

Not Guilty ;



Or, A Great Mistake.

CHAPTER XXII.

As soon as he heard the boy's words, Gordon took his decision. He would hunt Usher down now, and he would never rest until he had him in the hands of justice. The man was a murderer, and he had attempted Gordon's own life; but more than that was in it. The villain had tried to kill Vivienne Gaunt, and for that Gordon was determined he should pay dearly.

Without waiting for Sterrett's help, or for anyone to accompany him, he hurried from the house. He knew, thanks to the "Stoat's" intelligent son, where the gambler was making for, and confident in his ability to hold his own in a struggle with him, he set out in pursuit.

Fortunately, he had not far to go before he met with an unoccupied hansom, and, springing into it, ordered the driver to take him back to St. George's Road.

It was probable, of course, that the gambler would not intend to pay a long visit to the house where they had found Mr. Gaunt, but Gordon had started very quickly on his track; the cab he had hired was well horsed, and with any luck at all Gordon felt that he should arrive at his destination almost as soon as the man he pursued.

As the cabman made his way citywards through the crowded streets, Gordon had time to think over the events of the past few hours, and to congratulate himself upon his meeting with the ex-corporal. It was to him that he owed all the success which he had met with up to now—his discovery of Mr. Gaunt's hiding-place—his fortunate arrival at Pentonville in time to stop Vivienne from taking a fruitless journey to Liverpool in search of her father—and, lastly, the information which had enabled him now to follow Usher in his flight. Without the detective's valuable aid what might not have happened?

Yet that even now the danger was not over Gordon knew. Should the boy have made a mistake, or Usher have changed his plans, the position would become a serious one for the Gaunts. For their safety it was absolutely necessary that Usher should be captured; and Gordon felt, as he drew near to his destination, how much depended on the next step and his own ability to carry the affair through.

He stopped the cab and dismissed it at some distance from the door of the warehouse. He did not think it would be advisable to bring the cabman into an affair like this and enlist his services; he felt he would prefer to take the risk of acting by himself; and for the present he had no immediate plan of action.

There was no one to be seen near the warehouse doors or in the entrance, as Gordon cautiously approached; and he made his way inside, wondering whether he was too late, and if the gambler had already been and gone.

But at the foot of the stairs he stopped, arrested by the sight of one or two drops of blood which stained the woodwork, and had evidently but freshly fallen there. He remembered that Usher had been wounded by Sterrett's shot, and that, in all probability, he had not yet time to attend to the wound. Those bloodstains must mean that the gambler had reached the place, and was there in the rooms above.

Gordon listened a moment, and then cautiously mounted the stairs.

As he climbed, the noises of the animals came down to him and the strong scent of them assailed his nostrils.

Reaching the door he stopped and peered through the cracked panels. The room beyond was, as it had been before, almost in darkness, but to his relief he could see Usher seated on the floor not far from him; and for a second he stood and watched him.

The gambler was engaged in winding a strip of linen around his leg, from which he had raised the trousers, and Gordon could see, from the expression of his face, that the operation was a painful one. He was sighing heavily, and every now and then he would cease his work to wipe his forehead with his handkerchief. "There's not much fight left in him now," Gordon thought. "The brute! he has got a worse wound than I gave her."

And turning the handle, he entered the room.

Usher had evidently not in the least anticipated the arrival of anyone there, for he started violently as the door opened, and half rose to his feet. Then, on recognizing Gordon, he sank back again with his fixed white face and cold green eyes upon him. His attitude was an attempt at carelessness, but Gordon's quick glance saw the revolver which one hand had stolen swiftly to, and without a moment's hesitation he flung himself upon the man.

"Not again," he cried, as he seized the gambler's arm, "I might not have such luck this time."

Usher struggled violently, but he was probably weak from his wound, and Gordon soon had possessed himself of the revolver.

On realizing this fact, Usher rose with difficulty to his feet, and with a quick rush, half crawling, half running, he made his way to the furthest corner of the room, where it was almost in darkness,

repeated. "But my name matters very little. The question is to help me out of here. The tiger has got out of its cage, and I can't get to the door."

"Where are you, then?" came the question back; and Gordon, in spite of everything, could hardly resist a smile as he replied: "In the cage."

