

Not Guilty ;

Or, A Great Mistake.

CHAPTER I.

In the gilded dining-room of the newest Ritz hotel, two men were seated at a small table. They had made their way leisurely through the latest triumph of a French dinner, served to a smart London crowd, and were now conversing easily over their coffee and liqueurs. Though both of them were perfectly turned out, and evidently men of the world, neither seemed entirely the sort of man one would expect to find in such a milieu. From the manners of their neighbors, both men and women, it was evident that these were there quite as much to see and be seen as to dine. Our two friends apparently knew few in the smart crowd around them and cared little for their proximity.

The elder of the couple, a well set-up man of forty-five or so, with a military bearing and rather heavily-lined face, looked up quickly every now and then as some new arrival entered the room, or as a rustling of silk and lace and movement of chairs announced the breaking up of a party at one of the tables, but his glance had in it more of a quietly amused intelligence than interest. It seemed almost to say to those upon whom it rested for a moment, "I know all about you, and I don't think much of you, but I'm not very interested anyway."

The younger man, in a different manner, implied the same abstraction. Like his companion, he had singularly keen eyes, a keenness which an occasional glance revealed in a flash that was like the sudden drawing of a sword, but for the most part they had the far-away look and wrinkles at the outside corners which betoken the man of the open air and huge distances, a theory which his bronzed face and hands and strenuous look gave color to.

Evidently a soldier, a man of thirty-three or so, he had a noticeable personality, though it would have been hard to say precisely in what the attraction lay. With a keen, though good-humored face, aquiline nose, strong chin, small dark moustache, and square jaw, he was no more than merely good-looking; yet there were few of the pretty women in his neighborhood who had not glanced more than once in his direction, and been slightly disappointed that his eyes wandered so seldom.

Perhaps their interest lay precisely in this carelessness of their proximity, or more probably in an indescribable air of reserved force and readiness for emergency which was his, an air which seemed to say that were something untoward to occur in that crowded room, he would be the man to turn to, and probably the man who would assume command.

"I daresay you are right," he was saying, with rather an amused smile, to his companion, whose heavily-lined features had expanded under the influence of the creme de menth, whose color his quick eyes rather resembled. "You know what you are talking about, but if I had trained my men as yours are trained, with all respect to Scotland Yard..."

"... Rothville would have fallen," returned the other man, smiling. "Possibly; but the cases are quite different. You employed the means suitable to your situation, and you were successful. We do the same, here in London, and I flatter myself we do not utterly fail. After all, the theory is not mine. It has been built up on the experience of centuries. We find that to know the history of a man is to know what the man is likely to do under certain circumstances. Without conceit, I may say that the criminal population of London is known to us as an open book. A crime committed, we have only to set the beaters to work, narrow down the bounds, and find the particular criminal who is unable to explain his whereabouts at the particular moment of the crime. That is the broad theory, and to us it seems the best."

"And yet to start from the crime itself..."

"Occasionally we do. In a certain sense always we do!" returned his companion. "But London is different to South Africa, my dear Gordon. The wonderful instinct of the trained scout, the science of the displaced leaf, the broken branch, the startled bird, the moving shadow in the distance, the faint print of a flying foot, for South Africa—yes! but in the crowds of London, among the hurrying millions, in the enormous and constant traffic, where a clue once gained is lost a thousand times, no! We seldom have to track our man down; we know where to find him already, and we are there before him; or very soon after he arrives."

"And supposing he isn't one of your men after all—these wonderful criminals of yours whom you keep your fatherly eyes on, and apparently treat, save for the cages, like some quaint sort of pet; supposing he or she were one of these fine birds here to-night—that dark bird of paradise, for instance, or that golden-haired woman next to her, who certainly is rather like a canary, or one of their men, eh—Major?"

