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Literature.

SAVED BY A NEGATIVE.

"Father," said my son Donald to me one day, "how do they take these wonderful photographs of lightning flashes that are printed in the magazines? They don't know when a flash is coming, and can't make it stay while they photograph it can they?"

"Not likely," I laughingly replied; "the lightning 'takes' itself. If there is a thunderstorm at night all that is necessary is to put a sensitive plate in the camera, uncover the lens and point it at the sky, when the next flash of lightning will record itself upon the plate which must then be developed in the usual way."

"Is that all?" returned Donald. "How very easy. Couldn't we take some? Do let us try."

"All right," I replied. "But first of all we must wait for a thunderstorm, and when there is another at night get your photograph traps ready and we'll see what we can do."

The marvellous photos of lightning flashes that appear in the Strand had excited Donald's morbid curiosity, leading to the conversation with which this story commences.

We had not long to wait for a thunderstorm, for on that very night raged one of exceptional violence. It began about eleven o'clock and Donald who had retired to bed some time before, burst into my room, fully dressed, and shouted:

"Come on, father; there's a tremendous thunderstorm coming up, and such flashes of lightning! I'm off to the dark room to put some plates in the slides, so get the camera ready. The front bedroom window is the best place to expose from."

By the time I had made the necessary arrangements at the window Donald rejoined me, bringing three double dark slides loaded with the sensitive plates.

"We ought to get at least one successful photo out of this lot," said he.

Soon the storm, which had gradually been drawing nearer, burst over us with terrible fury, the lightning flashing with amazing brilliancy, the thunder rolling with deafening roars, one by one the plates were exposed under conditions that justified the expectations of good results and Donald was in high glee. Just as I was about to expose the sixth—and last—plate he said: "why don't you take a flash-light of the common with that one? Illuminated by the celestial electric light, you know. Point the camera towards the centre of the common, just for fun. I'd like to see how it comes out."

I acted upon his suggestion, and no sooner had I got the camera into position than a flash of lightning, as vivid and brilliant in its intensity as to momentarily blind us and bring from us a fearsome and terrified "oh!" imprinted the scene on the sensitive plate.

"I'm glad that's the last plate," said Donald, when the deafening peal of thunder allowed him to make himself heard, "for I should not care to stand at the window during another such flash as that. Shall we develop the plates to-night?"

"Not if I know it," I replied. "Be off to bed now, and we'll do them the first thing in the morning."

But we didn't; for we were awakened early by a violent ringing of the bell, and upon going down in my dressing gown and opening the door I beheld the village constable, with white, haggard face, on which fear was strongly marked in every line.

"Oh, sir," he gasped, "will you come over on the common with me! There's the corpse of a man lying there, and I fear he's been murdered, for there's a knife stuck in his breast. I want you to come as a witness before I touch the body."

"Lying on the common! Murdered! Impossible!" I said. "But wait a moment till I have dressed and I'll come with you."

The constable's tale was only too true, for there, lying on the damp grass—his hair and clothes sodden with last night's rain; with up-turned face, and with the blade of a large knife, buried deep in his heart—lay the corpse of Ivan Solenski, the handsome young tenant of the Hermitage, and sutor for the heart and hand of the lovely Marie Devereux of Forest Hill. While the constable guarded the body I hurried for the doctor, who upon his arrival declared that life had been extinct for some hours.

"Good heavens!" he ejaculated, "this knife belongs to Gerald Merrilee! See, here are the initials!" and there on the silver mounted handle, were the letters "G. M."

That evening Gerald Merrilee, the handsome, well-built young owner of "The Home Farm," and Solenski's rival for the affections of the beautiful Marie Devereux, was arrested on a charge of murder, upon the sworn infestation of the butler of "Forest Hall," who deposed that on the previous evening Merrilee had had a stern interview with Miss Devereux, in which Solenski's name was mentioned several times, and that Merrilee had suddenly dashed out of the house muttering: "I'll kill him! I'll kill him!" Upon this evidence and that of the knife found in the dead man's breast Merrilee was committed for trial at the

forthcoming assizes about to be held at the Guildhall, Winchester.

