A DEAD RECKONING.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Jules Picot had been carefully searched before being locked up in his cell, and it was an utter puzzle to the jail officials how he had contrived to conceal about him even so insignificant an article as the tiny phial of poison so as to evade detection. One of the wardens, however, of a more inquiring turn of mind than his fellows succeeded a day or two later, in solving the mystery. The mountebank wore very high-heeled shoes, as many of his countrymen make a practice of doing. The heel of one of his shoes had been so made that it could be unscrewed at will, while inside it was a cavity just large enough to hold the phial. Picot had evidently prepared himself beforehand for a contingency the like of that which had at length befallen him. The letter written a few hours before his death was in French, and was addressed to "Madame Brouke." The following is a translation of it:

Madame—When these lines reach you, the hand that writes them, will be cold in death. I am tired of life, and life is tired of me; this night we part company for ever. I take the liberty of addressing you because of your kindness to my little Henri, whom le bon Dieu has seen fit to take from me for my sins, and because you were so much in his thoughts when he was dying. I also address you for another reason, which I will explain presently.

It was in the first week of the new year that Henri met with the accident which proved fatal to him. He lingered for two weeks, and then died. He had but little pain; life faded out of him like a lamp that slowly expires for want of oil. As I said before, he often talked about his belle madame. He could not remember his mother, and it was your face that shone on him in his dreams, as it were the face of an angel.

After he was gone and I was alone in the world, I, too, began to have dreams such as I had never had before. Every night Henri came and stood by my bed, but it was always with an averted face; never would he turn and look at me. I used to try to cry out, to seize his hand; but I was dumb and motionless as a corpse. Then, after a minute or two, he would slowly vanish, with bowed head and hands pressed to his face, as though he were weeping silently. Night after night it was ever the same. Then a great restlessness took possession of me. I seemed to be urged onward from place to place by some invisible power and without any will of my own. When I rose in the morning I knew not where I should sleep at night; onward, ever onward, I was compelled to go. Last night I reached this place, and this morning I rose thinking to resume my wanderings; but a conversation I chanced to overhear led me to seek the court of justice. You, madame, know what took place there.

Even before I had spoken a word, I knew why my footsteps had been directed to this place, and that my wanderings were at an end. This afternoon, after all was over, I lay down on my pallet and fell asleep, and while I slumbered, Henri came to me; but this time his face was no longer averted; his eyes gazed into mine, and he smiled as he used to smile at me out of his mother's arms. Ah, how shining and beautiful he looked! Then a soft cool hand was laid on my brow, that had burned and burned for months, and all the pain went, and I knew nothing more till I awoke.

A word more and I have done. Madame, pray believe me when I say that never could a man be more surprised and astonished than I, Jules Picot, was to-day when I found that it was your good husband who was accused of the death of the Baron von Rosenberg. When I made my way into the court after hearing that some one had been arrested for the murder, I thought to see only a stranger, one whom I had never seen before. But even in that case I should have done as I did to-day, and have confessed that it was by my hand and mine alone that Von Rosenberg met his death. Conceive, then, my astonishment when in the accused I recognised M. Brouke, whom I had known in London under the name of "M. Stewart!" I knew that when in London he was in trouble—in hiding—but never did I dream of the crime that was laid to his charge. Had I but known it, you and he would long ago have been made happy by the confession of him who now signs his name for the last time. Jules Picot.

With what a host of conflicting emotions this document was read by her to whom it was addressed may be more readily imagined than described.

George Crofton sat alone in his cell devouring his heart in a bitterness too deep for words. All was over; all the bright prospects of his youth and early manhood had ended in this; his home for years to come would be a felon's cell, his only companions the lowest of the low, the vilest of the vile. "Facilis est descensus Averno," he muttered with a sneer. "Yes, in my case the descent has been swift and easy enough in all conscience." One gleam of lurid joy, and one only, illumined the black cavernous depths in which his thoughts, like fallen spirits, winged their way aimlessly to and fro, finding no spot whereon to rest. Gerald Brooke, the man he hated with an intensity of hatred bred only in natures such as his, was a prisoner even as he was, and it was his, Crofton's, hand that had brought him there! He had but spoken the truth when he said that the hour of his revenge would come at last. It was here now, although it had come after a fashion altogether different from what he had expected. Thanks to his folly, his own outlook was a dreary one enough; but what was it in comparison with the grim prospect that stared his hated cousin so closely in the face! When he thought of this it was as the one sweet drop in the bitter cup which Fate had pressed with such unrelenting fingers to his lips.

