



TRUE AS STEEL

CHAPTER I.
DEAD OR ALIVE?

Ghostly fell the snow!
Like a curtain, a shroud, it had closed about the devoted form of Edna Deane that wild, tempestuous night, when the poor child of destiny had sunk exhausted and despairing at the very threshold of safety.

The siren-scented Beatrice Mercer had sped to sunshiny, luxury and gold, with no thought of the real fate of the girl whose name she had assumed, whose loyal lover she had determined to win.

More merciful than she, the soft snow had drifted gently over the inanimate wanderer, striving to shut out from the rigor of storm and tempest the frail form that had succumbed to the chill of winter like a tender life.

Upon that same eventful night another figure braved the storm, and, breathing its fierceness, took his way along the same road, down which Edna Deane's dumb guide had so nearly led her to shelter.

"A night to get housed. I pity the homeless or belated!" breathed heartily, puffing John Blake, as he struggled through the deep drifts. Ah! nearly home. There, the dear old wife waiting to welcome me with a warm supper, I'll warrant."

Farmer John neared the unpretentious cottage that resembled a Laplander's hut, with its eaves hung deep with snow festoons. A doleful neigh from the wagon-shed aroused his humane heart, however, to turn from his path. He found there the exhausted animal that had led Edna hither, bestrode the wandering brute in its stall, and started again for the house.

"Ho, there, my dear!" sang out the bluff, great-hearted old fellow, as he made up a huge snowball and sent it six feet away dashing against the door of the cottage.

It opened. An eager, motherly face showed in the lamplight.

"Dear, dear! Is it you, John? I've been so worried. Always a boy, throwing snowballs and singing like a pirate. Will you never mend?"

"Never while this jolly snow reminds me of our school-day sleighrides, and your pretty, blooming face, you dear old girl!" retorted happy John. "Come, throw me a broom to beat a path, so I won't be dragging the snow all over that rag carpet you think more of than you do of me."

"Did you ever?"

"Been lonesome?" sang out John, industriously sweeping a path to the door.

"Terrible! Did you just come?"

"Did I just come? You wazer! I haven't been promenading around for fun, with snow chuck two feet down my neck, and that nice warm supper on the table!"

"Because I thought I heard some one cry out a bit ago!"

"Pigeons, maybe."

"No. It was a human cry for help."

"Phaw! Fancies. The wind toots like an engine-whistle to-night—lawdy me!"

Farmer John uttered a sharp cry, stumbled, recoiled. The broom fell from his hand, and there he stood staring blankly down at the ground at his feet.

"What now, John?" ejaculated his wife, peering to.

"Something in 'th path. Bag of oats—a sheep—no! Jane, look!"

He had leaned over to examine the object at his feet.

His great, soulful eyes glowed like two stars.

Into view he had dragged a human hand, limp and nerveless.

A soggy dress-sleeve followed and then a terrible cry rang from his wife's lips.

Out into the snow she dashed. Down beside the inanimate form, disenchanted from its snowy mound, she knelt.

"John! John!" she wailed, peering into the white, cold face of the inanimate Edna Deane—"it's a woman—a young girl. Oh, John! look at the bonny face, and the quick tears raining down her cheeks, motherly pity. 'Oh, John! dead or alive—' which?"

CHAPTER II.
FLOWERS IN COUNCIL.

The false Alice Ralston, the real Beatrice Mercer, went straight to Hopedale after leaving the home where she had found a father and a fortune.

She took no risks in her movements. Ralston did not know of her destination, had not known that she was at the Hopedale Institution through the years Rodney, the man who had died at the bridge, his friend, his advisor, had the sole charge of placing the real Edna at the seminary, for, as Beatrice knew, when father and daughter had parted, no years before the former was a fugitive from justice.

She had told the anxious Ralston that she would return speedily. She had secured a large sum of money. She made sure that no one followed her to the train. To break any possible trail she changed cars at a large city midway to Hopedale and made several mysterious purchases at a costumer's and at a hair dresser's shop.

When the next morning Beatrice Mercer alighted from a sleeper on the train at the nearest railroad town to Hopedale, and took a carriage to her home, her best friend would not have recognized her.

For she was completely disguised. She had come to act a part, and she had come fully prepared. In dress and face she had effected a marvelous change, and when she reached the Hopedale hotel and ordered a suite of rooms, no one formerly familiar with the trim neat figure and rather attractive face of the half-pay-school teacher of Hopedale Seminary, about the village, would for a moment have suspected the true identity of this new Beatrice Mercer.

She had come hither with an object, a definite object. She had come to seek a trace of the man she had loved, Raymond Marshall. She had resolved to win his love. Ruthlessly she had striven to destroy his faith in Edna Deane, as ruthlessly she had covered the trail of the young girl, when she disappeared, she had robbed her trusting friend of name, father and fortune, and now she would steal her loyal, broken-hearted lover from her. This was her plot, and her spirit never quailed at the upbraidings of an outraged, hardened conscience.