There was an ejaculation of surprise, and then a murmur of conversation. Then the voice spoke again:

"Where's the tiger?"

Gordon peered out through the bars of the cage. "Over in the corner opposite the door," he said.

The door opened cautiously, and an unkempt and dirty head appeared.

"Yus, Bill; she's over there in the corner by the armadillo. Ain't there a lump of meat in the cage where the gent is?"

A second head appeared also cautiously, and took a glance around. "Yus," said the new-comer: "There's a bit under the sack in the corner, if the gent'll look for it."

The first arrival, with an eye on the tiger, who stood against the wall swishing her tail violently, but otherwise motionless, waved his hand to Gordon explanatorily: "There's some food in the corner behind yer, gov-nor," he said, thickly. "Shove up the trap and pitch it into her cage. She'll hear you and she'll go in. It's luck it's there, or you might have stayed where you were for a bit longer."

The second man poked his head over his companion's shoulder.

"I say, gov-nor," he said, "it's worth a bit, this job. What are you going to stand?"

"Why, you rascal," cried Gordon, "it was your friend—it was that scoundrel Usher—who let me in for this."

"It ain't nothin' to do with us what Mr. Usher did," said the first of the two men surlily. "We didn't ask you here. This is my shop, and these are my animals, and that there is my tiger. You can't come here letting a man's animals out like this, and endangering precious lives, and not pay for it, you know."

"It ain't so much that," continued the second man, with a watchful eye on the tiger still. "It's a question of helping the gent out with what he done, Bill; and that's worth something. When she goes in the cage to get that lump of meat, sir, you see someone's got to go and shut the door behind her. Now, we're both married men. What's it worth now, between man and man?"

"It's for you to fix your price," said Gordon, realizing that there was a considerable amount of truth in what the man said, and remembering the touch he had already had of the brute's iron claws.

"Is it worth a quid?" said the second man, after a moment.

"I will give you a sovereign; yes, certainly," said Gordon, feeling that he would have asked considerably more himself.

"Done," said both men simultaneously. Gordon lifted the piece of ragged flesh which was under a sack in the corner of the cage, and turned, to the little grille by which he had entered.

"Bang it down," called out the first man, warningly. "Let her see it. There ain't no more if that's wasted."

Gordon complied with the directions given him. The noise of the opening grille had already attracted the tiger's attention, and as Gordon's hand passed through it, she sprang forward. He threw the meat down fairly into the centre of the cage, and drew his hand back quickly.

For a second the tiger remained motionless, and then with a howl she darted into the cage, and seizing the meat strode furiously up and down.

Would she leave the cage again or not? It was a tremendous question, but the man who had suggested the question of payment first, had no intention of avoiding his share of the bargain. He was sneaking quietly along, sticking close to the cages, and was rapidly approaching the gate through which Usher had disappeared.

As he passed the open entrance of the cage where the tiger was, the huge brute stopped, and with the meat still in his mouth, looked at him, growling furiously.

Gordon who could see the scene from where he crouched, held his breath in anxiety. He had remembered that the man could not know the gate was reversed, and locked now against the wall. He had probably planned to seize it and slam it to. This was now impossible, for it must be unlocked first. Would the man have time to do it before the tiger sprang upon him; or would he lose his head and rush back to the door, pursued by the beast?

The second man was standing at the door with eyes goggling. Like Gordon, he had seen the danger, and had almost called out. Fortunately, however, he had resisted the impulse; and the two rested motionless, watching the man as he reached the gate.

It was evident to them both that he realized the state of affairs at the moment his eye fell upon the lock, for he started imperceptibly as he reached and placed his hand upon it. But he kept his nerve admirably; and Gordon, who had seen real courage and admired it always, felt his heart warm towards this dirty, shock-headed Londoner. For the man did not even draw his hand back, but let it rest lightly where it had fallen, for a moment. Then, apparently carelessly, but with great caution, he passed his other hand down to his trousers pocket and produced a key. The tiger was watching him angrily, floutishing his tail, and growling horribly; but it did not move, and he placed the key in the lock of the gate and turned it.

