

# THE CRIMINAL'S CONFESSION

OR, SYBIL BERNER'S  
VINDICATION

CHAPTER IV.—(Continued).

"And for Nelly's, too, sir. See how she stands and looks up into your face, waiting for you to 'cide, just as if she understood all that I was axin of you, which of course she do."

"Not a doubt of it," assented the captain.

At that moment the messengers who had been dispatched for shutters and mattresses returned with the articles, and set them down before Captain Pendleton.

"Now, my men," said the captain, "arrange one of the mattresses upon the shutter, and assist me to lay my wounded friend upon it."

Ready hands obeyed this direction, and the faintly breathing body of Lyon Berners was laid down in comparative ease.

The same service was performed for poor young Munson, who was badly injured, and also quite unconscious.

"Now, my men, this poor negro has reason to believe that the body of his mistress may be found in the bottom of that vault; I want you, therefore, to go to work as fast as you can, and remove all the rubbish that has fallen into it, even down to the floor," was the next order given by the captain.

And the men seized their picks and resumed their digging with renewed energy.

"Joe, stay here by your master and this poor fellow; and occasionally wet their lips with this brandy and water while I go and see to the clearing out of the vault," said Captain Pendleton; and, leaving Joe in charge of the wounded men, he followed the workmen to the ruins to urge them to the greatest expedition, adding as a reason for haste: "It is time that Mr. Berners and Munson should be taken to my house, and placed in bed, to receive proper medical attention. But I cannot consent to leave this spot even to attend to them, until I find out whether the body of Mrs. Berners is really under the ruins."

Thus exhorted, the men worked with tremendous energy, and soon dug away all the pile of rubbish, and laid the depths of the vault open to the torchlight. But there was nothing to be seen but the damp and slimy walls and floor, and the little heaps of broken stones and fallen plaster in the corners.

"Not there! Well, then, I didn't know whether I was a-hoping or a-fearing to find her there, or whether I'm glad or sorry now at not finding her there," said Joe, who in his excessive anxiety had at length deserted his post behind the wounded men, and hobbled up to the opened vault.

"You should be glad, for now you have no evidence of her death; but, on the other hand, good reason to hope that she is somewhere alive and well," said Captain Pendleton.

"That's so, too, Marster Capping. But only see what a little story-teller Nelly is!"

"It was her master she scented, and she found him."

"Yes, but she tried to make me believe as her mistress was down there also. And look how she sticks to the story! There she is down there, still running round and round, like she was crazy, and anuffing at all the corners!"

"Never mind Nelly, Joe. Come along, now. We must take your master and the other poor fellow on to my house. It should have been done before this. I am sorry for this delay, which has been so fruitless," said Captain Pendleton, as he led the way back to the spot where he had left the injured victims of the explosion.

"Marster Capping," said Joe, as he hobbled after Pendleton, "I have got two horses tied up there in the woods, if they haven't been frightened at the blowing up, and done broke loose; and I have got a wagon down by the roadside, if so be as you would like to convey my wounded marster and the 'other gemplan that a way."

"No, Joe; the jolting of a wagon might be fatal to them in their present condition. They must be carried carefully on shutters. But the wagon will be just the thing to convey the dead bodies to Blackville, where an inquest must be held upon them," answered the captain.

And he requested some of the men present to go in search of the horses, and to harness them to the wagon for the required services to the dead, while others he detained to help in care of the wounded.

When the shutters upon which Lyon Berners and Robert Munson lay were each carefully lifted by the hands of four men, and the little procession was about to start, Captain Pendleton called to Joe, saying:

"You must go with me to have your limb looked to, and also to be with your master, who will need familiar faces near him when he comes to himself."

"Yes, sir, Marster Capping, I will go. But oh, my Hebbely Lord, what will I have to tell my poor marster, when he opens his eyes and looks at me?" cried Joe, bursting into tears.

"Come, come, be a man! Stop howling, and do your duty—which is now to follow your master," expostulated the captain.

"Yes, sir, I'll do it; but I must get Nelly first. I couldn't leave her, poor

little dog, here to pine away and die in the vaults," sighed Joe, who then, lifting his voice, cried, "Nelly! Nelly!"