The Major laughed. "Stranger things have happened," he said. "I really wouldn't like to swear

that there are not some present in this room who have done time at some period in their lives. But my theory holds good even in the case you suggest. Even the beginners in crime; even those who seem as remote as it is possible to conceive from what you call my pets, must inevitably become joined to them by connecting links the moment that they commit a crime. Their very innocence makes them obliged to seek the assistance of those more hardened than themselves. Suppose that very pretty lady, whom you call the bird of paradise, were to find herself hard up, and cast a longing eye on the jewels of that other pretty lady whom you call the canary. She steals them. How is she to realize them? She cannot sell them to her friends. She cannot pay her bridge debts with jewels for which a reward is offered. Jewellers won't buy them, and she would be caught if they did. No; she must keep them hidden away in her jewel case, or she must make the acquaintance, somehow or other, of Mr. Moss, or Cohen, or Samuels, the 'fence,' who will give her a tenth of their value for the jewels, but on the other hand will ask no questions. And that link once forged, there she is and there we are, my dear Gordon."

"Very likely, but what of crime when it takes the form of murder: what of the crime of passion?"

"Then, in nine cases out of ten, one can put one's finger on the criminal by finding out who profits by the crime, or who from jealousy or other cause, has the impulse towards it. There are not many mysteries of murder unsolved in England in a year. However, with all my talk, we do make mistakes. Good men are hard to find; it may be our training, as you say. I wish you would go broke, Gordon, and join the Force. We could do with a few men like yourself, in spite of the difference in our views."

George Gordon laughed. "No, thank you," he said. "I retired into private life because 'policing' the country after the war didn't appeal to me; policing this country appeals still less. All the same, without any vanity, I wouldn't mind, just for once, backing myself against Scotland Yard. It isn't possible, however, unfortunately. I should have to turn either criminal or policeman, and I feel too lazy after that Rothville affair to do either. The question must remain for ever undecided. Finished your liqueur?"

The two friends arose and made their way down the room.

At the entrance of the hotel they parted: the Major going off in a cab to some of his arduous but rather mysterious duties; George Gordon turning to the left along the pavement and making his way in the direction of Regents Park, where he was living.

He sighed a little as his friend left him; why he could hardly have said. "I wonder if I should have been better off there, after all," he thought. "I should at least have had something to do. I wanted to be lazy—yes—but now I begin to be afraid that being lazy means being bored."

George Gordon had distinguished himself in Africa; promotion had come rapidly; for a week he had been the hero of the man of the street; for a few months correspondents wrote his name often and large; and then came the end of the war. In the reconstruction which followed, there had been a contest at headquarters between petticoat influence and merit. The petticoat had won in a canter; and George Gordon, needing a rest, and piqued into the bargain, had chosen an idle life at home. He was young, master of a thousand a year, clever, good-humored, and full of life, with, if he chose, nothing but a long holiday before him; and after a few weeks he was already beginning to wonder what on earth he was going to do with himself.

CHAPTER II.

The night was damp and dull. As George Gordon made his way along the Haymarket, a fog, which had been clouding the atmosphere for some time, commenced to fall, shrouding everything. Fortunately, it was not a genuine yellow fog, and did not interfere much with Gordon's progress; but by the time he had crossed the Circus and turned up Regent Street he was compelled to walk more slowly.

A London fog deadens the usual sounds of the great city, and causes a peculiar sense of isolation, and this feeling, combined with the cessation of traffic natural to the hour, made George think pleasantly of his cigar case. He stopped and, selecting a cigar, made for the nearest doorway to get a light. But here the posts had been newly painted, and the match merely slid helplessly down the greasy surface without lighting. Taking another, he walked on a few steps and halted before a second doorway. Speculating on what might have occurred had certain other things not happened is a common occupation, but a very futile one; nevertheless, there were many moments in Gordon's future when he could not help wondering what his life would have

been like had the first apparently insignificant vesta not refused to light.

The second match made no difficulties; it performed its duties perfectly, and, his cigar wall under way, George was about to continue his road, when suddenly he stopped. Some small but heavy object had struck him a sharp blow on the head and, rebounding, had fallen at his feet.

It was a silver pin about six inches long, with a round knobby head almost the size of a walnut, and studded with small garnets and turquoises.

It had been Gordon's first impulse to pick up and examine under the nearest lamp-post this mysteriously arriving object, but meanwhile his highly trained senses had been also at work in another direction.