While he sat brooding over these and other matters, just as daylight was deepening into dusk, a warden unlocked the door of his cell. "You're wanted in the waiting-room," said the man. "Your uncle, Colonel Crofton, has called to see you. It's past the hour for visitors; but as he's brought a magistrate's order, and as he says he's obliged to go back to London to-night, the governor has agreed to relax the rules for once."

Crofton stared at the man in stupefaction. To the best of his belief he had no such relative in the world as the one just named. "Ah, you didn't expect to see him, I daresay," continued the warder. "A nice affable gent as ever I see; but I wouldn't keep him waiting if I was you."

Crofton followed the man without a word; and after being conducted through a couple of corridors, was ushered into a sparsely furnished white-washed room, where a middle-aged, well-built man of military carriage, who had been perusing through his eye-glass the printed rules and regulations framed over the mantel-piece, turned to greet him. He had close-cut grizzled hair and a thick drooping grizzled moustache. He wore a lightly buttoned frockcoat, gray trousers and straps, and millitary boots highly polished. He carried his hat and a tasselled malacca in his hand, and one corner of a bandana handkerchief protruded from his pocket behind.

"My dear nephew—my dear George!" he exclaimed with much effusion as he advanced a step or two and held out his hand. "This is indeed a dreadful predicament in which to find you. What, oh, what can you have been about that I should have to seek you in a place like this! Your poor aunt will be heart-broken when she hears of it. I must break the terrible news as gently as possible; but really, really, in her delicate state of health I dread the effect such a disclosure may have upon her." His voice trembled with emotion, he brushed away a tear, or seemed to do so.

George Crofton had undergone many surprises in his time, but never one that left him more dumbfounded than this, for in his soi-disant uncle his quick eye recognized at a glance no less a personage than Lardy Bill. If at the moment his eyes fell on him he had been in the least doubt of the fact, that would have been dispelled by the expressive wink with which his friend favored him an instant later. The man's audacity fairly took Crofton's breath away.

"The first question, my dear boy," resumed the sham colonel, so as to give the other time to recover himself, "of course is whether anything can be done for you, and if so, what. I need not say that my purse is at your service; for, shocked as I am to find you in this place, I cannot forget that you are my brother's son. I leave for London by the first train, and immediately on my arrival I will take the advice of my own lawyers in the matter, which will, I think, be the best thing that can be done under the painful circumstances of the case."

"I suppose that's about the only thing that can be done," answered Crofton, who was still utterly at a loss to divine the motive of the other's visit.

The warder, who had conducted Crofton from the cell, was present at the interview, ostensibly for the purpose of seeing that none of the jail regulations were infringed either by the prisoner or his visitor; but a sovereign having been pressed into his unreluctant palm at the moment he ushered the latter into the waiting room, he now discreetly turned his back on the pair and stared persistently out of the window.

A little further conversation passed between uncle and nephew, the chief part of it falling to the lot of the former, then the colonel looked at his watch and rose to take his leave. The warder turned at the same instant.

"As I remarked before, my dear George," said the uncle, as he clasped both the nephew's hands in his, "however pained—most deeply pained — I may be, everything shall be done for you that can be done. I refrain from all reproaches—at present I can only grieve. But your poor aunt, George—your aunt! You are her godson and favourite nephew. Ah me—ah me!"

He walked out of the room with both hands outspread and slowly shaking his head, like a man whose feelings were more than he could control.

The jail officials, at an early hour next morning, in addition to making the discovery that in the course of the night their French prisoner had taken leave of them after an altogether illegal and unjustifiable fashion, were further astounded by finding that the inmate of cell No. 5 had also relieved them of his presence, but in a mode altogether different from that which had found favor with the mountebank.

Crofton, unheard by any one, had contrived to file through the middle bar of his cell window and then to squeeze himself through the aperture thus made, after which there was nothing but a high wall between himself and liberty. Beyond this wall were some market gardens, the jail being situated in the outskirts of the town, and then the open fields. Outside the wall, a coil of rope with a strong steel hook at each end was found; and the footsteps of two if not of three men were plainly traceable for some distance in the soft mould of the garden. As to how Crofton had become possessed of the file, and by whose connivance and help he had been able to climb the wall and descend safely on the other side, there was no evidence forthcoming. The only fact the jail officials could affirm with certainty was that their prisoner was nowhere to be found.

At as early an hour as possible on the morning following his capture, Crofton had obtained permission to send a telegram to his wife, and before noon, Stephanie was speeding northward by the express in response to his summons. When she reached Cummerhays, it was too late for her to visit her husband that night; so, carrying her little handbag, she walked from the station to the inn nearest to it and asked to be accommodated with supper and a bed. She had ascertained from a constable in the street that the earliest hour at which visitors were admitted to the jail was ten o'clock.

