



CHAPTER XXIV.

One night in the attire of a longshoreman, Stuart was sauntering along South street when he observed a man in front of him, who he thought resembled the man he had met on the train.

The fellow entered a saloon, and Stuart followed him and heard him speak. He believed he recognized the voice, but he was not positive. The man wore a cap pulled down over his face, so that his eyebrows were concealed. But when the man left the saloon, as he presently did, he raised his cap, and Stuart made a recognition.

At last he had found the man who had brought an added weight of dreadful suspicion upon him, and whom he believed to be John Oakburn's murderer.

Stuart's heart leaped, and a wild, exultant feeling came upon him, while his nerves were tense with excitement.

At that instant the man turned and looked Stuart full in the face.

The latter saw a look of recognition in the fellow's eyes, and no doubt the other saw the same expression in Stuart's flashing orbs, for he wheeled about and started to run.

Stuart leaped after him, determined that the supposed murderer should not escape.

"Halt!" cried Stuart, and he strained every muscle in the attempt to overtake his man.

The next instant, when the chase had only well begun, Stuart received a cruel blow on the head, and he fell to his knees, but with a desperate effort, inspired by the thought that the man who might prove his innocence would escape, he staggered up again, half senseless, and saw Levi Kredge disappear around a neighboring corner. The man of whom he was in pursuit was no where to be seen. He had vanished mysteriously.

Stuart reeled back against the wall of the nearest building, dazed and stunned by the blow.

When he had sufficiently recovered, Stuart made his way to a neighboring corner, suffering from vertigo and a dull, heavy pain in his head.

The first passing car halted at a signal from Stuart, and, boarding it, he was carried rapidly out of the neighborhood.

The incident which we have just related transpired so quickly that scarcely anyone witnessed it, and no excitement was occasioned.

Stuart was enraged and bitterly disappointed.

It maddened him to think that the supposed assassin had eluded him, and he vowed to repay Levi Kredge for his dastardly blow if he ever had an opportunity to do so.

The young man proceeded directly to the office of Paxton, the detective, to whom he related his experience.

Acting under Paxton's instructions, five minutes later Sawyer and another of the detective's agents were on their way to that particular part of South street in which Stuart Harland had encountered the unknown and Levi Kredge. They were to attempt to trace these men from this point.

While Stuart Harland was relating his recent exciting experiences Stanmore entered the detective's office and became an interested listener to all the young man's story.

"Am I never to prove my innocence? Am I to be again placed on trial for my life?" said Stuart, despondently, as he concluded his narrative.

"I believe disclosures will yet be made that will flood this dark mystery with light," said Paxton, and he added:

"I made a little discovery the other day, which I saw fit not to mention to any one, but to encourage you I will tell you about it now."

Thus speaking, he opened a desk and took out a small package.

It was the very parcel we saw him take from the closet in Levi Kredge's room when he searched that apartment.

"I wish you to closely observe what I am about to show you," he said, and opening the package he drew out a small canvas bag, such as gold coin is packed in at the mint.

Paxton held up the canvas coin bag, and both Stuart Harland and Stanmore saw the name "John Oakburn" printed on the bag, as though the work had been done with a pen.

Stuart Harland sprang forward and examined the coin bag more closely.

"I have seen that money bag in John Oakburn's little safe! Where did you find it?" he cried.

"I found it in Levi Kredge's room," answered Paxton.

"Then he had a hand in the murder?"

"Perhaps," answered Paxton. "At all events we now have a good case against Kredge. Let me recapitulate the points I have made against him. First, it cannot be determined where he was at the time of the murder. Second, his boots made the tracks under the office window. Third, he has a large sum of money now, which he did not have before the murder. Fourth, the money-bag known to belong to John Oakburn and to have been kept in his private safe was found in Kredge's room."

"After all your labor has not been in vain. You have accomplished much," said Stuart.

"True, but it is not enough. We must have the lock, and discover the man who had it."

causing himself, presently he left the office.

From the time of Levi Kredge's disappearance Paxton had felt confident that his sister Judith knew where he was, and he had placed a shadow on the woman's track as we have seen.

