

The CONVICT COUNTRY: OR FIGHTING FOR A MILLION

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CHAPTER XVIII.

The Auction of Women.

After the noise had somewhat subsided and order had been restored, the crier announced that an allotment of women would then take place.

As was the usual custom, upon the arrival of marriageable females into the community, balloting for the privilege of claiming a mate was about to take place. As explained by the crier there were eighty-three men who had registered their intention of competing for a wife. The mode of procedure was very simple: into a basket were placed as many slips of paper as there were competitors; but as there were but twenty women, so also there were but twenty numbers, the balance being blanks. The numbered tickets alone gave the holder the privilege of choosing his mate. The women could refuse to marry the person who asked for their hand only by accepting some other person. The matter of choice, then, was slightly limited, and often led to the buying and selling of chances.

As the numbers were being placed in the basket, Lang said: "Place me on the list."

"And me," said Wilson.

"Take your places with the other contestants," then," replied the king. Lang and Wilson did so. Each read the other's thoughts: either if successful would ask Pearl Huntington to be his wife; there was no doubt in their minds that she, too, would be forced to enter the lists.

The crier held aloft his basket. "In this basket," he said, "are twenty numbers and sixty-three blank slips. Those only who obtain numbered tickets have the privilege of choosing a wife. Ready!"

"One moment!" interrupted Golden, speaking at the people and at the same time to Schiller. "The crier announces twenty women; and that the owner of a successful slip can be the only competitor. I count twenty-one women. This woman, Pearl Huntington, she is in Paradise; if she belongs here, if she remains here, she should become a citizen. As a citizen she has a right to make a choice. I demand that she be put upon the list! The king, if he wishes to enter the contest, can have the same opportunity as the rest of the citizens. I



"Will you be my wife?"

move you that such be the will of the people!"

"So be it!" came the cry.

"This is an outrage!" thundered Schiller, white with rage. "This is a scheme to cheat me of my revenge!"

A mighty combined howl of derision was the only answer he received, and realizing that it was useless to plead, Schiller bowed to the people's will.

Pearl Huntington rose from her seat. "Mr. Golden," she said, in a voice choked with emotion, "thank the people for me, for their small favor! Tell them that rather than become the wife of such a man as Schiller, I would take my own life!"

"The law is," said Golden sternly, "that you take a husband! If Schiller is the only person to ask for your hand tonight, the law will grant him that! Between two evils let me remind you, 'choose the least.'"

"I understand you!" she said.

The ballot box being held aloft King Schiller stepped to the front, placed in his hand and drew out a paper. Whether it was luck or chance, or through the power he wielded, Schiller drew a numbered ticket!

Wilson was next—fate seemed against him—the paper he drew was blank! "It all depends on you, Lang!" said he.

Lang quietly put in his hand and drew out a paper. He walked toward Miss Huntington as he opened the packet. It contained a number.

King Schiller was standing before Pearl. "I ask you, my lady, to be my wife!" said Schiller. "Think well before you refuse—I have you in my power!"

"I do refuse!" said the indignant girl.

"Miss Huntington," said Louis Lang, stepping to her side, with his slip in his hand, "will you be my wife?"

"I will!" said Pearl stepping to the side of our hero. But there was a look of shame upon her face.

"Then by virtue of the law, I pronounce you man and wife," said Golden, quickly stepping between Schiller and Pearl, placing her hand within that of Lang's, outstretched to receive her.

"Curse you!" said Schiller. "I will be even with you yet!"

"Be careful, Schiller!" calmly retorted Golden. "A threat—though you be king of Paradise—is a punishable crime!"

Fearful of another scene, afraid to trust himself further, with a muttered curse he walked away to another part of the room.

Before the crowd dispersed there was a ballot taken by the assembly to see if a certain person condemned to

die should expiate his crime (1) in a duel with another man; (2) or against a mountain lion in a hand-to-hand encounter; (3) or go free. Three slips of paper were placed in the basket as before, with the three propositions written on the different slips. The condemned man being brought into the ring blindfolded, was assisted to take a slip from the basket. The personage drew the slip which condemned him to fight a duel to the death with some antagonist as soon as one could be furnished either by volunteer act, or by some other criminal.

