

# The Gypsy's Sacrifice

OR  
A SECRET REVEALED

They represented almost a fabulous sum. Even allowing for the loss in realization, they would supply him with a large income. He could sell them at Amsterdam. The countess or Royce would not care to prosecute him. He would be a rich man, and—he would do it. He looked at his watch. There would be time to secure the jewels and catch a train for London. He would go on, without stopping, to Holland, and then—well, His face flushed with renewed hope and pleasant anticipation; it would be a charming way of revenging himself. Royce might have the title—though that was not certain—but that gypsy vagabond of a wife of his should never wear the Landon diamonds.

He rang the bell and ordered the brougham, and his voice, though rather thick, was suave as usual.

Then he went up and packed a small portmanteau, put on his loose, fur-lined traveling coat, and sat down for a few minutes to gain coolness and courage. When in the house the jewels were kept in a small safe in the countess' dressing-room; but it was very probable that in the confusion and excitement of last night that they were, most of them, lying on the dressing-table. Even if Louise had been thoughtful enough to put them in the safe he might be able to get the key. At the worst, the thing was stronger in appearance than reality, and he could force the lock.

He waited a quarter of an hour, then, with a small black bag concealed under his loose fur coat, he went quietly along the corridor and entered the countess' dressing-room. He tried the safe; it was as he had feared—locked. Louise had put away every jewel!

He thought for a moment, then a brilliant idea struck him. He went out into the corridor and waited. Presently Louise came out of the countess' room. She started slightly as she saw him, and noticed the hectic flush on his face and his swollen eyes.

"How is her ladyship now?" he asked.

"Better, my lord," said the maid, pausing a moment with her hand upon the handle of the door.

"I am glad, very glad!" said Seymour. "Will you tell her, please, that I have to go to London at once? And—oh, Louise, I want you to lock up these rings in her ladyship's safe; I have lost the keys of mine. If you are busy I will do it."

His heart beat fast. Would she refuse to give him the key? For a second she did hesitate, then she took it from her pocket.

"Here is the key, my lord," she said.

Seymour returned to the dressing-room, unlocked the safe, and emptied the contents of the morocco-lined cases into his bag. He took everything, even such trifles as a plain gold bracelet and neck chain. The bag weighed like lead.

He went back to his room, his heart knocking against his ribs. The bell, which was rung when a carriage that had been ordered was ready, rang softly. He looked around the room, with a sigh, for he was saying good-by to Monk Towers, good-by to his title, to his character—to everything save the jewels. He clutched the bag under his arm, beneath the fur cloak, and went stealthily toward the door, though there was no special need for stealth; but it opened inward, and Jake stood before him.

He uttered no cry, but shrank back. Jake closed the door, and leaning against it surveyed the white, cowardly face with an angry glare.

"I might have known it!" he said in a husky whisper. "I thought you meant to go back on me! You was so ready and willing to agree with everything. You're a mean hand, my son, and I'm hanged if I ain't ashamed of you!"

"What—what do you mean?"

"You were off! You were going to cut."

"It's—it's a lie! said Seymour. "I was going to the bank for your money."

"Bank! At this time of night! What do you take me for? You were off; you meant to give me the slip. And why, eh? What's your little game? Ah; the diamonds! You've got 'em! They're mine, you thief!" and he advanced a step. "They're mine! She gave 'em to me!"

"Hi—ush! They—they will hear you. I have not got them. I—I was not going—that is, I was coming back to-morrow. Go away before they find you. I swear—"

Jake had been watching him closely, and saw a movement of his arm. "You swear!" he retorted in a harsh whisper. "I wouldn't believe you if you swore till you were black in the face. What's that under your arm? It's them! Give 'em here—"

He advanced and Seymour drew back, clutching the bag.

"Come—come a step nearer and I'll ring the bell, and give you into custody!" he gasped.

"Not you! Give it here, I say!"

He made a grab at the coat, but Seymour stopped back out of his reach, and with the frenzy of an ani-

mal driven to bay, struck at him. The blow fell short, but it maddened Jake.

"What! strike your own father!" he cried hoarsely. "You unnatural—"

He made a dash at Seymour as he spoke, and Seymour in attempting to escape tripped and fell—fell with a dull crash and the ring of metal; his head had struck the fender.

Jake stooped down and tore the bag away.

"Hah!" he cried exultingly. "Look here now! I knew I was right. Get up!"

But Seymour did not move. Jake bent down over him and touched him.

