

MODES OF INFLICTING CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.

To begin with the ancients, and first of all the Assyrians; the disinterred palaces, besides bringing to light many revelations of their political, religious, and social habits, and the extent of their civilization, also show us their mode of treating captive rebels. One, the most dreadful, was the infliction of impalement, but not that impalement which prevailed in later times in the East and among the savages of Africa, whereby the sufferer was exposed to a lingering death of agony. The Assyrians pointed a stake at one end, and having planted the other end firmly in the ground, placed the criminal with the pit of his stomach on the point, and so transfixed his body. Death must have followed after no long interval; whereas the impalement of the later Arabs by red-hot hooks pierced into the shoulder must have proved as horrible a mode of punishment as could be devised. Usually the Assyrians either decapitated their criminals, or crushed their heads with a mace. In either case one blow would be enough. The flaying of the skin is sometimes represented, but that was probably done upon those who had already been put to death, and not on the living body. The Jews were singularly merciful in their methods of execution, being probably restrained by their divine religion and law. Their usual mode, that of stoning, depended entirely upon the executioners. It might be fearfully barbarous, all the limbs being mangled and crushed before life was forced out; so it was with St. Stephen, who offered up more than one prayer during the process; or insensibility might quickly stay suffering. Hanging was also not unknown. This was something like crucifixion, being not the hanging by the neck, but the criminal was first put to death in some other way, and it was only his lifeless body that was so treated by way of contumely. Nor was it allowed to remain exposed beyond sunset. This regulation shows that by hanging could not be meant the crucifixion or impalement of the living body. Burning with fire was inflicted upon the family of Samson's wife by the Philistines, and Judah ordered it when he suspected his daughter-in-law. The daughter of a priest who went astray was condemned to this death by the law of Moses, but the execution of Achan and his family shows what the punishment really was. The sufferer was not burnt alive; he was first stoned, and afterwards his body was exposed to the fire. Decapitation seems to have been practised under the kings. It was the duty of the captain of the guard to execute great criminals. So Benahiah was required to do his work to Adonijah, Joab, and Shimei; so in like manner among the Egyptians, Potiphar, captain of the guard, was really chief of the slaughterers. This post was one of considerable importance in those days, as it was also in France up to the Revolution. It would not be quite fair now to compare Potiphar and Benahiah to Calcraft. Yet in most cases they probably appointed a deputy, just as now it is the business of the sheriff to execute the sentence of the law, although he usually finds a deputy to do his work for him. The Babylonians were naturally more cruel than the Assyrians, probably owing to the infusion of white blood into the composition of their race. Among them we first hear of the fearful death of burning alive, not only in the case of the three children, when the victims were hurled into the midst of a blazing furnace, which would, had the fire been allowed its power, have brought their sufferings to a speedy end. Jeremiah tells us of certain false prophets whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire. Another new form of execution was first devised by them. The den of lions into which Daniel was thrown by the Median viceroy of Cyrus, was probably inherited from the Babylonians.

THE ONLY CHILD SAVED FROM THE "VILLE DU HAVRE."

A Paris correspondent, speaking of the "Ville du Havre" disaster, says: "Of the fourteen young children on board, only one was saved. As she came to the surface she instinctively caught at the first object floating past, and said to a lady who hung to the other side, 'I can't die, so!' A wilful, petted child, she even now struggled against the general fate. Her own story of the shipwreck is shorter than many, but full of pathos: 'There was a great crash, and they called to come on the other side; then I was in the water—she does not remember having gone down—and I clung to a pair of steps. I was getting tired, very tired, but Miss—told me to hold on, and I held down; then a boat came and took us off. I don't remember going on board the big ship, but they gave me some brandy; then I was dreadfully sick, and they took off all my clothes and put on me a man's shirt, and put me to bed.' She hugs her doll, and looks up with her large blue eyes, which never until now saddened; and remembers and seems to mourn over the fate of a kitten which floated past and she wished she could have saved."

A SUCCEDANEUM FOR COAL.

