

Copyright Story.

# A SILVER HEART.

By JOHN STRANGE WINTER, Author of "Bootles' Baby," Etc.

CHAPTER I.

that way were true. Her stormy remorse added a proof—a remorse which did not even attempt retraction or evasion. And his memory got to work. He knew now why Christine had been so reluctant to go to Caylesham. There were things back in the past, too, which now became intelligible—how that acquaintance had grown and grown, how constant the companionship had been, one or two little things which had seemed odd, and then how there had been a sudden end, and they had come to see very little of Caylesham, how neither of them had seen him for a long while, till John had sent Christine to borrow £15,000.

"For God's sake, go!" she cried. He rose to his feet slowly, and her fascinated eyes watched his face. His eyes were dull, and his face seemed to have gone grey. He asked her one question: "How long ago?"

"Oh, all over years ago," she answered, with an impatient groan, drumming her fingers on the arms of her chair. He nodded his head in a thoughtful way.

"Good-bye, Lady Harriet," she said. "Good-bye, John." Suddenly she sprang up. "Stop! What are you going to say to Christine?"

He looked bewildered still. "I don't know. Oh, really I don't know! My God! I never had any idea of this, and I don't know! I can't, can't realise it all, you know—and Caylesham, too!"

"Are you going to tell her I told you?" "I don't know what I'm going to do, Lady Harriet—I don't know."

"Ah!"

With a cry of exasperation she turned away and sat down in her chair again. "Good-bye," he muttered, and slouched awkwardly out of the room.

She sat on where she was, very still, frowning, her hand holding her chin, only her restless eyes roving about the room. She was like some handsome, fierce, caged beast. There she sat for close on an hour, thinking of what she was and of what she had done—of how she had known her the picture of herself, and of how from malice and in her wrath, she had betrayed Christine. Once only in all this time her lips moved; they moved to mutter:

"My God! what a cursed woman I am!"

(To be continued.)

CHAPTER II.

Before she changed her dress for dinner that night, Madeline Desmond sat down at the little writing table in her bedroom and wrote a note. It was to Ralph Byrne.

So the following afternoon found Ralph Byrne in possession of the quaint Dutch summer-house when Madeline Desmond arrived to keep the tryst.

"Something has happened!" he said to her.

"Yes, everything has happened. It's no use you going to mother, Ralph. She'll not hear of an engagement between us."

"But why?"

"It's a long story. But I feel that she has right on her side. I feel that I have no business to give her the anxiety that an engagement between us would be. I—Oh, you don't know what it is to me to give you up. I am not like most girls of my age. I'm not like my sisters. They've had a dozen sweethearts apiece—even the twins, who are only just promoted to the dignity of long frocks, and are not yet out of the schoolroom. I never had any favourite boys; I'm not like them; but I see that it won't do. Last night—I'll tell you all about it."

Then she told him the whole story that her mother told her the night before. "Can you wonder," she wound up, "that mother is so dead against long engagements?"

"No, I can't wonder. I can't forget that I've nothing to offer you—nothing but myself. It's no use my protesting that I shouldn't change. Who knows? I might. I suppose this Jacob, as you call him, didn't set out with the idea of marrying anybody but Rachel. But look here, Madeline, I shan't be in Blackhampton many days longer. You know that I'm going back to town to grind; and I will grind. If you forget me, I'll never reproach you. If you marry some other fellow—well, it will be better that we found it out sooner rather than later. I bought you an engagement ring this

"Of course you said no!" said Mrs Desmond.

Her voice rang across the glowing atmosphere of the firelit room like an east wind cutting through the air.

"—I didn't say no," came the reply. The voice of the girl who answered was very soft and low; it was also firm and decided. "I said yes."

"You didn't say yes?" shrieked the mother.

"I did. I meant yes."

"And you mean to tell me that Ralph Byrne had the impertinence, the audacity, the unparalleled impudence to offer you—what?"

"He offered me Ralph Byrne."

"Why, the man hasn't got a penny!"

"He will have."

"Will have! Will have! We shall all be in our quiet graves a little later on, and then things will be equal, whether we have fared luxuriously, or starved, in what these modern fanatics call our 'earth life.' I have finished with you, Madeline, finished with you!"

"I can't help it, mother," she said. There was a gleam of tears in the great violet eyes upturned from the low seat which surrounded the fire.

