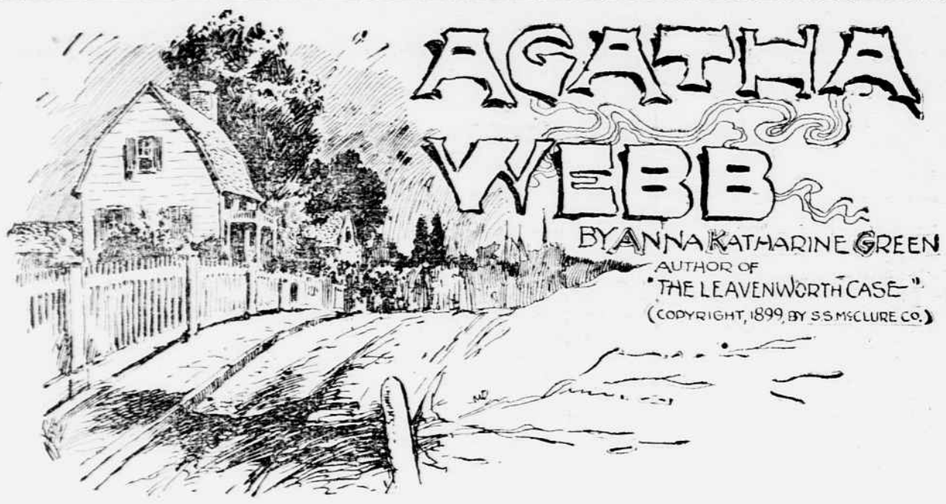


Synopsis of Preceding Chapters.

Just after a ball at the Sutherland mansion Agatha Webb and her servant are found dead, and Philemon Webb, Agatha's husband, who for years has been growing demented, is discovered asleep at the dinner table. A trace of blood on his sleeve points to him as the murderer. Agatha Webb is known to but few as a rich woman. Miss Page, the niece of Sutherland's housekeeper, persists in remaining about the Webb premises, and discovers blood on the grass. The money drawer is found to be empty, and robbery is added to the mystery. Frederick Sutherland, a wayward youth, calls his father to witness his determination to be a better man, and promises not to marry Miss Page, by whom he has been fascinated. Miss Page tells Frederick that she followed him the night of the murder, and knew where he had secreted a thousand dollars. She gives him a week to decide whether to marry her or be proclaimed as the murderer of Agatha Webb. It is learned that the money was in new bills, and the keeper of a small store produces one that a strange man gave him late the night of the murder for a loaf of bread. A detective arrives from Boston and reports, "Simple case. Murdered for money. Find the man with the flowing beard." Suspicion falls upon one of the Zabel brothers. Frederick visits the hollow tree. The money is gone. Wattles, a Boston gambler, arrives and demands $650 of Frederick in payment of a gambling debt. Frederick secures a check for the amount from his father. The Zabel brothers are found dead of starvation, one of them clutching the loaf of bread, the other a blood-stained knife. The Boston detective declares the mystery solved, but young Sweetwater astonishes the company by a new chain of evidence pointing to another perpetrator of the terrible crime. This time Amabel Page is suspected. Sweetwater finds the money where he has seen Miss Page hide it. Miss Page is confronted by the detectives and officers, and tells what she saw the night of the murder. Frederick overhears the talking and joins the group, and Miss Page tells just enough so that a later confession will implicate Frederick if he refuses to marry her. On the following day occurs the funeral of Agatha Webb, and late that night Mr. Sutherland discovers Frederick weeping over her grave. On the way home he learns of the death of Philemon, Agatha's husband. Sweetwater suspects and follows Frederick and is thus discovered by Mr. Sutherland. Frederick places a package of old letters into Agnes Halliday's hands and his father seeks an explanation. Agatha Webb's will is opened, and by its terms Mr. Sutherland is made executor and Frederick sole heir of a $100,000 estate. Sweetwater reasons that Frederick is the murderer, but because Mr. Sutherland once saved his life Sweetwater is unwilling to give evidence. In order to keep his secret he plans to leave home, and, in auspicious haste, pretending to be in search of an important witness, boards an outgoing steamer bound for Brazil.

