

MURDER OR ACCIDENT?

I.

The village of Oakworth was, in the expressive language of that oracular personage the oldest inhabitant, "a straightforward place." The straightforwardness of the primitive people seemed to an outsider to consist of a downright skepticism of the honesty of anyone who did not wear his heart on his coat sleeve. It was a law of the villagers to make any fresh comers give a very straight account of his antecedents even to the very minutest details. 'Tis true that things were very straightforward in the village. The daily lives of the men seemed to consist in slouching from their dismal cottages to the still more dismal pit at one end of the day, and from the pit to the cottages, and from the cottages to the village alehouse, at the other end of it. There was hardly room for the smallest divergence from the straight track in the life which these people lived.

It seems to be an inevitable law of human progress that the susceptibilities of such people should receive a great shock at some time or other. The shock came to Oakworth in a very simple manner. One day there slouched over the mill a young man who succeeded in getting employment at the only colliery which the village boasted. He carried his head down—like a full ear of corn. His coming was rather an inopportune one—for him. It was the dull season in the village. For a long time there had not even been a scandal to discuss, and the conversations at the alehouse were getting sadder and wearisome.

When the day's work was done the people crowded round the new hand, and poured upon him all manner of questions. The stranger stood it good-temperedly for some time, and then told them in pretty plain Saxon that his name was John Oldcastle, but that anything and everything else which he might possess was his affair, and not theirs.

From that moment John Oldcastle was a marked man in that village. When his name was mentioned the men wagged their heads suspiciously, and women declared that a man who could not tell them whether he was married or not was equal to any villain.

So John had rather a warm time of it in that village—or, perhaps, a better way of expressing a hard fact would be to say that he had a very cool time of it. The men would have nothing to do with him, and the women scandalized him.

John Oldcastle was glad to be left alone. He did his work like a man, and the shrewd manager, thinking that a collier who did not go to the village alehouse was worthy of confidence, made him his deputy. In doing this the shrewd manager erred—as he afterward found to his cost. It was gall and wormwood to the villagers to see John Oldcastle wielding the authority of deputy manager, and they resolved to wait their time, in the hope that, even in their sleepy village, something would turn up which would overthrow the anticipations of the stranger.

In every village there are the elements of tragedy. Sometimes they consist of one woman and two men; sometimes of two women and one man. In a case of this sort tragedy generally comes in the shape of a wronged and deserted wife, who appears upon the scene of action just in time to prevent her truant husband from re-entering into the bonds he has sought to break in another quarter. Not so with John Oldcastle. He never had a wife, so it was impossible for one to come upon him at an inopportune moment and point a terribly accusing finger at him. But the tragedy consisted in his prospective hopes of having a wife at some time in the near future. The manager, Mr. Harding, had a daughter—a fair, bright, joyful, little soul. Her sympathy had gone out toward the stranger just at the time when everyone seemed to take a pleasure in reviling him. And, as often happens, sympathy soon led her out of her depths, and made her wonder whether she was being led.

One night, about twelve months after his advent in the village, John met Miss Harding making her way over the bleak moor toward her father's house. Of course it was an accident. Lovers generally do meet by the purest of accidents, but somehow John had ready-made a speech—a very important speech—which he had been thinking about all day. Now was the time for its delivery, and his honest heart quivered, and the rising moon showed to Kate that his face was blanched as he thought of the stupendous possibilities connected with his speech.

"Kate, I am a rough sort of fellow. The way I have been treated by everyone except you and your father since I came here has not helped to make me any smoother. But, believe me, Kate, I am an honest man."
"I never doubted that," she replied, and her eyes looked confidently upon the stalwart form which was trembling beside her.
"Would you believe me if I told you that I am honest in my love for you, Kate?" he asked, and his tongue faltered. Somehow the speech he had thought so much about did not sound altogether as he expected it would sound. He raised his ponderous hand and laid it almost gently upon her shoulder. She, with the natural intuition of a woman, felt that this was only a preliminary movement, but she did not make any protest.
She laughed lightly, and said in a low, sweet voice: "I might believe it."
"Might believe it! Is that all?" he asked, and his sense of disappointment crept into his voice.

