

A DEAD RECKONING.

CHAPTER XV.

Gerald Brooke having relieved his "mate" Lucas at the signal-box, and having satisfied himself that his lamps were properly trimmed and set for the night, sat down in his box to read. The night duties at Cinder Pit Junction were not of a very onerous nature. The last passenger train from Cumberhays, which also carried the mail, passed at eight-thirty; and the last train to that place till the arrival of the morning mail, at a few minutes past ten o'clock. In the course of the night two or three trains of mixed merchandise and minerals passed through without stopping, and these, together with a train from the coleries bound for the South, comprised the whole of the nocturnal traffic. Thus it fell out that Gerald had plenty of spare time on his hands, and always brought a volume with him to help to while the long dark hours away.

The signal-box, the entrance to which was reached by a flight of eight or nine steps, stood on a small space of cleared ground by the side of the line. A little way back was a low embankment covered by a hedge, overhadowed here and there by an umbrageous beech or elm, beyond which the open fields stretched far and wide. Few places could be more solitary and deserted; not a house, not a habitation of any kind was within ken; but by day a haze of smoke in the distance told of life and labor not far away.

The last train from Cumberhays had passed more than an hour ago, the next one would be the train going the reverse way. Gerald sat reading, but with his ear on the alert for the ting of the telegraph bell which should tell him when the coming train had passed Mellingfield, the nearest station south, five miles away. All at once he was startled by the sound of someone coughing, evidently just outside his box. It was a sound so unexpected and surprising in that lonely spot and at that hour of the night that he sprang to his feet, while his nerves began to flutter strangely. Next moment there came a loud rapping at the door, as it might be with the handle of a walking-stick. Gerald opened the door at once, and then he saw a portly middle-aged man, dressed in black, with a white cravat and spectacles—to all appearance a clergyman—standing at the foot of the steps and gazing blandly up at him.

"My good man," said the stranger, in unctuous but well-bred accents, "I am a stranger in these parts, and am sorry to say that I have lost my way. I want to get to a friend's house at Overbarrow; no doubt you can put me in the right road for doing so?"

"You must cross the line—" began Gerald.

"My good man," interrupted the stranger, "I am somewhat deaf, and cannot hear what you say. I wish you would be good enough to come a little nearer. With my defective eyesight, I dare not trust myself upon these steps of yours."

Gerald stepped down without hesitation. "You must cross the line," he began again in a somewhat louder key, "and about twenty yards farther on you will find a gap in the hedge."

"Yes, yes—go in the hedge, I understand," responded the other eagerly.

"And after that you will find a footpath which will bring you to the high-road. Then—"

Not a word more spoke Gerald. A soft velvet cloth of some kind was suddenly thrown over his head, while at the same instant the man who had mentioned firmly from behind, and a cord with a running noose was drawn tightly round his legs. The attack was so sudden that he was powerless to make the least resistance, and in half-a-dozen seconds he found himself as helplessly a babe. Then a corner of the cloth that enveloped his head was raised, and the man said in his most oily tones: "My friend, if you have any regard for life you will neither cry out nor attempt to make the least resistance. Be obedient and do as you are bid, and you shall be as good as dead."

As if to add emphasis to that warning, Gerald was lightly rapped on the knuckle with what he could feel to be the chilly barrel of a pistol. Then, with a man on each side of him holding him by an arm, he was conducted to the background; and having been planned with his hands as they were bound firmly to it with several folds of thin cord. The cloth which still enveloped his head was fastened loosely round his throat, so as not to impede his breathing; but his voice would have been smothered in it had he even been in a position to call for help.

