Not Guilty;

Or, A Great Mistake.

CHAPTER VIII.

Gordon had been right when he said that that afternoon London would be ringing with the news of the Regent Street murder.

He had hardly gone a hundred yards from his house, on an after-lunch stroll, before his ears were assailed with the cries of the newsboys, and his eyes dazzled by the contents bills of the various evening journals, all making the most of what they could not disguise was a welcome sensation, and all vieing with one another in spreading over the largest surface their small amount of information.

For it was really very little after all which they seemed to know about this mysterious crime, Gordon noticed, half sorry, half relieved.

The young man (Claude Carlton, as George had imagined,) had been found dead that morning by the housekeeper who wailed on him and attended to his rooms. She did not sleep in the house, but came early and left late at night. She had not discovered the body for some time after her arrival, as she had not gone into the drawing-room, and had supposed Mr. Carlton in bed. She at once raised an alarm, and the police had taken possession of the apartment. The woman, who was very upset, could, however, give no information which could be of the least service in solving the mystery of her masters death. She had noticed nothing suspicious when she left the apartment the previous night; she had not been informed by her master that he expected any visitors, nor had she noticed anything in his manner which could cause her to imagine he was in trouble, or anticipated any danger. Her master had been, she explained, a very open-handed, pleasant gentleman, but he talked to her very little, and he seemed to prefer to get her off the premises always as soon as her work was finished, so that he might live his own life his own way, she imagined. In this manner she had seen nothing of any of his friends, who came, when they came at all, only in the evening; and she knew very little about him; indeed, she had only been serving him for two months (the time he had occupied the apartment), and, as it happened, no one, so far, had been able to add much to the woman's story.

It transpired later that Mr. Carlton had only lately arrived in England from abroad, and apparently had few friends or acquaintances,and also that those few knew very little about him. His solicitor, who appeared on the scene presently, was able to identify him as a man of considerable means who had been for some years a great traveller. So far as he knew, he had no near relations, nor was he aware that there was anyone who bore a grudge against his client; but he was compelled to confess that he had never been on intimate terms with the murdered man, and so was unable to say that such a person, or persons, did not exist. He had understood that his client had intended shortly to get married; his client himself informed him of the fact; but the name of the lady had not been mentioned, nor had he any idea who she was.

That the deed had been committed with some sharp instrument, probably a large knife; that it was murder and not suicide, and that it had not been done for the purpose of robbery, soon became evident.

It was with breathless interest that Gordon scanned the papers during the next day or so, and realized that in the task of solving this mystery—so far as the reporters knew, at least,—the police started no better equipped than he, himself, Indeed, they appeared less well informed; for they were ignorant as to who had visited Mr. Carlton's rooms on the night of the murder; while Gordon knew of at least two people who had been there—the young girl and Mr. Usher.

What had this man Usher been doing there? What was his part in this affair and what were his relations with the young girl now lying delirious at his house? That was Gordon's preoccupation; that was what he felt he must ascertain before he could feel any assurance of saving her, and how was he to accomplish it?

She herself could not tell him; would she if she could? There remained only two people who might know the secret of that night's happenings—Usher, and "her" father; for Gordon had concluded from the young girl's delirious murmurs, from the continual association of her father's name with those of the murdered man and Mr. Usher, and from the tone in which she called upon him, that the former had also been present at the young man's murder, or at least during that evening, and he felt that from him at least he might learn the truth.

Yet why had he not appeared. He must have missed his daughter; he must have heard of this murder; how was it he had made no sign?

The whole affair was so mysterious, so apparently impenetrable, that Gordon hardly liked to let his mind rest long upon any of the numerous hypotheses which occurred to him: but he determined at least to attempt to put himself into communication with the white-faced Mr. Usher and this mysterious father; and, meanwhile, he felt, with a thrill of satisfaction, that his intimacy with the Major would help to keep him informed of the progress which Scotland Yard was making in the affair, while those authorities could not, for some time at least, have any idea whence came his interest.

CHAPTER IX.

