

THE PRISONER'S STORY.

HOW THE OPINION OF THE COURT CHANGED WHEN IT HEARD IT.

And the Judge Riddled the Portrait of the "Popular Freeholder" with Bullets—The Sad Story of a Ruined Family and a Father's Desperate Act.

A few winters since, while travelling in the South, I found myself one afternoon in a little village, the country seat of a county, Virginia. Learning that the court was then in sitting, and that a murder case was on the docket for the next day, I decided to remain in town and attend the trial. On the following morning I made my way to the Court House, and early though it was, found the room well filled. I managed to find a seat beside an old gentleman, who gave me the history of the case to be tried.

About a year before, a stranger of very pleasing appearance and manner, had come to the place. He gave his name as the Rev. A. L. Holt, and showed letters of recommendation from prominent pastors throughout the State. There was but one church in the place, a union society, and being at the time without a pastor the stranger was invited to preach one Sunday. As the result of that one sermon he was engaged as the permanent pastor of the church not only as a preacher but as a social lion.

He literally took the quiet, aristocratic village by storm. The little chapel soon became too small to accommodate those who came to hear this wonderful man preach; and so the Court House was opened for the meetings, and every Sunday was filled to overflowing. Men sat in the windows, or perched on the trees that they might see and hear.

One Sabbath morning, about two months before the story opens, the pastor had taken for his text the words, "Be sure your sin will find you out." When the services were about half through, an old man was seen climbing through the window just back of the speaker. As the house, as well as all of the windows were filled, nothing was thought of the matter until, suddenly, there was a report of a revolver, and a cloud of blue smoke was seen rising above the desk.

As the smoke cleared away the preacher was seen lying on the floor, with the old man standing over him. For a moment the throng seemed stunned, and then a tempest of rage and wrath burst forth. The murderer was seized by the sheriff who with much difficulty, finally managed to get him from the angry crowd, into a cell.

Scarcely had the old gentleman finished his story, when the court was summoned and soon after the prisoner was brought in. He seemed to be a man of about 65 years, tall, and of commanding appearance. The two months in jail had not broken his spirit and he stood at the bar with head erect.

After some delay, a jury was empaneled, and as I looked at the hard, set faces in the jury box, I could not repress a feeling of pity for the poor old man, murderer though he might be.

On the wall behind the judge, just above the window, was a large picture of the murdered man; a handsome face; one over which a woman might rave and yet be forgiven.

Yet with all its beauty, there was something in that face that puzzled me. As the old man lifted his eyes to it, I saw such a look of joy and triumph as never before or since have I seen on human countenance.

The prisoner had refused the services of the lawyer furnished him by the State. The clerk read the indictment, and the Court asked the usual question. "What say you to the indictment found against you, are you guilty, or not guilty?"

"I am guilty," answered the old man, "I shot the feller and killed him too. Yer needn't have any trial, for I done it fast enough. Yer can hang me, for yours is the power to kill, and these here good folks want to see the man what shot their parson strung up. But before you pass the sentence; I want to tell yer something of my story, I don't expect yer will believe it, and I don't care if yer don't. I am asking for no mercy; I don't want none of it. I want to hang, for I am guilty, and the quicker I get out of this world the better for all. My home was in Connecticut, I was born and raised there. I'm a wheelwright and have worked like a trooper all my life, till I found, at last, that I'd got something laid by. I had a wife, who was one of God's own angels; and I had a boy an gal; twins they was, and we was the happiest family on the earth. Heaven kinder seemed to smile on us, and the future looked bright. So things went on till the children got most grown up. Nell was the prettiest gal in all the town, an 'twould bother you to find a smarter boy than Joe.

"By this time a young feller by the name of Frost come to teach our school, a nice, likely looking man he was too. After he had been in town a week or so, he come into the shop one night and asked me if I would board him, for he didn't like the place where he was.

"So I took him in, and from the first, he an' Joe was the best of friends, an' after a bit, he begun to shine up to Nellie a little. I didn't make no objections, for he seemed like a purty good feller, and I seed that Nell sot a heap of store by him.

"One morning long in the spring, Frost didn't come to breakfast, but as he often went out for a walk early in the morning, I didn't think nothing of it, 'till wile come in looking kinder white around the gills, and with a piece of paper in her hand. Wal, the gist of the matter was, Frost had so bamboozled my little gal that he had got her to run off with him. I knew 'twouldn't do no good to try to follow them. They would come back again pretty soon, and everything would be all right; but the spring turned fall and they didn't come and I began to get worried, and ma began to fade and droop like.

