

Not Guilty ;

Or, A Great Mistake.

CHAPTER III.

The girl's eyes followed Gordon's horror-stricken glance with a terrible calmness.

"He is quite dead," she said. "You can see for yourself, if you wish. He was stabbed to the heart and died instantly. There is the knife. I drew it out because . . . because I thought there might be hope . . . HOPE! Ah, heaven! hope!"

Gordon hardly heard this last exclamation. He had hastily flung himself down by the body, and was feeling the cold bosom of the form at his feet, but even while he did so, he knew there was no chance. He had seen too many dead not to recognize death in that stern rigidity. Quickly convinced, he yet gave a moment to an examination of the dead man's appearance. "Young, handsome, sensual, rich; stabbed to the heart from the front; one blow, but it was a fearful one." That was his conclusion.

"He died at once, you say?" he asked, half turning to the girl, who stood watching him, motionless.

"At once," she said. "He just fell down as he is now. He never moved afterwards."

"Who did it?" said Gordon. "Why did you let him escape? Where is he?" The girl looked at him for a moment with the calmness of an unutterable despair in her lovely eyes. "I did it!" she said at last.

Gordon started to his feet and faced her.

"Good God! you did it! You!!!"

"Yes. I!" and then, without a sign, her strength seemed to give way, and she slipped unconscious to the ground.

George darted to her assistance, but he was too late to save her; and placing her head so that it was lower than the rest of her body, he stood helplessly watching her.

Then, pulling himself together, he made a movement to the door, to call for help; but he stopped half way. He knew that help would mean discovery of the crime, the crowd, the police, the girl's instant arrest—and yet she had sat there so calmly beside her victim. . . . Why had she sat there? Why not fled?

Gordon dropped on his knees beside the beautiful, helpless figure, and looked long and intently at the pale face and half-closed violet eyes.

"She did not do it! She couldn't have done it!" he said at last. "Not that she is too beautiful: I am not such a fool as that, though, by jove! she is lovely—but I feel she didn't. And yet she says she did."

He bent to look at her hands. Those delicate white fingers, those slim firm wrists, might have hidden in them the strength to have struck that fearful blow, but they told no tale; they made no confession.

"She is coming round," he thought. "Perhaps it would be better for her if she never recovered—better if she died there where she lies. It would be so if I thought she had done that infernal deed; for with all her beauty and helplessness, it wouldn't be a moment before I called for the police! But I don't think so. Why don't I?" he asked himself, gazing round the room, and back again at the prostrate girl, who was commencing to move restlessly. "What the deuce have I noticed which makes me so sure?"

Gordon had relied so often on an instinct which had never failed him, and had been so accustomed to inquire—if he did inquire—into the motives which had impelled him, only after escaping from a predicament, that he often found himself entirely unable to explain from what source these motives had come. In this case he would have been puzzled to say exactly why his belief in this mysterious girl's innocence was so assured; yet he felt that given time to collect his impressions, he could put his finger on the facts to account for it.

The girl's eyes, which had opened wide by now, passing his carelessly, had lighted on the body of the dead man, and with a cry she rose to her feet, "Claude! Claude!" she cried piteously, and with a spring she put half a length of the room between herself and Gordon.

"What do you want? Why do you look at me like that and say nothing!" she cried, wildly. "Ah, I am not strong enough to stand this! Why don't you arrest me! Why don't you call for help and take me away!"

"You fainted. It is all right. You are better now," said Gordon soothingly. "But arrest you? You will excuse me for reminding you that I am not a policeman or even a detective. And, by the way, that reminds me. I came here quite by accident. You dropped—I suppose that it was you—this pin from the window just now. I presume it fell from your hair, I guessed where it came from. The doors were open and I came in. . . ."

"Yes, I was looking out of the window," she said wearily. "I meant to call the police, but I was not brave enough. But . . . then you know nothing of this? You are not . . . it was an accident that you came?" she murmured, taking the pin which George held out to her, and fixing her dark eyes on his.

"Accident entirely," said Gordon,

meeting her look with his keen glance.

Then, hesitating for a moment:—
"Tell me that you did not do that," he said at last.