"You can't help it! This is the reward of all I have done for you children; this is all the return that you make to me for my sacrifice years and years and years together. If I hadn't so considered you children's future, if I hadn't denied myself and pinched myself, and striven to keep up as good a position as we had when your father was alive, you would have been proper helpmeets for men like Ralph Byrne."

"I can't help it, mother." The voice was wavering a little, there was the sound of tears in the soft and yet decided tones; indeed, the girl was very near to breaking down altogether.

"Ralph Byrne!" Mrs Desmond went on. "Ralph Byrne! What is he going to keep you on?"

"He is going to make money."

"Oh, is he! That kind of man is always going to make money; he never gets there; he never makes it. You are nineteen; you are the eldest but one of my five daughters, and to you and George I naturally look for a suitable example to set before the others. And all you do for me is to engage yourself to Ralph Byrne. I'm ashamed of you, Madeline."

"I can't help it, mother. I—I—got fond of him. I don't think there's anybody in the world like him. I—I'd rather—yes, I would honestly, mother—live on twopence a day with Ralph than I'd marry a millionaire who was somebody else."

"And you might have married Sir George Stanton," said Mrs Desmond, bitterly.

"Oh, mother, how could I marry Sir George? He's so fat!"

"Fat!" echoed her mother.

"Yes, mother, so fat. And he is so podgy, and so prosy. There wouldn't be a bit of romance or anything else."

"Romance," repeated Mrs Desmond, "romance! My dear child, answer me this: Will romance buy you such a gown as you have on at this moment? Will romance give you such a luncheon as you ate to-day? Will romance provide you with a maid? Will romance take you to Paris, take you to London, give you the thousand and one things that you are accustomed to? No, no, no! Think what you will be like when he is working to make money; living in a grubby little house on the Tolbridge Road, with one grubby little servant and half a dozen children; doing your own cooking, doing half your own washing, tramping up and down your bedroom at night with a baby, and such a very small bedroom that it will have very little tramping room. Oh, I haven't patience with you!"

"But, mother—"

"Well."

"We shouldn't be married until he is in a position."

"A position! I should think his ideas of a position are very different to yours or mine. I don't believe in long engagements; I don't believe in a cruel waste of the best years of a woman's life, waiting while a man achieves success. It is a wrong thing. A man has no right to ask a girl to marry him, or be engaged to him—which isn't at all one and the same—unless he can provide her a house which is at least as good as the one that she is living in. I have known more than one girl, Madeline, who waited years for a man, and then married somebody younger, fairer, wealthier. I knew one girl," she went on, speaking in her well-bred, cruel voice, "I knew one girl who had a lover. She was a cousin of mine. She's dead now, poor thing; you never knew her. He was a handsome man, with a way with him, just such another as Ralph Byrne. They got engaged; they were so much in love that time was nothing. He was willing to wait seven years for Rachel; and in the end Rachel waited seven years for her Jacob. And when the seven years were over, she was willing and ready to wait seven more. And he married—Leah."

"Well?" said Madeline; her voice quivered a little in spite of herself.

"Well!"

"It wasn't well. Leah was the daughter of his chief. Marriage with her meant a partnership, but it did not mean waiting another seven years and getting Rachel at the end of them. There is no marriage of that kind in our country. She lived just seven years, and on Jacob's seventh wedding day she died."

There was a long silence. The smart silver kettle on the tea-tray hissed and bubbled merrily; the cinders dropped one by one on the hearth; and at last Madeline Desmond spoke:

"I never knew that you had such a story as that in your family, mother," she said. "I wonder you never told us. Was that Cousin Agnes?"

"Yes, that was my cousin Agnes. She was thirty-five when she died; she might have been twice thirty-five in everything but the texture of her skin and the abundance of her hair. I never can bear to think about my cousin Agnes. If I could have killed that man

I would have done it. I met him, the last time I was in London, at an evening party Leonore and I were at. It was one night you had a headache, and you said you would sit quietly by the window and go to bed early. It turned me over to see him. To think of that broken heart, of all those crushed and broken illusions! Can you wonder that I am not glad to welcome Ralph Byrne to be a Jacob to my Rachel? You think I'm hard, you think I'm cruel, you think I'm worldly. Perhaps I am."

"I—I didn't say so," said Madeline; "I never said so. And I quite understand why you should speak and think as you do; but I don't think that Ralph will ever treat me like that."

"Neither did Agnes O'Connor. Up to the end of the seven years I wouldn't have ventured to say one word against Jacob. And yet he left her. He married—Leah."