Although the result had not confirmed the detective's belief, he had not abandoned his opinion, and he had determined that Judith should be the guide to conduct him to her brother's hiding place.

He had racked his mind to devise some ruse whereby he might turn Judith's supposed knowledge to account, since the "shadow" had failed to track her to Levi's concealment.

Paxton tried "the letter dodge," as the detectives termed it among themselves. That is, he obtained a copy of Levi Kredge's handwriting, and wrote a note like this:

"JUDITH—Meet me to-night; same place."

The note he duly mailed, and he knew Judith received it.

But the woman paid no attention to it whatever.

It seemed that Judith Kredge was too cunning to be easily overreached, but Paxton did not despair.

The detective had determined to attempt a grand coup—to try the most difficult impersonation of his life, all things considered. In short, Paxton had resolved to personate Levi Kredge, and try to deceive the janitor's own sister.

For a week the detective had been considering this last and most difficult experiment.

Every day he had been studying his part and practicing the character upon the successful impersonation of which so much depended, just as an actor studies a new role.

He knew that it was folly to suppose that even the most experienced veteran in his profession could perfectly adopt a difficult character at a moment's notice.

It was Paxton's attention to details, and the fact that he neglected no precaution or spared himself no labor that might avail to assist him, that had frequently made him successful where other men in his profession failed.

The detective felt that he had now acquired as perfect an impersonation of the character of Levi Kredge as it was possible for him to attain.

His make-up was a triumph of his art. It was positively perfect in every detail.

Paxton was a "facial artist," and he possessed the power of changing the expression of his features in a marked manner, in order to imitate the habitual expression of any character he undertook to assume.

On the night of the day of which we are writing, Paxton had resolved to test his wonderful disguise, and his power to perfectly create the character of Levi Kredge.

But some personal business now demanded his attention.

Just outside the office door Paxton encountered his agent, who was still watching Judith Kredge.

"Ah, Brady, what news?" he asked of his man.

"Perhaps nothing of consequence; I've just tracked Judith Kredge to a pawnbroker, where she put up something. I thought I would leave it to you to find out what she pawned, if you wished to do it," answered the other.

"Very well; I'll attend to this matter. Give me the pawnbroker's address."

"Here it is," replied Paxton's agent, and he presented a card on which the address in question was written.

"Continue to keep an eye on the woman—as heretofore, and by the way, do not forget that to-night I shall try the ruse I have explained to you."

"Correct, sir. I'll not forget."

The detective's auxiliary turned away.

Half an hour later Paxton entered the pawnbroker's shop, to which Judith Kredge had been shadowed.

What relation, if any, Judith's visit to the pawnbroker might have on the investigation which he was making, Paxton could not imagine.

On general principles, however, he meant to find out.

The detective had previously made the acquaintance of the pawnbroker.

The latter had been arrested long since for a certain irregular transaction, and Paxton was the man who had taken him in charge.

Of course he was recognized by the pawnbroker the moment he entered the shop.

On this occasion the detective was not in disguise.

The pawnbroker was now on his "good behavior," for the authorities had threatened to deprive him of his license, and so he naturally desired to conciliate the detective.

Paxton anticipated no difficulty in obtaining the information he sought, and therefore he did not resort to subtleties.

Coming directly to the point, he adjured the detective by the name of Levi Kredge.

"Then he said:

"A woman corresponding to the description I have just given you pawned some article here to-day. What was it?"

"A gold locket," answered the pawnbroker.

"Let me see it?"

The other promptly produced a handsome gold locket, which he handed across the counter to Paxton.

The moment he saw it the detective recognized it.

To himself he said:

"I have seen Marion Oakburn wear this locket, and discover the man who had it."

handsome man, and under it was written the name, "Donald Wayburn."

But as Paxton did not in the least resemble the man who had exchanged overcoats with Stuart Harland.

In a moment Paxton comprehended that he had adopted a false theory.

It was clear that "Donald Wayburn" was not the real name of the supposed assassin.

Paxton examined the portrait critically.

He fancied there was something strangely familiar about that pictured face.

Suddenly he gave a violent start, and exclaimed:

"I have made a recognition and a discovery."

Paxton's face was the picture of surprise, and it could not be doubted that his discovery was the source of profound astonishment for him.

