

PERKINS WILLING TO RETURN TO HOUSE

He Announces That He Is Favorably Considering Running for Legislature in Douglas County.

ROSEBURG, Or., Jan. 21.—J. W. Perkins, the local coal mine operator, admits that he is "seriously considering" becoming a candidate for representative from Douglas county. He is a republican, favors the assembly plan and served in the legislature as a representative from Jackson county in 1907-8, when he was engaged in the fruit growing business near Medford.

HOUSE VOTES TO DESTROY 19,000 ROOSEVELT MESSAGES

WASHINGTON, Jan. 21. — The house had fun recently destroying by resolution about 1000 tons of useless documents now stored in the Capitol. "I want to congratulate the republicans," said Representative Fitzgerald of New York, "and rejoice in their courage to dispose of the messages of one whose presence in Africa seems to be so pleasing, and whose return is so greatly feared. I find that among the useless documents are 6442 copies of Roosevelt's messages to the Second session of the Sixtieth congress; 3496 of his messages to the first session of the Sixtieth congress; 4409 of the same papers to the Fifty-ninth congress; 2938 to the Fifty-eighth, and 567 to the Fifty-seventh congress.

FRUIT EXPERT BUYS PLACE BOULEVARD NEAR ASHLAND

ASHLAND, Jan. 21.—O. H. Barnhill, a fruit expert and writer, and formerly connected with farmers' institute work both in Montana and Iowa, who came to Ashland a short time ago, accompanied by his mother, brother and sister, has purchased the Bowersox orchard tract on the boulevard just south of the city, comprising 18 acres, a portion of which is set to new orchard, peaches, cherries, etc. Mr. Barnhill expects to improve the property systematically and scientifically and make a model orchard home of the place.

RUMOR HAS IT THAT FREEMAN HAS SOLD

CENTRAL POINT, Jan. 21.—A report was current on the streets yesterday that W. J. Freeman had bought the Mrs. M. E. Magruder farm of 33 acres, lying between the east line of the town corporation limits and Bear creek, the consideration being \$300 an acre, or \$10,000. When asked over the phone to verify the rumor, Mr. Freeman declined to give any information regarding the deal, but admitted that it was under way.

ELKS HAVE GOOD TIME; LADIES' NIGHT

Last night was "ladies' night" at the Elks' lodge. Over 60 ladies, daughters, wives and invited guests of the members of the order were present. A banquet was served and an especially enjoyable program of vocal and instrumental music was presented, after which the floor was cleared and dancing was indulged in until a late hour.

Found Both Parents Dead.

TULSA, Okla., Jan. 21.—Planning to surprise his parents, D. A. Smith, of Everett, Wash., arrived here today only to learn that the couple had been accidentally asphyxiated in their home here two months ago.

THE PERFUME OF THE LADY IN BLACK

By GASTON LEROUX. Author of "The Mystery of the Yellow Room."

Copyright, 1909, by Hrestan's. CHAPTER XVI. A Living Tomb and a Baffling Murder.

My thoughts turned to Roulettable. What was he doing now? Why had he gone away? As I lay there puzzling my brain over the outcome of the affair I heard some one knocking at my door. It was Pere Bernier, who brought me a brief note from my friend which had been handed to Pere Jacques by a little lad from the village. Roulettable wrote: "I shall return early in the morning. Get up as soon as this reaches you and be good enough to go fishing for my breakfast and catch some of the fine trout which are so plentiful among the rocks near the Point of Garibaldi. Do not lose an instant. Thanks and remembrances. ROULETTABLE.

This communication gave me more food for thought, for I knew by experience that whenever Roulettable seemed most occupied with trivial matters his activity was really most thoroughly engaged with important subjects. I dressed myself in haste, provided myself with some old tackle which was furnished me by Bernier and set out to obey the request of my young friend. As I went out of the north gate, having encountered nobody at that early hour of the morning (it was about 7 o'clock), I was joined by Mme. Edith, to whom I showed what Roulettable had written. The young woman was greatly dejected over the unexplained absence of her uncle, remarked that the letter was "so queer that it made her nervous," and she informed me that she intended to follow me to the trout streams.