"Well, I would believe it," she added.
His arm went further round her shoulders. Of course this too was only an accident—at any rate, it was as much an accident as their meeting on the dark moor.
"Kate, may I love you? Can I hope that you will love me in return?"
If Kate Harding had stood there another moment it is more than likely she would have answered the questions in the affirmative. But while her answer literally quivered on her lips they were startled by a sound close to them.

"Good-evening," was all the newcomer said, but the simple words made her reply: "No, I cannot give you that hope."
John Oldcastle and Kate Harding walked toward the manager's house in silence. They parted almost in silence, but when John was walking toward his lodgings he muttered angrily: "If that fellow hadn't come I feel sure she would have said 'Yes' when I asked her. He has come between us—a five feet three bit of a scribbling fellow, full of collars and cuffs and dandyism. Ah, well, he's my old friend, and I must not be too hard on him, but I hate him all the same."

II.

"John, I should be glad if you will show me over the mine this afternoon. I have had a letter from the editor of a London magazine asking me to write a special article on 'Life in a Coal Mine.' You see, Harding does not care much about this sort of thing, and as you are a very old friend of mine, I would much rather trust myself to your care."

The face of the deputy manager suddenly turned pale, then, as if ashamed of it, he went red.
"What's the matter? You look as if I had asked you to show me the Devil's Cavern," said William Harrison.

The deputy manager looked down upon the miniature figure of the sub-editor.
"It's all right, Will; only I fancy I have not been feeling very well lately."

"See a doctor, my boy; that's the best advice I can give you," he said flippantly and carelessly, but John thought he could detect a jeering spirit beneath the words.
"I'll expect you round at two o'clock. So long; I'm busy now."

Punctually the two men stood at the mouth of the shaft waiting for the cage to bring up some of the miners. The dandyism of the pressman had been hidden within the dirty masses of the rough overalls which the deputy manager had given him for the occasion. He looked a most entertaining specimen of nineteenth century culture. It was evident he did not like anyone to see him in those hopeless-looking garbs.

"Be very chary; let us go down into the darkness. Here's Miss Harding, and I don't want her to see me in this rig."

The deputy manager turned in the opposite direction, and said something which would have gone a long way toward confirming the suspicions of the villagers if any had been lucky enough to hear.

The two men had spent over an hour in the gloomy abyss. By the aid of the faint glimmering of a safety lamp Harrison had jotted down a number of notes, and had sketched a few plans with which to embellish his article for the magazine.

Suddenly he closed his notebook, and turned toward his guide.

"You are most confoundingly gloomy today," he said to Oldcastle. "I can get nothing out of you except a reluctant 'Yes,' or 'No.'"

John did not trust himself to reply. His heart was rending him. He had prayed in a rough heathenish fashion to have this man given into his hand. His prayers—his curseful prayers—had, apparently, been answered, and all he could do was to reply to his many inquisitive questions in monosyllables.

"I think we had better be going," continued Harrison, who was beginning to think something was really the matter with his friend. "What's that water?"

"It's not much. Simply the water flooding one of the lower seams. We have tried to stake it up the best we can, but I'm afraid it's no go. There are thousands of tons of water down in that bit of a hole."

Harrison peeped over the hoarding into the awful depths of water. He turned aside a moment. "I say, John. You are in love. Why, you look awful. Come, now; it's no good romancing about Miss Harding. She has told me many a time that she will marry no one but a gentleman."

A blast of hell-born passion conquered the deputy manager. In a second he seized the little sub-editor and swung him over his head, and dangled him over the torrent of water.

"I—I—only mean a man who gets his living with his collar and cuffs on. I didn't mean that you were not a gentleman. Let me go."

He struggled like a child, but the immense hands held him with a terrible grip.

