

## *The Libertine's Victim*

by A Retired Member of the Detective Police [William Russell]

### Chapter I

MANY years ago, at the time when the old Watch system was in operation, and when I filled the office of Runner, as the office was then termed, it was my practice to wander about the streets at night, generally in such disguise as would enable me, undiscovered, to penetrate into the mysterious and hidden haunts of crime, and many a rogue owed his detection and arrest to the successful manner in which my identity was cloaked.

One evening I found myself in the vicinity of the Park, then as now a favorite resort for parties who had made secret appointments. It was a lovely evening in September, and the trees and shrubbery being in full foliage, the place was really inviting, even for those who had no other expectation or desire than the enjoyment of the lovely night.

As I crossed from Broadway, I noticed a carriage standing about halfway between the Park and the head of Spruce Street, and as the driver had not lighted his lamp, I thought possibly there might be some deviltry on foot, and determined, as I had nothing special on hand, that I would watch what might be going on

Entering the Park, I noticed a well dressed young man pacing to and fro with impatient strides, ever and anon casting his eyes around in all directions, evidently looking for some one whose arrival he expected.

Pulling my slouched hat over my face, I advanced towards him, and a single glance revealed to me the features of a young man named Edward Hargrave, of whom more hereafter.

Satisfied now that something wrong was going on, I resolved, *coûte qui coûte*, to see the *dénouement*, and watching my opportunity, I crossed over to the shrubbery which lined the Park, and kept my eyes intently fixed on Hargrave.

As moments wore on, his impatience seemed to increase, for he would frequently pause, and shading his eyes with his hand, peer long and anxiously in every direction. Suddenly he started forward in the direction of the gate, and accosted a female who had entered, closely veiled, and bearing in her hand a white handkerchief, evidently a prearranged signal.

For a few minutes they walked up and down the walk in front of me, engaged in earnest conversation, he evidently pleading, and she resisting his entreaties. At length it was evident that his protestations had carried the day, for what else could have been expected of a young woman who had consented to an interview under such circumstances? Half reluctantly, she suffered herself to be led away, and as soon as it seemed prudent, I emerged from my hiding-place and made rapid strides towards the gate opening on Chatham Street, which I reached just as the coach door was shut to, and the driver was in the act of mounting the box.

Turning the horses' heads upwards, the coach was just being driven off, when without knowing why, and prompted by some impulse which I could not control, I ran after the carriage, and sprang on the back board just as the driver began to whip up the horses. He felt the added load, and plied his whip lustily behind, but as I had buried my head in the collar of my coat, his blows fell harmlessly, and as he soon wearied of his profitless exercise, he turned his attention to his horses, evidently forgetting his additional and non-paying passenger, and the remainder of the ride I performed unmolested.

The driver or Hargrave evidently had some mysterious purpose in view, for he drove up one street and down another, and across the squares, going at least five times the necessary distance to reach his destination, which was a well-known house of assignation in Church Street.

When the coach stopped, I descended from my perch, and glided quietly round the side opposite the house, while the driver opened the door, and his precious fare descended, Hargrave more than half supporting his companion, whose fear, or shame, or remorse, had evidently not all been conquered.

With a hurried and whispered direction to the driver, Hargrave mounted the steps of the house, accompanied by his companion, who was clinging to him with one hand, while with the other she drew her heavy brown veil about her face in so many folds as to render a recognition of her features impossible.

The sound of the coach wheels had drawn to the door the proprietress of the house, who had evidently been expecting this visit, and who had arranged every thing beforehand.

The moment the door of the house was closed, I moved round on the pavement, and seized the driver by the collar as he was in the act of mounting his box.

"Holloa!" he exclaimed, "who the h-ll's that?" and he turned upon me.

"I'll show you, you scoundrel," I replied, shaking him till his teeth chattered.

"Where is your light, and where is your number—eh? you infernal scamp!" and another shaking followed.

"What in the h-ll's that your business?" he said as soon as he could recover his breath, and struggling violently to free himself from my grasp; but I dragged him to the lamppost, and had a good look at his ruffian-like features, bloated and disfigured by late hours and constant dissipation.

"Come now, what's your number, and why have you blinded your light?" And I recommenced the shaking operation.

"Oh-oh-oh!" he said between the shakes; "don't, Barker (the rascal knew me well), and I'll tell you all I know;" and he communicated his name and number, and the name of the owner, which I knew very well.

“Now be off,” I said, loosing my grasp on his collar, and flinging him off.

“And won’t I wait for the gentleman and lady?”

“No, go about your business. Yet no, on second thought, hold on; wait till I come out, perhaps I may want you.”

I then ascended the steps of the house, and ringing the bell, my summons was answered by Mrs. — herself, who opened a panel cut in the door, and peered at me through the small iron grating which had been set in it. The light from the hall lamp fell on my face, and she recognized me instantly, for I had paid many official visits to her den, and without hesitation I was admitted, the door being securely barred and bolted after me.

“Now, please, sir,” said Mrs. —, in tones of entreaty, as she turned to me; “don’t make any noise tonight. There ain’t nobody here you want, I know.”

“I am not so sure of that. What room did that couple go to who just came in?”

“Back room, next floor; you know him well enough, and—”

Without stopping to hear the conclusion of her sentence, I mounted the stairs, two steps at a jump, and knocked gently at the door of the apartment designated.

“Who’s there?” was uttered in sharp, quick tones by Hargrave, evidently annoyed at an interruption.

I did not choose to bandy words with the door between us, so placing my shoulder against the door, I put forth all my strength. The lock flew from its fastenings with a crash, and in another moment I was in the centre of the apartment, and turning, I closed the door quite leisurely.

At the moment the door had flown open, Hargrave’s companion had sprung from the sofa on which both were seated, and stood clinging to him for protection and support—he holding her around the waist with one hand, and with the other leaning on the table in the centre of the room, on which stood two massive plated candlesticks; for in those days gas had not yet become so common as now.

Before I had time for more than a hasty glance at the position of things, Hargrave, with the rapidity of thought, seized one of the candlesticks, and hurled it with all his force full at my head, fortunately missing me by less than an inch.

“Pretty well done, Mr. Hargrave,” I said coolly, advancing and seizing the remaining candlestick, and thus disarming him from offensive weapons.

“Who the devil are you? and what business have you in this apartment?” he said, his voice fairly trembling with rage; and retreating towards the sofa, he seated his companion, and advanced to-

ward me with menacing gestures, the young woman meanwhile throwing herself upon the arm of the sofa, and burying her face in her hands.

“Oh, you know me well enough, Hargrave. I’ve been watching you from the beginning of this, and I want to rescue that young woman from your infamous designs, for I don’t think she’s exactly one of your kind.”

Hargrave, who was a high-strung, dare-devil fellow, and perfectly fearless, fairly gnashed his teeth with rage as he replied, “I know you’re an infernal impudent puppy, and I’ll make you repent of this to the last day of your life.”

“I think this young woman will be much more likely to repent than I am. Pray, miss,” I continued, advancing toward her, “I must presume, from what I have seen in the park, that you know the character of this house; but do you know the character of your companion—the gambler, libertine, and notorious *roué*?”

As I uttered these words the young woman sprang from the sofa, and advanced toward me with outstretched hands, giving me the opportunity to notice that she was young, beautiful, and elegantly attired—evidently no common woman.

“Oh, sir,” she exclaimed, “what do you mean?” and she laid her trembling hand on my arm. “What do you mean?” she repeated, looking at Hargrave with an expression of doubt and distrust, as he stood there biting his nails with vexation, and from the expression of his eyes, evidently measuring the probable consequences of a personal encounter with me.

“I thought as much,” I said, convinced of her ignorance from her air and manner, and turning to him, “Are you not a pretty scoundrel to lead away a young girl in this way? I will tell you, young woman,” and as I spoke she clung to my arm for protection, “you are in one of the most notorious houses in town; a den of infamy which nothing virtuous ever—”

“Oh! take me home,” she said imploringly—“take me home!” and clasping my arm with both hands, she looked beseechingly in my face, tears meanwhile coursing down her cheeks, now flushed with shame.

“Ada,” said Hargrave, advancing toward her; but she shrank from him with an expression of terror and apprehension—“would you trust yourself with this man, a perfect stranger? You know I mean you no wrong. I would not harm you for the world. Come, Ada, I will take you home, if you desire it.”

“Not so, Hargrave; she can’t go with you unless she does so freely. I am no stranger to him, miss; I am a police officer, and it is my duty, as well as my pleasure, to thwart the infamous plans of such villains as your companion here.”

“O yes! you’ll take her home, I dare say,” sneered Hargrave, “and a pretty penny you’ll make out of her father, I’ll warrant; or, possibly, you have taken a virtuous fit—eh, Mr. Barker?”

