

## TRACKING A CRIMINAL,

OR

Paul Webber, The Detective.

CONTINUED.

A MINUTE passed, and lo! the convict's eyes dropped, the pistol fell to the ground, and he said, with an oath, "I dare not kill him!"

"Then," replied Webber, raising himself, "I cannot count upon your friendship, Langley, and I must live on and suffer."

"Suffer! what is the matter with you?" asked the convict. "Are you miserable?"

"As the stones of a jail. But I'm not here to talk to you of my poor troubles. Come, there is nothing more to keep us here. Let us be off."

"Be off yourself, for I won't kill you. As for me, I stop where I am."

"Not to be thought of, my good Langley," replied Webber, whose ordinary manner was now gradually returning to him. "I swore to arrest you, and I will. You are a good sort of a fellow in the main, and so am I. Therefore we may as well be friendly. You have for a wife a fine, tall, red-haired woman, called Sunflower, though really named Adela."

"How do you know that?"

"All the detectives know that, Langley. I can tell you a good deal about yourself and Sunflower; for we have it from the lady herself, who, in fact, gave the information as to where you were to be found."

"It's false!" roared the convict.

"I tell you it's true."

"Sooner than hear that Sunflower had betrayed me, I would die."

"I can understand that," said Webber, with a sigh.

Suddenly Langley seized the pistol, put it over the detective's heart, and said, "Swear that my wife has sold me to the police, or—"

"I swear it," replied Webber, who remained quite motionless.

The convict looked at him, and said, as he stepped back, "You do not lie; you are too brave!"

He fell upon a chair, his arms dropping to his sides. So that's how it is! I haven't seen her for two long days!" he murmured. "And yet I loved the wretch as never man loved yet, for she was the only thing on earth I could love!"

Then he turned to the police-officer, and said, "I give myself up; you can put on the handcuffs."

"What do you take me for?" asked the officer. "Do you think I'm going to take advantage of a weak moment? Never! When you are calmer, we will see what is to be done."

The gigantic man was sobbing like a child.

Meanwhile Webber walked up and down the room hurriedly, murmuring, "He is happy, for he can shed tears! I cannot weep, for my tears choke me!"

A little time more, and the officer, going to Langley, struck him on the shoulder, and said, "Come with me. You shall see Sunflower."

The convict leaped up.

"You know where to find her then?" he cried.

"Yes; she's in prison, at Newgate. She has turned Queen's evidence against you and others, and though she can't bear witness against you, being your wife, she can find others who will. She did this to get rid of you, for it seems she is afraid of you, Langley."

"And you say I shall see her?"

"At once."

"I'm ready to kill her. Let's go."

"Ready!" replied the officer, and he and the convict proceeded on their way to Newgate.

Webber accompanied by Langley, went down the staircase. The convict appeared to be utterly unconscious of what he was doing. Sunflower had betrayed him. The rest mattered very little.

They walked up narrow Ewer Street without interruption, and as they emerged, a cab which happened to be passing was hailed by the police-constable.

Giving the cabman the startling order to drive to Newgate, Webber seated himself by the side of his terrible companion on the back seat of the vehicle.

For some instants neither man spoke a word. Soon, however, Langley gave the seat before him a violent kick, and cried, "To betray me, who did so much for her! Have I ever let her want for anything? Never! What she wished for she had. If not by fair means—well, I stole for her. Sunflower has been the cause of all my crimes—every one; them the officers know of, and them the officers knows nothing of."

Here the police-officer suddenly started. These remarkable last words startled Webber. "Them the officers knows of, and them the officers knows nothing of."

The detective is always a detective, whether he is or is not tired of life. The single fact of the criminal referring to

unacknowledged crimes, in a moment awakened the officer to the exercise of his calling.

He thought of his plans for a few moments, and then he said, "It's too early to see Sunflower. No visits are allowed before eleven; and it is not nine. Don't you think a good meat breakfast would help you to support the interview?"

"Oh, what I have got to say to her will not take long, so I'll take your advice as to the meat breakfast."

The cab was soon pulled up before a small eating-house.

The two men passed through the shop, and reached a queer shaped room, which, at that particular moment, was quite deserted.

Then, turning to the waiter, Webber ordered a plentiful meal, and slipping some silver into the young man's hand, he added, "Get a bottle of whiskey, and bring up some hot water, and a couple of glasses."

As he seated himself opposite the convict, he was thinking, "I'm not fit to be in the police if I haven't made this strong fool confess everything before he is an hour older. Now, what neat crime, of which the police know nothing, has this scamp been the perpetrator of?"

