

YORKVILLE ENQUIRER.

ISSUED TWICE-A-WEEK--WEDNESDAY AND FRIDAY.

LEWIS M. GRIST, Proprietor.

A Family Newspaper: For the Promotion of the Political, Social, Agricultural and Commercial Interests of the South.

TERMS--\$2.00 A YEAR IN ADVANCE. SINGLE COPY, THREE CENTS.

VOLUME 41.

YORKVILLE, S. C., WEDNESDAY, MAY 15, 1895.

NUMBER 27.

MYSTERY OF THE GREAT RUBY.

BY LUCIE ST. DEANE.

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CHAPTER XIV.

But which window would be used by the cowans?

That must be conjectured; but, since the light had shone plainly from the room I mentioned, and since its approachability struck me, it seemed likely that it would be favorably noticed by the two figures prowling among the trees. If such should prove the fact, no position could be better than mine. So I decided to await developments.

A soft rustling reached me. The stillness was profound, and my acute hearing told me it came from the other side of the house.

"They are working at the front; they have found a better mode of entrance there."

But while the thought was framing itself the rustling ceased. I waited for its renewal, but heard it not. They had stopped working or possibly had effected an entrance. In that event a light would soon show.

It became evident this time that a light was burning in the upper room, from which my view had been shut off. It was dim, however, and only the outline of the window showed a little more clearly. The lamp on the other side of the curtains was at a low point.

"They have effected an entrance and are moving around in that apartment."

The light became a little stronger. The outlines of the sash were more marked, but the illumination remained indistinct.

From between me and the house came the faintest possible noise, as if a serpent was gliding over the withered grass. The resemblance was deepened by several almost inaudible hisses.

They were not serpents, however, but the two men had stolen to the rear of the building and were standing between it and me. If they had contemplated entering the front, they had changed their minds.



I saw him stoop to raise the sash.

Not only that, but they meant to use the window upon which I had fixed my attention.

The low scraping sound which was next heard was made by one of them climbing the tree which grew so close to the stone wall that some of its branches must have touched it. The Asiatic intended to ascend to the window and enter the house through it, even though the light showed that some one was on the other side of the curtain.

From my position behind the oak I saw the figure of the man rising slowly to sight as he climbed the trunk until his head and shoulders were above the window ledge. Then he braced himself among the limbs and stood still. It was easy for him to step across the intervening space, but he was waiting for his companion to join him.

The second head and shoulders rose on the horizon of my sight, and after some shifting about the second secured a position beside the other. Then, steadying himself by grasping a projecting limb above him, he placed his foot on the window ledge.

His whole figure was now stamped with ink against the dimly lit window shade, his head reaching to the top, and his arms, body and legs clearly showing as if painted against the yellow background. His companion waited for him to open the way. They intended to enter the apartment. Murder was in the air.

I saw him stoop to grasp and raise the sash. His pose was a fair one, and sighting as well as I could in the gloom I pulled trigger.

A smothered exclamation, a wild clutching for support, and the man slumped to the ground, where he lay as if killed. His astounded comrade was paralyzed for the moment and then let go and dropped beside him. I maintained my position, with the smoking revolver ready for more service.

"That evens up the little affair in the lane," I muttered, "and saves the life for the time of the man whose life may not be worth saving."

But the fellow was not killed. There were whispered words between the two, and then, from the sounds that reached me, for I could not make them out in the deeper gloom, I knew they were moving slowly around the end of the house toward the front.

What could be their thoughts? Did they believe the shot came from the man whom they attacked in the lane, or did they think that the suspicious Howard was on guard and winged one of them in the nick of time?

The explosion of the pistol must have reached those in the house, even if all were asleep. But no one came to the window to investigate. The dim light

was undisturbed, and so far as appearances went a tomb was not more devoid of life.

A curious impulse came to me. It was to sound the knocker on the door, rouse the occupants and tell them what had occurred. I could well claim that I had prevented the commission of a crime and probably saved the life of one or more persons. That such was the fact would be so evident that Howard and his wife, as well as the old couple with whom they lodged, would be filled with thankfulness therefor.

But how explain my presence at the critical moment? They would naturally want to know what brought me there at that unseemly hour. If I should say that I was an officer of the law who had regarded the interlopers with suspicion, it would hardly satisfy them. More likely they would believe I was one of the burglars who had quarreled with the others and was as much to be dreaded as they. A complaint to the authorities would put me in an unpleasant situation, and though I could soon establish my identity all proceedings, so far as concerned the couple in whom I was interested, would be brought to naught.

It is rarely safe for a detective to act upon impulse. He must weigh each step carefully and labor to the end in view with the careful calculation of a professor solving an intricate problem in mathematics.