I felt very much like knocking down the young vagabond; but all my interest was now concentrated on the girl, who clung to me closer than ever.

“Oh, sir,”—and she spoke so piteously,—“you would not inform my poor father; you would not ruin me for ever!”

“Why should I not tell your father?” I said, forming my plans on the instant. “It is my duty to inform your parents of the company you keep, and the places you visit.”

“Look here, Barker,” interrupted Hargrave, pulling out a well-filled pocket-book.

“Don’t trouble yourself, Hargrave,” and I waved him away, though I felt like knocking him down, but restrained myself on account of his companion, “I don’t want *your* money, at all events. Now, miss, shall I take you home, or will you trust yourself with Mr. Hargrave?”

“Oh, take me home; don’t leave me with him,” and she shuddered at the thought; “but, oh, for God’s sake, sir, don’t let my poor old father know this! It would kill him; I know it would!” and sobs and tears choked her utterance.

“That will depend entirely upon yourself. Now, then, what is your name, and where is your residence?”

Ada looked in my face with a strangely mixed expression of doubt and fear; then at Hargrave, who shook his head, as if to warn her from giving the desired information.

“Come, Hargrave,” I said, as I caught at once his meaning, “you are acting not only wickedly but foolishly, and you are only injuring this young woman by such conduct. I shan’t leave her until I know her name and residence, and not until I have her most solemn pledge never again to be—”

“Look here, Barker,” said Hargrave, breaking out in a fresh paroxysm of rage, “you are taking a d—d sight upon yourself, and I won’t stand it. That lady is old enough to know what she is about, and if she is fool enough to go home with you and place herself in your power, she can do so, and I can’t help it.”

“Oh, sir,” exclaimed Ada, “I will go with you—I will go with you. I will do any thing you say or ask, only do not, please don’t tell my poor father how wicked I have been.”

“Now, Hargrave, you hear what Ada says, and you are only harming her by trying to keep her from doing what is right.”

Hargrave paused a moment, as if reflecting upon my words, and then said, “I don’t know but what you are right. It might make serious trouble for you to take her home alone. My name you know,” and, dropping his voice, he added, “hers is Ada Martin, and her father lives in Bleecker Street.”

“Now, Miss Ada, in time to come you will be grateful to me for my interference this night, though perhaps you do not now fully realize the extent of the danger you have incurred. As for you, Hargrave, I won’t take your word for any thing; but I tell you candidly that if ever you make an attempt similar to this, so sure as I live I will give you over to her father’s vengeance. I give you both warning that I shall watch you closely, and the consequences be upon your own heads if you do not heed what I say. In fact, I am somewhat afraid that I am doing wrong in permitting this to pass unnoticed.”

“Oh, no, no!” eagerly said Ada, who now appeared to have awakened to a full sense of her position. “I will never forget your kindness, and never cease to thank and bless you. Go,” she said in whispered tones, “do go home with me; I dare not trust myself with him again. Do not leave me now.”

“I won’t,” and I pressed her arm as it lay on my own, as if to assure her that she was safe, now she had placed herself under my protection. “Hargrave, this young lady desires me to accompany her home. Come, your carriage is waiting.”

“Of course, if Ada insists upon it,” he said, with evident chagrin, for he had other purposes in view. “Is it your wish, Ada?”

She did not raise her head, nor look at him, but replied, “It is. I prefer to have the officer go home with me.”

“You hear what she says, Hargrave. Now I will keep my word with both of you, and beware how you forfeit yours to me. I wish to say a few words to Ada alone.”

“Oh, of course,” he sneeringly replied; “I understand;” and clapping his hand on his pocket, he turned and left the room. It was evidently his desire, by his insulting remarks, to provoke me into some rash act which would have possibly tended to his future advantage with the young lady’s father, but I permitted them to pass in silent contempt.

“Now, miss,” I said, as I heard him descending the stairs, “I have but a few words to say. I watched every thing that occurred at the Park, and felt sure then that something wrong was going on. Answer me truly, did you know where you were going?”

A crimson blush suffused her face and neck at this question, and she hung her head with shame. My question was answered, and I pitied her from my heart.

“Oh, I must have been mad,” she suddenly exclaimed. “Oh, my poor father—poor, dear father, what would you say?”

“Come, come, Ada, you need fear nothing from me, provided you keep your promise. I thank God that I have been the means of saving you tonight, and I trust what has occurred will teach a lesson you will never forget.”

“It has indeed,” she said, wiping her eyes; and, drawing down her veil, she took my arm and suffered me to lead her downstairs. We found Hargrave waiting impatiently at the door, and without remark he entered the carriage, which I ordered to be driven to the place whence it had started.

Hargrave sat on the front seat, and during the whole drive uttered no word, but sat gazing moodily out of the window, now and then casting a glance of mingled rage and shame at Ada, who was seated by my side, her face buried in her handkerchief, and sobbing violently.

“Come, come,” I said, trying to soothe her, “if you continue to weep so, your father will discover that something has been going wrong.”

“No,” she murmured, trying to check her tears and sobs; “father will not be home for two days. Let me cry, it will do me good. But oh,” she added entreatingly, “if any thing should ever be said, you will tell the truth for me, will you not?”

“I will indeed. Send for me at any time. My address you will find there,” and I handed her one of my cards, which she wrapped in her handkerchief.

In a few moments we stopped at — Square, and having alighted, Ada walked on by the side of Hargrave, I following close behind. His head was bent down close to hers, and he was talking something to her. I fancied he was pleading with her, for several times she raised her handkerchief to her eyes, as if to wipe away tears called forth by his words.

They paused in front of the house named by Hargrave as her father’s residence, and having seen them enter, I turned away, fully satisfied that my work for the night was done, and wended my way homeward, rejoicing in the opportunity which I felt assured had been providentially placed in my way, of rescuing a young and innocent girl from the snares of a seducer.

Edward Hargrave, the young man thus singularly introduced to the reader, was by courtesy called a gentleman, and by right of birth and association entitled to that appellation. Descended from a family which in name and wealth stood first among the high and wealthy, he had received every advantage that could be bestowed upon him, with a view to the position which it was expected he would one day fill.

Soon after leaving college, were his actions had made him an object of disgust to many, and contempt to nearly all of his associates, he was sent to Germany, whence he returned after a three years’ tour, a confirmed libertine, *roué*, and gambler. Notwithstanding his character was well known, he was not only admitted into the best society, but sought for by all, for the golden cloak which he wore was of abundant dimensions to cover all his sins, and he might be daily seen promenading our fashionable thoroughfares, escorting some of our fairest and purest daughters. He had been a regular and welcome visitor at Ada’s father’s, and had taken advantage of the confidence reposed in him by winning her affections, and then basely endeavoring to compass her ruin.

How he had managed to persuade her so far to forget herself as to accompany him on the eventful evening just mentioned, is not for me to say, but I have often since felt proud to think that I had foiled his designs for once. How much eventual good resulted from my interference the sequel will show.

My first thought was, of course, that as a matter of duty, I was bound to make known to the young lady's father the circumstances which had so singularly come to my knowledge, but under a pledge of strict confidence. Accordingly, on the following morning, immediately after the discharge of the watch, I proceeded to the house which I had seen Hargrave enter with the young lady, and ringing the bell, asked to see the gentleman of the house if he was in.

I was ushered into a very elegantly furnished parlor, and before I had fairly time to examine the really superb furniture and ornaments with which it was filled, a tall, portly gentleman, whom I knew well as a retired merchant, named Martin, entered, and saluting me cordially (for he was well acquainted with me), inquired what he could do for me.

"I should like a few minutes' private conversation with you, Mr. Martin."

"An hour if I can serve you, Mr. Barker," he said, smiling, as he arose and led the way to his library, a small elegantly fitted apartment in the rear of the house.

As he closed the door, and I looked upon his fine, happy, smiling face, my heart smote me as I thought of the terrible blow I must inflict upon him, and accustomed as I was to all phases of human character, I almost wished I had not called.

"Now, then, Barker," he said, throwing himself into a large, well-cushioned chair, and motioning me to its counterpart, "what can I do for you?"

"Nothing until I first receive your pledge of secrecy as to what I am about to communicate."

"I have such confidence in your judgment and discretion, I freely give it, without asking the reasons for such a singular request."

"You are a father, Mr. Martin," I said, while I could feel the beads of perspiration standing on my face and forehead.

"God has blessed me with two sons, of whom any man on earth might be proud."

"And your daughter?"

"That blessing has never been vouchsafed to me," and although his reply almost dumbfounded me, I could not but feel a sentiment of real pleasure, that one so worthy and estimable was to be spared the pang I was about to inflict.

"Nieces, perhaps, Mr. Martin."



