RDONED AT LAST.

A THRILLING CHRISTMAS STORY, BY "JACK FROST.'

ACT THE FIFTH.—(Continued)

At the period of which this story treats there was, in the ancient manor of Chelsea, an old house which Queen Elizabeth had once honoured by her presence.

Alas! for all human grandeur! The place which once had afforded shelter to a queen and members of her court, was now in a state of neglect and decay, and some of those who had at one time inhabited it were sleeping in the old ivy clad church hard by.

The rickety gate in the broken pallings admitted to the yard—a square flagged space, with a broken water-butt in one corner under an old-fashioned leaden gargoyle.

There was also a grindstone, and some odd bits of timber lying about near the pump, which was nearly grown up with nettles and rye grass.

On opening the panelled door you found yourself in a great entrance-hall, whence a broad staircase with large balustrades, somewhat rickety and out of perpendicular, wound up beside a long mullioned window halfway up to the floor above.

It was a ghostly-looking place in all conscience, and when—as on a certain night—the storm-fiend was abroad, and his allies, the wind and rain, dashed against the windows, their rattling making gruesome music, and shook the old house to its very base, one would have been forgiven for imagining that a troop of demons were disporting themselves in it.

Jack Skinner and his wife were the inhabitants of the house at this time.

The cunning pair never had the remotest intention of going far away from so good a paymaster as Mr. Dene.

So, instead of proceeding across the Atlantic, they had doubled back upon him to Chelsea, and having paid half a year's rent in advance, became the tenants of the once lordly house, the owner being only too glad to get someone to live in it, to require references as to character and respectability.

The worthy couple elected to live up in the attic, consisting of one long apartment, off which a small store-room led.

Although the clock in the brick turret of the old church had struck twelve midnight, Skinner and his precious Martha had not gone to bed.

He was smoking a long clay, and sitting in an easy chair, with a steaming brew of hot rum punch before him, while she solaced herself with four-ale with a quartern of gin in it, and took hugh pinches of snuff from time to time.

"What are you going to do with the swag, Jack?" she asked. "Can't you sell it to some one, or pawn some of it?"

"You're a pretty woman of business, you are," he said, sneeringly. "Why, we'd be spotted in a jiff; the bobbies are on the scent yet, matey. Let sleeping dogs lie. We've plenty of money for the present, and know how to get more when we want it. Holloa! what was that?"

Starting up, he listened, while Martha's rubicund visage became suddenly pale.

Someone was knocking loudly at the street door, and continued to do so for several minutes.

"Police!" gasped Martha; "better put out the light."

"I'll put a brave face on it and go down; we've hid the swag away too artful for anyone to find it in a hurry," he rejoined, taking up the lamp and hurrying out.

"Don't leave me in the dark, Jack," she moaned.

"Dont be afeerd; no ghost wants the like of you, matey," he laughed; "and as for the old gentleman, he's been after us many a day without catching us."

The heavy tread of his descending footsteps aroused the echoes of the old house, and produced hollow sounds which were as much like groans as anything could well be.

Placing the lamp where the wind could not reach it, he swung back the great door, and peering out, called gruffly, "Holloa! What's up? This ain't a public house.

"I'm a cabman, and was driving a gent to Putney; the horse shied at a flash of lightning and upset the cab; the gent is hurt—he's a tip-top swell—and would come down handsome if you'd take him in and send for a doctor," said the driver of the ill-fated vehicle.

"Where is he?" Skinner asked.

"I propped him just inside the gate," was the eager answer. "Give me a hand with him, like a good fellow."

Where money was to be made Skinner was always "on the job," to use one of his own expressive phrases; and in a very short time the injured man was carried upstairs and placed in the room in the attic.

"No bones broken," said the cabman, after a hasty inspection; "he has only fainted."

"A drop of brandy might bring him to," said Martha. "I allus keep it in the house; saves a doctor many a time."

patient recovered consciousness potent spirit, and was soon able easy chair and converse.

were explained to him, he some money and his ad- to call on him next morn-

man had gone, the unexpected Skinner whether he might re- the storm had subsided."

ly, sir; take a lie down on the perfectly new and clean, and me ate will give you a call when the clears. You're welcome, sir; I rn a dog out such a night as

taking of hot brandy-and-water, on Skinner's suggestion, and se of security, and the grateful irits, was soon sleeping sound-

n go, matey," remarked ed tone; "he's got heaps

meddle with, Jack. culiar mark on his isper."