"Long in the fall, I wanted to use some money, so I went to L—to draw out of the bank, but the cashier told me that I hadn't none there. Said that Frost had brought an order from me asking for the whole deposit, and as I had sent money by him afore, they thought 'twas all right. I didn't say nothing to him 'bout the thing, but I kept up a pile of thinking all the time. One night in the next spring, while working in the shop, I seed a white face at the winder and opening the door quick I caught my Nellie in my arms, but she didn't look no more like my little gal than nothing.

"Wal, 'twas the same old story you have heard agin and agin. There had been a fraud marriage ceremony, and when he got tired of her, he told her she warnt no wife of his, and had turned her off, an she came back to her old father and mother. Afore long her baby was born, but it didn't live more than a day or two; and we buried them together, my Nellie and her baby.

"Joe he vowed he'd shoot Frost the first time he seed him. 'Bout a week after Nellie was buried, Joe he went to L—and long late in the evening I heard the horse come running inter the yard. I went out ter see if anything was the trouble, and there my Joe lay on the bottom of the wagon with a bullet hole in his breast. He just whispered "Frost" an was gone. When I got him inter the house and his mother seed that he was dead, she jest gave one groan and fell on the floor and was gone too. I put the police on the track of the devil what did it all, but they didn't 'mount to much, and I got so wild that I couldn't stand it any longer, and so I started out after the man myself. After a long time I got a little track of him and followed him for more than a year, and then I lost all trace again. 'Bout two months ago, I was going through this place one Sunday morning when I seed the crowd round this house. I couldn't get nigh the door, and I found all the winders was all full, till I got round back and seed one empty.

"I got up under it when I heard the fellow I was looking for, say, 'Be sure yer sin will find yer out, and I climbed up and shot him. That's the whole on it. My work is done. I ain't got nothin' ter live fer. I want ter die. Hang me after the sun goes down. I've broke the law; make me suffer fer it."

It is impossible to give the reader any adequate idea of the old man's story; to be appreciated it must have been listened to. And through the recital, the tears ran down his cheeks, his huge frame shook from the tempest within; his tones were now plaintive, as he spoke of his loved ones, and now strong and full of wrath as he denounced the wretch that had ruined his once happy home.

My own eyes were wet, and I was not ashamed that they were. I looked at the jury, their faces too, were wet. I looked around the room; not a dry eye could I see. The judge fising, drew from his pocket a revolver, and turning toward the picture on the wall, riddled it with bullets. A mighty cheer went up from the throng, then turning to the jury, the judge asked for a verdict. In an instant came the answer, "Not guilty."

The following summer I was riding past a cemetery, just out of a village in Connecticut. Lying face downward, between two graves was the form of a man. Passing the same way later in the day, I saw the man still lying between the graves. Hitching my horse, I went into the yard and spoke to the man, but received no answer. Turning him over, I sprang back in surprise, for I recognized the man I had seen on trial for his life the winter before.

Wandering back to his old home, his work all done, he had dropped down between the graves of his wife and child and had falling asleep; that long, deep sleep which no mortal voice can disturb and no human power unlock. Was he guilty of murder?—Portland Transcript.

Inquire of the Capitalist.
Architect (displaying the plans)—Here is the front elevation, with the outside window and circular gallery; this is the east elevation, showing oriel tower.

Teddy (enormously interested in the new house)—And where are the two mortgages pa said he was going to put on?—Munsey's Weekly.

A Surprise.
Wife (to husband who has been absent during the night)—I am ever so glad you left your pistol with me, darling. A burglar was here last night and I surprised him. Husband—You brave little woman! Did you shoot him?
"No, I threw it at him."—Detroit Free Press.

The Union City Hotel—See Advt.

DIRECTING THE WORK.

SUP'T. ARTHUR M. MAGEE OF THE LIVESTOCK DEPARTMENT.

He has had Considerable Experience and will be the Right Man in the Place—The Horse Races apt to Keep him Busy—Looking after the Buildings.