He had no means of ascertaining the number of his assailants, but as far as he could judge there must have been three or four of them. He was lost in a maze of the wildest conjectures as to what the object of the attack could possibly be. Apparently none of the gang had recognized him as Gerald Brooke, the man for whose capture so large a reward was still unpaid. Yet why then had they made him a prisoner? What object was to be gained by his capture? Never in his life had he felt so utterly perplexed. He could hear an eager conversation going on a little distance away; but all sounds now came dull and muffled to his ears. As already stated, the gang had previously separated into two parties. Three of the men, at the head of whom was Crofton, had made their way down the branch to Cinder Pit Junction, and as nearly as they could judge, the driver of the train would be able to pull up as soon as he found himself on the wrong line of track. The other three were with the man whom Gerald had just seen, and had been detailed for the capture of the signalman, the result of which was now before him. After a little talk to the driver, the man in charge of the train was ordered to start at once took possession of the branch by the Cinder Pit Junction, and various levers, in order that it might be no hitch when the moment should arrive. He was always a servant and thoroughly acquainted with the workings of the man whom he was now assisting, and among the "profession" which he had adorned under the name of "Lardy Bill" he had learned by reason of his fondness for the clothes flash jewelry and the most clever and unscrupulous of which the great pinhead boasted; but it is pleasant to record that he had never considered it his duty to

larmes dan le voix at command when the occasion needed them, and he could choose a sob in his throat as cleverly as any low comedian on the stage. As soon as the two men were left alone, with their prisoner in the background, Lardy Bill lighted a cigarette and looked over the fence at the prisoner, and began to stroll up and down the narrow clearing on which the box was built. Slinky was too nervous to follow his companion's example. "As I calculate," he said, "we ought to have had that signal from Mellingfield three minutes ago now. Can anything have happened?"

"Pooh, man—what is likely to have happened?" said the other coolly. "These beggarly branch trains are nearly always late."

Half a minute later they heard the welcome ting-ting announcing that the train had just passed Mellingfield. "There are two minutes more to spare yet before she's here," remarked Slinky as he again ascended the steps and entered the box.

Presently Lardy Bill tossed away the end of his cigarette, and crossing to his prisoner, examined his bonds and satisfied himself that they were still tight. "You must be a little more comfortable," he said, "and you'll manage here by yourself all right."

"Right you are," responded the other. "As soon as ever the train's past, I shall cut the wires, and then make a bolt of it, and wait for you fellows at the cottage."

"Nothing more was said. Lardy Bill started at a quick pace down the branch, while Slinky re-entered the box.

Neither of them had the slightest suspicion that for the last ten minutes or more all their actions had been watched by an unseen witness, but such was the case. When Clara Brooke, to her intense dismay, discovered that not her husband, but a stranger, was the occupant of the box, she felt for a little while as if her heart must die within her. Then she became aware of two dusky figures standing a little distance away, whom she rightly concluded to be the other members of the gang; but still her husband was nowhere to be seen. She had arrived on the spot almost immediately after Gerald had been bound to the tree, but the night was too dark to admit of her seeing him from that distance. She felt at once that she must get around to where the signal-box stood, on the opposite side of the line, and if it were possible, approach near enough to the man to overhear their conversation, and by that means discover what had become of her husband. No sooner was she thought formulated in her mind, than she began to put it into practice. Still keeping in the shelter of the hedge that ran parallel with the line, she sped as fast as her feet could carry her to a point some forty or fifty yards farther down the line, far enough, as she judged, to be out of the range of vision of any one who might be on the lookout at the box. Here, after drawing her shawl over her head—she had discarded her bonnet some time before—she broke through the hedge, was across the line in three seconds, and after a few pushing through the hedge on the opposite side, she turned back in the direction of the signal-box, and it being both now and the sun had set, she crept forward foot by foot and by the side of the line. Clara, peering through the interstices of the hedge, could see the two remaining men walking and talking together, but was unable to distinguish what they said. Not long had she watched and waited when she heard the ting-ting of the signal-box, and she knew that it was a signal of some kind, but not what its precise meaning might be. Then one of the men disappeared into the box, while the other—it was the one, she could now make out, who was dressed like a clergyman—turned, and seemed as if he were marching directly towards her. Terror-stricken, she fled back again to the shelter of the hedge bank, expecting every moment to feel a hand laid upon her shoulder. But nothing coming, she braced again to level her eyes with the top of the bank; then, to her surprise, she saw that the man seemed to be carefully examining the trunk of a tree some little distance away. She strained her eyes in the endeavor to see what he could possibly be about, and then suddenly her heart gave a great bound, and she knew that she was being followed. She saw a flash of divination, Clara knew that it was her husband who was gazing upon her. Her breath fluttered on her lips like a bird trying to escape, and she set her teeth hard on the flesh of her arm, to stifle the cry that rose involuntarily from her heart.