His tone and manner, his strong frank gaze, his air of power seemed to affect the girl; for a moment a piteous look trembled in her lovely eyes, and then she recovered herself with a sudden effort.

"I did it," she said. "I must suffer for it—I must suffer for it—I must suffer for it! Oh, quick, quick! for God's sake call for them, and have me taken away!"

Gordon shook his head.

"Perhaps I ought to," he said, "but I'm not going to. There is some mystery here. I can't think you killed that poor wretch there, and sat so calmly watching his body; and if you did, God help you, perhaps you had cause to . . . but that's absurd! You did not do it. What are we to do?"

Her eyes had the hunted look of the stag pressed by hounds, and her lip trembled; it was evident that only by the greatest effort she had kept herself upright, but her determination, so apparent in every line of her rigid figure never wavered.

"Since you came here by accident," she said. "Since you were not brought here by this . . . this crime, you must go."

"And you," asked Gordon. "What of you?"

"Don't think of me! Go, yourself, quickly. After all, there is perhaps danger here for you, too. You would have to explain, and they might not . . . but ah, I cannot talk any more! Why trouble about me, sir? Leave me, I beg you. Ah, leave me, leave me! Go!"

Her voice told Gordon that she was on the verge of breaking down; and he stood irresolutely, biting his moustache, and hunting vainly for inspiration.

"I don't believe she killed that man," he said to himself, "but she swears she did. Either I am mad, or she is. If I leave her here someone will find her; if not before morning, at all events, then; and she'll stick to her story. Then Lord knows what will happen! If only I could get her away—give her time to think over it all in cold blood. If she really did it there's plenty of time to say so afterwards. But it's absurd! Look at her! She did not do it. All the same, if she sticks to her tale, who's to say she did not? Give me time and I think I'd prove it, but how to get time when she herself refuses to help me."

Gordon was still vainly racking his brains when a shriek from the girl, and the direction of her gaze, made him turn quickly to the body on the floor. A strange incident had come to his assistance. One of the arms of the corpse which had lain across its breast straightened itself suddenly and fell with a thud to its side.

Possibly Gordon in his examination had placed it in a position opposed to the approaching rigor mortis, possibly there may have been some other cause which only a doctor could explain: the shock at least of the strange phenomenon had an immediate effect. Repeating her first cry of surprise and fright, the girl flew across the room and sank on her knees beside the murdered man. "Ah, he's not dead after all! Ah, Claude, dear, dear Claude! Thank God he's not dead! Ah, sir, come! come quick! he's not dead! he moved! he moved!"

Gordon shook his head sadly, though at her wild cries he approached.

At his gesture she shrieked again, "No! no! don't say it," she cried. "He moved! But no—ah! no! It is useless! You are right—he is dead—dead—ah, ah!"

She was off into a fit of hysterics—wild laughter and wilder weeping—but Gordon seized her by the wrists and drew her from the body. "This must stop," he said, "or she will go mad."

"Come!" he said firmly, "this must cease. You are overstrained—you don't know what you are doing or saying. You force me to think for you, and I will do so. Come now, you must obey me. I am used to being obeyed, and I will be so now. To stay here all night means death or madness for you; you shall say that in the morning. At present you will come with me."

The girl made a wild struggle to free her wrists, but Gordon's hands were steel.

"Don't struggle," he said. "It is useless. You heard what I said. Where is your hat? Your coat?"

For a moment there was a struggle still—for a moment, shaken with hysteria, the girl fought on; but Gordon held her powerless; his voice, which his men had often trembled to hear raised, even while they loved it, frightened and subdued her. Her eyes turned almost unconsciously towards a chair in the corner of the room where Gordon saw was lying a sable coat.

Drawing her towards the corner he seized the coat with one hand and flung it over her, holding her with the other; a hat was lying where it had fallen from the chair to the floor and picking it up, he placed it on her head. "It is dark and foggy and long past midnight," he said, "and no one will see us. Now, come on."

Still leading the now terrified and

half unconscious girl, he made his way from the room and out into the passage. At the entrance he paused and gave a rapid glance at the room.

"I'm in for it now, right or wrong," he said, "and the more time I have the better. Someone might notice that light." And groping round for the electric light button he turned one that came to his hand. Fortunately it was the right one, and, through the panels, he saw the light go out, and made his way down the stairs into the street, half leading, half carrying the girl whose sobs had entirely ceased by now.