A Belgian paper publishes a letter from Hasselt, announcing the discovery of a succedaneum for coal. The letter says: "Two days ago a peasant of our neighbourhood went the round of all the coffee-houses with a sack containing earth. He said that he had found the means of heating rooms with that substance impregnated with a solution of soda. He made the experiment before a crowd of people, and succeeded. Next day the whole town was in great excitement. Everybody had tried the new discovery and I did the same. Following the man's instructions, I filled a scuttle three-quarters with small coal, and the remaining fourth with vegetable mould; I then sent for a half penny worth of carbonate of soda, which I dissolved in half a litre of water, and then mixed up the solution with the rest. This quantity has been sufficient to warm my room from 2 p. m. till 7 p. m."

DON CARLOS AND THE CARLISTS.

Kate Field, writing from Spain, quotes the opinion of an English officer, who was also war correspondent for a London daily, respecting the Spanish Pretendu and his troops. What did he think of them? He didn't think of them. They were not worth thinking about. They were a ragged lot of good-for-nothings, and as for fighting of Spain, it was a farce. "Do they postpone a battle on account of inclement weather?" I asked. "Well, yes, it is almost as bad as that. Don Carlos is a coward. He hasn't slept since he crossed the frontier. There never was such a ridiculous war, and its continuance proves the weakness of the Madrid Government. But the Carlists can't succeed, you know. They have neither money nor arms. I recently heard a French Legitimist bet 1,000 francs that Don Carlos would be in Madrid in twelve months. The bet was taken by one of Don Carlos's own officers."

DOWN INTO THE DUST.

BY JOAQUIN MILLER.

Is it worth while that we jostle a brother,
Bearing his load on the rough road of life?
Is it worth while that we jeer at each other
In blackness of heart?—that we war to the knife?
God pity us all in our pitiful strife.

God pity us all as we jostle each other;
God pardon us all for the triumphs we feel
When a fellow goes down 'neath his load on the heather,
Pierced to the heart: words are keener than steel,
And mightier far for woe or for weal.

Were it not well, in this brief little journey
On over the i-thus, down into the tide,
We give him a fish instead of a serpent,
Ere folding the hands to be and abide
Forever and aye in dust at his side?

Look at the roses saluting each other;
Look at the herds all at piece on the plain—
Man and man only makes war on his brother,
And laughs in his heart at his peril and pain;
Shamed by the beasts that go down on the plain.

Is it worth while that we battle to humble
Some poor fellow-soldier down into the dust?
God pity us all! Time oft soon will tumble
All of us together like leaves in a gust,
Humbled indeed down into the dust.

TAKEN AT THE FLOOD.

A NEW NOVEL.

By the Author of "Lady Audley's Secret," "Strangers and Pilgrims," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XXXVI.—Continued.

"I have no objection to Mr. Perriam's staying here," she said carelessly. She held Mordred Perriam of little more importance than a piece of animated furniture—wearisome on occasions, but hardly worthy of consideration at any time. It could matter very little whether he were in one room or another. Mordred stayed, therefore, seated in a warm chair by the hearth, rubbing his withered old hands, and shivering a little now and then, or occasionally breathing troubled sighs. Mr. Stimpson departed, after promising to telegraph to a London physician directly he got back to Monkhampton, promising also to be at Perriam Place by eight o'clock next morning. Mr. Bain went down stairs with the doctor, but declared his intention of remaining at Perriam till a late hour.

"I have no patients waiting for me," he said, "so I'll stay as long as I can, and see how Sir Aubrey goes on. You might call at my door as you go by, and tell my daughters what has happened. They might be alarmed if I were later than they expected."

Mr. Stimpson promised to do his neighbour this kindness. Mr. Bain went into the dining-room, where all was laid ready for Sir Aubrey's small family. There were the three covers set forth in all accustomed pomp, far apart on the Great Sahara of table cloth. Mr. Bain rang the bell with an air of being quite at home in that spacious chamber.

"Bring me some dinner," he said to the butler. "And you'd better send a tray up to Lady Perriam's dressing-room. She won't come down stairs any more this evening, I dare say."

