THE FATAL REQUEST OR FOUND OUT

By A. L. Harris Author of "Mine Own Familiar Friend," etc.

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CHAPTER XIV—Continued.

Ah, though still legible, were more or less injured by the fiery ordeal to which they had been in some degree subjected. The fire, which had stopped before reaching the upper part of the body, had been sufficient for this.

He ran his eye over them again. What was that? Something which crackled as he laid his hand upon one of the papers nearest to him. It was a sheet of foreign note paper, much singed, and written only upon one side.

He pushed all the other papers together in a heap. Then, with the burnt letter before him, with an elbow planted on each side, and his head supported between his hands, he bent himself to the task of deciphering what still remained.

At last, after at least an hour spent in this way, he made a gesture of despair.

"I suppose I must give it up. The task is beyond me—at least, this portion of it."

He cast his eye again over the words.

"They tell me nothing as they are. They even serve to cast some implication upon my honor, honor, and——"

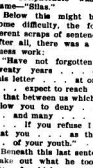
He broke off abruptly, as the color forsook his face. What was it the doctor had hinted at? Something disreditable in the past?

He glanced at the paper again. "But this speaks of something worse——"

He gave a hasty look round, as though he half-feared the possibility of the presence of a listener, as he whispered the words—"Something criminal!"

He took up his pen again, and once more concentrated his whole attention upon the burnt letter.

The paper before him contained a number of broken phrases—the beginnings and fragments of sentences. The upper part of the letter had been



"Some thing I can do for you?"

burned away, and the first word which was decipherable was his father's name—"Sibra."

Below this might be read, with some difficulty, the following incoherent scraps of sentences, in which, after all, there was a good deal of guess work:

"Have not forgotten of twenty years . . . on receiving this letter . . . at once for Dover . . . expect to reach . . . There is that between us which . . . not allow you to deny . . . I ask . . . and many . . . you alone can . . . If you refuse I shall . . . that you . . . as the criminal . . . of your youth."

Beneath this last sentence he could make out what took to be the letter J, which apparently stood for the initial letter of the Christian name, but the rest of the signature was burned and obliterated.

At this moment something again recalled to him the mysterious word which he had heard the night before the funeral, and he looked round for a possible interpretation of it then.

His eye roamed from one object to another, and his tongue repeated the words—"The spring at the back of the recess!" What recess? Where? He rose from his chair and took a sharp turn round the room. "The recess! What was meant by the recess?"

"Father," he said, as though addressing some one present, "Show me what you mean." He drew up his chair and resumed his seat; but there was that in his behavior which suggested one under the control of some mesmeric influence, or who walked in his sleep.

Immediately in front of him, his eye rested upon a small door. To his surprise, he now observed for the first time that this door was at the back. He turned it and saw papers within, tied up in bundles and endorsed. Some were quite yellow with age, and some were more modern.

He went to work deliberately until he had quite cleared the space. It was not very large, but now that it was empty it formed a sort of recess.

He did not finish the word even in his own mind, but began to pass his fingers over the panels at the back, slowly backwards and forwards, an inch at a time.

At last, something seemed to catch his nail—something which projected over so slightly.

He pressed—the spring at the back of the recess—firmly. There was a little jarring sound, and the back of the partition fell forward, revealing another compartment behind the first.

This at first seemed to contain nothing but a packet of old letters, tied round with a faded blue ribbon. These were his mother's letters, written before her marriage, and treasured ever since.

A bundle of old love letters. What else?

No, there was something else. A photograph, faded and yellow, like the letters. A photograph of a young man, in the dress, that now seemed old fashioned and ridiculous, of twenty or thirty years ago. The features were hardly distinguishable, but on the back was written a name and a date—"James Ferrers, taken June, 1858."

CHAPTER XV.

The New Client.

Mr. John Sharp's offices were situated off the Strand. And at 11 o'clock the morning after, John Sharp was seated in his private room, expecting a visitor, or, as Mr. Sharp would have preferred to himself, a client. He was waiting for the latter to put in an appearance, he whilled away the time with the morning paper.

At the particular moment to which we refer, his attention was engaged by a paragraph in the left hand top corner of the outside sheet, which appeared to afford him a considerable amount of satisfaction.

"It certainly does read well," he remarked to himself complacently. "I can't deny that, though I did draw it up myself. 'I wonder,' he continued, rasping his chin with his forefinger, "whether the gent who's made the appointment for 11 o'clock came from the advertisement, or whether he was recommended?"

