

Continued from 1st Page.

ly. At last he stammered out a question. "Well major, what do you think of this?"

The major sank into a chair, expressing his thoughts by a gasp. Mr. Paley turned his attention to the doctor.

"What do you say, doctor?"

"I say—I say nothing."

"I suppose," murmured the major, in what seemed to be the ghost of his natural voice, "that I did knock him down?"

The doctor seemed to have something to say on that point, at any rate.

"Knock him down?—I should think you did! Like a log of wood!"

The major glanced at the governor.

Mr. Paley shook his head. The major groaned. The governor began to be a little agitated.

"Something must be done. It is out of the question that such a scandal should be allowed to go out into the world. I do not hesitate to say that if the chaplain sends in to the commissioners the report which he threatens to send the situation will be to the last degree unpleasant for all of us."

"The point is," observed the doctor,—"are we, collectively and individually, subject to periodical attacks of temporary insanity?"

"Speaking for myself, I should say certainly not."

Dr. Livermore turned on the governor.

"Then perhaps you will suggest a hypothesis which will reasonably account for what has just occurred?"

The governor was silent. "Unless you are prepared to seek for a cause in the region of phenomena."

"Supposing," murmured the major, "there is such a thing as witchcraft after all?"

"We should have the Psychological Research Society down on us, if we had nobody else, if we appended our names to a confession of faith." The doctor thrust his thumbs into his waistcoat arm-holes.

"And I should lose every patient I have."

"There was a tapping at the door. In response to the governor's invitation, the chief warder entered. In general there was in Mr. Murray's bearing a not distant suggestion of an inflated bantam.

"A cock or pouter-pigeon. It was curious to observe how anything in the shape of inflation was absent now. He touched his hat as he addressed the governor, his honest, rubicund, something pugnacious face, eloquent of the weight that was on his mind.

"Excuse me, sir, I said he was a witch."

"Your saying that he was a witch—or wizard," remarked the governor dryly, "will not, I fear be sufficient excuse, in the eyes of the commissioners, for your throwing a pail of water over the chaplain."

"But a man's not answerable for what he does when he's bewitched," persisted the chief warder, with characteristic sturdiness.

"It is exactly that reflection which has constrained me to return."

They looked up. There was the chaplain standing in the door—still with his handkerchief to his nose.

"Mr. Murray, you threw a pail of water over me. If you assert that you did it under the influence of witchcraft, I, who have myself been under a spell, am willing to excuse you."

"Mr. Hewett, sir, you yourself know I was bewitched."

"I do; as I believe it of myself. Murray, give me your hand." The chaplain and the chief warder solemnly shook hands. "There is an end of the matter as it concerns us two. Major Hardinge, do I understand you to assert that you were under the influence of witchcraft?"

"This was rather a delicate inquiry to address to the major. Apparently the major seemed to find it so."

"I don't know about witchcraft," he growled; "but I am prepared to take my oath in any court in England that I had no more intention of striking you than I had of striking the moon."

"That is sufficient, Major Hardinge. I forgive you from my heart. Perhaps you too will take my hand."

The major took it—rather awkwardly, much more awkwardly than the chief warder had done. When the chaplain relinquished it, he turned aside, and picking up his coat, began to put it on, scarcely with that air of dignity which is proper to a prison inspector.

"I presume," continued Mr. Hewett, "that we all allow that what has occurred has been owing to the malign influence of the man Oliver Mankell?"

There was silence. Apparently they did not all allow it even yet; it was a pill to swallow.

"Hypnotism," muttered the doctor, half aside.

"Hypnotism! I believe that the word simply expresses some sort of mesmerism power—hardly a sufficient explanation in the present case."

"I would suggest, Major Hardinge, imposed the governor, that theorizing aside, that the man be transferred to another prison at the earliest possible moment."

"He shall be transferred to-morrow," affirmed the major. "If there is anything in Mr. Hewett's suggestion, the fellow shall have a chance to prove it—in some other jail. Oh, good Lord! Don't! He's killing me! Help—!"

"Hardinge!" exclaimed the doctor; "what's the matter now?"

"The major had been delivering himself in his most pompous official manner. Suddenly he put his hand to the pit of his stomach, and began to cry out as if in an ecstasy of pain, his official manner altogether gone."

"He'll murder me! I know he will!"