Then a tragedy happened. With the suddenness of a flash of lightning a fork of lurid flame shot through the pit, and the whole dark fabric trembled. John Oldcastle was knocked down by a heavy fall of roof. Either accidentally or intentionally, murderously, he loosed his grasp, and the "five feet three bit of a scribbling fellow," with his notes and his sketches which were doomed to eternal oblivion, was falling heavily through the blackness into the torrent of black water beneath.

How long John Oldcastle lay partially buried by the debris will never be known. When he returned to consciousness he felt bruised and shaken. He put his hand to his head, and when he drew it back it was covered with blood. The pit was full of stifling fumes, and he felt choked. It seemed as though he was just coming out of a horrible dream.

"Harrison, Harrison; where are you! Come along or this terrible fire-damp will kill you!" he cried as loudly as he could.

But he received no reply, except a long echo down the dark passage which sounded weird and uncanny.

Then the knowledge of the accident—or the crime—came back to him. His legs trembled so badly that he could hardly walk, but he struggled on through the dark passage, until he saw a faint gleam of light from the shaft. He looked up and saw the cage slowly rise from the ground.

"Save me! save me!" he cried, and staggered forward. He felt something in his hands, and he clutched at it desperately. Then he felt something drawing him quickly through the dense atmosphere. But it was a long time before he realized that he was clutching to the bottom of the ascending cage.

III.

When he reached the top of the shaft there was a strange sight before him. There was a crowd of women with blanched faces, and a large number of children crying piteously. He saw them peer anxiously into the faces of the four men who were in the cage, and he heard one of them turn from him and say, "That worthless fellow is saved, and my husband is among the lost."

Oldcastle knew that he was an object of decision—simply because he had been saved, and those they loved were among the

lost. If he could have looked half an hour into the future he would have preferred to be among the dead.

As he staggered from the cage he saw a little group standing close to the office of the manager.

"Aye, poor wench; it's young to dee, but it were a merciful death," said one woman, and the words fell ominously upon the ears of the young man.

"Aye, she were standing close to the mouth of the shaft, waiting for her father, when the explosion came, and it browed down a lump of the shaft on to her poor head. They say she's dead."

"Who's dead?" he asked excitedly.
"Mine own affairs," the woman replied insolently, "and be thankful you are not."

Still he staggered forward, and saw Mr. Harding kneeling upon a heap of the pit bank rubbish. Heedless of ceremony, the deputy manager pushed his way through the small crowd, saw lying dead the woman he had loved with a passion which swept everything before it.

"Oh, my God, it's Kate! Come back to me, dear!" he cried, heedless of the rough people around him.

"Get up, Oldcastle, and do not repeat those words in my hearing again. She was not dear to thee nor to any like thee," said the manager in an angry tone.

The young man hung his head in shame. The iron had entered into his soul, and he could not make any protest. The cup of his bitterness was running over. It was for this dead woman that he had murdered—oh, no, not murdered!—but allowed this accident to happen to one of his oldest friends. He was haunted by the feeling that in life perhaps she had loved the other one, and he, in his blind fury, had sanctified their love by insuring their eternal union in and through the grave whither they went in the same hour, perhaps in the same moment.

Well might he hang down his head in shame. But it did not hang down long. There was a heart still within him, and a desperate conviction that he might still redeem something of the past by giving his life in an effort to reach some of the men who were still entombed in the mine. It was a generous thought that arose out of his desperation.

"Come, lads, who will go with me in search of the missing men?" he cried in ringing tones.

The men and women opened their eyes. They knew very well that if any men were still alive in the pit they were the men who had reviled this deputy manager who was now offering to risk the dangers of the terrible fire-damp in an effort to carry them succor. The men who had staggered out from their cottages on hearing the explosion did not shrink from him now. One or two silently grasped his big hands, and in a very few minutes the cages were filled by many who were ready to sacrifice themselves for the sake of those in danger. Inspired by his courage common miners became heroes. They searched amid the blackness of the suffocating abyss, and succeeded in rescuing a dozen men from a terrible death.

