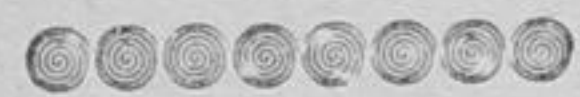


# Not Guilty ;



## Or, A Great Mistake.

### CHAPTER VI.

"Yes, that's the man. I'm sure to win now," said Billy, who was a good-looking boyish young fellow with a very flushed face. "Come along with that tenner. My game is to sit opposite to him. Then my side wins, and he loses, you see. It's always like that. He's the most unlucky chap in the world. There, what did I tell you?"

It was true, for at that moment, as the young fellow had predicted, the banker, with a quick sweep of his rake gathered in the dark man's little pile, together with those of the other players on his side, while he proceeded to cover with more chips the piles on the opposite side.

"Don't he look nasty when he loses, too," said Billy, as the object of his remarks frowned savagely, and his fingers went to his lips with the gesture Gordon felt he already knew so well. "I'll introduce you if you like."

Gordon hesitated. The chance was certainly a good one; but somehow he felt a disinclination to grasp the hand of this man in whom he took such an interest, a feeling of hostility which he could not with justice entirely explain. "Not now," he said quickly. "Tell me his name."

"His name's Usher. But if you don't want to be introduced, let me have that tenner, for goodness' sake, and come and sit by me and have a whang yourself! You're sure to win. Just follow my play!"

Gordon had not much faith in the young man's assurance, but the prospect of sitting face to face with Mr. Usher, hearing him speak, and picking up information about him from the garrulous Billy, was too good to be resisted, even at the cost of a few pounds; and he followed the young fellow to his seat, privately passing a crumpled ten-pound note into his hand as he did so.

The arrival of the two friends at the side of the table opposite to Mr. Usher did not make any difference to the run of the cards; indeed, from the moment they took their seat fortune seemed to desert that gentleman completely, and to run in Billy's favor, as he had sagaciously predicted that it would. Fives and fours fell thick and fast to the opposite players; if they drew to them they invariably broke themselves, while the banker contrived to supply himself with a long sequence of very sound sixes and sevens, which, however, were of no avail against the eights and nines of the players on our friends' side.

Billy was in the seventh heaven of delight, and even Gordon could not help taking an interest in this run of luck which was bringing him in quite a handsome sum. This was not prevent him, however, from watching Mr. Usher very keenly, and he soon came to the conclusion that he had discovered the master passion of that individual's character.

There was no doubt that this man was a gambler heart and soul, and it soon became equally certain that he was a bad loser. As pile after pile of chips, each representing a sovereign, was swept away by the fat man's relentless rake, his face became almost terrible to watch. It was not, as Gordon had decided a pleasant countenance at any time, but under the influence of his continued losses it became at last almost demoniacal in its expression. His white skin seemed to turn still whiter, and his eyes glared more fiercely, while he always furiously gnawed the end of the fingers of the hand that was not engaged for the moment in increasing the piles of chips which disappeared continually like snow in a London thaw.

The hour was drawing on, and the players were all slaking higher—some with the hope of getting back at least part of their losses before the hour came to rise, some with the feeling that luck was running for them as it might never run again, and that it was necessary to take advantage of the tide.

Billy, whom Gordon was carelessly allowing to play for both, was showing himself a master at the latter style of play, and was playing a game which, under the circumstances would have been reckless in the extreme for anyone but a millionaire; but even he grew weary of such fortune at length, and was struck with a doubt whether it was wise to tempt Providence too far.

"One last grand flutter," he said at length to Gordon. "This can't last forever. Let's bang it all on—no, I'll keep fifty pounds—and if we win we'll clear out. Are you agreeable?"

"If you like," Gordon assented, and the youth pushed the huge pile of chips forward with a laugh.

"If we win this time," he said, "I'm in clever for six months. But it's too exciting for me to watch. I must go and have a whiskey while it comes off. Look after our chips for me."

Gordon was about to protest, but the young fellow was already gone, and he was forced to turn his eyes to the table. It was an exciting moment. Nearly all the players, as if by agreement, had increased their stakes; Usher, as Gordon could see, had pushed forward all that he had on the table, and by the expression of his face the excitement was terrible for him. Gordon himself turned a little red under the influence of the moment, and next well have been excused for doing so, if not for his own sake, at

least that of his young companion, for the sum before him, and now awaiting the turn of the cards, represented a small fortune.