The detective returned the locket to the pawnbroker and left the shop, his mind filled with strange thoughts which were suggested by his discovery.

After nightfall, disguised as Levi Kredge, he crept to the window of the kitchen in the rear of Oakburn's flat, and seeing Judith alone within, he tapped on the window.

The woman saw him, and opening the door bade him enter.

At a moment the detective stood in the brilliantly lighted kitchen confronted by Judith.

Everything depended upon the occurrences of the next few moments.

CHAPTER XXV.

Before venturing to present himself to Judith Kredge, as her brother Levi, Paxton had well considered all the contingencies which might arise.

The detective's foresight prompted him to devise a plausible excuse, whereby to account for his presence, well knowing that it would hardly be safe to trust to an inspiration of the moment for an impromptu story as to why he came there.

Moreover, he had given his assistant, who was watching the house, certain instructions, and he knew that the trusty fellow would act in unison with him so as to sustain the ruse he had decided to adopt.

As the detective, so perfectly disguised to duplicate her brother in appearance, stood before Judith, she regarded him in astonishment for a second, and then she said abruptly:

"Levi, you're a fool to come here. I though nothing could tempt you to run the risk of arrest you take by coming here."

As Judith thus addressed him, Paxton experienced a feeling of relief and satisfaction inexpressible.

The woman's words conveyed to the detective a certitude that his impersonation was a success.

"The fact is, Judith, I am here only by chance, and a very narrow chance at that," answered Paxton, while Judith hastily secured the door and drew the widow curtain closely.

"Don't talk in riddles, Levi," she said.

"Well, to be plain, I was on my way to meet Pratt and Weeks, when I discovered I was shadowed. I doubled and twisted in every shape, but I couldn't throw the fellow off my track, until at last I dodged into the passage between this building and the next. Then the shadow went on by me. But he'll come back and explore the passage. We shall hear his footsteps, for I placed some loose boards where he'll step on them. When we hear him in the passage, I'll go out the front door and make off. You see I have come, Judith, merely to give my tracker the slip."

Thus Paxton replied, telling the story he had devised for the occasion in advance.

"You ought to have sent a messenger to Pratt and Weeks, instead of venturing to go there yourself," answered Judith.

As she spoke, there came the sound of footsteps in the passage.

"There's the fellow I want to give the slip," said Paxton, who knew the sounds he had heard were made by his agent, whom he had instructed to traverse the passage soon after he entered the house.

Quick as thought, Judith extinguished the light in the room.

"Come," she said, leading the way to the front door.

"You intend to remain at Brouseom's, I suppose?" she asked, as they started for the front door.

"Yes, for the present."

"I think it's about the safest place you could find. No one you wish to steer clear of is likely to visit Dredgers Alley, especially after night-fall, and I presume you keep close during the day?"

"Trust me for that."

With this conversation they reached the front door.

"Look out, Judith, and see if the coast is clear," said Paxton.

The woman unfastened the door and cautiously peered out.

In an instant she drew back, saying:

"All right, now is your time."

"Good! I'm off. Good-night, Judith."

"Good-night, Levi."

Then Paxton sprang down the steps and darted away, not forgetting to imitate Levi Kredge's peculiar limp.

In a moment he vanished around an adjacent corner.

He was exultant and delighted for success had surely crowned his effort this time. He had discovered where Levi Kredge was in hiding. He had not dared to risk a further conversation with the cunning Judith, much as he would have liked to draw her out and gain further information.

Paxton well knew the locality where Levi Kredge had secreted himself, and he was aware that Brouseom's was a sort of lodging-house, frequented by the dangerous classes of the metropolis.

Moreover, he knew that Brouseom's was the most dangerous place in New York to attempt to make an arrest in, unless backed by a strong police force, but to take such a force would be to defeat his purpose when he sought to capture Levi Kredge.

Paxton meant to arrest the treacherous janitor that very night, and in a moment or so he had hit upon a stratagem which he thought might answer his purpose.

Less than an hour subsequently, in an entirely new disguise—that of a sporting

man about town, the detective was on his way to Dredgers Alley.

Before setting out, however, he had repaired to the office and made a complete change in his disguise mentioned, while at the same time he had given some instructions to two of his agents whom he found there.