“Nor even those. I am an only child, and having neither brother nor sister, have not even a niece.”

“Perhaps—but to the point: was the young lady who entered your house last night in company with Mr. Hargrave, any connection of your family?”

“There is no young lady in my family, though I hope there will be one soon, for Ned, my eldest boy, is far gone in love with a very charming girl, who shall be heartily welcomed as my daughter, and I never even beard of Mr. Hargrave,” and he looked inquiringly at me.

“I don’t hardly understand this,” I said, half musingly.

“And I don’t understand it at all; so, sir, please to tell me what you are driving at?”

“Simply this: A young lady who gave the name of Ada Martin, residing here—No, by heavens,” I said, interrupting myself, “I see through it now. That scoundrel, Hargrave, gave me the name and residence. Now, I must go into further particulars,” and as Mr. Martin threw himself back into his chair, an interested listener, I detailed briefly the occurrences of the past evening.

“And you say they entered this house?” inquired Mr. Martin, with a surprised look, as I closed my statement.

“As surely as you sit there, I saw them.”

“They certainly did not remain, as surely as *you* sit there,” and he smiled as he spoke. “There is no female in the house but the servants and my wife. Ned was off courting last night, as usual, and Mrs. Martin, with Joe and myself, were at the theatre. Now, how will you get over that, officer?”

“Will you allow me to question your servants, Mr. Martin?”

“With pleasure,” he replied, and rising, he rang the bell, and directed every servant in the house to be summoned to the library.

There were three, all females, and none of them at all resembling the young lady whom I had met on the previous evening. The first one, however, to whom I put a question, shed a new light upon the matter. She stated that, while the family were out at the theatre, a gentleman and lady had rung the bell and asked for a Mr. Moreton. Of course she told him that no such person lived there, and as, while asking the question, the gentleman had led the lady into the hall, she had closed the front door.”

He then asked the number of the house; if she was sure that was the number and the street, and after a great many questions, which occupied some five or more minutes, during which the lady, who was closely veiled, clung to the gentleman’s arm, he suddenly recollected that it must have

been — Street, instead of — Street and with many apologies for giving so much trouble, they had departed.

“That will do,” I said, motioning to the servants to leave the room, for I saw at once how nicely I had been deceived by Hargrave, and as the servants retired from the room, I explained briefly to Mr. Martin the *rusé* which had been so successfully played.

Of course he thanked me heartily for my kind intentions towards him and his family, and with mutual expressions of earnest courtesy we parted

To say that I was chagrined would convey but a faint idea of my feelings as I left the house; but there was no help for it, and I made up my mind to bear my present defeat as philosophically as I could, fully believing, however, that time and Providence would afford me abundant opportunity for retaliation.

## Chapter II

SOME few months had passed away, and, except that I occasionally met Hargave in the course of my peregrinations, Ada, or rather the young woman he had christened Ada, would have passed entirely from my mind. We passed each other, however, with a simple nod of recognition, as I did not care to ask him about the young girl; but I had not forgotten the trick he played upon me.

One morning, just as I had dispatched the watch returns, and was about leaving the office, a very genteelly dressed, elderly gentleman, a stranger to me, entered, and accosting me, inquired if the chief officer was within.

“I am the chief officer,” was my reply.

“I am glad to have found you,” he said, in tones of earnestness, and with a singularly sad expression of countenance; and, in compliance with my request, he followed me into the private office.

“You are the chief, you said,” and he took the seat which I pointed to him.

“At your service, sir. In what way can I aid you?”

“I have something to communicate, but only in the strictest confidence. May I rely upon your entire secrecy?”

“So far as it may not conflict with my duty, most certainly, if you desire it.”

“I do desire it, and consider your pledge as given. Mine is a sad, sad errand for a father to make known, but this is my only resource,” and he passed his hand slowly across his forehead as if striving to collect his wandering thoughts.

“I have an only child—a daughter,” and again he paused, utterly unable to proceed from emotion; then suddenly dashing away the tears which had gathered in his eyes, he continued—“I am afraid, sir—nay, I am almost sure—she has forgotten every obligation of honor, duty, or virtue, and thrown herself away.”

“That is sad, indeed,” I said, hardly knowing, in fact, what to say. “I hope you are mistaken; or, if not, that I may be enabled to serve you.”

“I can but trust so, though I fear with little prospect of success. What in the name of heaven could have tempted her to bring my gray hairs with such sorrow to the grave, and to leave a kind and indulgent father, I cannot comprehend.”

“Perhaps, sir,” I suggested, “she may have eloped with some young man, loved by her, but to whom you had refused your consent that she should marry.”

“Not so. She has never named the subject of marriage to me, and I know of but one who was attached to her, and to whom I would gladly have seen her united. But, sir, here,” and he drew forth a miniature case—“I have brought her likeness to aid you in the search I wish you to undertake;” and, springing it open, he passed it to me, and as I took it he buried his face in his hands, and I could see the scalding tears trickling through his half-closed fingers.

A glance showed me that it was the counterpart of the young lady I had seen with Hargrave, and this, of course, was her father. On the instant my suspicions, as did my thoughts, fastened on Hargrave, but concealing the emotion which the unexpected sight of her miniature under such singular circumstances had aroused, I said confusedly, still gazing at the picture—

“She is very beautiful, sir. I think I can almost promise you success with this to guide me. Now be pleased first to let me know your name.”

“Moreton, Joseph Moreton, of — Street.”

“And your daughter’s name?”

“Ada.”

“By Jove, then,” I exclaimed, “he told half the truth. Now answer me a few questions. When was Ada at home last?”

“And you know me, do you?” he murmured, gazing at me with a look of blank amazement.

“With whom do you suppose she may have gone off?” I continued, not noticing his question.

“My first suspicions were fixed, I am free to admit, upon a gentleman named Hargrave, who has been a constant visitor to my house; the one, in fact, to whom I have just alluded. But then he is out of the question, because he, of all others, I would have been glad to see united to my daughter. No, I am satisfied that my suspicions of him were groundless.”

“And why do you no longer suspect him?” I asked.

“Simply because he seems as much puzzled and surprised as myself; and I know he has been unwearied in his efforts to discover her. In fact, it was through his advice I have applied for your assistance now.”

“The devil it was!” I exclaimed, half angry at the rascal’s impudence for I was as confident that Hargrave had a hand in Ada’s absence as Mr. Moreton was that he had not. “Now then, Mr. Moreton, listen to me. I have no more doubt that Edward Hargrave knows where your daughter is than that I am talking to you, and I am more convinced of it from the fact of his sending you to me.”

“I can’t believe it, officer,” said Mr. Moreton firmly. “What earthly reasons can *you* have for such a suspicion?”

“Reasons which, when I name them, you will not venture to gainsay. In the first place, he is a notorious *roué*, and an unprincipled libertine. And—”

“Go on,” he said calmly, seeing that I hesitated. “What else?”

“I scarcely know how I can tell you all; yet under existing circumstances I must—but only on the solemn pledge that you will neither do nor say anything without consulting me; that is, if you desire me to manage the affair.”

“I promise on my honor,” said he warmly, and with an inclination of the head towards me.

“And under any circumstances you will, until further advised by me, continue to receive and treat Mr. Hargrave as you have hitherto done.”

“And that I promise,” he said with a smile of incredulity.

“Now, Mr. Moreton, listen to me for a few moments. I have seen your daughter in company with Mr. Hargrave, and under circumstances which I am sorry I must now mention. I made an effort to discover her father, but was so thoroughly deceived, it was impossible;” and I proceeded to narrate the circumstances already familiar to the reader, Mr. Moreton listening with the most intense interest, while scalding tears ran down his furrowed cheeks.

“I thank you, sir, for the honorable course you have tried to pursue, and in which, to my deep sorrow, you were foiled. I could not, however, expect any thing else; for your character is too well known to me to doubt for an instant the promptings of duty with you.”

“Perhaps, Mr. Moreton, all may yet turn out for the best; and Providence has designed that I should not discover you, in order to further its own beneficent ends for her good and your happiness. I knew that Hargrave was a deep-dyed villain, and if I had discovered and told you all

I had learned, you would very naturally have quarrelled with him, and then he would not have scrupled to make his boasts among his vile associates of having been with your daughter at such a place, and thus blasted her character for ever. Yet more; if you had witnessed Ada's terrible remorse on that night, and heard her plead earnestly for her dear, dear father's sake, you would, as I did, have placed the most implicit reliance upon her professions of sorrow and promises of future amendment."

"Then she did think of me even there?" he said, as the unbidden tears blinded his eyes.

"Indeed, indeed she did; so much she seemed to have little care for herself, and I thought then that her love for you would be her best safeguard for the future."

"I suppose it was all for the best," he sighed, wiping away his tears. "And now, what is to be done?"

