

THE CRIMINAL'S CONFESSION

OR, SYBIL BERNER'S
VINDICATION

CHAPTER XXXIX.—(Continued).

"It is Satan!" she gasped. "It is Captain 'Inconnu!'"

And Miss Tabby, moved by compassion, went up to him and whispered:

"Listen, now. You said there was only one person in the world as you wanted to see, and that it was impossible to see her. But here she is. Do you understand me? Here she is."

"Who? Who?" panted the dying man, listening to Miss Tabby, but still staring at Sybil in the same dazed manner.

"Sybil Berners! Sybil Berners is here!"

"Is—that—her?"

"Yes, yes; don't you see it is?"

"I thought—I thought—it was her phantom!" he gasped.

Sybil gravely approached the bed, and put her hand on the cold hand of the corpse-like man, and gently inquired:

"Mr. Blondelle, or Captain 'Inconnu,' did you want to see me?"

The expiring flame of life flashed up once more—flashed up brilliantly. His whole face brightened and beamed.

"It is you! Oh, thank heaven! Yes, I did want to see you. But— It is growing very dark. Where have you gone?" he inquired, blindly feeling about.

"I am beside you. Here, take my hand, that you may feel that I am here," said Sybil, compassionately.

"Yes, Thanks, Lady. I did try very hard to save you from the consequences of my crime."

"Wretched man!" exclaimed Sybil, impulsively snatching away her hand in abhorrence. "You murdered that unhappy woman, of whose death I was falsely accused."

"No, lady; no! Give me your hand again. Mine is not stained with her blood. Thank you," he said, as Sybil laid her hand in his.

"A wild, bad man I was and am, but no murderer; and yet it is no less true that it was through my fault that the poor woman was done to death, and you driven to insanity. That was the reason why I tried to save you by every other means but the only sure one—confession. But now, when a confession will redeem your life without ruining mine—mine—which is over—I have made it, under oath, signed it, and placed it in the hands of your solicitor, Lawyer Closeby."

He ceased to speak, and he breathed very hard.

She continued to hold his hand, which grew colder and colder in her clasp.

"Lie down," she whispered, gently. "You are too weak to sit up. Lie down."

"No, not yet," he panted hard. "Tell me; do you forgive me?"

"As I hope to be forgiven, I forgive you with all my heart and soul; and I pray to the Lord to pardon you, for the Saviour's sake," said Sybil, earnestly.

"Amen and amen!" faintly aspirated the expiring man, and his frozen hand slipped from Sybil's clasp, and he fell back upon his pillow—dead.

Sybil's sudden cry brought the three old women to the bedside.

"It is all over, my dear child. The poor man has gone to his account. Come away," said the experienced dame, when she had looked at the corpse.

"I am very glad as you happened to come in time, and as you was good to him and forgave him, whether he deserved it or not," wept the tender-hearted Miss Tabby.

"Every one who is penitent enough to ask for forgiveness deserves to have it," Miss Tabby, said Sybil, solemnly.

"But, oh! the signs and omens as ushered in this awful event!" whispered Miss Libby.

"Hush! Hush!" said the dame. "No more vain talk. We are in the presence of death. Mr. Lyon, my dear sir, take your wife and daughter into the parlor. It is not damp or close. It was aired yesterday. The whole house has been opened and aired faithfully, once a month, ever since you have been away. And Joe went and made a fire in the parlor about a quarter of an hour ago. Take them in there, Mr. Lyon, and leave me and my daughters to do our last duties to this dead man," she added, turning to Mr. Berners.

He followed her advice, and took his wife and daughter from the room of death.

As they entered the old familiar parlor, now well aired and warmed and lighted, Joe, who was still busy improving the fire, and Mopsy, who was dusting the furniture, came forward in a hurry to greet their beloved mistress. They loudly welcomed her, wept over her, blessed her, kissed her hands, and would not let her go until the door opened, and Dr. Hart and Lawyer Closeby entered the room.