Waiting until the conspirators had time to get well clear of the premises, I moved stealthily around the end of the house to the front and was making my way toward the lane when a tall figure loomed up in the darkness, and I came face to face with a man who held a shotgun in his hand.

"Who are you?" he demanded in a threatening voice, bringing his formidable weapon partly to a level.

"A friend," I made haste to reply. "I mean no harm."

I knew instinctively that the man before me was Isaiah Bridges, the owner of the house, and that he was making an investigation of his own, with loaded weapon in hand.

"Was it you who fired that gun a little while ago?"

"Yes; I saw a burglar trying to climb into one of your windows and dropped him."

This ought to have disarmed his suspicion, but it did not.

"And how come you to be sneaking round here?"

It was a natural question and the one I was expecting.

"I was passing along the highway, and they entered your lane. I did not like their looks and followed. When I saw them trying to enter the window, I fired."

"Did you kill the tarual scamp?"

"No, but hurt him so badly that he was glad to leave with the help of his companion. They will trouble you no more."

"But why didn't you let me know afore they tried their tricks?"

"They are strangers to me. I could not know they intended any wrong until I saw them attempt it. Then it was too late to warn you."

"Why didn't you come round to the house afterward and tell me?"

"You were asleep, or I supposed so."

"So we war, but that racket woke us."

"I have just come from the rear, where I discharged my pistol and hadn't time to wake you up."

"That won't do," said the old man, his suspicion active again. "You warn't going toward the front door, but trying to sneak off down the lane. Confound you, I believe you are one of 'em! I've a good mind to fill you full of buckshot."

"I wouldn't advise you to try that, for there are several cartridges left in my revolver, and before you could bring your gun to a level I would use them all. I told you I was a friend, but you can consider me an enemy if you wish."

I made a suggestive motion with my weapon, which he understood. He ached to let me have the contents of his gun, but was afraid.

"Waal, the best thing you can do is to clear out from here as quick as you can travel. There have been several murders in this part of the country, and the law hain't found out who done 'em, but if I should catch it while prowling round where you've got no business to be I won't hesitate to tell the folks that I done it."

"Now, Mr. Bridges," I said conciliatingly, "what is the use of our?"

"Who told you my name?" he broke in.

"Every one in the neighborhood knows you as a good citizen and a gentleman like your brother Nathan. You do me great injustice to suspect me of any wrong intention. I would no more harm you than I would my own father."

"That talk is very nice, but I don't know you. You haven't told me your name nor where you come from."

"Don't you know William Browning of Rahway?"

"The president of our bank?"

"Of course. He knows you well, and I'm his son."

"That won't work. I don't know any Mr. Browning, and there's nobody of that name that has anything to do with our bank. Now I know you're an impostor. Cl'ar out!"

The old fellow was too shrewd for me. I was outwitted, and with a little laugh I turned about and strode toward the open lane.

I had not gone 20 paces when what did he do but bring his shotgun to a level and let fly at me with both barrels in quick succession!

CHAPTER XV.

Had the sun been shining the "Statement of Carl Wittner" would never have been written. The gloom interfered with the old farmer's aim; but, as it was, I felt the wind made by the heavy load of buckshot as it whizzed past my ears. It was a close call.

Angered, I wheeled about and leveled my revolver, but checked myself before pulling the trigger. Suppose I fired and killed him!

It would have been murder without excuse. My life was no longer in any danger and his act in firing at me was justifiable. He would not have been punished had he carried out his threat and "filled me with buckshot." Many



"Too late," he called.

might censure him for not having done so. I shoved my weapon back in place and walked briskly down the avenue leading to the main highway.

But there were others to think about. The presumption was that the two East Indians, having preceded me, might be waiting in ambush to adjust that little affair in the rear of the farmhouse.

They could not fail to know that it was I who had tumbled one of them from his perch and nipped in the bud the scheme he had in mind. They must believe I was in league with the Howards, and that before they could succeed with them I must be brushed from the path. What better opportunity than that which now presented?

But the wound of one of them must have been a potent factor in preventing what I feared. I was that apprehensive that I held my partly discharged revolver in hand after entering the road and turning in the direction of the farmhouse where I made my temporary home.

What had become of them could not be guessed. They had probably gone in the direction of the town and were not likely to be heard of again.

Reviewing my work of the evening, as I walked homeward, I saw little in it to encourage me. I had not only failed to gain an iota of additional knowledge of Nana Sahib's ruby, but had put the suspected ones on guard, and therefore increased the difficulty that confronted me from the first.