CHAPTER XXV.

Mr. Sutherland was right. Sweetwater did not return with the pilot. According to the latter there was no Sweetwater on board the ship to return. At all events the minutest search had not succeeded in finding him in the cabins, though no one had seen him leave the vessel, or, indeed, seen him at all after his hasty dash below decks. It was thought on board that he had succeeded in reaching shore before the ship set sail, and the pilot was suitably surprised at learning this was not so. So were Sweetwater's friends and associates with the exception of a certain old gentleman living on the hill and Knapp the detective. He, that is the latter, had his explanation at his tongue's end.

"Sweetwater is a fakir. He thought he could carry off the honors from the regular force, and when he found he couldn't he quietly disappeared. We shall hear of him again in the Brazils."

An opinion that speedily gained ground, so that in a few hours Sweetwater was all but forgotten, save by his mother, whose heart was filled with suspense, and by Mr. Sutherland, whose breast was burdened by gratitude. The amazing fact that Frederick, the village scapegrace and Amabel's reckless, if aristocratic, lover, having been made the legatee of the upright Mrs. Webb's secret savings, had something to do with this. With such a topic at hand, not only the gossips, but those who had the matter of Agatha's murder in hand, found ample material to occupy their thoughts and tongues, without wasting time over a presumptuous busybody, who had not wits enough to know that five minutes before sailing time is an unfortunate moment in which to enter a ship.

And where was Sweetwater that he could not be found on the shore or on the ship? We will follow him and see. Accustomed from his youth to ramble over the vessels while in port, he knew this one as well as he did his mother's house. It was, therefore, a surprise to the sailors when, shortly after the departure of the pilot, they came upon him lying in the hold, half buried under a box which had partially fallen upon him. He was unconscious, or appeared to be so, and when brought into open light showed marks of physical distress and injury, but his eye was clear and his expression hardly as rueful as one would expect of a man who finds himself en route for the Brazils with barely a couple of dollars in his pocket and every prospect of being obliged to work before the mast to earn his passage. Even the captain noticed this and eyed him with some suspicion. But Sweetwater, rousing to the necessities of the occasion, forthwith showed such a mixture of discouragement and perplexity that the honest sailor was deceived and abated half at least of his oaths. He gave Sweetwater a hammock and admitted him to the mess, but told him that as soon as his bruises allowed him to work he should show himself on deck or expect the rough treatment commonly bestowed on stowaways.

It was a prospect to daunt some men, but not Sweetwater. Indeed, it was no more than he had calculated upon when he left his little savings behind with his old mother and entered upon this enterprise, with only a little change in his pocket. He had undertaken, out of love and gratitude for Mr. Sutherland, to rid Frederick of a dangerous witness, and he felt able to complete the sacrifice. More than that, he was even strangely happy for a time. The elation of the willing victim was his, that is, for a few short hours; then he began to think of his mother. How had she borne his sudden departure? What would she think had befallen him, and how long would he have to wait before he could send her word of his safety? If he was to be of real service to the man he venerated he must be lost long enough for the public mind to have become settled in regard to the mysteries of the Webb murder and for his own boastful connection with it to be forgotten. This might mean years of exile. He rather thought it did; meanwhile, his mother! Of himself he thought little.

By sundown he felt himself sufficiently recovered from his business to go up on deck. It was a mild night, and the sea was running in smoothly, long waves that as yet but faintly presaged the storm brewing in the distant horizon. As he inhaled the fresh air, the joy of renewed health began to infuse its life into his veins and lift the oppression from his heart, and, glad for a few minutes of quiet enjoyment, he withdrew to a solitary portion of the deck and allowed himself to forget his troubles in contemplation of the rapidly deepening sky and boundless stretch of waters.

But such griefs and anxieties as weighed upon this man's breast are not so easily shaken off. Before he realized it his thoughts had recurred to the old theme, and he was wondering if he was really of sufficient insignificance in the eyes of his fellow-townsmen not to be sought for and found in that distant country to which he was bound. Would they, in spite of his precautions, suspect that he had planned this evasion and insist on his return, or would he be allowed to slip away and drop out of sight like the white froth he was watching on the top of the ever-shifting waves? He had boasted of possessing a witness. Would they believe that boast and send a detective in search of him, or would they take his words for the bombast they really were, and proceed with their investigations in happy relief at the loss of his intrusive assistance?

