

THE CRIMINAL'S CONFESSION

OR, SYBIL BERNER'S
VINDICATION

CHAPTER XXIV.—(Continued).

"Thank Heaven!" fervently exclaimed Beatrix Pendleton.

"Amen," earnestly responded her brother.

"You will go soon, Lyon?" eagerly inquired Beatrix.

"Soon? I would start instantly if I could. But there is no coach that leaves for Baltimore or Norfolk until the day after tomorrow. To-day I will give orders to my servants to pack up. Tomorrow I will ride over to Fugitt's to inquire after my child, which for its own sake must still be left in their care, I suppose. And the day after I will leave in the early coach for Baltimore. There I shall certainly be able to meet a clipper bound for Liverpool," answered Mr. Berners, speaking very rapidly.

"And in the meantime?" anxiously inquired Captain Pendleton.

"In the meantime, that is, to-day, I must give my friend Sheridan here a power of attorney to manage this estate during my absence. For you—you hold to your purpose of visiting Europe, Pendleton?"

"Oh, yes; and if you could wait a week, while I make the necessary arrangements, Beatrix and myself might accompany you; but that is too much to ask of you under the circumstances," smiled Clement Pendleton.

"I should be so rejoiced to have you both go with me, especially as the voyage is going to be a tedious one at this season of the year; but how can I delay a day while my poor Sybil, an exile among strangers, waits for me?"

"Oh, of course, you could not possibly do it. But we will follow you soon, Berners, rely upon that."

Lyon Berners pressed his friend's hand in silence, and they went to meet Minnie Sheridan, who had glided shyly and silently into the room.

She must have heard the latter part of the conversation, but without apparently understanding it; for she came forward blushing and smiling, as usual, and took her seat beside Beatrix Pendleton.

The conversation concerning Sybil ceased then. Some one started the subject of the Christmas sermon, and they talked of that until dinner was announced.

It was a much happier feast than Lyon Berners had ventured to hope for. They sat long at table. After they withdrew to the drawing-room, Mr. Berners sat the two Pendletons and the two Sheridans down to a rubber of whist, and then excused himself to them, and went out in search of Miss Tabitha Winterose.

He found that faithful creature in the housekeeper's room, sitting at a little table, drinking tea and dropping tears.

"What is the matter, Miss Tabby?" he inquired, cheerfully.

"What is the matter!" she repeated reproachfully. "Is it what is the matter you ask me, Mr. Berners; you? Ain't this Christmas Day, the first Christmas Day since ever she was born, as she hasn't passed here? And to see how you all went on at dinner, eating and drinking and laughing and talking as if she wasn't lost and gone!"

"Now, Miss Tabby, you know well enough that Mrs. Berners is quite safe."

Miss Tabby started, spill her tea, nearly dropped her cup, and gazed at him in consternation.

"I know that you know that she is safe," repeated Mr. Berners.

"I don't know nothing of the sort! How should I? And neither do you. How should you, indeed, when even I don't?" said Miss Tabby, defiantly.

"Now, my good soul, you were present when Mrs. Berners was taken through the window of the flooded prison on to the boat," said Mr. Berners.

Miss Tabby stared at him agape.

"How—how—how do you know that?" she gasped and faltered.

"My good creature, because the man who rescued her and her child and you has written and told me how he did it, and all about it."

Miss Tabby's mouth and eyes opened wider than ever.

"And is she—is she safe?" she inquired.

"Yes, she is safe, on her way to a foreign country, where I shall follow her."

"Well, my good gracious me alive! how uncommon strange things do turn out! Well, I never did hear the like to that! Well, thanks be to goodness!" ejaculated the poor woman fervently, clasping her hands.

"Now, Miss Tabby, this letter-writer tells me that he bound you by an oath never to divulge the secret of Sybil's rescue; but mark you, that he gives me the authority to release you from the oath, so that you may give me all the particulars of that event," said Mr. Berners, and then he waited for her to speak. But she kept a resolute silence.

"Come, Miss Tabby, tell me all about it," continued Mr. Berners, sealing himself to listen to the story.

"I ain't got nothing to tell you any more than I have told you already," answered the woman, doggedly.