's all, matey."

d, eagerly: ree moles, like so afeerd of. elf; they're on in astonish- ll on he

had stated was true—he was looking at Charles, fourteenth Duke of Brittany, and Myrtle's uncle.

Skinner nodded as he reseated himself, and said, with a rapacious smile:

"We ought to make this a paying job, Matey."

"Two paymasters, Jack," she assented. "But how can we let him know what we know?" her wrinkled face contracting into a puzzled expression.

"That's a licker, ain't it?" he said, musingly. Martha sat silent for a while, putting on her considering cap, as she afterwards averred, and said at last:

"I've got it! Myrt's photograph, the one you prigged that night. I'm going to get him a bit of breakfast presently (he can pay well)—a cup of tea and bacon and eggs. Thank goodness! I've got a clean tablecloth, and, when I've made all tidy, I'll put her picture on the table right afore him. If he knows her, he'll be sure to talk."

"Matey, you're clever. You'll be landlady of a tip-top pub, yet, mark my words," he said, with an approving nod.

Martha was as good as her word, and prepared an appetising breakfast for their titled guest, though ignorant of his exalted station as yet, and, half an hour after breakfast, they awoke him.

"You can have a wash and tidy yourself up a bit, sir," said Skinner, deferently; "There's water, soap, and clean towels and I'll give you a brush presently."

"You're a good fellow, and I won't forget you," said the duke, who was only too pleased to get rid of the marks of the previous night's accident.

He had half-partaken of breakfast, when his eyes fell on Myrtle's photo., and an eager look leaped into his sinister face as he said:

"That face seems familiar to me. Whose is it? Not your daughter's, surely?"

Martha and Jack exchanged significant glances behind his back, and she smiled exultantly as she answered:

"Well sir, she was like a daughter to us for years; we brought her up from a babby, and then her father took her away from us."

"What's her name?" he asked.

"Myrtle Dane, sir; a lady called about her after she was taken away from us."

"Ah! Did she leave her address, my good woman?"

"Yes, sir, but we lost it; she never called again. We lived at Rock Head then, sir, not at Chelsea."

"Where are the Danes now?" he asked, with assumed carelessness. He began to perceive that he had shown too eager an interest in the affair, little dreaming that he was being led on artfully.

"We know, sir, and yet we don't know," replied Martha significantly.

"You have been asked not to let their address be known, I suppose, eh?"

"That's it, sir," put in Jack, resolved to have a finger in the pie; "we're poor people, and can't afford to offend rich folks."

"I'm not sure that the young lady is known to me," the duke remarked, in a tone of indifference; "but still I should like to ascertain if a surmise of mine is correct. They live in London, of course?" and he fixed his keen, dark eyes on Skinner's face.

"It's hardly fair, sir, after what we've told you, to ask that 'ere question," Martha interposed huffily. "Of course if anybody made it worth our while we might let them know, provided they did'nt split on us."

"I understand; how much would you require, my good woman?" he asked with an assumed smile, as he saw another exemplification of his favorite proverb: "A golden key will unlock any door."

"Mr. Dene gives us a pension of two pounds a week, sir, besides hextras. He's a hard man, and wouldn't pay us a penny if he knew we'd split on him; isn't that so, Jack?"

"Right to a tick, matey," was the quick, assenting reply.

"Come to this address this evening, my good fellow," he said, pencilling it on a card; "we can talk matters over there. You will find me a liberal paymaster for work well done. Now see whether you can get me a cab. Here's three pounds for the trouble you have been at on my account.

"It's the finest night's work we've ever had," remarked Skinner, when their guest had departed. "There's more business in it than you think, matey; I could see the devil in his eyes, and no mistake."

"Poor folk must make a living," remarked Martha, sententiously.