"Go, now," said Sybil gently to her faithful servants. "Mopsy, see to having my bedroom got ready; and, Joe, carry up plenty of wood."

And of course she gave them these directions for the sake of giving them something to do for herself, which she knew would please them.

Delighted to obey their beloved mistress, they left the room.

Dr. Hart and Lawyer Closeby came up to Sybil.

"Let us welcome you home, Mrs. Berners! And you, sir! Words would fail to express our happiness in seeing you. You arrived in an auspicious hour, too. If you had not come I should have despatched a special messenger to Europe after you by the next steamer," said Lawyer Closeby, grasping a hand each of Sybil and Lyon.

"Welcome, my child! Welcome, Sybil! Welcome home! I thank heaven that I have lived to see this day. Well may I exclaim with one of old, 'Now, Lord, let thy servant depart in peace, for I have seen the desire of my eyes!'"

fervently exclaimed old Dr. Hart, as he clasped and shook Sybil's hands, while the tears of joy filled his eyes.

But Sybil threw her arms around his neck and kissed him, for she could not speak.

Then he shook hands with Mr. Berners, and warmly welcomed him home.

When the congratulations were all over, and the friends were seated around the fire, Mr. Closeby drew a parchment packet from his pocket, and said:

"I told you, sir, and madam, that you were ing for you. I hold the cause of my words in my hand."

"The confession of Horace Blondelle?" said Mr. Berners, while Sybil listened, eagerly.

"Yes; the confession of Horace Blondelle, alias Captain Inconnu, alias Satan. This confession must first be read to you, then sent to the Governor of Virginia, and finally published to the whole world; for it fully vindicates your honor, Mrs. Berners."

"At last! thank Heaven!" exclaimed Sybil, while her husband took one of her hands and pressed it, and her daughter took the other one and kissed it.

"The writing down of this confession from the lips of the dying man occupied an hour and a quarter; the reading of it will take perhaps fifteen minutes. Can you hear it now, or are you too much fatigued with your journey, and would you prefer to put off the reading until to-morrow morning?" inquired the lawyer, looking from Sybil to Lyon.

"Put off the reading of that document until to-morrow? By no means! Read it at once, if you please," replied Mr. Berners, with a glance at his wife, which she at once understood and acted upon by hastening to say:

"Oh, yes! yes! read it at once! I could not sleep now without first hearing it."

"Very well, then," said the lawyer, as he unfolded the paper and prepared to peruse it.

The confession of Horace Blondelle need not be given in full here. A synopsis of it will serve our purpose.

As the son of a wicked old nobleman and a worthless young ballet dancer, he had been brought up in the very worst school of morality.

His mother closed her career in a hospital. His father died at an advanced age, leaving him a large legacy.

His beauty, his wit and his money enabled him to insinuate himself into the rather lax society of fashionable watering places and other public resorts.

He had married three times. First he married a certain Lady Riordon, the wealthy widow of an Irish knight, and the mother of Raphael, who became his stepson. He soon squandered this lady's fortune, and broke her heart.

After her death he joined himself to a band of smugglers trading between the French and English coasts, and consorted with them until he had made money for a fashionable campaign among the watering places. He went to Scarborough, where he met and married the fair young Scotch widow, Rosa Douglass.

He lived with her until he had spent all her money, and swindled her infant out of his inheritance, and then he had robbed her of her jewels and deserted her.

About the same time a smuggling craft, unsuspected as such by the authorities, had entered the port of Norfolk, sailing under the British flag.

Mr. Horace Blondelle, going to take passage in her, recognized the captain and the crew as his own old confederates.

As he was quite ready for new adventures, he joined them then and there. The ship sailed the next day. And the next week it was wrecked on the coast of Virginia.

The lives of the captain and crew, and also the money and jewels, the silks and spirits they had on board, were all saved. They reached the land in safety.

