

# The Firm of Girdlestone

BY  
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## CHAPTER XXIII.—(Continued.)

The voices and the footsteps sounded louder and louder, until they were just at the other side of the boundary. They seemed to come from several people walking slowly and heavily. There was the shrill rasping of a key and the wooden door swung back on its rusty hinges, while three dark figures passed out who appeared to bear some burden between them. The party in the shadow crouched closer still, and peered through the darkness with eager anxious eyes. They could discern little save the vague outlines of the moving men, and yet as they gazed at them an unaccountable and overpowering horror crept into the hearts of every one of them. They breathed an atmosphere of death.

The newcomers tramped across the road, and pushing through the thin hedge, ascended the railway embankment upon the other side. It was evident that their burden was a heavy one, for they stopped more than once while ascending the steep grassy slope, and once, when near the top, one of the party slipped, and there was a sound as though he had fallen upon his knees, together with a stifled oath. They reached the top, however, and their figures, which had disappeared from view, came into sight again standing out dimly against the murky sky. They bent down over the railway line, and placed the indistinguishable mass which they bore carefully upon it.

"We must have the light," said a voice. "No, no; there's no need," another expostulated.

"We can't work in the dark," said the third, loudly and harshly. "Where's the lantern, guv'nor? I've got a lucifer."

"We must manage that the train passes over right," the first voice remarked. "Here, Burt, you light it."

There was the sharp sound of the striking of a match, and a feeble glimmer appeared in the darkness. It flickered and waned, as though the wind would extinguish it, but next instant the wick of the lantern had caught, and threw a strong yellow glare upon the scene. The light fell upon the major and his comrades, who had sprung into the road, and it lit up the group on the railway line. Yet it was not upon the rescuing party that murderers fixed their terror-stricken eyes, and the major and his friends had lost all thought of the miscreants above them—for there standing in the center of the roadway, there with the light flickering over pale sweet face, like a spirit from the tomb, stood no other than the much-enduring, cruelly-treated girl for whom Burt's murderous blow had been intended.

For a few seconds she stood there without either party moving a foot or uttering a sound. Then there came from the railway a cry so wild that it will ring forever in the ears of those who heard it. Burt dropped upon his knees and put his hands over his eyes to keep out the sight. John Girdlestone caught his son by the wrist and dashed away in the darkness, flying wildly, madly, with white face and staring eyes, as men who have looked upon that which is not of this world. In the meantime, Tom had sprung down from his perch, and had clasped Kate in his arms, and there she lay, sobbing and laughing, with many pretty feminine ejaculations and exclamations and questions, saved at last from the net of death, which had been closing upon her so long.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

The ruffian Burt was so horror-stricken at the sight of the girl whom he imagined that he had murdered, that he lay groveling on the railway line by the side of his victim, moaning with terror, and incapable of any resistance. He was promptly seized by the major's party, and the Nihilist secured his hands with a handkerchief so quickly and effectively that it was clearly not the first time that he had performed the feat. He then calmly drew a very long and bright knife from the recesses of his frock coat, and having pressed it against Burt's nose to insure his attention, he brandished it in front of him in a menacing way, as a hint that an attempt at escape might be dangerous.

"And who is dis?" asked Baumsier, lifting up the dead woman's head, and resting it upon his knee.

"Poor girl! She will never speak again, whoever she may have been," the major said, holding the lantern to her cold, pale face. "Here's where the cowards struck her. Death must have been instantaneous and painless. I could have sworn it was the young lady we came after, if it were not that we have her safe down there, thank the Lord!"

"Where are those others?" asked Von Baumsier, peering about through the darkness. "If there is justice in the country, they will bring for the work of dis night."

"They are off," the major answered, saying the girl's head reverently down again. "It's hopeless to follow them, as we know nothing of the country, nor which direction they took. They ran like madmen. Hullo! What can this be?"

The sight which had attracted the veteran's attention was nothing less than the appearance at the end of the lane of three

brilliant luminous discs moving along abreast of one another. They came rapidly nearer, increasing in brilliancy as they approached. Then a voice rang out of the darkness. "There they are, officers! Close with them! Don't let 'em get away!" and before the major and his party could quite grasp the situation they were valiantly charged by three of those much-enduring, stout-hearted mortals known as the British police force.

These three burly Hampshire policemen, having been placed upon our friends' track by the ostler of the Flying Bull, and having themselves observed maneuvers which could only be characterized as suspicious, charged down with such vehemence that in less time than it takes to tell it, both Tom and the major and Von Baumsier were in safe custody. The Nihilist, who had an inextinguishable hatred of the law, and who could never be brought to understand that it might under any circumstances be on his side, pulled himself very straight and held his knife down at his hip as though he meant to use it, while Bulow, of Kiel, likewise assumed an aggressive attitude. Fortunately, however, the appearance of their prisoners and a few hurried words of the major made the inspector in charge understand how the land lay, and he transferred his attentions to Burt, on whose wrists he placed the handcuffs. He then listened to a more detailed account of the circumstances from the lips of the major. "Who is this young lady?" he asked, pointing to Kate.