III

Doubtless the reader remembers the account of the trial, which was published so fully in the daily papers at the time, but in case he may not recall it to mind I might here briefly give Merrilee's defence. In spite of the strong proofs of his guilt, he persistently declared himself innocent and pleaded "not guilty." He fully admitted the truth of the evidence of the butler of "Forest Hall," and his counsel explained that he had that evening proposed for the hand of Miss Devereux, but had been rejected, upon which he had accused her of favoring the suit of Solenski, and when she admitted that she had that day accepted Solenski his jealousy and rage over-powered him—being a very hot-tempered fellow—causing him to rush from the house muttering the terribly incriminating threats now used as evidence against him.

After leaving "Forest Hall" reason gradually prevailed, and he proceeded to go home, his path lying across the common in front of my house.

Being anxious to arrive there before the threatened storm broke, and partly to cool his fiery temper, he ran; but, his foot catching in the stump of a furze bush, caused him to fall heavily to the ground and with such force as to render him unconscious.

He declared that his pockets must have been rifled by some malicious passage while he lay in that state, for whereas he fell on his knees, when he recovered consciousness he was lying on his back. He reached home too weak and dazed to think or observe, but great was his surprise the next morning to find his pockets empty; watch, chain, purse, loose cash, hunting knife (which he always carried) and everything all gone.

Counsel dwelt strongly upon this fact, and maintained that the accused was not the culprit, but that when lying unconscious the real murderer robbed him, taking among other things, the knife used with such fatal effect upon Solenski—whose pockets he had rifled—leaving the murderous weapon in the dead man's breast, to divert suspicion from himself to its innocent owner.

The jury smiled, in that supercilious, superior sort of way common to the British juror at the palpable weakness of the defence; and after a short consideration they returned their awful verdict: "Guilty!" Gerald Merrilee was sentenced "to death."

IV

Some time after the foregoing events was sitting up waiting the arrival of my wife and son who were returning from London by a midnight train, or, rather an early morning one—reaching Dean station at three a. m., after which they had to drive the intervening five miles home.

It was weary work waiting. I had finished reading my novel and was looking about for something to do, when I suddenly thought of the plates we had exposed on the night of the thunderstorm, and had lain undeveloped and forgotten until this moment.

"The very thing!" I exclaimed, "I'll set to work and develop them at once. It will pass the time nicely."

The first plate developed was a failure. Why, I don't know for I immediately threw it away and commenced another. One of the plates was a bit of a mystery to me, for it was a negative of the landscape in front of our house and I wondered when it was taken, until I remembered that Donald had asked me to take it as a flash-light landscape view with the last plate on that memorable evening of the storm. As development proceeded and the objects became more and more distinct, I was surprised to see several human figures portrayed in it. With a magnifying glass I gave it closer examination, the result of which made me tremble with excitement.

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed, "this is a photo of the murder of Solenski!" and indeed it was; at the identical moment that the crime was committed. There was the whole scene unerringly depicted on the plate by that brilliant flash of lightning! I examined the plate more minutely, and the result was startling; in the extreme; there was the murderer in the very act of plunging the knife in Solenski's breast.

The faces of both men were plainly distinguishable, and—that of the murderer was not Gerald Merrilee, but of a short, thick-set man with a heavy beard; and there, farther in the background, was an inanimate form, with upturned face lying upon the earth.

"Good heavens!" I again exclaimed. "So Merrilee is innocent after all! How wonderful that we should have this photograph, and thus be able to prove his innocence. Tomorrow I will go to Winchester with it, and procure his release."

Suddenly I realized as if shot, "Tomorrow, did I say? Why, tomorrow is the day of the execution! It is 'to-morrow' now for it is after three o'clock. In five hours it will all be over; another victim sacrificed to miscarriage of justice. What was I to do? Twenty miles from Winchester with no means of communicating with the authorities to avert the tragedy which would soon be enacted—here was I with evidence that would save an innocent man's life; and that man a dear friend, too!"

Just then my wife and son returned and were alarmed to see my agitated state, but upon explaining matters, my wife's ready wit suggested that I ride to Winchester on my bicycle. The very thing!