From the sensation of the blow which he still felt, it was evident that the pin had come from somewhere above him, and had probably been dropped rather than thrown. The night was dark and foggy; it was difficult to see more than a dozen feet away; there were hundreds of windows around him, but Gordon had not wandered night after night round the outposts of Rothville for nothing. Almost as the pin fell, a faint sigh and the slightest rustle of a dress had touched his highly-trained ear. His quick mind had noticed the sounds and placed them. Even while he looked at the silver jewel beneath the yellow lamplight, part of his attention was concentrated on the spot in the darkness whence he knew it had come, and his ears listened keenly for some further sound.

None came, however, and everything remained silent.

For a moment George stood still, with the pin in his hand, irresolute.

"All the same," he said at last, "it is quite evident there is someone there, or was, a moment ago. It is evident also, as they could have no reason for wishing to attract my attention, that this pin has fallen by accident, and that the fall owner is not aware of her loss. Queer things, women! In these days of inventions, to stick a smooth pin like that, with a heavy knob, into a bunch of hair and expect it to stay there when the owner leans out of the window! Queer thing, too, to be leaning out on such a night, when one can hardly see a yard, and there is no one to be seen—but me—and she couldn't have seen me—though that's Irish! What the deuce am I to do with this pin? Return it, I suppose. I think I know where it came from. I wonder if she will think it cheeky? Perhaps, however, it was only a man, after all, and he has been cleaning his pipe with it."

George sniffed at the pin, but certainly there was no smell of nicotine about it; rather it seemed to him as if some faint fragrance of the wearer still clung to it; as if it had fallen still warm and scented from a woman's hair. He laughed at the idea the next moment.

"Probably old and ugly," he said, "or not all she should be. Who lives in Regent Street? I'll certainly make an effort to return it."

Unless he was mistaken the pin had fallen from a second-story window of the house by which he stood, and the doorway of the house was that where he had lighted the second match.

He examined the entrance. There was an outside door, evidently common to the whole house, and at present standing open. Beyond was a passage with another door facing him. This was also ajar, though almost closed. On either side, were brass plates bearing names. Above the plate for the third floor was written "Mr. Claude Carlton."

"It is Miss or Mrs. Carlton's pin," said George. "Let's go up." And he went up the stairs.

At the third floor he stopped. Opposite him was a door, with a bell on the right hand; but he door was open.

"This is a most mysterious house," thought Gordon, "where at this hour of the night people drop silver pins out of the window, and leave all their doors open."

He listened for a moment attentively, some impulse restraining him from ringing the bell.

Within this mysterious flat the passage was dark and impenetrable; and for a moment he could hear no sound of habitation. He almost began to think he had been mistaken, and that this door was open because there was nothing to guard but an empty house.

He pushed the panels softly inwards and entered a step. Still there came no sound, and quite convinced but curious, he walked forward.

He groped his way in the darkness past two doors, and then taking a turning at the end of the passage, he came suddenly upon a light.

It shone through glass panels, from a room beyond, and for a moment Gordon hesitated again.

"I must go on now," he said at last. "If I retreated to the bell at this crisis, I might be surprised before I reached it, and then I should certainly have the air of a burglar running away, and, by George! with some of the property in my hand!"

He looked at the pin, and, deciding rapidly, walked up to the door. When he reached it, and glanced through into the room beyond, with a quick involuntary movement he took off his hat; and then his heart seemed suddenly to stop beating, and he passed his hand across his brow. He recovered himself almost instantly, but, nevertheless, for a space of time, of whose duration he was unaware, he remained in the attitude he had taken, staring at the sight which had startled him.

In front of him, at the further side of the room, in a great arm-chair was seated a girl. She was facing him and her eyes directly met his. At first sight her attitude seemed ordinary; it was only afterwards, when the expression of her eyes had impressed itself on him that he noticed the tenseness of her rigid figure, the pressure on each other

of her hands clenched in her lap, the deadly stillness of her rounded bosom—but the eyes! Had he threatened her with some terrible gesture of murder, had he held out to her from behind the glass some bloodstained and horrible head, only that, it seemed, could have explained the sickening fear, despair, death, in those lovely eyes, now strained and opened wide.

