

THE ONLY GIRL AT OVERLOOK.

BY FRANKLIN FIFE, IN N. Y. HERALD.

The midnight incident seemed to have come to a conclusion. It was a proper time for Gerald to say good night and go away. He still stood on the opposite side of the half open sash, around the edge of which appeared a small set of finger tips, which pulled the screen a little closer, showing that the girl was minded to shut herself in. But a hand twice as big opposed hers, gently yet strongly, and in doing so it touched her, upon which she let go and the window flew open.

"Oh, you mustn't see me," Mary exclaimed, as Gerald got a vanishing glimpse of the white draped figure. "Good night."

"You will be afraid if left alone," Gerald protested; "you can't go to sleep, nervous as you must be."

"I surely can't go to sleep talking," was her rejoinder, with the first touch of coquetry she had indulged in at Overlook.

"I won't talk then; I'll only keep guard out here until daylight. Eph may return."

"But there's the watchman. It is his duty."

"It would be my delight."

That silenced the invisible inmate of the cabin. The moon shone into the square opening, but Mary was ensconced somewhere in the darkness that bordered the income of light.

"Should I apologize?" Gerald at length began again. "It is like this, Miss Warriner—I used to know how to behave politely to a lady; but for six years I've lived in wilderness—in railroad camps—from Canada to Mexico. We've had no ladies in these rough places, no women, except once in a while some mannish washerwoman or cook. That's what makes you so rare, so unexpected; that is why it would be a delight to be a patrolman outside your quarters; that is why I don't wish to go away."

"Oh, oh! I am interesting because I am the only specimen of my sex at Overlook. That isn't a doubtful compliment; it is no compliment at all. Good night."

"You misconstrue me altogether. I mean—"

"I am sure you do not mean," and now the tone was pleadingly serious, "to remain here at my window after I request you to go away. I am, as you have said, the only girl at Overlook."

"If there were a thousand girls at Overlook—"

"Not one of them, I trust, would prolong a dialogue with a young gentleman at night through the open window of her bedroom."

Half in respectful deference to Mary's unassailable statement of the rule of propriety applicable to the situation, and half in inconsiderate petulance at being dismissed, Gerald let go of the sash with an impulse that almost closed it. This time two miniature hands came out under the swinging frame. Would more than one hand have been naturally used? Was it not an awkward method of shutting a window? And Mary Warriner was not a clumsy creature. But there were the hands and Gerald grasped them. They fluttered for freedom like birds held captive in broad palms by completely caging fingers. Then he uncovered them, but for an instant kept them prisoners by encircling the wrists long enough to impudently kiss them. Another second and they were gone, the window was closed and the offender was alone.

He walked slowly away, accusing himself of folly and ungentlemanliness, and he felt better upon getting out of the clear, searching moonshine into the dim, obscuring shade of rock and trees, among which the path wound crookedly. There rapid footsteps startled him, as though he were a skulking evildoer, and the swift approach of a man along an intersecting pathway made him feel like taking to cowardly flight. But he recognized the monomaniac Eph, who was in a breathless tremor.

"Mr. Heath, could a man walk to Dimmersville before the telegraph station there opens in the morning?" Eph asked, with several catches of breath, and a reeling movement of physical weakness.

"You go to bed, Eph," was the reply, meant to be soothing "and I'll see that your telegram goes from here the earliest thing in the morning. That won't be more than six or seven hours from now."

"Six or seven hours," the poor fellow deploringly moaned; "I'll be a good many years older by that time. Oh, its awful to have your life go whizzing away like mine does," and he clutched at Gerald with his fidgety hands, with a vague idea of slowing himself by holding to an normal human being.

Then he darted away, swaying from side to side with faintness, and disappeared in the foliage which lined the path he was following.

Gerald watched him out of sight, and was about to resume his own different way when the voice of Tonio Ravelli was heard, with its Italian extra "A" to the short words and a heavy emphasis on the final syllable of the long ones.

"Mistair Heath," he said, "I saw-a your affectionate parting wees Mees Warriner."

Gerald had just then the mind of a culprit, and he began to explain apologetically:—"It was cowardly in me to insult a defenceless girl. She didn't invite it. I'm ashamed of myself."

