

For The Term of His Natural Life

By MARCUS CLARKE

CHAPTER XIV.—(Continued.)

"Turn my face to it once more!" he whispered; and as they raised him, he inclined his ear to listen. "It's calm enough here, God bless it," he said; "but I can hear the waves a-breaking hard upon the bar!"

As Frere relieved Mrs. Vickers from the weight of the corpse, Sylvia ran to her mother. "Oh, mamma, mamma!" she cried, "why did God let him die when we wanted him so much?"

Before it grew dark, Frere made shift to carry the body to the shelter of some rocks at a little distance, and, spreading the jacket over the face, he piled stones upon it to keep it steady. The march of events had been so rapid that he scarcely realized that since the previous evening two of the five human creatures left in this wilderness had escaped from it. As he did realize it, he began to wonder whose turn it would be next.

The following day passed gloomily. It was hot and sultry, and a dull haze hung over the mountains. Frere spent the morning in scooping a grave in the sand, in which to inter poor Bates. Practically awake to his own necessities, he removed such portions of clothing from the body as would be useful to him, but hid them under a stone, not liking to let Mrs. Vickers see what he had done. Having completed the grave by mid-day, he placed the corpse therein, and rolled as many stones as possible to the sides of the mound. In the afternoon he cast the fishing line from the point of a rock he had marked the day before, but caught nothing. Passing by the grave, on his return, he noticed that Mrs. Vickers had placed at the head of it a rude cross, formed by tying two pieces of stick together. After supper—the usual salt meat and damper—he tried to talk to Sylvia. "Why won't you be friends with me, missy?" he asked.

"I don't like you," said Sylvia. "You frighten me. You are not kind. I don't mean that you do cruel things, but you are—Oh, I wish papa was here!"

"Wishing won't bring him," says Frere.

"There! That's what I mean! Is that kind? 'Wishing won't bring him! Oh, if it only would!'"

"I didn't mean it unkindly," says Frere. "What a strange child you are!"

"There are persons," says Sylvia, "who have no affinity for each other. I read about it in a book papa had, and I suppose that's what it is. I have no affinity for you. I can't help it, can I?"

"Rubbish," Frere returned. "Come here, and I'll tell you a story."

Mrs. Vickers had gone back to her cave, and the two were alone by the fire, near which stood the kettle and the newly made damper. The child, with some show of hesitation, came to him and he caught and placed her on his knee. The moon had not yet risen, and the shadows cast by the flickering fire seemed weird and monstrous. The wicked wish to frighten this helpless creature came to Maurice Frere.

"There was once," said he, "a castle in an old wood, and in this castle there lived an ogre, with great ogre eyes."

"You silly man!" said Sylvia, struggling to be free. "You are trying to frighten me."

"And this ogre lived on the bones of little girls. One day a little girl was traveling the wood, and she heard the ogre coming. 'Haw! haw! Haw! haw!'"

"Mr. Frere, let me down!"

"She was terribly frightened, and she ran, and ran, and ran, until all of a sudden she saw—"

A piercing scream burst from his companion. "Oh! oh! What's that?" she cried, and clung to her persecutor.

On the other side of the fire stood the figure of a man. He staggered forward, and then, falling on his knees, stretched out his hands, and hoarsely articulated one word—"Food!" It was Rufus Dawes.

The sound of a human voice broke the spell of terror that was on the child, and as the glow from the fire fell upon the tattered yellow garments, she guessed at once the whole story. Not so Maurice Frere. He saw before him a new danger, a new mouth to share the scanty provision, and snatching a brand from the fire, he kept the convict at bay. But Rufus Dawes, glaring round with wolfish eyes, caught sight of the damper resting against the iron kettle, and made a clutch at it. Frere dashed the brand in his face. "Stand back!" he cried. "We have no food to spare!"

