

# Not Guilty ;



## Or, A Great Mistake.

### CHAPTER XV.—(Continued).

She turned when he had closed the door, and Gordon saw that she was trembling. "I had told her to say that I was not here to anyone who came," she said, "I was afraid of being followed and also I expected someone who—"

"Usher?" asked Gordon, yet while the words passed his lips, he regretted the question.

Miss Gaunt bit her lip, but said nothing. "My father? How is he?" she asked after a moment.

"He is well, quite well," returned Gordon, "or rather he is well in health, but worried about you. It is to tell him your news that I have come here to-day."

"But how is it—where have you seen him?" asked the young girl, astonished.

"I left him not an hour ago in a house down at the East End. How I came to meet him was an accident, purely an accident, but that I can tell you later. I happened to mention your illness and your—forgive me—your hasty departure from my house—"

Miss Gaunt's pale face flushed, and she smiled slightly, while Gordon continued—

"And I found to my surprise that he knew nothing of it, though the person who had given him the latest news he had of you, was aware that you had been in my house and also that you had left it—was he not?"

Miss Gaunt nodded, and remained a moment in thought.

"Mr. Usher," she said at last.

Gordon nodded. "Mr. Usher," he said.

"I do not understand why he did not tell my father at least a part of the truth," Miss Gaunt said after a moment, "but perhaps he had a reason which was good. He did know I had left your house, for—I wrote and told him so."

"Yes," he said, "I guessed that. Here is the letter."

Miss Gaunt stretched out her hand and took the paper from him, while her eyes met Gordon's inquiringly.

"My letter?" she said.

Gordon bowed. "I have, of course, not read it," he said. "And yet when I say 'of course,' I am wrong, for I very nearly did read it. You must forgive me. I had better tell you the truth. I do not like Mr. Usher—"

Miss Gaunt was staring at him fixedly, but she made no sign; and Gordon continued: "I may be wrong—you must forgive me for that, too. When I heard that he was keeping your father, and had kept him in the dark, about several things, I considered him to blame. Your father wished to have news of you from a reliable source, and he begged me from giving him word of you. I went to Mr. Usher, and I asked him for your address. He denied having it. It happened that there was a photograph of yourself and some papers lying on a table by his side—"

"For the life of him Gordon could not have helped bringing in the photograph, and watching the flush rise to Miss Gaunt's cheek as her eye met his, but he had no time to analyze her look, and went on—

"While I talked, he seized one of the papers and attempted to hide it. I naturally thought that he was prevaricating, and that the papers had to do with yourself. I took it, and read the address—"

He stopped suddenly, for Miss Gaunt was looking at the wound on his temple.

"You are hurt," she said, quickly.

"You fought?"

Her tone made Gordon's heart beat suddenly. "It is nothing," he said. "Do you care?"

The young girl's face turned white, and for a moment he feared she was about to faint; and he bitterly regretted having allowed the question to escape his lips, for she turned away and, walking to the window, stood silent, looking out into the street.

"Forgive me, Miss Gaunt," he said gently.

It seemed to him that she bent her head, but she did not turn round, and he spoke again.

"Let me continue what I have to say," he went on. "I have found you here and I can tell your father that, so far, you are well and safe, but what of the future?"

"The future?" The words were murmured only, but Gordon caught them, and the tone in which they were uttered.

"The future," he repeated. "Yes, what of the future? Oh, forgive me, but consider what you do! Hesitate; go to your father from whom indeed you ought not to be separated; delay; I beg of you, before you put your future into the hands of this man Usher, who—"

Miss Gaunt took a step forward, looking him in the face, then, slowly she held out to him the letter which he had brought. "Read it," she said.

"Shall I?"

"You may," she returned, with her eyes still on his.

Gordon opened the paper, and read—

"Since you left me yesterday, I have been thinking—thinking deeply. Safety may lie in the path which you suggest—safety for my father, which is everything, safety for myself, too, which I assure you carries little weight towards

the decision you wish for. But does safety lie that way, even for my father? There may be another and a better and a juster way. It is I who am really the guilty one, and not my father; it must be so. It was I, and I alone, who was to blame for that terrible, terrible thing. I was the cause; is there any doubt? and it is I who should pay the penalty. I am thinking over it, I have thought over it, and I have decided; but this much I will grant to you—this much, I think—I am sure—I owe to you. If nothing happens, I, for one, will do nothing for a week. I will do nothing rashly, but, I am afraid, I am afraid, I cannot tell you to hope that I shall change my mind. I must beg you to leave me to myself for a week. At the end of that time you can come to me, and I will tell you what I have decided to do. Until then, believe me, I am grateful for what you have done for us.