He hardly realized to whom he was speaking. The two men were walking rapidly, Ravelli taking two strides to one of the bigger Gerald, in order to keep alongside.

"You should be ashamed—you—a scoundrel."

As much of jealous fury and venomous malice as could be vocalized in six words was in Ravelli's sudden outbreak. Gerald was astounded. He turned upon his companion, caught him by both lapels of the coat and shook him so violently that his boot soles pounded the ground. Ravelli staggered back upon being loosed, and threw one arm around a tree to steady himself.

"I didn't mean to hurt you," said Gerald, "but you shouldn't be reckless with your language. Perhaps you don't know what scoundrel means in English."

"I saw you—a kiss her hand."

"Did you? Well, do you know what I'd do to you, Ravelli, if I saw you kiss her hands—as I did—without her consent? I'd wring your miserable neck. Now, what are you going to do to me?"

"I am a-going to keel you."

The blade of a knife flashed in Ravelli's right hand as he made a furious onslaught. But the stronger and quicker man gripped both of his assailant's wrists, threw him violently to the ground and tortured him with wrenches and doublings until he had

to drop the weapon. In the encounter the clothes of both men were torn, and when Ravelli regained his feet blood was dripping from his hand. The blade had cut it.

"You meant to kill me," Gerald exclaimed.

"I said-a so," was the sullen, menacing response.

"And with my own knife," and Gerald, picking up the knife, recognized it.

"Your-a own knife—23 one zat you, carve-a Mary's hand with so lovingly."

Ravelli had retained it since the previous afternoon, when he had picked it up from Mary Warriner's desk. Its blade was now red with blood, as Gerald shut and pocketed it.

"You cowardly murderer!"

"Murderer? Not a yet. But I mean to be."

Ravelli turned off by the cross path and Gerald passed on.

CHAPTER III.—A STROKE OF LIGHTNING.

The first man to go to work at Overlook in the morning was Jim Wilson, because he had to rouse the fire under a boiler early enough to provide steam for a score of rock drills. The night watchman awakened him at daybreak, according to custom, and then got into a bunk as the other got out of one.

"Everything all right?" Jim asked.

"I guess so," the other replied. "But I hain't seen your boiler since after midnight. Eph was disturbin' Mary Mite, and so I hung round her cabin pretty much the last half of the night."

Jim went to his post at the boiler, and at an unaccustomed pace, from the point where he first saw and heard steam hissing upward from the safety valve. On quitting the night previous he had banked the fire as usual and this morning he should have found it burning so slowly that an hour of raking, replenishing and open draughts would no more than start the machinery at seven o'clock. Going nearer he found that open dampers and a fresh supply of coal had set the furnace raging.

What was that which protruded from the open door and so nearly filled the aperture that the draught was not impaired.

A glance gave the answer. It was the legs and half the body of a man, whose head and shoulders were thoroughly charred, as Jim was horrified to see when he pulled the remains out upon the ground.

Jim ran to tell the superintendent, and within a few minutes a knot of excited men surrounded the body. The gathering grew in numbers rapidly. By means of the clothing the dead and partially burned man was identified at once as Tonio Ravelli. That he had been murdered was an equally easy conclusion. The murderer had apparently sought to cremate the corpse. Whether he had found it physically impossible or had been frightened away could only be conjectured.

"Who can have done it?" was the question asked by Superintendent Brainerd, the autocrat of Overlook.

There was a minute of silence, with all staring intently at the body, as though half expecting it to somehow disclose the truth. The night watchman was first to speak.

"Eph might have done it."

Then he told of the monomaniac's visit to the telegraphic station, and of the acute stage which his malady had reached. Nobody else present had seen him since the previous evening. Superintendent Brainerd ordered a search of the lodgings. Ten minutes were sufficient for a round of the different quarters. Eph was in none of them. The searchers returned to the furnace, and with them came Gerald Heath.

"I met Eph yonder where the paths cross, not a hundred yards from here, a little past midnight," Gerald said. "He was terribly excited. That was after he had tried in vain to telegraph acrossy message. Evidently his delusion, that his whole life was condensed into a brief space, had driven him to a frenzy. He spoke of walking to Dimmersville, but I tried to quiet him, and he disappeared."

