Mayfield

Or, The Strange Disappearance

CHAPTER XXII.—(Continued).

With a half-stifled shriek, Miriam probability," she said, incoherently. recognized the distinct picture of the man | iam," he urged, gently. she had seen twice before with Marian.

"What is the matter, love? Were you near falling? Give me your arm, Miriam-you need us both to help you through this storm," said Thurston, approaching her.

But with a shiver that ran through all her frame, Miriam shrank closer to Paul, who, with affectionate pride, renewed his care, and promised that she should not slip again.

So link after link of the fearful evidence wound itself around her consciousness, which struggled against it, like Laocoon in the fatal folds of the serpent. Now cold as if the blood were turned to ice in her veins, now burning as if

the house. They were expected home, and old Jenny had fires in all the occupied rooms, and supper ready to go on the table, that was prepared in the parlor.

they ran fire, she was hurried on into

But Miriam refused all refreshment, and hurried to her room. It was warmed and lighted by old Jenny's care, and the good creature followed her young mistress with affectionate proffers of aid.

"Wouldn't she have a strong cup of tea? Wouldn't she have a hot bath? Wouldn't she have her bed warmed? Wouldn't she have a bowl of nice hot mulled wine? Dear, dear! she was so sorry, but it would have frightened herself to death if the carriage had upset with her, and no wonder Miss Marian was knocked up entirely."

"No, no, no!" Miriam would have nothing, and old Jenny reluctantly left her-to repose? Ah, no! with fever in her veins, to walk up and down and up and down the floor of her room with fearful unrest. Up and down, until the candle burned low, and sunk drowned in its socket; until the fire on the hearth smouldered and went out; until the stars in the sky waned with the coming day; until the rising sun kindled all the eastern horizon; and then, attired as she was, she sank upon the outside of her bed and fell into a heavy sleep of exhaustion.

She arose unrefreshed, and after a hasty toilet descended to the breakfast parlor, where she knew the little family awaitd her.

"The journey and the fright have been too much for you, love; you look very weary; you should have rested longer this morning," said Mr. Willcoxen, affectionately, as he arose and met her and led her to the most comfortable seat!

near the fire. His fine countenance, elevated, grave, and gentle in expression, his kind and loving manner, smote all the tender chords of Miriam's heart.

Could that man be guilty of the crime she had dared to suspect him of?

Oh, no, no! never! Every lineament of his face, every inflection of his voice, as well as every act of his life, and every trait of his character, forbade the dreadful imputation!

But then the evidence—the damning evidence! Her brain reeled with the doubt as she sank into the seat he offered

"Ring for breakfast, Paul! Our little housekeeper will feel better when she gets a cup of coffee."

But Miriam sprang up to anticipate him, and drew her chair to the table, and nervously began to arrange the cups and put sugar and cream into them, with the vague feeling that she must act as usual to avoid calling observation upon herself, for if questioned, how could she answer inquiries, and whom could she make a confidant in her terrible suspicions?

And so through the breakfast scene, and so through the whole day she sought to exercise self-control. But could her distress escape the anxious, penetrating eyes of affection? That evening after tea, when Mr. Willcoxen had retired to his own apartments and the waiter had replenished the fire and trimmed the Paul. lamps and retired, leaving the young hand, he suddenly laid the volume down, love.' and went round and drew a chair to Miriam's side and began to tell her how much he loved her, how dear her happi- way. ness was to him, and so entreat her to As he spoke, she became paler than death, and suddenly and passionately exclaimed:

"Oh, Paul! Paul! do not question me! You know not what you ask."

"My own Miriam, what mean you? I ought to know."

"Oh, Paul! Paul! I am one foredoomed quire?" to bring misery and destruction upon all who love me; upon all whom I love." change, and you shall have it, Miriam,

ever used toward her.

bosom, and---

dulies."

possible! or that I were dead."

"Miriam! where are those letters you frozen lips multered: wished to show me?"

knows? They may relieve this dreadful thing! But as an act of base policy, as that she will not find courage to keep and 12 jurymen."

returned with the packet in her hand.

since my mother closed them," said not strong or assured-she felt herself Miriam, as she proceeded to open the tottering on the very verge of death or parcel.

note, without date or signature, making to engage his attention. the fatal appointment.