"Vivienne Gaunt."

Gordon felt himself turn color as he read the letter, and his heart beat fast. Then he had been right from the very first moment he had seen her. She had not committed that deed, she could not have done it, for did not her letter say as much? A person who has committed a crime does not speak as the writer of that letter did. There was some mystery, some fearful misunderstanding; as he had always known there was, but Gordon had always felt that she was innocent, and now he knew it.

Yet the way was very dark. How was it that her father could believe her guilty, and what did it mean in her letter to Usher when she spoke of her father's safety and talked as if, to Usher, it was he that was the guilty one. Was it possible that to the daughter the father seemed the guilty one, and to the father the daughter—and what devilish trap had this Usher laid?

"He looked up at last. 'A week,' he said, 'well, a week is something. You will keep to that letter?'"

"Certainly; what do you mean?"

"Will you give me that week, too?"

"I do not understand you."

"Will you give me that week in which to work for you, to prove to you that I was right when I took you away from that room that night, when I thought that I could save you?"

"Save me—me! Ah, Colonel Gordon, you do not understand. You mean to be kind, but to save me would mean—But you have just read my letter."

"It would mean to lose your father?" returned Gordon. "Well, Miss Gaunt, I promise you that it shall not mean that. I promise you, if you will, that rather than your father should be lost, you shall sacrifice yourself. Oh, yes, for that is what your letter means. But there may be yet another way, which neither you, nor even perhaps, this Mr. Usher, has thought of."

"What way? What way can there be?"

"Forgive me, it would be useless to tell you now. But this I can tell you; I believe from the bottom of my heart, Miss Gaunt, that there is another way. Will you give me that week—me—in which to try and find it?"

He stepped forward, and, after a moment's hesitation, held out his hand. For a moment they stood facing one another. The young girl's lovely eyes looked into his, and Gordon meeting them with his own keen grey ones felt that she understood him.

"The future may not be as dark for you as you thought it," he said, gently; "if I am not mistaken in myself. If I could only feel as sure that my own might be as bright!"

Miss Gaunt did not answer, but her hand met Gordon's, and raising it gently to his lips, without looking at her again, he left the room.

### CHAPTER XVI.

"A week," thought Gordon. "I wonder how much I can do in a week! We shall see; however, the first step must be to let Gaunt know how his daughter is."

He was turning in the direction of the East End, when he noticed that the evening was already drawing on, and remembered that he had had nothing to eat since morning. He concluded that he would have a hasty meal somewhere in the neighborhood, before making his way down to Minden Lane, and he was standing still looking about him, when a man passed him slowly, turned and came back, glancing quickly at him as he did so.

Gordon started, and looked after him. He had a quick eye and a particularly good memory for faces, and he felt that he knew this man. Who was he and where had he seen him before? And then he smiled. The fellow was one of the men in his regiment, of course, a corporal, who had enlisted at the beginning of the war, and retired after serving through it.

Gordon was walking on again, when suddenly his heart leaped. "Corporal Sterrett," that was the man. Gordon remembered now, and felt himself turn cold. The fellow was, or had been, in the Police Force before volunteering for Africa, and he recollected all about him now. He had borne an excellent character on his enlistment, but somehow or other had not been a great success in the regiment. Called variously "Stoat,"

or "Ferret," he had never succeeded in making himself popular with his fellows, who, perhaps bore a natural antipathy to a man in blue, and he had never distinguished himself by any particular attention to duty, though he had done well enough to become a corporal. He was a man who had a great fondness for strolling about by himself, "staring and ferreting about," as his comrades had put it, and had always been suspected of giving an eye more to the unearthing of hidden Boer treasures than to distinguishing himself in any of the numerous sorties round Rothville.