George Gordon had formed a theory that when Usher had stopped at the hotel in Northumberland Avenue on the night he had so slosely followed him, he had done so in order to inquire for the young girl whose absence from the flat in Regent Street he could not account for. It was therefore at this hotel that he commenced his researches.

They brought him little result, however. The hotel, one of the largest in London, was crowded with visitors, and, as Gordon did not even know the name of the people he sought, it was some time before he could make the hall-porter, whose assistance he obtained, understand what he meant. A little money spent judiciously, however, soon had the wits of the employes exercised in his service; and he fixed at last upon a couple of visitors who, it was evident, were the objects of his inquiries.

These were a gentleman and his daughter who had arrived but lately from the Riviera. Their name was Gaunt—Mr. Gaunt and Miss Vivienne Gaunt, as they were entered upon the hotel books. They had taken rooms for a stay of some duration, but they had not been seen for a day or two. This fact did not, however, appear to disturb the hotel people, as Mr. Gaunt and his daughter were in the habit of spending a good deal of time out of doors, and, moreover, they had paid for their rooms in advance. It was supposed that they were visiting at the house of some friend or other, Gordon gathered, and, of course, in an hotel of that size, the doings of a couple of guests did not attract much attention.

They were entered as "from the Riviera," and Gordon could discover nothing further concerning them, save that one of the chambermaids described Miss Gaunt as very beautiful, and Mr. Gaunt as a fine, "handsome gentleman."

Gordon's next intention was to return to the gambling house of Park Lane, where he hoped sooner or later to come across the white-faced gambler, Usher, but at the time he concluded his inquiries at the hotel it was still early in the afternoon, and the idea came to him to spend the time before dusk in paying a visit to his friend the Major. This latter must be fully cognizant of the progress made by the police in the affair of the mysterious murder, and Gordon was intimate enough with him to feel sure that he might gather a considerable amount of information from him without the official having the least idea of the vital interest he would take in it.

He found the Major seated at his desk in a very comfortable room, which he called his study, at headquarters. He was pulling away at a big cigar, and before him on his desk, in a space hollowed out from the mass of papers which littered it, stood a whisky and soda. There was a cheerful fire burning in the grate, and the room looked warm and cosy, but the Major's heavily-lined face wore a worried look, and his fingers were drumming doubtfully upon the table as Gordon entered.

"Just the man I wanted to see," he said, looking up, "you never bore one, Gordon, and you've got a way of putting your finger on a weak point which is peculiarly your own. These fellows of mine, you know, they're always boring me, and, well, sometimes I think their skulls as as thick as—as my own."

"What's the matter?" asked Gordon, seating himself, and helping himself to a cigar.

The Major grunted and bit savagely at his cigar. "The matter is that I am sick of this job," he said, "I am going to resign. I've got a poor lot of men, and I am beginning to think I'm not much good myself. You know what I said to you the other night. I wished you would join us. I wish to goodness you would. I wish you were in my place!"

"What is the particular cause of this display of pessimism?" asked Gordon.

"The particular cause? This beastly murder's the particular cause, or, rather, the last straw."

"Which murder?"

"Which? Well, thank goodness, there's only one on our hands at present. The Regent Street affair. You must have heard of it; the papers are full of the thing."

George listened with a calm face but a beating heart.

"Yes, I've heard of it," he said. "But you don't mean to say you are puzzled: that your theories won't work? I thought——"

"You didn't think anything. You know we're only mortal like the rest of the world. We all run up against snags sometimes. We've struck a snag here."

"You can't find your man, then? You haven't got a clue?"

"Find our man. I tell you we don't know enough to be even sure that it was a man——"

Gordon started, but the Major went on.

"For all we know it might have been a monkey. All we're pretty sure of is that it wasn't suicide. You see, my dear Gordon, this is a devilish difficult affair. You laugh at us policemen, I know, you with your bush-tracking ideas; but I wonder what you'd do in a case like this. Here's this man found murdered, and not a sign to show who did it, or what it was done for. Well, that's all right; we have had things like that before, but then we've always had something to work on—somewhere to start from. Here, what have we got?"