"He shall be mine! Wealth is nothing without him," she had told herself, and forthwith she set herself at work to consummate her designs. She had money—that could buy information, co-operation. She had an ally in reserve, and after remaining in her room to rest

"I would violate my duty to my clients if I deferred it to a later hour."

"To-morrow I go into court and submit these documents. They represent a personal indebtedness of \$8,000. They represent your indorsement for \$2,000 more. The distressing feature of the latter amount is that the alleged maker of the note denies its validity. In other words, it is a forgery."

A groan rang from the lips of the unhappy man.

"You are right," he murmured in a hollow, broken tone of deep despair. "My personal indebtedness does not worry me. I should never have been called upon to bear it, for I never personally contracted a dollar of it. However, penury, destitution myself and family might honorably endure, but dishonor, never! If that two-thousand-dollar claim is presented in court—"

"You will be accused of forgery."

"Which I never committed!" cried the Colonel. "You believe it?"

"I certainly do, but will a jury? Those documents go in as evidence, on their face showing you are responsible for them."

"But I have explained to you! That sounder of a statement of mine drew out of the firm a few months since on the pretense of ill-health. He took nearly all the ready cash, and not until he had got safe in a foreign land did I learn that the alleged valuable assets he had left as my share of the business were only waste paper. Worse than the burden of debt, he left those forged notes. I hypothesized them! Now I am accused of uttering them!"

"Can you not take them up?" insisted the lawyer.

"Impossible! I have vainly tried to borrow. My son, a dependence usually, has lost all interest in business and appears about half-crazed with the disappearance of a heartless jilt. No, ruin guarantees me the face of a horse, the prison-dock, dishonor, death!"

"I am sorry for you."

"That was all the lawyer could say, [TO BE CONTINUED.]

The Baby Had to Go Too.

A man, a woman, and a baby—the man and woman on a tricycle and the baby sleeping in a basket swung from two arms in front of the machine—were going up the west drive in Central Park yesterday morning, says the New York World. Several packages were strapped to the machine and the man and woman were dressed as if for an outing. It was quite early, not yet 6 o'clock, as they came up Eighth avenue and entered the park at 59th street. The few people who were on the street turned to gaze at the queer outfit, and smiled as they caught sight of the infant in its swinging basket. Above the basket was a canopy like that of a baby carriage. At the entrance to the park the man stopped to tighten the straps on a package. He was a sun-burnt, athletic-looking young fellow with pleasant gray eyes and a full dark beard. His wife, who sat behind him, looked pale and thin and was dressed in blue flannel. "Yes," he said, in answer to an inquiry, "I had this machine made to order. My wife's health has not been good lately and we decided to take our vacation in this way, and, turning to his wife with a smile, "of course we couldn't leave the youngster behind. Wife said he would have to go too, so I had the basket rigged up for him. No, we shall not camp out. We expect to travel morning and evenings and rest in the middle of the day when it is hot, and at night we shall put up at some farm house or country hotel. We expect to be gone about two weeks, and have no particular destination, but shall travel about in a leisurely sort of a way and try to get back my wife's health. Name? Oh, no, never mind that; but don't you think it is a good idea?"

A Custom of the Past.

Western people, who are eminently practical in their ideas, are doing away with the custom of baring heads at funerals, giving as a reason that it endangers the health. Aside from this funeral, as it is conducted nowadays, often leads to serious results. A delicate member of the family, who, perhaps, has not been out of the house for weeks, worn down and prostrated by the care and grief incident to the loss of a dear relative, is subjected to a long, slow ride on a cold, inclement day. Custom has had its way; the victim following the custom, thinking it a duty, returns to her home, not to go out again until she is followed over the same road to the last resting place by perhaps others who fall victims after her. "I am a comparatively young man," says a physician, "and yet I have not fingers enough on which to count cases of this kind that have come under my observation and in my own experience, and I have resolved to raise my voice against this custom whenever and wherever I may have the opportunity."

Moorish Locusts Feed Man and Beast.

The British consul at Mogador, while on an excursion inland, about a day's journey from Mogador, met flights of locusts. He says it was an astonishing and interesting sight. The locusts were flying in great numbers, and he saw them feeding on the crops of the people. He says that they were very destructive, and that they were a great nuisance to the people.

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could possibly lay beyond that pinnacle of earthly grandeur and success?

"Excuse me for to-night," pleaded Penrith. "I am tired of it all. Oh, if out of it all I could extract one grain of comfort, one genuine emotion of enjoyment—something akin to the old boyish zest—something tangible!"

