

THE CRIMINAL'S CONFESSION

OR, SYBIL BERNER'S
VINDICATION

CHAPTER XIV.—(Continued).

Not to go home and rest, as he had been advised; there was no rest for Sybil's husband; there could be none now; he went to wander around and around her prison walls until the day declined and the sky darkened, and then indeed he turned his steps homeward, walking all the way to Black Hall, because in his mental excitement he could not sit still in carriage or saddle. There he passed the night in sleeplessness and horror. Imagination, favored by the darkness, the stillness, and the loneliness of the scene, conjured up all the ghastly specters of the future impending tragedies, and nearly drove him into frenzy. He started up from his bed and walked out into the summer night under the shining stars, and wandered up and down the wooded banks of the river until morning.

Then he returned to the house, and after a hasty breakfast, which for him consisted only of a cup of very strong coffee, he set out for Blackville.

He reached the prison before its doors were open to visitors, and he waited until he could be admitted. He found Sybil placid, peaceful, and unconscious of imprisonment and deadly peril of her life, as she had ever been. He spent an hour with her, and then he went to the hotel to see Mr. Worth.

He found the young lawyer in good spirits.

"I have made much progress, Mr. Berners. I succeeded in procuring the order for the medical examination. It is appointed for to-morrow at ten o'clock. Dr. Bright, Dr. Hart and Dr. Wiseman are the physicians authorized to make it. They have all been notified, and are to meet at the prison at the hour specified," said Ishmael Worth, as he shook hands with his visitor, and offered him a chair.

Lyon Berners warmly expressed his thanks, and sank into the seat.

"You look very ill, Mr. Berners; you look as if you had not slept for many nights. That will not do. Let me be your physician for once, as well as your lawyer. Let me advise you to take opium at night. You must sleep, you see."

"Thanks; but I think my malady beyond the help of medicine, Mr. Worth, unless it were something that should send me into the eternal sleep," said Lyon Berners, mournfully.

"Come, come; take courage! We have every reason to believe that this medical examination will result in such a report as, sent up to the governor with the new petition, will ensure her release. And then you will carry out your purpose of going with her to some foreign country. Gay France, beautiful Italy, classic Greece, good old England, are all before you where to choose," said Ishmael Worth, cheerfully.

Then they spoke of the three physicians who were to conduct the examination—Dr. Bright, who had once had charge of the State Insane Asylum, but who had recently retired to his plantation on this neighborhood; Dr. Hart, who was the oldest and most skillful practitioner in the county, having attended more families, and first introduced more children to their friends and relations than any other man in the place; and, lastly, Dr. Wiseman, the village druggist, who had taken his degree and was also physician to the county prison.

"Dr. Hart has attended Sybil's family for nearly half a century; he has known Sybil from her earliest infancy; his visit will not alarm her, though, for that matter, nothing alarms her now, not even—" He did not finish the sentence; he could not bear to utter the words that would have completed it.

Soon after he arose and took his leave. And he passed the day and night as he had passed the last and many previous days and nights.

CHAPTER XV.

The next morning he was early as usual at the prison, and, as usual, he had to wait until the doors were opened.

The news of the impending medical examination of the prisoner had been conveyed to the warden on the preceding afternoon. The prisoner and her companion had been notified of it this morning, so that when Lyon Berners was admitted to the cell he found the place in perfect order, and Sybil and Beatrix carefully dressed as if for company.

"See! we are all ready to receive our visitors, Lyon. And, oh, I am so glad to be at home again, and to give a dinner party! Like old times! Before we went on our wedding tour, Lyon!"

These were the first words Sybil addressed to her husband, as he entered the room.

Lyon Berners drew her to his bosom, pressed a kiss on her lips, and then signed to Miss Pendleton to follow him to the window.

"What does all this mean, dearest Beatrix?" he inquired.

in the expression of his fine countenance.

"Beatrix! No! I appreciate your magnanimity! And I thank you even as much as I wonder at you! But you must not make this sacrifice for us," he said.

Miss Pendleton burst into tears.

