

# THE CRIMINAL'S CONFESSION

OR, SYBIL BERNER'S  
VINDICATION

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

The awe-stricken women drew nearer to gaze upon the murdered man. "Grandma, he is not dead! He breathes," exclaimed Gem, whose young eyes had detected the slight, very slight motion of the man's chest.

The old woman knelt down beside the body, and began to examine it more closely. The shirt-bosom, vest, and coat front were soaked with blood, that still seemed to ooze from some hidden wound.

She hastily unbuttoned his clothing, and found a small, round, blackened bullet hole over the region of the left lung.

"Turn him over on his left side, men," she said, half rising from her knee.

As they followed her directions, the blood flowed freely both from the wound and from the mouth of the man.

"Joe, mount Fleetfoot and gallop to Blackville as fast as you can go and bring Dr. Hart, though I don't believe it will be a bit of use; but still it is our duty. And, Tabby and Libby, stop wringing of your hands and rolling of your eyes, and go upstairs and fetch down the cot bedstead to lay him on, for it stands to reason we can't carry him upstairs without hastening of his end," said the old woman, as she busied herself with stanching the wound in the chest.

All her orders were immediately obeyed.

The cot bed was made up in the corner of the room, and the wounded man was tenderly raised by the two laborers, and laid upon it.

"Now, stand out of my way, all of you, and don't ask any questions, but be ready to fly the minute I tell you to do anything," said the dame, as she stood over the injured man and still pressed a little wad of lint over the bullet hole to stanch the blood.

The other women and the men withdrew to the fireplace and waited.

"He is very nasty and uncomfortable-looking, lying here in all these stained clothes, but I am afraid to undress him, for fear of starting the wound to bleeding again, and that's the sacred truth," said Mrs. Winterose.

"No; don't move me," spoke a very faint voice, which, as she afterwards said, sounded so much as if it might have come from the dead, that the old lady withdrew her hand and recoiled from it.

"Brandy! brandy!" breathed the same voice.

"Tabby, get the brandy bottle and pour some into a glass and bring it here. Quick!" she exclaimed.

Miss Tabby, too much awed to whimper, brought the required stimulant, which Mrs. Winterose immediately administered to the patient.

The effect was good. He breathed more freely and looked around him.

"Now, be of good cheer! I have sent a man on a fast horse for the doctor. He will be here in an hour," said Mrs. Winterose, encouragingly.

The wounded man laughed faintly, as he replied.

"Why, what can the doctor do for me? I'm shot to death. I'd like to see a magistrate, or a lawyer, though."

"Would you? Then you shall, Hey! one of you men, run out to the stable as fast as you can, and see if Joe's gone. If he isn't, tell him to fetch Lawyer Closeby as well as the doctor," said Mrs. Winterose.

Both of the laborers started on the errand.

Mrs. Winterose turned to her patient. "What place is this; and who are you?" he inquired.

"Why, don't you know? This is Black Hall, and I am the caretaker."

"Black Hall!" echoed the man, starting up and gazing around him with an excitement that caused his wound to break out bleeding again. "Black Hall! Is it here that I must die? Here, and—great Heaven!—in the very room where the crime was committed! In the very room haunted by her memory!"

And, covering his face with his hands, he fell back upon the pillow.

"Tabby, more brandy!" hastily exclaimed the old lady, as she nervously pressed a fresh piece of lint into the gushing wound.

"Yes, more brandy!" he faintly whispered; "keep me alive, if possible, till the lawyer comes."

Miss Tabby brought the stimulant, and Mrs. Winterose put it to his lips.

"But, oh, this room! this fatal room! this haunted room!" he murmured, with a shudder.

"Be quiet, good man; this ain't the room where the lady was murdered," said Miss Tabby.

"And which is haunted by her ghost to this day," put in Miss Libby, who had come up to the side of the bed.

"Not—not the room where Rosa was murdered this day fifteen years ago?" murmured the man, gazing around him. "Am I delirious, then? It seems the very same room, only with different furniture."