While the people were enjoying themselves visiting among themselves, the king and his council, which were Rogers, Golden and Albert Fish, the treasurer, saw that the candidates signed their names, and allotted them certain places to sleep and duties to perform. Everything passed off quite smoothly until it became Lang's turn. As was the custom, newly married couples were given a house to live in. Each woman was supposed to do the cooking and washing for two persons besides her husband. Pearl Huntington had never been brought up to do such work and when allotted her duties, foolishly made objection.

This was Schiller's cue. "Ignorance is no excuse," he said.

It was foolish of Lang to enter into discussion about the merits or demerits of the case; mortal, like the rest of us, he retorted, when it would have been safer and wiser for him to have held his peace. "This is revenge," he said to Schiller. "You would overlook these faults in her did you not wish to punish her!"

The outburst gave the king the advantage. Schiller did not blame Pearl—it was but natural for the imprisoned and abused girl to be spiteful—but he was merrily revengeful at Lang for stepping between him and his desires.

"I will overlook your wife's shortcomings," said Schiller, "but your charges against me I will not overlook! For insubordination I hereby sentence you to work in the mines for a year."

Golden and Rogers, though they were perfectly aware of the advantage Schiller was taking of Lang, did not interrupt the king. The main body of the populace had retired for the

morning, Lang," said Schiller, who could not help but show his exultation in his face and in his voice. "Tonight your home is ready. As we have been expecting Dr. Huntington to make trouble, and be a guest of the city's for some time, you will find the house in better condition than usual." Louis bowed. Wilson was standing aloof awaiting the outcome of his case. For the first time Schiller appeared to notice him. The king beckoned to him. "Wilson, you can show your friends to their home. As a reward for the blow you gave me yesterday you will work out a year's penance in the mines also. As you seem to be pretty fond of Mrs. Laps, I also grant you the privilege of living under the same roof with her! Here are the keys to the house. Let me warn you against allowing Dr. Huntington out of the room allotted to him. You can see that he gets food, but at the same time give him no outdoor air or allow him no freedom." Having done all the harm possible, Schiller then bid his company adieu.

As soon as the king departed Wilson led the way to the haunted house. There were no lights burning in any of the rooms and the dwelling presented a very deserted and dilapidated appearance. The house had been used for a prison for some time, and there were bars across the windows, while a bar of iron faced the front door, which was held in place by being locked with a huge padlock.

The front room, so the story went (as told by Golden) was once the scene of a most foul murder. A man had killed his wife by beating her to death with a heavy stove-poker. The noises heard on the inside of the house were supposed to be the echo of the blows and groans emitted at that time. Even Schiller, educated man that he was, believed that this place was haunted. Perhaps his crimes made him a coward. In condemning Louis, Wilson and Pearl to live in this place, then, he imagined that he was inflicting upon them a most cruel punishment. This was true to a certain extent with all but Lang. To Lang, however, the place was a blessed spot, and had each room of its six been peopled with departed spirits, it would still have been the place of all places for him.

Not content with condemning our friends to live in this unwholesome spot, forever seeking a way to be revenged on Dr. Huntington and his daughter, and now also Lang, who had snatched from him his revenge, Schiller, before retiring for the night, placed a spy upon the track of the trio to discover, if possible, some means of further venting his spite upon them.

(To be continued.)

SHE IS FOND OF FLOWERS.

Late John Hay's Eldest Daughter is a Floriculturist.

Instead of driving a four-in-hand or running a gasoline chariot, Mrs. Payne Whitney prefers quieter pleasures and finds other outlets for her talents, says the New York Press. Floriculture, sometimes called the most feminine of fads, is her hobby, and she finds her flowers a never-ending diversion. The large garden which are laid out on her picturesque estate at Manhasset are under her constant supervision and contain the largest collection of roses in the country. In these fields blossom roses of every variety, large and small, single and double, from simple of dress to the heavy colored. Mrs. Whitney recently paid a fabulous sum for a rose imported from Paris, which is said to be a radical departure from anything ever seen here before. The French capital has the rose craze just now and many rich floriculturists there are vying with the orchid collectors of London, among whom Joseph Chamberlain is the leader, for supremacy in the size of collections. It is even said that some of this interest proceeds from a belief that speculation in flower culture forms an agreeable digression from commonplace margin deals in stocks.

Trailing Tramps of Air and Sea.