Dimmersville was a town about ten miles distant, in a direction opposite to that from which the railroad had worked its way through the mountains. No wire connected it with Overlook, and there was no public road for the nearest third of the way, although a faint trail showed the course that a few persons had taken on foot or horseback.

"Very likely Eph has gone toward Dimmersville," Brainerd argued, "and we must try to catch him."

Before the order could be specifically given a horse and rider arose over the edge of the level ground and came into the midst of the assemblage. The man in the saddle had a professional aspect, imparted chiefly by his smoothly shaven face. In this era of mustaches a hairless visage is apt to be assigned to a clergyman, who shaves thus from a motive of propriety, an actor who does it from necessity, or somebody who aims at facial distinction without the features suitable to that purpose. A countenance of which it can only be said that it has one nose, one mouth and two eyes, all placed in inexpressive nonentity, and which is dominated utterly by hair on and around it, may be less lost to individuality if entirely shaven. Of such seemed the visage of the dark man who calmly rode into the excitement at Overlook.

"Which way have you come?" Brainerd asked.

"From Dimmersville," was the reply.

"Did you see anybody on the way?"

"I started very early. Folks were not out of their beds in the houses—as long as there were any houses—and that is only for five or six miles, you know. After that—yes, I did see one man. A curiously excited chap. He looked tired out. He asked the distance to Dimmersville and whether the telegraph office would be open by the time he got there. Then he skurried on before I'd half answered him."

"That was known of the murder was told to the stranger by half a dozen glib tongues, and it was explained to him that he had encountered the maniacal fugitive."

"I knew there was something wrong about him," said the stranger. "It is my business to be observant."

He dismounted and hitched his horse to a tree. The dead body was shown to him. He examined it very thoroughly. All the particulars were related to him over and over. Then he drew Superintendent Brainerd aside.

"My name is Terrence O'Reagan," he said, and in his voice was faintly distinguishable the brogue of the land whence the O'Reagans came. "I am a government detective. I have been sent to work up evidence in the case of some Italian counterfeiters. We had a clew pointing to a sub-contractor here, the very man who lies there dead. Our information was that he used some of the bogus bills in paying off his gang. Now it isn't going outside my mission to investigate his death, if you don't object."

"I would be glad to have you take hold of it," Brainerd replied. "We can't bring the authorities here before noon, at the earliest, and in the meantime you can perhaps clear it all up."

The eagerly curious men had crowded close to this brief dialogue, and had heard the latter part of it. O'Reagan became instantly an important personage, upon whose smallest word or movement they hung expectantly, and nobody showed a keener interest than Gerald Heath. The detective first examined the body. The pockets of Ravelli's clothes contained a wallet, with its money untouched, besides a gold watch.

"So robbery was not the object," said O'Reagan to Brainerd. "The motive is the first thing to look for in a case of murder."

Next he found blood on the waistcoat, a deal of it, but dried by the fire that had burned the shoulders and head, and in the baked cloth were three cuts, under which he exposed three stab wounds. Strokes of a knife had, it seemed, killed the victim before he was thrust partially into the furnace.

A storm was coming to Overlook unperceived, for the men were too much engrossed in what lay there on the ground, ghastly and horrible, to pay any attention to the clouding sky. Gloom was so fit for the scene, too, that nobody gave a thought whence it came. To Gerald Heath the going out of sunlight and the settling down of dusky shadows seemed a mental experience of his own. He stood bewildered, transfixed, vaguely conscious of peril, and yet too numb to speak or stir.

Detective O'Reagan, straightening up from over the body, looked piercingly at Gerald and then glanced around at the rest.

"Is there anybody here who saw Tonio Ravelli last night?" he asked.

"I did," Gerald replied.

"Where and when?"

"At the same place where I met Eph, and immediately afterward."

"Ah! now we are locating Eph and Ravelli together. That looks like the lunatic being undoubtedly the stabber."

"And we must catch him," Brainerd interposed.

"I'll send riders toward Dimmersville immediately."

"No great hurry about that," the detective remarked; "he is too crazy to have any clear motive or any idea of escape. It will be easy enough to capture him."

Then he turned to Gerald and questioned with the air of a cross-examiner. "Did the two men have any words together?"

"No," was the ready answer, "I don't know that they even saw each other at that time. Eph went away an instant before Ravelli came."

"Did you talk with Ravelli?"