After a few seconds the man went back and uttering a few words to his comrade, he appeared to look for leave of him, and starting down the branch, was quickly lost to view; the other at once went back into the box. Now was Clara's opportunity.

Half a minute later she was by her husband's side. Laying a hand softly on his arm, she said in a low voice: "Gerald, the train has just passed. Some sounds came back to her, and then she discovered, what the darkness had hid from her, that her husband's hand and face were closely muffled. She trembled but skilfully fingers quickly untied the knots and removed the covering. Gerald gave a great gasp of relief, as he drew a deep inspiration, and then, looking at her, he whispered: "You will find a knife in my outside pocket." In a minute from that time he was a free man.

Slinky, waiting along in the signal-box, and treated to a view of the scene by means of which the points were opened that would turn the train on to the branch, and had satisfied himself that all was going on as he expected, both the distance and the noise signally snuffed the white light, so that the train would speed on unsuspecting to the best of time, and a man who walked a trembling dread of the hands in the dark, knew well some day he would be left alone, now that the man who had been detailed for the capture of the signalman, the result of which was now before him. After a little talk to the driver, the man in charge of the train was ordered to start at once took possession of the branch by the Cinder Pit Junction, and various levers, in order that it might be no hitch when the moment should arrive. He was always a servant and thoroughly acquainted with the workings of the man whom he was now assisting, and among the "profession" which he had adorned under the name of "Lardy Bill" he had learned by reason of his fondness for the clothes flash jewelry and the most clever and unscrupulous of which the great pinhead boasted; but it is pleasant to record that he had never considered it his duty to

SOME SILVER STANDARDS.

HOW IT EFFECTS THE CREDIT OF A NATION.

Countries Where the Basis of the Currency is Silver and They Have Some Right Debts to Pay.

Mexico is a silver standard country. She has a large national debt. The interest of \$20,687,669 is payable in London. It is not even payable in Mexico. The London indebtedness is greater than the Mexican indebtedness.

Guatemala is a silver standard country. Of her debt, \$887,700 is owed abroad.

Honduras is a silver standard country. Practically the whole of her debt is owed abroad, and not a cent of interest has Honduras been able to pay since 1872.

Nicaragua is a silver country. She owes \$285,000 in London, on which she has been obliged to default payment of the interest.

Salvador is a silver country. She owes \$254,000 in London.

Paraguay is a silver country. She declared herself bankrupt to her foreign creditors in 1885 and issued new bonds in exchange for old ones at just about 50 cents on the dollar. Paraguay has just defaulted the interest on the half of her debt which she had not previously repaid. She owes now in Europe \$836,550, with defaulted interest amounting to over \$765,000.

PERU-BOLIVIA-CHINA.

Peru is a silver country. She had a foreign debt of \$31,579,080, with arrears of interest amounting to \$22,998,651. Being utterly unable to pay, the European bondholders had decided to them in exchange all the states' railways, guano deposits, mines and lands for a period of sixty-six years.

Bolivia is a silver country. Her "external" debt to foreign corporations is \$2,000,000 bolivianos. The debt owed at home is \$428,705 bolivianos. Forty per cent of the customs dues at Arica are law seized by the foreign bondholder.

China is a silver country. It is a matter in the memory of every citizen that the money to pay China's war indemnity was raised by a loan in Europe. The Japanese commission has just gone to London to collect it. Her February debt of \$28,500,000 payable in gold, and her customs revenue is to-day mortgaged in terms to foreign syndicates. The United States pays in gold and borrows at 3 per cent. The United States has a debt of \$8,000,000, payable in silver, 80 per cent in interest.

JAPAN-INDIA-RUSSIA.

