

# MARY MIDTHORNE

BY  
GEORGE BARR McCUTHEON.  
Author of "Graustark," "Truxton King," etc.  
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## CHAPTER XVI.—(Continued.)

"Horace may forgive Eric, but he'll never forgive me," said Adam slowly, calculating. "There's only one guilty person in this case, and that is me. Let's be perfectly frank about it. I am the one who has made Horace suffer, not you, Eric. Can't you see what he will do to me? He will take it all out of me. He will ruin me, destroy me. I won't say he can put me behind the bars, but he can make me the most despised creature in America."

"You should have thought of all this before," said Mary sharply.

"I have," quoth Adam, with a frown. "If he meant to say more, he was checked by a sharp, eager exclamation from Eric."

"By George! Listen to me!" His face was bright with a new resolve. He leaned forward eagerly, his voice dropping to a tense, insistent half-whisper. "I know how I can protect you, Mr. Adam. It's as simple as A B C. You have stood by me; I'd be a dog to drag you down with me. Here's what I can and will do. I will not mention your name in connection with the affair. I will not call on you as a witness. I'll leave you out of it altogether, and take the whole blame on myself. That will let you off clean as a whistle. There's no reason why you should be punished for—"

"Hold on, Eric," cried Adam, rising slowly from the chair to look the impassioned young man squarely in the eye. "With an effort of the will, he managed to conceal the feeling of pride, of joy that Eric's words produced. There are several obstacles to that sort of a plan. First, leaving me out of it, how are you going to account for the disposal of the body?"

A slight shudder ran over Eric's frame.

"Oh, I can say that I weighed it with you and rowed out—"

"You haven't told a lie in connection with the affair up to date, have you?" asked Adam levelly.

"Why, no—I haven't even mentioned—"

"Don't you think it's rather poor policy to begin now?"

"Well, it's the only way I can think of to keep your name out of it."

Adam had been thinking hard all this time. His active, resourceful brain had been groping for the means with which to successfully combat this rather primitive, quixotic sense of honesty that afflicted Eric. To gain time; that was Adam's sole purpose. The real object of his visit to the little Vermont cottage was forgotten in the face of this amazing revolt. Strategy—ay, more than that would be required in the handling of the conscience-stricken man; harsh, unfeeling measures would be necessary, for he was thinking only of his own safety, although somehow it was becoming paramount. He loved Eric, in a strange, bear-like fashion; peculiarly his own. He was a far-sighted man; he foresaw dark trials for the boy if his present purpose was carried out. It was quite impossible for him to realize that he, too, had been short-sighted. He had played a deep, ugly game without counting on the certainty of this very hour. Time to curse his stupidity and to reckon the cost, not only to Eric but to himself.

"But suppose I don't choose to be left out of it, what then?" he demanded in a hard voice.

"I don't have to implicate you," went on Eric earnestly. "You can appear to be much surprised as anyone when the truth comes out."

"Just go on being a detective, eh?" retorted Adam with grim humor.

"Chasing a dead man for six years, eh? Do you think I have no pride? For my word, I'd rather be called a scoundrel than a fool."

Eric began to argue his point, but the older man cut him off short with the curt reminder that he was old enough to look out for himself.

"See here, Eric," he continued, ignoring the hurt look in his young friend's eyes, "we'll get right down to cases. If you go to Horace Blagden with your tale, I shall have to tell the world what I know of the affair. Do you realize what that may mean?"

"You saw the fight," cried Eric. "You can prove that it was self-defense—no, an accident."

"I can do nothing of the kind," said Adam coldly. He had thought of a way.

"What do you mean?" stammered the other.

"Just this. I did not see the fight. I saw one blow struck. I do not know what went before. I have only your word for that. Not competent testimony, my boy."

Eric's face was a puzzle.

"I—I don't see what you are driving at, Mr. Adam. Surely you don't—" He stopped short, his lips twisting into a sickly smile.

"Don't what?"