The people wondered why John Oldcastle had done this deed of heroism for the sake of men who hated him, and for the sake of women who scandalized him. They did not know the tumult that was within his heart.

Early next morning the village turned out in full force. They gathered around the house in which John Oldcastle lodged. They were going to give him a right ringing cheer in acknowledgement of his heroism. They cheered and cheered, but there was no answer. One of the leaders forced his way into the small bedroom, and found the great body of the deputy manager stretched cold and still across the bed. There was a beautiful smile upon his face. He was evidently satisfied at the thought that he too would accompany Kate Harding into the land of deathless spirits. There is to this day a simple stone standing in the churchyard recording his deed of valor. This was the only tribute the people could pay to one they had wronged and misunderstood.

STRIKES IN GREAT BRITAIN.

Nearly Half the Disputes of 1892 Settled by Conciliatory Methods.

The Westminster Gazette prints the report of the labor correspondent of the London Board of Trade on the strikes and lockouts of 1892 in Great Britain. The total number was 692. Of these 345 were settled either by mutual conciliation or by mediation and sixteen by arbitration. The remainder were lost by the working men.

It will, of course, be remembered, says the Indianapolis Sentinel, that conciliation and mediation are preliminaries to compulsory arbitration as proposed by all intelligent advocates of that system. Notwithstanding the peaceable and satisfactory settlement of so large a number of these strikes, the cost of the remainder was very heavy. The weekly loss of wages is estimated at about \$2,400,000. The loss on use of capital is placed at \$95,000,000. The cost of restarting works and resisting strikes is estimated at \$1,100,000. The known amount of aid voted by other unions is \$800,000, but this is only a small proportion of the aid actually furnished. The cost alone is a very strong argument against the strike as a remedy, even if it were a successful remedy, and the lesson is having its effect on English workmen, and the conclusion of the statistician is therefore hopeful. He says "the general balance of results was against the workmen, as may always be anticipated during a period of declining trade. But there is, it seems, a growing opinion, expressed year by year, both among employers and workmen, in favor of various forms of arbitration and conciliation. That, at least, is something to be thankful for."

The "Moliagel" gold nugget, found at Mount Moliagel, Australia, in 1869, weighed 190 pounds and assayed \$45,000 in pure gold.

The common council of Steinhubel, Silesia, have elected, for the protection of the village, a night watchwoman. She is said to be stalwart and resolute and takes a motherly interest in various small boys who are out o' nights.

THE SERPENT'S POWERS.

Its Ability to Continue Without Motion and Yet Actively Alert.

The power of continuing motionless with the lifted head projecting forward for an indefinite time, is one of the most wonderful of the serpent's muscular feats, and is of the highest importance to the animal, both when fascinating its victim and when mimicking some inanimate object, as, for instance, the stem and bud of an aquatic plant; here it is only referred to on account of the effect it produces on the human mind, as enchanting the serpent's strangeness. In this attitude, with the round unwinking eyes fixed on the beholder's face, the effect may be very curious and uncanny, says the Fortnightly Review.

Ernest Glanville, a South African writer, thus describes his own experience: "When a boy he frequently went out into the bush in quest of game, and on one of these solitary excursions he sat down to rest in the shade of a willow on the bank of a shallow stream; sitting there, with his cheek resting on his hand, he fell into a boyish reverie.

After some time he became aware in a vague way that on the white, sandy bottom of the stream there was stretched a long black line which had not been there at first. He continued for some time regarding it without recognizing what it was, but all at once, with an inward shock, became fully conscious that he was looking at a large snake.

"Presently, without apparent motion, so softly and silently was it done, the snake reared its head above the surface and held it there erect and still, with gleaming eyes fixed on me in question of what I was. It flashed upon me then that it would be a good opportunity to test the power of the human eye on a snake, and I set myself the task of looking it down.