As this was a question impossible for him to answer, he turned to other thoughts and fretted himself for a while with memories of Amabel's disdain and Frederick's careless acceptance of a sacrifice he could never know the cost of, mixed strangely with relief at being free of it all and on the verge of another life. As the dark settled, his head fell further and further forward on the rail he was leaning against, till he became to any passing eye but a blurred shadow mixing with other shadows equally immovable.

Unlike them, however, his shadow suddenly shifted. Two men had drawn near him, one speaking pure Spanish, and the other English. The English was all that Sweetwater could understand, and this half of the conversation was certainly startling enough. Though he could not, of course, know to what or whom it referred, and though it certainly had nothing to do with him, or any interest he represented or understood, he could not help listening and remembering every word. The English-speaking man uttered the first sentence he comprehended. It was this:

"Shall it be tonight?"

The answer was in Spanish.

Again the English voice:

"He has come up. I saw him distinctly as he passed the second mast."

More Spanish; then English:

"You may if you want to, but I'll never breathe easy while he's on the ship. Are you sure he's the fellow we fear?"

A rapid flow of words, from which Sweetwater got nothing. Then slowly and distinctly, in the sinister tones he had already begun to shiver at:

"Very good. The R. F. A. should pay well for this," with the quick addition following a hurried whisper: "All right! I'd send a dozen men to the bottom for half that money. But 'ware there! Here's a fellow watching us! If he has heard—"

Sweetwater turned, saw two desperate faces projected toward him, realized that something awful, unheard of was about to happen, and would have uttered a yell of dismay, but that the very intensity of his fright took away his breath. The next minute he felt himself launched into space and enveloped in the darkness of the chilling waters. He had been lifted bodily and flung headlong into the sea.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Sweetwater's one thought as he sank was, "Now, Mr. Sutherland need fear me no longer."

But the instinct of life is stong in every heart, and when he found himself breathing the air again he threw out his arms wildly and grasped a spar.

It was life to him, hope, reconnection with his kind. He clutched, clung, and, feeling himself floating, uttered a shout of mingled joy and appeal that unhappily was smothered in the noise of the waters and the now rapidly rising wind.

Whence had come this spar in his desperate need? He never knew, but somewhere in his remote consciousness an impression remained of a shock to the waves following his own plunge into the water, which might mean that this spar had been thrown out after him, perhaps by the already repentant hands of the wretches who had tossed him to his death. However it came, or from whatever source, it had at least given him an opportunity to measure his doom and realize the agonies of hope when it alternates with despair.

The darkness was impenetrable. It was no longer that of heaven, but that of hell, or so it seemed to this dazed soul, plunged suddenly from dreams of exile into the valley of the shadow of death. And such a death! As he realized its horrors, as he felt the chill night and the oncoming storm strike its piercing fangs into his marrow, and knew that his existence and the hope of ever again seeing the dear old face at the fireside rested upon the strength of his will and the tenacity of his life clutch, he felt his heart fail, and the breath that was his life cease in a gurgle of terror. But he clung on, and though no comfort came, still clung, while vague memories of long-ago shipwrecks, and stories told in his youth of men, women and children tossing for hours on a drifting plank flashed through his benumbed brain and lent their horror to his own sensations of apprehension and despair.

He wanted to live. Now that the dread specter had risen out of the waters and had his clutch on his hair, he realized that the world held much for him, and that even in exile he might work and love and enjoy God's heaven and earth, the green fields and the blue sky. Not such skies as were above him now. No, this was not sky that over-arched him, but a horrible vault in which the clouds, rushing in torn masses, had the aspect of demons ready to contend for him with those other demons that with long arms and irresistible grip were dragging at him from below. He was alone on a whirling spar in the midst of a midnight ocean, but horror and a pitiless imagination made this conflict more than that of the elements and his position an isolation beyond that of man removed from his fellows. He was almost mad. Yet he clung.