Upon receiving Paxton's orders, these men, who were both powerful fellows whom he knew to be perfectly fearless in the midst of danger, went out.

When Paxton reached Brouseom's it was near midnight.

He entered the combined bar-room and office of the establishment, which was thronged, and looked about for Kredge, but the janitor was not there.

The detective sat down near the door and waited, hoping that Kredge at this late hour might venture into the public room.

An hour elapsed, and then, just as Paxton began to despair of meeting his man, Kredge entered.

The janitor sauntered to the bar not far from the door, and just as he entered the room a man at the other end of the apartment mounted upon a rude stage and began to perform some skillful card trick with one hand, for he was a one-armed man, while a boy passed around with a hat, taking up a collection for the performer's benefit.

Paxton stealthily arose glided, to the street door and looked out.

He saw his two agents, who had left the office in advance of him, standing one on each side of the door.

With his men he exchanged a silent but significant signal, and then he approached Kredge and touched his arm.

The janitor wheeled about with a start, and his hand sought his pistol pocket.

"What do you want? Who are you?" he demanded.

"I come from Malvin. A word with you in private. It is important," said Paxton.

It was his purpose to decoy Kredge outside, but the latter was wary.

Just as the door he paused and said:

"We'll have gone far enough. We are out of a rash. Tell me now what word you bring from Malvin?"

Kredge stood with his back to the door, and at that moment Paxton saw one of his agents cautiously open it.

The detective cast a rapid glance about the room, and he saw that the attention of all the dangerous characters there assembled was centered upon the man with one arm who was performing the card trick at the other end of the room.

Paxton came close to Kredge, as though to make a confidential communication which he feared might be overheard, and then, quick as a flash, he gave him a violent push.

The janitor reeled backward through the door, and at the same instant he was seized by the detective's two agents, and the door closed behind him.

Kredge tried to "fall" for help, well knowing that assistance would be promptly rendered him if his voice was heard by the men in the "div," but one of Paxton's agents clutched his throat so that he was unable to utter a sound, and, lifting him between them, they thrust him into a carriage which stood close by, leaped into the vehicle after him, and were driven swiftly away.

Paxton hurried away on foot as fast as possible.

The arrest had been accomplished so quickly that even the people on the street thought that Kredge was an intoxicated man whom friends were taking away in a carriage.

That night Kredge slept in a police station, and the following day he was transferred to the Tombs, charged by Paxton with assault made upon Stuart Harland, with intent to kill.

The detective did not mention to the authorities that he believed Kredge was concerned in the murder of John Oakburn.

Meanwhile, a few days prior to the date of the occurrences last recorded, Richard Stanmore received a letter with a foreign postmark. Inside the outer envelope a second letter was inclosed, containing a letter which had been sent from New York to a foreign country, and now was returned again.

At the sight of the directions on the inclosed letter, Mr. Stanmore evinced the greatest surprise, and he eagerly opened it.

As he read the letter, Stanmore's noble, handsome face became transformed, and a joyful light beamed in his eyes.

"At last! at last!" he muttered. "Her true heart never banished my memory, and she is convinced of my honesty and honor."

Stanmore read the letter again and again, and he seemed like another man, so changed and joyful was his expression.

But leaving Stanmore to reflections, which must have been pleasant ones, we will turn our attention to Levi Kredge.

The morning following the night of his arrest the janitor sat in his prison cell, musing in terror upon his situation.

He was a coward at heart, and now he trembled with apprehension, but the cunning rascal had determined to feign bravery and deny any charge that might be brought against him.

"It's one thing to accuse me of John Oakburn's murder, and another thing to prove the charge," he kept saying to himself by the way of sustaining his courage.

The rascal had no idea what strong circumstantial evidence the detective had to present against him.

At an early hour Paxton called at the prison, and he was admitted to Kredge's cell.

It was Paxton's policy to frighten Kredge.

"Well, friend Levi, you find yourself in nice, snug quarters," were the detective's first words as he entered Kredge's cell.

The latter gazed out an impression, but he did not answer the detective, upon whom he flashed a look of intense hatred.

"Not in a conversational mood this morning, eh?" continued Paxton.

