LUKE HAMMOND, THE MISER.

By Prof. Wm. Henry Peck,
Author of the "The Stone-Cutter of Lisbon," Etc.

CHAPTER XXV.
Continued.

"I have seen that cloud-surrounded face, my father's face, and more distinctly than ever before. The same warning, too, to beware of Harriet Foss. And am I not bewaring of that woman? John Marks will remove her to win his son. And such a son! I dreamed that idiot was my son, and that he called me 'Father! Father!' until my brain reeled with the shrillness of his cries. But, worst of all, I dreamed of James Greene—of James Greene and my two dead wives. I thought I saw him holding them by the hand, and climbing up out of the old well—climbing, climbing, until they all got in here, and then the floor opened under me, and I fell, whirling down a thousand years, amid imps, idiots and dead men, until I stopped, mangled to a pulp, in a lake of burning brandy! Horrible! I awoke, and the sun was shining in my face with a gleam that blinded me. Then I dreamed that I sought for the lost will, and not finding it, fired the house, and saw everybody in it escape except myself, who was grasped by James Greene, and held in the well until it was red hot and I a cinder."

He rambled on of his dreams, trembling and nervous, until Stephen sneaked into the library.

"Stephen," said Hammond, "take these letters to the postoffice. Then call at my office in Wall street for letters, and say that I am out of town. There's an order for you to get the letters. Then go to No. — Mott street. Ask for Mr. Thomas Allday. Tell him his note is due, and that he will be wanted some time to-night. Tell him he shall have his note and its value in cash besides if he is found not wanting. Then hurry home."

Stephen took the letters and departed. After bathing, as was his custom, Hammond breakfasted, and was returning to his library, when old Fan sprang up in his path and said: "Mr. Hammond, I want to go away."

"Go where? You are better off here than you can hope to be elsewhere," said Hammond, eying her suspiciously.

"I want to go away," said the old creature, sitting down on the steps, and rocking herself backward and forward. "I want to go away from this dreadful house, Luke Hammond. My yellow birdies aren't safe here."

"Come, this is all nonsense," said Luke, angrily. "Get up; get out of my way. I wish to pass up to the library."

"Not until you can tell me I can go—can go, Luke Hammond," said Fan. "You must tell me you won't set the dogs on me, and let me go."

Luke looked at her sharply.

"What do you wish to go after?" said he.

"After! Nobody," said Fan.

"You lie, you old hag. You wish to betray me. Go to your kitchen; and remember, my eye is on you always."

"Yes, yes—so is his—so is his!" said Fan, hiding her face in her apron.

"His? Whose?" demanded Luke.

"James Greene's — yes! James Greene's," said Fan. "His eye is always on me—on me! just as he looked when the floor sank under him and he went down—down; but he comes up!—he comes up! and he creeps and crawls all over the house, looking at me—at me! and for you—for you!"

"Old woman, I must tie you up," thought Hammond, as she rose and crept slowly away. "You are growing very dangerous."

He entered his library, and pulled a bell cord, then called out quick and sharp, like a snap:

"Come up! Quick!"

Then, pacing around the table with uneasy steps, he muttered:

"The old woman grows dangerous. We must act, and immediately."

When Nancy entered he said:

"Well, it has reached that point."

"What point, Luke?"

"That point at which necessity demands that Fan shall be secured," said he.

"Does she suspect?" asked Nancy.

"I care not whether she suspects or not," said Luke, savagely. "I scent danger in the air, Nancy Harker. While I slept this morning my dreams were horrible—terrific. I shudder now in remembering them."

Nancy smiled.

"Oh, you may grin," said Luke. "But I tell you that dreams have frightened me for the first time in my life of fifty years. And now, at this instant, a sense of rapidly nearing peril so racks my brain, my nerves, my whole being, that the very air smells of imminent danger."

Hammond drew his tall, lean figure rigidly erect, and tossing back his long, narrow head, until his cruel face was turned upward, dilated his eyes and nostrils, and repeated, sweeping his hands in a wild circle:

"I scent danger in the air!"

On the stairs, not five feet from the open door of the little library, old Fan was peeping through the banisters, her keen, witch-like eyes on a level with the floor. But she could not see Hammond nor Nancy, and was as unperceived by them.