The convict uttered a savage cry, and, raising the iron gad, plunged forward desperately to attack his new enemy; but, quick as thought, the child glided past Frere, and snatching the loaf, placed it in the hands of the starving man, with, "Here, poor prisoner, eat!" and then turning to Frere, she cast upon him a glance so full of horror, indignation and surprise that the man blushed and threw down the brand.

As for Rufus Dawes, the sudden apparition of the golden-haired girl seemed to have transformed him. Allowing the loaf to slip through his fingers, he gazed, with haggard eyes, at the retreating figure of the child, and as it vanished into the darkness outside the circle of the firelight, the unhappy man sank his face upon his blackened, horny hands, and burst into tears.

CHAPTER XV.

The coarse tones of Maurice Frere roused him. "What do you want?" he asked.

Rufus Dawes, raising his head, contemplated the figure before him, and recognized it. "Is it you?" he said, slowly.

"What do you mean? Do you know me?" asked Frere, drawing back. But the convict did not reply. His momentary emotion passed away, the pangs of hunger returned, and greedily seizing upon the piece of damper, he began to eat in silence.

"Do you hear, man?" repeated Frere, at length. "What are you?"

"An escaped prisoner. You can give me up in the morning. I've done my best, and I'm beat."

This sentence struck Frere with dismay. The man did not know that the settlement had been abandoned!

"I cannot give you up. There is no one but myself and a woman and child on the settlement." Rufus Dawes, pausing in his eating, stared at him in amazement. "The prisoners have gone away in the schooner. If you choose to remain free, you can do so as far as I am concerned. I am as helpless as you are."

"But how do you come here?" Frere laughed bitterly. To give explanations to convicts was foreign to his experience, and he did not relish the task. In this case, however, there was no help for it. "The prisoners mutilated and seized the brig."

A terrible light broke upon Rufus Dawes, and he began to understand how he had again missed his chance. "Who took her?"

"That double-dyed villain, John Rex," says Frere, giving vent to his passion.

Rufus Dawes burst into a laugh so discordant that it made the other shudder. "We'll starve together, Maurice Frere," said he; "for while you've a crust, I'll share it. If I don't get liberty, at least I'll have revenge!"

The sinister aspect of this famished savage sitting with his chin on his ragged knees, rocking himself to and fro in the light of the fire, gave Mr. Maurice Frere a new sensation. He felt as if he might have felt that African hunter who, returning to his campfire, found a lion there. "Wretch!" said he, shrinking from him, "why should you wish to be revenged on me?"

The convict turned upon him with a snarl. "Take care what you say! I'll have no hard words. Wretch! If I hate you and myself and the world, who made me hate it? I was born free—as free as you are. Why should I be sent to herd with beasts, and condemned to this slavery, worse than death? Tell me that, Maurice Frere—tell me that!"

"I didn't make the laws," says Frere. "Why do you attack me?"

"Because you are what I was. You are free. You can do as you please. You can love, you can work, you can think. I can only hate!" He paused as if astonished at himself, and then continued, with a low laugh: "Fine words for a convict, eh? But never mind, it's all right, Mr. Frere; we're equal now, and I shan't die an hour sooner than you, though you are a free man."

Frere began to think that he was dealing with another madman. "Die! There's no need to talk of dying," he said, as soothingly as it was possible for him to say it. "Time enough for that by and by."

"There spoke the free man. We convicts have an advantage over you gentlemen. You are afraid of death; we pray for it. It is the best thing that can happen to us—Die! They were going to hang me once. I wish they had."

There was such a depth of agony in this terrible utterance that Maurice Frere was appalled at it. "There, go and sleep, my man," he said. "You are knocked up. We'll talk in the morning."

"Hold on a bit!" cries Rufus Dawes, with a coarseness of manner altogether foreign to that he had just assumed. "Who's with ye?"

"The wife and daughter of the commandant," replied Frere, half afraid to refuse an answer to a question so fiercely put.

"Poor souls!" said the convict, "I pity them." And then he stretched himself, like a dog, before the blaze and went to sleep instantly. When morning dawned Frere awoke him.