"Oh!" she said, amid her sobs, "there can be nothing in the world so precious to us as our childhood's friendships! Clement and I have played with Sybil and you since we were able to go alone! We have no parents, nor sisters, nor brothers, to bind us to our home. We have only our childhood's friends that have grown up with us—you and Sybil. Clement will resign his commission in the army; he does not need it, you know. Any more than his country now needs him; and we will let the old manor house and go abroad with you!"

"But, dear Beatrix, to expatriate yourself for us!"

"Oh, nonsense!" she said, brushing the bright tears from her blooming face. "You are trying to make this out an act of generosity on our part. It is no such thing. It is a piece of selfishness in us. It will be a very pleasant thing, let me tell you, to go to Europe, and travel about and see all the old heroic countries for a year or so."

"A year or so! Oh, Beatrix! it will not be a year or so of pleasant traveling! It will be the exile of a lifetime!"

"I don't believe it! I have more faith than that! I believe that the right shall ever come uppermost, and justice shall be done."

Sooner or later, you know! And, anyhow, Clement and myself have resolved to go abroad with you and Sybil! And you cannot prevent us, Mr. Berners!"

"I am very glad that I cannot; for if I could, Beatrix, I should feel bound by conscience to do it."

"Set your conscience at rest, Mr. Berners! It has nothing to do with other people's deeds!"

"But, dear Beatrix, you are reckoning without your host, Destiny, which now means the report of the medical examiners and the action of the governor upon it! She may not be free to go to Europe."

"I think she will," said Beatrix, cheerfully.

At that moment there was a knock from the inside of the cell.

The turnkey unlocked the door; Dr. Hart came out alone, and the door was locked after him.

Mr. Berners left the side of Beatrix, and went to meet the physician.

"Well?" inquired Sybil's husband.

"My dear sir, hope for the best. She has yet to be visited by my colleague, Dr. Bright, late of the State Insane Asylum. He is, of course, an expert in cases of insanity. His report will have more weight than mine in regard to her case. But I tell you this in confidence. I ought not to give any sort of opinion to any one at this point of the investigation."

And with a friendly shaking of hands and a polite bow, Dr. Hart went below. A few minutes passed, and Dr. Bright, who was a stranger to Mr. Berners, came up and passed to the door of the cell, which was opened for him by the turnkey in attendance.

The "mad doctor," as he was popularly called, remained more than an hour shut up with his patient.

At length he came out, bowed to the lady and gentleman that he saw waiting in the corridor, and went downstairs.

Mr. Berners would have given much for the privilege of questioning the "mad doctor;" but, as such a privilege could not be obtained at any price, he was forced to bear his suspense as well as he could.

In a few moments Dr. Bright was succeeded by Dr. Wiseman, the least important of the three medical examiners.

He saw Mr. Berners, came right up to him, and grasping his two hands with both his own, and with the tears springing to his eyes, exclaimed:

"I hope to Heaven your examination of this lady may eventuate in her release from captivity."

There was something in the delicacy of the physician's words, as well as in the earnestness of his manner, that deeply affected Sybil's husband. He pressed the young doctor's hands as he replied:

"I thank you very much for your earnest sympathy, and I need not say how devoutly I join in your prayer that this investigation may terminate in the release of my dear and most innocent wife."

The physician then passed into the cell, which was opened for his admittance, and then closed as before.

A half hour went by, and he came out again.

"I do not know what conclusion my colleagues have come to, Mr. Berners; but, for myself, I do not think this lady is, or has been for some time, a responsible agent," he said, in passing Sybil's anxious husband.

"You hold your consultation immediately?" inquired Mr. Berners.

"Yes, immediately, in the warden's private parlor, which Mr. Martin offered for our use," answered Dr. Wiseman, as he bowed and went downstairs.

Mr. Berners and Miss Pendleton were then permitted to return to Sybil's cell, to remain with her while waiting the result of the physician's consultation.

They found Sybil so fatigued from the visits that had been made her that she lay quite still and almost stupified upon her bed.

Mrs. Mossop was watching by her side; but at the entrance of Mr. Berners and Miss Pendleton she arose and left the cell.

Lyon went to the bedside of his wife and asked how she felt.

"Tired."