"Yes."

"About what?"

"Not about Eph at all."

"About what, then?"

Now the reply came reluctantly. "A personal matter—something that had occurred between us—an incident at the telegraph station."

"The station where Eph awakened the girl operator? Was it a quarrel about her?"

"That is no concern of yours. You are impertinent."

"Well, sir, the question is pertinent—as the lawyers say—and the answer concerns you, whether it does me or not. You and Ravelli quarrelled about the girl?"

"The young lady shall not be dragged into this. She wasn't responsible for what happened between Ravelli and me."

"What did happen between you and Ravelli?"

The two men stood close to and facing each other. The eyes of the detective glared gloatingly at an upward angle into the pale, but still firm face of the taller Gerald, and then dropped slowly, until they became fixed on a red stain on the sleeve of the other's coat. Did he possess the animal scent of a bloodhound?

"What is that?" he sharply asked. He seized the arm and smelt of the spotted fabric. "It is blood! Let me see your knife."

Quite mechanically Gerald thrust one hand into his trousers pocket and brought out the knife which he had taken back from Ravelli, whose blood was on it yet.

The storm was overhead. A first peal of thunder broke loudly. It came at the instant of the assemblage's tensest interest—at the instant when Gerald Heath was agitated with the revelation of his awful jeopardy—at the instant of his exposure as a murderer. It impressed them and him with a shock of something supernatural. The reverberation rumbled into silence, which was broken by O'Reagan.

"There'll be no need to catch Eph," he said, in a tone of professional glee. "This man is the murderer."

Again thunder rolled and rumbled angrily above Overlook, and the party stood aghast in the presence of the man dead and the man condemned.

"Bring him to the telegraph station," O'Reagan commanded.

Nobody disputed the detective's methods now—not even Gerald; and a prisoner as completely as though manacled, although not touched by any one, he went with the rest.

Mary Warriner had taken down the tarpaulin front of her shed when the men approached. In the ordinary course of her early morning doings she would wait an hour to despatch and receive the first telegrams of the day, and then go to breakfast alone at the table where the engineers and overseers would by that time have had their meals. She was astonished to see nearly the whole population of Overlook crowd around her quarters, while a few entered. But she went quickly behind the desk and took her place on the stool. The sobriety of the faces impressed her, but nothing indicated that Gerald was in custody, and her quick thought was that some disaster made it necessary to use the wire importantly.

"I wish to send a message," said O'Reagan, stepping forward.

The eyes of the girl rested on him inquiringly, and he palpably flinched, but as obviously nerved himself to proceed, and when he spoke again the Irish accent became more pronounced to hear, although not sufficiently to be shown in the printed words:—"I will dictate it slowly, so that you can transmit it as I speak. Are you ready?"

Mary's fingers were on the key and her bright, alert face was an answer to the query.

"To Henry Deckerman, president," the detective slowly said, waiting for the clicks of the instrument to put his language on the wire, "Tonio Ravelli, a sub-contractor here, was murdered last night."

Mary's hand slid away from the key after sending that and the always faint tint in her cheeks faded out and her eyes flickered up in a scared way to the stern faces in front of it. The shock of the news that a man had been slain, and that he was a man who only the previous day had proffered his love to her was for a moment disabling. But the habit of her employment controlled her and she awaited the further dictation.

"His body was found this morning in the furnace of the steam boiler," O'Reagan resumed deliberately, "where it had evidently been placed in a vain attempt to destroy it."

A shudder went through Mary, and she convulsively wrung her small hands together, as though to liberate them from cramp. But her fingers went back to the key.

"The murderer has been discovered," the detective slowly continued, and the operator kept along with his utterance, word by word. "He killed Ravelli for revenge. It was a love affair." Here the girl grew whiter still, and the clicks became very slow, but they did not cease. O'Reagan's voice was cold and ruthless. "The motive of the murderer was revenge. His name was Gerald Heath."

All but the name flushed off on the wire. Mary Warriner's power to stir the key stopped at that. She did not faint. She did not make any outcry. For a moment she looked as though the soul had gone out of her body, leaving a corpse sitting there. A grievous wail of wind came through the trees, and a streak of lightning zigzagged down the blue clouded sky.

"Go on," said O'Reagan.

"I will not," was the determined response.