"He's—he's only fainted," he growled. "Confound him, it serves him right. To strike his own father!"

He went across the room and got the water bottle and poured some water on the white face; but Seymour lay motionless.

A knock came to the door, and a voice said:

"The carriage is ready, my lord."

Jake sprang to the small moderator lamp that was burning on a side table and turned it down. In doing so it fell, but noiselessly, on the thick carpet. The room was plunged in darkness.

"The carriage is ready my lord," repeated the footman.

"Very well," said Jake as smoothly as he could—and his voice, for the best of reasons, was not very unlike the one he simulated.

He waited until the man's footsteps had died away; then he knelt down, felt for Seymour, and with some little difficulty took off the fur cloak, and exchanged his ulster for it. He found and put on Seymour's hat, drew the wide collar of the fur coat up around his face, and clutching the bag under his arm as Seymour had done, opened the door and went slowly down the stairs.

A footman stood at the hall door.

"Will you have the carriage window up, my lord?" he asked.

Jake nodded, and touched his face as if he had the toothache.

The man put the window up, and held the door for a moment.

"Where to my lord?" he asked.

"The station," said Jake from under the coat collar.

The footman looked at him rather curiously, but closed the door, and the carriage started.

Jake leaned back and laughed noiselessly.

"I'll teach him to play tricks on his father," he growled. "I reckon he'll be rather wild when he comes to."

The picture of Seymour's surprise and disgust when restored to consciousness amused him for some minutes, as the brougham rolled smoothly along; then suddenly a more serious reflection came.

"I suppose the diamonds are all right," he said, and he opened the bag and held it to the window to catch the light from the back of the carriage lamps.

For a moment he was almost bewildered by the sight that met his eyes. Then his face flushed, and he gasped:

"He's cleverer than I thought! He was making off with the whole swag! And I've got it! I've got it! Hooray! Hoo-ray!"

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

An hour later, Giles, the second groom, happened to be going from the stables to the house, fancied he saw smoke issuing from one of the upper windows. The night was dark and gusty, and Giles, thinking that his eyes were playing tricks with him, and being in a hurry to join the other servants at tea, passed on, and said nothing.

Who gave the first alarm no one knew, but suddenly, as if a hundred throats were shouting it, there arose the awful cry of "Fire!"

As usual, everybody rushed hither and thither, throwing open the doors and creating a splendid draught, under which the fire flourished at once and gloriously.

In less than ten minutes from the first moment of the alarm the upper corridor was filled with smoke, through which tongues of flames protruded. Flames were also coming from the windows of the south wing, and the crackling of timber and shivering of glass mingled with the shouts and screams of the terrified household.

One of the footmen had the sense to run and ring the great bell, and its sonorous tones rose grimly above the din which added to the confusion. In an incredibly short time a mob of villagers had gathered around the place, and the butler, who was the first to recover his presence of mind, got together a band of volunteers and supplied them with stable and house buckets.

There was an enormous tank on the top of the south wing, which was supposed to be always filled with a large quantity of water available in case of fire, but though the water was there no one seemed to know how to get at it, and the only water that was thrown upon the now roaring flames was obtained from the stable taps.

The nearest fire brigade—a volunteer one—was five miles off, and though the butler had started Giles off on horseback to fetch it, an hour must elapse before it could reach the Towers.

"If only Mr. Royce was here!" groaned the butler to the rector of the parish, who had been among the first to arrive, and was working away in his shirt sleeves with him. "But both he and his lordship are away."

"The ladies are all right, of course?" panted the rector.

"Yes, yes! They were in the west wing, and I saw the countess a few minutes ago with Louise and Marion Everybody's out of the house," and he looked around at the terrified group collected on the lawn.

"I think you ought to telegraph to his lordship," said the rector.

"What's the use, sir? He has only just left the Towers for London, and by the time he got here—Lord, how it flames now!—the whole place will be gone!" and he groaned as he sprang forward, bucket in hand.

The scene baffled description. The whole of the south wing was now in flames, and the murky sky was lit up with a lurid glare, through which now and again shot up a volume of sparks and smoke, as portions of the roof and the castellated coping fell with a dull crash into the body of the fire.

Black and half mad with excitement the little band of men with frenzied zeal, leered on by the mass of spectators. At intervals, carriages and horses bearing neighbors and friends arrived, adding to the confusion, for none of them could do any more than was already being done. Servants and villagers were so mixed up in the group on the lawn that it was difficult to find the countess, or, indeed, distinguish one person from another; but at last Lord Balfarras gained her side.