Next morning, which was that of Saturday, Stephanie rose betimes. While she was eating her breakfast the landlady bustled in, carrying an open newspaper. "Here's the weekly paper, ma'am," she said. "The boy has just brought it; and as it contains a long account of the doings at the justice-room yesterday, about which you may have heard, I thought that perhaps you would like to read it over your breakfast."

"Thank you very much; I shall be glad to do so," said Stephanie quietly. She had given no name at the inn, and the landlady had not the slightest suspicion that her guest had any reason for being more interested than any stranger might be supposed to be in the news contained in the paper. Nor, in fact, had Stephanie any knowledge of what had happened. Her husband's telegram had been of the briefest; it had merely said: "I am in trouble. Come at once. Bring money. Inquire for me at the jail." But from what she knew already, she guessed, and rightly, that the enterprise on which Crofton was bent when he left home had failed, and that by some mischance he himself had come to grief.

The moment she was left alone Stephanie opened the paper with eager fingers. Her quick eyes were not long in finding the particular news of which they were in search. She read the story of the attempted robbery, as detailed in the evidence, with ever-growing wonder—a wonder that was intensified twenty-fold when she read how Gerald Brooke had been arrested at the same time as her husband, and by what strange chance the two cousins had once more been brought face to face. But when, a few lines lower down, her eyes caught sight of another well-known name, all the color ebbed from her face, leaving it as white as the face of a dead woman. She read to the end, to the last word of Picot's strange confession before the magistrates, and then the paper dropped from her hands.

"My father the murderer of Von Rosenberg, and I—I the cause of it!" she murmured in horror stricken accents. For a little while she sat like a woman stunned, stupefied, her eyes staring into vacancy, her mind a whirling chaos, in which thoughts and fancies the most bizarre and incongruous came and went, mixing and mingling with each other in a sort of mad Brocken dance, all the elements of which were lurid, vague, and elusive.

How long she sat thus she never knew; but she was roused by the entrance of the landlady, who had come to reclaim the newspaper, there being three or four people in the taproom who were anxious to obtain a glimpse of it. Fortunately, the good woman was somewhat short-sighted, and perceived nothing out of the ordinary in her guest's demeanor. But her entrance broke the spell and served to recall Stephanie to the realities of her position.

For a little while all thought of her husband had vanished from her mind. This second blow had smitten her so much more sharply than the first that the pain caused by the former seemed deadened thereby. But now that her waking trance was broken, the double nature of her calamity forced itself upon her mind. "My father and my husband shut up in one prison!" she said to herself; and it was all she could do to refrain from bursting into laughter. For are there not some kinds of laughter the sources of which lie deeper than the deepest fountain of tears?

Suddenly she started to her feet and pressed both hands to her forehead. "But why—why should my father have gone to Von Rosenberg to demand from him tidings of me, when I wrote to him from London telling him all that had happened to me and where I was? Can it be possible that my letter never reached him? Had he received it there would have been no need for him to seek Von Rosenberg. Even after so long a time I could almost repeat my letter word for word. In it I told my father how I had left home with Von Rosenberg, but only after he had given me his solemn promise to make me his wife the moment we set foot in England. I told how, within an hour after our arrival in London, I had claimed the fulfilment of his promise, and how he had laughed me to scorn, thinking that he had now got me completely in his power. I told how I flung all Von Rosenberg's presents at his feet and left him there and then, and going out into the rainy streets of the great city, fled as for my life. I told how I hid for weeks in a garret, living on little more than bread and milk; and how at last, when my money was all gone, I found my way to the nearest cirque, and there obtained an engagement. All this I told my father in my letter, and then I prayed him to forgive me, and told him how I longed to get back to him and my mother. Weeks and months I waited with an aching heart for the answer which never came. Then I said to myself: "My father will not forgive me. I shall never see him or my mother again." But the letter never reached him. Had it done so he would not be where he is to-day." Tearless sobs shook her from head to foot.

At this juncture in burst the landlady with an air of much importance. "As you have read the paper, I thought that maybe you would like to hear the news that one of the warders just off duty has brought us from the jail. Such times as we live in, to be sure!"

"News—what news?" asked Stephanie faintly.