Gordon hesitated. "Well, from a purely amateur point of view," he returned, "I should say you have the man, his history, and his friends."

"Certainly, and in any other case that would be precisely where we should come in," said the Major quickly, not realizing that Gordon was practically repeating his own theories to him. "But, my dear Gordon, in this devil of an affair everything seems to have conspired to go against us. This man Carlton had no history and no friends."

"No history? No friends."

"Well, of course he had, but they are of no use to us. That is to say, what we have been able to find out is of very little use. If the man had wanted to make the discovery of his murderer difficult he could not have managed better. To all intents and purposes, so far as we are concerned, his life began six months ago, and in that six months' there isn't a blessed thing we can discover which seems to bear directly on this Regent Street affair."

Gordon was sitting with his back to the light, and otherwise attempting to disguise any expression his features might be showing by pulling fiercely at his cigar and wreathing himself in smoke. He felt that the Major was speaking frankly, and that, at least for the moment, there was no danger brewing, and he replied with just as much interest in his tone as he felt might lead his compinion on to talk while not exciting suspicion.

"Unfortunate," he said. "But what do you mean about the six months?"

"Why the man had only been in Europe six months. He had apparently been some years in Australia, where he made a good deal of money. Then he came to Europe—for a good time, I suppose. He seemed to have been a pretty rapid character, and he made things hum for time, but that's just where our misfortunes come in. He made no friends, contracted no binding relations. A young fellow of lively tastes, with plenty of money, goes round Europe for a holiday, and sets himself to have a good time. He makes plenty of acquaintances, women chiefly, he plays a little, goes to the theatre, gads about and moves on; the kind of people he meets are on the same game themselves; they don't trouble about him, he does not care what becomes of them. I could put my hand on fifty people who met this man Carlton; I can't find one who knew anything of him, save that he was a pleasant acquaintance who had plenty of money and kept his private affairs to himself. His own lawyer knows very little more. He was passed on to him by his agents in Melbourne. Credentials of the best as regards finance, what more does the lawyer want to know? I can't find the name of a single person who was in the habit of going to Regent Street rooms. Carlton apparently kept his pied a terre to himself; his housekeeper used to leave early in the evening, but she has an idea that not many people came to see him, and no one came often."

"But his life in Australia?"

"Well, of course we can trace him there, but think of the time it will take to contrive it. No, there is only one chance for us."

"And that?"

"The man got engaged to be married."

Gordon started, but held his breath.

"Engaged?"

"Yes; his letters show that. He met the girl on the Riviera."

"The Riviera?" Gordon felt himself change color.

"It was apparently a pretty rapid affair," continued the Major, "for they could not have known each other for long. However, Carlton was very rich, and that goes a long way. He must have been a bad lot though, for it is quite evident getting engaged made no difference to his mode of living. He seems to have carried on just the same in spite of the young lady."

"And who was the young lady?"

"Ah, that's where our bad luck pursues us again. She is a Miss Gaunt, and she's got a father. But they, too, are as mysterious as the rest of the people in this devil of an affair. In fact, more so, for we know practically nothing of them. The letters tell us very little but their names. Carlton met them on the Riviera, where they were travelling, and got engaged to the girl. We have only the letters, and one or two of the father's, and these contain, as it happens, nothing which could put us on their permanent habitation or their friends. It is bad luck, rank bad luck all through. But that's nothing to the last thing."

"And that is?"

"Why, they followed Carlton to England, came to London, put up at the Dorian Hotel, stayed there a few days—and disappeared."

"Disappeared?"

"Disappeared. Of course we shall find them. They probably haven't run away. They seem perfectly respectable people. They paid for their rooms, and their luggage seems quite right. Still, of course, we must get hold of them, for what they could tell us must be valuable. The strange thing is that they haven't turned up already; they must have seen the news. And I am bound to say that I don't think they can have had anything to do with the poor fellow's death."

Gordon gave a sigh of relief; that was something at all events.

(To be continued).

Mrs. Nexdore—"I bought a new piece of music for my daughter to play, and I think she'll master it soon. She was trying all the afternoon." Miss Peppery—"Indeed she was; very."