Probably up to this night Darius Howard was confident that no one had followed him to this pleasant little town, and that he was still safe with his secret in the house where he had made his home for an indefinite time.

But the occurrences of the night must have been made to break in upon him. His secret was no longer secure. He would take instant measures to avert the threatened danger.

The most effective step would be a change of quarters. He was not likely to spend another night in the old stone house. What was done, therefore, to checkmate him must be done quickly.

It is well known that the safest hiding place for a criminal whom the officers of the law want is in the heart of the great city of New York. It was hard to understand why this strange couple had left so secure a concealment and taken up their residence where their chances of detection were increased tenfold.

But, for that matter, everything thus far was hard to understand. The conceded fact, as I saw it, which confronted me was what next would be done by them. They were under my eye now, and if I let them slip I would not be likely to get on their track again.

I was glad to find on reaching my home that all the folks had retired. I let myself in with the night key with which I had been furnished and went to my room without being seen by any one. This was fortunate, for my clothing had lost much of the neatness which marked it at first and was in need of attention.

The farmers breakfast early, and finding that Mr. Bridges intended to drive into town I rode with him, reaching the station in time to catch the early trains had I wished, but my purpose was not to leave unless the Howards did so. I waited most of the forenoon, but saw nothing of them.

Guarded inquiries gave me no information of the two men of the night before. Had I chosen I might have killed that one at the window, but was relieved to know that such was not the case. He must have been hit pretty hard, but not sufficiently so to endanger his life.

If there had been any feeling of conceit in my mind—and I protest there was little, if any—it was pretty well removed by what followed by my loitering about the railway station. My intention was, if either Howard or his wife boarded any train, to do the same and shadow them wherever they went, but I made an inexcusably stupid failure to carry out my purpose.

I scanned every train that went toward New York and of course kept an

eye on those going in the opposite direction. This was somewhat perfunctory, for I did not suspect that either of the couple would proceed southward.

A Philadelphia train drew up at the station, and from my coign of vantage I watched the passengers as they disembarked and others got on. The stop was brief, and just as it began moving again Darius Howard made a rush from somewhere and swung upon one of the platforms, being helped by the waiting brakeman.

I made a dash to do the same thing, but had farther to go, and the brakeman blocked my way.

"Too late," he called. "There'll be another along in half an hour."

There was no help for it. If Howard saw me, and in all probability he did, he must have read my purpose, and therefore would be on his guard against me unless I effected a complete change in my appearance.

Mr. Bridges has returned home alone, and for the time I was perplexed as to what to do. It was useless to try to follow the man who had gone southward, for there was no saying what his destination was. He might have started on a journey of 20 or 1,000 miles.

I have referred to a game of bluff which I had in mind. Hitherto I had been working at long range, as may be said. Now I decided upon a bold step, which insured success or failure.

From the railway station I walked to my dwelling place, reaching there just in time for dinner. I spent a couple of hours in my room, and then, telling my friends that I might not return until late, once more set out for the old stone building where lived Isaiah Bridges, the brother of my host. Of necessity I was attired as on the night before, but my ornamental cane was left behind, and every chamber in my revolver had its charge.

It was a cool, brisk autumn afternoon, and the sun was shining. Any effort at secrecy would have been idle, and I walked with a confident step up the long lane, which had been the scene of more than one stirring occurrence within the preceding 24 hours.

Without hesitation I stepped upon the broad porch and sounded out a ringing knock with the old fashioned contrivance which must have penetrated to every recess of the building.

The summons was answered by Mrs. Bridges, a sedate old lady, who wonderingly surveyed me through her spectacles and waited for the announcement of my business.

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Bridges. I am an officer of the law, but don't be alarmed," I added, noting her slight start. "Something occurred here last night. Burglars I believe tried to effect an entrance, and a pistol shot was fired."

She stood as if hesitating what to do or say. Assuming that I was welcome, I stepped aside, removing my hat.

"I would like to make a few inquiries, and we can do it better inside than on the porch, if you have no objection."

She led the way into the wide, plainly furnished parlor, her manner showing that she was doubtful as to the prudence of the step.

Evidently she had received instructions from her boarders, and even my pretended business did not fully reassure her.

My original plan, as I have hinted, was to pretend to be an assessor who had called to examine the property, but the events of the preceding night gave me another pretext. I doubt whether even that would have worked had her husband been at home, so I took care to call when he was absent, looking after his farm duties.

"Couldn't you stop when Mr. Bridges is home?" she asked, sinking into a rocking chair and surveying me with distrust.

"When will he be in?"

"I can call him. If I don't, he will not be home until sundown."

"That is hardly necessary. May I ask whether you saw any of the burglars?"