"This, Paul," she said, mournfully, perhaps make out the meaning." "was found in the pocket of the dress | As he did not reply, she gently sought Marian wore at Luckenough, but to take them from his hand. But at her changed at home before she went out touch he suddenly started up and threw to walk the evening of her death. Mo- the packet into the fire. With a quick ther always believed that she went out spring, Miriam darted forward, thrust to meet the appointment made in that her hand into the fire and rescued the

"Paul took the paper with eager curi- destroyed. osity to examine it. He looked at it, She began to put it out, regardless of started slightly, turned pale, shuddered, the pain to her hands. He looked as if passed his hand once or twice across his he were tempted to snatch it from her, eyes, as if to clear his vision, looked but she exclaimed: again, and then his cheeks blanched, his lips gradually whitened and separated, to deprive me of this that I must guard his eyes started, and his whole counte- as a sacred trust." nance betrayed consternation and hor-

Mirriam gazed upon him in a sort of hushed terror—then exclaimed:

"Paul! Paul! what is the matter? You be saved, if all else be lost." look as if you had been turned to stone by gazing on the Gorgon's head; Paul! parcel?" he asked in a hollow voice.

"Miriam, did your mother know this handwriting?" he asked, in a husky, almost inaudible voice.

"No!" "Did she suspect it?"

"Did you know or suspect it?"

"No! I was a child when I received it, remember. I have never seen it since. "Not when you put it in my hand, just now?"

"No, I never looked at the writing!" should not have glanced at the hand- open air. writing when you handed it to me. Why didn't you? Where you afraid to look | cold, slaty sky was thickly studded with at it? Miriam! why do you turn away sparkling stars, the snow was crusted your head? Miriam! answer me-do you over-it was a fine, fresh, clear, wintry know the handwriting?"

"No! no! how should I? But Miriam, seemed stifling, the scene hateful. your head is still averted. Your very pect the handwriting?"

"How should I? Do you, Paul?" "No, no! I don't suspect it."

was any one in particular on familiar of most urgent business in Baltimoreterms with Miss Mayfield?"

Thornton."

family?" "Ours, at the cottage."

knew her intimately?"

The youth breathed a little freer.

"Why did you ask, Paul?"

wretch, a beast to think-" "What, Paul?"

in-in-in- What are you looking at of her compliance with his wishes. me so for, Miriam?"

Paul-strange resemblances in what?" "Why, in faces." sons, also; and sometimes in fates; but half the truth, he said to himself:

we were talking of handwritings, "Perhaps failing to persuade her to fly couple alone in the parlor-Miriam sit- right, Miriam. I believe I have confined temporarily lost his self-control, his very ting on one side of the circular work- myself too much, and studied too hard. sanity. That would account for all that

tell him the cause of her evident distress. | years this spring since your brother went | burning brain! to Scotland to fetch you?"

"Yes; why?"

"Yes; why?"

March and April, 182-?"

"My own dearest, you are ill, and need gow, and dated March or April, 182-." | were the right, must be transgressed, he said, attempting to sooth her with spring, he snatched the packet from her anything but the exposure and sacrifice that gentle, tender, loving manner he hand, tore open the first letter that pre- of their brother! If he had sinned, had he sented itself, and ran his strained, not repented? Did he not suffer? What But shuddering sighs convulsed her blood-shot eyes down the lines. Half- right had she, his ward, his protege, his suppressed, deep groans like those child, to punish him? "Vengeance is "Oh, Paul! Paul!" was all she said. | wrung by torture from a strong man's mine-I will repay, saith the Lord." "Is it that promise that weighs upon heart, burst from his pale lips, and great No. Miriam must not keep her vow! debentures.

yet! I dread to see them. And yet-was dened to the pitch of doing such a for me-I will so work upon her heart "I'm a victim of the figger 13-a judge

an act of forethought, oh! never, never.

"Paul! Paul! speak to me, Paul. Tell me what you think. I have had foreshadowings long. I can bear silence and uncertainty no longer. What find you in those letters? Oh, speak, or my heart will burst, Paul."

He gave no heed to her or her words, but remained like one impaled; still, fixed, yet writhing, his features, his whole form and expression discolored, distorted with inward agony.