It was now the critical moment, and the two watchers hardly dared to breathe. The tiger had raised its head swiftly at the turning of the lock, the sound which was so familiar, and probably recalled to it the fact that its cage was for the moment open. As the man turned the lock and pulled the gate swiftly towards him, it took a half-step forward; but it was too late. With a quick and powerful swing of his arm the man reversed the gate and slammed

it in the brute's face. It struck wildly out with its huge paw, but it missed the man's arm and only tore the empty air; a second's manoeuvring fastened the lock, and the work was done.

Gordon breathed a deep sigh of relief at the man's escape; but he, as if what he had just done was an everyday occurrence, turned quietly to Gordon's cage and commenced to unlock it and release him.

Gordon shook his hand heartily as he promptly paid his debt, with a good sum added. "You did that excellently," he said.

"Oh, it's all in a day's work, sir," returned the man simply. "Now, Bill would have done just the same for half the money. Hullo, who's this?"

Gordon turned to the door, and to his relief saw Sterrett in earnest conversation with the other man.

The ex-corporal came forward as he caught Gordon's eye. "So you've lost him after all, have you, sir?" he said. "Our cab got blocked for nearly a quarter of an hour owing to an accident in the city, but I followed you as nearly as I could. I guessed you would be here."

"Yes, the scoundrel has escaped," said Gordon, gloomily. "He played me a very clever trick, and this time I am afraid he has got away."

The "Stoat" shook his head. "I am not so sure of that, sir," he said, "it will take him all his time."

"Why, what do you mean?" asked Gordon.

"My youngster's after him still," returned Sterrett calmly. "We caught sight of him leaving here in a great hurry just as we were driving up, and I told the kid to follow him."

"Good heavens!" said Gordon. "But why not follow him yourself? Why leave it to a child?"

"He's a sharp child," said Sterrett, "and there was nothing else to do. I hadn't got a warrant to take him. But I shall have by to-night. You see I can get one now, after what he kindly told us, the boy will let me know where he goes to, and we'll have him quick."

"Thank heaven," ejaculated Gordon. "Sterrett, I can never thank you enough."

"Don't forget about that little office, sir," returned the "Stoat." "I shall get something from head-quarters for this, too, though it is really you, sir, who worked the business first. But we haven't got him or the warrant yet."

"Come on, then, and at least get the warrant," said Gordon quickly.

"I will go, sir," said Sterrett, "but you are wanted by the young lady at Pentonville. Her father's ill. He was taken very bad after that shooting business; he's a bit apoplectic, and she's very frightened about him. The old lady she's staying with don't seem much use, and she asked if you'd come, sir."

"Of course I will; I will come instantly," returned Gordon. "I know I can rely on you not to fail us."

(To be continued.)

About the Farm

OATS AND BRAN FOR MILCH COWS.

The high protein contents of oats combined with other good qualities gives it a high rating as a grain feed for milch cows. In many parts of the country where it returns large yields per acre it is a cheap source of protein.

When oats are high, however, and bran can be purchased at a reasonable price it is often better to sell the oats and feed the mill product.

There is a close similarity between oats and bran in their analysis and their value for feeding. One experiment is on record where whole oats were ground and gave 10 per cent. better milk and butter-fat returns than bran. Of course bran is quite variable in its analysis. So much so that this result could only be considered as indicative. However, the above experiment does not disagree much with general opinion.

Bran, that is, wheat bran derives its high value from the fact that it contains a larger amount of digestible protein and ash than any of the common grains. Besides it adds bulk to heavy grain rations, for example: corn meal and a natural laxative—two points considered the best properties of bran.

Comparing the analysis of oats with that of bran we find that for every hundred pounds of weight bran furnishes three pounds more of digestible protein and nearly the same amount more of ash. While it is somewhat short on fat contents we will not consider that feature, as both of these feeds are used primarily for their ash and protein, principally the latter and other qualities mentioned before. Let us compare the two feeds on a protein basis alone, placing the cost of this element at three and three-quarters cents per pound.

This is what protein costs in feeds where it comprises a large part, as, for example, in cotton-seed meal. Just on a protein basis, therefore, bran is worth nearly twelve cents more per hundred pounds than oats. Thus, if the cost of bran is ninety cents per hundred, oats would be worth twelve cents less, or practically twenty-eight cents per bushel. With bran at eighty cents, oats would equal it at twenty-five cents.

