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TRACKED.

PART SECOND. CHAPTER XIII. HOW CHARLES CAME TO BE REARED AS MRS. GANDY'S SON.

'And now,' said Mrs. Gandy, 'it is quite time you had some rest. I will get Gandy out of bed and then you can turn in, and have a good sleep.'

'But you yourself have never been to bed,' said Charles.

'You never mind me, I'm all right. I went to bed last night, and the night before, and you didn't.'

Deerbrook now took his leave, promising to come down to the lodge at dusk that evening, when Charles should at once proceed to arrange what course of action he intended to take to obtain his rights.

'A few hours' sleep,' said the young man, 'will clear my brain; but until I have had them, thought is out of the question.'

CHAPTER XIII. ANOTHER DARK DEED. Of all the persons of our story who were congregated within the Blakey demesne, Charles slept the soundest and calmest sleep that morning.

'Nature's softness' was early afflicted, by terrible dreams, from the pillow of the wretched mistress of the Hall; dreams in which her sister's child, whom she had robbed of his birthright, was ever before her eyes, perishing of hunger; his groans were in her ears, and his blazing eyes were ever looking into hers.

Oh, why did she yield to the madness of that moment, to thrust him into a living tomb? It was because she could not, even at the price of her soul, submit to the destruction of all her plans and hopes in the freshness of their triumph.

Robert Blakey, feverish and excited rose with the sun. Already he began to shrink from the consequences of the step he was about to take, but it was now too late to retreat—at least, he thought so. He was at the dairy before Carry.

When she came, as on the previous morning, she looked pale and her eyes were swollen with weeping.

Once more she offered a few faint expostulations, which were silenced even more quickly than before.

It was then arranged that Robert should leave about mid-day; when he arrived at Norwich he should send back his own carriage, hire a conveyance in the town, and return to the neighborhood of the Hall by a circuitous route. At ten o'clock that evening—she would not be safe of escaping observation much before that hour—she was to meet him at a certain spot, about a mile from the farm.

He gave her strict injunctions not to remember herself with any parade. 'Put on your best clothes,' he said; 'and as soon as we get to London you shall be supplied with everything you require.'

He kissed her, and thus they parted. At noon he left the Hall in an open carriage, accompanied by his valet. The parting with his mother had been almost painful. She wished him gone, and yet she could not endure the thought of being separated from him.

It was terrible, she felt, to be left alone with her own conscience and her awful crime; she clung round his neck, and wept as though she were parting from him forever. His consciousness smote him for the deed he was practicing, the affliction he was about to bring upon her, and these thoughts rendered his manner more tender and affectionate than usual.

Upon arriving at Norwich, the carriage was sent back, and he proceeded to a hotel, where he dined at four o'clock. He desired his valet to take the evening express to London, and get everything ready for him in town, whether he should follow him, by an early train next morning.

This done he hired a trap at a livery stable and set forward at a leisurely pace back toward Blakey. Thus far, he had carried his programme into effect.

Although Mr. Deerbrook did not get to bed until the servants of the Hall began to stir, he was abroad again before noon; his mind was too busy with the thoughts and plans of the future to rest long in oblivion.

Having wished Robert good-bye, and a safe journey, he ordered a horse to be saddled upon which he set forward for his usual morning ride.

'That young fellow is insatiable mischief; I know he is by his manner,' he muttered. 'Egad! I should not be surprised if he was going to bolt off with the dairy-maid. Poor Bob, I am sorry for him! It will be a terrible blow for him when he comes to hear of his altered fortunes, but I feel certain that Charles will behave handsomely to him.'

Musing thus, Mr. Deerbrook took his way up the Norwich road. When he arrived as far as the 'Blakey Arms' he saw an unusual number of people gathered round the small hostelry. Pulling up his horse, he asked one of the bystanders what was the matter. The man, looking at him, informed him that a poor woman had been found dead in the landlord's barn two nights before, and the coroner was about to hold an inquest.

With a feeling of nervous curiosity, Deerbrook throwing the reins of his horse to the spokesman, entered the inn.

He went into the barn where the body was lying. One glance sufficed. 'When the inquest is over,' he said to the landlord, 'let the poor creature be decently buried. Arrange the business yourself, and send the bill in to me, Mr. Deerbrook, of the Hall.'

He remounted his horse and rode away again.

'Poor Harriet!' he murmured sadly; 'what an awful fate! What a beautiful woman she was when I married her! I might have behaved better to her; there was much truth in what she said the last time we met.'

And with such like reflections, he rode back gloomily to the Hall. On the road he met the carriage that was conveying Robert to Norwich. Each waved his hand in token of adieu, and went on his several way.

As soon as it was dark, Deerbrook repaired to the lodge, and found Charles looking much invigorated by his long rest, and waiting his arrival. With his usual promptness, our hero was fully prepared with his plans.

'I shall leave here by daybreak tomorrow morning,' he said, 'walk to Norwich, and take the first train to London. As soon as I arrive there I shall put my case into the hands of a thoroughly respectable lawyer, and then—well, I shall call upon a friend.

'Let me go with you,' said Deerbrook. 'Under present circumstances I don't care for remaining at the Hall; and in your transactions with the lawyers, you may find my practical experience of some service. But by-the-by, I have a question to ask of you. You mentioned last night, that when as a boy, you discovered that secret door in your mother's chamber, you found behind it a stud and a glove; have you them with you?'

'No; the stud went years ago,' answered Charles.

It may be remembered that he had left it upon the library table when he fled from the house on Hermes Hill, it possessing no longer any value in his eyes—believing, as he did, that the murderer was discovered.

'But I can tell you what it was like; it was fashioned in the shape of a sphinx's head.'