On reaching the street it was evident that the fog had disappeared, at all events for the moment, and the wide thoroughfare was not so deserted as Gordon had expected. He was standing anxiously watching his companion and casting occasional doubtful glances round him, when the rattle of a cab sounded in the distance, and as it drew nearer, to his relief he saw the man held up his whip and drive quickly towards him at his affirmative gesture.

He turned to the girl, pressing his fingers into her wrists, and with his face stern and fierce. "Not a word or a sound now," he said harshly. "I am going to take you somewhere where you will be safe for to-night. What you like in the morning—at present you must obey me."

It hurt him to see her face, pale, terrified, dazed, to feel her white wrists shrink as he crushed them, to see her reel and recover with an effort under his stern gaze, but he had no mercy.

"Get in," he said, as he opened the door of the cab, and half lifted her inside, watching from the corner of his eye the cabman's blank stare of amazement at this beautiful girl, whose costly fur coat was hanging to one shoulder and whose plumed hat the wrong side before, trembled over her eyes.

"No. 12, Park Corner," he said firmly. "All right, cabby, only a supper party—rather late, you know. Our other cab broke down and left us."

"And may you never know, my beauty, that I once insinuated that you drank too much," he muttered to himself, as he entered the cab and seated himself by its occupant.

She had sunk back in the furthest corner, whether frightened still, or unconscious, Gordon did not know; and he did not attempt to speak to her. His mind was running over the events of the evening and their various consequences, seen and unseen.

"To-night's pretty clear sailing, at least," he thought. "Old Mother Crump's all right. Living with us all our lives, and knowing me from a baby, she's got a pretty good idea of my character: and with her motherly ways and a little more unpleasantness on my part—brutality you might call it—I think my lovely friend will see the reasonableness of taking things as they come—till morning. But then? To-morrow? What in heaven's name will happen to-morrow? Suppose I'm wrong; suppose she really did kill that fellow. Or even if she did not, suppose she still insists on giving herself up? Or suppose she does not do that; suppose that I persuade her, but the police discover that body and get on the track? What then? By jove, I shall be in a pretty awkward position—And she? Good Lord! She—But, thank goodness, I'm not easily frightened. Hullo, here we are!"

The cab drew up with a rattle and clatter before a gate in a wall above which could be seen trees, and beyond them again a distant house.

Gordon sprang to the ground, and turned to the cabman. "I don't mind giving you a good tip, cabby," he said, taking out half a sovereign, "for you got us home all right. The other fellow took us from — from the corner of Rupert Street and then broke down. Here you are. Don't bother to get down." And he turned back to the cab.

There was not a sound from the occupant, and when Gordon touched her hand it was icy cold. "Thank goodness, she has fainted," he said to himself. "So far so good."

It was not an easy task to raise the senseless form and lift it from the vehicle, and Gordon thanked providence that his muscles were of steel, as he bore his burden across the footpath and opened the gate with difficulty, the cabman's parting chuckle greeting his ears meanwhile.

"The worst part's over now," he muttered, as the wheels sounded farther and farther away. "I hope I look that cabby in. I don't see why he shouldn't believe my yarn. It was the best thing I could think of. Confound the fellow for laughing! Drunk, the brute!"

The fog had disappeared, and the moon had risen. Coming out behind the trees, it shone for a moment on the white face of the senseless girl, as Gordon stood holding her in his arms. He looked down at the lovely eyes, closed now, and covered by their long dark lashes, at the rich waves of her hair, and her pure curved lips.

"Thank God I did it," he said involuntarily. "Thank God I saved her!"

(To be continued.)

They were discussing the factors which make for success in the world, when the knowing young man said:—"There's nothing like force of character, old man. Now, here's Jones! Sure to make his way in the world. He's a will of his own, you know." "But Brown has something better in his favor." "What's that?" "A will of his uncle's." "Gentlemen of the jury," said the judge, as he concluded his charge, "if the evidence shows in your minds that pneumonia, even indirectly, was the cause of the man's death, the prisoner cannot be convicted." An hour later a messenger came from the jury room. "The gentlemen of the jury, your honor," he said, "desire information." "On what point of evidence?" "None, your honor; they want to know how to spell pneumonia!"