"Murder you? Who?"

"Mankell."

"Oddly enough, I too was conscious of a very curious sensation."

As he said this, the governor wiped the cold dew of perspiration from his brow. He seemed unnaturally white. As he adjusted his spectacles, there was an odd tremulous appearance about his eyes.

"It was because you spoke of transferring him to some other jail." The chaplain's tone was solemn. "He dislikes the idea of being trifled with."

"Trifled with?" He seems uncommonly fond of trifling with other people. Confound the man! Oh—h!"

The major sprang from the floor with an exclamation which amounted to a positive yell. They looked each other in the face. Each man seemed a little paler than his wont.

"Something must be done," the governor gasped.

"The chaplain made a proposition."

"I propose that we summon him into our presence, and inquire of him what he wishes us to do."

The proposition was not received with acclamation. They probably felt that a

certain amount of complication might be expected to ensue if such inquiries began to be addressed to prisoners.

"I think I'll go my rounds," observed the doctor. "This matter scarcely concerns me. I wish you gentlemen well out of it."

He reached out his hand to take his hat, which he had placed upon a chair. As he did so, the dog disappeared, and a small brown terrier dog appeared in its place. The dog barked viciously at the outstretched hand. The doctor started back just in time to escape its teeth. The dog disappeared—there was the hat again. The appearance was but momentary, but it was none the less suggestive on that account. The doctor seemed particularly affected.

"We must have all been drinking, if we are taking to seeing things," he cried.

"I think," suggested the chaplain, almost in a whisper, "that we had better inquire what it is he wishes us to do. There was silence. 'We—we have all clear consciences—there—there is no reason why we should be afraid.'"

"We're—we're not afraid," gasped the governor. "I—I don't think you are entitled to infer such a thing."

The major stammeringly supported him.

"Of—of course we—we're not afraid. The—the idea is preposterously absurd."

"Still," said the doctor, "a man doesn't care to have hanky-panky tricks played with a man's top hat."

There was a pause—of considerable duration. It was again broken by the chaplain.

"Don't you think, Mr. Paley, that we had better send for this man? Apparently Mr. Paley did."

"Murray," he said, "go and see that he is sent here."

Mr. Murray went, not too willingly—still he went.

IV.

Oliver Mankell was again in the charge of Warder Slater. Warder Slater looked very queer indeed,—he actually seemed to have lost in bulk. The same phenomenon was observable in the chief warder, who followed close upon the prisoner's heels.

Mankell seemed, as ever, completely at his ease. There was again a suspicion of a smile in his eyes and about the corners of his lips. His bearing was in striking contrast to that of the officials. His self-possession in the presence of their evident uneasiness gave him the appearance, in a sense, of being a giant among pigmies; yet the major, at least, was in every way a bigger man than was. There was silence as he entered, a continuation of that silence which had prevailed until he came. The governor fumbled with a paper-knife which was in front of him. The inspector, leaning forward in his chair, seemed engrossed by his boots. The doctor kept glancing, perhaps unconsciously at his hat. The chaplain, though conspicuously uneasy, seemed to have his wits about him most. It was he who, temporarily usurping the governor's functions, addressed the prisoner.

"Your name is Oliver Mankell? The prisoner merely smiled. 'You are sentenced for three months' hard labor.' The prisoner looked at the governor. 'For—pre-tending to tell fortunes?' The smile became pronounced. The chaplain cleared his throat. 'Oliver Mankell, I am a clergyman. I know that there are such things as good and evil. I know that, for causes which are hidden from me, the Almighty may permit evil to take visible shape and walk abroad upon the earth, but I also know that, though evil may destroy my body, it cannot destroy my soul.'"

The chaplain pulled up. His words and manner, though evidently sincere, were not particularly impressive. While they evidently had the effect of increasing his colleague's uneasiness, they only had the effect of enlarging the prisoner's smile. When he was about to continue the governor interposed.

"I think Mr. Hewett, if you will permit me, Mankell, I am not a clergyman."

The prisoner's smile almost degenerated into a grin. "I have sent for you, for the second time this morning, to ask you frankly if you have any reason to complain of your treatment here? The prisoner stretched out his hands with his familiar gesture. 'Have you any complaint to make? Is there anything, within the range of the prison rules, you would wish me to do for you? Again the hands went out. 'Then tell me, quite candidly, what is the cause of your behavior?'"