She was leaning against the pedestal of a statue, her hands clasped, her white face turned toward the burning house; and, though she was certainly as calm as the statue above her, her lips moved convulsively now and again.

"Thank God, you are safe!" said Lord Balfarras. "Are all out? Lady Irene, Mrs. Landon—"

"Yes," said the countess almost inaudibly. "Yes, Madge has gone, Irene was in the next room and is here," she looked around. "I saw her—when?" and she put her hand to her brow.

Lord Balfarras looked among the crowd eagerly.

"I do not see her!" he said. "Perhaps she is with Royce or Mrs. Landon."

A servant overheard him.

"Master Royce is away, my lord," he said hurriedly.

At that moment a roar arose from the crowd; the flames had broken out in the center of the building. As they did so a light was thrown upon the windows which had hitherto been darkened by the smoke, and the roar was followed by screams and yells of "look! look! There's some one there—look!—the window!"

"My God!" exclaimed the butler seizing the rector's arm. "There is some one standing at that window—the second! It's—it's a woman! It's Lady Irene!"

The rector turned white and dropped the bucket he was carrying.

Irene was standing at the open window, her hands grasping the frame, her white face set up by the flames, which licked against the stone walls as if eager to devour her.

A shriek of agony arose above the din. It came from the countess who sprang forward, to be instantly seized by Lord Balfarras.

The horror of the situation silenced the crowd for a moment, then a score of men rushed toward the hall door; but as they reached it, it broke forth a volume of fire and smoke, through which no man could have passed alive.

"Save her! save her!" yelled the crowd. "Get a ladder, a rope—"

Some men tore to the stables and brought a ladder, but it only reached to the top of the first floor, and there were no means of climbing beyond it.

Lord Balfarras gave the countess into the charge of his wife and rushed to the house; but he could do no more than others, and stood gazing upward with an anguish which he never forgot to the hour of his death.

The white figure of Irene stood motionless in the hideous light of the flames, as if she knew that she was doomed and was resigned, and her very attitude almost drove the spectators mad.

Suddenly a shout went up "The engine! the engine!" and a lane was made through which the brigade drove the horses at a wild gallop. A hundred hands were at the fire-escape ladder, but before it could be undone and run up to the building a figure was seen to dart through the crowd, pause a moment under the window, and then dart around to the back.

For a moment the flames lit up the figure, and a cry of curiosity arose amid the shrieks and yells.

"Who is it? A gypsy?" shouted some one. "She was dressed like one," was the response. "I saw her red shawl. Where's she gone—who is she?"

No one seemed able to answer the question; and Madge, with no one to hinder her, flew around to the walled garden and through the door by which Irene and she had gone out on the morning after her arrival at the Towers.

Her face was white, but not with fear. With set lips and flashing eyes she ran through the hall and up the stairs.

"Oh, God, don't let me be too late!" she prayed. "Let me save her! Let me save her!"

A moment afterward the crowd saw two figures that were at the window. Scarcely believing their eyes they sent up a wild yell.

The flames lit up both faces, and at last Madge was recognized.

"It's Master Royce's wife!" shouted the butler. "It's her, it's her! She'll be burnt too!"

A groan arose from those who had heard him, and the men rushed the escape to the face of the building. It reared itself short of the window by half a dozen feet.

The captain of the brigade ran up the escape-ladder.

"Jump! One at a time! Jump!" Madge put her arms around Irene, who stood senseless with terror, and quite unconscious that anyone was with her.

"Irene, Irene!" she cried. "Oh, my dearest, can you do it?"

Irene seemed to awake, and clutched Madge's arm.

"You, too, Madge!" she wailed, then she hid her face on Madge's bosom and shuddered. "I cannot—I cannot! But you go! Leave me! I cannot move. Leave me, Madge! Think—think of Royce!"

A strange expression shone on Madge's white face—the look of a woman at her best, when self is slain and all her nobility of heart is in ascendant.

"I am thinking of him," she murmured. "No, I will not leave you. I have come to save you, or die with you, dear," she added simply. "If you cannot jump—"

"For God's sake come down!" shouted the captain, making a wild effort to climb up the wall, an effort utterly futile.

Madge shook her head sadly. They saw her face, calm and almost serene in the light of the flames. And then they saw her put her arms round Irene, and lift her bodily on her shoulder.