"Mercy, no! I didn't dare look out of the window. My husband shot at one of them, who pretended he was a friend."

"Did he kill him?"

"I'm afraid not, for we haven't found his body."

"What a pity! He will not be likely to show himself around here again."

"No, indeed. The gun in the kitchen is loaded, and we're ready for him."

"That's right. Don't let him catch you unawares. Did they attempt to enter by way of the door?"

"No; they must have clamb one of the trees and tried to get into the back window. They had a quarrel among themselves, and one of 'em fired off a gun or pistol, and then my husband he fired, too, and the man groaned and jumped up in the air. So he must have been hit pretty hard."

"Undoubtedly. I will take a look at the room and window, please. You know it is necessary that I should secure all the information I can."

"Mercy, I can't allow you to do that!"

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT FRIDAY

A boy of 15 walked in an uptown street the other day, smoking a cigarette. He seemed not a little proud of his accomplishment, and strutted along, evidently conscious of budding manhood. He was stopped by a little girl, who could not have been over 6 years old. She looked up at him and exclaimed earnestly, "Oh, don't smoke cigarettes. If you do, you won't go to heaven when you die. If you stop I'll give you a penny." The boy wouldn't take the cent, but he threw the cigarette away, and promised never to smoke one again.

A gold coin depreciates 5 per cent. in value in 16 years use.

TILLMAN CHARGES BRIBERY.

Simonton Reverses Himself--Goff for the Republicans.

Senator Tillman was delivering an educational address at Micanopy, Fla., at the time the decisions of Judges Goff and Simonton were rendered. A correspondent of the Jacksonville Times-Union saw him next day and asked what he thought of the new turn of affairs.

"I have not seen the papers," the senator replied, "and, while I anticipated the result, I have no direct knowledge in regard to the decisions."

The correspondent handed the senator The Times-Union containing the report. After he had read the report, the senator said:

"In regard to the registration law, there is no general election in South Carolina this year, and no franchise will be exercised only in the election of delegates to the constitutional convention, called by the last legislature after having been voted upon by the people at the last general election last November. There is evidently a conspiracy afoot, and this dirty Republican—Judge Goff—was brought from his home in West Virginia into another circuit to do the work which is hoped will overthrow the rule of the people in our State. Simonton, in whose circuit South Carolina is, was, I think, a member of the legislature at the time the registration law was passed in 1882. It was good enough then because he and his clique governed the State. It has been in force for 13 years, and is only sought to be overthrown now because the people at three consecutive elections have been indicating a fixed purpose to permanently retire certain old-time leaders. I do not know what the United States supreme court will do, but I do know this: the constitutional convention will be held. It will be composed of white men principally, who will take care of South Carolina and see that white supremacy is maintained within her borders."

"What about the dispensary?" was asked.

"Judge Simonton has once declared that this law was constitutional," replied the senator. "He has practically reversed himself. From the sweeping nature of the injunction, I am almost ready to think that in going so far in trying to overthrow the law, the judge has been improperly influenced. The dispensary system is so popular in the State, and is being watched with such keen interest by the people outside with the almost absolute certainty of being adopted by other States, and the barkeepers and liquor manufacturers could well afford to raise \$1,000,000 to buy a judge or two. Congress has declared by enactment that liquor upon arrival in a State shall be subject to the laws of that State to the same as that manufactured therein. The supreme court has time and time again affirmed the right of a State to control liquor in any way it saw proper. It behooves the lovers of temperance throughout the United States to make their influence felt and heard at this crisis, for experience has shown the dispensary system to be the best political solution of the liquor problem."

"These two judicial decisions, if sustained practically destroys the vestige of States' rights and Jefferson's prophecy that the Federal judiciary would be the means of overthrowing our liberties and destroying local self-government will have been fulfilled. Governor Evans's plan to resist the injunction is the quickest and best way to have the supreme court pass upon it."

"What do you think of the outcome?"

"Unless the supreme court shall also prove subservient to the liquor interests, and lend itself to the dirty work which these judges have in hand, they will interpret the act of congress according to the English language, and the law will certainly continue its beneficent work in reducing drunkenness and liquor drinking. The judges by their decisions and injunctions, and congressmen by their votes, are rapidly making this country a despotism in which the rights and interests of the masses are of as little moment as they are in Russia. Unless the people bestir themselves, the lawyers and judges will sell our liberties to the corporations and the money power. But I am glad to see them pressing their schemes, for it will only bring upon us the revolution that must come sooner or later."