About the Farm

CARE OF YOUNG PIGS.

The prospect is that the supply of bacon hogs will be short the coming winter and spring, and that prices will rule high in this country. The outlook is the same in England, where the packers and dealers are complaining bitterly of the shortage of pigs, and are forced to handle more second-class product from outside sources than they would if the supply of first-class were sufficient. Many farmers fail to make a success of feeding fall pigs during the winter months, and many have become discouraged through failure and have abandoned the work. On the other hand not a few have succeeded satisfactorily and made it a profitable business. What is the secret of their success? It is a question others should observe and study, in order that they may share in the good prices going. Probably, part of the difficulty in carrying pigs through the winter in a growing and improving condition is due to having the litters come too late in the fall. September and October are the favorite months, to have them come, as then they may be kept running out on the ground and the grass a good part of the time, for two or three months' treatment; which is essential to the growth of bone, the development of muscle, and laying of the foundation of a vigorous constitution, which will enable them to withstand the effects of the enforced confinement due to snow and the cold weather in winter. Much trouble is experienced from crippling of pigs in winter, apparently from rheumatism, but probably from the inactive livers and imperfect digestion or derangement of the stomach,

DUE TO LACK OF EXERCISE,

and possibly from feeding too much sloppy food, which, in cold weather, may well account for a slow circulation of the blood and consequent inaction of the organs of the system which perform the functions of digestion and assimilation. If there is a reason to believe that the ailments which so often check the growth and health of pigs in winter are due to the system of feeding above indicated, why not try the system of feeding by which the grain is fed dry, either whole or ground, and the drink given in a separate trough, to be taken when required. We have seen pigs thrive admirably in winter in very ordinary quarters, fed in this way. Most of the hogs raised in the corn-growing States are fed whole corn, on the ear or shelled and scattered on the ground or on plank platforms; and no where are so many so successfully raised and fitted for market, the principal difficulty there being that the hogs, being kept in such large numbers bunch together too closely, and are liable to become over-heated from contact of their bodies, and to catch cold when separated. It is, we believe, sound doctrine that food eaten slowly, and thoroughly masticated and mixed with the saliva of the glands of the mouth, is best fitted for being readily digested, the exertion required to pick up thinly scattered grains of meal in a flat-bottomed trough tends to keep up the blood circulation, and the process of mastication is much more complete than in swallowing sloppy food. In the early years of farming in this country, it was the common practice to keep porkers till they were fifteen to eighteen months old before fattening; they were carried over the first winter almost invariably by scattering whole peas on the frozen ground, or on plank floors, or in troughs, and

GIVEN WATER SEPARATELY,

and were fattened at least to great weights on whole peas, with water to drink, yet rheumatism and winter crippling was practically an unknown ailment. Pigs seldom go wrong in summer where they are allowed to run on the ground, with access to grit and grass, and if we cannot have summer conditions in winter, the best we can do, it would appear, is to get as near as we can to it by adopting methods of treatment, which aid nature to do its work, despite the handicaps of frost and snow. To this end, it is surely worth while to experiment, by supplying the needs of the animal system, by providing bone-and-muscle-forming foods, and feeding them in the manner best calculated to aid digestion and assimilation. Well cured clover or alfalfa hay, cut up fine, and fed in combination with pulped mangles or sugar beets and a little meal, should answer admirably for the purpose, and should greatly reduce the cost of production, as compared with the common practice of heavy feeding of grain meals, much of which is often worse than wasted when the animals are knocked off their balance, and lose ground, instead of gaining in condition and weight. It would cost but little to provide a load or two of gravel in a covered place, or to carry over the coal ashes for this purpose, or to partially burn, under cover of earth, some of the rough wood lying around the yards to produce charcoal, to which the pigs could be given access. A mixture of salt and sulphur and wood ashes, as a condiment, kept under cover in a low flat box, so the pigs can help themselves, may prove the savior of life and vigor. These are but hints which may serve a helpful purpose in solving the problem of successful winter production of bacon to meet the good demand and prices of the present. At least the suggestions offered are open to discussion, which is earnestly invited. Who will be the first to take a hand in it, and add his quota to the solution of the question?