There a new scheme was formed in the busy brain of Mr. Blondelle. Accident had revealed to him the fact that the little Gentilska, the orphan daughter of a dead comrade, was the heiress of a great Virginia manor, long unclaimed. He made up his mind to go and look up the estate, marry the heiress and claim her rights.

Without revealing his whole plan to

his companions, he persuaded them to accompany him to the neighborhood.

There is a freemasonry among thieves that enables them to recognize each other even at a first meeting.

Blondelle and his band no sooner reached the neighborhood of the Black Mountain than they strengthened their force by the addition of all the local outlaws who were at large.

They made their headquarters at first at the old deserted "Haunted Chapel." They penetrated into the vault beneath it, and there discovered the clew to the labyrinth of caverns under the mountain that henceforth became their stronghold.

Thence they sallied out at night upon their predatory errands.

On the night of the mask ball, two members of the band determined to attend it in disguise, for the double purpose of espionage and robbery. Mr. Blondelle had learned to his chagrin that his deserted wife was in the neighborhood, at Black Hall, where her presence, of course, would defeat his plan of marrying the little Dubarry heiress.

He arrived as an ordinary traveller at the Blackville Inn, where he assumed the ghastly and fantastic character of "Death," and went to the ball.

His companion, known in the band as "Belial," took the character of Satan, and met him there.

With great dexterity, they had lightened several ladies and gentlemen of valuable jewels before supper was announced. And then they went and concealed themselves in the heavy folds of the bed-curtains in Mrs. Blondelle's room, intending to rob the house that night.

An accident revealed the presence of Belial to Mrs. Blondelle, who, on catching sight of him, screamed loudly for help. The robber was at her throat in an instant; in another instant his dagger was buried in her bosom; and then, as Sybil's steps were heard hurrying to the help of her guest, he jumped out of the low window, followed instantly by Blondelle. They clapped the shutter to, and fled.

Subsequently, when Mr. Blondelle discovered that the beautiful Sybil Berners was accused of the murder, he sought to save her in every manner but the only sure one—confession. He could not confess, for two reasons. He was bound by the mutual compact of the band, never to betray a comrade; and also he was resolved now that he was free, to marry the Dubarry heiress and claim the manor, which he could never do if once he were known as an outlaw.

The death of Belial and the disbanding of the robbers released him from his compact; but still self-preservation kept him silent until the hour of his death, when he made this confession as an act of tardy justice to Sybil Berners. His violent death had been the direct result of his lawless life. A brutal ex-confederate in crime had long successfully blackmailed him, and at length waylaid, robbed and murdered him. The criminal subsequently fled the neighborhood, but no doubt somewhere, sooner or later, met his deserts.

The confession was ended. At the same time Miss Tabby knocked at the door and announced supper.

And after this refreshment the friends separated, and retired to rest.

There is but little more to tell.

The next day news of the tragedy was taken to the Dubarry Springs.

Raphael Riordon and his stepmother, Mrs. Blondelle, came over to view the corpse and see to its removal.

Gentilska, now a very handsome matron, gazed at the dead body with a strangely mingled expression of pity, dislike, sorrow and relief. She had not been happy with the outlaw, whom, in her ignorance and friendliness, she had been induced to marry; and she was not now unhappy in his death.

Raphael, now a grave and handsome man, met Mrs. Berners with a sad composure. He worshipped her as constantly and as purely as ever. He had known no second faith.

Mr. Blondelle was buried at Dubarry. His confession was duly laid before the Governor of Virginia, who, in granting Sybil a pardon for the crime she had never committed, also wrote her a vindictory letter, in which he expressed his respect for her many virtues, and his sorrow that the blundering of the law should have caused her so much suffering.

The criminal's confession and the Governor's letter were both published through the length and breadth of the land. And Sybil Berners became as much loved and lionized as ever she had been hated and persecuted.

In the spring other exiles returned to the neighborhood; Captain Pendleton and his wife, once Miss Minnie Sheridan; and Mr. Sheridan, with his wife, once Miss Beatrix Pendleton.