Suddenly a better frame of mind prevailed. The sky was no lighter, save as the lightning came to relieve the overwhelming darkness by a still more overwhelming glare, nor were the waves less importunate or his hold on the spar more secure; but the horror seemed to have lifted and the practical nature of the man reasserted itself, if only for a passing moment. Other men had gone through worse dangers than these and survived to tell the tale, as he might survive to tell his. The will was all—will an an indomitable courage—and he had will and he had courage, or why had he left his home to dare a hard and threatening future purely from a sentiment of gratitude. Could he hold on long enough, daylight would come, and if, as in this calmer moment he realized he had been thrown into the sea within twenty hours after leaving Sutherlandtown, then they must be not far from Cape Cod, and in the direct line of travel from New York to Boston. Rescue would come, and if the storm which was breaking over his head more and more furiously made it difficult for him to retain his hold, it certainly would not wreck his spar or drench him more than he was already drenched, while every blast would drive him shoreward. The clinging was all, and filial love would make him do that, even in the semi-unconsciousness which now and then swept over him. Only would it not be better for Mr. Sutherland, if he should fail and drop away into the yawning chasms of the unknown world beneath. There were moments when he thought so, and then his clutch perceptibly weakened; but only once did he come near losing his hold altogether. And that was when he thought he heard a laugh. A laugh here in the midst of ocean! in the midst of storm! a laugh! Were demons a reality, then? Yes; but the demon he had heard was of his own imagination. It had a face of Medusa sweetness and the laugh. Only Amabel's rang out so thrillingly false; and with such a diabolic triumph. Amabel, who might be laughing in her dreams at this very moment of his supreme misery, and who assuredly would laugh if conscious of his suffering and aware of the doom to which his self-sacrifice had brought him. Amabel—the thought of her made the night more dark, the waters more threatening, the future less promising. Yet he would hold on if only to spite her who hated him and whom he hated almost as much as he loved Mr. Sutherland.

It was his last conscious thought for hours. When morning broke he was but a nerveless figure, with sense enough to cling, and that was all.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"A man! Haul him in! Don't leave a poor fellow drifting about like that."

The speaker, a bluff, hearty skipper, whose sturdy craft had outridden one of the worst storms of the season, pointed to our poor friend Sweetwater, whose head could just be seen above the broken spar he clung to. In another moment a half dozen hands were stretched for him, and the insensible form drawn in and laid on a deck which still showed the results of the night's fierce conflict with the waters.

"D— it! how ugly he is!" cried one of the sailors, with a leer at the half-drowned man's face. "Didn't please some merry lass in saving him! He's fit to poison a devil fish!"

But though more than one of them laughed, they gave him good care for all that, and when Sweetwater came to life and realized that his blood was running warm again, and that a gray sky had taken the place of darkness and a sound board supported limbs which for hours had yielded helplessly to the rocking billows, he saw a ring of hard but good-natured faces about him and realized quite well what had been done for him when one of them said:

"There! he'll do now; all hands on deck! We can get into New Bedford in two days if this wind holds. Nor'west, the skipper shouted to the man at the tiller. We'll sup with our old women in forty-eight hours at New Bedford!"

It was the only word Sweetwater heard. So, he was to get no further away from Sutherlandtown than that. Evidently Providence had not meant him to escape. Or was it but trying his fortitude? A man as humble as he might easily be lost even in a place as small as New Bedford. It was his indentity he must suppress. With that unrecognized he might remain in the next village to Sutherlandtown without fear of being called up as a witness against Frederick. But could he suppress it. He thought he could. At all events he would try.

"What's your name?" were the words he now heard shouted in his ear.

"Jonathan Briggs," was his mumbled reply. "I was blown off a ship's deck in the gale last night."

"What ship?"

"The Proserpine." It was the first name that suggested itself to him.

"Oh, I thought it might have been the Hesper; she foundered off here last night."

"Foundered? The Hesper?" The hot blood was shooting now through his veins.

"Yes, we just picked up her name board. That was before we got a hold on you."

"Foundered! The ship from which he had been so mercilessly thrown! And all on board lost, perhaps. He began to realize the hand of Providence in his fate.

