

Not Guilty ;

Or, A Great Mistake.

CHAPTER XIX.—(Continued).

At the back was a dirty courtyard, and beyond this a pair of rickety steps led up outside a broken-down house facing them.

At the foot of the stairs they paused a moment, and listened; and suddenly from the house above them came a strange, long-drawn howl.

"Good heavens, what is that?" gasped Gordon.

"Tiger, sir, I suppose. It sounds like one," said Sterrett.

"A tiger?"

"Yes, sir. Wild animals, I expect. Lots of these places round here keep them. You see, being near the docks it's convenient. They come over here in the ships, and the circus folk buy them, or hire them, at fair time."

At the top of the stairs Sterrett opened a door, and they passed through into a dark, narrow passage. As the close, heavy air rushed out at them, Gordon saw that Sterrett had been right in his explanation of the sound which had reached them, for the overpowering scent of wild animals in close confinement caught their breath, and almost forced them back on to the stairs.

"Cruel, the way they keeps them," said Sterrett, listening.

From the end of the passage before them came again the howl of the tiger, mingled now with the cries of various other animals. It was almost impossible to tell if there were human beings speaking, too, beyond the door which faced them, and Gordon at last placed his hand upon the knob.

"I doubt if there is anyone there, Sterrett," he said. "But look out."

And turning the handle he opened the door.

For a moment neither man saw anything, for the large light in which they found themselves was even darker than the passage outside. But after a second they could distinguish near to them, on both sides of the room, great iron cages, from which wild eyes glared at them and white teeth gleamed.

And then from the darkness at the other end of the loft there came suddenly a shriek of amazement and fear, and the sound of struggling.

Gordon and Sterrett started forward together.

It was difficult for them as yet to distinguish things clearly, but they could see that in front of a large cage in the darkest corner of the loft, a man was struggling furiously, held by something which protruded through the bars.

"Quick, Sterrett!" cried Gordon, "the tiger's got someone. Poor devil! help me, quick."

Almost before they knew what they were doing they had seized the man, and pulling together, they dragged him away from the bars. But even as they did so, they dropped him and stared at one another, for the furious voice of Gaunt broke upon their ears, uttering wild imprecations.

"Curse you, you fools. You've taken the brute away! Another minute, and I'd have throttled him. Give him back to me! Give him back!"

Almost unable to believe his senses, Gordon peered forward and stared blankly; for there, in the cage, his arm still reaching furiously out through the bars, and gripping at the empty air, crouched Vivienne's father.

"You! Mr. Gaunt!" he gasped.

"What? What! Good heavens, Colonel Gordon! You here! Oh, thank the Lord! But, I say, why the deuce did you drag that fellow off. Perhaps it's just as well, though. By heaven, he thought he'd caught a fine tiger for a minute, though!"

Gordon turned and looked at the man. It was Usher, though in the dimness of the room and in his present state, it was not easy to recognize him at once. The gambler looked a pitiable object as he stood there, shaking and breathless. His coat and shirt were torn to ribbons, and blood was streaming from his neck where Gaunt's strong fingers had almost met in his neck.

It was evident that had Gordon and Sterrett been even two minutes later the gambler's last moment would have come, but shaken as he was, his eyes flashed angrily from Gordon to his companion and back again; and his fingers went furiously to his lips with the old gesture that Gordon remembered.

"Curse you, what are you doing here," he cried, oblivious of the fact that Gordon had just assisted in saving his life.

But Gaunt interrupted Gordon, as he was about to speak. "Hold him, Gordon," he said, "and let me out of here. He's a scoundrel, that man. He meant to murder me, and he's a— Look out!"

But the warning came too late. With the speed of lightning, the gambler, who must have been gathering his resources for the effort, slipped past Sterrett and reached the door. The ex-corporal was after him like a flash, but the door slammed in his face as he reached it, and seizing it, he found it locked.

It was the work of but a second or two for the two men to wrench the crazy woodwork open, but during that space Usher had vanished, and Sterrett, after a few moments' search in the warehouse below, returned discomfited.

"He's gone, sir. It was my fault for not expecting it. It's useless to look for him just now. There's a hundred places near here where he could hide himself.