"It is the correspondal room in this wing. To other room is in 'other wing," explained Miss Tabby.

you will do the only thing you possibly can do for me," said Mr. Blondelle, speaking faintly, with difficulty, and with frequent pauses.

"Let me examine your injuries," said the doctor, gently.

"Do so, if you must and will. But, pray, occupy as little of my precious time as possible," pleaded the dying man.

The doctor proceeded to make his examination.

When he had finished it, he made not a single comment.

"I told you so," said Mr. Blondelle, interpreting his silence. "And now give me something to keep me going until I finish my work, and then send all these women out of the room, so as to leave us alone with the lawyer; but let them supply him with writing materials first."

"I will do as you direct; but, meanwhile, shall I not send for your wife?" gently inquired the doctor.

"No; what would be the use? It will be all over with me before she can possibly get here," answered Mr. Blondelle.

The doctor did not urge the point; he probably agreed with his patient.

When he had administered a stimulant, he whispered to Mrs. Winterose to place writing materials on the little stand beside the cot, and then to take her daughters and Gem upstairs.

When the women had left the room, the doctor bade the two laboring men to retire with Joe to the kitchen, where he himself would have followed them, seeing that the rest of the house was closed up and fireless; but at a sign from the dying man he stayed, and took a seat by the bedside.

The lawyer sat between the bed's head and the little stand upon which pens, ink, and paper had been placed.

"Is it a will?" said Mr. Closeby, as he rolled out a sheet of parchment he had taken the precaution to bring.

The dying man laughed low as he replied:

"No, it is a confession. I can make it now, when it will redeem her life without ruining mine."

The lawyer and the doctor exchanged glances, but made no comment.

What Mr. Horace Blondelle's confession would be they had already surmised. What it really was will be seen presently.

The work occupied something more than an hour, for the narrator was very weak from loss of blood, and spoke slowly, faintly, and with frequent pauses, while the lawyer, at leisure, took down his words, and the doctor, from time to time consulted his pulse and administered stimulants.

Meanwhile, the three old women, with Gem, remained upstairs, gathered around the small fire in their bedroom. Awe hushed their usually garrulous tones, or moved them to speak only in whispers. Never seemed an hour so long. At length it was past, and more than past, when the door at the foot of the stairs was opened and the doctor's voice was heard calling upon them to come down.

"Is it all over?" whisperingly inquired Mrs. Winterose.

"The work is over."

"But the man, I mean."

"It is not all over with him yet. He still lives, though sinking fast."

"Don't you think he ought to have a clergyman?"

"He would be dead before a clergyman could be brought here."

This rapid, low-toned conversation took place at the foot of the stairs, out of hearing of the dying man, whose senses were fast failing.

Mrs. Winterose then came down into the room and took her seat at the bed, and from time to time bathed the sufferer's brow with her own preparation of aromatic vinegar, or moistened his lips with brandy and water.

Tabby, Libby and Gem sat around the fire. The doctor and the lawyer stood conferring in a low tone at a distant window.

Thus the death watch was kept in the silence of awe, until Miss Tabby, unable to resist her desire to do something for the sufferer, crept up to the side of the cot opposite to to which her mother sat, and "shook his sands," by asking him in a low tone:

"Is there no one in the world you would like to see, or to send a message to?"

"No—no one—but Sybil Berners—and I have written a message to—her; but—to see her—is impossible," gasped the man at intervals.

"Tabby, go sit down and keep quiet. You only worry the poor soul!" said Mrs. Winterose.

Miss Tabby complied, and the silent death-watch was resumed, and continued unbroken except by the howling of the wind, the beating of the rain, and the rattling of the leafless trees, until at length—inexplicable sound!—wheels were heard grating over the rough, neglected avenue and approaching the house.

Who could it be, coming at that late hour of a stormy night, to a house to which even in daylight and good weather scarcely a visitor ever came?

The sound of the wheels ceased before the door, and was immediately followed by a knock.