"Paul! Paul!" cried Miriam, starting up, standing before him, gazing on him. 'Paul! speak to me. Your looks kill me. Speak, Paul! even though you can tell suspicion! they may point to another me little new. I know it all, Paul; or nearly all. Weeks ago I received the "Just get me those letters, dear Mir- shock! it overwhelmed me for the time; but I survived it! But you, Paul-you! She arose, tottering, and left the room, Oh! how you look! Speak to your sisand after an absence of fifteen minutes | ter, Paul! Speak to your promised

"These seals have not been broken But he gave no heed to her. She was madness. But she could not bear to see The first she came to was the bit of a him looking so. Once more she essayed

"Give me those letters, Paul-I can

packet, scorched and burning, but not

"No, Paul no! You will not use force

Still Paul hesitated, and eyed the packet with a gloomy glance.

"Remember honor, Paul, even in this trying moment," said Miriam; "let honor

"What do you mean to do with that "Keep them securely for the present."

"And afterward?" "I know not."

"Miriam, you evade my questions. Will you promise me one thing?" "What is that?"

"Promise me to do nothing with those letters until you have further evidence.' "I promise you that."

Then Paul took up a candle and left the room, as if to go to his sleeping apartment; but on reaching the hall, he threw down and extinguished the light "That was most strange that you and rushed as if for breath out into the

The night was keen and frosty, the night; at another time it would have in-"No, Paul, I do not know it-do you?" vigorated and inspired him; now the air

The horrible suspicion of his brother's voice is changed. Miriam! what mean criminality had entered his heart for the you? Tell me once for all. Do you sus- first time, and it had come with the shock of certainty. The sudden recognition of the handwriting, the strange revelations of the foreign letters, had not They seemed afraid to look each other only in themselves been a terrible disin the face; and well they might be, for closure, but had struck the whole the written agony on either brow; they "electric chain" of memory and associaseemed afraid to hear the sound of each tion, and called up in living force many other's words; and well they might be, an incident and circumstance heretofore for the hollow, unnatural sound of either strange and incomprehensible; but now only too plain and indicative. The whole "It cannot be! I am crazy, I believe. of Thurston's manner the fatal day of Let me clear my-oh, Heaven! Miriam! the assassination-his abstraction, his did-was-do you know whether there anxious haste to get away on the plea Business that never was afterward heard "No one out of the family, except Miss of; his mysterious absence of the whole the deliberate conscience. night from his grandfather's deathbed— "'Out of the family'-out of what provoking conjecture at the time, and the fresh wind fanned his fevered brow; unaccounted for to this day; his hag-"Was-did-I wonder if my brother late the next morning; his incurable sorrow; his habit of secluding himself "I do not know; I never saw them in upon the anniversary of that crime-and looked at, was the letter Thurston had written Marian to persuade her to ac-"No matter, Miriam. Oh! I was a company him to France, in the course of which his marriage with her was repealedly acknowledged, being inciden-"There are such strange resemblances tally introduced as an argument in favor

Yet Paul could not believe the crime "To find your meaning. In what, ever premeditated-it was sudden, unquarrel, in a fit of jealousy, rage, disap-

with him to France, he had attempted "Were we? Oh, true. I am not quite to carry her off, and being foiled, had table bending over her sewing, and Paul I am really out of sorts; never mind me! had seemed so strange in his conduct on the other side with a book in his Please hand me those foreign letters, the day and night of the assassination and the morning after."

Miriam was unfolding and examining There was agony—there was madness them; but all in a cold, stony, unnatural in the pursuit of the investigation. Oh, pitying Heaven! how thought and grief "Paul," she asked, "wasn't it just eight surged and seethed in aching heart and

mother-Miriam's promise to bring the "Wasn't it to Glasgow that he went?" criminal to justice! Would she-could she now abide by its obligations? Could "Were not you there together in she prosecute her benefactor, her adopted brother, for murder? Could her hand pride of place to shame and death? No, "Because all these foreign letters no, no, no! the vow must be broken, directed to Marian are postmarked Glas- must be evaded; the right, even if i With a low, stifled cry, and a sudden heaven offended-anything! anything! your mind, Miriam? Cast it out; you drops of sweat gathered on his agon- She must! she cannot fulfill it; impossibilities are not ized forehead. Then he crushed the let- the moral sense, slow, measured, disters together in his hand and held them passionate, as the regular fall of a clock's "Oh, Paul! would heaven it were im- tightly, unconsciously, while his start- hammer. "I will myself prevent her; I ing eyes were fixed on vacancy and his will find means, arguments and persua- Mr. Williams. sions to act upon her. I will so appeal "In a fit of frantic passion, anger, to her affections, her gratitude, her com- "only I'm a victim." "Oh! do not ask me, Paul! not yet! not jealousy-even he might have been mad- passion, her pride, her fears, her love

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her vow." She will! she will! responded AN EXTRAORDINARY PRIZE COMPE-

And so he walked up and down; vainly purgatory of his inner life.