When the governor ceased, the prisoner seemed to be resolving in his mind what answer he should make. Then, inclining his head with that almost staccato grace, if one may coin a phrase, which seemed to accompany every movement he made,—

"Sir, what have I done?" he asked.

"Eh—eh—we won't dwell upon that. The question is, What did you do for?"

"It is perhaps within your recollection, sir, that I have my reputation to redeem, my character to restate."

"Your character? What do you mean?"

"In the first interview with which you favored me, I ventured to observe that it would be my endeavor, during my sojourn within these walls, to do as well as I could for my character's sake."

"For my character's sake? But I am but beginning, you perceive."

"Oh, you're but beginning! You call this but beginning, do you? May I ask if you have any intention of going on?"

"Oh, sir, I have still nearly the whole three months in front of me! Until my term expires I shall go on, with gathering strength, until the end."

As he said this Mankell drew himself up in such a way that it almost seemed as though some inches were added to his stature.

"You will, will you? Well, you seem to be a pleasant kind of man! The criticism seemed to have been extracted from the governor almost against his will. He looked round upon his colleagues with what could only be described as a ghastly grin. 'Have you any objection, Mankell, to being transferred to another prison?'"

"Sir! the prisoner's voice rang out, and his hearers started—perceptibly. Perhaps that was because their nerves were already so disorganized. 'It is here I was sent, it is here I must remain—until the end.'"

The governor took out his handkerchief and wiped his brow.

"I am bound to tell you, Mankell, judging from the experiences of the last two days, if this sort of thing is to continue—with gathering strength!—the end will not be long."

The prisoner seemed lost in reflection. The officials seemed lost in reflection too; but their reflections were probably of a different kind.

"There is one suggestion I might offer."

"Let's have it by all means. We have reached a point at which we shall be glad to receive any suggestion—from you."

"You might give me a testimonial."

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"You might give me a testimonial."

What sort of testimonial do you allude to?"

You might testify that I had regained my reputation, redeemed my character,—that I had proved to you, as you said, a fact that I was the magician I claimed to be."

The governor leaned back in his seat. "Your suggestion has at least the force of novelty. I should like to search the registers of remarkable cases, to know if such an application has ever been made to the governor of an English jail before. What do you say, Hardinge?"

The major shuffled in his chair. "I think I must return to town."

The prisoner smiled. The major vetoed. "That—that fellow's pinned me to my chair, he gasped. He appeared to be making little efforts to rise from his seat. You cannot return to town. Dismiss the idea from your mind."

The major groaned. He took out his handkerchief and wiped his brow. The governor looked up from the paper-knife with which he was again trifling. "Am I to understand that the testimonial is to take the shape of a voluntary offering?"

"Oh, sir! Of what value is a testimonial which is not voluntary?"

"Quite so. How do you suggest it should be worded?"

"May I ask you for paper, pens and ink?"

The prisoner bent over the table and wrote on the paper which he handed him. What he had written he passed to the governor. Mr. Paley found inscribed, in a beautifully fair round hand, as clear as copperplate, the following "testimonial."

"The undersigned persons present their compliments to Colonel Gregory. Oliver Mankell, sentenced by Colonel Gregory to three months' hard labor, has been in Canterbury Jail two days. That short space of time has, however, convinced them that Colonel Gregory acted wrongly in distrusting his magic powers, and so casting a stain upon his character. It is to testify that he has proved, to the entire satisfaction of the undersigned, inspector of prisons and official of Canterbury Jail, that he is a magician of quite the highest class."

The signatures of all those present were on the paper, and the governor observed the prisoner, as the governor was reading the "testimonial."

Apparently at a loss for words with which to comment upon the paper he had read the governor handed it to the inspector. The major shrunk from taking it.

"I—I'd rather not," he mumbled.

"I think you'd better read it," said the governor. "Thus urged, the major read it. 'Good Lord!' he gasped, and passed it to the doctor."

The doctor silently, having read it, passed it to the chaplain.

"I will read it aloud," said Mr. Hewett. He did so, in a low, earnest, probably, of Slater and Mr. Murray.

"Supposing we were to sign that document, what would you propose to do with it?" inquired the governor.

"I should convey it to Colonel Gregory."