We started to fish for Roulettable's trout. Mrs. Rance and I both removed our shoes and stockings, but I concerned myself more about the dainty bare feet of my pretty hostess than about my own. She clambered into the pool and crept among the rocks with a grace which enchanted me more than I dared express. Suddenly we both desisted from our task and pricked up our ears at the same moment. We heard cries from the shore where the grottoes are. We distinguished a little group, the persons in which were making gestures of appeal. We hastily rushed to the beach, and in a few seconds we learned that, attracted by means, two fishermen had just discovered in a cave in the grotto of Romeo and Juliet an unfortunate human being who had fallen into the chasm and who must have been there helpless for several hours.

The quick conjecture which rushed into both our minds at once proved to be the right one. It was Old Bob who had been fished out of the cave. When he had been drawn up on the beach in the full light of day he certainly presented a pitiable spectacle. His beautiful black coat was torn and covered with mud, and his white shirt was as black as tar. Mme. Edith burst into tears and nearly went into hysterics when she found that the old man had a broken collar bone and a sprained foot. And he was so pale that he looked as if he were going to die on the spot.

Happily the case was far less serious than it at first appeared. Ten minutes later he was, according to his own orders, stretched out on his bed in his room in the square tower. But could any one believe that he absolutely refused to be undressed, even so far as to have his coat removed, before the arrival of the doctors? Mme. Edith, more and more nervous, installed herself as his nurse, but when the physicians came Old Bob ordered his niece not only to leave his room, but to go out of the square tower altogether. And he insisted that the door should be locked after her.

This last precaution was a great surprise to us all. We were assembled in the Court of the Bold, M. and Mme. Darzac, Arthur Rance and myself, as well as Pere Bernier, who hunted my footsteps, awaiting the news. When Mme. Edith quitted the tower after the arrival of the medical men she came to us and said: "Let us hope that his injuries won't be serious. Old Bob is solid as a rock. What did I tell you about him? I have made him confess, the old sinner! He was trying to steal Prince Gallitich's skull, which he believed to be more ancient than his own—just the jealousy of one servant toward another. We shall all laugh at him when he is cured."

At that moment the door of the square tower opened, and Walter, Old Bob's faithful servant, appeared. His face was pale, and he seemed very nervous. "Oh, Mme. Edith," he cried out, "he is covered with blood! He doesn't want anything to be said about it, but he must be saved." Edith had already rushed into the square tower. As to us, we dared not utter a word. Soon the young woman returned.

He started violently. I shrugged my shoulders, for I believed that he was counterfeiting surprise, and I went on: "Oh, you knew very well what kind of fish I should find when you sent your message!" "You certainly must be unaware of the purport of your words, my dear Salmeir, or else you would have spared me the trouble of protesting against such an accusation." "What accusation?" I cried. "That of having left Old Bob in the grotto of Romeo and Juliet, knowing that he might be dying there."

"Oh, nonsense!" I cried. "Old Bob is far from dying. He has a sprained foot and a broken collar bone, and his story of his misfortune is perfectly plain and straightforward. He declares that he was trying to steal Prince Gallitich's skull." "What a funny idea!" exclaimed Roulettable. "Do you believe that story? And—and that is all? No other injuries?" "Yes," I replied. "There is another injury, but the doctors declare that it is not at all serious. He has a wound in the breast."

"And how was this wound made?" "We do not know. None of us has seen it. He would not even permit his coat to be taken off in our presence."

As soon as we came to the chateau we encountered Mme. Edith, who appeared to have been watching for us. "My uncle won't have me near him," she said, regarding Roulettable with an air of anxiety different from anything I had ever noticed in her before. "It's incomprehensible!" "Ah, madame," he replied, "I assure you that nothing in the world is incomprehensible when one is willing to take a little trouble to understand it." And he offered her his congratulations upon having had her uncle restored to her at the moment when she was ready to despair of ever seeing him again.

Here we were joined by Prince Gallitich. He had come to ask for news of his old friend Bob, of whose misfortune he had learned. Mme. Edith reassured him as to her uncle's condition and entreated the prince to pardon her relative for his too excessive devotion to the "oldest skulls in the history of humanity." The prince smiled graciously and with the utmost kindness when he was told that Old Bob had been attempting to steal his skull.