At the sound of his voice the little terrier ran up from the vault, and leaped upon him.

Joe stooped and picked her up in his arms, and hugged her affectionately to his bosom, as he said:

"You see, it's no use stayin' here, my poor little dog. Our mistess an't nowhere about here."

Nelly was, however, of a different opinion, and she whined and struggled to be released; and when Joe held her faster, she growled and threatened him with her teeth.

"Can't help it, my little darling. Our mistess an't nowhere round, and it an't no use your stayin' here to grieve yourself to death among the ruins. You've got to go along with me—Owtch! you little devil, you!" exclaimed Joe, suddenly breaking off in his discourse, and dropping the dog; who, having found that all her efforts to release herself had been in vain, had made her little teeth meet in the fleshy part of the negro's hand.

"Was there ever such a vicious little beast?" cried Joe, as he hobbled away, sucking the blood from his wounded member. "Now she may stay there for me. I don't care if she do pine herself to death, agrawatin' little brute!"

And so, grumbling and growling, he hobbled after the little procession that was now well on its way through the thicket.

Meanwhile little Nelly ran back into the vault, and recommenced her irrational investigations.

The hour of the night wore on. The men who had been sent in search of the horses, with great difficulty found and caught them, and brought them back to the scene of the explosion. The dead bodies were bound upon their backs, and they were led through the thicket to the road, where the empty wagon was waiting. As there were five bodies and but two horses, and as only one body could be bound upon one horse at a time, it was necessary to make three trips through the thicket, before they could all be got upon the wagon. So it was a work of time and trouble to remove all the dead from the scene of the catastrophe. At length, however, the last body was bound upon the last horse and led away by the last man that left the spot.

And of all the living crowd that had filled the churchyard and surrounded the ruin, none was left but the little Skye terrier, Nelly, who was still at work in the vault.

What was she doing.

She had concentrated her attention and her energies upon one spot—a moderate-sized heap of densely-packed rubbish in one corner. She was scratching away at this heap; she had already burrowed a hole of some depth; and still she scratched away, with all her might and main, until her strength failed; and then she sat down on her hind quarters and panted until she recovered her breath; and then she recommenced and scratched away for dear life until something fell on the other side, and with a bark and bound of joy, she leaped through the aperture and ran snuffing along the damp ground. Eureka! the little Skye terrier had discovered what human intelligence had failed to do! She had found the secret subterranean passage, and now be sure she will find her mistress.

CHAPTER V.

We left Sybil sleeping on her sylvan couch, in the cavern chamber of her nameless hostess. She slept on as they sleep who, being completely conquered by mental and bodily fatigue, surrender unconditionally to Nature's great restorer.

Late in the afternoon she awoke, much refreshed in mind and body, though at first somewhat confused as to her "local habitation." But the voice of her strange hostess at once restored her memory and self-possession.

"You have slept long and well," said the girl. "I have been in here half-a-dozen times at least to look at you, and always found you fast asleep. You never even changed your position. I think you must feel much better."

"I feel very well, thank you, if only I could hear from my husband," replied Sybil.

"Always the same subject! that is stupid and tiresome. But I can tell you about your husband. He is just now at the Haunted Chapel, waiting for the constables to go away so that he may resume his search for you."

"Poor Lyon! But how do you know this?"

"Moloch, who has just come in, told me."

"Moloch? You have mentioned that name several times. Who is Moloch?"

"The lieutenant of the band, Belial is the adjutant, Satan is the captain, but we seldom see him. He is a very fine gentleman, of the very first society. I have no doubt that you have met him often in the drawing-rooms of wealth and fashion."

"Good Heaven! girl, what story is this that you are telling me?"

"The very truth. Satan is a gentleman. Belial also is no stranger to good company. Hem! they were both at your masquerade."

"Both at—?" gasped Sybil, losing her breath in astonishment.

"Your masquerade! Yes, for I tell you that they are both men of fashion and pleasure. As for poor old Moloch, he is just what he seems—a rude, rugged robber! And then there is Vulcan."

"But who are these men?" inquired Sybil, recovering her lost breath.

"I told you. Gentlemen in the drawing-room! Robbers on the highway."

"But why do you give them such diabolical names?"