Involuntarily, Gordon turned and glanced behind him, but there was nothing there save the darkness of the passage. Besides, the girl was looking straight at him; her glance met his; and yet he felt she did not see him; she could not, he knew, she in the brilliantly-lighted room, he against the background of the darkness. And though he had moved, her expression had not changed.

Gordon, still stupefied, cast a quick glance round the room. It was a handsomely furnished apartment, to all appearances a man's, for there were no feminine trifles adorning it. It was almost excessively lighted by means of electric globes, and there appeared no disorder in the rich comfort of its furniture.

Gordon's eyes turned again to the girl in the chair.

She was beautiful, more beautiful, he thought, than any woman he had ever seen. Very pale, her pallor seemed natural to her, and was rather that ivory paleness which comes sometimes with very dark hair and those deep violet eyes. Her features might have been almost severely handsome but for the warm depth natural to the eyes, and the charming curves of her crimson mouth.

And then her glance, which had never wavered for an instant, made Gordon start afresh, and, hastily turning the handle of the door, he entered the room.

Knowing the girl had not seen him, he had expected to startle her, and even while he had almost involuntarily made his decision to enter, he had prepared a stammering apology for his daring; yet a further surprise awaited him: for, instantly on his entrance, her expression changed to one of almost relief. The terror and despair seemed to fade from her eyes, and though she had turned even paler, her glance met his naturally and calmly.

"So soon," she said simply. George started, but fancying he had misunderstood her, he was about to commence his speech, when his self-possession quite leaving him, he gave a cry.

In moving towards her, he had walked round the table which stood in the centre of the room. On the floor on the other side, almost at the girl's feet, lay a dead man!

(To be continued.)

About the Farm

CORN HARVESTING.

The silo is undoubtedly becoming the popular Canadian method of caring for the corn crop, but in many cases good farmers who make a specialty of rearing corn primarily for the ears, continue to dry-cure the stalks. In both methods hand cutting is rapidly being superseded by the improved corn harvester. An interesting bulletin on this subject has been prepared by P. J. Zimmo, an expert in farm mechanics, of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Beginning with the old corn hook, he traces the evolution of modern harvesting machinery down to the present, figures out the cost of different methods with their comparative advantages, and draws therefrom the following conclusions:

Summarizing the comparative returns per acre of husking corn from the field, of cutting and feeding from shock, and of cutting and shredding by the various methods, it is found that the net value of the crop is \$17.93 for husking by hand and leaving the stalks standing in the field. This is obtained by adding to the net value of the corn 55 cents per acre for the stalks and subtracting the cost of husking by hand.

By allowing 25 cents per acre as the value of the fodder in field where a corn picker (a machine for picking the ears off the stalks in the field instead of by hand) is used, and adding this to the net value of the corn and subtracting \$1.80 per acre for picking with the machine, we derive the net value of the crop of \$17.81 for this method of harvesting, which indicates a small loss per acre as a result of using the corn picker.

The net value of the crop by feeding the stalks whole (\$23.18 for hand husking, \$23.50 for harvesting with large machines, and \$23.62 for small machines) is obtained by taking the total value of the corn and fodder and subtracting the costs of cutting and husking by hand, cutting with sled harvester and husking by hand, and cutting with corn shocker and husking by hand.

The net value of the crop by utilizing the fodder in the shredded form (\$24.68 for hand harvesting, \$25.45 for harvesting with large machines, and \$26.45 with small machines) is obtained by assuming a greater value of shredded fodder over whole cornstalks of 33 per cent., adding this value of the fodder to the value of the corn, and subtracting the various costs of cutting, husking and shredding the corn by the various hand and machine methods.

Conclusions.—The farmer who would secure the full value of his corn crop should secure the fodder with as much care as he gives his clover hay, harvesting it at the proper period, and not allowing it to become ruined by rain or frost. By the use of the proper machinery for harvesting the corn crop,

the farmer may considerably increase the net income from his crop over hand methods of harvesting the ears and wasting the stalks, and still allow full price for the use of the different machines.