Some haddock being put upon the table, Webber helped himself, and began eating, apparently with a great appetite. For a few moments the convict remained inactive, but his naturally strong passions and appetite soon overcame his grief, if only for a few moments, and he began eating ravenously.

"Have what you like," said Webber, after a time; remember that you hate the police, and the police pay the bill. I've plenty of cash."

"Then I say a good dish of beef-steaks."

"The very thing I've ordered, my boy. Do you feel better?"

"Yes; but I shall see her, shan't I?"

"Never broke my word yet, but I'm afraid you still like her more than you would care to own."

"No, I hate her," cried the convict, striking his fist upon the table with a blow so heavy, that it made the tea-cups dance again, while it brought up the waiter in a state of alarm, and an apology for having been so long getting the liquor.

The beef-steaks having been placed on the table, and heartily partaken of, Webber next proceeded to ply his companion with grog. He then led on the conversation to the man's wife, and the promised interview.

"That's it—that's it," cried the convict, taking up the spirit-bottle, and swallowing a huge draught from it. "And when I've said my say, I'll take her about the neck with these hands, and she will never, never give mortal man another kiss."

"Why, man, surely you're not jealous?"

"Not jealous?"

"No; for if you were jealous, you would betray her, and so shut her up in prison, while you were in prison yourself."

"Don't I say I mean to kill her? Not jealous—me not jealous?" he screamed, becoming every moment more excited.

"Why, it was through her I killed the man!"

"Don't say a word about that," replied Webber, "or I should have to lay information against you."

Webber knew that the more you try to silence a lover, or a drunken man, the more confidential he becomes.

"What does it matter if you do?" cried the convict, now excited quite beyond all control. "Since she told the police where to find me, I'd a deal sooner die, than go back to Portland."

A little liquor remaining in the bottle the unhappy convict drank the spirit out, flung the bottle crashing into the fire-place, and continued: "I say it again—I killed a man, and she was the cause. It was not long ago—last November, or late in October. We had a lodging up by Clare Market then. One night I went home, and upstairs. The door was locked. I thought she was out, and I was going down stairs to speak to the landlady, when I heard voices in the room. So I goes down stairs, out at the door, into a gateway opposite, and there I waits for an hour. Then the street door opened, and out come a young man, she standing behind him. 'Good-bye,' I heard her say, 'I shall soon see you again.' I don't know why I didn't rush across and kill him and her too; I think it was because two men passed at that very moment singing songs. I followed him as he went towards the Strand. Suddenly he stopped before the gateway at Taggart's Inn, and he went in. I did as he did; and then I lost my head, and all I can remember was a cry—his last cry. Five minutes after I was before her, and I said, 'I've killed him.'"

Here Langley's head fell forward on the table. All Webber's efforts to arouse him were ineffectual.

But what more did he seek to learn? Details were unnecessary. The story he had heard was sufficiently clear.

And while the convict slept the detective sat thinking.

After a long pause, he said, almost aloud, "Graham Forbes deserved what he got, for he was faithless to the purest lady that ever lived."

Then, during a whole hour, he was silent.

At last, the people of the house wondering that their customers on the first floor were so quiet, tapped at the door. The slight sound at once put the detective on the alert, and leaping up, he cried, "Come in."

"He added, 'My friend here has fallen asleep, and I thought I would let him be quiet for a little while. What's to pay? We will be off in a few minutes. Tell the cabman we are coming.'"

The waiter having left the room, Webber shook his companion, who was only awakened with difficulty, and then he re-commenced asking him questions concerning the murder at Taggart's Inn. But the giant had become taciturn and surly. One idea, and one idea only, filled his mind—that of seeing his wife.

Two minutes, and the strange companions were once more in the cab, the horse's head pointed toward Newgate.

No fresh event occurred between leaving the eating-house and arriving at Newgate. Langley still under the influence of the quantity of spirits he had imbibed, remained quiet in his corner of the cab, while Webber was equally silent, but more attentive, for his eyes were kept unceasingly upon his prisoner; his forefinger never for a moment left the trigger of the pistol to which so many references have already been made.

After the vehicle had turned into the Old Bailey, Webber called to the driver, and making a gesture to the convict to follow him, he stepped from the cab, backwards, that he might still keep his eyes upon his prize.

"One word, Langley," he said, when they were upon the pavement, and taking his arm.

"I won't say any more; I've said too much as it is," muttered Langley.

"Don't be afraid; I haven't much to say. It is simply this: Let us understand one another."

"Go on," said Langley, in a tone which appeared to be almost resigned.