About the Farm

THE COLONY SYSTEM OF POULTRY KEEPING.

Poultry-keeping is usually regarded as one of the easiest departments of farm work, and yet there are many problems connected with it; so many, in fact, that, for want of mastering them, the great majority of poultry-keepers who go into the business—at least, to any considerable extent—fail, says John H. Robinson, in a paper read before the National Poultry Conference, recently held in England. And this, perhaps, is not wonderful, considering that its complexities invariably increase with the number of the flock. Poultry-keeping, in fact, is a business which must be learned, as any other business must be learned; hence, the only safe way is to begin on a small scale, learn by experience, and make extensions only when the footing is known to be sure.

So far but three systems have been adopted by poultry-keepers in this country. (1) The farm method, (2) the intensive method, and (3) the colony method.

By the first of these—a very desultory method—all the fowl, chickens and old ones, are usually kept in one flock, and given, practically, the run of the farm. In summer, but little feed is given them, and too often but very little drink. In winter the whole flock is huddled in some small annex of the farm buildings, and occasionally are permitted to run at large through the stables and barns. This method, as may be judged, is not conducive to training or forcing of the hens to lay when required. They are almost sure to be summer layers, quite unproductive in winter, when the price of eggs is highest. Nevertheless, the hardihood of fowl thus neglected, as it were, is often remarkable. The method has, at least, some elements of the natural about it. Being thrown so much on their own resources, the fowl are obliged to

TAKE NECESSARY EXERCISE,

and during summer they usually manage to look out pretty well for themselves, although, it must be granted, at some expense to growing grain and gardens.

The second method—the intensive—is highly artificial, and is not, as a rule, to be recommended. Its aim is to keep a large flock in limited space, and it necessarily calls for expensive buildings, closed-in yards, and the constant care of an expert poultry-keeper. Even with the latter success is not assured, for where large flocks are huddled together insect pests make more speedy headway, disease is more likely to run rife, the ground of the yards becomes poisoned with toxic substances and endless complications ensue.

By the colony system, which is fast gaining popularity in the United States, especially in Rhode Island, most of the objectionable features in the two above methods have been eliminated. Instead of having one large poultry house, and compelling all the fowl to herd together, two or more, according to the number of hens, are used, and are placed far enough apart to keep conditions favorable to the health of inmates. These houses, which are from 8 or 9 feet wide to 12 or 14 feet long, are usually set in a pasture field, over which the fowl may roam at will in search of animal and insect food. The doors may be closed to keep cattle out, and such food and drink as are necessary placed on the floor, the poultry gaining access through a small hole; or a small enclosure may be fenced in before each building. Especial care is paid to ventilation, and during warm weather the houses are raised from below to give free circulation beneath. Each house accommodates from 30 to 35 hens. As a rule, plenty of food is supplied. There are all kinds of systems of feeding. Some use the hopper system, while many other adhere to the old plan of giving a cooked mash. Where soft food is given, it is usually fed in the morning. Care is taken that a supply of

CLEAN, COOL WATER

is always before the fowl. Hens are used almost altogether for hatching, and, until grown, the chickens are kept in small, separate coops, which are moved from time to time; that they may be always on clean ground; after hatching, they are usually placed in the hay fields.

The colony-house plan is a very natural one, and much safer as regards disease than the close-quartering and intensive-housing system.

There are two things which prevent a more general adoption of the colony method among farmers in this country. The colony plan is not adapted to winter use in sections where the snowfall is heavy, and where vermin abound, as their depredations would make it impossible to maintain colonies of fowls on fields and pasture remote from farm buildings. To meet the first objection, some poultry farmers are combining intensive methods for winter with the colony plan for summer. The first cost of such a plant is considerable, but the labor-saving may warrant it. That remains to be seen. The second objection is in many places a serious one. It takes time and persistent concerted effort to rid a district of the pests that prey on poultry. Many who prefer the colony plan would like to install a plant of that type complete, but cannot do so because of certain losses from wild animals. It seems appropriate to remind such that, in the natural development of the colony plan

nothing is done wholesale. Each addition to the equipment meant only a little extension of the area to be protected, but with every farmhouse the centre of a constantly-extending circle of territory in which fowls were safe from natural enemies, the district soon became untenable for those pests. And to my mind, it is well that the adoption of the colony system compels observance of the rule of slow growth in poultry-keeping, for my observation has been that rapid growth in the beginning is rarely associated with a successful enterprise.