"John Myles has brought word—and he ought to know, if anybody does—that one of the prisoners—Crifton or Crofton by name—managed to break out of his cell in the night, and has got clear away. But that's not all by any means. The foreigner—him-as accused himself in open court of the murder—was found dead this morning, poisoned by his own hand. The news will be all over England before nightfall.—Gracious me, ma'am, whatever is the matter! — Mary, Eliza,—quick, quick!"

To Be Continued.

MAIDS OF THE MIDDLE AGES.

In the Middle Ages the basement door was not besieged at all hours of the day by importunate beggars, for it seems to have been a pleasure instead of a penalty of the rich to feed the hungry, says a recent writer. Pilgrims and travellers were always sure of a good meal wherever they might find themselves, and in the case of the two Maids of Biddenden, Eliza and Mary Chulkhurst, even death did not stay the tide of hospitality and charity. The sisters, who were twins, lived in the early part of the twelfth century in that quaintly quiet French village. One of them died twenty-four hours after the other, and they left a piece of land to provide funds for doles of bread and cheese at Easter. The vicar and church wardens undertake the duty, and annually distribute gingerbread cakes to visitors, and bread and cheese to residents. Every dole is stamped with a rude likeness of the two maids, their names and the dates of their birth and death.

When we read we fancy we could be martyrs; when we come to act, we cannot bear a provoking word.—Hannah More.

PRACTICAL FARMING.

DRAINING A SLOUGH.

Farmers stand opposed in reference to the method of draining a slough, and many of them make serious blunders, blundering on both sides of the issue. One class says to lay the drains up the center, another class says to lay them along the sides. Either may be right; both may be wrong. While there are many general rules that apply in farm drainage, says Wisconson Farmer, still there are many exceptions that govern in special cases. The method of drainage depends largely upon the topography of the surface and geology of the subsurface. A slough is a depression in the surface lay them along the sides. Either may or ground water flows during heavy rains or periods of wet weather. Hence the soil of a slough may be wet from surface water alone or it may be wet by reason of several other states of the water as it exists in the soil and no man can drain successfully unless he thoroughly understands the several states of water. Of course, water is water wherever it is found, but it varies in the chemical properties very materially, and it has received several different terms in the parlance of drainage, accordingly as it finds lodgment on the surface or in the soil. We have cloud water, flood water, ground water, soil water, hygroscopic water, ooze water and spring water. The cloud water is the precipitation from the clouds or rain water and when it first strikes the ground it is surface water. When it begins to flow it becomes flood water and it may be the rapid little current which gullies the hillside or the torrent which plows a deep gulch in the steep graded slough or sweeps over the flood plain of the river. Ground water is the water that stands beneath the surface. It is the water of saturation. Its surface in the water table and its height or depth in the soil is denoted by the line at which the water stands in a well or post hole. Soil water is suspended water, or water of absorption or capillarity. It is that quantity of water which the soil holds without dripping and which it will not yield except through evaporation. Hygroscopic water is the water of constitution or that quantity which remains in air-dried soil. Sloughs may be deep or shallow, wide or narrow, steep or flat. Their surface may be depressed at different points into little basins called ponds. The drainage engineer, must, therefore proceed with the drainage of a slough according to its own characteristics and without regard to the way Thomas Smith or Ole Oleson drained his. There is the one general law that the ditch must strike at the origin of the water if it be ooze water or spring water or at the bottom of it be ground water. There is another law very well established for the light, porous soil of the prairies which is that a four-foot ditch will drain the land for a distance of forty feet on either side of it; so that ditches may run eighty feet apart whether they be sub-mains or laterals.

SUMMER CARE OF POULTRY.

This is the season of the year when poultry requires the closest attention. Especially is this the case with the young broods. At no other time of the year, with possibly the exception of the severest winter weather, does the flock need such constant care. Enervated by extreme summer heat, it is more easily attached by the various diseases to which both the young and the old are subject. Coupled with this is the fact that it is at this particular season the prey for all the vermin that afflict, and in many instances destroy poultry kind.

A few simple rules for the care of poultry during the summer months can be given, and if intelligently followed, will produce satisfactory results, not only in maintaining the health of the flock, but in their productive ability.

First of all may be mentioned the fact that poultry requires plenty of shade, and the shade very low, leafy trees, or bushes, is the best. Chickens are very sensitive to wind, whether it be hot or cold and prefer the shade of bushes because they shelter them from both the sun and the wind. In the absence of trees or bushes, a shade must be provided for the flock by other means, and an open shed or lean-to on the north-side of the hen-house or barn is the next best thing. Chickens ought to be prevented from congregating in the hen-house or stable during the heat of the day, as the habit increases the supply of vermin, both on the fowls and in the houses, and consequently makes this pest harder to cope with.