She had crept there to listen, for in her distorted brain began to burn a suspicion that Luke Hammond had lied when he told her that Roland Dunn, her son, was hanged, and that Luke Hammond knew where that son was. But that Luke Hammond was that son, old Fan as yet, never dreamed.

"Nancy," continued Luke, "often before now, during my life of plot and scheme, I have felt as I now feel, and always I have acted."

"Act then, Luke," said Nancy, who was much impressed by his earnest bearing and pallid face.

"You consent?"

"Not to her death, Luke," said Nancy, "but to her imprisonment."

"Folly! I feel as if my unseen agent of success tells me to remove forever this woman, whose remorse begins to threaten my death—death on the gallows—to your death, Nancy Harker."

"I will not consent to her death," said Nancy. "Imprison her. She may not suspect. Imprison her until you have got full possession of Elgin's estate, then we will share the wealth, and you may fly to whatever place you like."

"And you, Nancy Harker?"

"This affair finished, we must separate," said Nancy. "I shall fly to Italy."

"And where shall we imprison old Fan?" asked Luke.

Until he uttered those words old Fan had no idea of whom he was speaking. She began to creep farther up the steps; the conversation was growing very interesting to her.

"Anywhere. There are places enough in this large house to keep the old creature safe," said Nancy.

"There is but one safe place for her," said Hammond, shutting the library door.

But old Fan's ear was at the key-hole in a second.

"And where is that?" said Nancy.

"In the old store-room."

Old Fan nearly screamed at the bare thought of the place.

"You mean to murder her, Luke," said Nancy. "I will not consent to it."

"Take care, woman. You are growing dangerous. You are opposing me."

"I care not whether I am growing dangerous or not," said Nancy, vehemently. "Bad as I am, Luke Hammond, there is a crime I cannot commit. Our conduct caused the death of our father, the madness of our mother and were you to place your pistol at my head and say, 'Do it or die!' I will die before I consent to the death of our mother."

"Fool!" cried Luke, in a rage. "I did not say I wished her death. I say she must be imprisoned in the old store-room, not beneath it. She cannot know why."

"The mere fact of being there would kill her—her remorse would kill her," said Nancy. "No; imprison her in any other room."

"She shall be imprisoned in the old store-room, and nowhere else. I have said it," said Luke, fiercely. "And now to do it. We shall need Daniel's help."

He opened the library door, and old Fan sprang into the room, bare blade in hand.

"I know you now! I know you both!" screamed Fan, slamming the door and placing her back against it, while Hammond and Nancy recoiled to the other side of the room.

"You are crazy! you are a lunatic!" said Luke, while Nancy grasped his arm.

"I know it! I know it!" shrieked Fan. "And who made me so? My children! Who slew their noble father—broke his heart—killed him dead? My children! You, Roland Dunn, and you, Nellie Dunn! Oh, Nicholas, my dead and murdered husband! could you have lived to see this day! Not content with crushing of the noble heart—not content with driving their mother mad—see! hear! the parricides plot to finish by assassinating that half mad mother."

She sank down upon the floor and moaned bitterly. Her knife fell from her hand, and her sobs almost suffocated her.

Hammond's quick eye saw the knife, and he began to creep towards her to secure it.

"Back! unnatural son!" cried Fan, snatching up the knife and springing to her feet. "Back! Roland Dunn! For years in my feverish, fitful madness I have vowed to avenge the death of my husband. But my brain—my brain reels—and I cannot kill my children! No! I cannot! I thought I could—I thought it would be a pleasure; but I was insane—I am insane now—it cracks my brain to try to think. How came I here in New York? I know not. Where have I been? Here and there — wandering, wandering, ever wandering; scorned, jeered, laughed at—made a show, a scoff—by whom? By my children. Ah me! I am going mad again—I feel the fire rushing back upon my brain—ah! wait! wait, let me think; oh, my son, 'twas you made your old crazed mother an accomplice in a murder—what murder?—let me think—yes, of James Greene. Oh, my husband! let not the deed stand against me upon the dread records of heaven! I knew not what I did! I am dying!"