"She is going to carry her! She cannot do it!" rose the cry.

There are moments when human strength passes the natural and becomes superhuman. This was one of them.

Setting her teeth hard, Madge stepped back from the window, and was lost to the sight of the mob beneath. Slowly, feeling each step of the way, Madge carried the now senseless Irene through the corridor and into the hall. By this time the smoke was as dense as a wall. She shut her eyes and staggered on, but even as she did so she wound her shawl round Irene's head, that she might not suffocate by the smoke.

For an instant or two she lost her way in the thick, foul darkness; then a flash of flame showed her where she was, and she made for the door.

At that moment a portion of the window railing fell. It was of oak, solid, and heavy as iron. Madge felt a blow on her side and bosom, which sent her reeling against the wall; but she did not relax her hold of Irene, and staggered on again.

She reached the door. A veil of flame and smoke hid them from the howling, crying, yelling mob; then the two figures were seen standing on the threshold.

With a roar like the breaking of the sea the crowd rushed forward; but before they could reach her a horseman dashed through them, throwing them right and left, and Royce flung himself out of the saddle.

His left arm was in a sling, and bound to his side, but he caught at Madge with his right and dragged her out of reach of the flames. She still held Irene in her arms—held her in a grasp like that of a vise.

The crowd closed round them, a dozen men stretched out their hands to touch her, a hundred throats yelled "Bravo!" the women sobbing "God bless her! God bless her!"

Madge stood, her precious burden in her arms, her face turned toward the sky. Blood was streaming down it, and turning her burnt, red shawl a deeper crimson.

For a moment she seemed lost to everything, as if she had passed beyond the boundary which divides death from life and the desire of life; then she looked at Royce—Royce

clutching at her and sobbing out her name—and held Irene toward him.

"Take her," she breathed. "Take her, Royce! I have saved her—for you!"

The woman took Irene from her, and Royce put his arm around Madge, calling upon her wildly, madly.

Her head rested on his breast, and she put her burnt hands round his neck and smiled up at him peacefully, serenely; then her eyes closed, a faint shudder ran through her, and she fell forward.

(To be Continued.)

## EPIGRAMS OF REPORTERS.

### A Great Deal Said in a Very Small Space.

"A man in Maryland the other day ate fifteen dozen raw oysters for a wager. The silver trimmings on his coffin cost \$12.25."

It is impossible to state the name of the humorist who originated the above manner of describing a fatal occurrence; but it seems to be quite generally followed by American newspaper paragraphers nowadays. It is a delicate way of putting it, and reads much better than when one says: "He died amid the most horrible and excruciating agonies." The whole story is told and the reader's sensibilities are not shocked.

This style of paragraphing affords an opportunity for exercising the ingenuity. Variety, freshness, and a cheerful, not to say vivacious, facetiousness can be mingled with the briefest notices of fatal casualties that otherwise may be neglected by the reader or very briefly glanced at. Here are a few selected examples:

"A young man in Louisville examined a keg of damaged gunpowder with a red-hot poker, to see if it was good. It is believed by his friends that he has gone to Europe, although a man has found some human bones and a piece of shirt-tail about twenty miles from Louisville."

"John Smith, jun., in Nebraska, said he could handle a rattlesnake the same as a snake-charmer. The churlishness of the undertaker in demanding pay in advance delayed the funeral four days."

"Richard Strongarm, better known as the 'champion trunk smasher of Missouri,' found a box last week marked 'Dynamite. Handle with care.' 'Ha, ha!' said he, dynamite, in a scornful voice, as he seized it by the handle, braced one foot against the load, and yanked it on the platform. He never came back."

"A circus rider in Arizona tried to turn three somersaults on horseback the other day. The manager sent back to New Orleans for another somersault man."

"A man warned his wife in Chicago not to light the fire with kerosene. She did not heed the warning. Her clothes fit his second wife remarkably well."