"This is the Miss Harston whom we came to rescue, and for whom no doubt the blow was intended which killed this unhappy girl."

"Perhaps, sir," said the inspector to Tom, "you had better take her up to the house."

"Thank you," said Tom, and went off through the wood with Kate upon his arm. On their way she told him how, being unable to find her bonnet and cloak, which Rebecca had abstracted, she had determined to keep her appointment without them. Her delay rendered her a little late, however; but on reaching the withered oak she heard voices and steps in front of her, which she had followed. These had led her to the open gate, and the lighting of the lantern had revealed her to friends and foes. Ere she concluded her story Tom noticed that she leaned more and more heavily upon him, until by the time that they reached the Priory he was obliged to lift her up and carry her to prevent her from falling. The hardships of the last few weeks, and this final terrible and yet more joyful incident of all, had broken down her strength. He bore her into the house, and laying her by the fire in the dining room, watched tenderly over her, and exhausted his humble stock of medical knowledge in devising remedies for her condition.

In the meantime the inspector having thoroughly grasped the major's lucid narrative, was taking prompt and energetic measures. "You go down to the station, Constable Jones," he ordered. "Wire to London, John Girdlestone, aged sixty-one, and his son, aged twenty-eight, wanted for murder. Address, Eccleston square and Fenchurch street, City. Send a description of them. Father, six feet one inch in height, hatchet-faced, grey hair and whiskers, deep-set eyes, heavy brows, round shoulders. Son, five feet ten, dark faced, black eyes, black curly hair, strongly made, well dressed."

"Yes, that's near enough," observed the major.

"Wire to every station along the line to be on the lookout. Send a description to the chief constable of Portsmouth, and have a watch kept on the shipping. That should catch them. Let us carry the poor soul up to the house," the inspector continued, after making careful examination of the ground all round the body. The party assisted in raising the girl up, and in carrying her back along the path by which she had been brought.

Burt tramped stolidly along behind with the remaining policeman beside him. The Nihilist brought up the rear with his keen eyes fixed upon the navy, and his knife still ready for use. When they reached the Priory the prisoner was safely locked away in one of the numerous empty rooms, while Rebecca was carried upstairs and laid upon the very bed which had been hers.

"We must search the house," the inspector said, and Mrs. Jorrocks having been brought out of her room, and having forthwith fainted and been revived again, was ordered to accompany the police in their investigation, which she did in a very dazed and stupefied manner. Indeed, not a word could be got from her until, entering the dining room, she perceived her bottle of Hollands upon the table, on which she raised up her voice and cursed the whole company, from the inspector downwards, with the shrillest volubility of invective. Having satisfied her soul in this manner, she wound up by a perfect shriek of profanity, and breaking away from her guardians, she regained the shelter of her room and locked herself up there, after which they could hear by the drumming of her heels that she went into a violent hysterical attack upon the floor.

Kate had, however, recovered sufficiently to be able to show the police the different rooms, and to explain to them which was which. The inspector examined the scanty furniture of Kate's apartment with great interest.

"You say you have been living here for three weeks," he said.

"Nearly a month," Kate answered.

"No wonder you look pale and ill. You have a fine prospect from the window." He drew the blind aside and looked out into the darkness. A gleam of moonlight lay upon the heaving ocean, and in the center of this silver streak was a single brown-sailed fishing boat running to the eastward before the wind. The inspector's keen eye rested upon it for an instant, and then he dropped the blind and turned away. It never flashed across his mind that the men whom he was hunting down

could have chosen this means of escape, and were already beyond his reach.

## CHAPTER XXV.

Esra Girdlestone had given many indications during his life, both in Africa and elsewhere, of being possessed of the power of grasping a situation and of acting for the best at the shortest notice. He never showed this quality more conclusively than at that terrible moment, when he realized not only that the crime in which he had participated had failed, but that all was discovered, and that his father and he were hunted criminals. With the same intuitive quickness which made him a brilliant man of business, he saw instantly what were the only available means of escape, and proceeded at once to adopt them. If they could but reach the vessel of Captain Hamilton Miggs they might defy the pursuit of the law. He had hired a boat near Claxton.

The Black Eagle had dropped down the Thames on the very Saturday which was so fruitful of eventful episodes. Miggs would lie at Gravesend, and intended afterwards to beat round to the Downs, there to await the final instructions of the firm. If they could catch him before he left, there was very little chance that he would know anything of what had occurred. It was a fortunate chance that the next day was Sunday, and there would be no morning paper to enlighten him as to the doings in Hampshire. They had only to invent some plausible excuse for their wish to accompany him, and get him to drop them upon the Spanish coast. Once out of sight of England, and on the broad ocean, what detective could follow their track?