(To be continued).

WESTERN ASSURANCE REPORT.

Annual Statement, Shows Company to be Enjoying Prosperity.

The annual statement of the Western Assurance Company will be found in another part of to-day's issue, and will be seen to be one that does much credit amounts to \$1,742,020.42. The liability Northwest. for unearned premiums on unexpired "Once more, yes Why do you in- be raised to hurl him down from his risks is estimated at \$1,322,183.46. By deducting this sum from the reserve it is seen that there is a surplus over capital and all liabilities amounting to \$419,- commissioner of Canada and organizer 836.96. The fire premiume during the of farmers' institutes. year amounted to \$2,888,590.34, and the The Union Trust Company is to be marine premiums to \$705,764. The fire congratulated on securing Mr. Hodson for losses were \$1,547,906.20, and the marine this position, as his mere connection losses \$665,157.57. The excellent list of with their land business will undoubtedassets which is published in the annu- Is secure the confidence of the entire al statement shows that almost one-third farming community of the country. of them consist of municipal bonds and

THE 13 SUPERSTITION.

"Nothin' much," the convict said,

"Victim of what?"

TITION.

In the usual run of prize competitions vainly the sparkling stars glanced down only two or three lucky persons get anygard and distracted looks upon returning from holy heights upon him; he found thing for their efforts. The best feature no coolness for his fever in the air, no about the prize competition which the sedative for his anxiety in the stillness, Maclean Publishing Company have inno comfort for his soul in the heavens; augurated in connection with THE each other's company but twice in my now the damning evidence in these let- he knew not whether he were indoors BUSY MAN'S MAGAZINE, is that everyters! Among them, and the first he or out, whether it were night or day, body gets a reward for his or her work. summer or winter, he knew not, wrap- To him or her will be offered one of ped as he was in the mantle of his own three unique prizes,-a four years' course sad thoughts, suffering as he was in the at any Canadian university or educational institution with all expenses paid, While Paul walked up and down, like a free trip around the world, or one a maniac, Miriam returned to her room thousand dollars in gold. In addition, to pace the floor until nearly morning, there will be a great many more prizes, when she threw herself exhausted, upon which can easily be won by any comthe bed, fell into a heavy sleep, and a petitor. These are over and above a intentional, consummated in a lover's third time, doubtless from nervous ex- reward, in the shape of money paycitement or prostration, suffered a repe- ment, to everybody who enters the com-"Why, then, so there are—and in per- pointment, madness! Stumbling upon tition of her singular vision, and awoke petition. The MacLean Publishing late in the morning, with the words, Company, through whose enterprise "perform thy vow," ringing in her ears. THE BUSY MAN'S MAGAZINE is being pushed rapidly to the front among present-day periodicals, are perhaps better known to the public as the publishers of Canadian trade newspapers. All interested in this competition should write for particulars to the nearest office of the MacLean Publishing Co.,

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We published in another section of And Miriam's promise to her dying to this progressive company. The year's this paper the advertisement of the transactions resulted in \$86,340.12 being Union Trust Company. This Company devoted to dividends, and \$133,254.69 ad- has large holdings of land along the ded to the reserve fund, which now line of the Grand Trunk Pacific in our

The Union Trust Company has securea for the management of its Lands Department the exceptionally able services f Mr. F. W. Hodson, formerly live stock

The plans of the Union Trust Company for sale of lands, colonization, settiement, etc., are most unusually helpful especially to the settler with small capilal. Their scheme is a general and far-"What's the matter, my man?" asked reaching one and it will certainly pay anyone contemplating taking lands up in the Northwest to communicate with them.

> Too many men pray for the things they are too lazy to work for.