I think I can put my hand on him later on. We had better see to getting this gentleman out of the place before there's more trouble. We don't want the rest of the gang on our backs. Let's hope that that chap who's just gone don't put them on! Can you walk, sir?" he asked, turning to Mr. Gaunt.

"No, curse it, I can't. I had a bad time getting here yesterday; and so did some of them. But what with that and this cursed cage, my legs have failed me—paralyzed! I've had the same thing before, can't move an inch. But, by gad, I've still got some strength in my arms. I wheedled that scoundrel within distance, and caught him just right. In another minute he'd have wished it had been that tiger over there! But no, I can't get away from here, if getting away means walking."

"Then we shall have to get a cab or a cart," said Sterrett, "for you can't stay here, sir. It ain't healthy, and may be worse soon. Do you think you can manage here while I'm gone, sir?" he asked, turning to Gordon. If the worst comes to the worst, you might contrive to hold the door for a time."

Gordon nodded. "Yes, Sterrett, I think we can manage," he said. "But go quickly; we are only wasting time in talking."

Sterrett hurried off, and Gordon turned his attention to Mr. Gaunt.

He soon found the lock of the cage, which was in a position where Mr. Gaunt could not reach it through the bars, and, after some exertion, succeeded in lifting the helpless man out.

"It's a cursed nuisance, being helpless like this when I feel so strong and well," said Gaunt as Gordon aided him to lie comfortably on the floor. "Just feel my arm! Good enough, isn't it?"

Gordon felt the iron limb extended to him and pitted Usher, who must, indeed, have imagined that his day had come.

"Do you know," continued Gaunt, "that devil meant to murder me! He was taunting me with that tiger over there, when I got hold of him. I don't know why he waited, but I suppose he was afraid to do it before some more of his friends here turned up. The man who keeps this place is a friend of his, and as bad, apparently."

"And you mean to say he would have murdered you, and in that way?" said Gordon.

"He would certainly have done so, if for nothing else but to save his own skin."

"Ah! Then you, too, think—"

"Think? I know. I've been a fool, the most miserable, blind idiot who ever lived. I've played like a child into that fellow's hands, Colonel Gordon; and to imagine that I could ever have believed her a— but it's to you that I owe it, that I know that scoundrel as he is, and I won't forget it. It was you and what you said in Minden Lane, in that cursed cellar, that first made me suspect that there was something wrong. And yet, I fancy almost anyone might have been deceived as I was. But, if you care to hear it, while that man of yours has gone for the cab, I'll tell you the story. That is, if these wretched brutes will let me speak."

For the animals around them, evidently excited by their approaching dinner hour, were making a chorus, above which it was difficult to distinguish conversation.

"I should, indeed, be very glad to hear," returned Gordon. "For myself, I have never really thought anyone guilty of that crime but Usher himself."

"And he is the man, said Gaunt. "But to my story, which commences some months back, when I and my daughter were staying at Nice."

CHAPTER XX.

"We have been living abroad, more or less, for some years, my daughter and I," continued Mr. Gaunt. "It suits my health; she likes the life, and it matters very little to anyone else, as we have no very near or very dear relatives who wish us at home. My own place, down in Wiltshire, has been let for some time, and, fortunately, we are able to please ourselves."

Gordon nodded. He guessed that Mr. Gaunt was a wealthy man, and that therein lay the secret of Usher's machinations.

Mr. Gaunt went on: "It was some few months ago that the events commenced which have ended, well, which have ended here. We were staying at Nice, at the Cimiez Hotel, when we came across Mr.—Mr. Carlton. I made his acquaintance first, and afterwards introduced him to my daughter. You may guess, Colonel Gordon, how often and how bitterly I have regretted that fact since. But how could I foresee? He was a charming fellow, with most fascinating manners. Everyone liked him, and though no one knew much about him, it was evident that he was a gentleman and well off, and also that time he seemed very well-behaved."

"Well, we became intimate with the poor young fellow, and saw a great deal of him, and before long he began to entertain a great admiration for Vivienne. I noticed that fact, of course (probably, however, as late in the day as anyone), and I confess that the idea of a match between them did not displease me. Why should it? They were both young and handsome, both well off, and while

Carlton was, I knew, devoted to my daughter, she, in her turn, entertained a sincere affection for him. But I had left out of my calculations Carlton's nature, which was a peculiar one. He was a fine young fellow, full of good points, open, generous, and good-hearted; but, nevertheless, he was an impossible man, as I was to find out one day to my cost. It was the fault, I suppose, of his upbringing, which in itself might have sufficed to ruin even a better nature.