THE LAW STILL GOOD.—Governor Evans this morning had a long talk with me about the dispensary situation, and he says that it is all foolishness to think that the dispensary law will go under, even if the Inter-State clause is struck out of the law. It will not allow the barkeepers to resume their business, and it will not permit "blind tigers" to be run by those who wish to take the risk. As a matter of fact it is the intention of the State to push the fight against the "blind tigers" more vigorously than ever, and if possible to get a few penitentiary sentences, and they think that this will have a most decided effect. Governor Evans holds that under the law, as defined by Judge Simonton, there must be some one to decide whether the liquor is for personal use of the party to whom it is shipped, and the constables will judge that matter until there is some other construction.

Going on Governor Evans said: "Section 22 of the dispensary law will be more rigidly enforced than ever." (This is the section which gives judges the right to imprison for violations of

injunctions on contempt proceedings.) "While this contempt business is going on we will see if the State circuit judges are not entitled to as much respect as the United States circuit judges. The people are determinedly in favor of this law, and I will see that it has a fair trial and every power put in my hands will be used to give it. Any town whose mayor, aldermen or city police refuse to enforce the dispensary law, as it is their duty to do, will be placed under the provisions of the metropolitan police law."

Governor Evans went on to say that there was no use for the "blind tigers" to try and get under cover at this time. Incidentally it might be mentioned that if the towns are put under metropolitan police it would save the dispensary system a great deal, in the matter of expenses, as it now costs about \$75,000 to sustain the force, not to count the extras that are being paid for—August Kohr, in The News and Courier of Saturday.

AT THE CRUCIFIXION.

Planets in the Same Position This Spring as When Christ Died.

If some astronomical calculations recently made may be believed, the planets which gravitate around the sun were last month, about Easter time, in relatively the same position in the heavens as they were in the spring of 29, A. D., which is the year when Jesus Christ is generally supposed to have been crucified and to have risen from the dead. Not since that time has this coincidence occurred.

Each of the heavenly bodies has its own time for making a revolution around the sun, and these times differ widely. The earth, as everybody knows, goes around once every year. Mercury takes but a quarter of this time, while Saturn is employed for nearly 30 years in making a circuit of the path laid out for him. Consequently, in all these hundreds of years, they have never yet moved into the same positions which they occupied in the month of April, 29, A. D. Neither are they expected by astronomers to be in exactly the same position as they were then, for the attraction of other planets and of the sun has caused variations in their respective cycles during the 18 centuries.

It is for this reason that the recurrence of a similar condition of the skies possess no scientific interest to the astronomer. But to the millions of Christian people all over the world it is an important coincidence that they should have seen during Holy Week of this year, the heavenly bodies almost as they were when Christ looked up to them nightly in the rapid succession of events which marked the fortnight preceding his crucifixion.

That the last year which Christ spent upon earth was really the year 29, A. D., is a question which is not settled. It and each of the four years succeeding it have been named by Biblical scholars who have compared the chronology of events mentioned in the New Testament, with the events as given in Josephus and the best Roman historians. Christ is supposed to have been 33 years old when his life upon this earth was ended. His crucifixion occurs in the 33rd year of what is called the Christian Era. But the Christian Era was first invented by a learned monk called Dionysius Exiguus, and it is now admitted that its invention or made an error in his calculation of at least four years, and that the birth of Christ really occurred in the year which is now called 4, B. C. This would make 29, A. D., the most probable date for his crucifixion, but the Encyclopedia Britannica and a number of German scholars favor 30 A. D., and this would make Easter-tide of next year, and not this year, the date at which the similar position of the planets can be recalled.—Baltimore Sun.

SUPERSTITIONS ABOUT FIRE.—Where a fire burns upon the hearth the German say that lightning never strikes.

In Cambridge, England, there is a curious belief to the effect that a fire started by a lightning stroke can only be quenched with milk.

In Devonshire if a fire burns blue and dead it is thought to be a forerunner of death or disaster in that house.

When a Russian family moves from one house to another they always rake all the fire from the hearth of the old domicile and carry it in a closed pot to their new residence.

The Sicilians say that fire will not burn a man born on St. Paul's Day (January 25.) but that if a woman be burned upon that day the sore will never heal, and will eventually cause her death.

In Greece, when one peasant borrows fire from another's hearth to kindle his own, the owner of the fire must accompany the borrower to his home "to see the fire blaze," otherwise the man making the loan will have his house and goods destroyed by the "devouring element."

In Wales and in Cornwall miners burn their hats upon the birth of a male child; if a girl be born, his neighbors burn it for him.

The next United States senate will be constituted as follows: Republicans, 42; Democrats, 39; Populists, 6. This gives the Populists the balance of power. How the senate will stand on the financial question has not yet been ascertained; but it is believed that a majority of the members are for the free coinage of silver.