She sank forward upon her face, as weak as a child.

"She is dying," said Nancy. "Help me to place her upon the settee."

"No. She must not die here," said Luke. "Come, we will take her to Catharine Elgin's room up stairs."

He was fearfully agitated, and perhaps at that moment even his soul writhed with remorse. They raised the unconscious form of their mother, and bore it to the room formerly used by Kate Elgin.

They placed their mother upon the bed, and she opened her eyes.

They started back from the calm, reproachful expression of those dying orbs.

"My children," said Fan, in a feeble voice, "I am dying. I know I am dying, but I am glad to die. I thank God that I die in my senses. It seems like a fearful dream, but I know it is true—a dread reality. You, who call yourself Luke Hammond, are my son. And you are my daughter. My mind is calm and clear; it was not utterly clouded as it has sometimes been, and I remember all, or nearly all, I have done in this house. At times during my madness I have been entirely sane, and so great was my misery in being sane, that I have prayed to be mad again. But never have I been in my clear mind more than a few moments at a time; and for many months I have never been utterly mad. I have always believed that I should see my children again. May God forgive me for all the evil I have done, as I forgive you, my children. I have done and thought much evil, but I was mad, or half mad. My daughter, place your hand in my bosom, there is a weight there."

Nancy Harker obeyed, and drew out the little sack of golden coin.

"Sink it! bury it! cast it away!" said the dying woman. "How I loved it in my madness! There's the price of a human life in it! Oh, scatter it to the winds! Roland, my son."

But Hammond felt weak, sick and faint, and hurried away to his library. His face wore an appalled and ghastly look, as he departed, but there was no tear in his eye, no repentance in his soul. He regretted—nothing more.

"He has gone," moaned Fan, turning her weeping eyes upon Nancy, who knelt near her. "Ah, I loved my husband too much to gain the love of my children. Have you children, Nellie?"

"Yes, my mother, one son," said Nancy.

"And has he—has Roland children?"

"Yes, my mother, one son," replied Nancy.

"I would ask many questions," said the dying woman. "I would talk much with you, my daughter. But death is near me. But oh, my child, tell me, have you known me to be your poor mother very long?"

"No, my mother," said Nancy. "We have suspected it only a short time. I wrote my father's name on the floor, and you recognized it."

"I remember now. I fainted. Look at my scarred and distorted face. See the ravages of that awful disease, the smallpox. No wonder you did not suspect sooner. But stay, I remember something more. That sick man in the red room—that young maiden in the other—who are they? You do not answer. What deed of crime are you doing, my daughter?"

Nancy made no reply. Sorry for what she had done she was, but sorrow is not repentance. She had a purpose to accomplish, and what that purpose was the reader shall soon learn.

"Farewell, my daughter, and may God forgive you. May you repent and reform ere you die. And now to Thy mercy, Father of all mercy, I commend my soul."

Old Fan, as we have called Ellen Elizabeth Dunn, never spoke again. She fell asleep, and in that sleep her tortured spirit passed away from earth forever.

Nancy covered the body with a sheet, and stole away to the library. She found Luke drinking brandy, and looking very wild.

"She is dead," said Nancy, coldly.

"It is well," said Luke. "And now you must perform the duties she performed for a time."

"Are you not sorry, Luke?"

"Of course I am, Nancy," said he. "I am puzzled how to manage about the burial. Trouble there—trouble ahead."

And that was his sorrow!

"Now, Nancy, go to Catharine Elgin. Daniel must have his sleep. I must think."

Nancy left him sitting at his desk—his eyes hard, keen and cruel, and every feature growing stiff in iron resolve. His race was nearly run.

CHAPTER XXVI.

JOHN MARKS EXTORTS A CONFESSION.

Luke Hammond had not been thinking long, when he heard the gate-bell tinkle.

He left the library and went to the end of the hall, where, through the closed shutters, he could see the person who demanded admittance.

"Ha!" said he; "it is my dear friend, John Marks. Can he have done his work so soon?"

Then hastening to Daniel, he awoke him, and ordered him to conduct the visitor to his library.

It was not long before John Marks and Luke Hammond were once more together.

"Ha! you are prompt and pale, John Marks," said Hammond.