"Leave every thing to me. I will manage this matter alone, and no one shall be let into my confidence. If Hargrave should find out that I am watching him, he would scruple at nothing, however desperate, to get her out of the way (as I believe he has her in his care), for he knows he has money enough to purchase immunity from almost any crime."

"So be it. I shall leave every thing in your hands, and trust to your sympathy and kindness to leave no effort untried to rescue my poor girl from the fate which now seems to hang over her. There, take this," and he tendered me a large roll of notes; "spare no expense, but bring me back my daughter, and I will thank you to the latest hour of my life. Of course you have no idea where she may be concealed?" he continued, and in a tone of inquiry.

"None in the world. I must keep a lookout on Hargrave, and perhaps I can trace him to her hiding-place. But keep your money, Mr. Moreton. If any expense is incurred, I will inform you."

"I hope you may find yourself mistaken as to Hargrave. I cannot think that he could make such a return for my kindness and hospitality."

"For your sake, I hope I may be mistaken; but time will show. Now Mr. Moreton, I must ask to be excused. I have matters on hand requiring my immediate attention. I will communicate with you as often as may be necessary," and with a few words of courteous greeting, expressing the pleasure he derived in having placed the matter in such competent hands, he took his leave.

On the evening of the same day, while passing through Broadway, I observed Hargrave standing before a noted gambling house, and to my surprise, he came over and addressed me.

"I say, Barker, I did you a good turn today you did not deserve," he said, slapping me on the shoulder. "I have not forgotten your conduct on a certain night," and he winked knowingly; "still, as I knew you were infernal sharp, I sent a good fat job to you. Have you seen Moreton yet?" he asked, as, with a familiarity which, under other circumstances, I should have resented, he tried to place his arm within my own; but declining the proffered honor, I moved on, while he walked by my side.

“Yes, he was at the office this morning,” and I looked at the imperturbably cool rascal with a glance of astonishment.

“Then, of course, you know all I could tell you.” (“Not all,” I said mentally.) “Isn’t it strange that Ada should have acted so singularly? Now, Barker, the fact is, I have a little pride in this matter, and just for the sake of finding out who it is that has headed me off so nicely, I will add five hundred dollars to any thing old Moreton has offered if Ada is found, and it is discovered who she went away with; and you can tell the officers that from me.”

I looked in Hargrave’s face as he uttered these words, and must confess I was completely dumbfounded at his consummate assurance. Was he earnest in his proposition, or was he only “throwing dust in my eyes?”

“Now, Hargrave,” said I, looking him full in the eye, and he did not quail, “answer me one question, on your sacred honor as a gentleman;” and I appealed to him in this strain, for I knew he prided himself upon nothing more highly than upon the strict adherence he claimed to pay to his word.

“I will anticipate your question,” he replied, without the least symptom of confusion or hesitation. “I assure you, on my honor, that I know no more of Ada’s whereabouts than you do at this moment. True, I have been a pretty regular visitor at old Moreton’s since that night, and by mutual consent that subject has been dropped between Ada and myself. We both agreed upon this as the best course, as a sudden cessation of my visits, and the breaking off of an intimacy so publicly known as was ours, would have afforded too much food for gossip, so we concluded upon that course, and I continued my visits. I am in honest, sober earnest, and will pay the five hundred dollars as cheerfully as Ada’s father will pay any thing he has promised. Now are you satisfied?”

“To be candid with you, Hargrave, I am not, and I am free to admit that I communicated my suspicions to Mr. Moreton this morning.”

“You were wrong there,” he said, with the most ineffable coolness; “but are you sure you did not tell him of—?”

I knew that he was lying, and I felt fully justified in using his own weapons; so I said hastily and boldly, “O no, of course not; that was not necessary. I did not give him any special reasons for my suspicion, and indeed he seemed half angry with me for uttering them at all against you.”

“Indeed,” and the villain’s face betrayed no index of any emotion.

“Yes, and he left me with the assurance that until I could make him think as I did, he should continue to receive and treat you as he has heretofore done.”

“Well, I am glad of that at least, but I must confess I am sorry you put such a notion in his head. I know the old man has been thinking of me for a son-in-law for sometime past, and I don’t know

but for this I should have settled down into a quiet, orderly Benedict. Reformed rakes, you know, Barker,” and he winked again knowingly. “I renew to you my assurance that I know nothing of Ada or her whereabouts, and unless you have better grounds for your suspicions than the mere remembrance of that night, I hope the next time you see Mr. Moreton you will do away with any evil impression you have made on his mind against me.”

“I will inform him of this interview,” I said, not caring to compromise myself by a more direct answer, for I was as confident that he was “selling” me as that I was living.

Hargrave looked searchingly at me for a moment, and said, “I can see that you still suspect me. So be it. I shan’t take any measures to disabuse you; but remember, and let the officers whom you may set at work know, that the five hundred dollars will be paid when they are earned,” and without further remarks he turned away and left me to pursue my walk alone.

When Hargrave left me he entered the gambling house where I had first seen him, and acting upon the impulse of the moment, I determined to watch and follow him. Contrary to his general custom, he did not remain inside the house more than half an hour, and but for the circumstance of hearing his voice as he came up the street laughing boisterously I should have missed him, for I was standing on the corner of Bond Street and Broadway engaged in conversation with a friend, not dreaming of seeing Hargrave so soon. I observed that he passed up Bond Street without having seen me, and when he had walked a sufficient distance ahead, I followed on, keeping him in sight. On reaching the Bowery, he crossed over and went up until he came to St. Mark’s Place, and thence into the Second Avenue, up which he passed until he reached a small house not far from East River. Opening the door with a night-key, he was quickly lost to my sight, and I congratulated myself upon the success which had crowned this brief watching of my customer.

I had never heard any thing wrong concerning the house that he had gone into, but the very fact of his having thus familiarly entered, satisfied me that there was little good within. I then set about making inquiries at the various grocers’ and others shops in the vicinity, and to my great surprise, learned that it was an assignation house, but so quietly conducted that, although the proprietress had occupied it as such for several months, it was only very recently that the true character of the house had become suspected.

Armed with this information, I went back, with the determination to watch until Hargrave should make his exit, and then, by virtue of my office, demand admission and institute a thorough search. After kicking my heels together for an hour, and finding that he still remained within, I started homeward, intending to pay an official visit to the premises at the earliest opportunity.

On the following evening, having nothing special to do, I thought I would follow up the scent of Hargrave while it was fresh, so after tea (folks did not dine in those days at seven o’clock), I started off, and after reconnoitering the neighborhood for some minutes, I went up the steps and rang the bell.

The door was opened a few inches only, by a female whose features I could not distinguish, and who asked me, in not the most polite terms, what I wanted.

“I could tell you a great deal better if I was inside,” I replied.

“But you can’t come inside. I don’t know who you are, and this is a private house.”

“Oh, of course it’s private,” I replied; “perfectly private, and that is the very reason I wish to come in.”

“Well, you can’t come in here,” she said, and tried to slam the door in my face; but I had quietly inserted my foot inside the door when it was first opened, and of course it was impossible to close it.

“You are an impudent fellow,” she said, throwing herself with all her force against the door, “and if you don’t clear out I will call the watch.”

“And if you don’t let me in, and that very quickly, I will call the watch myself, and that may not be so pleasant. So you had better take things quietly, and not kick up any rumpus. I am a police officer, and have business inside, so if you don’t let me in peaceably, I will find means to get in without asking you.”

For a single instant the female hesitated, and then having evidently made up her mind to choose the least of two evils, she stood back from the door, permitting me to enter, and closing it immediately after me.

“Now then, sir, what may be your business? You see I am alone; so you needn’t be afraid.” And she spoke with a very perceptible sneer on her lip.

“Who resides here besides yourself?” I inquired, not heeding her remark, or the manner in which it was delivered, for I knew tolerably well how to get along with such characters.

“I am here alone, as I told you. If you are an officer, which I doubt, I should like to know the nature of your business. You will bear me witness that I offer no resistance to the law.”

“I am in search of a person who I have reason to believe is concealed in this house, and I wish to examine it.”

“You are welcome to search the house, though, I warn you, it is at your peril; for I have a friend who will not allow such an insult to pass unnoticed. I will go into the parlor, and you can search the house at your leisure.”

“Perhaps you may save yourself trouble by answering two or three questions.”

“I can answer them as well in the parlor as here,” she said, leading the way into her small, but superbly furnished room. “Now, sir,” and I seated myself, without waiting for her invitation, “if your questions are civil and proper, I will answer them,” and she put on an air of virtuous indignation which I was enabled at once to penetrate.



I saw that in one thing she had the advantage of me, and after a moment's hesitation I said, "Never mind; I will not trouble you; I choose to look for myself."