## CHAPTER II.

Before she changed her dress for dinner that night, Madeline Desmond sat down at the little writing table in her bedroom and wrote a note. It was to Ralph Byrne.

So the following afternoon found Ralph Byrne in possession of the quaint Dutch summer-house when Madeline Desmond arrived to keep the tryst.

"Something has happened!" he said to her.

"Yes, everything has happened. It's no use you going to mother, Ralph. She'll not hear of an engagement between us."

"But why?"

"It's a long story. But I feel that she has right on her side. I feel that I have no business to give her the anxiety that an engagement between us would be. I—Oh, you don't know what it is to me to give you up. I am not like most girls of my age. I'm not like my sisters. They've had a dozen sweethearts apiece—even the twins, who are only just promoted to the dignity of long frocks, and are not yet out of the schoolroom. I never had any favourite boys; I'm not like them; but I see that it won't do. Last night—I'll tell you all about it."

Then she told him the whole story that her mother told her the night before. "Can you wonder," she wound up, "that mother is so dead against long engagements?"

"No, I can't wonder. I can't forget that I've nothing to offer you—nothing but myself. It's no use my protesting that I shouldn't change. Who knows? I might. I suppose this Jacob, as you call him, didn't set out with the idea of marrying anybody but Rachel. But look here, Madeline, I shan't be in Blackhampton many days longer. You know that I'm going back to town to grind; and I will grind. If you forget me, I'll never reproach you. If you marry some other fellow—well, it will be better that we found it out sooner rather than later. I bought you an engagement ring this

## DEBILITY PROMPTLY CURED.

### BILE BEANS INVALUABLE DURING THE SUMMER SEASON.

With Summer comes that weary, wornout feeling. Women more particularly are sufferers in this respect, owing partly to their confinement in the house, and not getting plenty of fresh air, and owing a great deal to the delicate constitution of the female organs, which give way under the strain of work and worry. To all women who are feeling "done up" at this time of the year, a course of Bile Beans will prove of immense benefit. They brace up and give tone to the various organs, thus strengthening the whole system. As a striking illustration, Miss Mary Tattersall, of Cook Street, Auckland, writes:—"Believing that you are always pleased to receive testimony as to the efficacy of Bile Beans, I desire to add my testimony to their value, in cases of debility, sick and nervous headaches. Debility is a complaint from which I frequently suffer, and I find that by using Bile Beans I receive considerable relief. As a purgative I am satisfied they cannot be surpassed. They are pleasant to take, and cause no pain or uneasiness in their action. I shall have much pleasure in recommending them to my friends and acquaintances." Bile Beans have proved a reliable cure for Biliousness, Headache, Indigestion, Constipation, Piles, Debility, Female Weaknesses, Nervousness, Bad Blood, Pimples, and all Skin Eruptions, Bad Breath, Anaemia, Insomnia, Loss of Appetite, Summer Erag, and in fact all ailments that owe their origin to defective liver action. Bile Beans are obtainable from all medicine vendors, price 1/11 or 2/0 large box.

# REGAIN YOUR VIGOR!

We have the means at hand to cure you; we know what you require before you can regain your vigour; you need New Life, New Nerve Force, New Ambition. Follow our advice—Use Electricity, and it will cure you.

We have used Electricity for twenty years, and many years ago gave up drugs as being utterly useless, but very expensive auxiliary.

## Dr. McLaughlin's Electric Belt

Is the surest and most economical way to get back your lost nerve force. The current from it is constant and steady. It invigorates the circulation, expands the tissues, develops the organs, in fact, it practically renovates the entire nervous system, and gives you new life and happiness. Try it and you'll never regret it. NO DRUGS FORCED ON YOU.



Mr. A. B. CAVANAGH, Ingleburn, writes: "I have worn your Belt about twenty times and have had some of the most restful sleep I have ever had since." Mrs. B. J. WELLS, Ingleburn, writes: "I have been cured of ailments that made me miserable, and I am now as well as ever."

NOTICE. No man or woman has made the right steps towards regaining their health, unless they have read our free treatise on Electricity. Our books are beautifully illustrated, and show practical applications of Electricity on all chronic ailments. They are free and will be sent post paid to any who write.

Call if you can and have a free examination and consultation. We will make you a written diagnosis by post, FREE. Don't pay any fee for such services. Hours—9 a.m. to 5.30 p.m.

The Dr. McLaughlin Co.

867, WILLIS STREET, WELLINGTON.