"It was the Hesper I sailed on. I'm not just clear yet in my mind. My first voyage was made on the Proserpine. Well, bless the gale that blew me from that deck."

He seemed incoherent, and they left him again for a little while. When they came back he had his story all ready, which imposed upon them just so far as it was for their interest. Their business on this coast was not just legitimate, and when they found he simply wanted to be set on shore they were quite willing to do this much for him. Only they regretted that he had only $2 or so and his own soaked clothing to give in exchange for the motley garments they trumped up among them for his present comfort. But he, as well as they, made the best of a bad bargain, he especially, as his clothes, which would be presently scattered among half a dozen families, were the only remaining clew connecting him with his native town. He could now be Jonathan Briggs indeed. Only who was Jonathan Briggs and how was he to earn the dinner for which he felt himself at that moment famishing?

At the end of a couple of days he was dexterously landed on the end of a long pier, which they passed without stopping, on their way to their own obscure anchorage. As he jumped from the rail to the pier and felt again the touch of terra firma he drew a long breath of uncontrollable elation. Yet he had not a cent in the world, no friends and certainly no prospects. He did not even know whether to turn to the right or the left as he stepped out upon the docks, and when he had decided to turn to the right as being on the whole more lucky, he did not know whether to risk his fortune in the streets of the town or to plunge at once into one of the low-browed drinking houses whose signs confronted him on this water-lane.

He decided that his prospects for a dinner were slim in any case, and that his only hope for breaking fast that day lay in the use he might make of one of his three talents. Either he must find a fiddle to play on, a carpenter's bench to work at or a piece of detective shadowing to do. The last would bring him before the notice of the police, which was just the thing he must avoid; so it was fiddling or carpentry he must seek, either of which would be difficult to obtain in his present garb. But of difficulties Sweetwater was not a man to take note. He had undertaken out of pure love for a good man to lose himself. He had accomplished it, and now was he to complain because in doing so he was likely to go hungry for a day or two? No; Amabel might laugh at him, or he might fancy she did, while struggling in the midst of rapidly engulfing waters, but would she laugh at him now? He did not think she would. She was of the kind who sometimes go hungry themselves in old age. Some premonition of this might give her a fellow feeling.

He came to a stand before a little child sitting on an ill-kept doorstep. Smiling at her kindly, he waited for her first expression to see how he appeared in the eyes of innocence. Not so bad a man, it seemed, though his naturally plain countenance was not relieved by the seaman's cap and knitted shirt he wore. For she laughed as she looked at him, and only ran away because there wasn't room for him to pass beside her.

Comforted a little, he sauntered on, glancing here and there with that sharp eye of his for a piece of work to be done. Suddenly he came to a halt. A market woman had got into an altercation with an oyster-man, and her stall had been upset in the contention, and her vegetables were rolling here and there. He righted her stall, picked up her vegetables and fruit and in return got two apples and a red herring he would not have given to a dog at home. Yet it was the sweetest morsel he had ever tasted, and the apples might have been grown in the garden of the Hesperides from the satisfaction and pleasure they gave this hungry man. Then, refreshed, he dashed into the town. It should now go hard, but he would earn a night's lodging.

The day was windy, and he was going along a narrow street, when something floated down from a window above past his head. It was a woman's veil, and as he looked up to see where it came from he met the eyes of its owner looking down from an open casement above him. She was gesticulating, and seemed to point to some one up the street. Glad to seize at anything which promised emolument or adventure, he shouted up and asked her what she wanted.

"That man down there," she cried; "the one in a long black coat going up the street; keep after him and stop him; tell him the telegram has come. Quick, quick, before he gets around the corner. He will pay you; run."

Sweetwater, with joy in his heart—for 5 cents was a boon to him in the present condition of affairs—rushed after the man she had pointed out and hastily stopped him.

"Some one," he added, "a woman in a window back there, bade me run after you and say the telegram has come. She told me you would pay me," he added, for he saw the man was turning hastily back, without thinking of the messenger. "I need the money, and the run was a sharp one."

With a preoccupied air, the man thrust his hand into his pocket, pulled out a coin and handed it to him. Then he walked hurriedly off. Evidently the news was welcome to him. But Sweetwater stood rooted to the ground. The man had given him a $5 gold piece, instead of the nickel he had evidently intended.