"Yes, matey, a man must live—honestly if he can, or else t'other way," he assented, and then the subject dropped, for the pair were tired and wanted rest.

The duke put up at a well-known hotel in Putney under an assumed name, as may be conceived, and resolved not to appear in his English home until he had accomplished a certain project, which, it need hardly be stated, had a connection with Myrtle and her father.

There he was visited by Skinner, who, after a long conference, went away apparently well satisfied, for there was a smile on his ill-favoured countenance.

Meanwhile, the inmates of Fairlawn House remained ignorant of the new danger that threatened them, although Mr. Dene was in expectation of some fresh attempt on the part of his old enemy to molest his peace and happiness, if not his life.

Miss Becky was behaving with great forbearance, simply because she felt assured that before very long she would have gained her point and become Mrs. Dene.

She knew him to be excessively wealthy—a millionaire, in fact; and though he was under a convict's ban, yet even that might be lessened in time, and his innocence proved. Besides, he had not broken the laws of England, in itself greatly in his favour, if ever the truth oozed out.

Although she had had to earn her living from girlhood almost, yet she was not without some means of her own—for, being of a frugal turn, she managed to save money yearly.

But she always rebelled secretly against her dependent position, and when she saw this opportunity of emancipating herself, seized it with avidity.

What Myrtle's opinion was of the recent interview she could not gather, for that astute young lady would not be drawn out, though she made several attempts to do so. Cards of invitation had been issued for another brilliant gathering at Fairlawn House, to exceed in gorgeousness the former.

Myrtle, in view of threatening eventualities, meant, in sporting phrase, to "die game," and it was to please her that the invites were sent out.

Erle Peyton was progressing well towards complete convalescence, and hoped to be able to be present on the occasion in question.

A dead calm precedes a storm, and such a calm now reigns at Fairlawn House—when, lo! an incident happened to throw its inmates once more into a state of alarm.

Miss Becky Pride was missing—her bed had not been lain in, and neither a letter nor any intimation had been left behind her to explain her sudden disappearance.

Myrtle and her father had been out till a late hour the preceding night, and on returning concluded that Miss Pride had retired, for they saw nothing of her.

One of the servants, on being questioned, remembered seeing her about an hour before dusk, going down towards the gate leading to the river.

And then a maid deposed to hearing a scream just as it began to get dark, but put it down to a bit of "larking" on the part of some river excursionists—a thing of not unfrequent occurrence.

The boat, which was usually moored near the gate, was missing, and in the shallow water was found a book—an English translation of Victor Hugo's "Les Miserables"—which proved to belong to the missing woman, for there were marginal notes in pencil, in her handwriting.

All this only heightened the mystery, and grave fears were entertained that, as in Myrtle's case, the boat had broken away from the moorings, and, floating to midstream, had capsized.

This supposition was further strengthened when, on searching her wardrobe, all her dresses but the afternoon robe she was wearing were found intact.

The district inspector of police, on being communicated with, at once gave his opinion that foul play had been at work.

"You see, sir," he remarked to Mr. Dene, "the rascals who committed the last burglary and outrage here, having got off so easily, resolved to try their hand at it again, and, most likely were seen at their work by the missing lady, who, by the way, was rendered insensible before, if you remember."

This ingenious theory was not openly discredited by Dene, who was positive Skinner had no hand in the affair, because he had started him off for America.

"I know you will use every effort, Mr. Urquhart, to bring this dastardly outrage to light," he said, in a tone of anxiety. "If a handsome reward will aid your labours, I will willingly pay it."

"Pardon me, sir; but do you happen to know whether she was on bad terms with any one in the house?" the inspector asked; "I mean with the servants?"

"Not to my knowledge; in fact, I think I am right when I tell you, that I am sure she had not made a single enemy; she was singularly inoffensive and gentle in her manner towards every one—her inferiors more especially."

"That's a good point cleared up, for in all these matters, that of murder especially, we always look for a motive," said the inspector. "Do you happen to know whether Miss Pride was in the habit of using the boat on these summer evenings?"

"I think not; my daughter was very fond of doing so, though."

"Depend upon it, we'll find this out, sir; clever as they think themselves," remarked Urquhart. "The pitcher that goes to the well too often gets broken at last. Good day, sir; the moment I have got any reliable clue, I will let you know."

