

MARY MIDTHORNE

BY GEORGE BARR McCUTCHEON.

Author of "Graustark," "Truxton King," etc.

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CHAPTER XXII—(Continued.)

A week passed. In that period, Corinth came to appreciate the unfamiliar growth of two conditions, not unlike in character, but entirely foreign to each other. In one instance was the devoted loyalty of Joan Bright to Eric Midthorne; in the other, the surprising devotion of Mary Midthorne to the sick man in the Widow Payson's cottage. There was no speculation as to the attitude of Miss Bright, but in some quarters wonder was expressed over Mary's behavior. In the ignorance of the real situation, found some difficulty in satisfying itself as to an imaginary one. Of course, it was known that Mary and John were in love with each other, but that was no reason why she should devote so much of her time to Adam Carr, outside. The man could not be moved, but as there were two nurses in the house to attend to him, with doctors making daily visits, it was not reasonable to suppose that Mrs. Payson depended on Mary for assistance. Moreover, Corinth was still a student at the law, and was friendly to Mary's brother, in any event, he was distinctly at odds with Horace Blagden, which was something.

Before the end of the week, Adam Carr recovered the power of speech. He was hopelessly paralyzed from the waist down. At first he spoke with an effort, but his indomitable will power overcame the impediment; he articulated slowly but clearly. His mind was clear and active. He required the truth of the doctors. Getting it, he philosophized:

"There's no sense in your waiting here, Jack. I may hang on for 10 years. Doctors can't tell anything about it, but I'm such a tenacious individual that it's not likely that I'll give up the ghost without a long fight. Of course, I ought to be sensible and quit right now. Better get a better job, better for me, better for Mrs. Payson, better for everybody, if I could pass on tonight, but I guess it won't be so easy as that. Nothing has ever been real easy for me. Even this won't be easy. I was born to be a lawyer, not a New York and business man. I'll be lying here if you can find the time week ends, to come and see your mother and Mary. I don't mind it much, after all. A long rest will do me good. As you won't hear to be being removed to a hospital and your mother won't either, I guess I'll have to stay here. In a week or two I can be wheeled about in a chair, so it won't be so bad. Now listen to what I've got to say; get it firmly in your mind. So far as the world is concerned, I am never to be anything more to you than Mr. Adam. That's what I've been for 30 years. I never said I was anything else. I never will, not even to you. It won't hurt the world any to keep on thinking your daddy is out there in the Atlantic, and that your mother is here instead of up there in the little graveyard at Gloucester. Blagden, Blagden, much as he'd like to, can't take either of them up. He only suspects half the truth. He doesn't know about poor Lucy Barlow. Your mother here won't mind being mother to you, right or wrong, till she dies. So just you go on thinking of me as Mr. Adam, your best friend, and I'll keep on being your best friend. All the king's horses and all the king's men can't drag it out of me. When it comes time for me to die, and I know it, I may ask you to put your ear close to my lips so that I can whisper to you, but it won't be till then, and it won't be for anybody else's ear. There's only one other person that must be told. Eric's got to know it before you make Mary your wife."

"But I'm not going to make her my wife," said his son gently but firmly.

"Oh, yes, you are," said Adam decisively. "There's no way round that. I'm not as good as Philip Midthorne was, but Lucy Barlow was as good as most of the Blagdens. Don't forget that, my lad. Ask your mother. She knew her."

"Ask my mother!" repeated John Payson, with a bitter smile.

"I didn't mean it to sound funny, Jack," said Adam humbly.

A day or two later, old Jabez hobbled up to see his son. He leaned on the bedside, peering quizzically at the occupant, on whose lips there was a distorted grin of welcome.

"Well, father, how are you?"

"Just so-so, Adam," replied the ancient.

"Maternalism any better?"

"Some."

There was a period of silent regard. Then old Jabez found the words he wanted.

"It's a blamed shame, Adam. I don't see why the good Lord didn't do this to me instead of you. It wouldn't have made any difference if it had been me, but—'ere it don't seem right for you to be livin' here like this an' me skippin' about as spry as ever. It don't seem right."

