oh, no; it could not, it must not be. And yet, there was the letter. It was her handwriting, the signature was here, the words—ah, what bitter, accusing words they were—they, too, were here.

Picking up the letter he read it once more, in the stolid, hopeless manner in which a condemned murderer listens to his death warrant. There was no blaze of indignation, no resentment in his eyes, as he read these already familiar words—nothing but dumb despair:

"My Dear Husband—It would seem strange to address you by any other term, so for the last time I shall call you that. I say the last time and I mean it, for when you read these words the sacred name of husband and wife will have no further meaning for us, as I shall then be, not in the eyes of the law, perhaps, but in my heart and in the sight of the being who alone has the right to judge me, the wife of another.

"When I stood with you at the altar, one brief year ago, and trustingly gave my future happiness into your keeping, I little dreamed that I should ever be driven to take the step I am about to take. I know what the world will say; I know that on my weak shoulders will fall all the blame, while you will receive only pity and condolences; yet even that will not suffice to hold me back. You and I, at least, will know the truth; but lest, in the first bitterness of your resentment, you should forget some part of it, I will here set it down.

"In the days of our courtship—a thousand years ago it seems as I look back at it tonight—you fed me on honeyed words and phrases and poured unceasing flattery into my willing ear. After we had wedded and you had grown weary of me, as a child grows weary of a new toy, the empty husks of love would have been grateful to my starving soul, but I did not receive even them—nothing but neglect. Sometimes you spoke lightly of love and kissed me, but not often, and when you did there was in the touch of your lips none of the warmth, the joyous electric thrill of old, nothing but the careless and perfunctory performance of a distasteful duty. That was all, Philip; and though it may have signified little joy to you, it meant much to me—life, joy, honor, everything that a woman holds dear!

"A starving rat in its desperation will attack even man; the starving soul of woman—famishing for love—will risk all to obtain it. The love, the companionship of a husband is sweeter than all other, but if that be denied her she must seek elsewhere for the love and sympathy which her heart craves. I did not seek it. It came to me unsought, and as I possess no longer any share in your love, I must needs accept that.

"It was you who trampled on the tender buds of womanly affection in my bosom by studied indifference and neglect, and then left him to bind them up and watch over and coax them into bloom.

"Yes, Philip, it is all your own doing, and although it may humble your pride somewhat to find that I have at last taken you at your word (unspoken, it is true, but none the less a reality), I believe and trust you will be happier without me. As for myself, whatever my future may be, I cannot be more miserable than I have been for the past two months—neglected, and shall I say, despised—by the very man who had vowed to love, cherish and protect me through life.

"I have borne it in silence as long as I could, and now I am free—yes, Philip, free! And the terrible price I must pay for that freedom will tell you how dear it is to me and how much I must have suffered to bring me to this step.

"I have one final request to make of you. If in the first rush of your blind rage (not at the trivial loss of an unloved and unappreciated wife, but at the indignity that has been put upon you as a husband) you feel that you must wipe out the stain on your honor by shedding blood, please spare him and kill me! I alone am to blame. Love was sweet to me. I had heard scarcely a word of it from you since our brief honeymoon was over. My heart was hungry for love—for your love, Philip, if I might have had it. But, no; you were always too preoccupied, too busy, too much taken up with your club, or with politics, or with some matter outside your home, to pay any attention to poor me! The love and sympathy that were rightfully mine you denied me. Perhaps you bestowed them on some one else. I don't know as to that, but I do know that when my famishing heart asked for bread it received a stone. Do you remember the last time you kissed my lips upon returning from your office? But of course you do not. You have so many more important matters to occupy your mind!

"Man's love is of man's life a thing apart,
'Tis woman's whole existence.