"Why, you never told me anything!" exclaimed Lyon Berners, impatiently.

"Yes, I did, too! I told you as how the last time I seen Miss Sybil's face, or the baby's face, was when they was both a layin' side by side on the bed just before the water rushed into the broken winder; and how I myself was picked up not far from where the prison was," said Miss Tabby, stubbornly.

"Which was all a prevarication, Tabby, though to the letter true. Come. You can tell me more than that."

"No, sir; I told you that then, and I can't tell you no more now."

"But I know you can. See! This letter releases you from your oath of silence."

"No letter can release me from no oath, sir, which I took upon the Bible," persisted Miss Tabby.

"Was there ever such fanaticism!" exclaimed Lyon Berners, impatiently.

"I don't know what sort of schism fanaticism is, sir, but I know I ain't left so far to my own devices as to be let to fall into any schisms, so long as I prays faithfully into the litany every Sunday to be delivered from all schisms."

"Heaven and earth, woman! That has nothing to do with it. Here is a man writing to release you from an oath you took to him to keep secrecy on a certain event, of which it is expedient now for you to speak. He frees you from your oath, I tell you."

"Which he can't do, sir, begging of his parding and yours. If so be I took an oath, which I don't acknowledge as I did take," said Miss Tabby, cautiously, "he can't free me from it no more'n no one else. And if so be you could put me on the rack like a heathen and torter me to death, I would die a marture to the faith rayther than break my oath," snivelled Miss Tabby.

"Who the demon wants to put you on the rack, you intolerable old idiot?" exclaimed Lyon Berners, driven past his patience by her obstinacy. "Will you, or will you not, tell me all the particulars of Sybil's rescue?"

"No, sir; I will not, because I cannot without breaking of my oath," persisted Miss Tabby, with a constancy which compelled respect for her honesty, if it inspired contempt for her judgment.

"Well, I hope also that you will never mention the matter to any one else," said Mr. Berners, one little comfort mingling with his disappointment.

"That I never will, sir; but will suffer my tongue to be tored out by the roots first. If I have strength to withstand you, sir, don't you think as I shall have strength to withstand others?"

"I think it quite likely. Well, Miss Tabby, I know you understand me, whether you will divulge anything to me or not, and so I shall soon give you certain instructions as freely as if there were an outspoken confidence between us," said Mr. Berners, rising to leave the room.

"That you may do, sir, with full faith in me," answered Miss Tabby.

And then Mr. Berners left her, and returned to his guests.

Mr. Berners and his guests passed that Christmas evening, not in playing Christmas games, but in transacting important business.

The three gentlemen excused themselves to the two ladies, and leaving them to practice a new duet together on the piano, withdrew to the library, where documents were drawn up giving Lawyer Sheridan full powers to manage the state in the absence of its proprietors.

When these were duly signed, sealed and delivered, and all the details of the agency and of the voyage had been thoroughly discussed, they returned to the drawing-room.

It was now late, and the guests arose to take leave, but at Mr. Berners' earnest invitation, they consented to remain, not only for the night, but for the two days that their host would be at home.

The next morning, after an early breakfast, Mr. Berners mounted his horse and rode over to the plantation where his child had been placed to nurse. He was determined, as a man of prudence, not to divulge to the nurse the parentage of the child. He knew that to do so would start a furor of gossip and speculation that would be both unpleasant and inconvenient.

On reaching the plantation, he rode up to the gate of the substantial stone cottage belonging to the overseer, alighted, tied his horse to a post, and went up to the house door and knocked.

A rosy-cheeked girl of about twelve years of age opened the door.

"Is Mrs. Fugitt in?" he inquired.

"Yes, sir," replied the girl, stretching wide the door to admit the visitor.

Mr. Berners stepped into a very clean and comfortable room, where a woman sat with one young babe at her breast and another in the cradle beside her.

She took her foot from the rocker of the cradle and arose with the babe still in her arms to meet the stranger.

"Mrs. Fugitt?" inquired Mr. Berners.



Mrs. Tibble—I'd like a tie for my husband, something suitable for a handsome blonde man.
The Salesman—I see, something like the one I have on.