In breathless silence the banker cut and dealt, and the tension was over. Gordon heard a hasty exclamation from the other side, but took little notice of it. His eyes were glued on the cards, which lay face upwards on the table. His side had nine, and the banker drawing to a four had seven.

Gordon gave a sigh of relief, raked in the pile of chips, and then remembered the other side. Their faces had fallen, and the relentless rake had swept the table before them clean; on the green cloth lay a small three and a smaller two. Then Usher had lost again. Gordon's eyes turned to his seat, and he gave a start; for it was empty; the occupant was gone.

Seizing the pile of chips, he hurriedly rose from his seat, and hastened from the room. At the door he ran against Billy, who was just returning. "Here you are—take it," he said, pushing the chips into the young fellow's hands and pockets.

Billy gasped. "I thought it would come off," he said, breathlessly. "Good Lord, what a lot! But what's the matter? It isn't all mine—half's yours. And where on earth are you off to?"

"That man—Usher, he's gone! I want to catch him!" said Gordon, breathlessly, attempting to push by the amazed youth.

"Oh, Usher? What the deuce? he's gone long ago!"

"Gone? Are you sure?"

"Quite certain. I was having a breath of air at the door while this little event was coming off, and I saw him go out. He was in a deuce of a rage. He didn't even wish me good-night!"

"Billy, are you sure he's gone? But I must catch him! There is time, still!"

"Not you," said Billy, philosophically. "He's miles away by now. He took a cab. I saw him. Lucky beggar, I don't suppose we shall get one now. However, vive la bagatelle! We've got enough here to buy an automobile!"

Gordon bit his lip; yes, he had won a handsome sum, but he felt he would willingly have given it all not to have lost sight of Mr. Usher that night. Why, was not that why he was at there at all!

"Billy, where'd's he live?" he asked.

"Live? Goodness knows! I haven't an idea."

"But you know him—you called him a good fellow just now."

"So he is, when he likes. But I know no more of him than what I've seen here."

"But the other men? You know some of them—perhaps they can tell me. This is a matter of importance to me."

"They may know him as I do," returned Billy, "as I know them and as they know me. We meet here, that's all, and we punt our chips. We don't know each other's family history, or even families. You see, old chap, this isn't a club. The only qualification here is that you are introduced by someone who is himself a member, and that you pay your pound, and, by the way, of course, you're expected to play. As that's what were here for we naturally do it. However, as you seem keen, and as I've won a little fortune through your friendly tenner, I don't mind asking the men I know about your pal Usher."

"Do," said Gordon, gratefully. And the youth disappeared into the gaming-room.

He returned after a few minutes. "It's as I thought," he said. "They don't know any more than I do, or very little. Usher is a regular here. He plays high, and has been losing a lot lately. From appearances he won't hold out much longer. One man, Jervis, was at Oxford with him; hasn't seen him for years till just lately, says he has been travelling a great deal, apparently; people had a big place up north, smashed up, and Usher disappeared for a time. Jervis doesn't know where he has been, or what he is doing now, but fancies he heard somewhere he was going to marry a rich girl. He doesn't know her name, though, and isn't even sure whether it is true. No one knows his address, old chap, or anything more about him; but you can bet your boots that he'll be back here again unless he has lost his last sovereign."

Gordon sighed. It appeared certain that he would have to content himself with that, and he made his way slowly into the street with Billy.

At the corner the two friends parted, the youth dancing gaily down the street with his fortune in his pocket, Gordon making his way slowly homeward. It was almost morning: This eventful night was nearly over, but Gordon could hardly believe, in spite of the hour, that so many events had occurred since his dinner with the Major. It seemed to him that two days and nights at least must have gone by since he had passed that mysterious house in Regent Street and felt the silver pin fall on his shoulder. And what a difference the fall of that pin had made! Not so much as the fall of Newton's apple, perhaps, but sufficient to make him thoughtful about the future. This murder, which he had so strangely discovered, this lovely girl whose story he had refused to accept, and whom even against her own will, he had insisted

upon trying to save, this man who had come so cautiously creeping back to the scene of the crime; into what kind of a net had he thrust himself, and where was it all going to lead him? He could only wonder vainly and half hope that it was, as at moments it seemed it must be, all but some weird and impossible dream. But the girl? She was no dream, she was there in his house waiting for him, tended by Mother Crump, and his heart beat high as he thought of her. How would she greet him on the morrow? What would she say to him? What strange story of intrigue and crime would she unfold; and would she seem as pure, as innocent then, as much a victim of some terrible misunderstanding or treachery as she did to him now, while the glamor of the night hung round her?