"Byron was right. That event was a little thing, the veriest trifle to you; to me it was an epoch, a milestone marking the spot where our pathways diverged. August 7 was the date, only two short months ago; yet these months without your kisses have been an eternity to me! Do you remember, Philip, how I sprang to welcome you upon your return that day and put up my lips for the usual kiss, and you tried to brush me aside, with the remark that it was about time I got over such schoolgirl foolishness? And do you remember how I clung to you until I got the kiss—the last you have ever given me?

"This is a rambling, incoherent letter, but such as it is it has come straight from my heart. A soul writhing in agony does not stop to choose its words. I do not ask you to forgive me—there is nothing to forgive; all I ask of you is to forget me as speedily as possible; and when you have succeeded in doing this (it ought not to take long, seeing you have already half forgotten me) I know you will be far happier than I have ever made you.

"If you wish to send me a parting word, or have any communication for me, you may address it to my maiden name, care of general postoffice, Chicago, and it will reach me safely. Once more, farewell, and may heaven help us both! FLORENCE."

Tossing the letter on his desk, Philip Watson sprang to his feet and began striding up and down the length of the room, like a tiger restlessly pacing the rounds of its cage. There was a picture of his wife hanging on the wall beside his desk. Pausing in front of it he held out his hands, as if in supplication.

"My God! my God!" he groaned; "she is gone beyond recall, and I—how can I face the world without her? What shall I do?"

He stopped speaking and flung himself into the chair at his desk. Already his mind was made up, and seizing paper and pencil he hastily dashed off the following note:

"My Poor Neglected Darling—It is with deepest sorrow I have read your farewell letter, and though shocked and stunned by the calamity which has fallen upon me, I have no words of reproach for you. It is wholly my fault. Your accusing words have stabbed me to the heart, but they are true—God pity and forgive me—they are true. I have slighted and neglected you shamefully, cruelly neglected you; but it was more from thoughtlessness than anything else. You are the only woman I ever made love to or cared for, and until I read your letter I knew little of the requirements of a woman's heart; I did not realize what a tender plant was woman's love, nor how easily crushed. I am a man and judged woman's feelings from a man's standpoint. Wrapped up in my business by day, and with my club at night, I was blindly content, and did not think of your loneliness, nor of the heart that was breaking at home.

"I remember the occasions of which you speak. Business had gone wrong those days and I was cross and irritable. I did not mean to treat you as roughly as I did, but after it was done and the words were said I was too stubborn to take them back. A thousand times since I have been on the point of asking you to forgive me and begin anew, but each time the devil of contrariness that lurks in every man's breast said: 'No, let her take the first step' and I foolishly listened to this advice instead of acting upon the better impulses of my nature.

"Tonight, however, I came home two hours earlier than usual, fully resolved to confess my fault, but, alas, I find I am too late! I have forever driven from my side the woman to whom I was bound by the most sacred of ties, the woman who one year ago placed her life happiness and her honor in my keeping. I have failed in the great trust I took upon myself, and there is but one way in which I can make reparation and that is, to take myself out of the world as quickly as possible and leave you legally free to marry the man who is now your friend and protector.

"This I shall do. When you receive this note I shall be lying dead in my rooms here—the rooms that once were ours; would to God that they were still!—with a bullet through my unworthy heart. Then you can come back, alone, to your old home, and follow me to my last resting place; it will be better so; and then, when I am forgotten by the world (it will not be long to wait), you may go back to him, with no breath of scandal to assail your fair name.

"I have failed you in all else, I know, but I shall not in this! Farewell, dear wife, and when you look upon my dead face I trust you will forgive the past for the sake of the atonement I have made, and the love you once bore me. Your repentant 'PHILIP.

"P. S.—I shall inclose your letter with this, so no one but you will know my reason for killing myself, and as my body will probably not be discovered before you return, you can doubtless readily explain your absence in some way without subjecting yourself to criticism or gossip. My last anxious wish, dear Florence, is to shield you from any possible censure for the awful step I am about to take. PHILIP."