They reached the ship. The early part of the voyage of the Black Eagle was extremely fortunate. The wind came round to the eastward and wafted them steadily down channel, until on the third day they saw the Isle of Ushant lying low upon the skyline. No inquisitive gunboat, or lurking police launch came within sight of them, though whenever any vessel's course brought her in their direction the heart of Esra Girdlestone sick within him. On one occasion a small brig signalled to them, and the wretched fugitives, when they saw the flags run up, thought that all was lost. It proved, however, to be merely some trivial message, and the two owners breathed again.

The wind fell away on the day that they cleared the channel, and the whole surface of the sea was like a great expanse of quicksilver which shimmered in the rays of the wintry sun. There was still a considerable swell after the recent gale, and the Black Eagle lay rolling about as though she had learned habits of inebriation from her skipper. The sky was very clear above, but all round the horizon a low haze lay upon the water. So silent was it that the creaking of the boats as they swung at the davits, and the straining of the shrouds as the ship rolled, sounded loud and clear, as did the raucous cries of a couple of gulls who hovered round the poop. Every now and then a rumbling noise ending in a thud down below showed that the swing of the ship had caused something to come down with a run. Underlying all other sounds, however, was a muffled clank, clank, which might almost make one forget that this was a sailing ship, it sounded so like the clapping of a propeller.

"What is that noise, Captain Miggs?" asked John Girdlestone, as he stood leaning over the quarter rail, while the old sea-dog, sextant in hand, was taking his midday observations. The captain had been on his good behavior since the unexpected advent of his employers, and he was now in a wonderful and unprecedented state of sobriety.

"Them's the pumps agoin'," Miggs answered, packing his sextant away in its case.

"The pumps! I thought they were only used when a ship was in danger?" Esra came along the deck at this moment, and listened with interest to the conversation.

"This ship is in danger," Miggs remarked calmly.

"In danger!" cried Esra, looking round at the clear sky and placid sea. "Where is the danger? I did not think you were such an old woman, Miggs."

"We will see about that," the seaman answered angrily. "If a ship's got no bottom in her she's bound to be in danger, be the weather fair or foul."

"Do you mean to tell me this ship has no bottom?"

"I mean to tell you that there are places where you could put your fingers through her seams. It's only the pumpin' that keeps her afloat."

"This is a pretty state of things," said Girdlestone. "How is it that I have not been informed of it before? It is most dangerous."

"Informed!" cried Miggs. "Informed of it! Has there been a voyage yet that I haven't come to you, Muster Girdlestone, and told ye I was surprised ever to find myself back in Lannon? A year ago I told ye how this ship was, and ye laughed at me, ye did. It's only when ye find yourselves on her in the middle o' the broad sea that ye understand what it is that sailor folk have to put up wi'."

"I presume," Girdlestone said, in a conciliatory voice, "that there would be no real danger as long as the weather was fine."

"It won't be fine long," the captain answered gruffly. "The glass was well under thirty when I come up, and it is fallin' fast. I've been about here before at this time o' year in a calm, with a ground swell and a sinkin' glass. No good ever came of it."

## (To be continued.)

### Hending Him Off.

Blox—I want to give you a piece of good advice, old man.

Knox—All right; but before you do, let me give you a piece.

Blox—What is it?

Knox—Follow the advice you are going to give me.



### Cabbage Worms.

When the first appearance of the worm is made the plants should be dusted with the paris green and flour mixture. When the heads are forming use one pound of pyrethum powder to four pounds of flour to dust the plants. This is harmless to man. After the head begins forming paris green should not be used. Those who are afraid to use paris green are generally successful by beginning early to use the pyrethum powder and spraying often.

Cabbage and other plant lice are best controlled by spraying with kerosene emulsion, using the 15 per cent solution—a solution containing 15 per cent of kerosene. If the lice are on trees, flowers or rose bushes, tobacco decoction may be used with good results. The tobacco decoction is made by taking three pounds of tobacco stems and five gallons of water and boiling for two hours. It is used without diluting, but must not be applied too hot, or it may scald the plants.

If treatment is begun in time plant lice can be controlled. It must be done before the leaves are curled so the spray can reach the pests. There should be several sprayings, four or five days apart, as one spraying will not completely do the work. Clean culture is important in fighting these insects, as with many others.

### Automatic Dump Wagon.

The ease with which modern dump carts and wagons can be unloaded is illustrated in the automatic dump wagon shown in the accompanying illustration, the invention of a Connecticut man. The wagon box is pivoted on the



OPERATING THE DUMP WAGON.

axle, the greater portion of the load being in back of the pivoted point. The forward end of the box is normally held in position by a lever directly behind the driver's seat. When ready to dump the load the driver turns in his seat, releases the lever and the load automatically turns over. The driver is thus not compelled to leave his seat, saving considerable time.