"Yes, sir; that's my name. Will you sit down? Betsy Ann, hand the gentleman a chair."

The little girl brought forward a country-made chip-bottom chair, and with a bow the visitor seated himself.

The woman also sat down, and waited in some little curiosity to find out the object of the stranger's visit.

"You have a young child at nurse?" he said.

"Yes, sir; this one that I have upon my lap. That one in the cradle is my own."

"Are you strong enough to nurse two children?" inquired Mr. Berners.

"Betsy Ann," said the woman, turning to the little girl, "call your sister Nancy 'Lizabeth in here."

The child went into a back kitchen, and returned with another child the counterpart of herself.

"There now! You two stand right up here before the gentleman."

The children joined hands and stood before Mr. Berners for inspection.

"There now, sir. You look at them." "They are very well worth looking at; a pair of stout, rosy, healthy, happy lasses, I'm sure," said Mr. Berners, smiling at them, and feeling in his pocket for some loose coins.

"Well, sir, them's my twins. I nussed 'em both myself without any help from a bottle—either a bottle for them, sir, or a bottle for myself," said the mother, proudly.

"They do you much credit, certainly," said Mr. Berners, who had now found two half-eagles.

"Well, sir, they never had a day's sickness in their lives. I showed 'em to you, sir, to prove as I could nuss two children successful."

"I'm convinced of it."

"One of 'em is named Elizabeth Ann, and the other Ann Elizabeth. The same name because they're twins, sir, only put backwards and forwards like, so as to tell one gal's name from 'l' other's. And I call 'em Betsy Ann and Nancy 'Lizabeth on week-days and work-days; and I call 'em Elizabeth Ann and Ann Elizabeth on Sundays and company days."

"Quite right," said Mr. Berners, smiling.

"And now, gals, you may go," said the mother.

"Here, my dears! Here is something to buy you a Christmas gift each," said Mr. Berners, slipping the gold coins into the hands of the children.

"There! thank the gentleman, and then run out and peel the potatoes and turnips. And be sure you don't lose your pennies," said the woman, who had no idea that the children's gifts had been half-eagles.

The well-trained little girls obeyed their mother in every particular. And as soon as they had left the room, Mr. Berners turned to the woman and inquired:

"Are those fine children your only ones?"

"I never had any but them until about three months ago, when that boy in the cradle came to put a surprise on me. Look at him, sir! Ain't he a hearty little chap for a three monther?"

"Indeed he is!" acknowledged Mr. Berners, as he turned down the coverlet and gazed at the fat, rosy babe.

"And, now," he continued, as he replaced the cover, "will you let me look at your nurse-child? I—I am its guardian, and responsible for the expense of its rearing."

"So I judged, sir, when I first saw you. The gentleman that brought the child to me, and gave me a hundred dollars with it, told me how, in about a couple of months, the guardian of the child would come to make further arrangements. And you're him, sir?"

"I am he," gravely replied Lyon Berners, as he gazed fondly down on the face of his sleeping babe, and traced in the delicate features and silky black hair and faintly drawn black eyebrows the linaments of its mother.

"Well, sir, I can tell you, for your satisfaction, that the child is in good hands."

"I have no doubt of it. And," he continued, after some hesitation, "I can tell you, for your satisfaction, that the child is all right. She was born in lawful wedlock."

"I'm glad to hear that for the child's sake, sir; though if what you tell me is true, as I suppose it is, I don't see why the parents can't own their child."

"There are good and sufficient reasons, which may be made known to you at some future time," replied Mr. Berners.

"Humph! then I s'pose it's a case of a secret marriage, that can't be acknow-

ledged yet awhile, upon account of offending rich parents, and being cut off from their property or something. I have heard of such things before now. Well, sir, I don't want to intrude on your secrets, and I know how to keep a still tongue in my head. And, as for the baby, sir, she has made her own way into my heart, and whatever her parents have been and done, I shall love and nuss her as if she was my own."

"You are a good woman, Mrs. Fugitt; and now to business. I, as guardian to that child, wish to make some definite arrangement for her support for the next two years at least."