Yet Gordon knew that the man had been useful to him on many occasions, when his peculiar habits had put him in possession of details connected with the Boer besiegers—details which would have escaped the eyes of any one but "Stoat," and which often proved invaluable to Gordon in his defence of the beleaguered town.

And the man was a Police Volunteer, he had been in the Force, in what position Gordon could not remember, and in all probability had returned to it. He was in plain clothes now; was he in the detective branch, and it was this thought which had made Gordon's heart beat? Was he watching Vivienne? Were they already so nearly on her track?

Gordon shuddered as he remembered "Stoat's" silent, dogged ways and keen penetration. If he had only a week before him, and this man against him, already at Vivienne's door, what hope could there be? Yet was there not a chance that he might be mistaken? Many things, notably his old wandering habits, might have brought the "Ferret" to this neighborhood, and it might, after all, be but the purest accident that Gordon had met him there as he came from Vivienne's house.

He determined to decide the question before he left the neighborhood, and, walking on carelessly, he turned a corner and waited. If "Stoat" had seen and recognized him, he might follow; or, if he was indeed watching the house, he might stay there, and when Gordon returned, as he intended to do if he saw no sign of the fellow pursuing him, he would make certain of the fact and decide what was to be done.

He waited round the corner, about a dozen yards down the street, holding a cigarette and a match-box in his hand. After a moment or so he heard a quiet and steady step come round the turning after him; and, striking a match, he lighted his cigarette, casting a glance at the approaching promenade as he did so.

It was the "Ferret," and, throwing the match away, Gordon walked on.

As he walked he looked about him for a restaurant where he might satisfy his hunger, which was now becoming serious. Mr. Sterrett might wait while he ate and considered what was best to be done. Gordon did not want to lose him until he had come to some decision, but he felt as sure of the "Stoat" now as if he had him tied to a string. He knew that gentleman's quiet persistence; and coming at last to a clean-looking Italian restaurant, he turned carelessly in, and took a seat at a table.

He was deep in the intricacies of a very Cockney-Italian menu, when the door opened and Sterrett entered. He passed Gordon without looking at him, and taking a seat at a table to one side, he called to the waiter, and gave an order.

Gordon looked hard at him, but for a minute or two "Stoat's" face was blank and impenetrable. Then, suddenly, he looked up, stared at Gordon, and rising quickly to his feet, gave him a military salute.

Gordon nodded, a little puzzled. "Sterrett?" he said. "I am glad to see you again."

"Thank you, sir," said the man, and, rising, he came across to Gordon's table.

He stood there quietly by Gordon's side, not saying anything, and with his impressionless face turned toward the window, and Gordon for a minute or two hardly knew what to do.

"I hope you are getting on well, Sterrett, my man?" he said, at last.

"Not very well, sir, thank you," said Sterrett.

Gordon looked up at him. "Oh, I am sorry to hear that. What are you doing now? You have gone back to the police to your old trade, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir, I have gone back. The Criminal Investigation Department's my job now."

His face did not change, nor was there any particular meaning in his tone, yet Gordon felt as if "Stoat" had somehow implied very much more than his words had said.

"The work must be very interesting," he said at last, more from a desire to give himself time to think than anything else. "And from what I remember of you, Sterrett, it should suit you."

"Yes, sir, I am useful to them up there. I see most things that come my way."

"And some that don't, eh?" said Gordon, smiling, and trying to speak carelessly. "Are you at work now?"

"Yes, sir, I am on a job now."

"Is it—er—is it a difficult one?"

"It was, sir, a little; but I'm making my way fairly—now."

The last word and the slight intonation on it, made Gordon start, and look up quickly at Sterrett's face. But it was quite blank, and he was not even looking at Gordon.

Gordon tried back again.

"And yet you don't like the work?" he said. "Why is that?"

Sterrett's grim lips relaxed a little, and he turned to Gordon.

"Leads to nothing, sir," he said. "Too much like the army. Too much master and not enough man. You do the work—other people take all the credit; and the money, sir, and the money. Now money's a very useful thing, ain't it, sir?"

"Very."

"Yes, sir, money's a very useful thing. I could do a good deal with a bit of money now."

Gordon stared at him suddenly. Then he pointed to a chair in front of him.

"Sit down, Sterrett," he said. "Can I order anything for you?"