Philip Watson folded the two letters together, placed them in an envelope and addressed it to Florence Fairchild (how strange it seemed to write that name), general postoffice, Chicago, Ill. Then, unlocking a drawer in his desk, he took therefrom a heavy, pearl-handled revolver, which he carefully examined to see that it was loaded and ready for use, and then placed it alongside the letter.

"There, I guess everything is ready; all I've got to do now is to step out and mail this letter, and then—this will end it," he grimly remarked, toying with the weapon.

At that moment he heard the front door open, and a well known footstep sounded in the hall. Dropping the revolver, he turned and faced his wife, who stepped quickly into the room.

"You here?" she gasped, as she caught sight of her husband's pale face and staring eyes.

"Yes, and you; I—I thought you had gone with—with—"

"No; I thought I could do it, but I—I couldn't. A sudden revulsion of feeling came over me when I reached the station where he was waiting for me. I saw the enormity, the wickedness of the step I was about to take, and told him so, and said he must never see me again. As soon as I had convinced him that I meant it, and that our foolish dream was over, I hurried back, thinking I would be in time to destroy my letter, and then I would go on and live out my life here, even if it were an unhappy one. But of course, if you have read my letter you will not want me longer as your wife. You thought litte enough of me before, and now—"

"Florence," he broke in, with a choking voice, "whatever you have done it is I that drove you to it. It is all my fault that you were led to break your marriage vows."

"Surely, Philip, you do not think so badly of me as that?" she exclaimed, in tones of mingled reproach and sadness. "I have not been untrue to my vows. O, no, I could not bring myself to that step while living under the roof to which you brought me a bride. I have not allowed him to even kiss my hand. It would have been time enough for that if—if I had gone with him. But I listened to his words of love, Philip; in my heart I have sinned against you, and I am no longer fit to live, even with the husband who despises me. I see you have a weapon ready. Take it and kill me, if you will. I shall be willing and even glad to die if you will be happier without me. Come, Philip, I am ready!"

"Don't Florence!" he pleaded; "please don't talk like that. I cannot bear to hear you accuse yourself, when my conscience tells me I alone am to blame for all our past unhappiness. I have made you suffer, cruelly and unjustly; but for the past hour I have been through the torments of hell to pay for it!

"I have read your letter; perhaps you would like to read my reply; I was about to go out and mail it when you came in—and this weapon was meant for myself, not for you."

He gave her a chair, and then tearing open the envelope he handed her the note he had just written.

As she read it the hot tears gathered in her eyes and began to roll slowly down her cheeks, and when she had finished she dropped the letter, and with a convulsive sob stretched forth her hands toward her husband and attempted to rise, but the room swam around her, and she would have fallen to the floor had he not sprung forward and gathered her quickly to his breast.

For a time she lay in his arms like one dead, while he chafed her hands and called her endearingly by name; then the color gradually came creeping back to her cheeks and lips, and as she looked up into the eyes that were tenderly bending over her, she whispered:

"I'm so sorry I—"

"I'm not!" replied her husband, cutting off the rest of the confession with a lover-like kiss. "It has taught me how worthless life would be without you; and now, that I've got you safe under the shelter of my wing once more, I'm going to do my best to keep you there." W. S. G.

SHE DROPPED THE LETTER WITH A CONVULSIVE SOB.

STARED DUMBLY AT THE LETTER.

Thousands sink into an early grave for want of a bottle of Dr. Bull's Cough Syrup. This great remedy would have saved them.

OUT OF THE ORDINARY.

From two corn cribs at Monticello, Ill., the rat catchers got 1,400 rats in one raid.

Conductors and motormen of the Hartford, Conn., street railway company have been ordered not to chew tobacco while on duty.

A curiosity has been brought to light in East Friendship, Mo.—a man who has kept a dairy since January 1, 1870, and never missed a day.

Mrs. Antonio Dalayo of Orange, N. J., has presented her husband with twenty children in twenty years. Mrs. Dalayo is evidently not a delayer.

About 3,000 people are employed by the English brewers of Bass' ale. Eighty thousand acres are devoted to hop raising and the annual output is about 230,000,000 bottles.