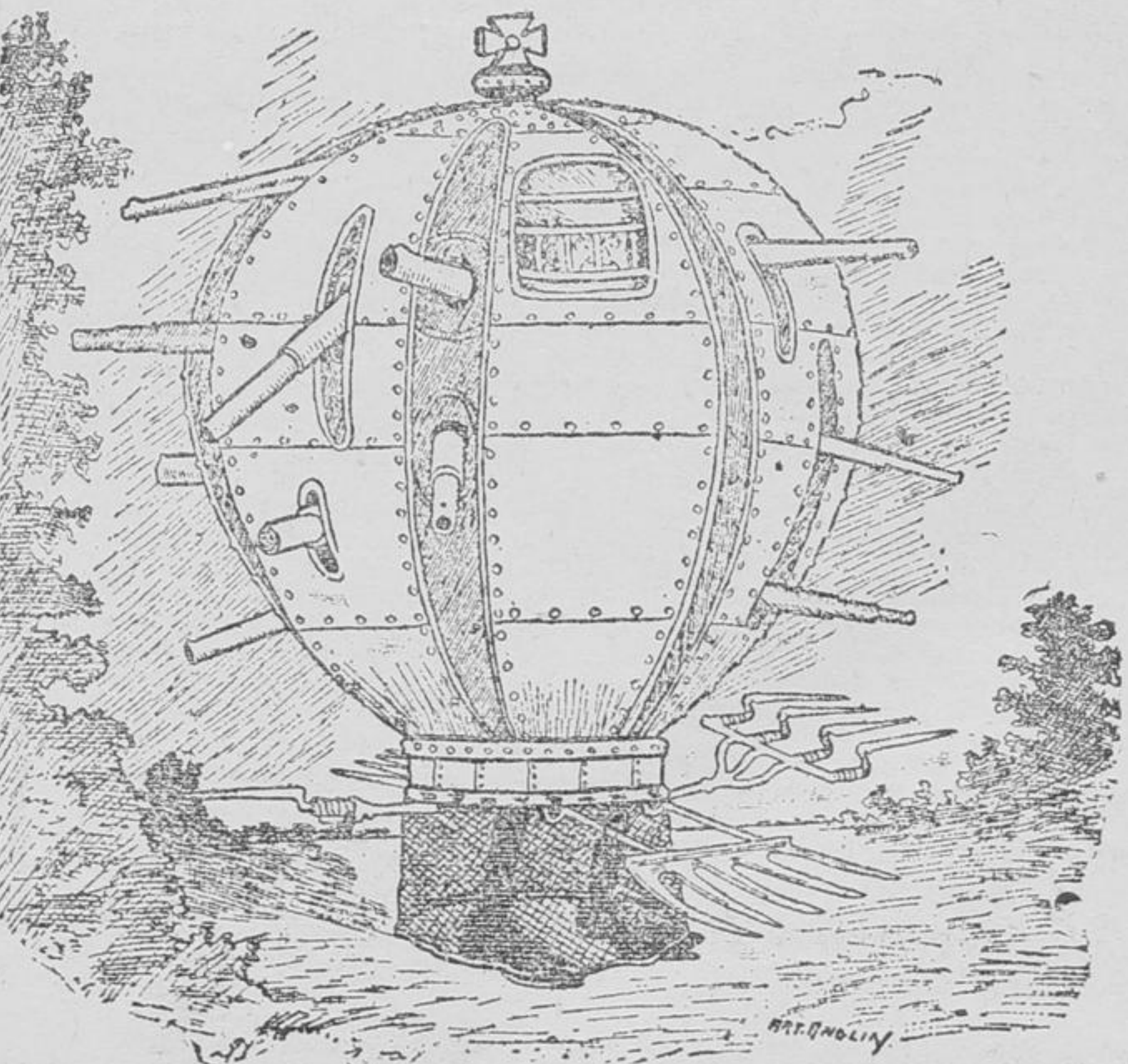
"A small boy was hanging around a circus in Brooklyn the other day, when he opened the lid of a box marked 'Boa Constrictor.' That small boy doesn't hang around any more circuses."

"A boy in Quebec disregarded his mother's injunctions not to skate on the river, as the ice was thin. His mother does not cook for as many as she formerly did."

"In Massachusetts the other day a man thought he could cross the track in advance of a locomotive. The services at the grave were very impressive."

## A MISSIONARY OAK.

In Stoke Park, near Guildford, England, is an oak tree which has a world-wide interest. Regularly once a year a missionary meeting is held beneath its branches, when people who have a desire for work in the mission fields are invited to step forward. The annual gathering has just been held, when sixteen young men and women rose from their seats as the sign of their intention to undertake missionary work. The result is that in almost every portion of the globe there are men and women who look upon this tree as the scene of the turning-point in their lives.



THE SAFETY CROWN.  
Bomb proof crown designed for the Czar by loving relatives who do not want his job. (Russian patent applied for.)