"Thank you, sir, I have told the waiter. But my table's over there."

"It doesn't matter. I shall be pleased if you will have your dinner here," said Gordon, quickly; and he told the waiter to move Sterrett's place.

He knew Sterrett well enough to be aware that the man had some very good reason for his proceedings, and also for his words, which he was not in the habit of wasting—but what was he after?

"Yes, Sterrett," he said at length, as the other ate his dinner silently, "I suppose money is a very useful thing. Fortunately, I have enough for my wants myself."

"Yes, sir, so I thought."

It struck Gordon that "so I should suppose" would have been more natural under ordinary circumstances. "So I thought" seemed to imply that Sterrett had been thinking about it; and with a sudden comprehension, he turned and looked at the man, who met his gaze calmly.

"Oh, you thought so, Sterrett?"

"Yes, sir; I thought so."

"Then you have been thinking about it?"

Sterrett's expressionless face turned more blank than before. "Oh, no, sir," he said; "only sometimes I have been thinking lately what good use I might put a bit of money to if I had it. I was thinking so, foolishly enough, sir, when I see you come out of that house in Charles Street just now."

"Why you wretched scoundrel," said Gordon suddenly to himself, "I'm hanged if you aren't hinting that you are to be bought! I wonder what your price is, and how much you know?"

And he watched Sterrett for a moment curiously. The ex-corporal had ordered that wonderful creation, a "fritto misto," and as he ate it he prodded it about with his fork as if he were investigating its innermost secrets, and "ferreting" it out, so to speak; and as Gordon eyed his heavy jaw and overhanging eyebrows, and remembered the almost uncanny experiences he had had of "Stoat's" powers of observation round Rothville, his mind turned instinctively to his bank account.

(To be continued).

## About the Farm

### STARTING A FLOCK.

To persons wanting to begin raising fowls, and to those who are tired of going along slipshod fashion year after year, the best advice is to begin right. Get a good start, and half the battle is over. If you are new at the business, read and study all the things you can about poultry, and that will do no harm if you are tired of unbusinesslike methods and want to make money. The old saying, "Be sure you're right, and then go ahead," is peculiarly fitted to this business. A good start means everything in making a success later.

Several things enter into getting a right start. In the first place, too much money should not be spent; in the second, you must be sure you have time and patience for the work; and third, you must study conditions. It is foolish and useless to introduce a few pure-bred chickens into a mongrel flock and expect them to be the heaven that will leaven the whole lump. Many have tried this plan, and have failed miserably. Neither is it advisable to put pure-bred, or any other kind of fowls, into a filthy house, thinking you will house them there for a short time, and clean up later on. Put off buying your fowls until everything is ready. Clean up the premises thoroughly, and plow under every bit of soil fouled by chickens that have belonged to you or anyone else before starting. Get your yards and coops into good condition, and then go ahead.

Save money on everything but your stock. Make your coops out of old boards, and cover with straw or corn fodder; make coops for little chicks out of store boxes; nest boxes out of cheap boxes; use old dishes for drinking vessels, and in every way economize so as to keep expenses down. Chickens do just as well in a cheap coop as an expensive one, provided it is dry and warm. Even a framework of poles banked with fodder or straw to be burned the following spring has been known to keep chickens safe and warm all winter, and one successful chicken-raiser always uses the family supply of fire wood, raked up into walls and covered with straw for his fowls. In this way she has a new coop every fall, and thinks the chickens do better. Of course, she has a permanent house, too, but she likes the "wood house" for the winter season.

It is poor economy to starve the chickens under the impression that you are economical. Better feed them well and rush them to market than to buy a lot of hungry, peeping fowls at your heels whenever you set your feet outdoors. A hen will lay just as fine eggs in an old water-pail filled with straw as in a patent nest box; but she must have her crop well filled with seasonable food to make her worth anything as a layer or for the table. If wheat is very cheap in your locality, do not discard it for expensive corn, but manage to give the fowls plenty of good food, and use a variety. Milk, alfalfa, corn, table scraps, fresh meat and other things will keep chicks in good condition.