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know Lawyer Sheridan?"

"Of course I do, sir; he drew up the papers between the colonel and my old man when my old man made an engagement with the colonel to oversee the plantation for five years."

"Very well. This Mr. Sheridan will pay you quarterly installments of money amounting to six hundred dollars a year for the support of the child."

The overseer's wife was a very simple-hearted woman, so she burst out, with her surprise:

"But that is a great deal of money, sir. More than twice too much."

"I do not think so. The child is entitled to much more, if she could use it. At any rate, that is her allowance. And here is the first quarterly payment in advance," said Mr. Berners, placing a roll of bank-notes on the woman's lap.

"But, sir, I haven't used a quarter part of what the other gentleman paid me. In truth, I only spent what I did to buy the baby's clothes, of which she hadn't a rag but what was on her when the other gentleman put her in my arms."

"So much the more reason I should advance you this money."

"Why? Because I have got so much already, sir?"

"Because you are so simple and honest. Few people would believe in such simplicity and honesty, Mrs. Fugitt."

"Then, Lord forgive 'em, sir."

"Amen. And now, Mrs. Fugitt, a last word, and then good-by. If you should ever wish to communicate with me, you may do it by inclosing a letter to Mr. Sheridan, or sending a message by him."

"Yes, sir."

"And now let me take another look at this little one."

"But there is another thing, sir: What is her name? I asked the gentleman, and he said he did not know, but you would tell me."

"Her name?" repeated Lyon Berners, as he gazed down upon the face of the sleeping child—the prison-born child—"Her name? It is Ingemisca; call her Ingemisca."

"Yes, sir," said the woman in a very low tone, for she was awed by the looks and words of the speaker—"Yes, sir; but would you please to write it on a slip of paper? It is a strange, solemn sort of a sound, and I'm sure I never could remember it."

Lyon Berners tore a page from his tablets, wrote the name in pencil, and handed it to her.

Then he kissed his infant daughter, breathed a silent blessing over her, and took his leave.

He returned to Black Hall, well satisfied with the woman in whose care he had left his child.

That afternoon he dined with his friends for the last time for many years. That evening, with their assistance, he concluded the very last business he had to transact, before leaving his home and country.

Beatrix Pendleton had been busy all day, looking up and packing up Sybil's costly jewelry, laces and shawls. Valuable as they all were they filled but a small trunk, which Miss Pendleton assured Mr. Berners he could easily put inside his great sea-chest without crowding out other things.

Beatrix Pendleton and Minnie Sheridan volunteered to remain at Black Hall for a few days after the departure of the proprietor, to see that all things were set in order.

Among the last arrangements made was that by which honest Robert Munson, the young soldier who had befriended Sybil Berners, was appointed assistant overseer of the plantation, with the use of a cottage and garden, and with a considerable salary.

All the arrangements for the voyage of Mr. Berners, and the management of the manor during his absence, were completed that evening.

The next morning Mr. Berners, accompanied by his friends, Captain Pendleton and Lawyer Sheridan, set out for Blackville, to meet the stagecoach for Baltimore.

There, at the stage office, Mr. Berners took leave of Lawyer Sheridan, but not of Captain Pendleton, who made up his mind, at the last moment, to accompany him as far as the seaport, and to see him off on his voyage.

After two days' journey, the friends arrived safely in Baltimore.

On consulting the shipping list, they found the fast sailing clipper, Dispatch, Captain Fleet, advertised to sail for Liverpool the same afternoon.

Lyon Berners, with his friend, hastened to the agent to secure his passage, which he was so fortunate as to get.

He had barely time to hurry his luggage on board before the clipper set sail.

The very last words addressed to Mr. Berners by his friend, Captain Pendleton, were these:

"Give our love to Mrs. Berners, and tell her that Beatrix and myself will follow you soon. Heaven bless you with good luck!"

(To be continued).

Riches may have wings, but poverty is seldom a quitter.

PERSONAL POINTERS.

Notes of Interest About Some Prominent People.

The favorite hobby of Dr. Elizabeth Garret Anderson, most famous of all lady physicians, is gardening.