The prince asked for the details. He seemed very curious about the affair, and Mme. Edith told how her uncle had acknowledged to her that he had quitted the Fort of Hercules by way of the air shaft which communicated with the sea. As soon as she said this I recalled the experience of Roulettable with the flash of water and the close iron bars, and the falsehoods which Old Bob had uttered assumed gigantic proportions in my mind, and I was sure that the rest of the party must hold the same opinion as myself. Mme. Edith told us that Tullio had been waiting with his boat at the opening of the gallery abutting on the shaft to row the old servant to the bank in front of the grotto of Romeo and Juliet.

"Why so many twists and turnings when it was so simple to get out by the gate?" I could not restrain myself from exclaiming. "Mme. Edith looked at me reproachfully, and I regretted having even seemed to have taken part against her in any way. "And this is stranger yet," said the prince, "day before yesterday the 'hangman of the sea' came to bid me adieu, saying that he was going to leave the country, and I am sure that he took the train for Venice, his native city, at 5 o'clock in the afternoon. How then could he have conveyed your uncle in his boat late that night?" In the first place, he was not in this part of the world; in the second, he had sold his boat. He told me so, adding that he would never return to this country."

"I looked at Mme. Edith. Beads of perspiration stood out on her forehead, and her face was as pale as death. Edith led the way toward the postern gate. The vault of this postern formed a black arch in the light, and at the extremity of this tunnel we perceived, facing us, Roulettable and Darzac, who were standing at the edge of the inner court like two white statues. Roulettable was holding in his hand Arthur Rance's ivory headed cane. Motivating with the cane, he showed Darzac something on the summit of the vault which we could not see, and then he pointed us out in the same way. We could not hear what he said. The two talked together for a few moments with their lips scarcely moving, like two accomplices in some dark secret. Mme. Edith paused, but Roulettable beckoned to her, repeating the signal with his cane.

We went on until we reached the vault, and the others watched us without making a movement to meet us. We had come up close to them by this time, and they bade us turn around with our backs toward the court so that we could see what they were looking at. There was on top of the arch a stone, now loose, which seemed in imminent danger of falling and crushing the heads of the passers-by. Roulettable asked Mme. Edith if she had any objections to its being pulled down until it could be replaced more solidly.

"A good idea," she answered. Roulettable handed the ivory headed cane to Darzac, asking him to perform the feat of dislodging the stone, which was part of a carved escutcheon, the shield of the Mortola. "You are taller than I," he went on, "see if you can reach it." Darzac seized the stick. He stretched upward and struck with great vigor at the object, which clattered to the ground.

Suddenly behind me I heard the cry of a man in his dying agony. We turned with one impulse, uttering an exclamation of horror. We all stood there, shivering, our eyes wide with horror. Who was dead? What expiring breath had emitted that terrible sound? Roulettable was the most terrified of us all. Mattouli, who was passing through the garden and who had also heard the cry, rushed up. He hurried behind him.

When we had passed the shade of the eucalyptus we found the cause. The cry had come, indeed, from a soul passing into the unknown. It was Bernier—Bernier, in whose throat sounded the death rattle, who was trying in vain to rise and who was at the last gasp of his life. It was Bernier from whose breast flowed a stream of blood and who, with one last fearful struggle, summoned strength enough to utter the two words "Frederic Larsan."

Then his head fell back, and he was dead. Larsan always, forever. Here yet again was his mark—a dead body and no one anywhere near who could have committed the murder by any possibility of human reason. We rushed into the square tower, the door of which still stood open. We entered in a body the bedroom of Old Bob, passing through the empty sitting room. The injured man was lying quietly on his bed within, and near him a woman was watching—Mere Bernier. Both were as calm and still as the day itself, but when the wife or the nurse condescended to see our faces she uttered a cry of affright, as though smitten by the knowledge of some calamity. She had heard nothing; she knew nothing. But she rushed into the air like a streak of lightning and went straight, as though impelled by some hidden force, directly to the place where the body was lying.