In London the omnibus horse is worn out in five years, the tram horse in four, the postoffice horse in six and the brewers' from six to seven, while the vestry horses last eight years.

A runaway team in Gloucester the other day ran into a big telegraph pole, breaking the neck of one of the horses. The shock of the collision set off the fire alarm box on the pole and called out the department.

Following the grocer who sold butter that had "never been eat," there has come a butcher who announces, in Sturgeon, Mo., that he will "shortly handle meats that have never been sold in Sturgeon before."

One of a gang of bank robbers lately arrested in Indiana said that in attempting to escape after one of their burglaries they rubbed onions on their shoes, and thus were able to throw the bloodhounds sent after them off the scent.

A London artist who ordered soda water at a bar and was hit in the eye by the cork when the barmaid opened the bottle, has recovered $1,500 damages from the proprietor of the restaurant, though no structural injury was done to the eye.

"There is an old woman," says a London paper, "who has a milk stand in St. James' Park, who has stood at it for sixty-three years. Her mother kept it before her and her grandmother before that, the latter having been in possession for seventy-two years."

Miss Evatima Tardo, the young woman who has attracted so much scientific attention abroad on account of a total lack of the sense of touch, has also been found to possess complete control over the circulation of her blood, which she can cause to stop flow at will.

New Madrid county is the home of probably the youngest successful farmer in Missouri—Ames Riley, a 9-year-old boy residing there, having planted in cotton three acres of ground which his grandfather had given him, and raised therefrom this season 1,521 pounds.

It is a singular fact, but one proved by statistics, that crime is more common in single life than in married. In the former thirty-three in every 100,000 are guilty, while only eleven of the married have gravely broken the laws out of the same number.

Not long ago a professor of the University of Chicago advertised in a morning paper for information concerning hexadactylous or six-fingered people. He received 155 answers from six-toed or fingered people. Perhaps an unusual number of toes may account for the extraordinary size of feet in Chicago.

James Carter of Kansas recently went to a drug store and purchased some pills for insomnia. Being unable to sleep again that night he groped around in the dark until he found what he supposed to be the pills and gulped down three of them, after which he slept soundly. It was discovered the next morning that he had swallowed three of his wife's shirt waist buttons.

Federal authorities on the Maricopa and Prima Indian reservation, near Phoenix, Ariz., report the death of Ne-un-ca-ma, the famous Pima fat boy, who was but 15 years old, yet tipped the scales at 440 pounds. Occasionally Ne-un-ca-ma used to come up from the reservation on a visit to Phoenix. This was excitement enough for one day in Phoenix. Crowds followed him about the street and stared at him as though he were a curio in a museum. He was a great favorite among his own people, and great preparations are being made for his funeral services.

Coughs and colds. Those who are suffering from coughs, colds, sore throat, etc., should try Brown's Bronchial Troches. Sold only in boxes.

MEXICO'S MARVELOUS RUINS

Wonderful Evidence of a Remarkable Prehistoric Race.

BELIEVED TO BE A MIGHTY PEOPLE

Explorer Niven's Discoveries in the Wilderness of Southwestern Mexico—Great Piles of Crumbling Ruins.

Mr. William Niven, an explorer whose industry and enthusiasm in the field of Central American archaeology and ethnology have contributed not a little to the general stock of knowledge of those subjects, is once more in the wilderness of southwestern Mexico delving in the ruined remains of the prehistoric inhabitants of that country. There he will remain many months to come. The following letter, which was written by him to the New York Herald from his camp, possesses both popular and scientific interest:

I am again in the heart of the wilderness of southwestern Mexico and am encamped beside the ruins of a prehistoric city that had evidently fallen into decay long before Columbus discovered America. Before my eyes stretch away acres upon acres of the remains of this mysterious civilization, and as I look out from my tent door I see on every hand evidences of the mightiness of this now utterly lost race.