Something tangible! He dwelt on the words at the stately dinner table. They lingered with him as he tried to settle down to a quiet smoke in the library. There arose in his mind a picture of the past. It was poverty, obscurity then; but a thought of the bare-footed rambles through the woods, of the real coziness of the little attic-room back at the old home—stead, of ambitions tinged with ideal sentiment and glowing hopes, glorified the years now dead.

He glanced from the window at the dying day. Mournful, inexpressibly cold, repellent, unlively, seemed the wilderness of stately mansions and stiff, precise equipages on the street without. How different the dear old village where he was born! The narrow streets, its quaint homes, its heart-warming people floated across his vision now, and seemed part of another world.

It was not so very far away. That little country town nestling among the hills was only an hour's ride from the great metropolis. Was he getting sentimental? What was this strange impulse that lured him to steal thither like a thief ashamed, and try to warm the frozen currents of his dreary life at the ashes of a dead past?

Ah! the dear old town. How natural it looked! The old red school-house, the rickety depot, the broad common—once again, for the first time in ten years, Richard Penrith trod his native soil that night.

He wandered about the place like an uneasy ghost haunting the scenes of former experiences. He felt a keen pang of actual envy as he peered through the frost-crested windows of the homely village store, and saw its proprietor, happy, serene, all one glow of perfect delight over the gathering in of an extra few dollars for holiday business. Why! a turn of stock in the city often meant a fortune for him, and yet scarcely stirred a nerve!

All heart, all sympathy, all human, simple felicity! What a paradise, compared to the hot-house, superficial life of the city! He paused as a name spoken by a bent, old man, passing with a companion, struck his ear with a shock.

"It's all Miss Naomi's doings, sir. Bless her dear heart! She's nursed my wife back to health, she's got my boy a situation, and we ain't the first that angel of charity has helped."

"Miss Hewitt is a great friend to the poor; yes."

Naomi—Miss Hewitt! Richard Penrith stood stock still on the snowy street. A slight flush surmounted his brow, his eyes grew larger, then tender.

Strange how he had forgotten her—stranger still that after all these years the sudden recurrence of that once treasured name could stir his nature as it had not been moved for nearly a decade!

He tried to smile at the memory of their boy and girl love, but failed. Something choked him as he walked on, and paused to peer through the windows of a neat, pretty cottage. Yes, there was the "best room," brightly lighted, and old Mrs. Hewitt seated knitting, surrounded by coziness and warmth. There was the pretty rustic porch. How often he had kissed Naomi good-night under the dew-spangled vines surrounding it. All was the same, only the vines were dead and drooping now. All was the same. His heart gave a great bound as the vivid lamplight showed a little framed portrait on the wall; his picture as he had been, treasured, esteemed faithfully by the winsome lass he had sacrificed to the cold, cynical demands of gold.

He fell to wondering how Naomi looked now. She was not visible about the house, and he strolled reluctantly on, and passing people stared suspiciously at him. He followed the concourse. Ah, another reminder of the past, the old church, its glowing portals an open welcome to all the weary, and hungered, and penitent.

He entered and glided to an obscure pew. It took him back ten years. How a certain watch-night meeting one New Year's Eve long ago came back to his mind! Naomi was there then, and he was her "company." Why! Naomi was here now! Yes! his heart thrilled as he made her out.

Changed? Yes, as gentle years of sympathy, and purity, and love for fellow mankind change the face of a saint. The glory of perfect womanhood in her kindly beaming eyes made Richard Penrith shrink at a sense of his own callous unworthiness.

Angelic influences were here to-night, surely. The white-haired preacher seemed to appeal to his heart as to a brother's. He was distressed, awakened, and then a peaceful calm swayed his soul—he hated the things he had loved, he realized the hollowness of the bright bauble he had striven to hold at its call only bitter dust and flight.

How his heart beat! It must have been dead for years! New Year's chimes ringing, he stood on the church porch, he timidly advanced to the side of the trim, loving, fond woman he had watched all the evening.

"Naomi—Miss Hewitt, do you not remember me?"

Her face paled, her little hand trembled as he grasped it. Then her soul beamed out in honest welcome, and then—

"They were boy and girl again, 'keeping company,' walking home from watch meetings as of yore, and the holy stars smiled down."

Richard Penrith bade Naomi Hewitt good-by at the cottage porch only to return the next day.

At evening he returned to the city to be greeted with dismay at his unexplained absence by his sister.

"You have alarmed us, Richard. So unlike you, too. But you look better."

CHAPTER III.
THE NEW LEAF.

January 1. Snow off. 2. Caught cold. 3. Bad cough. 4. Headache. 5. Don't think I'm high. 6. Er—a kite. 7. Friend and I. 8. That all right. 9. Good and tight. 10. Painted town. 11. Boy red. 12. Broken down. 13. Large head. 14. Aching sore. 15. Don't think I ever drink. 16. Any more. 17. Wandering fifties.