"From his earliest childhood he had been possessed of almost unlimited means. The only child of a very wealthy father, who had died when he was six years old, he had been brought up entirely by his mother, who completely spoiled him. I learned, as I grew to know him better, that she was unhappily, a drunkard, however, and that, fond as she was of him, her affection did not prevent her from exhibiting her worst failings to her son, who, naturally, was unable to respect her as he should have done; or to obtain from her anything but a false view of the duties and obligations of life. He did not learn to control a temper which, though seldom displayed, was furious almost to madness, and, I am afraid, had either inherited or acquired to a certain extent the weakness which had ruined his own mother's life."

"It was not until almost the end that I learned this last fact. His temper, however, I knew all along was a bad one, and there were times when I feared for Vivienne's future happiness. He was such a good fellow, though, so frank, so quick to recognize himself at fault and remedy the fault, that I could not fear any serious mischance, and I put my misgivings always aside."

"That condition of things did not last long. As time went on a date was arranged for Vivienne's wedding, and we had settled to all run over to London for a few weeks before, to complete the trousseau and other necessary arrangements. Carlton had a flat in town which he had used for a short time as a pied-à-terre, and he intended to come over with us and stay there, while we decided to stop at the Dorian Hotel."

Among the acquaintances we had made in Nice was this man Usher. His father and I were old friends, very old friends; I had met the son almost by chance, and for the father's sake I had made myself particularly friendly to him.

"As for Carlton, he had taken to him at once. He was a great gambler, and Carlton, who was bitten in a mild way with the same fever, used to spend a good deal of time with him. I may add that Usher can be very pleasant when he wishes, and that we all got on very well with him. His people had been rich at one time, but they had not left him much in the way of an income, and I really believe he gambled then as much of necessity as with a passion for the thing itself. He was always grateful to me, and polite and courteous to Vivienne; and I need hardly say did not give a sign which could lead us in any way to suspect his motives."

Shortly before we left for England, Vivienne and Carlton had one or two quarrels. They seemed to me merely the tiffs natural to young lovers, and I took very little notice of them; but evidently they made more impression at the time upon both Carlton and Vivienne than I had imagined.

Vivienne did not like to see Carlton getting gradually caught by the gaming mania, and I fancy I rather began to blame Usher as the original cause of the young man's increasing infatuation for play. In addition to this she received, though I did not hear about it until afterwards, an anonymous letter which accused Carlton both of being a drunkard and of being intimate with a great many undesirable friends and acquaintances of the opposite sex.

"That there was truth in both of these accusations, I am afraid, for, as I have said, Carlton was an utterly spoiled and irresponsible individual. Yet that he was as bad as the originator of the anonymous letter (who I firmly believe was Usher himself) made out, I do not credit for an instant."

"However, as I have said, Vivienne mentioned nothing of the anonymous letter to me, and I only heard of it afterwards."

"In London for a time all went well. Usher had apparently disappeared, and Carlton seemed to have given up his rage for gaming, and to be commencing 'sarge ringer,' with a view to his approaching marriage."

"But, suddenly, there came the crash. Vivienne received a second anonymous letter, and this time the scoundrelly epistle was followed by a visit from the writer. This latter was, of course, a woman; and, whether she was prompted partly by jealousy and ill-treatment, and partly by Usher, or wholly by the latter, I have not discovered. Her call had a terrible effect upon Vivienne, as you may imagine, for her story was a terrible one."

"Vivienne, who had disguised from me her receipt of the letters, was compelled to come to me in her trouble now. She told me the whole story, and also confided in me that for some time she had had doubts as to the suitability of the match she was making and the firmness of her affection for Carlton."

"I was extremely shocked by what she told me, and as regards the carrying out of the engagement, I was prepared to leave the matter entirely in her own hands, but I did not consider it advisable to allow Carlton to remain for an instant longer than was necessary ignorant of the charges brought against him, and I determined to go at once and see him."