This was the only word she spoke, as

of his imprisoned wife, saw that the

young lawyer had many preparations to make for his sudden journey, and but little time to make them in; and so he arose and shook hands with Ishmael Worth, and bade him Godspeed in his humane errand, and left the room.

Mr. Berners returned to his most desolate home; took, by his physician's advice, a powerful narcotic, and slept the sleep of utter oblivion, and waked late on the next morning more refreshed than he had felt for many weeks past.

He visited his wife as usual, and found her in the same quiescent state of mind and body and still utterly unconscious of her situation, utterly ignorant that within a few days past the dread death warrant had been read to her, which doomed her young life to die in the beautiful month of June, now so near at hand—in the blooming month of roses, her favorite of all the twelve.

Yes, the death warrant had been duly read to her, but not one word of it all had she understood; and that was all that had been done to inform her of her real situation. If it was any one's duty to impress the truth upon her mind, provided her mind could be made capable of receiving the impression, every one shrunk from it, and prayed that to the last she might never know more of her condition than she now did.

As for the rest—the preparation of her soul to meet her Judge—what would have been the use of talking about salvation to a poor young creature driven to insanity by the horrors of a false accusation and an unjust conviction?

The best Christians, as well as her nearest friends, were willing to leave her soul to the mercy of Heaven.

She was even unsuspecting that she was destined to be a mother.

This circumstance, that so deepened the pathos and terror of her position, also invested her with a more profound and pathetic interest in the eyes of her husband.

Would she live to bring forth her child, even though the governor had spared her life so long? he asked himself, as he gazed fondly on her pale face and sunken eyes.

Would the child—perhaps destined to be born in the prison—live to leave it? And then, what must happen to the mother? And what must be the after-life for the child?

(To be continued).

A KLONDIKE WINDOW.

Six Tall Glass Jars in a Row Made One Fit for a King.

During the first rush for the Klondike gold-fields a party of five men was wrecked on the right bank of the Yukon, some distance this side of the arctic circle. Winter was coming on; but instead of putting back, they determined not to lose the ground gained, but to spend the winter there, and push on as soon as possible. "The Magnetic North" contains a description of their winter quarters.

The big cabin consisted of a single room, measuring on the outside sixteen by eighteen feet. The walls of cottonwood logs soared upward to a height of six feet, and this was magnificently increased in the middle by the angle of the roof. But before the cabin was breast high the Boy had begun to long for a window.

"When the door's shut it'll be dark as the inside of a cocoon."

"It'll be dark all winter, window or no window," Mac reminded them.

The next day the Boy came across the wooden box a California friend had given him, containing a dozen tall glass jars of preserved fruit. The others had growled at the extra bulk when the Boy put the box into the boat, but they now looked upon it kindly. One morning the Boy was found pouring the fruit out of the jars into some cans.

"What are you up to?"

"Wait and see." He went to O'Fynn, who was dish-washer that week, got him to melt two buckets of snow and wash the fruit jars clean.

"Now, colonel," said the Boy, "bring along that saw of yours and lend a hand."

They took off the top log from the south wall of the cabin, measured a two-foot space in the middle, and the colonel sawed out the piece. While he went on doing the same for the logs next below on that side, the Boy roughly chiseled a moderately flat sill. Then one after another he set up six of the tall glass jars in a row, and showed how, alternately with the other six bottles turned upside down, the thick belly of one accommodating itself to the thin neck of the other, the twelve made a very decent rectangle of glass. When they had hoisted up and fixed in place the logs on each side, and the big fellow that went all across on top, when they had fitted the little cracks between the bottles with some of the mud mortar with which the logs were to be chinked, behold a double-glass window fit for a king!

HIS HARD LUCK.

"Yes," said Mrs. Herlihy, pressing a damp handkerchief to her eyes. "He's an unfortunate man, me cousin Celia's man is. If iver there's anny chanst of a good thing he's always a little to wan side. If it hadn't been for that he'd be in his home now, instid of in the hospital, ma'am."

"Why, I understand that Timothy stepped backward off the staging and fell clear to the ground," said the district visitor, sympathetic but puzzled.

"He did," said Mrs. Herlihy, with a fresh burst of tears, "but if he'd fell a bit more to the right, there was a great pile o' bricks, an' it would have broke his fall, annyway."