Rufus Dawes glanced around him stupidly, and then remembering what had happened, with a great effort he staggered to his feet. "I thought they'd got me," he said; "but it's the other way. I see. Come, let's have breakfast, Mr. Frere. I'm hungry."

"You must wait," said Frere. "Do you think there is no one here but yourself?"

The convict, stretching out his wasted arms, looked down upon them with the uncertain gaze of a drunken man. "I am weak now," he said. "You have the best of me; and then he sunk suddenly down upon the ground, exhausted. "Give me drink!" he moaned, feebly motioning with his hand.

Frere got him water in the pannikin, and having drunk it, he smiled, and lay down to sleep again. Mrs. Vickers and Sylvia coming out while he still slept, recognized him as the desperado of the settlement.

"He was the most desperate man we had," said Mrs. Vickers, identifying herself with her husband. "Oh, what shall we do?"

"He won't do much harm," returned Frere, looking down at the notorious ruffian with curiosity. "He's as near dead as can be."

Sylvia looked up at him with her clear child's glance. "We mustn't let him die," said she. "That would be murder."

"No, no," returned Frere, hastily; "no one wants him to die. But what can we do?"

"I'll nurse him!" cried Sylvia. Frere broke into one of his coarse laughs, the first one that he had indulged in since the mutiny. "You nurse him! That's a good one! The poor little child, weak and excitable, felt the contempt in the tone, and burst into a passion of sobbing. "Why do you insult me, you wicked man? The poor fellow's ill, and he'll—he'll die, like Mr. Bates. Oh, mamma, mamma, let's go away by ourselves."

Frere walked away. He went into the little wood under the cliff and sat down. He was full of strange thoughts, which he could not express, and which he had never owned before. The dislike the child bore to him made him miserable, and yet he took delight in tormenting her. He was conscious that he had acted the part of a coward the night before in endeavoring to frighten her, and that the detestation she bore him was well earned; but he had fully determined to stake his life in her defense, should the savage who had thus come upon them out of the desert attempt violence, and he was unreasonably angry at the pity she had shown. When he got back he found Dawes stretched upon the

brush wood, with Sylvia sitting near him.

"He is better," said Mrs. Vickers, disdaining to refer to the scene of the morning. "Sit down and have something to eat, Mr. Frere."

"Are you better?" asked Frere, abruptly.

To his surprise, the convict answered quite civilly, "I shall be strong again in a day or two, and then I can help you, sir."

Within a week from the night on which he had seen the smoke of Frere's fire, the convict had recovered his strength, and had become an important personage. He was skilled in all the mysteries of the prison sheds. He knew how to sustain life on as little food as possible. He could fell trees without an ax, bake bread without an oven, build a weather-proof hut without bricks or mortar. From the patient he became the adviser; and from the adviser, the commander.

As the time wore on, and the scanty stock of provisions decreased, he found that his authority grew more and more powerful. Did a question arise as to the qualities of a strange plant, it was Rufus Dawes who could pronounce upon it. Were fish to be caught, it was Rufus Dawes who caught them. Did Mrs. Vickers complain of the instability of her brush wood hut, it was Rufus Dawes who worked a wicker shield, and, plastering it with clay, produced a wall that defied the keenest wind. He made cups out of pine knots, and plates out of bark strips. He worked harder than any three men. Nothing daunted him, nothing discouraged him. When Mrs. Vickers fell sick, from anxiety, and inappetent food, it was Rufus Dawes who gathered fresh leaves for her couch, who cheered her by hopeful words, who voluntarily gave up half his own allowance of meat that she might grow the stronger on it. The poor woman and her child called him "Mr. Dawes."

But the days stole on, and no vessel appeared. Each day they eagerly scanned the watery horizon; each day they longed to behold the bowsprit of the returning Ladybird glide past the jutting rock that shut out the view of the harbor, but in vain. Mrs. Vickers' illness increased, and the stock of provisions began to run short. Dawes talked of putting himself and Frere on half allowance. It was evident that, unless succor came in a few days, they must starve.