Japan, the most prosperous of the silver countries, is paying at the rate of 7 per cent for a foreign indebtedness of \$2,110,112 yen. The bulk of her debt is owed to the United States. Her citizens cost her 5-1/2 per cent per annum. Japan's financiers favour the adoption of a gold basis.

India is on a silver basis. Of a total debt of \$1,908,307,000, \$27,354,398 rupees, or \$113,792 is foreign debt owed to England. Sixteen million pounds sterling a year must be paid to the United States. The bulk of her debt is owed to the United States. Her citizens cost her 5-1/2 per cent per annum. India has stopped the coinage of silver in order to get upon a gold basis and relieve herself of the yoke that was yearly growing heavier.

Russia is on a silver basis, but she has been forced into an indebtedness of \$1,000,000,000 rubles. Russia was forced to ask permission of foreign bankers before she went to war. Russia is about to adopt the gold basis.

INNOCENT.

THE RETORT ADROIT.

Little 5-year-old Jennie's mother had a little church, leaving her and her baby sister with her grandmother after a while grandma got weary and put the baby to bed. Then she suggested that it would be nice if Jennie also, with her mother.

"I don't want to yet, grandma," said the little girl.

But see how nicely little sister has grown! Her grandma urged.

"Oh, well, replied Miss Jennie, she ain't old enough yet to realize that it's not dark!"

MAN IN DISTRESS.

A whole family suffering. A dull aching of nerve or muscle, or the acute pains of neuralgia, toothache or lumbago makes life a misery. But Nervine—nervine pain cure—will relieve all these. Nervine is powerful, penetrating, and effectual.

FOR SICK WOMEN.

Has your doctor failed to cure you? Then try Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People. It will cure you of all ailments, and give you a new lease of life.

LETTER FROM THE RECTOR OF THE QUEBEC HIGH SCHOOL.

Dear Doctor Levers—I should like to add another testimonial to the number of your Quikcure which I have been using. I have been troubled with a good deal lately with Boils, and tried Quikcure. It can be described its effect as magical in about half a minute after application. I felt as though I had never been troubled at all, and was completely well in two days. Wishing you every success with your valuable discovery, I remain, yours very truly,

Signed, T. Anstie Young, Rector, High School, Quebec.

TOY SOLDIERS.

The majority of the tin soldiers sold in this country are manufactured at Wurtenberg, where some of the best artists are employed in their designing. The painting of the figures is done by women at their own homes.

DREADFULLY NERVOUS.

Gentle—L is dreadfully nervous and for relief, took your Karl's Clover Root Tea. It quieted my nerves and strengthened my whole Nervous System. I was troubled with Constipation, Kidney and Bowel trouble. Your Tea soon cleaned my system so thoroughly that I rapidly regained health and strength. Mrs. S. A. Sweet, Hartford, Conn. Sold by all druggists.

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Dr. J. A. McDowell, New York, writes: "I have used your Salada in many cases of indigestion, and it is a most valuable remedy. It is sold by all druggists."

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Central Business College. Toronto—Gerrard and Yonge Sts.

Manitoba Home Products. The Canadian Pacific Railway will run Three Excursions to Manitoba on June 29, July 6 and 20.

Ontario, 28.00 To any part of Manitoba. Tickets Good for 60 Days. See the Winnipeg Exhibition, July 19 to 24.

Peerless Machine Oil. Their best for Wear—stands hot weather. Ask for Peerless Oil. Dealers all sell it. It's their best customer. It's just what you need. The Queen City Oil Co., Ltd., 300 Water Street, Toronto. Use our Mica, Grades or Gem. Ask for Grade.

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Some lives are like Horseshoes the more worn the brighter! Busy wives who use SAPOLIO never seem to grow old. Try a cake...

Doctors' Bills Are High Don't Pay Them YOU SAY HOW? Keep your feet warm and dry. Be like all sensible people and wear the NEW Patent Sleeper Flexible Insole IN COMBINATION WITH GORK

For Sick Women. Has your doctor failed to cure you? Then try Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People. It will cure you of all ailments, and give you a new lease of life.

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