"Don't mean that you doubt my word?"

Adam Carr shook his head. "I've always said it was an accident, haven't I?"

"Certainly. Then what do you mean?"

"Do you suppose that any court, knowing my interest in the case, will accept my statement that I believed it to be an accident?"

"Why not?"

"Simply because what I believe and that actually occurred are in no way connected by fact. You did strike him. I did not see him strike at you. So far as I can testify, you struck the only blow."

"Good heaven!"

"Just think it over, Eric," said Carr solemnly. "Don't put your neck in a noose in the hope that I can get it out for you. He was a big, powerful chap. It doesn't seem likely that—"

"Why—why, curse you, do you mean to say that I struck him without warning?"

Eric was towering over the square, heavy figure, his face convulsed by rage. His arm was drawn back as if to strike. The older man did not flinch.

"You seem to forget that I taught you a blow that would be likely to catch any man off his guard. It is a blow that never fails to do the work. That was the only blow I saw pass between you and him. As I said before: just think it over."

He picked up his hat and strode toward the door. Eric sprang after him, rage giving way before apprehension and dismay.

"Are you turning against me?" he cried. "Wait! Wait! You're going."

"I am going to my room in the hotel. Day after tomorrow we may hear of Chetwynd's death in South America. I am expecting a message to that effect. Believe me, I hope to receive the news before you go to your uncle with this tale of yours. It would hurt me more than I can tell, to be called to the witness stand against you, Eric. I am glad that I came here today. A good fairy must have sent me. I came for

an entirely different mission, but—upon my soul, I've quite forgotten what it was. Goodbye."

He did not offer to shake hands with the amazed, pale-striken young man, but walked calmly out of the door and into the street, an ominous figure that filled their eyes until it was lost behind the hedges—and even longer, for they had him in mind for many minutes.

They had followed him to the door. Mary clung to her brother's rigid arm, staring down the gray, wind-swept street, a great and growing dread in her lovely eyes.

"What are you going to do, Eric?" she asked dully.

He started, and turned to look down into her eyes, as if suddenly aware of her nearness to him.

"Do?" he asked blankly. "Why, he's gone. He's in Baxter street by this time."

"I wasn't thinking of him," she said, a shrill note beginning to make itself felt in her voice. "I mean about going to Uncle Horace."

"I can't believe that Adam has turned against me," went on Eric, as it stupefied. "But there was something ugly in what he said, wasn't there? It—it was like a threat. God! It was a threat!"

She shivered. "Is this all real, Eric? Am I having another of those terrible dreams? I am so cold. See! My hands are like ice. I—I—"

He clasped her in his arms. "God forgive me, little sister! I've blighted your whole life. Why—oh, why did I tell you this beastly thing? Mr. Adam was right. He did his best to stop me. I'm a beast, a—"

"Don't, Eric—don't! Oh, brother, brother! My big, good brother!"

He drew her back into the room, still holding her in his arms. For a long time they stood motionless and silent in the middle of the little parlor, dry-eyed, dry-lipped and unseeing. She shivered again.

"Close the door, Eric," she murmured. "It's queer how cold the air has grown. It's off the sea. When did the wind change?"

"I'll stir up the fire in the grate," he said, with nervous haste. "It's the dampness." He closed the door.

She watched him poke up the embers and pile on the chunks of wood.

"I hadn't noticed the change," he said mechanically. "It is off the sea."

"When do you suppose he has gone?" she asked, drawing near to the grate. He did not look up. She noted the grayish, bloodless look of his neck and half-averted cheek.

"We were standing at the corner above the Massasoit house when Uncle Horace somehow felt his presence. The wind was more than 10 minutes before I—"

"What are you asking, Mary? Excuse me."

"Where has he gone?" she repeated shrilly.