The advertisement referred to was as follows:

"Sharp's Detective Agency. Swift, sure and secret. All inquiries conducted with the greatest skill and discretion. Evidence obtained on any subject. All communications regarded as strictly private and confidential. Mr. John Sharp promises to all those who honor him by seeking his aid the experience of twenty years and the secrecy of the confessional."

Mr. John Sharp, as regarded his outward appearance, was somewhat of the weaker order. As he himself often said, "Sharp was his name and sharp was his nature."

"My name's Jennings, sir, continued, looking at his watch. He opened a door of communication and put his head through.

"Jennings!"

"Yessir."

"When the gentleman comes, don't forget to tell him that I'm engaged for the moment, but shall be at liberty shortly; and remind you once in when, you hear me bang the door, and ask if I am still engaged and can see the gentleman now."

The faithful Jennings performed his duty to the letter. "I think," said Mr. Sharp, rising and referring to a memorandum, as the gentleman was ushered in, "that I have the pleasure of addressing Mr. Burritt? Will you be good enough to be seated."

The visitor admitted that was his name, and took the seat indicated.

"Something I can do for you?" inquired Mr. Sharp, placing the tips of his fingers together interrogatively.

The new client, who had with him a small leather bag, opened it, and produced three articles, which he placed one after the table before him. They consisted of a pocket, flat package, a photograph and a ball from a revolver.

"Suppose you begin from the beginning and tell me all about it. I shall be glad to assist you, I'm sure," Sharp, as he opened the note-book and motioned a stump of lead pencil with his tongue.

He kept his word, though he made copious notes, and for some moments there could be the monotonous sound of the one voice, as the new client recapitulated all the circumstances that had led to his seeking Mr. Sharp's assistance, and which have already been fully gone into.

When he had finished, "I thought the name seemed familiar to me," said the other. "To be sure, I remember all the circumstances connected with the sad affair. And so you think you have hit upon the guilty party?"

"I am certain of it," was the determined answer. "I believe I know his name, and have proof in my own mind that he committed the deed. What I want you to do is to trace him for me—or, rather, put me on his track and let me run him down."

"There!" whistled Mr. Sharp, softly, under his breath. "This is something quite out of the common, this is. Suppose," he said, addressing the young man, "that we examine the evidence. What is the first thing, you say; and this a photograph you found among the deceased gentleman's papers. Might the first ask what that is?" laying his hand upon the other article.

"That is the letter I spoke of, which made the gentleman destroy his father kept, and was thus, indirectly, the cause of his death. It is partly burnt, but I have succeeded in so far as show that there was"—here he heaved a deep sigh for the first time—"something of the nature of a secret between them."

Mr. Sharp ran his eye down the page. "Humph!" he remarked; "something vague and unsatisfactory. Probably some one hint at some thing of a suspicious nature between the two."

"Don't make any mistake," put in Ted Burritt at this point; "whatever there may be of that nature does not cannot apply to my father."

"Probably not! Probably not! But you must allow a certain amount of ambiguity—of cutting both ways. If we could prove the knowledge of some circumstance—here is referred to a sentence in the copy of the letter—"some criminal proceedings connected with the deceased gentleman—or—the unfortunate gentleman who was shot—something which lay between the two, we could say, then, we should be able to see our way. Suppose there was a strong presumption that your father had run to alone in a first-class carriage. Suppose that a sudden quarrel arises between them; that a struggle ensues; that a blow is provoked by utter threats that the latter may or may not do. Suppose the one, in self-defence, carries a revolver, makes up his mind to bring to a close the affair by the means of a bullet through his brain."

His client nodded.

"Now," continued Mr. Sharp, "before proceeding farther, just let us come to an understanding as to what we are about. Eyes."

"I want you," was the answer, "to trace this other from the time that he was last seen."

"Very good," from Mr. Sharp.

"And to trace his history backwards from that time."

"And the party's name?"

Ted handed him the photograph and showed him what was written on the back.

"Very good, sir. I think we understand each other. And you want me while me to begin my investigations——"

"At once!"

There was a little discussion here about terms, expenses, etc., which being satisfactorily arranged, the client rose and prepared to take his departure.

"You will leave me this"—the detective indicated the photograph—"and your copy of the letter?"

Ted Burritt assented and replaced the other articles.

"I shall make a point," said Mr. Sharp, "of going through the report of the inquest again to refresh my memory, and to see whether there is any little fact that may have escaped attention. You have to prove"—checking the items off on his fingers—"first, that the man we want wrote that letter, and, secondly, that he the other passenger, and, thirdly, that he fired that shot."

The answer was firm and concise.