How hungrily Sweetwater eyed that coin! In it was lodging, food, perhaps a new article or so of clothing. But after a moment of indecision which might well be forgiven him, he followed speedily after the man and overtook him just as he reached the house from which the woman's veil had floated.

"Sir, pardon me; but you gave me $5 instead of 5 cents. It was a mistake; I cannot keep the money."

The man, who was not just the sort from whom kindness would be expected, looked at the money in Sweetwater's palm, then at the miserable, mud-bespattered clothes he wore (he had got that mud helping the poor market woman), and stared hard at the face of the man who looked so needy and yet returned him $5.

"You're an honest fellow," he declared, not offering to take back the gold piece. Then, with a quick glance up at the window, "Would you like to earn that money?"

Sweetwater broke out into a smile, which changed his whole countenance.

"Wouldn't I, sir?"

The man eyed him for another minute with scrutinizing intensity. Then he said, shortly:

"Come up stairs with me."

They entered the house, went up a flight or two and stopped at a door, which was slightly ajar.

"We are going into the presence of a lady," remarked the man. "Wait here until I call you."

Sweetwater waited, the many thoughts going through his mind not preventing him from observing all that passed.

The man, who had left the door wide open, approached the lady who was awaiting him, and who was apparently the same one who had sent Sweetwater on his errand, and entered into a low but animated conversation. She held a telegram in her hand, which she showed him, and then after a little earnest parley and a number of pleading looks from them both toward the waiting Sweetwater, she disappeared into another room, from which she brought a parcel neatly done up, which she handed to the man with a strange gesture. Another hurried exchange of words and a meaning look which did not escape the sharp eye of the watchful messenger, and the man turned and gave the parcel into Sweetwater's hands.

"You are to carry this," said he, "to the town hall. In the second room to the right on entering you will see a table surrounded by chairs which at this hour ought to be empty. At the head of the table you will find an armchair. On the table directly in front of this you will lay this packet. Mark you, directly before the chair and not too far from the edge of the table. Then you are to come out. If you see any one, say you came to leave some papers for Mr. Gifford. Do this, and you may keep the $5 and welcome."

Sweetwater hesitated. There was something in the errand or in the manner of the man or woman that he did not like.

"Don't potter!" spoke up the latter, with an impatient look at her watch. "Mr. Gifford will expect those papers."

Sweetwater's sensitive fingers closed on the package he held. It did not feel like papers.

"Are you going?" asked the man.

Sweetwater looked up with a smile. "Large pay for so slight a commission," he ventured, turning the packet over and over in his hand.

"But then you will execute it at once, and according to the instructions I have given you," retorted the man. "It is your trustworthiness I pay for. Now go."

Sweetwater turned to go. After all it was probably all right, and $5 easily earned is doubly $5. As he reached the staircase he stumbled. The shoes he wore did not fit him.

"Be careful there!" shouted the woman, in a shrill, almost frightened, voice, while the man stumbled back into the room in a haste which seemed wholly uncalled for. "If you let the packet fall you will do injury to its contents. Go softly, man, softly."

Yet they had said it held papers!

Troubled, yet hardly knowing what his duty was, Sweetwater hastened down the stairs and took his way up the street. The town hall should be easy to find, indeed, he thought he saw it in the distance. As he went he asked himself two questions: Could he fail to deliver the package, according to instructions, and yet earn his money? And was there any way of so delivering it without risk to the recipient or dereliction of duty to the man who had intrusted it to him, and whose money he wished to earn? To the first question his conscience at once answered no; to the second the reply came more slowly, and before fixing his mind determinedly upon it he asked himself why he felt this was no ordinary commission. This he could answer readily enough. First, the pay was too large, arguing that either the packet or the placing of the packet in a certain position on Mr. Gifford's table was of uncommon importance to this man or this woman; secondly, that the woman, though plainly and inconspicuously clad, had the face of a more than ordinarily unscrupulous adventuress, while the man was one of those saturnine-faced ones we sometimes meet, whose first look puts us on our guard and whom, if we hope nothing from him, we instinctively shun. Third, they did not look like inhabitants of the house and rooms in which he found them. In the few minutes he had stood in the doorway he had noted other things besides those we have named. He had seen that nothing was to be found there beyond the usual objects of furniture to be seen in any decent lodging house room. Not a trunk, not an article of clothing, nor any of the little things to be found where a woman expects to spend a day or even an hour. They were transients, consequently, and perhaps already in the act of flight. Then—he was not sure, but he was almost sure—that he was being followed by one or both of them. He had followed people himself, and something in his own sensations assured him that his movements were under surveillance. It would therefore not do to show any consciousness of this, and he went on directly and as straight to his goal as his rather limited knowledge of the streets would allow. He was determined to earn this money and to earn it without disadvantage to any one. And he thought he saw his way.