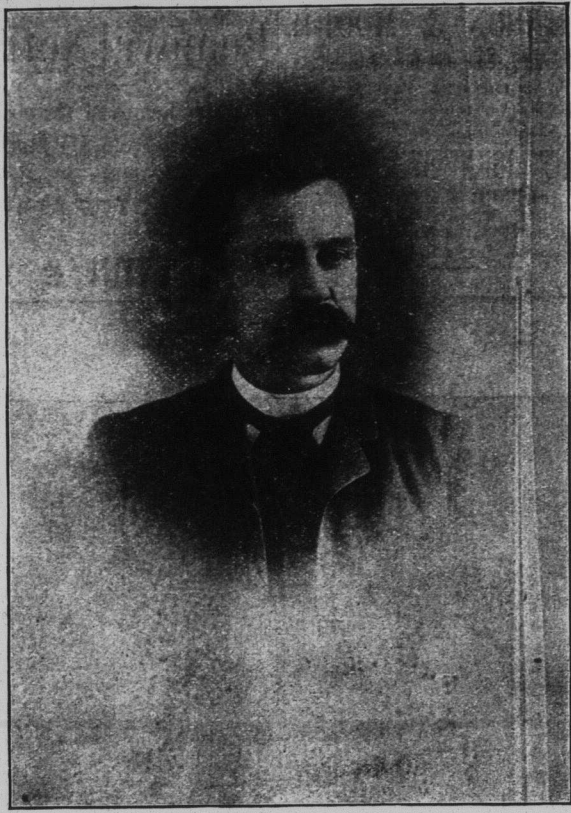
Mr. Arthur M. Magee, the secretary of the agricultural society, has had his hands full lately superintending the work at Moosepath and making ready for the coming of exhibits.

His appointment was a late one—almost

a small way, he has had something to do with them, since he has been secretary of the agricultural society.

He has a first-class director in the president of the society, and the chairman of the live stock committee, Mr. J. M. Johnson, who has given much time to the work. In fact as great harmony reigns here as in all other departments of the work of the exhibition, every person directing his best efforts to one end, its success.

One of the attractions that Mr. Magee will have to look after is the horse races, which take two days of the time allowed

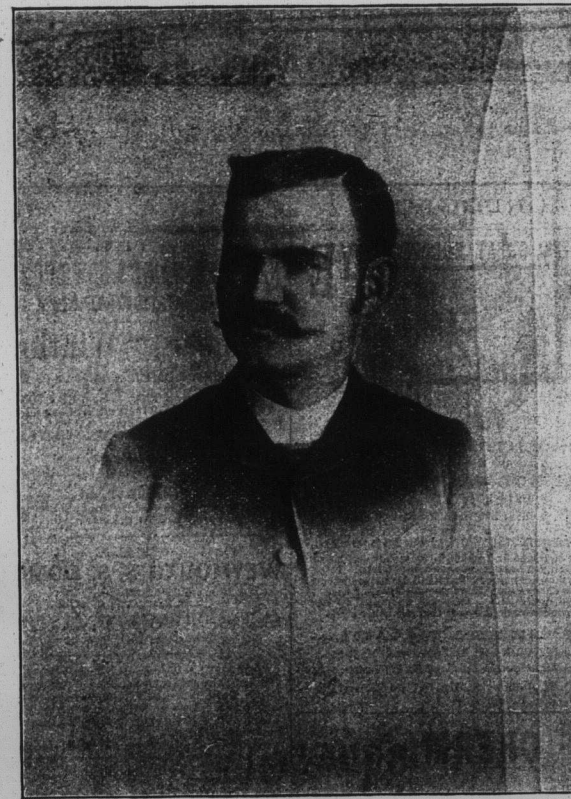


SUPERINTENDENT ARTHUR M. MAGEE.

too late for PROGRESS to include him in the lists of officials—and he has had no time to lose since.

Mr. Magee should know something about the live stock of an exhibition, because, in

for the live stock show. The prospects are that they will be as good as any held here for a long time. If they are it will be a further cause for the appreciation of the people.



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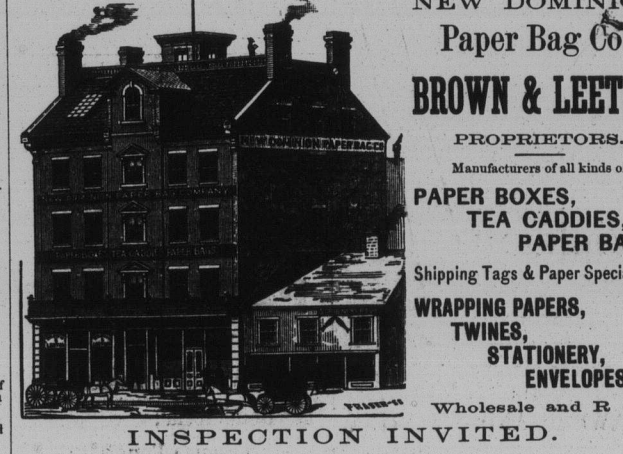
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