"Eighty odd last January. Dang it, you ain't even 60. That's why it's wrong."

"No," said Adam, "your 80 odd years proves it to be right. Nature makes us pay as we go. You haven't any scores to settle with nature. That's why you're so spry and spry. And, now, how are the squirrels?"

"Well," said Jabez, taking the chair that had been placed for him, "they're gettin' so blamed fresh that there ain't no livin' with 'em. The whole caboodle of 'em got in the house yesterday when I was takin' a nap, and dang me, if they didn't find that barril of peanuts you sent down last month. When I woke up, by gosh, I couldn't hardly get out of the door fer peanut shells. Just I thought there'd been a sudden snowstorm, but they cracked so loud when I stepped on 'em I knew it couldn't be that. Then I got to the door and seen them fool critters settin' around on the grass out there in front, go cussed fat that I thought they'd bust. They jest couldn't wobble. You never in all your life, Adam, seen such little lookin' things as they wuz. A hundred of 'em! Squattin' around the place, kinder pitiful like. Cussin' them didn't do no good. They jest looked back and twigged their tails feeble the more I cussed. And you can't give a square, paregoric like you can a baby."

"And now you have an idea what nature had begun to do for Jabez Carr."

But I am getting ahead of my story. Adam Carr did not recover his speech until after the brief, perfunctory trial of Eric Midthorne was over and the young man stood honorably acquitted. The defendant's story was not even assailed by the commonwealth. There was no voice to dispute his claim of self-defense, no witness who at the remotest doubt upon the statement he made. The only human being who might have spoken for or against him, was powerless to utter an intelligible sound.

When John Payson entered the sick room and calmly announced to his

mother that the jury had discharged Eric without leaving the box, and on the advice of the court himself, Adam Carr opened his eyes and spoke aloud for the first time since he was stricken the week before.

"I knew they would," he said with an effort, but quite distinctly, to the great amazement of the doctor and the nurse. The Widow Payson and John were not surprised. They understood the inscrutable ways of the man.

The machinery of the law never worked so fast as in the case of the State vs. Eric Midthorne. Five days after he surrendered himself to the sheriff, his case was called for hearing. The court room was crowded, for the Court had announced the trial day and hour. No one was there in the hope of finding fresh sensations, but to hear the story of the fight from the lips of the victor himself.

Inside the railing sat the entire bar of the city. Judge Oswald Bright came to the front, the capitol and occupied a seat on the bench beside the court. His daughter sat with Mary Midthorne at the defendant's table. Horace Blagden and his wife had seats so close to Eric that they could lean forward and whisper in his ear, an oft-repeated act which attracted the attention of the court through the big audience, and had a moral though utterly wasted effect on the jury.

The preliminaries were brief. Mr. State's Attorney Collins read the affidavit on information and belief and called his only witness, the sheriff of the county, who merely testified that the prisoner at the bar was the man mentioned in the instrument and that he had openly confessed to the slaying of Chetwynn Blagden. The state rested. The audience leaned back with an audible breath of relief.

The defense very naturally moved to quash the indictment, on the ground that the corpus delicti had not been established, but formally withdrew the motion a moment later, as a part of the program, to permit Eric Midthorne to tell his story on the stand. The audience listened with breathless interest to the recital, dividing its attention between the young man in the box and the grey haired parents of Chetwynn Blagden, watching with eager eyes for some sign of animosity on his part.

If the people expected or hoped for a demonstration they were disappointed. The Blagdens sat very still and erect, their pinched backs to the multitude, their heads twisted slightly toward the witness, from whose face their gaze was not once removed during the unintermitted recital. At its conclusion they turned expectantly toward the state's attorney.

Horace Blagden's figure straightened perceptibly. A moment later his own name was called. He arose slowly—at any other time he would have said "I'll handle it"—and stepped into the witness box. A stir swept through the crowd. Here was a sensation, after all.