LIVE STOCK NOTES.

It costs as much to raise a scrub animal as it does a blue ribbon winner, and there is a wide difference in their respective values at selling time.

Be careful to leave at home such poultry that does not dress off good, plump, yellow carcass, and a full breast. Any fowls having feathered legs and lots of dark pin feathers are not the desirable kind for presenting to particular customers.

Give the horse a reasonable quantity of water just before feeding him. This three times a day. If he has been hard driven or worked, allow him first to rest at least fifteen minutes—30 minutes would be better. He will work better, feel better and keep better by this method than by any other possible way of management.

It is the breeder's maxim that the quicker an animal can be put in condition for the block the greater the proportionate profits. Good breeding, careful feeding, and early maturity are very essential to success in cattle breeding. It is well for the breeder to remember that competition is sharper and prices lower than in former times, and that economy in those items of greatest cost, food and time should be considered in meeting the demands of the market. A steer can be fed to a weight of 1,000 pounds cheaper than it can be fed to a weight of 2,000 pounds; and while the immediate profit is smaller, it will come quicker.

A NOCTURNAL NAUMACHIA.

(By A. Banker.)

The twilight has faded away, and night has asserted her sway. Dense masses of black cloud drive swiftly across the heavens, from time to time obscuring the brilliant stars, which ever and anon, as the passing clouds come and go, again and again scintillate and sparkle in the canopy of the skies; their combined light sufficient to bring into bold relief the jutting bluffs, each crowned with a heavily armed, almost impregnable fort, on each side of the bay; and the foaming breakers, lashed by the strong breeze, advance and recede to and fro on the shingle and pebbles of the shore with a reverberating gurgling stridor, the long white line of surf plaintly visible in the starlight.

Again the heavens are obscured by banks of heavy cloud, and all is shadowed in sable darkness. But only for a moment. For from the fort at the western end of the bay a brilliant tapering ray of dazzling light of lustrous splendor flashes out, slowly sweeping the horizon, illuminating a wide section of the ocean and revealing a fleet of destroyers, protected by a cruiser and a battleship. In a moment, with a deafening roar, the great guns of the forts, and also those of another powerful fort on the summit of the downs, rend the air with their discharges; while the rattle of some smaller weapons adds to the crashing din. But the warships, finding themselves unequally matched, are, with their own searchlights, signalling apparently for assistance by throwing flashes on the clouds; until the forts, by a well directed, constantly shifting beam of light, render the signalling almost nugatory. In the meantime the destroyers, every light concealed, are speeding away out of danger; while the larger vessels, realizing the futility of the attack, also beat an ignominious retreat; though continuing for a time to fire their great guns at the fort.

At length the thunder of the booming artillery subsides, the flashing light-beams cease, and all is once more calm and peace.

But all this reverberating uproar is but a naumachia—a quaint old term for a mock sea-fight—a sham fight; only an episode in the usual autumn manœuvres of the fleet; and there is no roar of projectiles, no bursting of great shells, and happily no cries and agonized groans of wounded and dying men. But if angels could shed tears, how at an actual battle must they weep at the sight of men furiously immolating each other, and in frenzied rage madly slaughtering their foes. And how much more poignant must be their grief, when men are falling all around, to see the spirits of, alas it is to be feared, some, who had forgotten their God, carried off to the doom. Happy they who had lived the life of the righteous, and who had laid their sins upon Him by whose stripes we may all be healed. For then those bright angels would escort their ransomed spirits up to the realms of glory.

IN SPITE OF THE SPEECH.

A young barrister was conducting his first case. He had evidently conned his argument till he knew it by heart.

Before he had proceeded ten minutes with his oratorical effort the judge had decided the case in his favor, and had told him so. Despite this, the young lawyer would not cease. It seemed that he had attained such a momentum that he could not stop.

Finally, his lordship leaned forward and, in the politest of tones, said:—

"Mr. B——, notwithstanding your argument, the court has concluded to decide this case in your favor."

Wise men cultivate the art of taking things easy.