"I don't require you to prove the murder so much as to trace the man, who, for aught you have done so—leave him to me!"

(To be continued.)

A Yankee Trade.

The old Yankee skill at driving a bargain is not confined to the Yankee visitor at a fashionable resort on the Maine coast in summer went to the Universalist church in the morning of a first Sunday morning of her stay, and was politely shown to a seat. There was no hymn book in the pew, but the occupant of the pew behind her leaned forward and tapped one in her hands. At the close of the service the visitor turned and thanked the person, saying as she took the book that church all summer she would like to buy a hymn book. "Well," said the other, "I guess I can let you have that book if you'll give me a pair of black gloves, No. 7." "Very well," said the visitor. The next day she went to Portsmouth, purchased the No. 1 black gloves for $1.50 and duly received the hymn book in exchange for them on the following Sunday.—Boston Herald.

One Thing to Avoid.

"Yes," said the great man, "I am going to write a book of personal reminiscences. I think I am prominent enough for people to buy it."

"Oh, yes, you're prominent enough, but I'd like to caution you about one thing."

"What's that?"

"For the purposes of publication, don't say anything about prominent men now living."

"But they're just the people I want to write about. Where is the value of the one voice, as the new client recapitulated all the circumstances that led to his seeking Mr. Sharp's assistance, and which have already been fully gone into.

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(To be continued.)

WESTERN CANADA'S RESOURCES.

Farming Very Successful.

By Western or Northwest Canada is usually meant the great agricultural districts west of Lake Superior, and north of Minnesota, North Dakota, and Montana. Part of it is agricultural prairie, interspersed with groves, part is pasture, part is grassy plains, well adapted to cattle ranches, part requires irrigation for successful cultivation, part it does not. The political divisions of this region are the Province of Manitoba and the territories of Assiniboia, Saskatchewan, Alberta and Athabasca. As described, however, the latter is too remote for immediate practical purposes.

The general character of the soil of Western Canada is that of a black loam with a clay subsoil. Such a soil is particularly rich in food for the wheat plant. The subsoil is a clay, which retains the winter frost until it is thawed out by the warm rays of the sun and drawn upward to shelter the growth of the young wheat, so that even in dry seasons the crop is a good crop. The clay soil also retains the heat of the sun later in the summer and assists in the early ripening of the grain. It is claimed that cultivation has the effect of increasing the temperature of the soil several degrees, as well as the air above it.

Western Canada climate is good—cold in winter, but in summer, with cool nights. Violent storms of any kind are rare. The rainfall is not heavy. It varies with locality, averages about 17 inches. It falls usually in sufficient quantity.

The Department of Agriculture, Ottawa, Canada, has agents established in Great Britain and throughout the United States who will be pleased to forward an Atlas of Western Canada and a book which contains information as to railway rate, etc., as may be required.

"That agriculture in Western Canada pays is shown by the number of Mennonials given by farmers. The following is an extract made from a letter from a farmer near Moose Jaw:

"At the present time I own sixteen hundred acres of land, fifty horses and a large pasture fenced containing a thousand acres. These horses run out all winter and come in in the spring quite fat. A man with means and closely expended will make a competence very shortly. I consider in the last six years the increase in the value of my land has netted me forty thousand dollars."

NOT A COLORED CHURCH.

Yet New Minister Met the Grays, Browns, Greens and Scarlets.

"While I lived in Raleigh, N. C.," said Philip W. Wiley of the government printing office, "one of the churches was about to receive a new pastor and two of the trustees of the church, associating with themselves three other members, went to the railroad station to meet him. On his arrival one of them spoke to him:

"'Rev. Mr. Black, I believe?'

"'Yes, sir.'

"'We are the committee appointed to receive you. My name is Gray.'

"'I am glad to meet you, Mr. Gray.'

"'And this is Mr. Scarlett.'

"'Delighted, Mr. Scarlett.'

"'And Mr. Brown.'

"'Mr. Brown, I assure you this is a pleasure.'

"'And Mr. Green.'

"'Mr. Green, permit me to grasp your hand.'

"'Also Mr. White.'

"'Mr. White, I love to meet so many of the brethren. But, Mr. Gray, is this a colored church to which I am called as minister?'

"'Why, no!' said that gentleman, blankly.

"'Well, I see all the colors are represented in the committee,' said Mr. Black, 'and the idea occurred to me.'

"It was the fact, though none of them had noticed it before."—Washington Post.

ON A RANCH.

Woman Found the Food That Fitted Her.

A newspaper woman went out to a Colorado ranch last summer to rest and her experience with the food probably is worth recounting.