Facing the judge, the great man of Corinth took the oath, his right hand uplifted. It did not tremble. He testified to the reputation of the defendant for truth and veracity, and to his standing in the community. That was all. He gave it clearly, unflinchingly. He was not asked if he were the father of the deceased. It was as the first citizen of Corinth that he testified. One who had been accused for smiling at the theatrical display of self-reliance that overshadowed the real intention of the man. The great man of Corinth was speaking. No one could have asked for more than that.

Horace Blagden did not mean to place himself in a false position. He was intensely sincere in his desire to dissipate all doubts in the minds of the townspeople as to his attitude toward his nephew. No more convincing way could have presented itself, he argued, than this opportunity to publicly re-assert the sentiments embodied in his earlier newspaper expression. Adam Carr, when he heard of the act, uttered an opinion that no one else dared to voice.

"Old Horace simply can't help it. It's his own fault. When the dies, by the grace, he'll lie in state. And, no matter how dead he is, he'll know he's lying in state."

The judge instructed the jury to find for the defendant, and Eric was discharged from custody almost before you could say "Amen."

The whole affair was so palpably predestined that it savoured of travesty, and yet there was a seriousness about it all that could not be mistaken. The law itself did not come in for much consideration. So far as the real legal aspects of the case were concerned, all precedents were violated. But no one cared about that. Not a single soul in all Corinth desired the punishment of Eric Midthorne. Corinth, therefore, was the law.

The trial was much the same as a wedding or a funeral—a matter of a few very important minutes and then everybody going about his own business as if it hadn't occurred. The wedding means a great deal to the fellow who is getting married, and the funeral is of utmost importance to the chap who is being buried, but the world does not care a scrap what happens to either of them after it is all over. Most of us get married and all of us die. People come and see us both, if the opportunity presents itself, and go away thoroughly satisfied that it is the end of the matter so far as they are concerned.

Corinth would have stepped up and congratulated Eric on his acquittal if it could have done so with propriety. But there had been ample time for reflection. The magnanimous Blagdens were to be considered. How would it appear to them if everyone rushed up to shake hands with the destroyer of their only son? Dreadful! So Corinth, or as much of it as could be crowded into the courtroom, considerably effaced itself as soon as the verdict was given.

While the crowd was leaving the courtroom, the judge on the bench calmly turned to the clerk and said:

"Call the next case, Mr. Clerk."

The regular panel remained in the jury box, the sheriff went over to the telephone and called up the gail; and half an hour later a dissolute sailor from the water front was on trial for stealing a pound of tobacco, and the state's attorney was working his head off to speak, to secure the maximum penalty. One had to make an example of such chaps, you see. Society demands it.

The Rev. Mr. Presbrey alone came forward to congratulate Eric, regardless of the presence of the Blagdens or the fitness of the occasion. With tears in his eyes, he wrung the embarrassed young man's hand with a vigor that suggested something long pent-up and thriving.

"Thank you, Mr. Presbrey," muttered Eric, very uncomfortable.

"We've been praying for you, Eric,"

said Mr. Presbrey: "Mrs. Presbrey and I. Ah, my dear young friend, you do not know how greatly this will please my wife, your most devoted friend. She is indisposed today. Otherwise she would have accompanied me here. But her heart is here, her thoughts are here."

"Good morning, Arthur," said Horace Blagden pleasantly. "I am sorry to hear that Julia is ill. Nothing serious, I hope."

Mr. Presbrey's eyes flew wide open. He stared for a moment. Then his face turned a deep pink.

"Not at all, not at all," he stammered, completely taken aback. "Merely a cold, Mr. Blagden. In the head."

"Please remember us to her," said Mr. Blagden, slipping his arm through Eric's. "Oh, by-the-by, Arthur," he went on after an instant's reflection, "will it be convenient for you to drop in to see me at the bank tomorrow? Any hour will do. I want to talk over a question in connection with the new library."

Mr. Presbrey stiffened. "I have read something about it," he said.