"It was a foolish effort. The bronze head and sinewy neck, about which the water flowed without a ripple, were as if carved in stone, and the cruel unwinking eyes, with the light coming and going in them appeared to glow the brighter the longer I looked. Gradually there came over me a sensation of sickening fear, which, if I had yielded to it would have left me powerless to move, but with a cry I leaped up and, seizing a fallen willow branch, attacked the reptile with a species of fury.

Probably the idea of the Icarus originated in a similar experience of some native." The Icarus, it must be explained, is a powerful and malignant being that takes the form of a great serpent and lies at night in some dark pool, and should a man incautiously approach and look down into the water he would be held there by the power of the great gleaming eyes and finally drawn down against his will, powerless and speechless to disappear forever in the black depths.

MURDERS ARE COMMON.

British Columbia Seems to Have Her Full Share of Crime.

A despatch from Vancouver says:—Murders and attempted murders are becoming common in British Columbia. The other night Wah Hun, a well-known market gardener, was shot while driving home a few miles out of Vancouver and killed, one ball entering below the heart and another in the head. The body was discovered immediately after the shots were heard, so that the highwayman had no time to commit robbery. Twenty-five cents was all the money found on the body.

The case of Hy. Higgins, of Vancouver, who "woke up and found his throat cut," is according to his sworn statement, still a unique mystery. The man will probably live, though in a precarious condition. The theory that Higgins was drunk and fell on some sharp instrument was accepted until a bloody knife was found in the cabin with a portion of Higgins' whiskers on it. Summerville, Higgins' sleeping companion, says he did not hear the slightest noise all night. Both men bear good characters.

Cholera in Europe.

An abstract of sanitary reports just issued by the United States Government, contains a number of statistics concerning the progress of cholera in European countries. In parts of Southern Russia there have been many new cases recently; Belgium has suffered somewhat, there having been 101 deaths in Liege alone during the first half July. Russia shows the heaviest mortality; in St. Petersburg there were 3,354 cases and 1,550 deaths in the month of July, and many of the provinces have suffered heavily, the figures for the warm summer months being startling. One district in Turkey reports 5,000 cases and 1,500 deaths up to the beginning of June; and in 76 villages of Galicia, during one week of last month, there were 250 deaths. The issue of London Lancet of September 8th says that during the previous week there had been 5,518 cases and 2,546 deaths in European Russia. Great Britain is entirely free from the scourge, but in Germany there has been a marked increase in the number of cases, and the Emperor has issued an edict forbidding popular gatherings or demonstrations at army manœuvres in Eastern Prussia, Canada and the United States are free.

Odd Phases of Sunstroke.

"A peculiar phase of sunstroke," says an eminent physician, "is that a subject does not succumb to the attack till some hours after it occurs. The only explanation that medical science can give is that a sunstroke consists in a disintegration of the blood corpuscles, and considerable time elapses before the disintegrated blood reaches the little nerve centre in the brain which acts as a governor on the heat system of the body. The flow of the blood finally paralyzes the heat centre, and the heat runs riot, raising the temperature of the body to a fearful height within a few minutes." As an instance of heat prostrations, the doctor cited the statistics of the British Army in India, where the great majority of sunstrokes take effect between 7 and 9 o'clock in the evening.

AN OPEN LETTER

FROM A PROMINENT PHYSICIAN.

A Remarkable Cure of Consumption in Its Last Stages—Is This Once Dread Disease Conquered?—Important Facts to All Suffering From Diseased or Weak Lungs.

ELMWOOD, Ont., Aug. 21st, 1894.