"Because they are devils, each in his way! Moloch is a brutal and ferocious devil; Belial is a smooth, deceitful devil; and Satan is an intellectual and commanding devil."

"What are their right names?"

"It would be hard to tell! Each one having a score of aliases at his disposal."

"I shall be grateful for all this—but—but—my husband!"

"Oh, bother, there it is again! Always the same mew! If there's anything in the world makes me feel ill, it is a love-sick woman!" exclaimed the strange girl. But her short-lived anger quickly disappeared, and, holding out her tiny broad hand to her guest, she said:

"Come, get up and wash! There is some fresh water and clean towels, and there is a change of clothing, if you wish to have it. And here am I, to serve as your lady's maid. And when you are dressed, there will be a dinner ready for you, of which I may say that the Governor of the State will not sit down to a better one to-day."

Sybil gave her hand in token of reconciliation, and then arose from her couch of leaves. Very glad was she of the opportunity of washing and changing her dress; for of all the petty privations that were mixed up with her great troubles, she felt most the want of fresh water and clean clothes.

The girl waited on her kindly and skillfully. And Sybil would have been well pleased had she not, in taking up one of the fresh damask towels, saw on it the initials of her friend, Beatrix Pendleton. She held it up to the view of her hostess, and looked inquiringly.

"Yes, to be sure! we wanted face towels, and they brought away a dozen or so of them from a house they recently visited. But you cannot help it. I advise you to make the best of everything," said the girl, answering the look.

Sybil said not a word in reply; but she thought within herself, "I am forced to consort with thieves, and to use their stolen goods; but I will profit by nothing which I shall not make good to the owner; and so as soon as I shall be freed, I will privately send Miss Pendleton a four-fold compensation."

And thus, having satisfied her conscience, Sybil took her hostess's advice, and made "the best of everything."

When she was thoroughly renovated by a complete change of clothing, every article of which she recognized as the property of Miss Pendleton, her strange hostess conducted her into the spacious and beautiful cavern that has been already described.

There was a large round table set in the middle of the floor, covered with a fine white damask cloth, and furnished with a heterogeneous service of the richest silver plate, the most delicate Sevres china, and the coarsest earthenware and rusted cutlery. Around the table were seats as miscellaneous in quality as was the service; there were three-legged stools, stumpy logs of wood set on end, one very large stone, and one elegant piano-chair.

"We always eat our great meal of the day in this place. You would call it dinner; we call it supper, but it is all the same," said the girl.

"Oh!" exclaimed Sybil, looking in dismay at the many plates, "oh I have I got to meet all these horrid men?"

"Yes, my lady! You must meet these horrid men who have saved you! They do not often have the honor of a lady's company to supper, and they will not dispense with yours now," replied the elfin hostess, sarcastically.

A shudder ran through Sybil's frame; but she rallied all her strength to resist the creeping terror.

"These thieves are men, after all," she said to herself. "They are not beasts nor devils, as their companion calls them; they are human beings, why should I fear them?" And she spoke very cheerfully to her hostess, inquiring:

"When do you expect your companions?"

"They drop in at any time in the evening. Some of them will be here soon, and then we will have supper."

The darkening of the cave now indicated that the sun was setting. And soon the wild hostess clapped her hands and called in her pale attendant to light up the cavern. And the phantom vanished for a few moments, and then returned with two tall silver candlesticks, supporting two such large wax candles that Sybil saw at a glance that they must have been stolen from the altar of a Catholic chapel. And she shivered again at perceiving that she was the guest of the worst of outlaws—sacreligious church-robbers! But soon her attention was attracted by the splendor of the scene around, when the stalactite walls of the cavern, lighted up by the great candles, emitted millions of prismatic rays of every brilliant hue, as if they were incrustated with diamonds, rubies, emeralds, sapphires, amethysts, topazes and carbuncles, all of the purest fire.

"Splendid, is it not? What palace chamber can compare to ours?" inquired the girl, on observing the evident admiration with which her guest gazed upon the scene.

Before Sybil had time to reply there was the heavy trampling of feet near at hand, and the next moment four rough-looking men entered the cave.