With all our learning, we don't know much about some of the most common things. For instance, though men have been catching fish along the coasts of the world for many centuries, no man knows where they go when they disappear from the shore waters and swim toward the deep sea.

So it is with birds. Though their annual migrations have been written and sung about ever since the memory of man, no one knows what tracks they take, where they stop for rest, or how fast they travel.

Recently we have begun to wonder to some purpose about these things. The United States is putting copper tags on codfish every year now and turning them loose again. The tags are attached to the fins, and on them is a number and the request that the fisherman who catches a fish bearing the tag send it back to the government, with a statement, saying where he got it and how much it weighed.

The Germans are also trying this experiment. They fasten the tags to the gills of the fish. The Germans also fasten aluminum rings to the legs of birds now, to find out which way they go when they fly away in the autumn. They have discovered already that many species of birds do not fly due south, as had been supposed, but go east and west first. It has been found, too, that the crows do not cross the German ocean when they fly north in the spring, but that they follow the coast along the northern part of Germany to Russia, and so work north.

Overheard in the Courtroom.

First Lady—I wonder why the judge deferred sentence until to-morrow?

Second Lady—Probably he wanted to talk the case over with his wife.—Tales.

His Trouble Over.

Mrs. Twicewed—"Henry, I do believe you are jealous of my poor first husband."

Mr. Twicewed—"No, I merely envy him."

French Army Bands.

The French army is planning to free France is likely to deprive the French army of its bands. A regimental bandman is not to be made in two years.

LITTLE EXPLOSIONS

What Attracted Him.
"I'm a-goin' to be an Arctic explorer," announced Tommy Twaddles, who was reading about the Peary expedition.

"Indeed?" asked Pa Twaddles. "Are you so anxious to find the north pole?"

"Naw, I don't care about that. But up in them cold regions it's dangerous to wash yer face!"

Catching.
"Where did he catch his wife, anyway?"

"He didn't. She caught him."

"If that's the case, he caught a Tartar, eh?"

"Yes, and he's been catching it ever since."

A Collection of Idiots.
"I want to ask for the hand of your daughter in marriage," said the young man.

"You're an idiot!" said the irate father.

"I know it. But I didn't suppose you'd object to another one in the family!"

Clear the Track.
"I see that some of the Sioux tribe of Indians are buying automobiles."

"Getting 'em cheaper than white buyers could, I suppose."

"Why so?"

"Because they don't need any honk-honk! They can furnish the war-whoops!"

GOOD ADVICE.



Miss Oldone—I wouldn't have refused Charley Banks if I'd been you.
Miss Sweetgirl—I don't believe I would either, if I'd been you.

Absurd.
"Last night I slapped a mosquito on the face."

"How absurd!"

"What's absurd?"

"Slapping a mosquito on the face!"

"You didn't let me finish. I slapped him on the face of my girl; and her father thought it was the smack of a kiss he had heard and he bounced down stairs and chased me a block."

Whom the Old Man Feared.
"Say," said Mrs. Nuritch, "your father's got to stop smokin' his pipe in the parlor. You'll have to speak to him; he won't mind me."

"He ain't afraid o' me, neither," replied Nuritch.

"Well, something's got to be done."

"If I wasn't afraid o' scarin' the old man too bad I'd get the butler after him."—Philadelphia Press.

The Three Fiddles.
"And what did you see at the concert, Willie?" asked the father.

"I saw a man play a little fiddle and another one play a big fiddle," said the boy.

"And don't you remember the cello player, too, Willie?" suggested the mother, who accompanied him.

"Oh, yes; and then another man played a half-grown fiddle."

His Mistake.
"It is strange that a man like Mr. Braynes, with so many good ideas as to government, should command so little attention in public life."

"Yes," answered Senator Sorghum. "He is one of the people who figure out how things ought to be, instead of finding out how they are going to be and laying his plans accordingly."—Washington Star.

Liable to Damages.
"Papa, what's that red light out in the street for?"

"It's to warn people that the street is dangerous."

"Do they always set lights out when a street is dangerous?"

"Not always. Never heard of 'em setting any out in Wall street."—Detroit Tribune.

Her Object.
"Did you hear that statement Mrs. Tattle is making?"

"Yes, and every word of it is true."