"Am I?" replied Marks, coldly. "But I have come to see Nancy Harker, not you."

"And have you no news from Harriet Foss?" cried Hammond.

To be continued.

CLIMAX IS REACHED

Startling Testimony in Equitable Investigation

YOUNG HYDE GOES ON THE STAND

Former Vice President of the Equitable Life Gives Sensational Testimony and Clears Up Many Points They Have Hitherto Remained Dark. More Than Meeting the Expectations of the Crowd That Thronged to Hear Him.

New York, Special.—James Hazen Hyde, former vice president of the Equitable Life Assurance Society, whose resignation followed the sensational disclosures in thath company last spring which led to the investigation of insurance company methods by the Armstrong committee of the Legislature, the man whose presence as a witness before this committee has been looked forward to in the expectation that it would produce the greatest sensation of the investigation, appeared before the committee Tuesday.

Mr. Hyde's manner on the stand was one of composure and deliberation and his replies to questions from counsel were calm and deliberate and at times studied. He was fortified with statements and data and was very frank in his explanations. Frequently he would become bitter in his reference to some of his associates, and while his entire testimony was of deep interest and cleared up many points that have heretofore remained in the dark, it was not until late in the day that the sensational features of his testimony were developed.

Mr. Hyde cleared up the matter of the $685,000 loan of the Mercantile Trust Company, which appeared on the books of the Equitable Life under the caption of the "W. J. Alexander Number 3 Account."

Mr. Hyde first heard of this account in the fall of 1902, when it was called to his attention by President Alexander, who said that he and Mr. Jordan had incurred the loan to take up stock that was being bid up to fictitious values, to the detriment of the company, to settle suits that were hampering the business of the society, and for campaign contributions. This contribution was the one of the last campaign and was asked for by Mr. Frick, who suggested it for the benefit of the society. To procure this money, Mr. Alexander had Mr. Hyde write a letter to the president of the Mercantile Trust Company and this letter practically placed him in the position of a guarantor.

Later when the settlemen of the loan was forced, Mr. Alexander and Mr. Jordan raised all they could toward it. The stock purchased with part of the loan was sold to Thomas F. Ryan for $212,000 and the balance, $212,500, Mr. Hyde paid personally. He did this because he understood that Mr. Alexander was financially embarrassed, and in a bitter tone said:

"Notwithstanding the strained relations with these two gentlemen (Alexander and Jordan), I felt bound to see that the debt was liquidated by reason of the letter Mr. Alexander extracted from me."

Mr. Hyde said that he first received a salary of $30,000, seven years ago. In 1902, when he became chairman of the finance committee, this was advanced to $75,000, and in 1903 it was advanced to $100,000, at which it remained until he resigned as vice president of the society.

Eclipsing all this sensational testimony, however, were the statements of Mr. Hyde concerning former Governor Odell and Mr. Harriman relative to the settlement of the Shipbuilding Company. Mr. Hyde said that Mr. Harriman came to him and advised the settlement of the Odell's suit, and he feared that powerful influence at Albany would be invoked in retaliatory measures.

Charges of conspiracy to get him out of the country were made by Mr. Hyde against Henry C. Frick and E. H. Harriman, in connection with the reported aspirations of Mr. Hyde to become ambassador to France. He said Mr. Frick inspired the idea and witness too it as a joke at first, but when Mr. Frick brought it up later Mr. Hyde was flattered and both Mr. Frick and Mr. Harriman promisel to use their influence to secure the appointment.

Again Mr. Hyde waxed bitter in his explanation of the extraordinary interest these gentlemen had in his absence from the country. He said he thought their idea was "that they would acquit themselves of their friendly stewardship with great profit to themselves" and added that the nature of their interest hid since become very obvious.

Pleads Guilty of Assault and Gets Death Sentence.

Atlanta, Special.—Jim Walker, the negro who was arrested last week charged with a criminal assault on Mrs. W. G. Moore, three weeks ago, pleaded guilty to the indictment and was sentenced to be hanged December 8. Walker was rescued by Sheriff Nels last week after a mob had placed a rope about the negro's neck.

OLD DOMINION NEWS.

Two Childre Mangled.