Both these couples had long been married, and had been blessed with large families of sons and daughters.

The widow Blondelle sold out her interest in the Dubarry White Sulphur Springs, and with her stepson, Raphael Riordon, returned to England. Under another name, those springs are now among the most popular in America.

Mr. and Mrs. Berners have but one child—Gem! But she is the darling of their hearts and eyes; and she is betrothed to Cromartie Douglass, whom they love as a son.

The end.

A KIND MAN.

A gentleman was disturbed in his rest in the middle of the night by someone "knocking on the street door."

"Who's there?" he asked.

"A friend," was the answer.

"What do you want?"

"I want to stay here all night."

"All right, stay there, by all means," was the benevolent reply.

About the Farm

GETTING PROFITS FROM HENS.

No one need fear the "fancy" being over done. The "short-term," fancier and the demand for good birds by those starting in the business will keep up an active call for high class stock for many years to come. The small percent of really high class exhibition birds from the averaging mating will also help to keep the market alive. From five to ten percent of the best matings produce top birds.

Fifty per cent. of any variety or breed should be sold for table use or kept for market eggs. Line breeding, a closer following of pedigrees and severe selection will improve these averages in any breeder's yards. The fancy presents as much of an opening to-day as the breeding of any class of pure-bred stock.

Poultry raising can be entered cheaply and for the man of real ability as a student of breeding, the returns will come sooner than in any other field. Hard work with the hands and good head work, will put the breeder to the fore early.

There are many men who are putting the best they have into the business of poultry breeding; and they are making names for honesty and success. Stand up for the fancy and the business in general. There is room at the top, and applied manhood can get there. The fancy is a recognized calling and many glory in it.

Some hens are not worth their keep. Others produce enough to cover the cost of their handling. The hens that pay are those that more than meet the expense of money and time necessary to make them worth while. The last is the one we will desire, and the one we can have if willing to pay the cost.

What is necessary to own birds that pay? It takes more than money to do this. You can buy birds that pay, but it is another thing to have them pay you after you own them. Not only must you have the right kind of hen, but you must use time and thought in caring for them to make her of the "paying kind."

The paying hen is usually hatched from a paying strain. The paying hen that comes out of a flock of good-for-nothing birds is seldom met and it not worth hunting for. It takes time, it takes money and it takes born hensense to produce a flock of paying hens. It takes a very little neglect to send this flock back to the class of non-paying birds.

Paying birds are a delight to the eye. You show them to your friends, and linger in your description of what they are and what they have done for you. You gladly take care of them; you are willing to properly mate and feed them, and you look for fresh blood to improve them.

Paying birds never make up a large part of your flock when you sell the cream of the choice chicks every year. Money-making flocks are made up of the best you raise always letting the second quality go to market.

Paying birds live in houses free from vermin and supplied with pure air and water. They get food that is needed to bring the profit to the proper point. Cheap food, because it is cheap, never helped to produce the paying hen and kept her running to the nest.

Hens that pay spending profits are what the world is asking for, is looking for and is demanding. Are you going to be among the breeders who will fill the orders for this kind of birds?

SHEEP BREEDING.

The sheep-breeding business, to me appears to be divided into three sections, each one somewhat similar in aim, and yet differing considerably in the carrying out of the work, as it must be, to secure the harmonious whole, writes Mr. John Campbell. First, we have the flocks where the aim is wholly, the production of the butcher's lambs, and the fleece to help pay the keeping expenses. Next we have the flocks of higher merit, which may be named the sub-standard ones. They furnish the rams, to the producers of market lambs. In the third division, we find the high standard, registered purebred flocks. Perhaps it may be well for us to first consider the important place the last class occupies, as it is the fountain from which all, or nearly all, improvement springs. Without the stud flocks being of the best, we cannot have the grades between them and the butcher's flock, of the superior and desirable quality.