The inspector's question about the boat gave Mr. Dene an uneasy feeling.

"Perhaps, after all, the outrage was aimed at Myrtle, and fell on poor Miss Pride in mistake. I trust no serious harm has befallen her. If people only knew what passed at our interview, suspicion of this daring crime might fall on me."

He had searched in his study for her in vain, for he was quite sure she had by some means discovered the secret door leading into the billiard room.

The more he reflected upon the matter the greater became his fears that Miss Pride had suffered vicariously for Myrtle, and the firmer grew his resolve to unravel the mystery.

That night Bertram Dene was up rather late writing important letters, when a loud knocking and ringing at the front door brought him there quickly.

"Beg pardon, sir," said a policeman, "but we found this person in the grounds. He refuses to give any account of himself."

"If you will afford me a few minutes in private, sir," said the stranger in French, "I can convince you that I am innocent of anything wrong."

"Policemen, I think he meant no harm. Mr. Dene said. "Leave him with me, and continue to watch. I commend your vigilance highly."

"Shall one of us wait here, sir, to see him clear off the grounds?" asked the officer. "He looks an ugly customer, just the sort of fellow who'd knife you!"

"Thanks, no," Mr Dene said, with a good-humoured, sceptical laugh. "I think I can take care of myself in this case. Good night."

He took the stranger into the billiard room, where the gas was left burning to be in readiness for the police should they require it as a kind of temporary lock-up in the event of their capture of any suspicious character.

One look at the stranger confirmed the policeman's description of him as an ugly customer.

He squinted horribly, had red hair, a long lantern-jawed face and a large mouth, full of wolfish teeth—just the sort of a man one would give a wide berth to at any hour by day or night in a lonely spot.

"You had a motive in coming here?" Dene said sharply in French. "What is your business with me?"

"You know Pierrie Verlon, monsieur. I come from him. I arrived late, and on getting into the grounds was arrested by the gensdarmes," the fellow said readily.

"I only received a letter from him to-day and in it he said nothing of sending a messenger. What have you for me?"

"This!" hissed the fellow, drawing a formidable dagger and aiming a blow at Dene's unprotected breast.

But he sprang nimbly aside, and the next moment had closed with the assassin.

Both were powerful men; but Dane had the advantage of thews and sinews braced till they were like iron in the labour mines of Siberia.

Not a word escaped either combatant as they fought—the one for dear life, the other for liberty.

The fellow had dropped the knife on being throttled by his opponent, and both now trusted to skill in wrestling for an advantage.

No one in the house suspected that a life and death struggle was going on at this midnight hour, or that while they lay sleeping calmly in their beds murder might be committed at any moment.

One person, however, was on the alert. Myrtle, who had been aroused from her first sleep—in which she enjoyed a delicious dream of being in a flowery bower with her lover—by the ringing and knocking.

She got up, put on a dressing-gown, and sought for her father in the room where she had left him writing, but he was not there so she descended the stairs which led to the entrance hall, where she listened, and detecting a peculiar noise proceeding from the billiard-room, turned the handle.

There she saw a sight which, for the moment, almost froze her blood with horror.

Her father had, up to a certain point, gained an advantage over his opponent by throwing him heavily.

But the ruffian bit him so severely on the arm that, for the instant, the pain of the wound rendered him helpless.

That instant was enough to turn the tables; he got Dene underneath him, and, snatching up the dagger, was preparing to stab him, when, arousing from her torpor, Myrtle seized a heavy billiard cue, and strengthened by love, rendered desperate by fear, struck a blow for her father's life with the butt end, which she brought down swiftly and surely on the ruffian's unprotected head.

With a horrible execration uttered in French, he rolled off his victim, and lay on the floor senseless.

"Myrtle, my darling, you have saved my life," he gasped as he rose and leant against the billiard table for support. "Water, water, quick!"

Pouring some into a tumbler from a carafe, she held the glass to his lips, and he drank with fearful avidity.

"Oh, papa! you are hurt," she cried, seeing blood stains on the sleeve of his brown alpaca coat.