"Burglars never come in wheeled carriages," said Miss Tabby to herself, as she recovered her courage and went and opened the door.

She recoiled with a loud cry.

Every one started up, and hurried forward to see what could be the matter.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

Sybil Berners stood before them! Sybil Berners, in magnificent beauty! Sybil Berners, developed into a woman of majestic dignity and angelic grace! Yet they all knew her in an instant,



JUST TOOK A NIP.

Green—How does your dog like your new neighbors?  
Brown—It's a little early to say, Rover has had only a small piece.

The scene that followed is indescribable, unimaginable.

Forgotten was the dying man! Unseen was Lyon Berners, whose fine form filled up the doorway.

They crowded around her, they caressed her, they cried over her, they exclaimed about her, they asked her a score of questions, and, without waiting for a single answer, asked her a hundred others.

"God bless my dear old home, and all the people in it," were the first words that Sybil spoke after she was permitted to catch her breath.

"And you, my darling, you! God bless you in coming home!" fervently exclaimed the old woman.

"Now, where is my child, Mrs. Winterose? Where is my Gem?" the lady inquired, looking eagerly around the room.

"Gem, come here," said the dame.

And the beautiful young girl, who had been timidly lingering in the background, yet with some suspicion of the lady's identity, too, came modestly forward, and was silently folded in the arms of her mother.

A moment they clung thus; and then Sybil lifted the young head from her bosom, and, holding it between her hands, gazed tenderly down in the sweet face.

"My daughter! my little Gem!" she murmured. "It is but a few months since I knew that I possessed you."

"But I always knew that you were my mother. I always knew it, though no one ever told me!" sobbed Gem.

"And did you think that I had deserted you all this time, my daughter, my daughter?" inquired the lady, lingering on the last word, and tenderly gazing into her dark eyes.

"I thought you were compelled to do it, mother!"

"What! to leave you here alone, uneducated and untaught, all these long years? No, my daughter; no, no, no, I did not know that I was blessed with a daughter; I did not know that you lived, until within a few months past. Mistaken love for me, inordinate care for me, induced all those who were nearest to me to conceal your existence from me, lest if I should know it, I should compromise my safety, my liberty and life, Gem, by seeking to see you!"

"Oh, mother!"

"And they were so far right, my darling, that as soon as, at last, your father informed me of your existence, and of a necessity to bring you over to us for education, I became so impatient that I could not wait for you to be brought to me. I felt that I must fetch you, at all risks, for the sake of seeing you some few weeks earlier than I could by waiting for you over there! So here I am, my daughter!"

"But, oh, dearest, dearest mother, at what a hazard!" sighed Gem.

"I do not believe it, my darling. I do not believe, after all these years, that any one will seek to molest me for the few days that I shall remain here, even if my presence should be suspected, which will be very improbable, as I have taken and shall take every precaution for secrecy. I have travelled only by night, Gem, and this is the first time I have raised my thick veil."

"But, oh, mother!" she said, giving an alarmed look around, for she suddenly remembered that there were the doctor and the lawyer in the house; but she did not see them. They had discreetly withdrawn into the back room.

"And now, dear Gem, here is your father, who is waiting to embrace you," said Sybil.

And Lyon Berners, who had forborne to interrupt the meeting between the mother and daughter, and who was standing apart, talking in low, eager tones with Mrs. Winterose, now came forward and folded his daughter to his heart, and laid his hand upon her head and blessed her.

"But who is that?" exclaimed Sybil, in a startled tone, as she turned her eyes upon a ghastly and blood-stained form, sitting bolt upright on the cot bedstead, and staring in a death-panic at her.

At her exclamation all eyes were turned in the direction that hers had taken, and Mr. Berners looked inquir-



ADDRESS DOSSIE

—Life.

ingly towards Mrs. Winterose, who hastened to reply:

"Oh, I forgot. In my joy at her arrival, I forgot all about the poor, dying man! Sir, he is Mr. Blondelle, who owns the great Dubarry Springs up yonder. He was set upon and murdered by—the Lord only knows whom—but he was found by Joe lying in the pine woods, and with the help of two laborers he was brought here. We sent for the doctor, but he could do nothing for him. He must die, and knows it," she added in a whisper.