THIS FOR YOU, YOUNG MAN.

Now That Vacation is Over Renew Your Resolutions.

The following from the pen of "The Man in the Overalls," a writer on the staff of The Hamilton Times, may be perused with profit by all young men:

Now, my young chap, don't throw down the paper, for I have a word or two for you which I think you should know, and I haven't bothered you for some time. Certainly, I'm an old crank and several other things, but it won't do you any harm to read the rubbish anyway, and it won't take more than a minute. How are you making out? Last year about this time, when I spoke to you, you were going to pitch right in and make a success of yourself. You were going to read up everything you could get your hands on relating to your business, and then make yourself indispensable to the boss. Have you done it? You haven't? What was the trouble? You got tired? You did not have perseverance enough to keep it up? You couldn't do it and enjoy yourself as you wanted to do at the same time? Too many things going on—too many attractions. Besides, what was the use of your killing yourself? You only go through this world once, and you guess you will be able to make a fairly good living some way or other.

Now, my boy, why not be honest about it, and confess right out that you are beaten, that you have given up the fight to be somebody—that you are content to drift with the crowd? You didn't look at it in that way? Well, perhaps not. But that doesn't alter the fact. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, but all play and no work sends Jack to the poorhouse. The billiard table, theatre and homes of mirth may be all right in a way, but they should never be allowed to interfere with a fellow's life purpose. I think I told you once before that what you will be twenty years from now—if you live—will largely depend on what you do now—on how you spend your time at present. Going on as you are doing now will just be one of the romps—a nobody. How do you like the prospect? Haven't you pluck and determination enough to pull yourself together and be a man?

CONCRETE POLES.

Show Greater Endurance for Electric Lines than Wooden Poles.

An Indiana company has been organized for the manufacture of concrete poles for line work. A series of continuous rods of twisted carbon steel especially prepared for the purpose are held in position and bound together by a spiral steel wire from the apex to the base of the pole, and the poles are moulded into adjustable forms.

All large poles or poles over thirty-five feet will be constructed in the holes by upright forms, says the Electrical World. Gains for cross-arms, holes for bolts and steps are easily provided for while the concrete is plastic.

A thirty foot pole of octagonal section constructed a year ago in a horizontal position, hauled nine squares and set up with cross arms, subjected to two summers and a winter with wires attached, is stated to show no perceptible wear or injury from use or the elements.

Some severe tests made with poles constructed in this manner, show that though very hard and durable and apparently rigid a surprising elasticity is displayed. For instance, a pole thirty feet in length when subjected to a strain of 3,100 pounds at the top deflected from a straight line thirty inches before cracking the cement. A cedar pole of like dimensions broke at 2,200 pounds, thus showing in the concrete pole a 50 per cent. greater power of resistance.

Even the cracking of the cement did not apparently weaken the strength of the concrete pole, since the re-enforcement then becomes active and takes the entire strain. In addition to the great strength imparted to the cement shaft by the carbon steel twisted rods, that spiral coil binds the body of the concrete and at the same time imparts additional strength both horizontally and longitudinally.

Accurate accounts of all expenditures for labor and material in the construction of these poles are stated to show that under average conditions the first cost of these re-enforced concrete poles is about equal to, or slightly in excess of the cost of cedar poles set in the ground. With re-enforced concrete poles the renewal cost incident to the use of wooden poles is entirely removed, as the former are absolutely indestructible.

Pat (to English traveler)—"And have you heard the latest?" E. T.—"No; What is it?" Pat—"Shure, in Ireland they can't hang a man with a 'wooden leg'." E. T.—"Never! What do they do then?" Pat—"Ach, shure, they just hang him with a rope."

"Whew! What, Lottie Brown engaged? That proves what I've always said—that, no matter how plain and bad-tempered a girl may be, there's always a fool ready to marry her. Who's the poor man?" "I am!"