"It happened that on the very evening when this occurred, we had arranged all three to go to a theatre. We were to call for Carlton, Vivienne and I, at his flat after dinner, and go on together. The writer of the anonymous letter had called on Vivienne almost at dinner-time, and being impatient to get it over with Carlton, and sure of finding him at home according to his appointment, I determined to go and see him at once."

"As fate would have it, Vivienne insisted upon accompanying me, I expostulated with her, explained how much more suitable it would be in every way for me to see the young fellow alone, but unfortunately she overrode my objections."

"See him alone afterwards," she said, "but let me see him when you tell him you have heard the story. I know him well enough and like him well enough to be able to assure myself if he is telling an untruth as soon as I see his face. I am the person who is most concerned; surely I have a right to see for myself what kind of a man I am going to marry."

"We talked and argued the matter over, but I am always weak where she is concerned, and in the end I allowed myself to be persuaded. You can imagine now how I wish I had not listened to her!"

"During the drive to Carlton's rooms I recognized the fact that I had made an error, for Vivienne, I could see, was terribly strained and over-excited; but it was then too late to draw back. I was myself pretty confident that the story, from Carlton's side, would prove not so bad as it appeared on the face of it, and I hoped vaguely that things would smooth over, although firmly determined in my own mind that should Carlton show any sign of guilt, or confess to the justice of the accusation, I would never allow the marriage to take place."

"As it chanced, that night Carlton had been drinking. It was the first time I had ever seen him fail in his respect for Vivienne; but there was no doubt, poor fellow, that he, too, was worried and in trouble, and had yielded to the temptation half unconsciously."

"Carlton was awaiting our arrival nervously. It was the first time either Vivienne or myself had been to his flat. He had a housekeeper who came in in the morning to do the place, and left in the evening, after dinner. It happened, therefore, that he came to the door himself to receive us."

"He must have seen in our faces, poor fellow, that something was wrong, for he turned pale after a quick look at Vivienne, and motioned us inside without speaking."

"Usher was to be of our party, and he was seated in the drawing-room when we arrived. I had not thought of this, but as it happened, Carlton himself helped us out of the difficulty by telling the man that he had a few words to say to us in private, and asking him to go into the dining-room. The dining-room looks through glass doors directly into the drawing-room, and it was then unlighted. When you hear what happened afterwards you will understand why I have mentioned this fact."

"Vivienne, after one glance at Carlton, had walked to the fireplace, and stood there with her elbow resting on the mantelpiece and her face hidden."

"It was a most awkward situation, and I felt it extremely, and hardly knew what to do or how to commence."

(To be continued.)

About the Farm

THE DEVELOPMENT OF BETTER TYPES.

The evolution of present day farm animals shows the result of years of thoughtful work by some of the brightest and most intelligent men of the past. That much improvement has been offered in every direction is plain to those who look and needs no proof. Compare the Clydesdale horses imported to-day with those of 50 years ago, and you have a striking instance of steady improvement. They are not heavier in weight, but legs and feet, the essential parts, are far superior. For hard work they have much more endurance, they are more active, less subject to lamings or blemishes. They have less soft flabby flesh and less inclination to "grease" and kindred ailments. They are becoming more uniform in type, and carry, on that account, more progeny. Again, you have changes quite as distinct in Shropshire sheep. They are much more beautiful in appearance, more compact in form, produce a better class of wool. They are easier feeders than when they first obtained their popularity. There is no wool on legs, nor head covering. (Neither of which will by some be considered an improvement.) Again, the Shorthorn type has been changed very materially since the days of the Bates popularity. Now, usefulness as a beef maker and especially when combined with good milking qualities is more generally the type looked for. Mere style and gay appearance, which once counted for much, is now laughed at unless it be the finished touch to a beast of substance and flesh. These will serve as illustrations showing that it is quite possible to change and improve the type by careful and

PERSISTENT BREEDING.