"Why not?"

"Because it is not so. Gerald Heath never murdered Ravelli."

Gerald had stood motionless and silent. Now he gave away to an impulse as remarkable as his previous composure had been singular. If there had been stagnation in his mind it was now displaced by turbulence. He grasped Mary's hands in a fervid grip, then dropped them, and faced the others.

"I did not kill the Italian," he said. "He attacked me with my knife which he had stolen. In the struggle his hand was cut, but I took the weapon away from him. He quit me alive and unhurt. I never saw him again. You don't believe it? Mary does, and that is more than all else."

"The circumstances don't favor you," the detective retorted, "they convict you. You killed Ravelli because you and he were both in love with this young lady."

"Isn't it the rejected suitor who kills the other one for spite?" This was in Mary Warriner's voice, weak but still steady.

"Ravelli loved me, I know, and I drove him away. Mr. Heath loved me, I believed, and I had not repulsed him. If I were the cause of a murder—between them, it should be Ravelli who killed Gerald."

"You detested Ravelli?" O'Reagan asked with a strange bitterness.

"Yes."

"And you love Heath?"

The answer was no more hesitant than before. "Yes."

"Send the rest of my message," and the detective was boisterous. "Send the name: Gerald Heath is the murderer."

He roughly seized her hand and clapped it on the key. She drew it away, leaving his there. A blinding flash of lightning illuminated the place, and what looked like a missile of fire flew down the wire to the instrument where it exploded. O'Reagan fell insensible from the powerful electrical shock. The rest did not altogether escape and for a minute all were dazed. The first thing that they fully comprehended was that O'Reagan was getting unsteadily to his feet. He was bewildered. Staggering and reeling, he began to talk.

Mary was first to perceive the import of his utterance. He was merely going on with what he had been saying, but the manner, not the matter, was astounding.

He spoke with an Italian accent and made Italian gestures.

"You a send ze mes sage," "Heath ees ze murderer. Send a ze mes sage, I say."

Tonio Ravelli had unwittingly resumed his Italian style of English.

His plentitude of hair and whiskers was gone, and in the face thereby uncovered nobody could have recognized him in Detective O'Reagan but for his lapse into the foreign accent, and he said so much before discovering his blunder that his identification as indeed Ravelli was complete.

Who, then, was the dead man? Why, he was Eph.

Nothing but the fear of being himself condemned as a murderer of the maniac, as a part of the scheme of revenge against Gerald, induced Ravelli to explain. He had found Eph lying dead in the path after both had parted from Gerald. The plot to exchange clothes with the corpse, drag it to the furnace, burn away all possibility of recognition, and thus make it seem to be his murdered self, was carried out with all the hot haste of a jealous vengeance. Ravelli was not an Italian, although very familiar with the language of Italy, and able by a natural gift of mimicry to hide himself from pursuit for a previous crime. Overlook had been a refuge until his passion for Mary Warriner led him to abandon his disguise. Thereupon he had turned himself into Terrence O'Reagan, a detective, whose malicious work wrought happiness for Gerald Heath and Mary Warriner.

[THE END.]

TWINS.

The Undefinable Sympathy That Often Exists Between Them.

Few things are more mysterious than the undefinable sympathy which often exists between two beings who came into the world together. There can be no doubt that this sympathy is real, and not the effect of the imagination, as some have supposed. So far as it is known it does not always develop itself and when it is present its cause is not by any means understood. A very real affection generally exists between twins, and often seems to show itself in the earliest days of infancy. It is no uncommon thing for a twin who has lost his or her counterpart to pine away, drooping gradually into the clutches of the destroyer, who, in taking the other, has deprived life of all its joy. But though intense fondness is no doubt to a great extent the cause of such sad occurrences, the sympathy which twins have for one another shows itself here.

WITH MANY SAVAGE RACES

twins are hurled out of the world immediately they have entered it; others allow them to live, but only under certain conditions. In Western Africa, a little below the equator, between 10° and 12° east longitude, live a large tribe called the Ishogo. They have many peculiar customs, but none more so than their treatment of twins and of the mother who is so unfortunate as to bear them. An idea seems to exist with them that no woman ought to produce more than a single child at a time, and they seek to rectify the error by giving their duties every chance of killing one of the children before they have arrived at the age at which they are considered able to take care of themselves. This is held to be at about six years old; since that age has been passed it is thought by these people that a proper balance between life and death has again been struck, and they do not deem any further precautions necessary. Immediately the birth of twins takes place the hut in which the event happened is marked in some manner which will render it readily distinguishable from all others in the village.

