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Circumstantial

By DONALD CHAMBERLIN

The lawsuit between the MacGregor and MacAlister estates had been decided in favor of Fergus MacAlister, cousin to Alexander MacGregor, who had been long in possession of the estate. Both were bachelors, and, neither having children, the property would have gone in any event to MacAlister had his cousin continued to live single. But Fergus had heard that Alex was about to be married, and, since there was a doubt as to whether he or his cousin was legally entitled to the estate, he had commenced suit to gain it.

MacGregor was too honorable to permit Helen Cameron to become his wife till it was decided whether he would be rich or poor, and when the case was decided against him he released her. He made preparations to leave the homestead to his cousin, and when all was ready and he was about to leave Fergus drove up to the homestead, alighted and went into the house.

Andrew Cummings, a cobbler, was passing that way at 6 o'clock in the evening. He noticed MacAlister's chaise before the gate, and at the moment Alex MacGregor came out evidently in a rage and passed down the road. MacAlister did not return to his home to dinner, and, since it was known that he had gone to the homestead during the evening, a servant was sent to find out if possible if he was there. He found his master lying on the floor of the library dead. His skull had been fractured, apparently with an iron poker that showed signs of having inflicted the blow.

Alexander MacGregor was suspected, but it was not till Andy Cummings told of what he had seen that Alex was arrested. His story was that just before leaving the homestead his cousin had come in. The meeting was a trying one to Alex, who had just been dispossessed. He had upbraided his cousin, saying that he had not a cent in the world and knew not where to go for a lodging. Fergus had taken out a handful of gold pieces and offered them to him. Alex had scornfully declined to take them and had left the house in an excited state of mind.

MacGregor's misfortune was too much for Helen Cameron, who, despite her father's commands, visited him in jail and sat beside him during the trial, declaring that she would marry him, whatever the verdict might be. Since no one saw the murder committed her lover was not convicted, but there were few but believed that he had killed his cousin. Indeed, there was a special motive for his putting Fergus out of the way, for at Fergus' death he came again into possession of the estate he had lost.

For a time Alex refused to permit Helen to make the sacrifice of marrying a man who had been convicted by opinion if not by the courts. But when it was found that if she were not permitted to bear her burden with him her life would still be wrecked his parents begged Alex to withdraw his opposition. The pair were married privately and lived, not where the murder had been committed, but at Helen's home.

Alex drooped under the stigma of being considered his cousin's murderer. He was cut by his old friends, and had it not been for his wife not a human being would have crossed his threshold. Life to him was an intolerable burden. He preferred death to such a life.

One day his wife went to the homestead to examine the room where her husband had told her he had had an interview with Fergus with a view to discovering a clew to the real murderer. She made a search of the room where the corpse had been found and under a baseboard caught a glimpse of something yellow. Withdrawing the object it proved to be a gold sovereign.

MacGregor had told of the offer of the gold pieces by his cousin, but had no proof of his story. Helen, without a word to her husband, took the sovereign to her lawyer. He carried it to the only bank in the vicinity, and after an investigation it was learned that they had received a considerable number of sovereigns of the same coinage (1848) just before the date of the murder and on the morning of the day MacAlister was killed had paid him fifty of them.

The piece Helen had found was the only one that was traced up to this time. Andy Cummings some time after the murder was remembered by one of his neighbors to have offered a gold sovereign to be changed into silver. The attorney got out a warrant to search Andy's premises, and five sovereigns, coinage of 1848, were found in a stocking hidden under the eaves of his cabin.

Andy was arrested. He at first explained having the sovereigns in his possession by the statement that MacAlister had owed him money, but when pressed for what the debt was for he broke down and made a confession.

On seeing MacGregor come out of the homestead curiosity had moved him to go in and investigate the cause of his wrath. In the library he had found on a table the gold Fergus had offered Alex. Cupidity seized him. He was gathering them in when Fergus appeared. A struggle followed. Andy seized the poker by the fireplace, struck his opponent on the head and killed him.

To divert suspicion from himself he had told what he had seen.

The Beautiful Cypress.