Involuntarily Sybil shrank closer to her hostess, as they passed near her. But not one of them either did or said anything to alarm or offend her. Each one, in his turn, gruffly greeted her by nodding, as he pulled off his hat and threw it into a corner, and then seated himself at the table.

The elfin girl clapped her hands, and when her attendant appeared, she ordered that supper should be immediately brought in.

Meantime Sybil furtively observed the four robbers, but one of them especially fascinated her gaze, with something of the terrible fascination that the boa constrictor is said to exercise upon the beautiful birds of the Brazilian forest.

He was a great red-haired and red-bearded giant, whose large limbs and coarse features had well earned for him the nick-name of "Moloch;" and Moloch, Sybil instinctively knew this man to be. The other three were ordinary, hirsute, dirty ruffians, upon whom she scarcely bestowed a glance. Her eyes continually reverted to Moloch, from whom she could not long keep them. He was huge, ugly, brutal, ferocious; but he commanded attention, if only from the power that was within him.

But what terrified Sybil the most was this—that her own fascinated eyes at length attracted his, and he looked at her with a devouring gaze that made her eyelids fall and her very heart sink within her.

The two women—the dark and shrieking old Hecate, and the pale, cold Proserpine—now brought in the supper. And as the elfin hostess had declared, a more luxurious meal did not grace the table of the State's Governor that day. There were green-turtle soup, rock fish, ham, wild turkey, and partridges, with every variety of vegetables and of condiments. And there were pies, puddings, custards and pastries of every description. And jellies, jams, and fresh and preserved fruits, of every sort. And there were priceless wines, and fragrant coffee and tea. All these luxuries were placed at once upon the supper-table, or a side table, in full view of the company.

"We have no printed bill-of-fare," laughed Sybil's strange host; "but the fare itself is before you!"

"Let the lady be seated in the place of honor," growled Moloch, glowering at Sybil with his dreadful eyes.

"Which means the piano stool, I suppose," said the strange hostess, taking Sybil by the hand, and leading her to the seat in question.

She suffered herself to be put into it; but the next instant she was horrified by the insolence of Moloch, who deliberately arose from his seat and came around and placed himself beside her, and laid his great hand upon her shoulder.

"You are handsome," he said. "Do you know it? But of course you do. The swells have told you so a many times."

"Don't touch me!" said Sybil, shrinking from him.

"Now don't put on airs. You're one of us, you know, and so we'll lend you to the last drop of blood in our veins. Only don't put on airs; but be kind to them as are kind to you," growled the brute.

"But take your hand away—please do. I cannot bear it!" cried Sybil, shrinking further off still.

"Why, now, if you only knowed what this here hand have done in your service, you fouldn't on to it, instead o' flinging it off like it was a wasp," coaxed the ruffian, stealing his arm around her neck.

But Sybil, with a sudden and violent gesture, cast it off, and started to her feet, seizing the knife beside her as a weapon of defense.

"Lord bless your pretty little soul, what's the good of that? Why, when I was a lad, I always liked to tease the kittens best that spit and scratched and fit the most! That only makes me like you better. Come now, sit down alongside o' me, and let's be good friends," said the ruffian, throwing his arms around Sybil, and forcing her into her seat.

"Stop that, you devilish beast! Let the lady alone!" cried Sybil's nameless hostess, in a voice of authority.

"Don't be jealous, my darling," replied Moloch, tightening his grasp around Sybil's waist.

"Men! why don't you interfere? He is rude to the lady!" cried the girl, appealing to the others.

"We never meddle between other men and their sweethearts. Do we, mates?" called out one.

"No, no, no!" answered the others.

"Oh, if Satan were here!" cried the girl, in despair.

"Satan is here!" responded a voice close by.

And the robber captain stood among them as if he had risen from the earth. Moloch dropped Sybil, and covered in the most abject manner.

Sybil looked up, and turned cold from head to foot; for in the handsome, stately, graceful form of the brigand chief, she recognized the finished gentleman who, in the character of "Death," had danced with her at her own mask ball, and—the probable murderer of Rosa Blondelle!

(To be continued.)

TAXING PICTURE POST CARDS.

The Taxation Committee of the German Reichstag has accepted the proposal for taxing picture post cards. This measure, if passed at the plenary sitting of the Reichstag, will bring in a revenue of \$2,500,000. It is computed that 500,000,000 picture post-cards are annually sent through the German post-offices.