"The woman who ran the ranch was preeminently the worst housekeeper I have ever known—poor soul, and poor she was, too.

"I simply had to have food good and plenty of it, for I had broken down from overwork and was nervous and irritable. I was in a state of mind that could only be relieved by a good night's rest and the right kind of food.

"One day I obtained permission to go through the pantry and see what I could find. Among other things I became across a package of Grape-Nuts which I had heard of but never tried. I read the description on the package and become deeply interested, so then and there I got a saucer and some cream and tried the food.

"It tasted delicious to me and seemed to freshen and strengthen me greatly so I surreptitious that Grape-Nuts and cream be provided each day instead of other food. For a fortnight I lived on Grape-Nuts and cream and two or three months.

"If you could have seen how fast I got well it would have pleased and surprised you. I am now perfectly well and strong again and know exactly how I got well and that was on Grape-Nuts that furnished me a powerful food I could digest and make use of.

"It seems to me no brain worker can afford to overlook Grape-Nuts after my experience." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

Get the miniature book, "The Road to Wellville" in each pkg.

C. L. Brownell Off to the Orient.

Clarence L. Brownell, the author of "The Heart of Japan," was among the first of the London newspaper men to be sent as a correspondent for the expected war in China between Russia and Japan. Dispatches announce his arrival at Tien-Tsin on January 14th. Mr. Brownell is equipped for his task by a knowledge of the Japanese and their language, such as few foreigners have ever obtained. He spent more than five years in Japan living right with the people. Mr. Brownell knows thoroughly the Japanese and admiring their loyalty and devotion to a principle is a strong element in Japanese nature. Men and women are ready to sacrifice anything if a principle which they believe to be involved, an observation which throws a good deal of light upon the Japanese attitude in the recent diplomatic negotiations.

Miss Nettie Blackmore, Minneapolis, tells how any young woman may be permanently cured of monthly pains by taking Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound.

"YOUNG WOMEN!—I had frequent headaches of a severe nature, dark spots before my eyes, and at my menstrual periods I suffered untold agony. A member of the lodge advised me to try Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, but I only secured good advice and felt that my case was hopeless, but she kept at me until I bought a bottle and started taking it. I soon had the best reason in the world to change my opinion of the medicine, as each day my health improved, and I now am entirely without pain at my menstruation periods, and most grateful."—Nettie Blackmore, 28 Central Ave., Minneapolis, Minn. *$5000 forfeit if original of above testimonial proving genuineness cannot be produced.*

If there is anything about your case about which you would like special advice, write freely to Mrs. Pinkham. She will hold your letter in strict confidence. She can surely help you, for no person in America has more experience or more success. Her address is Lynn, Mass.; her advice is free.

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HAVE YOU A BABY?

If so, you ought to have a

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OUR PHOENIX Walking Chair enables the baby to learn to walk, without injury or excessive exercise. It is impossible for the child to fall and injure itself. It enables it to walk without assistance, and in a most comfortable manner. It is well made. It is provided with a leather cloth removable seat; it also has a table attachment which enables the baby to enjoy itself with its toys without further attention. This chair is so constructed that it prevents colds and diseases from drafts or floor germs. It will prove a good solid clothes to pay for itself. It is attractively made and is an ornament to any home, and baby will get more already, comfort and enjoyment out of it than anything else you can get.

"A delicacy and a crash."

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WINDSOR RUBBER COLLARS look like linen, are cool, comfortable and neat. Guaranteed not to turn yellow, blacken or crack. Sample, 25c. Sent postpaid. Agents wanted. Catalogue free. Address, WINDSOR RUBBER COLLAR CO., Box 1, Windsor, Vt.

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GINSENG WILL NOT GROW. Ginseng Growers Guide. It is wasting money for you to buy, or to pay for growing Ginseng. Sent, Postpaid, Stamp. PROF. SPYE, 38 N. Penn. Indianapolis.

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Tickets on first-class sale and stopover on going trip, south of Windsor, Mo., within twenty days; final limit, 21 days. Stop-over from date of sale. Never before has there been such a chance to secure a home in the Southwest. Tickets on second-class sale only will be sold same days at reduced rate. Never fail to secure Pullman Sleeper. Don't fail to GO NOW. For particulars, address, W. S. KEENAN, GEORGE MORTON, Katy Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.

Wisdom Soap (Granulated)

"Soap that sells to clean, Must clean to sell."

Wisdom does the same work at one-half the cost of any bar soap.

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If affiched with Thompson's Eye Water save money.