Of all the trees in America the cypress is in summer the most beautiful. Ever fresh and green, its tiny leaflets resemble the choicest ferns. Young, it is a thing of charm; older, it is inspiring and interesting; mature, it becomes majestic, towering, with a long, straight, thick trunk, which makes the best of durable lumber.

It is a tree of rapid growth. It is hardy anywhere in the corn belt, and southward it has no insect enemies or diseases. A man could plant a cypress tree in his lawn, enjoy its wonderful presence during his life, and his son might cut it and with the proceeds send the grandson to college for a year. What other tree will afford shade, add beauty and make fine lumber at the same time?

Cypress trees transplant easily, though they should be mulched the first year and looked after occasionally. Once established, they are able to forage for themselves. Cypress leaves have been found unchanged in blocks of coal deep down in the earth.—Breeder's Gazette.

Fowl Names.

The fat plumber was in a philosophical mood.

"There is simply no understanding woman," he observed.

"Whaddye mean, understand?" the thin carpenter asked, just to start the conversation.

"Well, for instance, a woman doesn't object to being called a duck."

"No."

"And she even smiles if some one happens to refer to her as a chicken."

"Too true."

"And most of them will stand for being called squabs, broilers or turtle doves."

"Yes, yes, but what's the idea?"

"It's just this," the fat plumber exclaimed. "A woman objects to being called a hen, and a hen is the most useful bird of the whole blooming bunch."—Youngstown Telegram.

Tiny German States.

While it is well known that some of the German states are of lilliputian size, few persons are aware that it is quite possible to visit seven of them, including two kingdoms, two duchies and three principalities in an easy walk of four and a half hours. A good walker, starting from Steinbach, in Bavaria, will arrive in half an hour at Lichtentanne, which is situated in Saxe-Meiningen. Thence the road proceeds in one and a half hours to Rauschengesees (Reuss, elder branch), after which in a few minutes Gleima, in Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt, is reached. Half an hour's walk brings the pedestrian to Altengeseees (Reuss, younger branch). An hour farther on lies Drognitz, on Prussian soil, and the last stage is another hour's stroll, finishing up at Saalthal, Saxe-Altenburg.—Washington Star.

Over Their Heads.

Lady Southwark, in her "Social and Political Reminiscences," relates this experience of her father, the late Sir Thomas Chambers, during an election meeting in 1880, when Gladstone was speaking for him in St. Pancras:

"When my father arrived the crowd outside the building was so dense that it seemed physically impossible for him to get in. An inspector, realizing this, suggested that he shoud go over and not through the crowd. This extraordinary idea was carried out. My father was lifted up with a gentle shove and propelled along on the heads of the people on all fours. This, he said, was not so difficult, as most wore bowler hats. Willing hands assisted, and when he reached the inside of the door he was gently lowered to the ground."

One Exception.

Mrs. Blanc said to her daughter one day:

"I am certainly easy on shoes. Look at this pair of elastic sides. I've worn them three years, and they're as good as new. I'm easy on clothes too. There's my tweed—just as fresh as the day I bought it seven years ago. And hats, gloves, stockings—in fact, I'm easy on everything."

"Except father, eh?" said the daughter.—Detroit Free Press.

Bombs In Warfare.

It is claimed that during the siege of Paris in 1590 the Parisians invented the first bombs ever used. Being short of ammunition with which to reply to the artillery of the Bearnais, they set to fabricating it as best they could. Old nails and bits of wire, copper and other metals were rolled up in leaden envelopes, and the cannons were loaded with these improvised projectiles.

Right and Left.

A writer says that probably in every language, as in English, "right" originally signified merely "straight," "straightforward" and thus "normal." "Left" at first was no opposite to "right," but meant "weak," "inefficient."

More Worry.

"Don't worry. Worry affects the ductless glands of the body, thereby causing actual physical ailments."

"Gosh, I'm sorry you told me that. It will make me worry."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

War.

War has always been the mint in which the world's history has been coined, and now every day or week or month has a new medal for us.—Oliver Wendell Holmes.

"Impossible is the precept, 'Know thyself,' till it be translated into this partially possible one, 'Know what thou canst work at'."—Carlyle.