Breeders are born, not made. Here is where skill, capital, and labor must combine to reach the highest aim. And all three must be combined in the one individual, in order to obtain the outstanding success. To establish and maintain a ram-breeding flock of a high order, which will yield profit to the owner, and transmit merit and worth to the flocks in which sires from it are used, requires keen judgment, constant study, untiring industry, and the ready available capital to secure such sires and dams, as will be required.

The first and foremost thought must be, where can the sire we need be seen? and when found, the money to buy him must be more lightly valued, than our need. We have seen men of means invest freely in establishing purebred flocks, and right well pleased we all should be, as they are good customers, and in some ways are most helpful to the industry. Yet for all that, it



Henry Rover—In my travels through Palestine, I stood upon one of the sun-kissed hills of Judea and I could see the valley where the dead sea—
Squire Boggs (interrupting)—The dead see—Jee-rusalem—say Hank, yer lyn!

is the one whose bread and butter largely depends, on his successful efforts that attains to distinction as a breeder. And it is he also, who keeps on improving his flock, year by year, not so much by purchase, as by skillful mating and careful feeding. His surplus stock is eagerly sought by those who have come to realize the safety and certainty, in using such in their flocks, being assured that good results can scarcely fail.

The building up of a high standard, pure-bred flock is a fascinating business, but losses and crosses abound there as well as in other farm operations. Because of the latter and the greater disappointments, pluck, fortitude and perseverance are occasionally in demand, as well as skill and sufficient capital. We therefore need not fear the disastrous increase of such flocks, for if anywhere the old saying of, "there is always room at the top" holds true, it is in this division of sheep husbandry.

LIVE STOCK NOTES.

It may take you six weeks to heal up a sore on the breast of a horse. Two minutes spent in bathing might have kept that sore off. Water is cheaper than drugs.

Fattening animals should never be allowed to become hungry; nor, on the other hand, should they be fed too heavily. Too heavy feeding clogs the appetite and too long periods between feeds makes the animals restless.

The natural horse first ate his fill, then sought his drink, and there is practically no danger in watering a horse right away after he eats. The danger is far greater if he is allowed to go without drink for several hours later when the food has gotten out of the stomach and is passing through the second stomach (duodenum) or farther along the alimentary canal, where the water would in its passage to its proper place of necessity wash the food along.

The Danish Government's experiments continued for five years with 1,150 cows scattered through 110 dairies, failed to show that feeding fat into milk was a commercial possibility, beyond making the cows increase their milk. It might be that this feeding for fat, continued through several generations, possibly would have its beneficial effect, but as the director points out: "Breeding is the only way that an increase of fat in milk can be secured," and some late breeding reports seem to indicate that even then the influence must come from the sire, which means that breeding heifers back to their own sires is about the only plan by which this increase can be maintained and perpetuated.

FARM NOTES.

The American people are now expending \$150,000,000 for sugar that ought to be produced in this country from cane and sugar beet.

In order to make twentieth century farming a success we must make a thorough study of the scientific principles which underlie the various phases of agricultural science and then make practical application of them on the farm.

There are many purposes for which we can find use for concrete on the farm, beside making walks from house to barn, or from roadside to house, etc. It is used for cellar and stable and poultry-house floors, for stock water-troughs and tanks, for lasting bridge abutments, and even for fenceposts.

Don't let the carelessness of other persons do damage to your woodlot by fire. It is worth while, in the dangerous season, to see that the borders of the woodlot are clear of inflammable material. Especially clear away the leaves so as to form a miniature fire lane about the forest. Forbid the careless use of matches and the building of campfires. Don't be in too great a hurry to realize on your woodlot investment. Be satisfied with a permanent revenue, which is the interest on your forest capital. You may materially increase this interest by managing the woodlot itself so that the thinning always bears a wise proportion to the yield. Meantime, the steady rise in the value of all forest products will add little by little to the market value of your timber. Years hence, when you need it, the woodlot which has supplied you all along will in all probability bring you far more than at present.

Money talks and some people make every penny count.