"See here, Mary, I'm in for something nasty," he exclaimed, coming to his feet and running his hands into his pockets once more. "I don't know what to do. If I go to Uncle Horace now, Adam Carr will turn squarely against me. That's plain. Somehow, I can't find it in my heart to blame him, either. I suppose I ought to consider his position as well as my own. On the other hand, I can't go on this way any longer. It's unbearable. I can't even look at Uncle Horace and Aunt Rena without cursing myself for a beast. Adam Carr has never let up on them—not for an instant. He's been a devil, so far as they are concerned. I should have stopped it long ago."

He threw himself into a chair and stared, wide-eyed, at the crackling, snapping logs. Mary stood at his elbow, looking down upon him, her eyes full of love and pity. Presently she laid a hand on his shoulder.

"I don't believe Uncle Horace can forgive you, Eric," she said.

"He can't forgive me for letting it go on in the way it has," he groaned. "Why, it's been hell on earth for them, Mary."

"I pity them now," she said simply. "I never can love them—never! But I do pity them. If there is anything I can do, Eric, dear, to make life easier, happier for them, I shall try my best to—"

He did not look up, but as she hesitated he hid his eyes quickly.

"They don't want you to marry Jack Payson."

"Oh, Eric, can't they overcome—"

"There's a great and sufficient reason for their opposition, dear. Something you don't understand, but I do. Adam Carr's greatest triumph over Uncle Horace would come the day you married Jack Payson."

"I don't understand," she cried, bewildered.

He checked the impulse to blurt out the horrid truth, as he took it to be concerning John Payson. She loved the fellow. Why strike at a heart that was already sore and bleeding? Why add another cruel slash to the wounds that perhaps were marking it for life? And then, up from some dark, secret recess of his heart, came an astonishing throb of pity for John Payson: a curious revolt within himself. After all, what wrong had John Payson done? Why strike an innocent, unsuspecting man in the back? Why inflict a wound that could never be closed?

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"He was lost at sea. Were they enemies?"

"I only know that Uncle Horace hated Jack Payson's father."

"Then why did he put Jack in the bank?"

"Well, he got him out of it soon enough, didn't he?" demanded her brother, hard put for explanations.

She waited a moment. "There is something you are holding back, Eric," she said, closing her eyes. "How would you feel, dear, if I were to hint that Joan Bright isn't what she ought to be?"

"Joan!" he cried out, a new despair rising in his voice. He covered his eyes with his hand. "What will she think when she hears what I have come to tell her?"

"If she loves you, she will not let anything come between," said Mary, slowly, significantly. The true appeal in her words was lost on him. He walked over to the window and stood there, staring blankly out into the little garden. For a long time she kept her eyes on his straight, tense figure. Then she moved up closer to the fire, resting a hand on the mantelpiece as she looked down into the writhing flames. Finally her shoulders relaxed and drooped, and her whiplike gaze went once more to the back of him who was so racked and harassed.

She crossed slowly to his side.

"Eric," she said, her voice very low and unwavering, "I will give Jack up

if it will make you happy. I—I shan't see him again."

"Good heaven, Mary—you would do that?" he cried hoarsely. "Why, little sister, you—you! No, by heaven, you do not make me happy. You make me feel so small, so puny, so ashamed of—"

"Don't, Eric, I beg of you!" She spoke rapidly, jerkily. "I mean it. I will try to make them a little bit happier than they are. I will do this for—"

She stopped in the middle of the sentence, the soft, warm glow in her eyes fading like a flash. In its stead came an almost venomous glitter, completely transforming her lovely face. "But, wait! What am I saying? Why should I do this for them? They may try to hang you, Eric."

He took a long, deep breath. "I can't stay in the house any longer. Can't stay. I've got to get out where I can breathe." He started toward the door, catching up his hat as he passed by the table.

"Where are you going?" she cried.

"I don't know—oh, anywhere. Listen! Can you hear the breakers? A mile and a half to Stone Wall. There's a big sea running. Mary, I haven't been on Stone Wall in six years. I'm going out there now. I'm going to face the thing I've dreaded all these years. He's out there somewhere. He hasn't moved. It's horrible to think of. But, I'm going to smash this contemptible fear, once and for all. I'll be back by dinner time. Out there I can think it over, as Adam says. Don't worry, dear. I will not—"

"I am going with you, Eric," she said quietly.