"As you please," and she rose and started for the door.

"I should prefer that you would show me through the house."

"I shall do no such thing; but my servant may. Maria!" she said, in a loud voice, and a sharp, bright-eyed girl whose face was perfectly familiar to me, but whom I could not at the moment fully remember, entered.

"Get a light, Maria, and show this gentleman over the house; from garret to cellar, Maria; but do not lose sight of him," and she turned from me with a look of contempt.

I bit my lip with vexation, but said nothing, and when Maria returned with a candle I followed her upstairs.

"I suppose *you* know me, Maria?" I said, as we entered the front room on the second floor, which was elegantly furnished in the style peculiar to certain houses.

"Me, sir? I never saw you in my life," she replied, with the most brazen impudence.

"Well, I have seen you often enough at Mrs. H—'s, in D—" (for I had then recalled her), "and that is about the same. Whose room is this?"

"Missus', sir."

"And this?" I said, following her into the back room, which was furnished in the same style as the other.

"Missus', too."

"Does missus sleep in both beds every night?" I asked sternly.

"I dunno, sir," she replied, not knowing what to say; at that moment her eye caught sight of a handkerchief lying on the floor near the dressing-table, which stood between the windows, and advancing, she picked it up, and was about putting it in her pocket when I said, approaching her, "Hand that to me."

"It's missus'," she said, hesitating, and holding it behind her.

"Give me that handkerchief," I said sternly, and with a spiteful look she almost threw it at me.

“Hold the light close,” and I proceeded to examine the corners, in one of which I found the initials “A. M.” plainly and handsomely marked. Without commenting on this discovery, I merely said, as I placed the handkerchief in my pocket, “Now show me the other rooms.”

“Is this missus’ too?” I asked as we entered the front second-floor bedroom, which was furnished in keeping with the rest.

“Yes, I tell you. I told you so before. There ain’t nobody here but missus and I.”

“Sometimes Mr. Hargrave comes,” I continued, suddenly turning upon her as she was following me with the light.

“Yes, sometimes,” she replied without confusion or hesitation.

“Now, then, upstairs,” and I followed Maria to the attics. These rooms, though smaller, were all handsomely furnished, satisfying me that the character of the house, as described by the neighbors, was as near truth as it could well be. As there were no signs that any of the rooms were permanently occupied, I was convinced that there was no probability of Ada being there, and, having thus satisfied my curiosity, I said to her, with a careless air, “What’s missus’ name, Maria?”

“Mrs. Belden,” was the reply.

“Oh! then, this handkerchief, I suppose, must have belonged to her before she was married, for I see another name on it!”

“Ask her yourself,” said the hussy, evidently feeling that she was caught in her own trap.

“Well, sir, I trust you have been well paid for your trouble,” said the young woman who, claimed to be the sole occupant of the house, and who, was in the parlor awaiting my return.

“I have seen enough to satisfy me that my visit was at least not unnecessary, and I shall put your house under the surveillance of the watch. I am sorry to see a young woman of your appearance in such a position.”

“I don’t thank you for your sorrow. And now, sir, if you have finished your business, perhaps you will favor me with your name, that I may know by whom I have been so highly honored.”

“You may say that Mr. Barker has been here, and may call again when he is least expected or desired.”

“I hope you may have a pleasant time when you do come,” she sneered, dropping the character of injured innocence, which at my first entrance she had put on.

“I hope so. Goodnight now, Mrs. Belden; perhaps I may have better luck next time;” and bowing to the young woman, who courtesied down to the very ground, while a contemptuous sneer crossed her really handsome face, I left the house.

Of course the handkerchief marked “A. M.” must have belonged to Ada Moreton, and I had then no more doubt that she had been in that house than that Hargrave was a villain, and I could only account for her sudden disappearance by the supposition that Hargrave must have learned of my watching the house on the previous evening, and, in consequence, had removed her to other quarters.

### Chapter III

MR. MORETON for some time called upon or sent for me almost daily for some weeks, but as I had no encouragement to give him, his visits became less and less frequent, and at length he seemed to avoid me entirely, though I saw him occasionally in the streets.

The loss of his daughter had preyed upon him so that he was utterly unlike himself. Naturally spare and thin, he appeared to grow into a very shadow, and his face was the index of the grief which was consuming him; so palpably, too, that accustomed as I was to similar, and even worse transactions, I felt for him as I had never felt before.

As for Hargrave, I had tracked him from haunt to haunt, but ever unavailingly, and at length I almost began to think that I might, after all, have been on the wrong scent. Latterly I had missed him from his accustomed haunts, and presumed that he might have gone to some of the watering-places, where his profuse extravagance ever rendered him a welcome visitor.

A new light, however, broke upon me soon, through the medium of a circumstance which came under my official observation, and which threw me completely off from the further pursuit of Hargrave, to whom I was almost inclined to think I had done injustice.

One morning I was on duty at the discharge of the watch, being specially desirous of preventing the discharge of a prisoner from whom I knew I could derive important information. And my presence was the more necessary at that early hour, as I was aware that there were hanging about the office a knot of harpies who disgraced the name of lawyer, and who were ever at hand to take advantage of every possible opportunity to secure the discharge of a client.

Having seen my man securely housed, I strolled into the prison yard, and while there heard a great outcry in the kitchen. As it was my practice never to *harry* about any thing, I walked in leisurely; but the sight which met me there knocked all my equanimity from under me, and without exactly knowing how or why it happened, I found myself an excited and interested spectator.

There, in the centre of the large apartment, surrounded by keepers, prisoners, and a motley crowd of watchman and other lookers-on, lay on the cold, wet stone floor a young female, clothed in rich and elegant attire, and ornamented with a profusion of jewelry. Her long black hair streamed

from her head in tangled and disheveled masses, and her elegant bonnet lay beside her, crushed and trampled out of all shape. Around her neck was a massive gold chain, securing several handsome trinkets, which, as if in very mockery, lay upon her breast, heaving with convulsive throes. Her neck was upraised by a small log of wood, which caused her head to be thrown far back, and there she lay, gasping and struggling for the breath which came in hard spasmodic gasps. Her countenance was distorted almost out of the semblance of humanity by the intensity of her sufferings. Her eyes were forced from their sockets, and deeply bloodshot; in fact, she presented one of the most harrowing pictures on which I ever gazed.

A hurried inquiry from one of the keepers was answered by informing me that she, with others of her unfortunate class, had been arrested in the streets on the previous evening for annoying and insulting passers by their obscenity and profanity. This poor girl, dreading the idea of being committed to prison to herd with felons, and the worst and lowest in the scale of humanity, but perhaps dreading more the public exposure of her name, had attempted to end her life and her troubles at once by suicide—hanging being the mode selected by her. Fortunately she had been discovered and cut down before life was extinct, and she had been dragged into the kitchen, where she lay awaiting the arrival of a physician for whom a messenger had been dispatched.

He soon came, and his first call, on beholding the miserable girl, was for a pair of bellows, with which he proceeded to inflate her lungs as he best could with such an instrument. The sufferings of the poor girl were almost intolerable, certainly painful to behold, but the skillful, kind-hearted physician persevered, and at length had the satisfaction of seeing that sufficient reaction had taken place to warrant the use of the lancet, which was at once resorted to, and after giving directions not to have the patient removed until his return, he left.

As the crowd about her thinned off, I had an opportunity of examining her more closely, but I failed to recognize in the bloated and disfigured mass before me any familiar feature, as she lay struggling, foaming, and panting for breath. While I stood thus contemplating the poor shattered wreck before me, and perhaps thinking over the terrible trials, sorrows, and temptations which had brought her to this fearful strait, I was arrested by the sound of many female voices, and looking up, I saw one of the keepers of the prison advancing, followed by nearly half a score of the unfortunate women who had been arrested on the previous night, and who, after a severe reprimand, were ordered to be discharged. The keeper, however, a very kindhearted and humane man, thought that possibly the sight of their miserable companion in crime, whose life had been nearly forfeited, might prove a salutary lesson to some of them, and he was bringing them thither with that purpose.

As they straggled into the kitchen, their appearance was calculated to awaken the saddest emotions. They gathered around in circle—the young girl just entering on the career of infamy—some whose experience in this mode of life was written in indelible characters on every feature, and others, old, hardened, and reckless, and whose sunken eyes and hollow cheeks, down which paint and chalk had run in disgusting stripes, told too truly how soon they would be numbered among the things that were.

Some started back, horror depicted on their care-worn faces, as they beheld the outstretched form of the sufferer before them—some buried their faces in their hands, and gave way to tears and

sobs which they could not suppress. Perhaps they saw foreshadowed the end of their own career, while one of the oldest of the group, one whose face was stamped with vice and crime, walked near to the sufferer, and after gazing at her a few moments with close scrutiny, but without semblance of feeling or emotion, exclaimed with an oath, "Why, if it ain't Emma Belden, I wish I may be hanged;" and turned away with a half-scornful remark.