Mr. John Bentley, of Scholes, Cleckheaton, has just retired from the choir of St. John's church, of which he has been a member for over sixty years. He entered the choir as a schoolboy at ten years of age, and is now nearly seventy-two. His grandfather and father were also members of the choir.

Justice Darling is a man of many accomplishments, as well versed in literature and art as he is in the law. In his house you will notice a picture by him which has a story attached to it. It is a landscape, and unless your host were to make the explanation you would fail to believe that it was executed with his finger! He went out to paint this particular bit of scenery, and on opening his paint-box found that he had forgotten his brushes. There was no other course but to use his finger as a paint-brush, and in this way the picture was begun and finished.

Apart from his extensive library, Mr. John Morley has no amusements whatever; but to be surrounded by his books is his ideal of happiness. He is a capital walker, but from his youth upwards games have never had any attraction for him. So considerate is he of everybody and everything that it has been said of him that if he kept a score of horses he would probably refuse to use them, because he feels so keenly for the brute creation that he will only consent to be driven on the level. The story goes that when he lived in a hilly part of Surrey he once kept a horse, but its kindly owner alighted from his carriage whenever a hill had to be ascended or descended.

Queen Alexandra possesses a tea service of sixty pieces, each piece being decorated with a different photograph which she took herself in Scotland.

A story is told of the late Sultan Burghash and Sir John Kirk, then Consul-General at Constantinople. The Sultan had a very savage chained lion, and, as a happy thought, he offered it to Sir John for Queen Victoria, reminding him that the lion formed one of the supporters of the Royal arms above the gate of the British Consulate, and that the presence of the real king of the forest would be appropriate. Alive to the jest, Sir John quickly capped it, and at the same time escaped the necessity of accepting such an unpleasant gift. "I am sure that your Highness would never make an incomplete present," he replied, "and when you are able to accompany the lion with a unicorn I shall be delighted to receive your munificent offer."

Had it not been for chance, Professor Milne might never have taken up the study of earthquakes at all. He was twenty-one years of age when Field, the American millionaire cable-layer, sent to the British School of Mines for a young man to go out to Japan. The present professor was the man selected. "When can you start? On Tuesday?" asked Field. The student responded that the time was too short to get his things together, as it was then Friday. "Look here, young man," said Field, "it only took six days to make the world, and if a whole world can be made in that time your few things can be got together in less. Leave a note with my secretary as you go out as to what salary you want." On the Tuesday the young man was on his way to Japan.

The Dowager-Duchess of Newcastle is one of the great ladies who are devoting their lives to the poor. The Duchess was told that of all the London districts Whitechapel was in greatest disrepute, owing to the exploits of Jack the Ripper. "Very well," she replied, "then I will go to Whitechapel." Since that time she has labored almost unceasingly among the poor in the East-end, making her home, for the most part of the year, at St. Anthony's House, in Great Prescott Street, in the heart of Whitechapel.

It is interesting to note that when Miss Angela Burdett-Coutts was created a baroness by Queen Victoria, thirty-five years ago, there was not a single peeress in her own right in these kingdoms, though Lady Berners succeeded to her uncle's barony very shortly afterwards. There are now no fewer than ten peeresses of the United Kingdom or of England, besides two Scottish baronesses—Lady Kinloss and Lady Gray. Baroness Clifton is the youngest, and Baroness Burdett-Coutts is the oldest peeress, in her own right.

CRIME INCREASES IN JAPAN.

Many Violent Bursts, in Which Soldiers Participate.

Gen. Terauchi, Japan's Minister of War, has issued significant instructions to the troops and reservists, urging them to maintain the dignity of the army and set an example to the nation in thrift and industry. Individual hard work and self-restraint, the Minister says, are the foundation of future military successes.

These instructions are probably prompted by the recent outbreak of violent crimes, in several cases committed by old soldiers, in which many police have been killed or wounded. Armed burglars and other malefactors are very prevalent. As an instance, on Thursday two gangs of laborers fought with daggers and revolvers near Osaka, terrorizing their village. Juvenile crime is also increasing.

She—"And to think I am the only girl you ever loved!" He—"Yes, dear." She—"And to think you thought I believed

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