"No!" he cried, but she was rushing off for her hat and mackintosh.

Half an hour later they crossed the bleak, wind-blown stretch of meadow land and came out upon the rocks. They had not spoken in all this time. The stiff gale that blew in from the Atlantic drove the words back into their throats. A fine drizzle smote them in the face. They had not noticed that it was misting when they left the cottage.

"This way," he managed to say when they came to the forlorn coast road which wound through the rocks. "We'll cross the bridge. If you care to look, you may see where he fell. The clump of vines, too."

She kept pace with him, uttering no word.

They stopped in the middle of the bridge, leaning side by side on the stout, new rail to look down into the ravine. He pointed to the jagged rocks and then to the mass of vines behind which Chetwynd's body had been secreted on that memorable day. Then they passed on, striking Bud's Rock, and bent their bodies against the gale that shrieked across the rocky waste. It was a chill, raw wind that beat in their faces and cut through the clothes they wore, an insistent wind that seemed bent on keeping them back from the brow of the cliffs.

At last they stood at the edge of the great black things with hoary crests and foaming maws, crashing against the huge rocks that stood guard in front of the passade, swirling in between and bounding back again as if surprised to find resistance so strong.

A drab sky seemed to flatten itself like the low top of a charging steed, and the whole world, sloughing off into a thick, impenetrable bank of fog which brought the bleak horizon close to hand, and out of which slipped shadowy billows that took vivid shape as they raced into the arena. On they came, with eyes-increasing speed and velocity, only to shatter themselves against the mammoth barrier that had defied them for ages and ages. They struck with splintering force, roaring like a thousand cannons, swishing with the mighty hiss of a hundred cataracts, and then ground their way back for another and mightier assault.

The puny spectators at the top of the cliff braced themselves against the wind and stared out over the majestic foe of all mankind. Mary pointed to a vast cleft in the wall far to the left; the fury there was greater than anywhere else, the struggle more sublime.

"It's like a Paul Daugherty painting, Eric. How terrible it is today!" she cried in his ear.

He was looking far out across the bounding waves, his eyes set on a certain spot in the shifting sea.

"The sea was like a mill-pond that night, Mary. How different now. It seems as though it is working up all this rage for my especial benefit. It's a grewsome thought, but do you know I have a feeling that—that our cousin is doing all this trying to get out the sides of that staunch old chest, just as the genii of old tried to split the jar that the fisherman found and opened. See! Follow my finger, Mary. Out there beyond Lord's Point, eighth miles or more, where it's 300 fathoms deep, there's a chest of iron. No sea is strong enough to move that coffin of his. It's buried too deep. All the grave robbers in the world could not snatch Chetwynd from the grave here in. No! He's there forever and ever. Isn't it horrible!"

(Continued next week.)

### International Anarchy.

From the Saturday Evening Post.

Last July there was a thing called international law. It was a thing that was not exactly defensible; but, in spite of vague and debatable boundaries here and there, a very solid and definite body of law, which was presumed to be binding on all civilized nations. And on that incombustible and neutral were as much entitled to rely as a man walking down the street of his home town is entitled to rely on the rule that his property shall not be taken from him except by due process of law.

To assume that any belligerent can change the code of accepted international law to suit its own exigencies is simply to throw the whole code into the waste basket and accept international anarchy. It is to put a neutral in the unhappy position of a traveler in Mexico, where the first man he meets with a gun in his hand can declare whatever law he pleases and execute it on the spot.

To say, for example, that international law cannot apply to submarines because they were developed in their present efficiency, since the law was framed, is as cogent as to urge that a belligerent would be entitled to blow up a neutral's powder factory if it could do so with the new agency of an aeroplane. If a nation is absolved from international law because it is "fighting for its life," then any attempt to set up international law is only a silly futility; for every nation that fights at all is always "fighting for its life."