"Do you think Julia will be well enough to come to dinner tomorrow evening?" asked Mrs. Blagden. "Then you two could have the whole evening to yourselves in the library."

"And we could have the architect there to assist us. What do you say, Presbrey?"

Mr. Presbrey's face was a study.

"I—I—dear me, dear me!" he faltered, nervously fumbling for his handkerchief. Finding it, he blew his nose rather amiably and then repeated: "Dear me!" They were waiting for an answer. He cleared his throat. "Really, I—I—yes, yes, it's very good of you, I am sure. Dear me! Of course, you understand, it is only a cold in the head. I fancy she will be quite rid of it by tomorrow. Mustard foot bath tonight. Yes, yes! Hot mustard for a cold head—cold in the head, I should say. Dear me! It will seem quite like old times, my dear friends."

Horace was enjoying himself. Afterwards he confessed to a certain meanness of spirit, a delicious sensation of malice; but quite pardonable, he argued, in view of the fact that he was returning good for evil. Eric, the only other witness beside Mrs. Blagden, actually felt sorry for the distressed examiner.

"Except that we all have grown older and wiser," supplemented Mr. Blagden.

Mr. Presbrey made haste to accept the amendment. "And better, I hope," he said. "But I don't know it, but that was a master-stroke. As a matter of fact, in repeating the amazing conversation to his wife, he quite forgot to mention the remark."

"We dine at 7, Mr. Presbrey," said Mrs. Blagden.

He responded bravely. "Instead of 6:30?"

Ah. Here was tribute to the memory of old times!

"I shall also ask Mr. King to come in," said Horace, in the most matter-of-fact way.

Mr. Presbrey drew a long breath. "I shall rejoice in the opportunity to meet him," he said desperately. "You said 6:30?"

"Seven," said Horace. Then, as if recognizing an oversight, he extended his hand. Mr. Presbrey was on the point of blowing his nose again. He hastily switched the handkerchief to his left hand, and clasped the ends of Mr. Blagden's fingers in his right. It was not much of a hand-shake, but it seemed to put new life into him. At least, he breathed with less difficulty.

He went home to Julia in a perfect maze of bewilderment. She not only took a mustard foot bath externally but nine grains of quinine the other way.

In the corridor of the courthouse, Eric, walking between his uncle and aunt with his arms through theirs, burst out feelingly:

"Uncle Horace, you are wonderful, really wonderful."

Mr. Blagden smiled, self-satisfied. "Paying off all the old scores, Eric," he said gravely.

A little group was waiting for them at the top of the stairway. John Payson quietly detached himself from the rest and switched the handkerchief to his right hand, and clasped the ends of Mr. Blagden's fingers in his right. It was not much of a hand-shake, but it seemed to put new life into him. At least, he breathed with less difficulty.

"Just a moment, John, if you please," said Mr. Blagden, raising his voice slightly. "This is a day for renewing old acquaintances, old friendships. Will you shake hands, sir?"

Payson did not hesitate. He clasped the banker's hand.

"Certainly, sir. Is this your verdict?"

Mr. Blagden was puzzled. He looked into the young man's steady eyes for a moment; then the doubt was lifted from his own.

"It is," he said succinctly, and Payson knew that at last he was acquitted of complicity in the bank defalcation. An instant later Horace remarked: "I am a just man. By-the-by," he went on, "how is Adam Carr today?"

"There is no change, Mr. Blagden, I am sorry to say. He will never speak again, sir."

Then Horace Blagden uttered a remarkable prophecy.

(Continued next week.)

MAY LEAD AN ARMY AGAINST THE SERBS



Crown Prince Boris of Bulgaria.

According to cabled reports Crown Prince Boris of Bulgaria, who is barely past twenty-one years of age, will command a Bulgarian army if the threatened war against the allies becomes fact and an invasion of Serbia takes place. The prince was very active in the Balkan war against Turkey and even more so in the second Balkan war when Greece, Serbia and Roumania combined against Bulgaria. Crown Prince Boris is extremely popular with his people and his appointment as commander of an army division met with general approval.