"Indeed! In that case he would have as high an opinion of our characters as of yours. And, yourself, what sort of action might we expect from you?"

"I should go."

The governor's jaw dropped.

"Go? Oh, would you?"

"My character regained, for what have I to stop?"

"Exactly. What have you? There's that point of view, no doubt. Well, Mankell, we will think of a matter over."

The prisoner dropped his hands to his sides, looking the governor steadily in the face.

"Sir, I conceive that answer to convey a negative. The proposition thus refused will not be made again. It only remains for me to continue earnestly my endeavors to retrieve my character,—until the three months are at an end."

The chaplain was holding the testimonial loosely between his finger and thumb. Stretching out his arm, Mankell pointed at it with his hand. It was immediately in flames. The chaplain releasing it, it was consumed to ashes before it reached the floor. Returning to face the governor, the prisoner laid his right hand, palm downwards, on the table: "Spirits of the air, in whose presence I now stand, ask you if I am not justified in whatever I may do?"

His voice was very musical. His upturned eyes seemed to pierce through the ceiling to what there was beyond. The room grew darker. There was a rumbling in the air. The ground began to shake. The chaplain, who was caressing the hand which had been scorched by the flames, burst out with what was for him a passionate appeal,—

"Mr. Mankell, you are over-hasty. I was about to explain that I should esteem it quite an honor to sign your testimonial."

"No should I—upon my soul, I should!" declared the Major.

"There's nothing I wouldn't do to oblige you Mr. Mankell," stammered the chief warder.

"Same here!" cried Warder Slater.

"You really are too rapid in arriving at conclusions, Mr. Mankell! Remember the governor. 'I do beg you will not suppose there was any negative intention.'"

The darkness, the rumbling, and the shaking ceased as suddenly as they began. The prisoner smiled.

"Perhaps I was too hasty," he confessed. "It is an error which can easily be rectified."

He raised his hand. A piece of paper fluttered from the ceiling. It fell upon the table.

"Your signature, Major Hardinge, should head the list."

"I—I—I'd rather somebody else signed first."

"That would never do; it is for you to lead the van. You are free to leave your seat."

The major left his seat, apparently not rejoicing in his freedom. He wrote "William Hardinge" in great sprawling characters.

"Add 'Inspector of Prisons.'"

The Major added 'Inspector of Prisons,' with a very rapid countenance.

"Mr. Paley, it is your turn."

Mr. Paley took his turn, with a really tolerable imitation of being both ready and willing. Acting on the hint which had been given the major, he added "Governor of his own accord."

"Now doctor, it is you."

The doctor thrust his hands into his trouser pockets. "I'll sign, if you'll tell me how it done."

"Tell you how it done? How what is done?"

"How do you do that hanky-panky, of course?"

"Hanky-panky! The prisoner drew himself straight up. It is possible that you suspect me of hanky-panky? Yes, sir, I will show you how it's done. If you wish it, you shall be torn asunder where you stand."

"Thank you, you needn't trouble. I'll sign."

He signed. When the chaplain had signed, he shook his head and sighed.

"I always placed a high estimation on the twenty-eight chapter of the first book of Samuel. It is singular how my faith is justified!"

The chief warder placed his spectacles upon his nose, where they seemed uneasy, and made quite a business of signing. And such was Warder Slater's agitation, that he could scarcely hold his pen. At last the "testimonial" was complete. The prisoner smiled as he carefully folded it in two.

"I will convey it to Colonel Gregory," he said. "It is a gratification to me to have been able to retrieve my character in so short a space of time."

They watched him—a little spell-bound, perhaps; and as they watched, the prisoner's eyes—behold, he was gone!

RICHARD MARSH

THE END.

LAND FOR SALE!

The Subscriber offers for sale the following property, situated in the Town of Chatham, namely: The property known as the "Regency Hall Field," formerly owned by the late Hon. William Murray, consisting of about twenty acres. The dwelling house situated on Fountaine Lane—known as the "Murray House" property. The property situated on the south side of the river, opposite the late Hon. Murray's house, known as the "Murray House" property. If not sold at Private Sale, before the 1st October, the above property, with the land, will be offered at Public Auction, on 12 October, at the office of the Public Auctioneer, J. B. SNOWBALL.

For terms and further particulars, apply to J. B. SNOWBALL.

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