At 6.45 that same morning I rode up to the Winchester jail, and demanded to see the governor immediately, and upon being admitted to his presence, showed him the heaven-sent witness, which he deemed of such importance that he telegraphed to the Home Secretary giving him details of my marvellous photograph, with the result that in this eleventh hour Gerald Merrilee was relieved—he was saved!

The police had my negative enlarged and sent copies of the photograph—whereupon the features of the murderer were clearly portrayed—to all the police stations in the kingdom, with the result that within ten days the real culprit was arrested in the foreign quarter of Soho, and upon being charged of the murder, confessed his guilt, stating that Solenski was an absconding nihilist, who had fled to England to avoid carrying out a horrible task imposed upon him by the particular rules of that dreaded society.

By so doing his life became forfeited and to the murderer was allotted the duty of carrying out the society's vengeance. Hoping to escape, Solenski, had lived in retirement in our village, but was tracked by his inexorable executioner, who stated that on the night of the great storm, he had come across the prostrate and senseless form of Merrilee, from whom he took everything available, including that fatal knife with which he stabbed his victim whom he accidentally met immediately after leaving Merrilee just as the defending counsel had surmised at the trial. In due time Merrilee received a full and unconditional pardon and I should not at any time be surprised to hear of his engagement to Miss Devereux.

Make Pets of Your Animals.

All domestic animals, even fowls, respond to kindly treatment. Give a horse a piece of apple or sugar a few times and he will expect it and whinny for it. Watch your swine while they feed and they will thrive. Feed a hen a few times out of your pocket with bits of crusts and she will watch you and expect it and even take it out of your hand.

To talk of "babbling" your cattle or live stock is nonsense. You should give extra care to all domestic animals, and then make them mind. I have in mind a Morgan horse owned near me, who when he is naughty and is spoken to will not flinch or show his displeasure, even when cut with a whip. He seems to know why he is corrected. You cannot love animals as you do your wife and children, but you should treat them with affection in kind. A collie dog will watch your face for orders or approval or the opposite. He will want to be noticed when you return after an absence of a few days. Fail to notice him and he will slink away, head down, tail between his legs, and will not come near you for some days.

Count; anyway, master doesn't even have a word or a look for poor me." We talk about "pet stock"—that is, such living things as are kept more for pleasure than profit. All live stock should be pet stock, and they should be made to understand and know it; it is not difficult to do this. Fail to do it and neither you nor your stock will thrive.

Seeding a Lawn.

"To have a good lawn," says Rural New Yorker, "the work must be started in good form, ground well pulverized and raked smoothly after having been carefully dug and well manured. After seeding it should be rolled and some chemical fertilizer applied to give growth. We have had a large experience in seeding for grass, as we usually seed some acres every year, and the best results have been obtained by seeding during the month of September, which we find to be the best time with us. We always use Kentucky blue grass and red top, which have never failed to give us a splendid yield of grass."

A Singing Squirrel.

It was several years ago that, while gunning one day in the woods near Dover, N. H., my attention was drawn to what seemed the singing of a bird somewhere among the branches at a little distance away. The note was so peculiar that I turned my steps toward the sound to see what species of bird was making it. It was some time before I could trace the note to its source. Then I found out that it came from a red squirrel sitting upright on a bough, singing away as if in love with its own melody. At sight of me he stopped, but as I remained perfectly still he presently piped up again.

I should compare it to a single note of a canary usually prolonged, with no variations except in rising or falling and increase or decrease of volume. It may have been a call to mate. It certainly had nothing in it of the scolding character associated with the chattering of the northern red squirrel. There was no movement of the throat that I could discover in the production of the sound.

From time to time he would stop his singing, and presently, after three or four minutes, would start up again, always in the beginning with a low note which increased in volume until shortly before the next pause. I remained on the spot a half hour listening, and went away leaving the squirrel singing away with as vigorous a note as ever.—New York Sun.

A Simple Plan.

A pail of water or milk set out upon the ground for a calf, sheep, cow or horse is quite liable to be tipped over by the animal and the water spilled. A simple plan suggested in the Farm Journal is to have a sharpened stick and drive it down beside the pail, inside the bail, whenever the pail is set out with water in it.

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