### CHAPTER VII.

When Gordon returned home after his adventure at the gaming house, he found all quiet; and apparently both Mother Crump and her charge were sleeping soundly.

He was awakened later from a heavy slumber, however, by a hurried knocking at his door; and opening it, he found his gold housekeeper anxiously awaiting him.

"The young lady, sir," she said, breathlessly, "the poor young lady!"

"Yes, yes? What of her?" asked George.

"She is ill, Master George, I'm afraid; very ill. She is quite delirious, and talking so!"

George gasped at the events of the night before came back to him, and he realized the importance of this new development.

"Thanks, mother, for waking me," he said quickly. "You had better go for Dr. Seymour at once."

"I'll go, Master George, this minute. But you'll just give an eye to the poor young lady while I'm away. She does seem so very wild-like," said the old lady, hastening off to put on her bonnet. Startled, Gordon made his way to the room bed-room, but however alarming the delirium which had caused the gold housekeeper to awaken him, he saw that it had subsided now, and that there was little danger that the young girl would do harm to herself.

She lay calmly, with her flushed face turned up to the ceiling, her eyes vacant, and her lips moving quickly, but her voice hardly rose above a whisper, and had it not been for the continual motion of her fingers on the counterpane she might have seemed simply asleep.

Gordon seated himself by the bedside and watched her.

She seemed even more beautiful by daylight than he had thought her on the previous night, and she seemed even more pitiful as she lay there unconscious of his presence, her mind evidently wandering far away among other scenes, and her lips following the broken, troubled sequence of her thoughts.

"The shock of that tragedy last night has been too much for her," he thought, "and her brain had given away for the time under the awful strain. May it only be a slight attack of fever. Is she thinking now of that scene, I wonder?"

He bent his ear over the murmuring lips. "Ought I to listen?" he thought. "The whole affair is so outside all convention it is difficult to say what is right or wrong. Certainly I must discover the truth, if it is possible to do so, for her sake. I am sure she is innocent; ah, why can she not tell me her secret while she lies there unconscious!"

But in the whispered words, the disconnected sentences, the occasional broken cries, he could read no story of this crime, which he felt sure the young girl's mind was engaged in reviewing. "Claude! Claude!" the name of the murdered man recurred constantly to the girl's lips, as did often the word "father"; and once the name of the white-faced gambler "Usher" made Gordon start, murmured with a peculiar intonation which, with a ready sympathy, he decided re-echoed his own dislike, but the rest of her speech was incoherent and vague, and he sank back in his chair after a time, resigning all attempts at comprehension.

Suddenly, however, he started, and bent forward again. The word "father" had come from the girl's lips once more, but this time with such an emphasis that Gordon could not pass it by, and, comparing it with the manner in which she had spoken it before, his mind commenced to follow out a chain of reasoning.

It had not been a cry of affection, the natural appeal in an hour of distress of a child to a parent, but rather there was something in it of sudden fright, horror, and momentary repulsion which made it ring strangely in his ears, and caused him to wonder if it were not there that the clue lay hidden which he sought so eagerly.

He was aroused, however, from his musing by the sound of voices in the hall below, and presently Mother Crump appeared again, accompanied by a round-faced jolly-looking man of fifty or so, who shook Gordon heartily by the hand, and turned without further delay to the patient on the bed.

"Brain fever," he said, after a moment or two. "I'll just give Mrs. Crump some directions and join you downstairs in a few minutes, Colonel. This is a case of sudden shock, I suppose? You can tell me how it came about when I come down."

He joined Gordon in his study, presently and shrugged his shoulders slightly in response to his inquiries.