Richmond, Special.—Two little girls met instant death and a woman and a smaller child had a most miraculous escape on the five-mile trestle over the canal over the Cheaspeak and Ohio railway. Mrs. John Dolan, with her baby, a child just able to toddle; her daughter Lizzie, 9 years old, and Lillie Manotti, an Italian girl, the daughter of a neighbor, were crossing the trestle when the whistle of the locomotive warned the woman of their danger. Grasping the smaller child in her arms and screaming to the other children to follow, her example, she jumped for her life into the water below. The water was quite deep at the point and the boyancy of the woman's skirts kept her and the child from sinking until assistance arrived. The little girls, paralyzed by fear, refused to to take the jump, and both were instantly killed.

Death and Marriage.

Westminster, Special.—One of those rare occurances in which the sorrows of death and the joys of marriage are strongly intermingled happened in Westminster Wednesday afternoon. Charles Schaeffer, a prominent citizen, died at his home Sunday and Wednesday afternoon his youngest daughter, Miss Ada Schaeffer, and Mr. Frank Fuller, of Washington, were married in the parlor of the home in which the remains of the deceased father lay awaiting burial. This date had been fixed for the wedding before the death of the bride's father, and her widowed mother, certain that it would be the wish of her husband if he could be conscious of it, desired that the event should not be postponed. Only members of the families interested were present. The ceremony was performed by Rev. Dr. P. H. Miller, of Grace Lutheran Church.

Receivers for Hotel.

Norfolk, Special.—W. L. Williams and W. W. Starke, atterneys, were appointed receivers by Judge W. R. Martin, of the Court of Law and Chancery, for the Atlantic Building Company, the company which owns the hotel and office building financed by John Skelton Williams and his associates of Richmond. The suit is brought by the Bank of Richmond, and the petition says that the company has defaulted in taxes and interest to the amount of $15,000 due to that bank, and that it has confessed judgment to Mrs. Fannie B. Randolph for $37,000. It has issued bonds to the amount of $407,000, of which the plaintiff holds $200,000 on which the interest has not been paid.

R. W. Craton Held for Court.

Lynchburg, Special.—R. W. Craton who is charged with embezzling $150.-75 from C. A. Hancock, of this city, was given a preliminary hearing in the Police Court, and held for the action of the grand jury. Craton, it is alleged, represented the Provident Life and Trust Company, of Baltimore, here, and sold Hancock a policy in that company, took his note for the premium, had the note discounted and, it is charged, made no accounting for the amount. He left here and was arrested some time afterwards in Bristol,. Craton has a wife and six children living in Norfolk.

Davis Monument Begun.

Rehmond, Special.—Actual work on the monument to Jefferson Davis commenced when the building committee of the monument association met at the corner of Cedar street and Monument avenue last week and, without ceremony, broke ground for the foundation of the monument. Mrs. S. T. McCulloch, of Staunton, chairman of the committee, threw the first spadefull of earth that commenced the work. The monument will be pushed continuously until completed.

Killed Bride and Suicided.

Norfolk, Special.—A special to The Virginian-Pilot says that Helen Hope, who was married to Randolph C. Johnson at Perquimans, N. C., was found dead in her bridal chamber Thursday with a pistol in her hand and a bullet wound through her head. Johnson was lying across the bed dead with three bullets in his head and body.

VIRGINIA BRIEFS.

News Gathered From Every Section Of The Old Dominion.

N. E. Luce, of Binghampton, N. Y., entered upon his duties recently as general secretary of the Petersburg Young Men's Christian Association. The association has been without a general secretary for some time,

The Stunton candy kitchen, owned by P. G. Charuhas, was entered Sunday night and $380 was stolen. The burgler took from the cash register $220 in gold and from the money drawer $160.

Roy Thompson is held at Norfolk as an elleged escaped convict from Georgetown, Del. He is 22 years old.

Union Veteran Falls Dead.

Newport News, Special.—Patrick Cleary, an inmate of the National Soldiers' Home, dropped dead while walking from his quarters to the tailor shop of the home. He was 70 years old. Heart trouble caused his death. Cleary served with a New York regiment during the war.