One day Sylvia was sitting in the sun reading the "English History," which, by the accident of fright, she had brought with her on the night of the mutiny. "Mr. Frere," said she, suddenly, "what is an alchemist?"

"A man who makes gold," was Frere's not very accurate definition.

"Did the ancient Britons know it?"

"No; not so old as that."

Sylvia suddenly gave a little scream. The remembrance of the evening when she read about the ancient Britons to poor Bates came vividly into her mind, and though she had since re-read the passage that had then attracted her attention a hundred times, it had never before presented itself to her in its full significance. Hurriedly turning the well-thumbed leaves, she read aloud the passage which had provoked remark:

"The ancient Britons were little better than barbarians. They painted their bodies with wood, and, seated in their light coracles of skin stretched upon slender wooden frames, must have presented a wild and savage appearance."

"A coracle! That's a boat! Can't we make a coracle, Mr. Dawes?"

The convict knitted his brows gloomily.

"Come, Dawes!" cried Frere, forgetting his enmity for an instant, in the flash of new hope, "can't you suggest something?"

Rufus Dawes, thus appealed to as the acknowledged head of the little society, felt a pleasant thrill of self-satisfaction. "I don't know," he said; "I must think of it. It looks easy, and yet—"

He paused as something in the water caught his eye. It was a mass of bladders seaweed that the returning tide was wafting slowly to the shore. This object, which would have passed unnoticed at any other time, suggested to Rufus Dawes a new idea. "Yes," he added, slowly, with a change of tone, "it may be done, I think I see my way. How far do you think it is across the bay?"

"About four miles,"

The convict sighed. "Too far to swim now, though I might have done it once. But this sort of life weakens a man. It must be done, after all."

"What are you going to do?" asked Frere.

"To kill the goat."

(To be continued.)

Wanted It Reversed.

"This cheese is full of holes," complained the prospective purchaser.

"Yes, sir," said the proprietor.

"That's right."

"Haven't you got one with the holes full of cheese?"—Louisville Courier-Journal.

Horrid Man.

Mrs. Newed (during the first spat)—Some of my friends say that you only married me for my money.

Newed—Well, please don't contradict them, my dear. I don't want them to think I'm a fool.—Chicago News.

Professional Rivalry.

First Reporter—"What the deuce are you got up in a dress suit for?"

Second Ditto—"I am going to a big banquet."

"So? Where did you learn to wait at table?"—Tales.

Signs of Genius.

"He must have the germ of great genius in his make-up."

"Why so?"

"Can't catch a slow train, nor sit still enough to have his hair cut."—Atlanta Constitution.

From Bad to Worse.

She—I wish I could induce you to cease your attentions to me.

He—You can.

She—How, pray?

He—By marrying me.

Prize Winner.

The Pessimist—"Don't you believe that marriage is a lottery?"

The Optimist—"I certainly do. I won a grand prize in one once!—Yonkers Statesman."



Promising Late Strawberry.

The Fremont Williams strawberry is one of the new late sorts from which much is expected. When it is introduced the name will doubtless be shortened, in accordance with the general plan of using but one name for a variety when possible. The variety has been under test throughout the country for two years, and has shown every indication of being all that was claimed for it by the originator. Its one bad feature, and this will be mainly in the opinion of the consumer, is its rather mis-shapen form. It is full as late as the Gandy, generally considered the best late sort, of much better quality and is large and firm. In color it is an attractive, bright crimson, and this feature ought to offset, to some extent, the bad shape. If it does as well under general culture as it has under tests, it will be a valuable acquisition. It has not yet, so far as the knowledge of the writer goes, been introduced, but