"One can never tell in a case like this," he said. "Probably—I say probably—all will go well. The young lady has a splendid vitality, and she has youth on her side. But in any case it might be a long business, and will require too much watching for our old friend up there. You must get a trained nurse. I will give you a note to one I know, who will do everything admirably."

"Certainly," returned Gordon eagerly.

"Only tell me all that is necessary. I want everything to be done that possibly can be done."

"I imagine so," said the doctor, with a little glance, half humorous, half sympathetic. "You can rely on me. But now tell me how this came about; and who this young lady is."

Gordon looked into the fire for a few minutes before replying.

"I wonder what you will think of me, doctor," he said at last. "If I say that I cannot tell you; or rather, if I ask-you to let me tell you at some later time? You know me?"

The doctor laughed. "You, and your family. I should do so, if twenty years' acquaintance is anything."

"Yes," said Gordon. "And under those circumstances you must not think the worse of me for my request. I know I could trust you if I told you now all that I shall in all probability tell you before long. That is not, however, entirely the question. I am considering you, yourself, almost as much as anyone; and believe me when I say that I think it better to ask you for the present at least, to allow me to remain silent. This is, of course, supposing you do not insist, in your position as a medical man."

Doctor Seymour shook his head. "I shall certainly not insist," he said, good-naturedly. "So far as the case goes at present, I do not think it would make the least difference if I knew my patient's name and the cause of her sudden illness; though, of course, I cannot say how it might be later on. At present there is nothing to be done but wait, taking meanwhile, the usual precautions. You will find the nurse I recommend thoroughly efficient, and I shall call frequently."

"There is no need for alarm?"

"I will not say that, but certainly there is no immediate need."

"And supposing all goes well, supposing she recovers rapidly, when will she be able to speak, doctor?"

The doctor shook his head. "In all probability—but, my dear Colonel, it is impossible to say. Not for some days at all events."

Gordon escorted him to the door, and returned to his study, where he continued his inspection of the glowing depths of the fire. "Some days," he thought; "some days! And this afternoon London will be ringing with the news of this murder; some days before she can tell me her story, before I can be sure if she is really innocent or guilty; and, meanwhile, Scotland Yard may be searching all England for her. And she will be hidden in my house! Surely when I made that rash declaration to the Major last night I had no idea I should so soon be in opposition to him!"

(To be continued.)

## About the Farm

### DO SOME WEEDING.

If there is ever a time in which a man is justifiable in giving barn-room to an unprofitable animal that time is surely not now. As a matter of fact, why should we keep animals that are a loss to us, by reason of their not being in the class of profit makers? A man may have a good cow and by some accident or curable sickness she may be rendered unprofitable for a period of longer or shorter duration. If she has even chances of recovery and coming back to her normal usefulness it is of course wise to keep her. If one has a sow that has been in the habit of producing good litters of about ten pigs and is a good mother to them and she accidentally slips a cog and comes out of the brush some day with a sham-faced litter of three or four, it is right and proper to give her another try, writes a correspondent.

But the sow that is poor because she is so constituted, that will not show a profit even with the best of care and a year-round full balanced ration, she should have her ration broadened even to the point of making her fat and her career be closed as quickly as possible.

The sow that will persist in having small litters, or fails to keep her litters growing, or is in any way an unsatisfactory mother, should be changed to pork, without further ceremony.

We complain about labor being high and a great deal of inefficient labor again complains about living, rents, shoes, clothing and things to eat being high. I have only a superficial knowledge of economic conditions in the cities, but I suspect that many a man with country breeding in his veins; a man who on the farm would be able to do good farm work and command best farm wages, with his wife helping with the garden and lot and a couple of pigs and some chickens, his children growing up as strong and indigenous as weeds, or wind-blown, sun-kissed flowers, strong because their bare feet touch the earth, and clean of heart and mind, because nature holds no corrupting environment; I suspect there are plenty of these men on ten and twelve, fifteen and twenty dollars per week "salaries," fixing in the towns from hand to mouth with neither hand nor mouth ever very full, who have the consumer's right to complain that living is high. I do not like to be harsh or hard on any man, but I do like to see some of the misguided town-seekers pinched back to their birth-rights in the country.

My reader may be complaining that I am getting away from my subject, but really all economic questions are so foundationally established on the farm that we agricultural fellows who talk can allow ourselves the widest kind of latitude and still not go astray.