SCIENTIFIC & INDUSTRIAL

The bicycle industry is still flourishing in Great Britain. One firm of makers has just placed contracts for a new building amounting to over £25,000.

Peat was used exclusively as fuel on Swedish railroads during the past year, the custom being to mix it with half its weight of coal. This mixed fuel has proved satisfactory for freight service.

The clock in the tower of the New Naval College, at Dartmouth, which will be opened shortly, will mark time as kept on board ship, striking eight, six, four bells, etc., and will be the only clock of its kind in England.

The storks which spend their summers in Austria-Hungary and their winters in India and Central Africa are also marvelous travelers, and make their journeys twice a year in unbroken flight each time. From Budapest, in Hungary, to Lahore, in India, is 2400 miles in an air line, and the storks make the journey in twenty-four hours.

A great deal of attention has recently been drawn to the experiments of Mr. John B. Burke, of the Cavendish Laboratory, Cambridge, England, where, by putting radium into tubes of sterilized bouillon, he has produced puzzling phenomena which have been regarded as possibly indicating the spontaneous generation of living organisms out of non-living matter. Every known precaution was taken to exclude living germs, yet under the apparent influence of the radium bacteria-like forms developed in the tubes.

On Tap.

War correspondents would have us believe that the entire proceedings of the Japanese army in the recent war form a kind of exalted bookkeeping. Not only were victories won, but they were won at the specified moment.

The New York Times says that a certain colonel had sought Field Marshal Oyama, and asked permission to sacrifice himself and his command by capturing a certain redoubt.

"Which redoubt?" asked Oyama.

The colonel told him.

Oyama consulted his notes.

"My brother," said he, "such glory is not for you. It has been assigned to another. Besides, it is early dawn now, and that redoubt is set down to be taken at 10.30."

The redoubt was captured on time.

A Wise Child.

Mr. Joseph Mordecai, the well-known portrait painter, tells in M. A. P. a quaint little story in connection with one of his best subject pictures, the "Murder of the Princes in the Tower."

One day in his studio he was discussing the progress of the work with a brother artist, and observed that he found it difficult to get a suitable man to sit for the principal murderer.

"I want a villainous, horrible looking fellow," he said.

At these words one of the little princes, a diminutive model with an angel face, looked up from the couch where he was lying beside his brother, and piped:

"Please, sir, I wish you'd have my father. I'm sure he'd just suit you."

Could Most Catch the Train.

There is a man in Enfield, Conn., who drives a carriage to and from the station for the accommodation (?) of the public. He is exceedingly slow, nearly always being a little behind time.

One day he was engaged to carry a lady to a train which it was very important she should catch. She watched and waited, with hat and coat on, until it was nearly train time. At last Mr. C. drove up, hurrying not an atom.

The lady's husband flew to the door and impatiently shouted: "What's the use of coming now? It's nearly train time."

"Wall," drawled the immovable hackman, "if your wife has her things on and is ready to start I reckon I can git her most there."—Boston Herald.

The Final Blow.

It is said that often when a woman says "no" she means "yes," but there are signs which discourage even the most hopeful and persistent wooer.

"I didn't so much mind Hetty's saying she'd as soon marry a jumping-jack as me," said Ethan Hatch, forlornly, to a sympathetic friend; "nor I didn't much care when she said she'd rather stay at home than go out to Jordan Park with such a slow coach as I was, but when she told me she'd got to help her mother iron when I asked her to go with me down to the Centre for some ice cream soda, I saw 'twasn't much use hanging on any longer."—Youth's Companion.

Odors of the Mountains.

If you notice a strong spicy and "woodsy" odor about any woman these days, do not imagine that she has adopted a new perfume. It is balsam that you smell, for the lady has just returned from the Adirondacks and brought with her a balsam pillow as a souvenir of her stay in the mountains. Of course she jammed the pillow into a corner of her trunk when she packed up to come home, and equally, of course, the strong smell of balsam permeated everything. It is as much a mark of the returning vacationist as is the coat of tan.

Returns to Horses.

A few months ago the town of "Tunbridge" Wells, England, adopted a motor omnibus service for its streets. Now it has sold the motor omnibuses and returned to horse vehicles.