



CHAPTER XXVII.

It was a remarkable coincidence, but at the very time when Paxton was on his way to visit Judith Kregde, in answer to her letter, Stanmore was also setting out to secretly call upon the janitor's sister.

Stanmore was approaching Garrison's office from one direction, while Paxton was coming toward it from an exactly opposite way. The former had almost arrived at his destination, when he discovered the detective, and believing that Paxton had not seen him he crossed the street and hurried around the next corner. He feared that the detective would not get to remain where he was until the detective took his departure. The note which Paxton had received from Judith Kregde stated that she had just discovered a letter which Marlon Oakburn had left behind her, and that she wished him to see it at once, as it contained a veritable disclosure.

When Paxton entered the Garrison building he was admitted by Judith, and almost immediately the woman produced a letter, which she declared she had just found in Marlon's room, where she thought the detective must have overlooked it when he searched the apartment.

Paxton had previously obtained a specimen of Marlon's handwriting, and he saw that either the letter given him by Judith Kregde was a genuine document or a clever forgery, such as only an expert in photographic identification could detect. The substance of the letter signed by Marlon Oakburn, with her name in full, was a terrible confession. We will not reproduce the letter in full, since it would be to no purpose to state that Marlon murdered her father. When he had mastered the contents of this letter, Paxton reflected for some time in silence, and his good judgment whispered that it must be a forgery.

"A criminal flying from justice never yet left such a confession behind him," thought the detective.

He had the letter in his hand, and he was seeking to read his thoughts, but his face was now as immovable as a mask, and it told no story.

"If this letter is not a forgery, then the secret of John Oakburn's fate is revealed. I shall find a way to decide that question soon," said Paxton; and taking the letter with him, he soon after left Judith's abode.

Although he had not betrayed the fact, Paxton saw Stanmore as he was approaching the Garrison building, and he saw the latter dodge across the street to avoid him.

"There is something strange in Stanmore's conduct," thought Paxton, glancing about as he came out of the Garrison building.

A moment later he saw Stanmore at the corner, but he passed on as though he had not seen him, and entered a shop.

Then Stanmore hastened to the door of the Garrison building.

Through the shop window Paxton saw Stanmore leave his post at the corner, and the detective followed him, and saw him enter the house which he had himself just left.

Wondering what Stanmore's business with Judith Kregde could be, the detective left the vicinity, and took his way homeward.

He passed the office of Pratt & Weeks, and although all was darkness there, he could have seen within the private office of the firm, he would have observed Pratt and his partner going over their accounts, and striving to find a way out of the financial difficulties in which they had become involved.

The railway strike, upon the rise of which all their hopes depended, were steadily declining in value, and the rascally brokers felt that they were ruined, unless they could use the marked money.

"I will tell you, Weeks, there's no use of concealing it from ourselves any longer. We're flooded with the marked money must be used!" cried Pratt, dashing down his pen savagely.

Paxton did not appear to be as much surprised as Stanmore had assumed the role of an eavesdropper as might have been anticipated. To his men he said: "Not a word about this."

That same evening Paxton again visited the pawnshop and secured the locket containing the picture of Donald Wayburn which had belonged to Marlon Oakburn.

The next day when Stanmore dropped in at the detective's office as usual, the latter slyly opened the door in his own apartment, frequently from the portrait it contained to Stanmore's face, as though he was comparing the two.

When Stanmore had gone, Paxton said in monologue: "I was not mistaken when I thought I made a discovery when I first saw the picture. The portrait in Marlon Oakburn's locket is that of Mr. Stanmore, taken years ago, and though he has since changed greatly he cannot change his eyes. The name of the original of the portrait is written under it. That name is Donald Wayburn, and therefore I know that Richard Stanmore's real name is Donald Wayburn. He is the author of the threatening letter which I found among John Oakburn's correspondence. Here is a mystery. Has the Chief of Police who sent this man to me been deceived in him? Can it be that this man whom I have trusted, and who has employed me, is really guarding the secret of the great crime I am trying to unearth?"

Thus reflected Paxton, and he added: "He must have the gratitude that he is Marlon Oakburn's lover."

Paxton considered the startling and enigmatical developments which were now presented to his consideration, and at length he said, mentally: "The Chief of Police from whom Stanmore brought his letter of recommendation and introduction. The thought has just occurred to me that it is possible he may have forged the letter."

The detective acted upon this resolution forthwith.

He returned at once to the office of the chief of the Metropolitan police force, and he was closeted with that gentleman for more than an hour.

When at the expiration of that time Paxton left the office of the chief, he said to him: "I begin to comprehend the matter at last."

He must have obtained some information regarding the man who called himself Richard Stanmore.

Meanwhile Marlon, on the second night following the day when Stanmore received her letter, paced a narrow apartment in a dilapidated building in the suburbs of Harlem.

To this place she had been removed by her captors, after her captivities were aroused that a detective had discovered her original prison place.

Marlon's thoughts were troubled, for she was reflecting upon the circumstances which had united to place her in her present unprecedented situation of peril and danger.

The reflection that the truth unsupported by evidence would not be credited distracted her.

Before her mind arose a vision of her arrest, trial, and conviction of a crime which she had not committed, and the thought of her perilous position, and her explanation with cruel derision, rang in her ears.

"No, no; my story will not be credited. I must not be arrested, now that I have lost the paper I took from the office on that fatal night, and a prisoner would have proved my truth and innocence, but now I am doomed if captured."

Then Marlon knelt and breathed a prayer which began with these words: "Father in Heaven, Thou knowest I am innocent."

Fervently she supplicated, humbly she implored divine help to lead her out of the fatal quietude in which she had found into which she had unwittingly strayed.