Of course labor is high because laborers are few—a case of supply and demand. Personally I do not think labor is any higher than the general prices of farm products. The farm worker is not living any better or saving any more money than is due him. My complaint against labor is of the quality. I don't object to paying a dollar and a half to a dollar-and-a-half man, but the fly in my ointment is having to work so much harder to make up the deficit twenty-five cents. Now we have high-priced labor and much of it of low quality, and one cannot in the country, imagine anything much higher than corn at seventy-five cents per bushel, oats at fifty-five, hay twenty dollars per ton and up, who bran at twenty-six dollars a ton by car-load, and no other feed in the long list of questionable mixtures quotable at less than twenty-five dollars.

My unburned brother, there is not much pleasure and certainly no profit in associating the poor cow and the unprofitable hog. That you have yourself raised the corn and oats and the hay does not in the least alter the figures of values. If hay is worth twenty dollars to sell, it should return that much when fed or there is no sense in feeding it.

Feeding seventy cent corn and getting back for it but sixty cents from the cow, the steer or the hog, is always a losing game, and it is a game which a vast number of farmers are playing, or rather working. They don't know how they are doing, or most of them would stop it if they would keep at it that the traditions of their practices might not be disturbed.

At present selling prices of cow and hog products there are cows and hogs that will pay for seventy-five cent corn and for high-priced labor, but the profits from such are not so big that out of them the farmer can support a lot of other non-producing animals, not worth their salt. If we would systematically go about getting rid of all the money losers how vastly would we add to the profits of the money makers!

If all the unprofitable cows could be subtracted from our dairy problem this coming winter the price of butter would easily reach fifty cents a pound, and some of the country-bred boys, hanging on the city, would begin to hanker for the cream pots back on the farms.

### FARM NOTES.

There is but one method of saving all the manure on the farm that can be profitably used by the general farmer, and that is to place it all on one heap, and apply it together.

It is little matter how lime may be applied to the soil. Sometimes it is most useful as a top-dressing, this especially on old grass lands on which moss and the dead rubbish of a meadow have accumulated. The lime tends to decompose this stuff and make it available as food for the grass.

If you want good potatoes, worth something as food, do not put off digging them until late in the fall. Often potatoes are left in the ground until there is danger of freezing. If there is much rain they watersoak; if it is dry they sunburn, get tough and strong, take the word of a farmer's wife. The sooner potatoes are dug after the vines ripen and fall down, the better.

There may fairly be two opinions about the advisability of clearing up the roadsides by cutting down all the vines, ferns, bushes and small trees that grow there. The road looks neater, but less picturesque and inviting without them. Then the shelter and food of innumerable birds is destroyed, and along with this the pleasure they give and the protection from insects they help to provide. Some close thickets about a farm are necessary to the birds, and the most economical place to have this growth is outside the fence. Plenty of fruit-bearing trees, such as wild cherry, hawthorn, mulberry, etc., ought to be there, too.

### LICORICE ROOT.

W. Buy Half a Million Dollars Worth a Year from Asia Minor.

Licorice root grows wild in the fields of Asia Minor, and few attempts have been made thus far toward its cultivation.

Until fifty years ago it was practically unused. The root grown on the Mender plains is the best in the world, being superior to that found in Syria, Mesopotamia, Caucasia, Siberia or China.

The exporters of the root lease licorice bearing lands for a period of from three to five years. Digging usually begins in October, and is done by peasants, who at the end of each day deliver the root to the various depots and receive payment according to the quantity they bring.

The root is piled up and exposed to the air until about May or June. It then weighs only half as much as originally, owing to the thorough drying process to which it has been subjected. The root is sorted to obtain the qualities known as "debris" and "bagette," both of which are highly valued.

Licorice root is shipped in bales weighing about 220 pounds each, pressed by hydraulic machinery and strapped with iron bands. The United States is the principal consumer of this class of licorice, which is shipped there in its natural state as raw material.

It is converted into licorice paste for medicinal purposes, and is especially used for flavoring plug tobacco. Licorice root in its original state can also be found in any drug store.

One day, while two boys were talking together, one asked the other a question. He said, "Do you know what the Scotch mean when they say 'A dinn ken'?" The other replied with the correct answer, "I don't know." The first boy replied, "It's time you did, then."