It must be remembered that this comparison has been based solely on protein basis. While we think that is the point on which to make the most representative comparison, there are other things to be considered; for example: the costs of marketing the oats and

hauling back the bran. This expense would allow oats to be two or three cents per bushel above their value compared with bran before the change would be profitable. Then in turn this expense might be offset by the superior property of the bran in giving bulk to the ration of grain and keeping the digestive apparatus in tone. Ash is low in many rations, and as this is a very necessary element in the making of milk, the large percentage in bran is a point in favor of the milk product.

From the above we do not wish to give the impression that when the price admits bran should wholly replace oats for we should always wish to feed several pounds of this unexcelled grain for milk making. But suppose oats are worth twenty-eight cents per bushel, and bran eighty cents per hundred it is quite likely that the farmer any reasonable distance from market could buy and feed bran freely, especially if no clover hay or other roughage high in protein could be fed. The following ration will illustrate our point. It is intended that corn stover and clover hay be fed freely for roughage in conjunction with this grain ration: Three pounds corn-and-cob meal, two pounds oats and six pounds bran; this amount to be fed daily to a cow weighing 1,000 pounds. Though a trifle below the standard set for protein this ration will be economical and conducive to the thrift of the herd. If clover hay is not obtained then one or two pounds linseed meal must be added. Some careful breeders would not be without bran, whatever it cost, but the farmer not making a specialty of dairying must be economical and use feeds of his own raising as largely as possible.

FARM NOTES.

If a farmer wishes to keep books only sufficient to show which way he is annually drifting, he can do it with very little bookkeeping. Just let him keep track of what he owes and what others owe him.

One of the first things requiring early spring attention, is to prevent the sprouting of potatoes in warm cellars where they are kept for seed. The sprouting reduces or exhausts the vigor of the tubers, and the remedy is to plant them as early as the ground can be prepared and made deep and mellow.

There is no need to urge the average farmer to give more attention to the pigsty, the cabbage patch, or the potato field. These are thought to be matters of necessity, and every good householder provides these things in abundance. With no greater labor and care than these staples require, every landowner may provide to his family for several months of each year a fruit diet which, compared with hog and poultry, is as the "nectar of the gods."

As a rule, milk should always be skimmed while it is sweet, whatever way it is set, for the cream to rise. Most excellent butter may be made from cream allowed to stand until the milk and cream are sour and thick, if it has not been too long reaching this condition, and the cream is removed just as soon as this condition is reached. Under this system one should almost "sit up" with the milk pans like a patient, in order to churn the cream, as soon as the proper period arrives. Delay is ruinous. To wait for milk to sour, or cream, when the temperature is low is always dangerous. A cool spell in summer and cold weather are fruitful conditions to produce poor butter. Under such circumstances the milk stands too long before it sours, and the cream also, and the cream becomes bitter, and the butter bitter.

LIVE STOCK NOTES.

Oats, bran and cottonseed meal are well calculated to develop the muscle and grow the bone of the colt. Bran especially furnishes the phosphoric acid to grow the best bone, and oats are considered the standard horse food.

Oats, buckwheat and bran mixed together in equal parts by weight would have the following composition: Digestible albuminoids, 9.47 per cent.; carbohydrates, 47.07; fat, 2.81. This has a nutritive ratio of 1 to 4.6, and when fed in connection with timothy and clover hay would be a well-balanced food. Both to keep up the condition of the ewes and to produce a good yield of excellent milk.

Sheep thrive better and increase the growth of wool if they receive some green food once a day during the winter—roots, linseed meal or potatoes—just enough to keep from too much costiveness. Sheep to do well, must have free access to water, both summer and winter, but more particularly in winter when fed on dry hay. Snow is by no means sufficient to take the place of water. Salt is also necessary to good health. It aids the digestion of the food, and gives tone and vigor to the whole system. Rock salt should be placed in boxes in the sheep house so they can eat it at any time. Sheep should never be fed hay on the ground; much hay is wasted in this way. Sheep are cleanly animals and will eat their food from only a clean place. Well constructed racks to place the hay in are the best.

NO USE.

He paused at the booth where the prettiest girls were in charge. They greeted him with winning smiles. "Can you change a ten?" he anxiously inquired. "We have no change," they chorused. "And I have no ten," he reluctantly murmured. Then he moved away.