"Now, Johnny, you've had a merry Christmas, and you must be good till next Christmas to pay for it." "Oh, yes, of course, be good. I don't believe you can hire me to be good a whole year for a tin horse and a story book just like what Bill Jones was going to trade me for three marbles. Not much!"

"Tax reward of any duty is the power to fulfill another."

CHAPTER IV.
KILLED BY A BEECH NUT.

There have been instances of deer meeting death by having their antlers inseparably locked together during a fight, and also of wading birds being captured and slowly killed by the occupants of bivalve shells on the seashore. The illustration represents the only known example of an animal being killed in this peculiar way. The bird is a chaffinch, and he has lost his life by pecking his lower mandible through a beech nut that he was vainly endeavoring to open. The shell became tightly wedged on the beak so that the unfortunate bird was unable to scrape it off, and death by starvation was the inevitable result.

How Famous Rulers Died.

Louis XVII., titular King of France, the unfortunate dauphin, died in the Temple of Paris of abuse and neglect. His body was identified and certified to by four members of the Committee on Public Safety and by more than twenty officials of the temple. The remains were privately buried in the cemetery of St. Marguerite and every trace of the grave was carefully obliterated.

The hero of the Great was attacked by a vile disease, which caused his body to rotify even before death. When aware that he was near his end he commanded all the most noble and prominent men of the Jewish nation to be apprehended and confined in a theater near his palace and gave orders that as soon as he was dead they were all to be slain. He intended, he said, to have mourning at his death. They were released after he had breathed his last.

William the Conqueror was a man of very gross habit of body, and at the siege of Nantes was hurt by the rearing of his horse, the pommel of the saddle striking the King in the abdomen and causing injuries from which he died in a few days. Before his death he was deserted by all his attendants, who stole and carried off even the coverings of the bed on which he lay. The body remained on the floor of the room in which the King died for two days before it was buried by charitable monks from a neighboring monastery.

William Rufus was killed by an arrow, either accidental or with murderous intent. He died in the New Forest, his body was stripped by tramps, and the next day was found by a charcoal burner, who placed the naked corpse on his cart, hoping to receive a reward. On the way to Winchester the cart was upset and the King's body fell in the mire. Covered with filth and black with charcoal it arrived in Winchester, where it was buried in the Cathedral. A few years later the tower fell and crushed the tomb, and 600 years after the Puritans rifled the grave and played foot-ball with the King's skull.—Globe-Democrat.

Lady Henry was curious.

When Lady Somerset first came to America, she was particularly anxious to become acquainted with all the American customs and to take part in everything American. Her appreciation of America was intense.

"Now, will you tell me," said she one day to a friend, "why the chestnut has been selected as a national nut, and why it is so dear to the hearts of every one? I notice that all, be they old or young, boy or girl, man or woman, speak of the chestnut frequently, and always pleasantly, and even affectionately."

"To-day, as I was seated in one of your horse cars, a little boy began telling another one some short anecdote, when suddenly the other little boy sprang to his feet and shouted, 'Oh, chestnuts!' Later in the day I saw one man whisper something in the ear of a friend, to which the friend only replied, 'Oh, what a chestnut!'

"How pleasant to have something of which every one is so fond. But explain the cause of the liking. Why was that particular nut selected? Why not the almond or the pecan? Is it that the chestnut grows more freely here?" New York World.

A WOMAN LAWYER.

The Remarkable Career of Miss Ella F. Knowles—Her Legal Work.

One of the queer things in the election of 1892 was the choosing of Miss Ella F. Knowles, by a large majority, as Attorney General of Montana.

Miss Knowles was born in Northwood, Rockingham county, N. H., and is the daughter of David Knowles and Louisa Knowles. Her mother died when she was 14 years of age, and she graduated from the Northwood Seminary at the age of 15, and one year later from the New Hampshire State Normal School. Afterwards she went to Bates College, Lewiston, Me., from which she graduated in the class of '84, receiving the degree of A. B. Four years later Bates College conferred on her the degree of A. M.

In 1885 Miss Knowles commenced the study of law in the office of Burnham & Brown, Manchester, N. H. She presented her studies there about a year, when, on account of ill health, she went West, and took the chair of elocution and Latin in Iowa College. Being advised by physicians to go among the mountains, she went to Helena in the fall of 1887. She taught one year in the central school there, and then resumed the study of law. There was considerable prejudice against allowing her to practice. So the little woman went to work among the members of the Territorial Legislature, that of 1888-'89, and had a bill introduced and passed to admit women to practice law. She was admitted to the bar on December 1, 1890. Now she has a practice of which many men would be proud, and is peculiarly popular among them.

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