That was a scene not soon to be forgotten. There they stood, decked out in their tawdry finery, now soiled and torn by the night's lodging in the cheerless prison cell, while on the faces of some there was abundant evidence that, to them, the night had been one of tears and sorrow. For several moments they stood thus, no sound breaking the silence of the hour, save an occasional stifled sob from some of the unhappy girls, or the deep-struggling sigh of the sufferer as her feeble breath came and went painfully. At length, without a word, they turned away, and one by one left the apartment and the prison, to resume, perhaps within the hour, the career whose sad end was so painfully foreshadowed by this scene.

Emma Belden! I had not forgotten the name. It was the young proprietress of the house in G— Street who "wanted none of my sorrow," and she had reached this end so soon. Sadly I approached nearer, and after a long and painful scrutiny I, too, recognized her features, and knew at once that she was the same. My first thought, of course, was that through her I might obtain some clue to Hargrave's present whereabouts, and possibly some information which might lead to the discovery of Ada. Nothing doubting that she would not possibly be sufficiently recovered to leave the prison that day, I turned away and left, intending to return in the afternoon, and, if she was well enough to converse, to seek an interview with her.

On my return late in the afternoon, I was surprised and annoyed to learn that during the day some friends had come for her with a coach, and taken her away. I made inquiries of every one about the prison, with a view of ascertaining her residence, but without success, and finally, after consulting the watch return, I selected the names of some of those arrested with her, and determined to seek among them for information as to her residence.

In this I was successful, and finally I learned that she was residing at a well-known house in Mercer Street, whither I posted directly. Admittance was, of course, promptly gained, and on making known the object of my visit, I was at once shown into the room where Emma, still a sufferer, was in bed.

The moment I entered the room she recognized me, and tears started to her eyes as she beckoned me to her side.

"I am sorry, very sorry, Emma," I said, as I took her extended hand, "to see you here and in such a situation. I saw you yesterday at the Tombs, when you could not recognize me."

"But I did, though"—and as she spoke I did at the moment recall a long, fixed look of her blood-shot eyes as I hung over her in the prison kitchen, and which had made my blood run cold—"I did know you, officer, and even then the kind words you once spoke to me came back to me."

"In God's name, then, Emma, I hope you will heed them now, and quit this life for ever!"

“I had nearly done so yesterday, officer, but they wouldn’t let me die. That is the only end I dare now to look forward to.”

“But why not break off now when your own heart tells you of the inevitable consequences?”

“Why, sir, where could I go? What could I do? Which way could I turn? Who would put any confidence in me? No matter for that now; I’m afraid it’s too late, and I’ve only got one thing to look for. But I say, sir, I knew what brought you to my house that night, and I am right glad to see you now, for I want to tell you about her. I want to get that off my mind; but for Heaven’s sake, you won’t tell Hargrave, will you?”

“On my honor, no.”

“Well, Hargrave knew about it all the time. The girl was in the house the very time you searched it.”

“Is that really true?” I asked, for I felt sure that I had made a very thorough search, and at the moment I recollected the handkerchief I had taken from the servant: “was she really there?”

“She was in the wardrobe of the second floor front room all the time.”

“Then that was her handkerchief which I found?”

“Yes, sir; but she wasn’t worth the trouble her father took about her.”

“And how do you know what her father did?”

“Why, Hargrave told me all about it. She was a bad girl at heart, and went off willingly enough with him.”

“You only say that now, Emma, because you—”

“I told you I know it,” she interrupted. “I know all about her, and she was fully as bad at heart as Hargrave. But do you know what ever became of her?”

“No, I do not; but I want very much to ascertain. Can you give me any information? Her father is terribly distressed about her, and would, I am confident, sacrifice every penny he is worth to reclaim her.”

“I am really sorry I cannot help you or him. Hargrave came to the house the same evening after you had been there, and I never saw a man in such a rage. He called you more hard names than I choose to repeat, and said you were meddling with matters that did not concern you, and if you didn’t look out he’d make you pay dearly for it. Did he ever say any thing to you?”

“O yes, as much as he dared to, but I didn’t mind him. But what an awful liar he must be, for he gave me his solemn word of honor that he had not seen the girl, and knew nothing of her. Did he seem to care much for her?”

“Not a farthing. He told me that she threw herself upon him, and that he would be glad to get rid of her; but now that you had put your nose in, he swore you should never see her. She was really a wicked girl, officer.”

“Now stop,” I said, interrupting her; “I can’t imagine why you should talk so of that girl. I can’t believe that within a week after she left her father’s house—”

“A week! Why, sir, what are you talking about? She had lived three months in my house before you came there.”

“What, Ada there three months!”

“No. No Ada about it. Her name was Adelaide Martin.”

“In the name of all that is good, what are you talking about?”

“About the girl you were hunting for. Her name, I tell you, was Adelaide Martin, and her father was a butcher, living in Hammond Street. She had no mother. That much she told me herself.”

“Here,” I said, drawing forth the miniature of Ada which I had brought with me for that purpose, “was she any thing like that?” and I placed it in her extended hand.

“No more than she looks like you,” she replied, closing the case after a single instantaneous glance at the picture. “I never saw anyone who looked like that.”

“Then what on earth could Hargrave have told you about me, and why did that girl hide away from me?”

“He never mentioned your name until after your visit to my house. It was Adelaide who was afraid of being discovered, for she said if her father got her back he would send her to the House of Refuge. There were other girls in the house, but they went out into the back yard, and then into the street through a court alongside of the house. I thought that Adelaide had gone with them until you had left, and then she came running down stairs in high glee at having foiled you.”

“Is this all truth, Emma?” I asked, scarcely, however, doubting, for every thing now appeared susceptible of the plainest explanation.

“As true as that I am alive,” and she shuddered as she thought how nearly she had been dead. “But tell me, sir, was that girl,” and she pointed to the miniature which I still held in my hand, “connected with Hargrave? Stop—now I I think of it,” she continued, half raising herself on her elbow, and speaking with great earnestness, “I do remember his saying with great glee, after he had got over his rage, that you had got on the wrong scent this time, and after all he wasn’t sorry

you had been there, and what struck me as queer then, he said he wished you had seen Adelaide. Were you searching for that one?" and she nodded toward the miniature. "Had he any thing to do with her too?"

"I have always suspected he had, and now my suspicions are confirmed. Well, good-day, Emma. I called to see you today specially on this subject, and will call and see you again, and hope to hear from you that you have determined to abandon this course of life."

"I only wish I had died then, sir," she said, dropping her head upon the pillow, and clasping her hands over her eyes, disclosing as she did so the deep purple mark around her neck.

"Poor girl!" I said, half aloud, as I turned to go away.

"If you only knew all, you would say, poor girl, indeed," she said, removing her hand from her eyes, and looking at me with an expression of sadness which touched my heart. "Come and see me again, do, please. I don't often hear kindness from any one. Remember, sir, on my soul I have told you only solemn truth now. I have no object in concealment, and you know," she added, with a bitter smile, "we girls never do any thing without an object."

Here, then, was an end to my present hopes of discovering Ada, and when I left Emma I was half angry and half ashamed of myself for having been so handsomely fooled by Hargrave. His rage at hearing I had been at the house in G— Street now appeared perfectly natural, and I had fallen into a trap which he had unwittingly set for me. I could not, of course, make up my mind what course to pursue under the present circumstances, but when I returned home and replaced Ada's miniature on my desk, I was glad only that I had not communicated to Mr. Moreton the expectations which had been raised by my discovery of Emma Belden, for he would not have borne it with as much complacency as myself.

I had never abandoned the idea that Hargrave was connected with Ada's disappearance, and hoped that I should yet prove a match for him.

Of late I had seen nothing of him, and could only learn by inquiring among his gambling friends that he had left town, but no one could or would give me any information as to his probable residence; and until he returned, I could only lay on my oars, and await such events as time and Providence might bring to pass.

#### Chapter IV

MONTHS passed away, and as yet no clue had been obtained of Ada. Mr. Moreton had fallen away almost to a shadow, for his was not a nature to bear up against the shame and grief entailed upon him by the conduct of his erring daughter. I saw him very seldom, and always strove to avoid him when I did, for I was anxious to spare him the agony which my failure to discover Ada inflicted on him. Hargrave returned to town early in the summer, and I followed his footsteps with a keenness of a sleuth-hound, but ever unavailingly, so far as Ada was concerned, for I failed to obtain the remotest clue of her, and when we met to speak, as we did occasionally, he



always was the first to allude to her, expressing his wonder that, with my experience and sagacity, I had failed to ferret her out, or to learn with whom she had gone.