SOLDIERS OF A REPUBLIC.

From an Interview With General Jeffrey by Owen Johnson in Collier's Weekly.

When a nation is truly republican it does not think there is any danger to the spirit of democracy in military preparation.

It is not simply the need of preparation for the future, which the public needs to respect, the rights of others as well as to be able to act in organized bodies.

If you have the dread of military service in America, it may be because you are looking at the German ideal rather than at the French. The art of war is practically the same everywhere; the same general principles are taught everywhere.

Distasteful between the French army and the German is a difference in the conception of the role of the soldier. The theory of the Germans is to make of the soldier a machine, not to which him to think for himself. By their discipline of fear they rob him of initiative and make his movements absolutely mechanical.

That is why they must attack in close formation. To carry out this theory, the officer class has been made into a Brahmin caste. The perspective of a feudal supremacy, the officer does not converse directly with the privates, but transmits his orders through the agency of an intermediary class—sergeants and corporals.

You have been to the front, in the trenches and in the camps. You must have seen how different it is with us. Our discipline is not the machine of fear. We do everything that we can to impress the necessity of this spirit of fraternity. Our soldiers are treated as intelligent human beings, not as thinking for themselves in great crises.

Every day men come from the ranks into leadership. The private soldier is not a machine, but a man. We do not necessarily we can replenish our staff of officers. They, in turn, are taught that their soldiers are their children; nothing that a private soldier does is worthy of indifference to them; they watch over their comforts and necessities, share their food with them and endure the same hardships. They live together as a great family.

When we make a charge, the officer leads his men always—no one has to tell him that—and he does not need to look around to see if he is followed.

France's Future.

Paris Dispatch to New York Post.

It has been the fashion, in other countries, to talk of France as financially and economically exhausted. Yet, without saying much about it, she is presenting some considerable evidence of her strength. As to gold, for instance, it is notorious that France is far from being at the end of her rope. Besides the gold cover of her currency, she has reserves to more than one-third of the face value of her banknotes, and actually in the vaults of the Bank of France, the inflow to the Bank of France from the sale of private reserves has averaged \$10,000,000 a month since July, and it is continuing undiminished.

Even if continued at that weekly rate up to the end of the year, this would amount to only one-third of the gold supposed to be held in private hands in France. The French government has no compulsion in case of proved need. Again, with all the loss from seven manufacturing departments occupied by the enemy, French industry is still turning out 70 per cent of its normal production. The agriculture of the territory not held by the enemy is alone nearly equal to the task fulfilled by French agriculture for the past years of peace to satisfy native consumption.

And I have not mentioned one part of the revenue of France during the last years of peace—revenue which certainly can not be greatly diminished as soon as peace is declared again. This is the revenue from foreign travelers and from the tourist trade, estimated at \$600,000,000 a year, and paid in gold.

Beauty Hints to Girls.

In the Woman's Home Companion, Alice Farnham Leader, a New York physician, tells how girls can keep their good looks. She says that health depends upon food, sleep and fresh air, and that upon pills and prescriptions.

Her article is full of practical suggestions as to diet, sleep and exercise.

Following is a brief extract from what she has to say about food:

"Rich pastries, frozen creams and candy are difficult to digest and, in addition to making the health, they cause positive indigestion. They contain more sugar and fat than the system can possibly assimilate, and the surplus is carried to the skin, where it makes its appearance in the form of pimples and blackheads. To avoid such food doesn't mean giving up all desserts. Let your choice rest between light custards, fruits and ices.

"Coffee and tea are not always injurious, provided they are taken in moderation. Never drink more than one cup of coffee for breakfast, and add cream and sugar with a grating heat. Drink plenty of water, hot and cold. Nothing will promote digestion and prevent sickness as will a glass of hot water slowly sipped immediately upon arising in the morning. The human body requires at least a quart of water a day, that is, about a half pint every two or three hours.