Little did Marlon Oakburn suspect that human ears heard her prayer, or the soliloquy which preceded it, but such was the fact.

Every word Marlon uttered was heard by Stuart Harland, who was at that very moment a prisoner in the cellar under the room in which Marlon was a captive.

An explanation as to how Harland became a prisoner in the power of the wicked man, was encouraged by the fact that the jailers must be given, and we will content the events which led to his capture.

Stuart was not discouraged by his failure to capture the mysterious man who had exchanged coats with him. On the contrary, he was encouraged by the fact that he had sighted him once, and he believed he should sight him again.

Thus it was that after his encounter with the unknown, where Levi Kregde had struck him down with a cowardly blow, Stuart still continued his "still hunt" for the man called "Garnar" by Pratt and Weeks.

On the evening when Marlon's secret friend had delivered her letter to Stanmore, Stuart Harland chanced to enter a lodging house on West street.

While he was in the office of this establishment, Stuart heard a clerk say to the proprietor, as he took a valise from under the counter:

"This traveling bag is in the way here behind the counter. I hardly think the man who left here will ever call for it. What shall I do with it?"

As he spoke, the clerk placed the traveling bag on the counter, and Stuart read the name "J. C. Garnar," which was stamped on the side of the valise.

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Rivers Are All Raging.

HE Old Missip is a loomin' is the correct river expression for the condition of the father of waters at St. Louis.

The danger line has already spread itself over territory not rightfully its own, doing great damage to its banks and to the movable property of citizens along the shore between Bremen on the north and River des Peres on the south. The rise came within thirty-six hours, and the water is still creeping up. Near the Merchants' bridge, in North St. Louis, scores of men in the employ of the lumber companies are at work securing lumber piles from the water. Last Saturday these piles were from twenty to thirty feet from the water. Where the river seems to have created the greatest waste is a squatter settlement about half a mile below the Merchants' bridge, called "Okiahoma." The greater number of the squatters' homes are small shanties or floating houses, built there in the water, others on land supported on stilts.

The danger line is 28 feet for a number of houses along the river front. At last reports the water was 27 feet 7 inches above the high water mark.

Damage Beyond Estimation. Near Brunswick, Mo., the Missouri and Grand Rivers have been rising rapidly for several days. Monday was spent in rescuing the inhabitants of the bar south of that place, which was formed about twenty years ago by the Missouri River changing its channel, and has lately become valuable farming land. Much stock was also taken off the bar. Hundreds of acres are covered by the floods and dozens of homes destroyed. Monday evening the ferryboat, loaded with people and horses, was broken from its cables by drift and floated down the stream. One man fell into the river, but was rescued. The drifting ferry-boat was carried down the stream for almost four miles, where it landed on a bar in the Missouri River and the people were rescued by some fishermen.

Much suffering in Nebraska. Never has Nebraska experienced such a long-continued down-pour of rain. The Missouri River is nine feet above low water mark. There is no flood at Omaha, but reports from points below indicate that the river is rising rapidly and already out of its banks and flooding the lowlands and bottom lands. Reports from all along the lines of the Omaha roads tell of rain and snow in the Black Hills and in Western Nebraska and cloudiness all the way to Salt Lake. All trains were late and there are a number of washouts reported, though none of them have caused accidents. There is a washout between Beatrice and Lincoln on the Union Pacific branch, and the Rock Island main line trains are using the Burlington tracks instead. The rain has broken the approaches of the Missouri Pacific at Plattsmouth bridge that the opening of the bridge has been delayed until June. Snow has fallen in Western Nebraska, ranging in depth from sixteen inches in the northwestern portion to two inches in the southwestern portion of the State.

Iowans May Seek the Hills. At Ottumwa, Iowa, a heavy rain has set the Des Moines River booming again. The water has risen rapidly and continues to rise. The rain, it is feared, will swell the river to the highest point since 1856, when all the city except that part on the hills was submerged.

Dead Farm Animals Floating By. The Maumee near Toledo, Ohio, is on the rampage, being higher than was ever known before, except at the floods caused by ice gorge in 1883 and 1881. Parts of buildings, trees, fence rails, dead cattle, hogs, sheep and general debris came down—Reports tell of extensive devastation at Defiance, Antwerp, Napoleon, Fort Wayne, Maumee, Perrysburg, Marengo Island, of Perrysburg, where are many summer cottages, was nearly covered, and six or seven houses were being washed away.

Bad Snow in South Dakota. At Redfield, S. D., quite a heavy snowstorm occurred Tuesday morning, but melted almost as fast as it fell. Rain has been falling all the time since. During the past forty days eight inches of water has fallen there, the heaviest downpour known since the settlement of the country. There has been no damage to crops.

Five Children Killed Overight. William Wilkins and wife and five children, colored, thinking a storm was brewing, retired into a cyclone cave at their home in the southwest part of Anthony, Kan. The heavy rain so undrained the house that the roof fell on the sleeping people. Wilkins succeeded in getting out and arousing the neighbors, who assisted him in rescuing the wife alive. The five children, from 6 months to 14 years of age, were taken out dead.

World's Fair Notes. THE Administration Building will have a mosaic floor costing \$5,000. The fine art exhibit will be much more extensive than was at first expected. VISITORS to Machinery Hall will be enabled to pass from one end of the building to the other at an elevation, and thus gain a birdseye view of the vast area of exhibits, and to see many of the larger exhibits to much greater advantage than will be possible from the floor.

HENRY J. REYNOLDS and Samuel B. Foster, Chicago tourists, recently climbed to the summit of South Dome, one of the highest points of the Yosemite range, and painted in enormous characters on the most precipitous cliffs the words, "Visit the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893."

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