Mrs. Brown: "How would you define 'fact'?" Mrs. Jones: "I should say that fact is the ability to make your husband believe he is having his own way."

## About the Farm

HARVESTING THE TIMOTHY CROP

The man who grows timothy produces it for the market, for it is not the best thing for stock, clover or mixed hay being preferred by the large majority of careful feeders of all kinds of stock, writes Mr. W. W. Stevens. If it should be grown for home consumption, then the harvesting should begin about the time the heads are in full bloom, as you then have a nice green, sweet-smelling hay without much dust or lint. But when it is to go to market, allow it to get quite ripe before the cutting begins.

Engage ahead of the season a reliable hay baler to do your work just when you need him, if you do not own a baler yourself. With satisfactory arrangement made for the baling of hay you can start the mower, getting a few acres cut down ahead of the teams. One man and team will be sufficient to operate the mower and tedder. The tedder should be started an hour or so before you begin taking up the hay, which work must, of course, be done in weather suitable for hay making. The tedder should be used in this way for the purpose of getting all the external moisture out of the hay. This is very necessary when it is to be baled.

Two wagons and three men are usually sufficient to get the hay to the baler, as it is best to do the work in the hay field. If it is not convenient to secure teams to haul the baled hay to market, the bales may be ricked up and covered with some refuse hay or straw to protect them till time may be had to haul them to the barn or to market. It is best to sell and ship hay just as it is baled. It saves handling, which costs money, and I find no trouble in getting buyers for hay baled and shipped direct from the meadow. Care must be taken not to bale up any damp hay. It injures your trade as well as reputation.

This method is the cheapest and best when one comes to handling the timothy crop. Any sort of stacking, rick-ing or mowing away hay adds to its cost and thus reduces the farmer's profits. If you can possibly engage a man to do your baling, just the day you need him, then put up your timothy in good, large hay cocks, where it may stand some time without any serious damage. When thus put up, the cocks can be readily dragged to the baler without forking the hay in the wagon. This method does not take much more labor than to haul it to baler direct from the swath.

If there is any considerable amount of hay to handle, a good loader is an indispensable piece of machinery in the hay field. It does the hardest part of the work, and will put hay on the wagon faster than any two men will do the work under ordinary conditions. In this part of the country it is a very difficult matter to secure extra help in hay time, and the average help is never as reliable as a machine that can be made to take the place of hand work.

I had always heard that hay baled directly from the swath would sweat and mould, no matter how well cured it might be, but I know from recent experience and observation that the very best of hay can be made as above noted, the only point is to observe carefully and see that their is no external moisture on the grass when it is baled.

DESTROYING CANADA THISTLES.

Mowing twice each year, just after the flowers open, usually in June or August, will keep the plants in subjection. This will prevent the production of seeds, and thus serious injury to crops may be avoided, but it will rarely cause the death of the thistle roots except in good grass land or in wet seasons, and will therefore need to be repeated each year. It is generally as effective as pulling or grubbing twice a year. This plan is recommended for roadsides and waste land, and for meadows and pastures where the methods for complete eradication seem to be too expensive for immediate application. Canada thistle plants are often killed by mowing them just as a heavy rain sets in, late in June or early in July, when they are in bloom and the stalks are hollow. The rain, keeping the cut surface moist and filling up the hollow stalks, favors the growth of fungi, inducing decay, which often extends down to the root system.

A more effective method, especially in dry seasons, is to go over the ground once during every two weeks after the mowing in June and cut off every thistle about two inches below the surface with a hoe or spud. A spud made of a strong, sharp chisel on the end of a pitchfork handle, will be found most convenient for this work. The second year, the spudding should begin as soon as the thistles show in the spring, and should be continued through the season, although there will be few to cut after midsummer if the work has been well done. The land should be looked over occasionally each year afterward to detect and destroy plants that may spring from dormant seeds. Salting thistle plants every week or two during two successive growing seasons, in pastures where sheep have access to them, usually destroys them.

FARM NOTES.

What is more pleasant than a drive through the country in June?

Drive your work—don't let it drive you.

Scrubs in any breed are on the expense account every time.