Lady Perriam was in no humour for refreshment of a substantial character. She told the servant to bring her some tea and take the dinner tray away with him.

She was writing a letter when the maid went in. Sir Aubrey's dressing-room opened out of the bedroom on one side, and on the other communicated with that narrow passage which led to Mordred's apartments. Lady Perriam's dressing-room was a small oak-panelled chamber on the other side of the bedroom, a chamber that in days gone by had been used as an oratory by a certain Lady Perriam of Roman Catholic faith and Jacobite leanings. It was a narrow slip of an apartment, with a small fireplace in one of the angles, like those one sees in some of the closets at Hampton Court. Three dark blue oriental jars adorned the high narrow chimney-piece, a fine carving of the Perriam coat of arms stood boldly out upon the time-darkened panel above them. Sombre green damask curtains shrouded the one narrow window and its deep-cushioned window seat. The washstand and dressing-table of darkest mahogany, were small and inconvenient. A Chip-pendale pembroke table, with the famous claw and ball feet, filled the centre of the room, a tall narrow wardrobe occupied the end wall, and, with a secretaire and two roomy old arm-chairs, completed the furniture of the apartment. Seen by the light of two tall candles, Lady Perriam's dressing-room had a somewhat gloomy air. One might fancy one of the State prisons of the tower—that room for instance where Sir Thomas Overbury was done to death—about as lively of aspect. Sylvia was deeply absorbed in that letter, so deeply that she seemed hardly aware of the servant's entrance with the dainty little silver tea tray, though the maid, perhaps out of kindly concern for her mistress, possibly out of curiosity, lingered in the room a few minutes to stir the fire, and to draw those heavy curtains a little closer.

The letter ran thus:—

PERRIAM PLACE, near Monkhampton, March 15th.

"DEAR MRS. CARTER,—I find it in my power to provide at least a temporary home for you, if you are able to fulfil the duties which will be required of you in the position I can offer. In your struggles to obtain a living you may have sometimes been employed as a sick nurse. If that is the case, and you feel yourself able to nurse and wait upon an elderly gentleman who has just been rendered helpless by a paralytic stroke, I can engage you as an attendant upon my husband, Sir Aubrey Perriam. But it must be understood if you come here that you will say nothing about your past life to any member of this household, and that you will keep the strictest silence upon anything you may happen to know about my father. I offer you this opportunity out of compassion for your sad state, and hope you will give me no reason to repent my confidence."

"I enclose you a ten-pound note to enable you to provide yourself with decent clothes, and to pay your expenses. Please to buy a ready-made outfit, and come by the first train that will bring you conveniently after your receipt of this letter."

"If questioned as to your qualifications as a sick nurse you must reply that you have had ample experience, but you need give no details. When you arrive here you will enquire for Lady Perriam, and you will call yourself Mrs. Carter, as I imagine you would hardly like to be known by the name that belonged to you in better days."

Yours truly,

"SYLVIA PERRIAM—late CAREW."

This letter addressed and sealed, Lady Perriam looked at her watch. There was just time for a groom to catch the Monkhampton post, which did not go out till half-past nine o'clock. It now wanted a quarter to nine. She rang, and gave her maid the letter, with strict orders that it should be taken to Monkhampton without a moment's delay. The maid promised obedience. This business despatched, Sylvia drew her chair to the fireside, and sat looking at the ruddy logs on the low hearth, and meditating on the step she had just taken.

"Have I done wisely, I wonder?" she asked herself. "Surely a woman who has suffered what this poor creature has gone through must have learned to keep her own counsel. It is an act of charity to give her a good home, and the day may come when I shall have need of a friend."

Sylvia had hardly thought of her sick husband while engaged in writing this letter. She rose presently, opened the door between the two rooms and peeped into the baronet's bedchamber.

Sir Aubrey lay in a doze, the fitful firelight now shining on his pale, altered face, now sinking into shadow. Chaplain sat in a comfortable chair by the bed, reading the newspaper by the light of a shaded lamp, which was screened from the invalid by the heavy bed curtain. On the hearth rug crouched the figure of Mordred Perriam. He had crept in from Sir Aubrey's dressing-room, noiselessly as a dog, and had been permitted to remain unnoticed and unimproved.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

DR. CROW'S OPINION.