Our camp is near the same neighborhood that I touched at last year, but where I was not able to remain long, owing to the climate and lack of help. My journey to this wild spot on that occasion was by the merest accident. I was traveling in quest of minerals, when some natives came to my tent one night and showed me a number of wonderful stone idols, war implements and pieces of jewelry, which they said they had found in the ruins of a great, mysterious, unknown and half-buried city that lay crumbling in decay in the unexplored wilderness beyond.

GUIDED BY A NATIVE.

I induced one of the natives to guide me to the spot. For several days we traveled through a wild and uninhabited land, that was so unpropitious that I began to doubt the faithfulness of my guide. So wild was the country as we journeyed inward that I was on the point of abandoning the quest, when the native pointed out to me what appeared to be an artificially leveled path and told that it had once formed a roadway leading up to the ruined city. It was so overgrown with trees and underbrush that it was only by the greatest difficulty we were able to follow. Passing through vast tracts of swampy wilderness and dense tropical forests, we at last came upon the site of the wonderful ruins.

Through vast extents of crumbling remains the guide took me, and on every hand I saw the evidence of a great buried nation. I saw at once that it was a discovery of great archaeological importance, but had not the necessary equipments and assistance to excavate the remains. So I made a careful study of the location, and returned to New York for the requirements necessary for a prolonged stay. Equipped with arms, ammunition, tools and provisions, I again set out for the ruins last September.

A ROUGH JOURNEY.

Our journey was a rough one, but we reached here all right. We had some trouble in finding the old roadway, but finally struck it and shortly afterward began to encounter the little detached groups of ruins that I had noticed on my previous trip. Presently, as we began to get near the great mass of decaying grandeur that once formed the ancient metropolis itself, I for the second time got a good view of the ruins. They seemed to me even more wonderful than before. It must have been an immense nation, and this city, or district, I should judge, was fully as large as Babylon or Thebes or other famous cities of remote antiquity. Its buildings, save those that were built on the tops of huge pyramids, were of rather low construction, but exceedingly massive.

As we journeyed along through the tangled underbrush we could see the faint outlines of a great mass of ruins that rose majestically up from the plain some distance ahead of us. This we have since found out to be an immense arch or doorway, and it seems probable that it may at one time have been one of the chief entrances into the city. It is made of great unhewn stones, piled closely together and held in place by a clay substance resembling cement.

AN IMPRESSIVE SCENE.

A few minutes before the sun finally sank we reached the first of the crumbling structures, and, clambering over great masses of fragments of stone, mounted a little hill and looked out over the remains of the fallen nation. I wish it lay within the power of my pen to give some idea of that wonderful sight. There, all bathed in the red glow of the sinking sun, were miles upon miles of ruins—fragments of shattered columns, portions of temple walls and the last remnants of what had once been shrines and the palaces of kings, varied here and there with patches of green brush and tangled underwood.

After viewing the impressive scene for some time we descended to the ruins and, selecting a spot beside the crumbling walls of a great temple, pitched our tent. Our equipments and provisions were then moved up and we made preparations for a long stay. After establishing the camp as comfortably as circumstances would allow we unloaded the mules and, wrapping ourselves in our blankets, were soon fast asleep. The next day we began explorations in earnest. We came upon the foundations of huge buildings in a fast decaying state, and that I have no doubt within the next few centuries will have crumbled away altogether, and upon the walls, that had sunk until now only a few feet remained standing above the ground. Many of these measure from forty to 100 feet square.

GREAT PILES OF CRUMBLING RUINS.

We made a general survey of the place and on every hand encountered monuments and walls of the greatest interest. In many places great mounds of decaying stone marked the sites where huge structures had once stood. We finally began excavations upon the site of what appeared to have been a building of great importance. The plan of this structure measures 300 by 200 feet. In the center of it we found a huge altar of solid masonry fifteen feet square by nearly twenty feet high and in a remarkably good state of preservation. There are many such altars scattered throughout these ruins. They appear to have been used for sacrificial purposes, and some of them are built upon the very apex of huge pyramidal piles, evidently constructed solely for their foundation.