Don't waste money buying a lot of chickens in the start. Just remember

that lice and filth are the bottom of most poultry evils, and determine to be without both. An occasional dose of some sort of poultry food (and there are many good kinds) will do much toward keeping off diseases, but cleanliness and care will do more than all the medicines in the world. The best way to doctor most sick chickens is to cut off their heads and bury them deep in the earth.

When it comes to buying your first fowls—make up your mind which is the best breed for your peculiar conditions, and then buy of a reliable dealer. If you want an all-around hen select that type; if you live in town, where the range is limited, get some of the big, lazy fowls that do not care to wander, and if there are marked peculiarities in the preferences of the people you expect to be your patrons, keep them in mind when you start. While it would be foolish to spend time consulting all tastes, it would be equally foolish to buy a variety for which there is no demand in your neighborhood. Begin modestly in everything but the grade of the fowls, and work to the top of the ladder. In this way your chicken business will be both pleasant and profitable.

### LIVE STOCK NOTES.

If the hens are compelled to hunt their food entirely, and receive little consideration from their owner, they will be unable to give a satisfactory return for the space they occupy on the farm.

A grain mixture consisting by weight of linseed meal two parts, wheat bran two parts, and corn and oats chop four parts; fed in quantities adapted to the size and capacity of the animals, from six to ten pounds daily, should keep up the flow of milk. The quality of the milk will vary with the animal.

Roots and tubers should form a large part of the feed for calves in the winter. Turnips, artichokes and beets are all good, cheap feeds for calves and sheep in the winter season. They will do much better on half the grain ration with roots and tubers. Calves get fatter on all feed in winter, and often get so that they do not eat their feed well. They relish some succulent food much better.

It has been found that the same cow calving the last of October, and well kept, housed and fed during the winter, will give in twelve months nearly 30 per cent. more milk than she will if she calves in April; and if in addition to 30 per cent. more milk, there is a paying demand for fine butter for the winter, and the milk of this dairy, prolonged by the grazing of the summer pastures, can be made into fine cheese, the dairy will be raised in commercial importance and be put on a yet more substantial basis. Of course, there must be a conspicuous farm improvement to carry out these plans, but a farm improvement is always an improvement that pays twofold.

To a weaning colt feed the following: two pounds cut hay, three pounds wheat bran, two pounds linseed meal. Let the wheat bran and linseed meal be mixed together and then mixed with the moistened cut hay. This may be given in two feeds with what long hay it chooses to eat. Cornmeal is a very heating food and should be avoided as a food for a growing colt, but wheat bran contains the best elements to grow good healthy bone. The linseed meal will be excellent to keep the digestive organs in health, grow muscle and give the colt a smooth coat.

It will not do to feed brood mares oil meal, although it is not likely that it would affect all of them, but it might be the cause of abortion in one or more, and it is therefore unsafe to feed it. For brood mares feed with cut oats—two pounds cornmeal and three pounds bran, and if from their heavy weight they require more, add one pound bran. We consider cut oats, with straw, as probably less nutritious than good hay. Much cornmeal is improper food for brood mares, because of its heating effects. Bran is a cooling food, and excellent to keep up the vital energy and furnish the material for developing the coming foal.

### MEEKNESS OR WEAKNESS.

Meek Man Need Not Be Weaking or Door Mat for Fellow Humans.

Some people don't know the difference between meekness and weakness. A meek man is not an ass who lets everybody saddle and ride him, nor a door mat that lets every clod-hopper wipe his boots on him. The creeping, wobbling, weaking that adapts his posture to every new surrounding is not a meek man but a weak man. A meek man has backbone enough to keep his head up and yet of such flexibility as to allow him to get through an ordinary doorway. No one admires the aggressive nuisance who disturbs and annoys everybody and everything with which he comes in contact, but we have no patience with the simpleton who has no opinions or convictions of his own, and who hasn't enough self-assertion to wipe his nose without asking somebody's leave. Don't go around apologizing for being on the earth. If you are a man that is enough. Stand out for the treatment a man should receive, and get it. Beware of being made a fool by those who will traffic in your innocence or softness if they get the chance. Remember "the simple believeth every word," but the prudent man looketh well to his going. This does not mean that you should be suspicious of everybody, but keep your weather eye open. Don't be fooled with sugar slicks of fox talk. Be not meek in the sense of being weak. There is all the difference in the world between the two.