"You wish to see your wife, and I have promised you that you that you shall have her before your eyes. But pray remember that the moment you are across the threshold of the prison door, you are simply a convict, against whom every man's hands is raised, and who cannot be looked after too closely. Once in jail, and I can do little or nothing for you."

"But you said I should see her, and I know you'll keep your promise," said the convict, whose mind appeared only capable of containing that one eager idea of seeing his wife.

"Of course you shall see her. But before we knock at the door, do me the pleasure of offering me your two hands."

"What for?"

"These little bracelets."

And Webber produced a pair of handcuffs from a side pocket.

"Then be quick; the sooner the better," replied Langley, thrusting forward his hands.

Five minutes afterwards Webber presented himself and his prize in the room of the deputy-governor.

He walked up to this official, and said, "I have kept my promise—here is the man."

"What man?" asked the deputy-governor, looking up from his papers.

"The escaped convict, Langley. Here he is!"

"And it was you who arrested him?"

"I, and without help. I said I would do it, and I have done it."

"Webber," said the deputy-governor, "I thank you in the name of the Government. You have rendered the police a signal service. In an hour I shall have to be with the Chief Commissioner, and I promise you that I will say no harm of you."

"As you will, sir," replied Webber, "but I beg to inform you that I want and will receive no reward for this morning's work, which has paid me itself. But I have one favor to ask, nevertheless, of yourself, sir."

"It is granted, Webber, already," said the deputy.

"I have made a promise that this Langley shall see his wife face to face, without handcuffs. How it can be managed must be left to you. But I wish to see this woman myself before her interview with her husband takes place. I wish to get some light thrown upon another affair, and I think she is able to help me."

"Very well. I won't ask you what the other affair is. I know you police gentlemen like to keep your plots dark until you choose to light them up yourself. I'll write an order at once."

The line or two written, Webber took the paper, saluted, and then called in several jailors, who were waiting to accompany Langley to his prison.

This strange man—this very incarnation of brutality—offered no resistance

to being put into a cell. His instinct told him that any resistance on his part would retard the consummation of this sole hope of his life—to see his wife once again.

## CHAPTER XIII.

SUNFLOWER'S HISTORY.

The woman called Sunflower was unquestionably a beautiful woman, possessed of that peculiar pearly, transparent skin which is generally found in combination with chestnut hair. She was distinguished for many of the charms and more of the drawbacks of the style of womanhood to which she belonged.

As for her heart she did not know what the word meant. She was wasteful, careless, unwomanly—incapable of love, most capable of hate; unable to be grateful, most able to return evil for good. In a word, she was one of those women apparently sent upon earth to show how utterly thankful we ought to be that so many women are, as they are found to be, unspeakably good and merciful.

She had been the terror and dread of her parent's life. Clever and quick, she had very early in life obtained a knowledge of several accomplishments beyond the ordinary education of those born in her sphere of life. As she grew up to womanhood she had lovers in plenty. She appeared to possess a positive delight in attracting a new face, and then in laughing its owner away.

Langley came, saw, and conquered. Possibly his stupendous height, his vast voice, and savage, brutal ways, accorded more with her nature than that of any of the youths who had fluttered about her. It is certain that she at once promised to be his wife.

He was below her in position, and he was only too glad to marry her; not that he had any hope of obtaining money with Sunflower, but because he knew that once his wife, she could not escape from him during life.

Those lovers she had jilted were bitterly avenged for her cruelty, though they never learned the facts. Within a month of her miserable marriage she had ascertained the frightful extent of her error. She had become his slave; he showed himself to be a positive incarnation of jealousy. She dared not leave their lodging without him; if they were out together, a mere glance at any man who happened to pass was sufficient to enrage him. Finally, within three weeks of the marriage he had threatened her life.

Yet he loved her devotedly in his way, and when she bitterly complained of being cooped up in a couple of small rooms, as bitterly he hated himself, that with all his strength he was incapable of earning more than thirty shillings a week as a carpenter, for that was his trade.

Before six weeks were over, she asked for her liberty, to go whither she would, and to trouble him no more. He lifted her from the floor, dashed her down, and there she lay maimed, bruised, moaning. Then he flung himself down by her side, cried like a little child, and promised that she should have all the riches she wanted.

So Langley became a thief—a burglar.

She fell in with this new and criminal life with great eagerness, for it gave her luxuries and pleasures. But it was an existence which sooner or later was sure to be troubled by the interference of the police. A few months, and Langley was taken in the act, and finally, upon his trial, went to Portland in pursuance of a sentence of five years' penal servitude.