"If the average woman gave as much attention to that much abused organ, the liver, as she does to her finger nails, her face would need less attention. No wonder the liver rebels and reacts upon the complexion, its apathy being betrayed in the form of pimples, sallowness and black shadows under the eyes."

Locking the Stable Door.

From the Minneapolis Journal.

The prosecution of the New Haven railroad wreckers should stimulate congress to pass the bill for federal supervision of the issue and sale of railroad securities.

The business of the country has suffered for want of such a law for 10 years, but congress has preferred trust to trust regulation. The president did his best to get the measure through the last session, and will try again this winter. The experts of the New Haven trial should help him to succeed.

It is probable that the former officers and directors of the New Haven broke the Sherman law, and it is certain that the proceedings would have been unlawful under the Clayton law, which was passed after the acts. But the mischief has been done.

In previous prosecutions under the new principles of trust law, juries have been found very slow to secure the maximum damages to plundered stockholders, and sending officers and directors, and wholly unwilling to send such offenders to jail. The jury theory seems to be that stockholders should protect themselves by watching their servants.

But the government can protect stockholders by sending the juggling of stocks and bonds by railroad wreckers to gain control through the compliance of stockholders. A federal law modification on those New York and other states have enacted for securities charters by them would have anticipated the New Haven, Rock Island and Frisco wrecks in the last 10 years.

Congress should stop talking about trust busting for popular consumption, long enough to pass the measure.

LIFE'S BARGAIN.

Agnes Laut, in the Century Magazine.

For we take out of life just what we put in it. If we give to life a happy ending, we give to life only a many echoed wail of our own whining. If we give to life joy, life throws back to us all those + ancient picture Spring tossing out + of her lay to youth. Happy dreams + send us out into the day glad. + dull shadows across the day.

Lloyd's Misty History.

Now that Mr. McKenna is looking to Lloyd's for a substantial contribution to the revenue from war profits, it is interesting to recall that the greatest maritime institution in the world is named, not after a financier or shipowner, but after a humble coffee-house keeper. Of Lloyd's history, says the London Chronicle, little is known beyond the fact that he kept a coffee house in Lombard street at the beginning of the eighteenth century, which, from its proximity to the Royal exchange, came to be the favorite assembling place of the underwriters.

The first mention of his house occurs in a poem. "The Wealthy Shopkeeper," published in 1700:

When to Lloyd's coffee house to go he never fails
To read the letters and attend the sales.

In 1710 Steel dated some numbers of the Tatler from Lloyd's and Addison also makes mention of the house in the Spectator.

Hardened.
"Mr. Editor, the mayor spoke very feelingly when welcoming us here and sympathized with us in the hardships we endured while prisoners in G. S. W. A., but I can assure you all those hardships can be considered as a pleasure when comparing them with the magnificent reception that was extended to us."—Letter from a released prisoner of war in the Capetown (B. S. A.) Cape Times.

Appropriate Gift.
"How could old man Smith afford to give his daughter so many stocks for a wedding present?"
"I guess they came from his 'war brides' speculations."

What Ignorance.
"Shall we have champagne or some other wine?"
"Are there other wines?"—Punch.

To be a gentleman a man has to hide his meanness.

Correct.
"What is one of the characteristics of the Indian race?" asked an instructor in city college.
"They play football to beat the band," replied a former De Witt Clinton boy.

The man who can lose all his money and still retain his friends is a wonder.

Talk is cheap when one uses his neighbor's telephone.

Poor Excuse.
Thomas Mott Osborne, warden of Sing Sing, said at a luncheon in Newport:

"This laying of all one's crimes and transgressions at the door of heredity disgusts me. If we sin, we ourselves are to blame. To blame heredity is false and foolish.

"These heredity blamers are like the chap who said to the dun:

"We can't escape domination of early-formed habits. In my infancy my parents hired a young nursemaid to wheel me about in a baby-coach. And ever since that distant time, alas, I have been pushed for money."

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