A FIERY DOSE

By JOHN Y. LARNED

When Billy Olcott was invited to spend a week with his friend Tom Roberts he was delighted. He had met Tom's sister, Fanny, and had fallen before a pair of liquid brown eyes, a pair of coral lips and a pair of dimples, one in each cheek. Since that meeting he had thought of her by day and dreamed of her by night. He received the invitation on Monday for the following Friday. Then followed the four longest days of Billy's life. He counted the hours till at last the day of his departure arrived, and an hour before dinner he was under the same roof with the girl who had enthralled him. Now for the wooing.

Tom's brother, Jim, was ill in bed and did not make his appearance. On the second night of Billy's visit he went to bed at 11 o'clock and was soon asleep. He was awakened by hearing some one moving about the room.

Whoever it was tried to light a match. It sputtered a moment and went out, but not before Billy saw by its light the face of Fanny Roberts.

"There," she grumbled, "the last match gone, and I don't know where to find another! However, I know exactly where I left your medicine—in the closet on the third shelf from the bottom in the right hand corner. I don't believe in giving medicine in the dark, but I'll risk it this time."

Billy heard her groping and fumbling, and finally she came to his bedside, put a glass half full of some liquid to his lips and poured it down his throat. Then she left him with a good night.

Olcott was one of the most modest, sensitive young men in the world, and he considered young girls to be even more sensitive than himself. If Fanny knew that she had come into his room at midnight by mistake to give him a dose of medicine she would never get over the shock. This is the reason why he had not made her mistake known to her and why he had permitted her to pour down his throat a medicine he did not need.

He lay congratulating himself on the delicacy with which he had handled the matter and how, if she came to know of her mistake, it would set him up in her opinion. Girls were sometimes caught by trifles, and he wouldn't wonder if this bit of sacrifice would cause her to fall in love with him.

Then he felt something down in his stomach where the dose had gone that felt as if a red hot poker had been applied to his internals. He started. A dose in the dark had been given him, and might it not have been the wrong medicine? Another application of the hot poker. He sat up in bed, his hair stood on end and a cold sweat broke out all over him. Fanny had been looking for a bottle in the closet in her brother's room, not Billy's. She certainly had given him the wrong dose.

Great heavens! Could she have poisoned him?

A third application of the poker. This time it seemed to Billy that some one had gripped him with redhot pincers. He sprang out of bed, ran to Tom Roberts' door and hammered on it. Tom came out in his pajamas and asked what was the matter.

"Bring me an emetic as soon as you can!" cried Billy. "I'm afraid I've swallowed poison."

Tom ran to his sister's door, called her up and told her to go downstairs and bring up some mustard and warm water. She tried to find out who had been poisoned, but Tom told her to "go on and be quick about it." When she brought up the emetic she found Billy's door open, the room lighted and her brother bending over the groaning invalid.

Then for the first time she understood the cause of the trouble. She flew to the closet, opened the door, took out a vial and read the label. Then she put the vial back again and gave Billy a look, but said nothing.

"I took a dose of that," said Billy between groans. "Will it kill me?"

"No," replied Fanny.

"What is it?"

"A preparation of ginger and red pepper."

"Is that all?"

"Yes; it won't hurt you."

"That's past praying for. It's eating my vitals."

"Thank heaven it's no worse."

"It's bad enough as it is."

"How came you to take it?" queried Tom.

This was a poser. Billy took advantage of another internal firebrand to invent a story. When the paroxysm had passed he said:

"Just before I came up here I felt sick and went to a doctor. He said I had anthropomegaphone and gave me some medicine for it. I forgot to take it before going to bed; got up and hunted for it in the dark. I must have got into the wrong place."

By this time the emetic took effect, and Fanny took advantage of the fact to withdraw. While Billy was retching he thought he heard a te-hee in the next room.

"Confound that girl!" he said mentally—he was doing something else physically—"catch me trying to shield her again. Next time she tries to give me a dose I'll turn it down her own throat."

But the next morning he felt better and was doing a lot of spooning—not with medicine either.

Dictionary Readers.