At each corner of the foundations of the building mentioned we unearthed circular towers six feet in thickness and most remarkably designed. We endeavored to take photographs of them, but, owing to the trees and the thick tropical underbrush, it was impossible to show them as they really appeared. In fact, the dense growth in places almost buried the great walls from view, trees as large around as a man's body grew straight up beside them and almost right out of the stones themselves. For hundreds of years this unrestrained growth of wild vegetation has been going on, until some portions of the ruined structures are so entwined with vines and weeds that it was only with great difficulty that we could remove them without displacing the stones themselves. In many instances we found the underbrush actually growing out of the walls.

After digging through a thick layer of masonry we effected an opening and found ourselves in an immense circular chamber filled with dust and fragments of timber. This wood had remained so long sealed up here that upon contact with the air it became soft as tinder and crumbled at the slightest touch. The chamber also contained a quantity of broken plaster, painted a brilliant red and white, and which had undoubtedly once formed the coating of the inner walls. The pigment appeared to have been of excellent quality. Mixed with this debris were large boulders, gravel and many parts of broken statues. In the center of this remarkable building was a long carved altar and in an adjoining chamber we were astonished to find skeletons and human bones.

A NEST OF CURIOUS IDOLS.

We cleaned out the chamber and on the floor, lying under a mass of crumblings, found large quantities of stone beads, idols, masks and heads made of diorite. These idols are of various shapes and appearances, but all of them, even the most weird looking, have the human form. Some of them are fairly well proportioned, while others are of the most hideous conception, with huge heads and abnormally long faces. Others, again, have small bodies and exceedingly large legs, each leg being almost as large as the entire rest of the body. Then, there are still others with small heads, small legs and great wide bodies, while others, again, do not bear resemblance to any form of beings known of today. These idols undoubtedly represent the religious worship of this forgotten people. The masks which we have found are mostly of stone, and in nearly every case the face bears a stolid expression, with the mouth wide open. They vary in size from that of a man's head down to but a few inches, and all of them seem to have been very carefully made.

TWO REMARKABLE PYRAMIDS.

Some little distance southeast of these ruined buildings are two wonderful pyramids, one being no less than sixty feet high. Here the ruins are rich in treasure in the shape of personal ornamentations, terra cotta seals and various other objects. Here also we found an idol with the most curious markings on the breast—a design of fire, and on the face a striking expression of pain. A little further on we excavated in what seemed a particularly inviting spot and dug up a quantity of bone and shell ornaments, and within a space of twelve inches no less than two dozen finely formed lance heads and two small masks. Close to this spot is a layer of human bones six inches thick and twenty feet in length. The skulls appear perfect, but are so frail that they fall to pieces at the slightest pressure. A similar deposit of bone is visible from a canyon twenty-five feet below. We have also explored a few miles north of what appears to have been the limits of the city itself and have found a number of structures similar to those in the city proper, but smaller and almost entirely buried.

We are pushing our excavations with all possible dispatch, and in a short time hope to be able to find something that will give us a more definite clew to the rest of the human race, and in what period of the remote past they inhabited this continent.

The Fleeced and the Fleecers.

The receipts from the gambling hell at Monte Carlo for the last fiscal year, says the Philadelphia Press, were $2,970,000, the expenses being $1,200,000, of which the prince of Monaco got $400,000. Among the items of expense was one of $20,000 for the prevention of suicide, and another of $20,000 for travel money to enable unfortunates who lost their all to reach their homes. The enormous profits of nearly $2,000,000 are eloquent of the fleecing that goes on at this famous resort. No one "breaks the bank" save in a concert hall song, and those who win simply win at the expense of their fellow players. Thirty-five suicides in a year tell the tale of despair that attends this form of amusement, and taken in conjunction with the gross profits of the concern preach a telling homily against gambling.

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