When he was taken, Sunflower (this was the name Langley himself had given her) danced for joy, believing herself freed from him forever—so it seemed to her, so long a time did five free years appear to her. She was clever, and with the few pounds she possessed she paid for learning to work the sewing machine. Within a week, she was the loneness of the room of work-girls which she had joined, and who had no idea she was a married woman. Within a month, her word was law, and her power was not any the less that she was so clever at her work. But before the second month was at an end, she suddenly vanished. Langley had broken from jail, unable to live away from his wife, and she was once more in his power.

During six months, he lived hidden away from the police in a small village in Suffolk, where the couple passed a strange retired life, which only half excited the suspicions of the country folk. Whether he had obtained the money upon which they lived, she never knew; but in all probability he stole it between the time when he broke jail, and the hour in which he once more claimed her as his wife.

At the end of those six months, Sunflower, returning from the village to which she had been sent upon some domestic errand saw him being marched from their cottage, handcuffed, and in the custody of four policemen.

"She does love me," was his thought, when he saw her fall to the ground. In reality, she had fainted from sheer excess of joy. Often and often during those six months, she had thought of denouncing him herself, but the fear of his discovery of her treachery prevented her. The woman's instinct told her that he would destroy her if he learned that she had even thought of betraying him.

"Let me kiss my wife."

It was these words which she heard as she recovered her senses.

"I could stop in prison all my life if you was with me, my Sunflower," he said, as he held her to his breast, for he had passed his huge muscular arms over her head, and thus held her close to him.

That night, she returned to London, and next morning presented herself in the old work-room. Again she was welcomed, but by this time she was slipping down in life.

Whether falsely accused or not, it is certain that within three months of this time, she stood charged with an attempt to commit theft, and she was sentenced to six months' imprisonment.

Such was Adela Coulton's life up to that morning when Webber was about to visit this unhappy woman.

As Webber entered the police-cell in which Sunflower was temporarily placed, she was lying on her mattress, her flowing hair lying over her chest, she playing with the long locks after the manner of a child. A chance line of sunlight fell upon the face and this luxuriant hair, making her appear at first sight inexpressibly beautiful.

Any other man than Webber must have admired this dazzling woman; but he, in the terrible bitterness of his heart, despised her.

He closed the door behind him as she started up.

"So young woman," Webber began, without any preamble whatever, "here you are, in prison again?"

"Yes, here again," replied Sunflower, in a loud, hard voice. "Prison is a paradise to me, and liberty is torment."

"So," he said, "then it does not suffice for the happiness of a pretty woman that she can boast of having the tallest man in London for her husband?"

She drew herself up, and said, "You know him, do you?"

"Happily for me, not so well as you do," replied the policeman; "but I do know him."

"As for me," she said, "I hate him."

"Well, my girl," replied Webber, "you may try and be happy, for, thanks to the information you gave us, Langley has been arrested."

"Taken!" she cried, drawing herself back; "is he really taken? and who dared to take him?" she asked, almost below her breath.

"I did."

She looked at the officer up and down.

At last she said slowly, "So you really did arrest him, did you sir?"

"I did, and alone."

Suddenly she leaped forward, caught the officer's hand, and kissed it.

"Very kind and civil on your part, I dare say," said the officer, quite insensible to this caress; "but I am at a loss to understand your meaning. Langley is arrested, and is in prison, and he will be sent back to Portland. So far, so good. But as he has escaped twice from that spot, I can see no reason to be sure that he will not escape again, and then your small martyrdom will recommence, my poor creature."

Sunflower's face faded, as it were, as she heard these words.

"You will never be at rest," continued the officer, "you will never sleep with both eyes closed, while he is only at Portland; he can get away from that place as another man can get out of bed. You must manage him another way."

"What way?" she asked.

"There's another punishment known to judges," insinuated Webber, "which goes beyond a term of penal servitude."

She turned pale, and said, "I understand. But they can't hang him, for he has done no murder."

"Are you sure of that?" asked the officer, approaching her, and looking her steadily in the eyes.—Continued next week.

## How it was Done.

"How do you manage," said a lady to her friend, "to appear so happy and good natured all the time?" "I always have Parker's Ginger Tonic handy," was the reply, "and thus easily keep myself and family in good health.—When I am well I always feel good-natured." Read about it in another column. 64t

## "Women Never Think."

If the crabbed old bachelor who uttered this sentiment could but witness the intense thought, deep study and thorough investigation of women in determining the best medicines to keep their families well, and would note their sagacity and wisdom in selecting Hop Bitters as the best and demonstrating it by keeping their families in perpetual health, at a mere nominal expense, he would be forced to acknowledge that such sentiments are baseless and false.—Picoquine. 7 2t