Neutral nations can no more afford to hand the world over to belligerents to set up whatever rules their various exigencies may dictate than peaceful members of a community can afford to give a free hand to the truculent ones. Neutral nations are entitled to say to belligerents: "Shoot one another if you insist on it; but you must not shoot away our guaranteed rights."

A century ago there was no German empire—only a number of German states whose aggregate wealth and income were probably less than those of France. Now united Germany is estimated to possess an income of nearly \$10,000,000,000 and accumulated wealth of about \$20,000,000,000. During the past century Germany's population has grown from 24,000,000 to more than 67,000,000, or 130 per cent.



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### SKY MARAUDER IN AIRSHAFT

Birds Cling Fearfully to Fire Escape While Sparrow Hawk Hovers Near.

A servant maid in an apartment on the fourth floor of the Victoria, at Riverside drive and Ninety-seventh street, opened the kitchen window Monday morning and wondered why dozens of sparrows that were huddling on fire escape and window sill did not take fright and scurry away. Then she glanced outward and upward into the airshaft and discovered the reason.

A sparrow hawk, sun glinting on its wings, was wheeling rapidly high up in the airshaft, but below the roof level. Occasionally, when the marauder's keen eye glimpsed a sparrow which hadn't taken refuge it darted like a flash. Twice while the maid watched the hawk made a capture and soared out of the airshaft.

The air pirate worked for about two hours and disappeared shortly before noon, but it was at least half an hour later when the plump, brown sparrows recovered from the terror caused by the hawk's appearance.

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It is said that woman, owing to her peculiar physical construction, is unable to jump—except at an offer of marriage.

Electricity was first used in a mine in 1879, when a Scotch colliery was lighted with it.

Leaders of fashion always follow it.

### Two Boys, a Cow and Two Calves.

This is a short story of how two Vermont boys, still in their teens, have made some real money on a thoroughbred Guernsey. They paid \$200 for the animal when she was two years old, and as their father was a banker and they were away to school a farmer was induced to keep the animal for them. They owned the cow a little over two years and during that time she had two calves. The boys found a ready market for the calves and have just sold the cow, the three animals having been sold for \$525.

The farmer charged them \$125 for keeping of the stock and other expenses and the boys will net \$100 apiece from the transaction. The boys are quite satisfied with their investment and incidentally have become somewhat interested in life upon a Vermont farm.—Springfield (Vt.) Reporter.

Roumania has a powerful army, well equipped and trained. The approximate war strength is 650,000.

The man who is good at making excuses is seldom able to make good at anything else.

A New York inventor has patented a child's muff formed like a doll.

The man who marries a widow does not make a miss-take.

Italy consumes less tobacco per capita than any other civilized nation.

But talk isn't cheap when you hire a lawyer to do it for you.

A woman with small feet may be vain, but she walks on her pride.

The Terrible Turk. There are no old maids in Turkey. No wonder, then, that country has so many unhappy men.—Detroit Times.

The Limit. "What a pessimist he is." "Yes, indeed. Even misery shuns his company."

Electricity is being successfully used in France to ripen cheese.

### Prize Definition of Money.

What is regarded as one of the best definitions of money was given by Henry E. Beggs of Sheffield, England, who was awarded a prize offered by a British weekly for the following philosophical wisdom:

"An article which may be used as a universal passport to everywhere except heaven and as a universal provider of everything except happiness."

No Bookworm. "What works on political economy have you read?"

"None," replied Senator Sorghum. "Political economy is a science that tells you how a government ought to be run, but it doesn't tell you how to get the votes that will enable you to run it."

"Two-Way" Masons. Members of the Chicago Craftsmen chapter of Operative Masons are Masons in two senses of the word. They are bricklayers and stone masons and are members of the Masonic order.

About one-eleventh of the area of Africa, some 1,000,000 square miles, still awaits exploration.

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