I bore his taunts, for such I construed his most civil remarks, as best I could, but never gave up the suspicion that he was at the bottom of the whole trouble.

One evening I was passing along the Park, not with any special purpose, except to look around the vicinity and see if I could discover any suspicious persons, for a very heavy burglary had been committed in that neighborhood a few nights before, and I thought that the rogues might act upon the sailor's belief, that a shot would never strike in the same place twice, and so attempt another robbery near the same place.

I walked around the Park, perhaps two or three times, and on the last tour through, having resolved to proceed to Wall Street, and keep an eye on the banks and banking-houses there, I saw just ahead of me a female moving along in a very unsteady manner. Increasing my pace, I soon approached near enough to discover that she was handsomely attired, and that she was swaying to and fro, as if under the influence of liquor, pausing occasionally to hold on by the iron railing, and uttering sounds which resembled groaning.

I hurried on so as to catch a front view of her as she neared a lamp, and turning suddenly, I noticed that her face was as pale as marble, and that she was gazing about strangely and in a wandering manner. Stepping up to her, I accosted her in some slang phrase, expressing my fear that she ought not to be out alone at such an hour, but she made no reply save to place her hand upon her heart, and utter a deep groan as if in pain.

I looked closely at her again as the light shone full upon her face, and its feeble rays only enabled me to discover that a white foam was oozing through her clenched teeth, and that her face was distorted by pain or the consequence of too free indulgence in liquor. In any event, she was not in a condition to be left alone in such a neighborhood, dressed as she was, for I saw glittering jewels hung about her person, and laying my hand upon her arm, I said, "Come, you had better go with me, and I will see you cared for until morning."

She made no reply, but pressing one hand on her heart, placed the other on my arm, and moved along in silence by my side. At the corner of Chambers Street I sounded the call, and when the watchman came up in answer, I asked if he knew the young woman.

Peering closely in her face for a few moments, he ignored all knowledge of her, and I concluded that I would convey her to the nearest station, so we moved along in that direction. On the road thither I strove to draw her into conversation, but in vain, as her only replies were sobs and deep groans, so deep that I was sure something more than drunkenness caused them, and I quickened my pace.

When we reached the station I led her into the captain's office, where, fortunately, Dr. McComb was in attendance, who had been summoned to dress the wounds of a drunken bully received in a street affray, and who was on the eve of leaving for home.

The moment he cast his eyes upon her he exclaimed, "My God! she has taken poison," and without another word ran off as if shot from a twenty-four pounder.

Astounded at this, I conducted my charge to the room occupied by the captain, and, lifting her now almost inanimate form in my arms, placed her on his bed, where she lay, breathing heavily, and her whole form convulsed with agony.

Before I had time to consider what was to be done, Dr. McComb returned, bringing with him a stomach pump, and other appliances for her relief, and, to my inexpressible satisfaction, I saw in the course of an hour that she had probably been rescued from death.

I said to my inexpressible satisfaction, for as the light of the lamp in the apartment shone fully upon the features of the sufferer, I had recognized those of Ada Moreton, and, of course, every anxiety in her behalf was proportionately increased.

The doctor having removed as much of the poison she had taken as could be done, and having forced down proper antidotes, turned to me, and assured me that all danger was now past, and that she would recover.

Calling him aside, I inquired if she could be removed with safety, and receiving an affirmative reply, I directed one of the men to summon a coach, into which, with the doctor's aid, she was speedily removed, and at my request, he accompanied me to my house, whither I had ordered it to be driven.

My wife was, of course, immeasurably astonished at such an arrival, but a few whispered words from me set every thing right, and she bustled about with a woman's activity to render every aid to the sufferer. Dr. McComb remained until he saw her in a profound sleep, and renewing his assertion that no further danger need be apprehended, he took his departure, receiving my warmest thanks for his prompt kindness, and the assurance that at a proper time I would inform him why I had taken the young woman to my house, instead of permitting her to remain at the station.

My wife and myself remained seated by the bedside of the sleeper until nearly dawn, when I directed her to retire, being desirous of an interview alone with Ada as soon as she should awake to consciousness.

She slept so profoundly, breakfast was announced while she was still sleeping, and leaving her in charge of the servant, I started for the kitchen, and ate the meal hurriedly and almost unconsciously.

When I returned to the apartment where she had passed the night I found her seated up in bed, her long black hair streaming wildly about her pale and haggard face.

I advanced to the bedside, and addressing her said, "I hope you feel better, Ada."

At the sound of her own name, she looked at me fixedly for a full minute; then, as the recognition of my face came to her, she uttered a loud piercing scream, and threw herself back upon the bed, drawing the clothes over, so as to conceal her face.

“Come, Ada,” I said, gently moving them away; “you see I know you. Do you not remember me?”

“Too well! too well!” she sobbed, “You—”

“Yes; I saw you that night with Hargrave.”

“Don’t name him; don’t name that incarnate fiend, unless you wish to drive me mad. I do know you; I do know you, and, oh! how bitterly I have cursed the hour in which I forgot your kind advice. O that I was dead! Why did you not leave me to die in the streets, as I deserved?” and covering her face with her hands, she gave way to hysterical sobs and exclamations of distress.

“Come, Ada, you are better here than you think for; you are with friends, and need to fear nothing here. Oh, how your father’s heart will leap to see you again!”

Ada removed her hand from her eyes, and gazing at me abstractedly, as if she had forgotten what had just passed, said, “My father? I haven’t any father. You don’t know me. I don’t know what you are talking about.”

“Come, come, Ada; that is nonsense. You know me, and I know you well. If you could only know what your poor father has suffered on your account, you would gladly cheer his heart by flying to meet him; but as you can’t fly to him,” I added with a smile, “I will bring him to you.”

“Please don’t speak of him,” she said, as if memory had again resumed its sway. “The sight of him would kill me at once, and I—am—not—fit—to—die,” she added, very slowly, in tones which went to my very heart. “Why did you not let me die last night? and yet,” she continued, in the same slow, sad tones, “it—was—very—wicked—in—me,” and as she closed, her voice fell almost to a whisper, showing how mysteriously the better feelings of her nature were struggling for the mastery.

“Officer,” she said, suddenly, and with great earnestness, “before you see my father— You have not seen him yet?” she said, interrupting herself.

“I was about to go for him now.”

“Now, officer, I have only one favor to ask on earth. Before you see my father, could you not bring Hargrave here?” and her eyes actually glared as she spoke.

I looked at her with astonishment; for why, of all on earth, should she wish now to see him who had brought such misery to her?

She seemed to interpret my thoughts, and said, hastily, "I see you think it strange; but, for the love of Heaven, do not refuse me, if it is in your power to bring him here. It is the only favor I will ever ask of you; the greatest you can possibly confer."

"I will see him at once," I replied, carried away by her earnestness, and not pausing to consider whether I was doing right or wrong.

"Don't tell him who wishes to see him; only bring him here face to face with me."

"I will try and find him now. I know where he is to be found at this hour, and you shall see him."

"Thank you," she said with a sad, serious air, which quite puzzled me; but I made no reply, and as I left the room I communicated to my wife the strange request with which I had promised compliance.

Going directly to the house where Hargrave had rooms (for he was too fast a man to stay at home), I had the good fortune to find him within, having just arisen, and prepared to start for the club-house, where he took his meals.

"Ah, Barker," he said, gayly, as I entered the room, "I hope you haven't got a warrant against me. I haven't been home long enough to deserve such a special attention at your hands, and I shouldn't care to be locked up just now, as I have two or three pretty little affairs on hand."

"No," I replied, in the same peculiar strain, for I feared I might miss my mark; "I come to ask a favor of you."

"It is granted," he said, almost before the words were out of my mouth. "So go ahead. By the way, come round and breakfast with me at the club."

"Thank you, I have breakfasted. I want you to put off your meal for half an hour, and accompany me to my residence."

He turned suddenly upon me, and with an air of suspicion said, "What is the meaning of this? Is it a genteel way of arresting me?"

"On my honor, no. I am desired by a party who is there, to ask the favor of a call from you."

"Man or woman?"

"I have promised to answer no questions, and have fulfilled my mission in receiving your promise."

"Suppose I decline to go with you?"

"I have neither the desire, inclination, nor the power to compel you. I have simply fulfilled my promise in making this request."

“And I promised to grant it, so here goes,” and taking up his hat, he pulled on his gloves leisurely, and commenced at once a conversation upon some indifferent topic, which he kept up as we walked hurriedly along.

I showed him into the parlor, and as he threw himself indolently and with a yawn into a chair, I went upstairs to inform Ada that Hargrave had arrived.