There is a limit beyond which it is not profitable for a farmer to invest in corn-harvesting machinery, and the amount of work to be done by the machine each year should be carefully considered before a purchase is made.

LIVE STOCK NOTES.

Don't forget that as the pasturage fails grain or other food should be fed in corresponding amount.

That there will always be a demand for good pork is unquestionable. For economy, both to the buyer and seller, there is no meat which surpasses pork. Its fine flavor and the small ratio of waste in the hog commend it to lovers of meat in spite of the ancient prejudice respecting swine's flesh.

When pigs are fed milk freely, cornmeal may be fed as the grain ration, giving one pound of meal to each eight pounds of milk. Ground oats or wheat middlings are also excellent for pigs, fed in same relation to milk. The selection should depend partly upon costs, as the pigs grow older, the proportion of grain to milk may be gradually increased. The total food daily must be determined by the appetite and condition of the animals. Either sweet or sour milk may be fed to younger pigs.

There are many kinds of improvident feeding. In the first place, all feeding for arable farms is improvident which keeps the animals standing still at any period of development. All feeding is improvident, because inconsiderate, which gives the animals a badly balanced ration. All feeding on the farm is improvident that places before animals ill-cured fodder that ought to have been well cured. All feeding is improvident that places food before animals in such a way that much of it is liable to be left uneaten, and all feeding is improvident which forces the animal along so rapidly or which tries to force it thus, so that much food is wasted because it is not fully utilized in the feeding process.

FARM NOTES.

A dwelling to be healthful should have not only a well-drained cellar, but the ground which lies against or is near the wall of the house should be thoroughly drained.

Our experiment stations are doing a great work and the farmer should realize and appreciate this fact. Instead of opposing the result of scientific research there carried out, they should be at least willing to be convinced, which many of them are not at the present time.

With lime and the plowing in of sod every four or five years, heavy clay may be brought to the condition of a friable loam, not at once, but after two or three rotations. Of course, it is always to be understood that the use of lime is in no sense a substitute for manure, but it is a help to it, making it more quickly available for the crops, and thus increasing the products as one of its most valuable effects.

There is no tillable soil that is wholly destitute of vegetable matter. The thorough cultivation which lifts the soil as it mellow it introduces air by separating the particles of soil, and leaving more spaces for still air to rest in. Air under the soil in contact with vegetable matter is itself decomposed. Not only does its oxygen unite with the vegetable matter, but some of its nitrogen is also set free, and, in the darkness, in contact with decomposing vegetation, it supplies a certain degree of nitrogenous fertility in available form, which is that of a nitrate. Any mineral that readily unites with nitrogen is pretty sure to do so in the soil that contains vegetable matter and is frequently cultivated.

MUSLIN STABLE WINDOWS.

Experiment to Provide Better Ventilation for Cattle.

The experiment of using muslin curtains in place of window glass, which has proved so successful in poultry houses all over the country, is now being extended to dairy barns.

Experiments have shown that even in the coldest weather the temperature of the stable is lowered only two or three degrees by the use of these curtain windows, while the barns actually have seemed very much warmer. This result is due to the fact that the air is kept dry.

Where this plan has been adopted the cattle have shown less evidence of suffering from the cold, and the attendants have admitted that the barns have been more comfortable places in which to work than when the glass windows were in use. It is the excess of moisture in the air which causes the feeling of dampness and chill which prevails in many dairy barns. Although the outside air is able to pass through the muslin, it is almost impossible for any one standing three feet away to detect its entrance.

It is possible that the introduction of a system of this kind will do much to prevent the spread of tuberculosis among cattle. Poultrymen have found that whereas under the old system of using glass windows and keeping the house as warm as possible, fowls were frequently afflicted with colds and similar troubles, where the muslin curtain system has been adopted the birds are much more free from such complaints and it is expected by advocates of the new system that there will be similar beneficial results in the case of dairy cattle.

If kissing is a crime it must be a capital one.