"What do you want?" demanded Kredge, fiercely.

"I want to have a little chat with you on your own good, Levi."

"Say what you have come to say, and

do doze with it."

Suddenly Paxton's manner became stern, and his voice became keen and cutting, and each word fell upon Kredge's ear like a knell of doom as he said:

"I have come to tell you that I have the proof that you murdered John Oakburn."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

BIG CHINA CLOSET.

The Treasure of the Winter Palace at St. Petersburg.

Perhaps the largest residence in the world is the winter palace at St. Petersburg. It has 700 rooms, many of these of enormous size, and some so large that the White House at Washington could be erected in them, portico and all. It is said that 5,000 soldiers have at different times been sheltered under its great roof. The storerooms of the winter palace are filled with the china of the Russian czars as far back as Catherine the Great, and here a woman collector was able to obtain samples by purchasing them of the attendants, who brought the pieces to her hotel one at a time for several days afterward and demanded only moderate prices—not more than some plates would be worth at a shop without considering the value of association.

The imperial china is all of Russian manufacture and does not equal in quality nor in luster the product of Austria or Germany or France. It is plain and coarse, and the decorations are not very artistic, although there is in the winter palace a world-famous table service of solid silver overlaid with gold, that will furnish a banquet of 500 covers. It dates back to the time of the crazy Emperor Paul, who was the son of Catherine the Great.

The plates used by all the czars are larger than the ordinary size. Those of Catherine were ornamented with conventional designs of blue and gold and bore the imperial crest in the center. Nicholas, "the Iron Czar," as he was called, used enormous plates and cups and saucers of the commonest china, heavy and coarse, which were also decorated with blue and in the center bore his initial, with a crown and cross. The china of Alexander II, who was assassinated by the nihilists, was a little better in quality, but of similar designs, only it bore the initial A and an eagle with outspread wings. That of the present czar is of the same pattern and bears the same initial with the distinctive III. under the A to indicate that it belongs to the third monarch of that name.

It is said that the private china in the smaller palaces is very different and of much better quality. It was imported by the empress from England, but strangers are not allowed to visit them, and it is impossible to obtain a sample.

—San Francisco Chronicle.

Lord Lorne and the American Girls.

The following pleasant and unusual experience happened to a party of well-known American girls who were traveling in Europe last summer. Its truth, of course, can be vouched for. The story is vouched for by one of the young ladies: "On our way to Edinburgh we stopped over a train at Stirling to see the castle, and there an adventure befell us, of which I will tell you. When we got out of the train and were looking about for ways and means of reaching the castle, we were accosted by a tall, fine-looking, middle-aged man, who asked if we were not from the 'other side of the water.' We said 'yes,' and that we wanted to get to the castle. He said he was going there and would be glad to show us the way, and also to show us his old family house, which was close by. We got into the carriages and our new friend mounted the box beside the driver, and on we went. We finally stopped before a quaint old house, with coats of arms carved in stone, and he led us into the courtyard, which was very quaint and old. He said the place was called 'Argyle Lodge,' and then added: 'Perhaps I ought to tell you who I am. I am Lord Lorne, the last of the house of Argyle!' He then took us all over the castle, the old Gray Friar's Church, and rushed about so that we saw twice as much as we could possibly have seen by ourselves, for he knew just what was worth seeing, and could shake off the guide when he started on his long, rambling story. Lord Lorne was perfectly lovely, and we have all lost our hearts to him, and have serious designs first upon the life of Princess Louise, his wife, and then upon each other."

—Rochester Post-Express.

A Hasting Courtship.

They do things up quick in Chicago. So pleased was Nathan Ladon, a wealthy merchant of Menominee, Wis., with the way pretty Mary Frank, at the head of the handkerchief department in a Chicago store, tucked the handkerchief he had just purchased into his pocket the other day that he asked her then and there to marry him. So it came about that Mary pulled off her apron and went up stairs to tell her employers all about it. Within an hour they were married by the county clerk.

The Nephew of His Uncle.

"Why does Luckpenny carry his coat on his arm so ostentatiously instead of wearing it these cool days?"

"He wants to inspire his friends with confidence in his financial condition."