I found her up and dressed, but there was an expression in her eyes which fairly startled me. She was evidently in a state of most unnatural excitement, and her fingers were clutching convulsively, as if she longed to have something or some one within her grasp.

“Why don’t he come up?” she asked, in hoarse, unnatural tones.

“I thought it best to inform you first that he was here.”

“Do you suppose,” she fairly hissed, “I do not know his step? Bring him up at once—quick—I cannot hold out much longer.”

Scarcely knowing what I was doing, I descended to the parlor where Hargrave was still seated, switching his boot with his cane, and trying to look as unconcerned as possible, and in answer to my summons he started to follow me, humming a lively air, although I felt assured that he was not so indifferent as he assumed to be.

I preceded him into the room where Ada was standing by the side of a large easy chair, on which she was leaning for support, her face turned from the door. Scarcely had Hargrave crossed the threshold, than turning towards him with all the hell of a woman’s deadly hate glaring in her eyes, she sprang forward with a scream—no, a shriek of mingled rage, despair, and vengeance, and aimed a blow at his heart with something which she held in her right hand. As her arm descended almost with the quickness of lightning, Hargrave threw up his left hand and arrested the weapon—a small dagger which she held—when it was within an inch of his heart.

So great had been the strength she had put forth for the blow, and so sudden its arrest, her arm was for a moment completely paralyzed, and the small pearl-handled dirk fell on the floor at her feet.

Hargrave stood there, pale, terror-stricken, and trembling like an aspen leaf, while Ada, no longer able to bear up under the tremendous excitement which had thus far stimulated her, sank to the floor in a swoon.

“D—n you,” said the guilty, conscience-stricken villain, half recovering from the affright into which the suddenness of her attack had thrown him, and shaking his fist at me, “I’ll remember you for this yet, mind me,” but he paid no attention to the inanimate form lying prostrate on the floor before him.

“Go—go,” I said hurriedly, for I was dreadfully agitated at the unexpected turn which matters had taken. “I did not dream of this, or I would never have asked you to come here. Go, now, and thank God that you are alive.”

“I’ll have her up before the world, d—n her. I’ll see if such an infernal hussy shall attempt my life for nothing. You’ll remember me for this, my fine fellow, I can tell you,” and without another word, and not even deigning to notice his wretched victim lying inanimate at his feet, he descended the stairs, and left the house, slamming the front door violently after him.

Hastily summoning my wife and servant, we raised Ada upon the bed, and while they proceeded to apply proper restoratives, I hurried off to seek Mr. Moreton, for I feared that if Hargrave should in his wrath and fright, sue out a warrant against her for assault with intent to kill, it would prove a troublesome and disagreeable affair. On reaching his residence I was at once ushered into the library, where I found him seated perusing the morning paper. At sight of me, he hastily threw it aside, and springing forward exclaimed, “You have found her, officer, I know by your looks.”

“I have, indeed,” I replied, “through God’s help.”

“The Lord be praised—the Lord be praised,” he said solemnly, raising his hands to heaven, and sinking back in his chair, as if overpowered at the intelligence. “Is she here? did you bring her with you? Let me see her at once, for God’s sake, or I shall die.”

“She is not here, Mr. Moreton. She is at my house.”

“Come, come, let us hurry,” he said, rising; but he was evidently so agitated, he hardly knew what he was saying or doing.

“One moment,” I said hoping to gain time enough to restore him to comparative calmness. “Wait a few moments and—”

“Wait and why should I wait?” he asked hurriedly. “Did you not say my child was at your house? and why should I not go to her? Is she not my daughter—my Ada? Come, officer, I am ready. No matter how she is, or what she is, she is my child, my Ada, my heart’s treasure. What do I care for the world, so I have my child again?”

I saw that he was in no condition to speak or listen to any thing like reason; so, making a virtue of necessity, I yielded to his wishes, and made known my readiness to conduct him to her. A few doors from his house I found an empty hack, which we entered, the unhappy father throwing himself back in his seat, and never uttering a word during the drive; nor did I venture to address him, for I could well imagine how little comfort I could afford by any words of mine.

“Is Ada better?” I inquired of my wife as we entered the house.

“You had better sit down a moment,” replied my wife, and as she spoke she gave me a look which I rightly interpreted as desiring to speak to me alone, and as she led the way into the parlor I could see that her eyes were suffused with tears.

I almost dreaded to ask what had occurred during my brief absence, but was spared from asking any questions by Mr. Moreton, who said to me, as he seated himself, “You were very kind, officer, to bring her to your house.”

“When I first met her, Mr. Moreton, I did not know who she was. Come, Susan,” I said to my wife, “we can see Ada, I suppose?”

“She is—” and, unable longer to control her emotion, she stopped suddenly, and burst into a flood of tears and sobs.

“Great heavens!” exclaimed Mr. Moreton, rising, and turning ghastly pale, “she is not dead?” My wife could not make any reply; and, while I was lost in amazement, Mr. Moreton suddenly sprang forward, and, laying his hand on my shoulder, exclaimed in tones which went to my very heart, “Officer, you have deceived me. Ada is dead; I *know* she is,” he added, with almost frantic vehemence.

“She is not dead, Mr. Moreton,” replied my wife, striving to check her tears. “Go up and see for yourselves.”

Not waiting for further remarks, we left the parlor, Mr. Moreton following me, and ascending the stairs which led to Ada’s apartment, a sound of singing met my ears, which caused me to pause involuntarily. Mr. Moreton pushed on, and would have passed me, had I not hurried, and when I opened the door, and he followed me into the room, he stood still, as if he had been suddenly transformed into a statue, and the sight which met him there was enough indeed to appall a stouter heart than his.

Ada was seated in the large easy chair, twining her glossy hair around her fingers, and humming in low soft tones a familiar ditty. As we entered, she looked up, and the vacant stare, the idiotic smile, which met us as she paused in her song, told at once the dreadful truth. Her reason had sunk beneath the blow, and Ada Moreton was an idiotic lunatic.

“How do—how do?” she said, with a ghastly, sickening smile, cutting short her sentences, and speaking in a childish voice.

Mr. Moreton gazed for a few moments upon the sad wreck before him, unable to utter one word, then turning to me, he laid his hand upon my shoulder and turned away his face, as if unable to bear the sight.

“Come, Mr. Moreton, try and compose yourself, and be a man; you may only make matters worse.”

“See, is not this pretty?” she said, holding out her white wrist, around which she had twisted her hair in some resemblance to a bracelet.

The unhappy father bit his lips until the blood streamed from them, in his efforts to keep down the tears and sobs which were choking him. But they would come, and throwing himself on his knees by the side of Ada, he buried his face in her lap, and wept and sobbed as though his heart was breaking.

“What makes you cry, pa?” she said in the same childish voice, patting his head and smoothing down his gray locks. “Don’t cry, pa; Ada will be a good girl.”

“Oh, my God! this is too much!” said the half-distracted father, raising his head. “This is, indeed, more than I can bear! Ada—my darling! do you not know your father?”

“To be sure I do,” she said, still smoothing down his hair; “my own dear pa,” and clasping his head with both her hands, she pressed it to her heart.

“O Lord—O Lord! why did I not die before I saw this hour?” exclaimed Mr. Moreton, rising and pacing the room with excited steps, the tears coursing down his furrowed cheeks in torrents, and wringing his hands in an agony of grief.

But every reader can imagine how futile would be any attempt to depict, with any thing like reality, this harrowing scene, and I can only hope that no one who may read this imperfect sketch may ever be placed in a position to realize the awful sufferings of the agonized parent in that trying hour. His only child, the victim of a villain’s arts, was there before him a helpless, hopeless idiot. Hours wore on, and Mr. Moreton still continued his vain attempts to win from Ada one word of reason or one look of recognition. She was lost to him forever; lost to the world; lost, happily, to herself—for a restoration of her reason would only have brought with it the most soul-harrowing, maddening reflections.

At his request we sent for his family physician, who, after a careful examination, was compelled to acknowledge that he could promise no hope of her recovery. His carriage was sent for, and accompanied by the physician, she was conveyed to her father’s residence, where she was surrounded with every comfort and luxury which affection could dictate or wealth procure. But all was vain. She was an incurable idiot, and at length died without having blessed her doting father with one smile of recognition.

Of course, the terrible secret of her desertion of her father’s home died with her, for Hargrave alone could have solved that; but on the very day after the interview with Ada he left town, and I did not catch sight of him again until after she had been laid in the grave. I never spoke to him of the subject, and, indeed, he never gave me the opportunity, ever studiously avoiding any conversation with me. I met him, however, afterwards, under terrible and trying circumstances, not connected, however, with Ada, which may be detailed in some future sketch, and which may show how surely the vengeance of Heaven will overtake those who willfully provoke and court its wrath.



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