Those who have read accounts of African travels will probably remember the unanimous testimony which explorers of the dark continent bear to the extraordinary loquacity of its natives. Africans talk as they breathe—unconsciously, and yet the unfortunate mother of twins is

FORBIDDEN TO EXCHANGE

a single word with any but the immediate members of her family. She may go into the forest for firewood, and perform the household work necessary for the existence of herself and her children, but it must be all done in strict silence, unless she finds herself near one of her close relatives. The consequence of this peculiar custom is that the Ishogo woman dreads the advent of twins more than anything, except, perhaps, being childless; and nothing irritates a newly-married woman more than to tell her that she is sure to become the mother of two children at a birth. When the six years of probation have dragged out their weary length, a grand ceremony is held to celebrate the release of the three captives, and their admission to the society of their fellows. At daybreak all the village is aroused by a proclamation made in the principal street and the mother and a friend take up a stand on either side of the door of the hut, having previously whitened their legs and faces. The rest of the inhabitants of the place congregate round about, and

AT A GIVEN SIGNAL

the white legged women march away from the hut, followed by the twins, the mother clapping her hands and capering about, the friend beating a lusty tattoo upon a drum and singing a song appropriate to the occasion. After this procession has gone the round of the village there is a general dance. Then every one sits down to a great feast, and eating, drinking and dancing are carried on for the rest of the day and all through the night. As soon as the next day dawns all restrictions upon the mother and her offspring are held to be removed. This ceremony is known as "M'jaz," a word which signifies both the twins and the rite by virtue of which they and their mother are admitted to the companionship of their kind.

Cases in which one of a pair of twins has felt some disturbing influence at work within him when evil was befalling his other self are numerous. As with all matters of the kind, the instances related are apt to border upon the land of fiction, but there are many which are perfectly well authenticated. Though twins are usually alike in form and feature, this is not invariably the case. The writer knows twin brothers who can scarcely be said to bear even a family likeness to one another, and whose complexions go to the very extremes of darkness and fairness. But though unlike bodily, they resemble one another mentally to such an extent that they passed from the bottom to the top of one of our great public schools side by side.

Punctuality for Railroad Trains.

Before attempting to accelerate the speed of trains railroad men would do well to exhaust all their resources in making existing trains keep to the schedule time. If the advertising agent of any through route was in a position to tell the traveling public that he would guarantee to land passengers at their destination on time nine times out of ten he would be certain to secure the greatest share of the business. Punctuality of existing trains is a luxury much more to be desired than any promise of shorter time, with the certainty of still more annoying delays. Some of the leading lines ought really to try and reform their train service in the interests of punctuality. On many roads it is quite an exceptional and surprising circumstance for a through train to get on time.

The Alternative.

The Dentist's daughter (who hears her father approaching): "Oh, dear Edward here comes my father! If he should find us together here we are lost. Oh, he is coming! You will either have to ask for my hand or—let him pull out a tooth for you."

Mr. Noddy's Surprise.

Miss Greene (just returned from a Western tour): "Oh, Mr. Noddy, we had a most delightful trip! The Yellowstone Park was beautiful, and the sunrise which I saw there was simply grand!" Mr. Noddy: "Yaas, But—aw—excuse me—but I wasn't aware that the sun ever rose in the West."

Altered Cases.

Colored Lad:—"Gemman to see ya, mum." Lady of the house (at breakfast): "Very well, John; show him into the parlor." John: "Oh! but it's the gemman come to sweep the chimney." Lady (much nettled): "Then show him up the chimney."

Due to Carelessness.

She: "It must have been an awful storm to blow away the lighthouse." Cholly: "Terrible, my dear; but it could have only been through carelessness that there was a lighthouse in such an exposed place."—(LIFE.)

An Appeal for Mercy.

Wife: "Tom, I must have some money to pay what I owe at the hair-store. I owe for a skeleton-bang, and a switch, and a— Husband: Clara, spare me the hair-owing details."