"But I supposed Mrs. Tattle was merely a gossipy romancer."

"Well, she's telling the truth this time because she knows it will make more trouble."

Lots of Beau.
"Then," said the jilted lover, "am I to understand that I no longer sway your heart?"

"That's what!" replied the summer girl; "for awhile, at least, my heart will be controlled by a syndicate."

Enjoyed the Change.
"He's married, all right?"

"How can you tell? He has no wife with him."

"I know, and see how happy he is even at this dull summer hotel."

Hot Air.
"Was he really interested in the boat race?"

"Oh, intensely, apparently."

"How was he betting?"

"With his mouth, as usual."—Philadelphia Press.

Even.
He—you married me for my money!
She—Well, what if I did. I didn't get it! Isn't that punishment enough?
—Detroit Free Press.

Mutually Satisfactory Arrangement.
They had been married in due and ancient form.

Geoffrey," said the young wife, "you endowed me with all your worldly goods, didn't you?"

"I did," answered the young husband.

"Well, I hereby give them back to you."

"Gwendolen," he said, "you promised to obey me, did you not?"

"I did."

"Well, dear, I hereby solemnly command you to do as you please hereafter, no matter what orders I may give you."

On that basis they lived happily ever after.

Reminiscences.
Marie (after the honeymoon)—Max, dear, here is the tree under which you kissed me for the first time.

Max—You're always raking up old memories. I'll have that tree cut down.

Marie (after the tree has been cut down)—Do you remember, Max, dear, this is the very spot where the tree grew, Tableau.—Translated for Tales from Flegende Blatter.

Fit.
"It fits you," argued the modiste, but the summer person shrugged her shoulders archly.

"It fits me," she said, drily, "but it doesn't fit the exigencies. I am 30 years old. My time is short. My bathing suit should correspond. Do you understand?"

The modiste bowed and went for her shears.—Puck.

Where He Fell Down.
Archibald—I will do anything in the world for you, dearest.

Helene—Will you?

Archibald—If you would only try me!

Helene—Then take this collyrette to Catchem's department store and exchange it for a size larger; I've lost the slip.—Puck.

Cause of the Change.
"The water was cold when I came in," said the thin bather, "but it feels warm now. I suppose it's because I've got used to it."

"Hub, uh," responded the fat bather. "A Boston girl just went out and a New Orleans girl came in."—Detroit Tribune.

Where They Were.
"My husband and I read to each other every evening, now; it's just splendid," said Mrs. Newwood; "why don't you and your fiance do that when he calls on you?"

"Gracious!" replied Miss De Muir, "how can you read in the dark?"

Nothing Doing.
"Well—I told him if he dared to kiss me he'd sorry for it."

Belle—And was he?

Nell—No; but I was; I was sorry I told him.

Unkind.
Digby—I lost my mind when I was sick.

Higby—When do you expect it back?
—Judge.

VERY OBLIGING.



Grocer—Ten pounds of flour, ma'am. Shall I send it for you?
Mrs. Takitt—No, I'll take it with me if it isn't too heavy.
Grocer (absently)—I'll make it as light for you as I possibly can.

Quite Hopeless.
"Dear Pop," wrote the boy from the art school, "don't send me any more money—I have saved half that which you sent me last month."

"Come home," wired the old man, "you'll never make an artist."—Puck.

A Come-Back.
Mrs. Mayhem—I'm sure I don't know why I ever married a one-eyed brute like you!

Mr. Mayhem—I do. If I'd had two eyes, I'd have looked further.

A Conversational Need.
"Money talks!" said the impudent grafter.

"Yes," answered the member of the grand jury; "but it is about time there was some sort of a grammar to hold it down to proper discourse."

His Finish.
Hicks—He tells me he doesn't know what to do; he says he's between the devil and the deep sea.

Wicks—Well, I can see where he's going; I know he can't swim.

SOIL HAD LITTLE CHANCE.

Scotland's Suffering at the Hands of Visiting Englishmen.

An English golfer on a Scottish links hit the turf ten times for every once that he struck the ball. His caddy ventured on a sarcastic remonstrance.

"Ha' peety on aul Scotland, sir," said he. "She's suffered enouch at the hands o' yer countrymen in the past that ye sud treat her sae sair the day. Hit the ba', mon, an' let the grun' alone."