"Only a bite, child," he said, with a reassuring smile; "this ruffian was sent here to murder me by your uncle—my implacable foe. I must search the scoundrel; he may have compromising papers on him."

After securing him, with Myrtle's help, he turned out his pockets, but found nothing.

The police were eventually called in, the prisoner given into their custody, and conveyed to the station on a stretcher.

The fellow preserved the same dogged obstinacy when brought before the magistrate, refused to give his name or afford the slightest information about himself.

Mr. Dene and his daughter gave evidence before a crowded court, and her bravery in saving her father's life met with unstinted applause, which the magistrate did not care to check.

In the end, it resulted in the Frenchman being remanded for further inquiries; but he managed to escape.

Although Mr. Dene had triumphed over many misfortunes, he had a relentless enemy on his track still.

Many polite refusals were received to the invitations, and on the evening of the day on which the magisterial investigation took place, Mr. Peyton came over to Fairlawn House, his face pale with suppressed passion.

"Myrtle, my darling," he said, on seeing her, "you told me you had an enemy, and here is the proof of it. I wish, I knew the fellow who wrote it—I'd horsewhip him."

"Dear Erle," Myrtle said, sweetly, "to what do you refer?"

"Two anonymous letters, and rumours which have got into circulation that your father is an escaped convict," he replied indignantly.

"Well, suppose that were so, dear Hugh, what would you do?" she asked, paling as she put the momentous question to her lover; "would you renounce me?"

"No; a thousand times no, my darling!" was his loyal protest. "Your father might have been betrayed; but guilty of crime—never."

Her father entered at this juncture, looking pale with suppressed anger and excitement.

"Papa," said Myrtle, joyously, "here stands one of your staunchest champions, your most loyal friends."

"You are very kind, Erle; I know to what you refer. Scandal has been rife—the world knows that I am an escaped convict. You would not wed my daughter now?"

"Aye, to-morrow—this very minute," Erle said, passionately. "Oh, sir, do give your consent."

"No! I would be taking a mean advantage of you, Erle. You have a father to consult, a mother, who may not look upon my innocence as assured."

Erle's reply was cut short by the entrance of Police-inspector Urquhart, who said—

"Sir, Miss Pride's body has been found."

"Her body?" gasped Myrtle.

"Yes, miss. It appears that she was being abducted in the boat, and struggled with her captors, the boat upset, and both were drowned. The bodies were picked up near Battersea, both firmly gripping each other."

"Has her assailant been identified?" Bertram Dene asked brokenly.

"Yes, sir; it's a fellow named Jack Skinner. We've had an eye on him for some months past. If we can apprehend his wife we may learn more about this unhappy affair."

It need hardly be stated that the party at Fairlawn House did not come off.

A few days after this sad news Bertram Dene took his daughter abroad, accompanied only by Molly Spriggins.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Barnum at Oxford.

On one memorable occasion, some five-and-thirty years ago, Mr. Phineas T. Barnum undertook to deliver a lecture at Oxford, England, before an intelligent audience composed chiefly of undergraduates. The subject was "Humbug," and the students were so unruly that Mr. Barnum shared the fate of many other entertainers at Oxford, and was unable to obtain a hearing. At length there was a lull, and the speaker, seizing the opportunity, shouted out: "Then you don't want to hear anything about humbug?" "We don't!" was the immediate reply. Mr. Barnum gazed steadily at his audience for a minute, and then remarked: "Well, I have got your money, and there is no humbug about that!" Peace with honour was thereupon proclaimed by the students, and Mr. Barnum was allowed to deliver his lecture without further interruption.—[New York Tribune.

Timely Encouragement.

In the struggles of life the need of encouragement and assistance comes to all. A timely word or an outstretched hand has often helped an earnest worker over a slough of discouragement in which he would have sunk irrevocably without it. We hear a great deal of the rivalries of artists, but very little of the unselfish, disinterested ways in which they strive to help each other. Unrecorded though they may be, such deeds are written in imperishable characters in the hearts of those who have been helped.