Dr. Crow, the London physician, appeared at Perriam in the dusk of the following afternoon. He was the great man for all patrician ailments, having as it were a divine right to cure the aristocracy, landed and commercial, the episcopacy, and the bench, or if incurable, to usher them decorously across life's mystic threshold to the unseen land beyond it. He was a square-built, genial-looking gentleman, with an ample brow, a large massively-moulded face, and dark eyes, whose lustre years of closest study and hardest work had not extinguished.

He had come more than two hundred miles to see Sir Aubrey, but a quarter of an hour in the sick room, and ten minutes in consultation with Mr. Stimpson, comprised all the time that he devoted to the consideration of the case. What he said in those ten minutes no one knew but Mr. Stimpson. But as he retired from the dressing-room where that brief conference had been held, Lady Perriam emerged from the shadowy darkness of the corridor to intercept the great physician.

Dr. Crow gave a little surprised look at sight of so fair a creature in that gloomy old house, whose unbroken quiet had struck the stranger as almost sepulchral.

"Is there any hope?" Sylvia asked eagerly.

The doctor replied dubiously, in those smooth placid tones which tell so little to the anxious ear.

"I'm not without hope that your father's life—"

"Husband's," murmured Mr. Stimpson in the physician's ear.

Dr. Crow gave another surprised look, but went on unfalteringly.

"That your husband's life may be prolonged, perhaps for many years."

"But will he get well again?"

"Nay, my dear madam, there is no reason that his bodily health should not improve, with careful nursing," replied Dr. Crow.

"Will he recover his mind?" asked Sylvia with increasing anxiety. "Will he be what he was at the beginning of the winter, what he was yesterday morning even?"

"Alas, madam, I fear never," answered Dr. Crow, with tones of profoundest regret. Long habit had taught him to speak of his patients as if each new sufferer had been his boyhood's playfellow, the bosom friend of his youth, the companion of his manhood, or a beloved and cherished brother. The tone was soothing, though conventional. Disconsolate widows sobbed upon Dr. Crow's shoulder, and forgot that he had not been the familiar friend of their departed ones. Hapless mothers pressed his kindly hand. And if the doctor was somewhat exaggerated in his expressions of regret, he had at least a tender heart, and compassion for all sufferers.

"What!" cried Sylvia. "Will he live on for years, to be a very old man, perhaps, and remain always as he is now—without memory—saying the same words over and over again, unconscious of the repetition, at times hardly recognizing the most familiar face! Will he be always like that?"

"Always is a long word, dear Lady Perriam," answered the doctor; "there may be some slight improvement. We will hope so. The medicines I have prescribed may have a better effect on the clouded brain than even I venture to hope. We are in the hands of Providence. But I will not conceal from you that Sir Arthur—"

"Aubrey," whispered Mr. Stimpson.

"I cannot deny that Sir Aubrey's brain has received a severe shock, and I entertain little hope of his permanent recovery. The mind may in some measure regain its tone, but there will be, I apprehend, always a cloudiness, even a childishness of intellect, for which, dear Lady Perriam, we must prepare ourselves. I have promised Mr. Stimpson to come down again in about a month's time, when I may be able to speak with greater certainty. In the meantime we are quite agreed as to the treatment. And whatever regret you may naturally feel at seeing your husband's impaired intellect, dear madam, you may yet console yourself with the thought that you have him still with you. He might have been taken away altogether, and think how much worse that would have been."

Sylvia was silent. Dr. Crow pressed her hand gently, and withdrew, escorted by the respectful Stimpson.

"What a lovely young woman," said the physician as they went, with hushed footsteps, down the broad carpetless oak stairs. "And how young. Hardly twenty I should think."

"Not twenty, I believe," answered Mr. Stimpson.

"She appears quite devoted to the poor old gentleman."

"She ought to be devoted to him," replied Mr. Stimpson.