'The very studs that Robert Blakey presented to Wieland when he came into his estate!' exclaimed Deerbrook. 'I was there when they were given, and I remember the remark that Robert made at the time—'I wished my present, he said, laughing, to be symbolical of the owner, so I chose the pattern of a sphinx's head, as being the symbol of all of wisdom and inscrutability.' This, with the exception of the handkerchief found at the bedside, is the darkest proof of all against the German.'

'Charles made no reply.

Just as objects were becoming dimly visible in the gloomy morning light, the two men set forward from the lodge upon their journey. When they had got about two miles upon the road, they saw, a little in front of them, a figure suddenly cross a stile which led from the highway across the fields; but, upon seeing the two pedestrians, it beat a hasty retreat.

'That fellow is up to no good,' said Charles.

'I should fancy not, by his manner. I think I have seen him somewhere before,' answered Deerbrook.

He was a hideous, grimy-looking brute, in a suit of tattered velvetene.

But we have not yet finished the records of the past night, and must go back a few hours to gather up another thread of our narrative.

the silence—then a groan—then a dull thud—then a sudden crash, and the frantic galloping of a horse.

Upon the ground lay a blood-stained form, and kneeling over it a hideous semblance of humanity, furiously stabbing the helpless clay.

'You'll never horsewhip me again, curse you!' he muttered, passing the back of his hand over his face to wipe off the sweat-drops produced by his work, and leaving a crimson streak in their place.

His hate was glutted; now to satisfy his greed. With trembling fingers he clutched and tore away the watch and chain, and rifled the pockets. Then he dragged the body a few yards further into the wood, and left it lying upon its back upon the branches.

That death-shriek was heard a long distance off by Carry Lee, as she was coming, with beating heart, to the meeting-place.

Almost at the same moment she heard the crash and the furious bawling of the horse's hoofs upon the road. Onward it came, snorting and mad with fright, dragging behind it a shapeless mass, the noise and blows of which urged it to yet more frantic speed.

As it rushed past, the horror that pursued it infected the girl, and with a sudden panic she turned round, and fled wildly home.

Through the open tracery of the trees timidly peep down the moonbeams upon the livid, upturned face of the dead; the trembling leaves try to hide it from them, but with a strange fascination they hover about it, and when the trees have slumbered again, gaze down steadily on more.

But the moon calls them away at last, and then they wane and fade, and leave the ghastly thing to be enshrouded in the darkness until the inquisitive day comes to investigate the doings of the night, and rouses up the sun to look down upon its horrors.

CHAPTER XIV. THE LAST APPEAL. Under the guidance of Mr. Deerbrook, Charles found a solicitor who, under the understanding that all money actually expended should be forthcoming, undertook his case.

To the legal eye it did not appear quite so clear or so safe an one as it did to the client's.

'You have not,' said the lawyer, 'according to your own showing, one scrap of documentary evidence, and you have only one witness, who could be easily shown to be an interested party, since one of the points to be proven is whether or not you are her son.'

'Pardon me,' interposed Deerbrook, 'but I, who am his uncle, most firmly believe him to be the lawful son of Robert Blakey.'

'But you have no proof,' replied the solicitor; 'and simple impressions, however certain they may appear to be, are nothing in evidence. If it be possible to prove that the present possessor of the estate is the issue of an illegal marriage—there will be no difficulty in annulling his claim. But the simple fact of his dispossession will not alone be sufficient to entitle you in his place. However, we will do our best.'

'Why, in the name of all that is extraordinary, did you hold back the circumstance of Helen's attempt upon your life?' cried Mr. Deerbrook, as they left the office. 'It is one of the strongest points of evidence in your favor that you possess.'

Charles, previous to their interview with the lawyer, had emphatically cautioned his uncle not to mention that event without his permission.

'I have very cogent reasons for my silence,' he replied. 'I cannot explain them at present. They may be removed in a few hours—perhaps never.'

'But it must come out ultimately, if the affair be proceeded with,' urged Deerbrook.

Charles did not answer, and his uncle already understood sufficient of his character not to press the argument.

This business concluded so far, he took Mr. Deerbrook home with him. Mrs. Gripley received her quondam lodger very glumly, and probably respect for Charles alone prevented a hostile demonstration. Payment in full, however, of his small debt, and some gin being sent for, instantaneously sweetened her asperity, and transmogrified him from 'that scamp Pontifex' to one of the gentlemanly lodgers that ever put foot in a house.

Having once more installed him in the landlord's good graces, and seen him comfortably seated in the large arm-chair, with a cigar in his elbow, Charles begged to be excused for an hour or two, as he had an important call to make.

'All right, dear boy!' exclaimed Deerbrook who had once more recovered his usual serenity of temper. 'I am very comfortable here with my old and esteemed gossip; and although I would much sooner see you sit down with a cheerful face, and join us in a social glass, yet let me not be a bar to your freedom of movement.'

The reader will doubtless surmise whether Charles bent his steps. He had resolved to make one more appeal to Wieland to clear himself, if possible, from that foul suspicion that clung to him.

Crumb your state bread into a pudding-pail and cover with sweet milk; set it by the stove to warm and soften; then to a quart of milk add three well-beaten eggs, a half cup of sugar, and as much fruit as liked, either dry or preserved; set it in boiling water, and do not allow it to stop boiling till done. Do not fill the pail, as it needs room to rise. This is an excellent pudding.

Though years bring with them wisdom, yet there is one lesson the aged seldom learn, namely, the management of youthful feelings. Age is all head, youth all heart; age reasons, youth feels; age acts under the influence of disappointment, youth under the dominion of hope.

The worth of every thing is determined by the demand for it. In the deserts of Arabia, a pitcher of cold water is of more value than a mountain of gold.

A sensitive old bachelor says that pretty girls always affect him as do ornamental confectionery—they give him the heartburn.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)