Millais and Holman Hunt, with their brilliant talents and inspired brushes, worked on unsuccessfully year after year. Returning to the Academy at each exhibition with their carefully considered pictures, they sought in vain to overcome prejudice and to win a kindly word from the critics.

Under desperate discouragements, in great poverty and need, they toiled on and on until they both regretfully began to talk of abandoning art, lest they should starve. Then a sudden encouragement came to Millais. He sold a picture, and hastening to Hunt, said, "You must not give up. You have before you a great future. If you need money, share mine."

The sympathy between the two men was so perfect that Hunt accepted the timely help in the spirit in which it was offered, and for a whole year lived upon Millais's purse.

The long-deferred success came at last. It was as sudden as it was complete. Within one week Hunt sold every picture he had painted during those long years of unrequited toil, and received commissions enough to occupy him for several years more. Literally, he went to bed one night in poverty and discouragement, and wakened to find that he had become famous, and that the way to prosperity was wide open before him.

But for Millais's timely assistance, Hunt would never have enriched the world with "The Finding in the Temple" and the "Light of the World."

Some of Turner's unselfish efforts to help others were truly heroic. On one occasion, when Turner was on the hanging committee, a painter by the name of Bird sent a picture to the Academy. It had great merit, but no place for it could be found. Turner pleaded hard for its admission, but the committee refused.

Turner sat down and looked at the picture for a long time, and, becoming more and more convinced of its merit, insisted that it must be accepted. He was still overruled. The thing was impossible.

Turner said no more, but going into the Academy, silently and alone, took down one of his own pictures, sent it out of the room, and hung Bird's in its place. The picture received the recognition it deserved, and another struggling artist was saved from despair.

At another exhibition, in the year 1826, Turner's great picture of Cologne was to be exhibited. It was hung between two portraits by Sir Thomas Lawrence. The sky of Turner's picture was exceedingly bright, and had a most injurious effect upon the color of the two portraits. Lawrence, naturally, felt mortified and complained openly, as he had good cause for doing, of the position of pictures.

On the morning of the opening of the exhibition, at the private view, a friend Turner's who had seen the Cologne in its splendor led a group of expectant crit up to the picture. He started back in sernation. The golden sky had cha to a dun color, and all its glorious tint disappeared. He ran up to Turner have you been doing to your picture

"Oh," muttered Turner, in a tone, so as not to be heard by othe Lawrence was so unhappy! It's black; it will all wash off after tion."

He had actually passed a w black, in water-color, over t and spoiled his picture for should hurt Lawrence, a pictures receiving the appr their due. The kindl rence over a ba ght a

"I never word of livi saw him look an unki never knew him let sorrowful remonstrance gation, a blameful w other."

Democracy in Ger

Despite all oppressive an legislation of the German Impe ment, the Social Democratic par many continues to gain ground. recent Saxon elections they polled as many votes as they polled six year and won two new representatives in provincial parliament. They now have seve men in the Saxon Landtag, among whom are such extremists as Bebel and Liebnecht. This fact is all the more significant because in Saxony the majority of the workmen, who are generally supposed to build the rank and file of the Social Democracy, are excluded from voting by a property qualification. Nor is a Saxon citizen eligible to a seat in the Landtag unless he pays State taxes of at least thirty marks annually. The proof furnished by the Saxon elections that Prince Bismarck's severe repressive measures have entirely failed to crush the socialistic malcontents and that his conciliatory measures, like the workingmen's insurance scheme, have in no way appeased them, has caused the German dailies to plunge again into the perennial discussion of the causes of social discontent in Germany. The "Vossische Zeitung," a representative daily of liberal tendencies, says: "Government and parties alike should find in this movement of voters a reason for thoughtful introspection. Our previous policy, far from winning over the workmen, pushes them more and more into the Social Democratic camp, despite all social political laws. Should the present law against the socialists be continued, and the present tariff policy be retained, the Social Democracy would eventually assume proportions which would enable it to drive the wedge of destruction into all the old parties."

On the Safe Side.

Sam Johnsing—Huh! did you hear de parson say dat wheebber had stole his pumpkins would go ter de bad place?

Jim Webster—Heah! heah! ain't I glad I didn't steal nuffin but cabbages.