### Wasted Road Money.

In a recent speech at Peoria, H. H. Gross, secretary of the Farmers' Good Road League and special agent for the National Department of Agriculture to study the question of highways, made the following statement: "In forty years enough money has been thrown away and squandered on the dirt roads of Illinois to pay for graveling or macadamizing every foot of highway in the State." He went on further to state that as good, hard roads could be built on the black land in the corn belt of Illinois as in Massachusetts, or in any other State, and at a moderate annual expense to the landowners of the State, possibly not exceeding their present annual tax for road and bridge purposes.

### Milk for Calves.

The calf finds in fresh milk while it is still warm with the animal heat of the cow, it is said, a constituent value not found in the milk after it is allowed to get cold. The chemist can not define it, and it can not be restored again by warming the milk. If every calf could be fed its milk sweet, and while it still retained its animal heat, there would no doubt be fewer cat-banned steers going to the block.

### Treatment for Loco.

The results of the loco weed when eaten by stock are unpleasantly familiar to the stockman of the plains east of the Rocky mountains. It has been estimated that the losses from this source in Colorado alone have reached the sum of a million dollars per annum. The national bureau of plant industry has been taking a turn

at the loco problem, and C. D. Marsh, expert in poison plants, reports that it has been found that locoed cattle can in most cases be cured by a course of treatment with strychnine, while locoed horses can generally be cured by a course of treatment with Fowler's solution. The animals under treatment must not be allowed to eat the loco weed and should be given not only nutritious food, but so far as possible, food with laxative properties. To this end magnesium sulphate was administered to correct the constipation which is almost universal among locoed animals. It should be noted, too, that magnesium sulphate may serve to some extent as an antidote to the poison.

It may be added in regard to the question of immunity that loco poisoning comes on in a slow and cumulative manner, so that there is no possibility of animals becoming immune.

### Southport Globe Onions.

Connecticut's famous Southport Globe onions stand unsurpassed among popular American varieties of the onion.



They are in high favor in some of the finest commercial onion growing districts of Ohio and New York and during a few years past have made a steady advance in standing everywhere as a highly bred, perfect onion. Eastern onion growers use the red and white Southport Globes to produce the exceptionally large, solid, beautifully formed bulbs that bring top prices in the New York City markets.

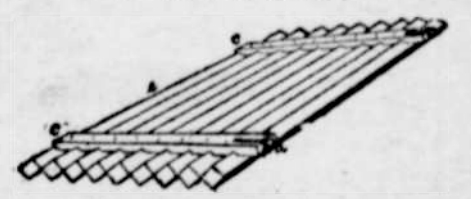
Besides the two varieties named, there is a yellow Southport Globe that resembles the others in shape and general character, but is of a rich yellow color.

The white is one of those beautifully white, perfectly globe shaped onions that take the eye and bring highest price in any market. Its skin is thin and paperlike, the flesh fine grained, crisp and mild flavored. Add to this that it is a tremendous cropper, and it represents almost an ideal product in its line.

### Disk Plows.

The twenty-four-inch size disk plow can safely be recommended as being superior to any other size. The smaller size pulls easier, but it does not pulverize the soil so well. The disk plow is capable of handling ground that has become too dry and hard for the moldboard plow. It is of somewhat lighter draft, does not require sharpening so often, cuts through trash better and does not clog so easily. Do not try to cut a furrow wider than eight or ten inches with a disk. The wider the furrow the deeper will corrugations be and the poorer will be the work. It is better to use two twenty-four-inch plows, each cutting eight inches in width, than to use a single twenty-eight or thirty-inch plow cutting sixteen inches.

### Smoother Drag.



To break down clods and give a fine surface the field drag serves a useful purpose. It may be used in connection with the spring tooth harrow or even with the disk. The 6x6 inch pieces are 6 to 10 feet in length and are laid edgewise, being bound together by cross pieces made of 1 1/2x6 inch stuff.

### Farm News Notes.

In New Zealand the best demand is for Shorthorn bulls of the milking strain.

Kangaroo rats are destroying the vineyards near Santa Cruz, Cal. They have appeared in thousands and are feeding on the young buds and vines.

While attending a mule on a farm in Morgan County, W. Va., Frank Culp, a farm boy, was attacked by the animal and had his leg nearly chewed off.

Secretary Wilson says we ought to have bumper crops throughout the country this season. All conditions are favorable for record-breaking yields of all sorts.

While one class of stock may pay better than another, do not lose sight of the fact that the average farm needs a few head of every sort in order to make the best and closest use of all the products.

A Connecticut farmer is reported to use the incubator system in starting his potato crop. The seed potatoes are placed in a warm room in a rack, where they sprout, and are then transplanted in the field.