In the meantime, Sybil, staring at the ghastly face which was staring back at her through its glazing eyes, recognized an old acquaintance.

(To be continued.)

## PERSONAL POINTERS.

### Interesting Gossip About Some of the World's Prominent People.

The Prince of Wales is a crack shot, and is said to be one of the finest in England.

The King of Spain received a handsome legacy some time ago from one of his subjects. It amounted to 3,000,000 pesetas—which is more than \$595,000 in our money.

King Leopold of Belgium is, perhaps, the most skilful of Royal Gardeners, and is said to be prouder of his lively gardens and greenhouses—the products of his skill and care—than of any other of his possessions.

The German Emperor is said to much regret the fact that he missed being born on the birthday of Frederick the Great by three days. His father, the Emperor Frederick, was born on the anniversary of the Battle of Leipzig, in which the French troops were utterly defeated by the combined Prussian, Russian and Austrian armies.

Signor Tito Mattei, the famous composer, who is pianist to the King of Italy, started his musical career at an earlier age than is usual even with Continental musical prodigies. He was only a little over five when he gave his first concert. At eleven he was a professor of music at Rome and a member of several famous philharmonic societies, and when he was twelve, Pope Pius IX. gave him an audience and presented him with a gold medal.

Herr Kubelik, perhaps the greatest of "magicians of the violin," owes his brilliant career almost entirely to his peasant father, who, although self-instructed, not only taught all his sons to play on every instrument, but by incessant toil in his garden gave them the best available musical training. Unfortunately, the parent never lived to see his son's triumph; and, by a curiously pathetic irony of fate the very first fee the young violinist received was spent on a wreath for his father's grave.

Sir Walter Buller, the distinguished New Zealand scientist, whose death is just recorded, had an unusually versatile career. He began by editing a paper in the Maori language; at twenty-four he was a resident magistrate, at twenty-seven a judge of the Native Lands Court, and shortly afterwards he was out fighting the rebel Maoris. He was mentioned in despatches for gallantry in carrying news by night through forty miles of the enemy's country. At thirty-three he went to London as Secretary of the New Zealand Agency, and entered as a student at the Inner Temple. He was one of the few instances of a man being made a judge before he became a barrister.

When Prince Edward of Wales was a very little boy a children's party was held in the neighborhood of Sandringham, at which he was present, and during the course of the evening the hostess, to his delight, bestowed a toy sword upon her little guest. "You must tender your thanks very nicely for your present," said the Prince of Wales, who was standing by. To everyone's surprise the little Prince mounted upon a chair, and gave forth gravely, "Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you very much for my beautiful sword; I shall always value it and always wear it." His father burst into a hearty laugh. "Little beggar!" he exclaimed, "why, he speaks better than I do!"

Mr. Booker Washington, who is now the head of a great industrial training college for colored people in the United States, was born a slave. He used to carry books to school for his little mistress, but while in slavery had no schooling himself, and thought the happy children he saw in the school-house must be in Paradise. Before the Civil War, by which slavery was abolished, broke out, he used to hear his mother and the other slaves whispering together about the struggle, and their joy was very great when at last they were set free. Mr. Washington christened himself "Booker." In the school-house, after the Emancipation, he was asked his name by his master. As a slave-boy he only had one, but he thought he ought to have at least a couple, and said, on the spur of the moment, "Booker Washington," as indifferently as if he had borne the double name all his life.

## SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER.

Father (sternly): "So you've failed again in your examinations! How do you explain that?"

Son: "Because they went and asked me just the same questions as before."

"I like to believe that all men are honest," said the moralizer. "Same here," rejoined the demoralizer; "still I always draw the line at taking the same patent medicine for liver complaint that I use for toothache, no matter how the label reads."