"Confound Scotland!" shouted the exasperated golfer, flinging down his club in a rage. "It's just what Dr. Johnson described it—stone, water and a little earth."

"Sae the doctor said that, did he?" inquired the caddy.

"He did. And he was a very wise man, let me tell you," snapped the Englishman.

"I believe ye," retorted the caddy. "Nae doot the doctor was a vera wise man, for there is muckle o' stane an' water in Scotland—oor mountains an' lochs that ye come sae far to see; an' it's a sair truth that the soil is no vera deep. You see, there's sic a number o' English bodies come to Scotland to play gowf."—Tit Bits.

BOUND TO SING IT.
Preacher's Rhythmical Remarks Followed by Congregation.

Ex-Congressman Harry Libby of Virginia tells a story of John Randolph of Roanoke, which has never been printed. Randolph had employed a preacher named Clopton to deliver some sermons to the negroes in the chapel on the plantation. One Sunday when the weather was very cold the preacher was giving out the hymns, two lines at a time, when he saw a negro put his foot on the red-hot stove, and called to him: "You rascal you; you'll burn your shoe."

"That fitted rhyme and meter, and the negroes sang it. The preacher smiled and explained: "My colored friends, indeed you're wrong; I didn't intend that for the song."

The negroes also sang this verse very piously, and then the preacher impatiently shouted at them: "I hope you will not sing again, until I have time to explain." And this they sang with strenuous earnestness, so that Clopton gave up in despair, took up his Bible, announced a text and delivered a sermon which was not so rhythical as his other utterances.

Scoring on an Error.
The professor had been summoned as an expert witness in a case involving the ownership of a tract of coal land.

"I will ask you, professor," said the attorney for the prosecution, "if the geological formation of this land corresponds with the published data pertaining thereto?"

"It does, sir," he answered.

"You have thoroughly read up the geology of the tract in question?"

"I have not."

"You have not?"

"No, sir."

"I ask the jury to notice that the witness flatly contradicts himself now, sir, if you haven't read up the geology involved in this case, why do you pretend to know anything at all about it?"

"Because, sir," said the professor, "in studying geological formations it is my invariable custom to read down."

"Silence in the courtroom!" thundered the judge.

Question of Preference in Ice.
Admiral Coghlan took the greatest interest in the Roosevelt before her departure to make possible the success of Peary's north pole seeking expedition. Looking over the craft, he pronounced her to be perfect for her purpose, and then could not avoid his usual pleasantries. Turning to Peary as they stood in the blazing sun forward he remarked:

"Peary, it is up to you. I wish you every success. You may prefer the blue ice of the frozen arctic, but I prefer to stay at home and listen to the ice clinking in my glass."

Some few seconds later Charles Percy, the cook and steward, filled two glasses with ice and other things. The two glasses looked of the same color, but Commander Peary swore by his hope of reaching the north pole that his concoction was iced tea, while it might be that the one for the admiral had "a little, just a little, Dutch courage" in its composition.—New York Times.

An Anecdote of Dumas.
Dumas pere, who was proud of the prices he received for his work, was once boasting of the fact.

"Beyond a doubt," he remarked, "I am the best paid of living men of letters; I receive 30 sous a line."

"Indeed, monsieur?" said a bystander. "I never worked for less than 45,000 a line. What do you think of that?"

"You are joking," responded Dumas, in irritation.

"Not at all."

"For what do you receive such rates per line?"

"For constructing railways," was the answer.—Harper's Weekly.

Twelve Ounces to a Pound.
One of the most recent discoveries in connection with the British South African war stores scandal is that the army authorities bought "one pound" tins of jam which weighed twelve ounces. The discovery was made when 1,350,816 surplus tins were sold at the end of the war.

Vengeance is Quick.
Prof. Sutterlin writes in the Frankfurter Zeitung that it is dangerous to bring complaint against a Naples coachman for cruelty to animals; he knows of an Englishman who did so, and was found dead next day in a narrow street with a dagger wound in his heart.

To Change Name of Ship.
It is stated that the name of the Russian battleship Kniak Potemkin, on which the mutiny occurred, is to be changed.

Fanning the Shah.
On his recent visit to Paris the Shah of Persia was fanned, night and day by relays of perspiring attendants.