For a bed where a mass of yellow is desired, golden California poppy is useful. It must be sown where it is to bloom, as it does not transplant well. Its flowers are not adapted for cutting. For side and back fences clumps of single and double hollyhocks in mass are good. A flower which grows nearly as high as the hollyhock is radbeckia golden glow, which produces a wealth of golden flowers good for cutting. It is a good plan to devote the space in front of one fence to dahlias and cosmos, for these are sure to please the most fastidious flower lovers. The cactus and decorative forms of the dahlia are becoming more and more popular every year. The tubers may be stored in the cellar in winter like potatoes. If there happens to be a sunny exposure in the garden, plant a few pompon chrysanthemums, which are hardy. They will give an effective display of tiny flowers in the autumn. The Drummond pinks are exceedingly pretty, slow growing annuals, exceedingly showy in mass. In warm and exposed situations they last but few weeks in bloom.

Coops for Small Chickens.

A farmer's wife writes: The coop I use, shown in sketch, is much better if made of pine. It is made in three separate pieces, the roof and bottom being removable. The roof projects over the coop on all sides, but much farther in front and back. This is to keep rain from beating in. The roof boards are nailed to two narrow poles, which are just the length of the inside of the coop, and are placed far enough from the front and the back to fit inside the coop. The cracks are battened.

The floor, *d*, is made to slip in at

DETAILS OF A CHICKEN COOP.

the back like a drawer. This coop is very easily sunned and cleaned on account of the removable floor and roof. The 8-inch board at the top in front has holes bored in for ventilation. A wooden button on top board and a 2-inch strip at the bottom holds on the frame of wire screen which is used stormy days when the chicks are too young to run out, and on warm nights. At other times a slatted wooden front, *b*, is used.

"I make this coop in two sizes—a single coop 20 inches square, 24 inches high in front and 16 inches in the back, and a double coop is 30 inches long and 24 inches wide. A removable lath partition, *c*, divides it.

Don't Forget the Lettuce.

Lettuce plants that have been wintered over in the cold frame should be planted at the earliest possible date in spring, and a sowing of the seed should be made at about the same time. Many kinds of vegetables will yield good returns on land but moderately enriched, but lettuce can only be grown to perfection in very rich and heavily manured ground. Plant in rows twelve or fifteen inches apart; plants should be set eight inches apart in the row, and the seed sown in drill and when large enough thinned out to about eight or ten inches. Give clean and thorough cultivation. Varieties of lettuce are exceedingly numerous, and the selection of a few good kinds is not without difficulty.

The New Flax Industry.

An industry new at least to Minnesota has been introduced during quite recent years. It relates to the manufacture of flax straw into binding twine. Professor Shaw affirms in Orange Judd Farmer that one of the finest features of the new industry is that it will tend very much to lessen waste on many farms of the west. Nowhere probably in all the United States has the sin of waste prevailed to such an extent as in the western and north-western states. Flax straw was almost a complete waste. The greater number of acres devoted to the growth of flax the greater was the waste.

Hampshires and the Bacon Type.

At the last international I was much amused at the discussion in various quarters as to whether the Hampshire swine are of the bacon or lard type. The individual who calls Hampshire swine bacon animals has not yet learned the A B C of what the term bacon means, remarks Professor T. W. Shaw in American Agriculturist.

Cleaning the Coops.

Scalding with hot, strong soapsuds will cleanse the filthiest coop, and if when thoroughly dry it is whitewashed with a wash containing a good amount of carbolic acid the lice and mites will be dead or gone for the time being, and you will then have the work under control and by constant care can keep free of the pests.

Too Free Use of Lime.

There is certainly such a thing as using lime too freely both in the matter of quantity and of frequency. As a rule sour soils need lime, but it does not follow that all acidity of the soil is due to lack of lime, for, as is well known, there are certain minerals in the soil in some locations which will, apparently, make it sour, and all the lime in the world will not overcome the effect. Then, too, certain plants contain more or less lime, many of them sufficient for their own use—clover is one of these, but oftentimes more lime is required in the soil not only to correct any acidity which may exist, but to set free some element in the soil that would otherwise remain inactive. We thus see that lime has some other function besides correcting soil acidity.