DEAR SIR:—I wish to call your attention to a remarkable cure of consumption. In March, 1893, I was called in my professional capacity to see Miss Christina Koester, of North Brant, who was then suffering from an attack of inflammation of the left lung. The attack was a severe one, the use of the lung being entirely gone from the effect of the disease. I treated her for two weeks when recovery seemed assured. I afterwards heard from her at intervals that the progress of recovery was satisfactory. The case then passed from my notice until June, when I was again called to see her, her friends thinking she had gone into consumption. On visiting her I found their suspicions too well founded. From robust health she had wasted to a mere skeleton, scarcely able to walk across the room. She was suffering from an intense cough, and expectoration of purid matter, in fact about a pint each night. There was a burning hectic fever with chills daily. A careful examination of the previously diseased lung showed that its function was entirely gone, and that in all probability it was entirely destroyed. Still having hopes that the trouble was due to a collection of water around the lung I asked for a consultation, and the following day with a prominent physician of a neighboring town again made a careful examination. Every symptom and physical sign indicated the onset of rapid consumption and the breaking down of the lungs. Death certainly seemed but a short time distant. A regretful experience had taught me the uselessness of the ordinary remedies used for this dread and fatal disease, and no hope was to be looked for in this direction. I had frequently read the testimonials in favor of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills in wasting diseases, but not knowing their composition hesitated to use them. Finally, however, I decided to give them a trial, and I am free to say that I only used them at a stage when I knew of absolutely nothing else which could save the patient's life. The test was a most severe one, and I must also admit an unfair one, as the patient was so far gone as to make all hope of recovery seem impossible. A very short time, however, convinced me of the value of Pink Pills. Although only using an ordinary soothing cough mixture along with the pills, within a week the symptoms had abated so much that it was no longer necessary for me to make daily calls. Recovery was so rapid that within a month Miss Koester was able to drive to my office, a distance of about six miles and was feeling reasonably well, except for weakness. The expectoration had ceased, the cough was gone and the breathing in the diseased lung was being restored. The use of the Pink Pills was continued until the end of October, when she ceased to take the medicine, being in perfect health. I still watched her case with deep interest, but almost a year has now passed and not a trace of her illness remains. In fact she is as well as ever she was and no one would suspect that she had ever been ailing to say nothing of having been the clutches of such a deadly disease as consumption. Her recovery through the use of Pink Pills, after having reached a stage when other remedies were of no avail, is so remarkable that I feel myself justified in giving the facts to the public, and I regret that the composition of the pills is not known to the medical profession at large in order that their merit might be tested in many more diseases and their usefulness be thus extended. I intend giving them an extended trial in the case of consumption, believing from their action in this case, (so well marked) that they will prove a curative in all cases where a cure is at all possible—I mean before the lungs are entirely destroyed.

Yours truly,

J. EVANS, M. D.

The Dr. Williams' Medicine Co.,

Brockville, Ont.

Queer Things in the Russian Army.

The Russian Army is full of funny things. Thus, the biggest fellows are detailed for duty in the body-guard regiment, "Preobrazhenski," founded by Peter the Great, and originally composed of that monarch's personal friends, all giants in their way. The Czar's family takes great pride in this regiment, and on the named day of its patron saint attends the festivities in a body, usually reinforced by foreign Ambassadors and Ministers. Then there is the Ismailowski regiment, where only fair men are tolerated, and the well-known Pawlow Guards, all of whom must have retousse noses. The regulations of the Guard Chasseurs, on the other hand, admit only dark-haired men.

A landslide in Bengal transformed a valley into a large lake, which is steadily rising

I Had Coitre



Or swellings in the neck since I was 10 years old; am now 52. I used Hood's Sarsaparilla recently and the swelling has entirely disappeared. It has been very troublesome. When I began I was feeling so discomfited with the goitre and rheumatism I felt that I would as soon be dead as alive. Whenever I caught cold I could not walk two blocks without fainting. Now I am free from it all and I can truly recommend Hood's Sarsaparilla. I received a letter from Mrs. Jennie Bigelow, now of Fremont, Mich., asking if my testimonial in behalf of Hood's Sarsaparilla was true; I replied it was, and sent particulars. I have another letter from her thanking me very much for recommending

Hood's Sarsaparilla

and stating that she also has been cured. Mrs. ANNA SUTHERLAND, Kalamazoo, Mich.

HOOD'S PILLS are the best after-dinner Pills. They assist digestion and cure headaches.