That the natives of Nigeria are capable of advanced forms of education is apparently proved by this little incident told by Constance Larymore in "A Resident's Wife in Nigeria:"

"My husband told me that in the course of the patrol they passed through a valley where the inhabitants of the rocks and hills above apparently made their homes in holes and caves. One member of the party idly asked what was the scientific name for cave dwellers, the word having slipped his memory for the moment. No one appeared to be able to supply the word. But then the native interpreter, plodding along behind, came up, saying: 'Pardon me, sir. Don't you mean troglodytes?'

"The Englishman, amazed, asked where he had ever heard such a word, and 'George' replied placidly, 'I was reading a dictionary one day and saw it.'

"I cannot imagine myself reading a German or Italian dictionary for pleasure and storing in my mind for future use conversationally a specially unusual scientific term. I only wish I could."

Spartans Kept In Trim.

The ancient Spartans paid as much attention to the rearing of men as cattle dealers in this country and England in modern times do to the breeding of cattle. They took charge of firmness and looseness of men's flesh, and regulated the degree of fatness to which it was lawful, in a free state, for any citizen to extend his body.

Those who dared to grow too fat or too soft for military exercise and the service of Sparta were soundly whipped.

In one particular instance, that of Nauclis, the son of Polytus, the offender was brought before the Ephori and a meeting of the whole people of Sparta, at which his unlawful fatness was publicly exposed, and he was threatened with perpetual banishment if he did not bring his body within the regular Spartan compass and give up his culpable mode of living, which was declared to be more worthy of an Ionian than a son of Lacedaemon.—Philadelphia Inquirer.

A Napoleonic Famine Scare.

Britain was on the verge of a bread famine during the Napoleonic wars, and in 1800 a law was enacted prohibiting the sale of bread till it had been out of the oven at least twenty-four hours. "Food was so scarce and dear," writes F. W. Hackwood, "that a portion of the population refused to starve in silence, and rioting broke out in many parts of England. * * * A royal grant of £500 was made to one Thomas Toden to enable him to prosecute a discovery made by him of a 'paste' as a substitute for wheat flour. * * * The unfortunate seamen fighting Great Britain's battle on the high seas had to subsist on biscuits so badly made that when the weevils were knocked out there often remained nothing but empty shells." A plentiful harvest the following year saved the situation.—London Standard.

"Decimation."

A popular error which recurs with unvarying regularity whenever military engagements are reported is the use of the word "decimated" to imply a crushing defeat or something approaching annihilation. Yet, as a moment's consideration of the real meaning of the word suffices to show, the word is so used quite erroneously. "Decimation" means the destruction of one-tenth part of the force involved, and the loss of one in ten, though sufficiently serious, certainly does not mean anything like that wholesale destruction usually meant when "decimation" is talked of. Losses of one in three or one in four have been sustained by forces which still maintained their cohesion and discipline.—Westminster Gazette.

How Dr. Holmes Felt.

Dr. Oliver W. Holmes was small in stature. Upon one occasion he was present at a meeting which happened to be attended by a number of very large men, thus making his diminutive size rather conspicuous in contrast. One of these men—doubtless wishing to make him feel at ease—came up to him and said:

"Well, Dr. Holmes, I should think you would feel rather small among all these fellows."

"I do," replied the doctor; "I feel like a 3 cent piece among a lot of pennies."

Suicides In China.

The Chinese look upon all suicides with honor except when the suicide is from trouble caused by gambling. Frequently if a Chinaman insults another the quarrel is followed by the suicide of the insulted man, who thinks he has cast ignominy on his aggressor by taking his own life.

Good Idea.

Little Margie had watched a man tune the piano and was told it was for the purpose of improving the sound. One day when her infant brother was crying she said, "Mamma, can't I telephone for the baby tuner?"—Chicago News.

Passing Judgment.

Producer—The comedians seemed nervous. What they needed was life. Critic—You're too severe! Twenty years would be enough.—Judge.

The Bible.

The Bible has been so called only for the last 700 years. It was formerly called "The Books" or the "Divine Library."

Frugality, when all is spent, comes too late.—Seneca.