And now it was her groans that sounded on the air under the terrible sun of the Midi over the bleeding corpse. We tore the shirt from the dead man's breast and found a gaping wound just above the heart. We looked for the weapon everywhere without finding it. The man who had struck the blow had carried the knife away. Where was the man? Who was he? What we did not know Bernier had known before he died, and it was perhaps because of that knowledge that his life had been forfeited. "Frederic Larsan!" We repeated the last words of the dying man in fear and trembling.

Suddenly on the threshold of the postern we saw Prince Gallitich, a newspaper in his hand. He was reading as he came toward us. His air was jovial, and his face wore a smile. But Mme. Edith rushed up to him, snatched the paper from his hands, pointed to the corpse and cried out: "A man has been murdered! Send for the police!"

The prince turned away from the body, stating that he would send for the authorities. Roulettable was examining the iron bars and heavy lid which closed the shaft, but his manner was distrustful and discouraged. Turning once more to his hostess, he said in the same low voice: "And what will you tell the police when they get here?" "Everything!" Mrs. Rance fairly snapped out the word between her teeth, her eyes flashing fire. He seemed utterly exhausted and vanquished. M. Darzac wanted to search through the square tower, the Tower of the Bold, the new castle, all the dependencies of the fort from which no one could have made his escape and where, therefore, the assassin must still be concealed. The reporter shook his head drearily and said that it would be of no use.

Roulettable and I knew only too well that any search would be in vain. No, no! I had learned that there was no use in looking for Larsan with one's eyes. To see clearly it was better to close the eyes, as Roulettable was doing at this moment. And when he opened them he was another man. A new energy animated his features. He stood erect as though he had thrown off a weight. He clinched his fist and raised it toward the heavens.

He threw himself on the ground, creeping on his hands and knees, his nose to the earth, like a hound following the scent, going round the body of poor Bernier and around Mere Bernier, around the shaft, around each of us. He moved about like a pig nosing its nourishment out of the mire, and we all stood still, looking at him curiously and half in alarm. Suddenly he started to his feet, almost white with dust, and uttered a shout of triumph as though he had found Larsan himself in the gravel. What new victory did he feel that he had achieved over the mystery?

"It's all right, monsieur! Nothing is changed!" Attracted by the sound of voices, we looked around and saw Pere Jacques approaching, followed by two gendarmes. It was the brigadier of La Mortola, who, summoned by Prince Gallitich, had hurried to the scene of the crime. What did Roulettable mean by his "Nothing is changed" if not that despite the incidental murder of Bernier everything which we dreaded, which made us shudder and which we had no understanding of, continued just as before?

The gendarmes were busy examining the body and chattering over it in their incomprehensible jargon. The delegate would have power to begin the investigation, which would be continued when the examining magistrate had been notified. The delegate arrived. It was easily to be seen that he was enchanted, even though he had not had the time to finish his repast. A crime, actually a crime, and in the chateau of Hercules! He was fairly radiant. His eyes shone. The delegate examined the wound and said in very good English: "That was a magnificent stroke!"

"And now how did all this happen?" he asked encouragingly, smacking his lips as though in the anticipation of hearing a story of thrilling interest. "It is terrible," he added—"terrible! In the five years that I have been delegate we have never had a murder. Monsieur, the examining magistrate—here he checked himself, but we know well what he had been on the point of saying—"monsieur, the examining magistrate will be very much pleased." He wiped the perspiration from his forehead and repeated, "It is terrible!"

At the request of the delegate we all entered the square tower. We took our places in Old Bob's sitting room, where the inquest was to be held and where each of us in turn recounted what he had seen and heard. Mere Bernier was first questioned, but little or nothing could be gained from her testimony. She declared that she knew nothing about anything.

An exclamation from the delegate struck upon our ears. The farther the evidence of the witnesses progressed the greater became the amazement of the commissioner and the more and more inexplicable he found the crime. He was on the point of finding it impossible that it should have been committed at all when it came Mme. Edith's turn to be interrogated.

Her lips opened to answer the first question when Roulettable's voice was heard: "Look at the end of the shadow of the eucalyptus!" "What is it?" asked the delegate. "The weapon with which the crime was committed!"

Roulettable jumped into the court and picked up from the bloody stones a sharp, shining piece of flint. It was "the oldest dagger of the human race."

(To be continued.)

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