None of these changes have been effected immediately, nor have they come about by mere accident as some suppose. The results have been attained by steady and persistent work along definite lines with a distinct object in view. Doubtless in the evolution from one type to another there have been setbacks, disappointments and heavy losses. Yet with the desired result in the mind of the breeder, and with a certain intention (which cannot well be described) as to what mating will best produce it, progress

is certain, although it is sometimes slow. The present day popular Scotch Shorthorn is in type entirely different from either of the once popular strains of Booth or Bates. The cattle are not so large, but though smaller they are smoother, with more quality and substance, and especially do they excel in early maturing qualities. Nor are they without milking qualities of a high order. Mr. Cruickshank, to whom the greatest credit is due for the changes effected, was a great advocate of cultivating the milking qualities. In order to test his cattle in this regard he invariably milked the young heifers by hand in order to prove by actual testing their ability as milk producers. All those really inferior in this respect were discarded as breeders and sent to the butcher. When the popularity of his cattle increased in the United States, the demand became so strong that everything was called for and sold for breeding purposes regardless of milking qualities altogether. At the same time this did not preclude him from selecting the best milkers for retention in his own herd, so that progress was steadily made in this direction. We fear, however, it is too true that many of the foremost breeders in Scotland at the present time pay little attention to the milking qualities of their Shorthorns. The beef quality is the main thing aimed at and sought for by the majority. Besides the tendency at the shows is towards

THE STRONG BEEF TYPE

in the first place and the younger generation are thus educated in spite of themselves in this direction.

To those who do not follow dairying as a specialty, and to the great mass of ordinary farmers the Shorthorn is held by most to be the best ideal. They live and thrive, responding to good treatment in every country. Their greatest power lies in their ability to improve the common, everyday cattle of all breeds. No other breed can show better results in this respect, and when there is added to beef a good display of milking powers we cannot wonder that they are popular. We have no harsh word for those cattle useful only as milk producers. They suit the soil and environment of some admirably, but there are others who find it more profitable to combine the two possibilities of beef and milk. There are farmers, who, owing to circumstances, must carry on mixed husbandry. A proper type for such condition can be created and will be without doubt evolved, furnishing a cow capable of producing the amount and quality of milk given by the average dairy cow, and in addition a calf with the best beefing quality. But we repeat, it will not come by accident as is so often asserted. Persistent selection of the ideal cow and breeding her to selected bulls will finally present the type which the present day demands. When it has been evolved it will supply a distinct need and add to the returns of many farmers whose soil and situation present possibilities in their direction.

The ideal cow need not be registered, in fact it is probable the vast majority will be grades mated with a pure bred bull with the blood of superior milking dams strongly predominant. Such cows were numerous 30 years ago, but the low price of beef coupled with the prevailing fad for the richer milk of some of the dairy breeds caused them to be crossed with Jerseys, Ayrshires, etc., resulting generally in nothing definite or useful for either beef or milk. They can be turned towards the old type and improved by care and study, and it is not too soon to commence now.

WHEN ENGLAND WENT MONEY MAD.

Terrible Scenes Have Been Enacted on Several Occasions.

Wholesale commercial panics, such as that which recently raged, with disastrous results in New York, have happily been unknown in England during these latter years.

Indeed, to find anything to equal Wall Street's great monetary cataclysm, it is necessary to go back more than forty years to that "Black Friday" of May, 1866, when the failure of Overend and Gurney's Bank, with liabilities totalling over £10,000,000, started a panic that shook the financial world of London to its foundations.

The day following, before noon, the English Joint Stock Bank, with its forty branches, went under. Next, the British Mercantile, with a capital of £5,000,000, closed its doors. Ten minutes later the Consolidated Discount followed suit. After that, chaos. Banks collapsed everywhere in all directions. The streets were filled with frantic mobs of well-dressed people, shouting, cursing, gesticulating. Many men went raving mad, having lost their all. Scores committed suicide.

Even worse was the great panic of 1825-26, for it was prolonged practically all through the winter. Not a city or town of any importance in Great Britain but was affected by it, and before it was stayed no fewer than 770 banks had been compelled to stop payment.

Nothing approaching this terrible experience had ever befallen the country before, nor has it since. Neither is it at all likely that it ever will in the future, for the conditions that led up to it are not at all possible in these days of quick transit, which permits of the easy and rapid transference of gold from place to place.

Nevertheless, how easy such a panic may arise, even when there is no real cause for it, was shown in 1892 in connection with the Birkbeck Bank, when fear-maddened depositors withdrew £1,600,000 from that perfectly sound institution in less than a week.