By far the best way to use lime is to experiment with the crop, knowing before seed is sown something about what it requires in the way of lime for its best development, then testing different quantities of lime on different plots of ground, but always with the same crop.

Fertilizing an Orchard.

Nothing is better for fertilizing an orchard than raw bone meal and potash, says an expert orchardist. The bone will have nitrogen enough for the orchard in soil, and the phosphoric acid will become soluble by degrees as the trees need it. The principal need of your sandy soil in apples is potash, for not only is such a soil usually deficient in potash, but apples take a large amount from the soil. We would apply 400 pounds per acre, mixed 350 pounds of the bone meal and fifty pounds of muriate of potash. Then mow the orchard and use the cut grass as a mulch for the trees. In short, keep the orchard for apples alone, and devote all that grows on the land to the trees.

Plow Run by Trolley Wires.

Electric plows are used with considerable success in Italy, two power cars being stationed at each side of the field with wire cables between. The current is obtained from trolley lines. The plow is pulled by the cables from one side of the field to the other, the current being cut off when it reaches the end of the furrow. The plow is double ended and can be run either way with ease. One man manages the plow and another each power car. The three men and the machines plow from seven to fifteen acres per day.

Uncle Billy's Shade.

He Used It as a Test of Human Nature.

"I should think, Uncle Billy, that that crooked window-shade would drive you wild," Evelyn said, stopping a moment at the door.

"I don't admire it myself," Uncle Billy remarked, cheerfully, "but you see the hem is torn, and notwithstanding my best efforts, I can't get it to be any more than empty air. Evelyn had vanished. "She probably," Uncle Billy mused, "has seventeen dearest friends to see this afternoon."

Five minutes later his sister appeared. "That shade is a disgrace, Billy," she said. "Why don't you get a new one?"

"Couldn't match it, and it seemed a pity to throw away three good shades just because one of them needed a few stitches."

"I suppose it would be extravagant," his sister acknowledged. "Well, you'll bring up the step-ladder some morning I'll try to get it fixed. I came in to ask you—"

In the course of the afternoon Uncle Billy had two other callers, Cousin Caroline, who was visiting the family, and said that if it were her house that shade would be mended at once, and Trude, who said nothing about it because she did not notice it.

A week went by, and the crooked shade was still crooked, and Evelyn sympathized, and her mother said that she must get time to mend it, and Cousin Caroline smiled significantly, and Trude had not yet discovered it.

"There remains," Uncle Billy mused, "only Polly."

The next day Polly came home. That first evening she spent chiefly in hanging the family and talking, but early the following morning she appeared at her uncle's door.

"Uncle Billy," she asked, "do you like crooked shades?"

"Not particularly," Uncle Billy replied.

Polly flashed across to the window. "Torn hem," she commented; then to her uncle, "Suppose you take it down?"

Uncle Billy, after a stupefied moment, meekly climbed a chair and took it down. Polly dashed away with it, and Uncle Billy heard the whirr of the sewing-machine; in two minutes she was back. "There you are!" she announced, cheerfully.

Uncle Billy looked at her. "Now why did you do it that way?" he asked, plaintively.

"What way?" Polly echoed. "Why, make me take it down and put it up. This shade has been waiting a week for somebody to fix it. I had planned a reward for the one who should mend it, but of course I expected her to do the whole business. Now as far as I can make out, I'll have to give the reward to myself, for on fault-finding girl could expect anything for a mere two minutes' work."

A queer look came into Polly's eyes. "And he expected me to go and get the step-ladder, while he, an able-bodied man, sat and laid traps for poor human nature. Thank you, Uncle Billy!" and with a saucy courtesy she was gone.

"The experiment," Uncle Billy chuckled to the shade, "was more successful than I foresaw."—Youth's Companion.

Not a Stenographer.

"I understand that you have a new typewriter."

"Yes."

"Did you succeed in getting a bright one?"

"Yes, it's nickel-plated."—Houston Post.

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