Next in point of importance is that the fowls have plenty of fresh, clean water. During the season, drinking vessels no matter of what description they may be should be cleaned at least once a day, and fresh water, given morning, noon and night.

A small quantity of Douglass mixture, which can be made by dissolving eight ounces of copperas in a gallon of water and adding one-half ounce of sulphuric acid, put in the drinking water, will prevent dysentery and destroy cholera and other disease germs which are liable to attack poultry at this time. One tablespoonful of this mixture to the half gallon of water is about the proper proportion—a little more or less according to the condition of the flock won't hurt. It should be used about once a week and dysentery, diarrhea and cholera will be successfully banished.

THE COW AND HER DRINK.

If a dairyman wants to treat himself to a genuine surprise, let him keep his herd of milk-giving cows in the stable and give them water in such a way that the weight drunk by each cow can be ascertained, and be on hand so that each cow may have all she will desire, and when she wants it, writes John Gould in Country Gentleman. We have been through a little experience of this kind, and the quantity drunk by each cow was found out. It is an experiment one will not care to follow up more than a week, before the faucet at the big tank will be turned, and the cows drink out of the basins again. The trial was made with six cows, and it was found that the average quantity consumed daily varied with individual cows from 70 to 140 pounds. One cow drank this last quantity daily right along and some the smaller quantity, with an average of 90 pounds each. Another thing we found was that some of the cows would drink very often, i. e., their buckets would be frequently found empty, and others drank longer at intervals; and one cow wanted about an her twenty-four hours' supply at one time, an dwould only drink a little towards night As these cows were being fed fifty pounds each of ensilage a day, it is seen at once that succulent food did not play any important part in the economy of of drinking water. It was also found that the desire of a cow for water was about an hour after eating, but the evening thirst was never so great as in the morning. With some of the cows there was some variation in the quantity of water consumed daily, but with others it was as steady in quantity as standard measure. In this there might be some variation in results from some other herd not so cared for; these cows being continuously stabled at the time of the experiment while a herd that ran outdoors more or less might show different results. In another thing I was convinced that a cow did better that drank several times a day and so convinced was I of this, that a watering system for the cow stables was put in several years ago; and my opinion of its value has never changed, except in a more thorough belief, in its promoting the milk flow; and if our cows were to be turned out every day for exercise, I should not connect out-door drinking with it, but hold to the manger water basin. In this connection there is another point I think of importance, and that is in stable watering there is uniformity of the temperature of the water, and the cow being habituated to drinking water at say 52 degress day after day—as the water in my big stable tank indicates—is not subjected to the extreme temperature ranges of out-door drinking water, and air included, and she must do the better for this uniformity with the shocks to the cow's system eliminated.

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TEETOTALLER TWICE A VICTOR.

He Won the Queen's Prize for Rifle Shooting Twice.

It is odd that only one man should have won the Queen's prize twice, says a writer. The hero of that feat was Angus Cameron, of the 6th Inverness, a splendid shot, who beat the record each time he won the Queen's. I believe that his sight failed through an attack of ophthalmia, otherwise he might have won a triple crown. A slight, short, spare Highlandman, and a miller by trade, was Angus Cameron. He was also a teetotaller; and I shall not easily forget the disgust of the gallant and hospitable Victorias, who claim the prescriptive right of handing their splendid regimental loving-cup, brimming with champagne, to the winner of Queen's, when that modest little high-Queen's, when that modest little Highland miller refused the proffered pollet and asked for a bottle of ginger beer! What a contrast to another countryman of his, one of the best-known rifle shots in the country, who invariably used to fortify himself with a stiff "dram" of "mountain dew" before shooting at each range. Another remarkable feature about Angus Cameron's shooting was that on the first occasion he shot from the right shoulder, and on the second, owing to the failing sight of the right eye, he shot from his left shoulder.

ANOTHER MATTER.

Strict devotion to the truth is commendable, but it sometimes leads to curious situations.

A young man who was paying court to a young lady was thus addressed by her mother, who was perhaps not the most agreeable person in the world:

And so you want me for a mother-in-law?

Ah-ah, it's n-n-ot exactly that, stammered the young man, but I don't see how I can marry your daughter without your being my mother-in-law!

NO DISCOUNT ON THEM.

She—How can I ever repay you for your kindness?

He—With kisses.

She—How much do you value them at?

He—I'll take them at their face value.

INSULTED.

Tenspot—Why are you so angry at the doctor?

Mrs. Talklot—When I told him I had a terrible tired feeling, he told me to show him my tongue.

ONTARIO ARCHIVES
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