At the entrance of the town hall he hesitated an instant. An officer was standing in the doorway. It would be easy to call his attention to the packet he held and ask him to keep his eye on it. But this might involve him with the police, and this was something, as we know, which he was more than anxious to avoid. He reverted to his first idea.

Mixing with the crowd just now hurrying to and fro through the long corridors, he reached the room designated, and found it, as he had been warned he should, empty.

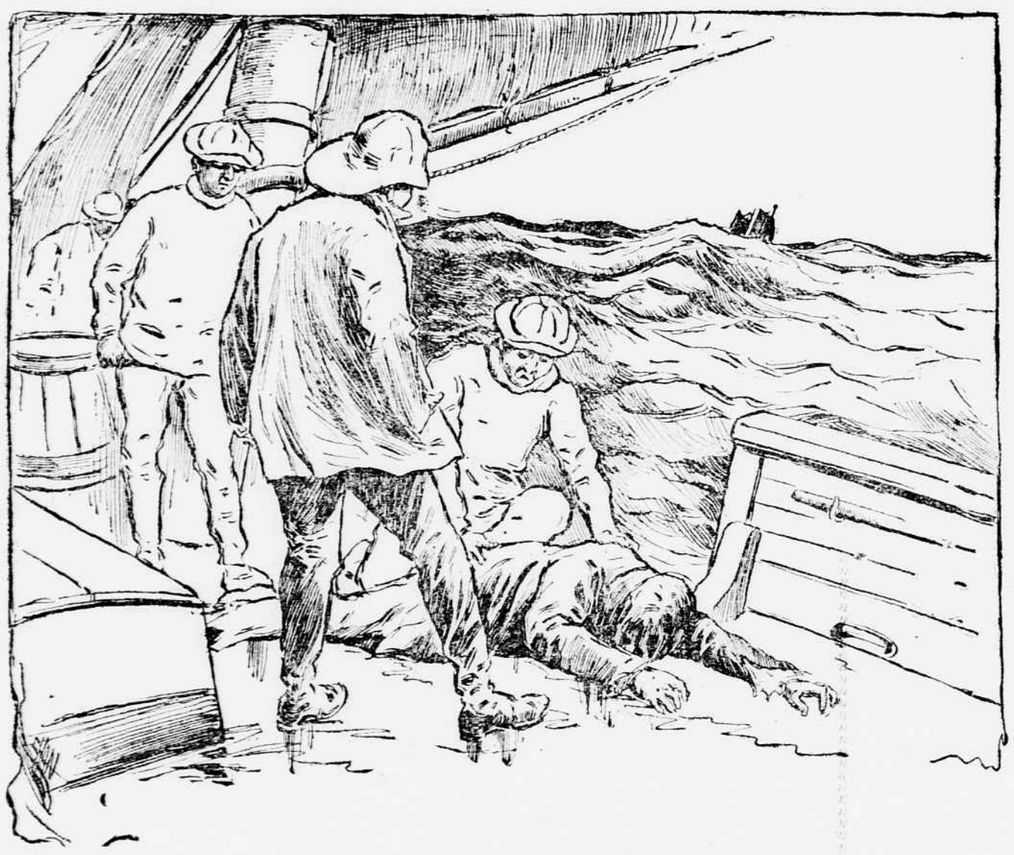
Approaching the table, he laid down the packet just as he had been directed, in front of the big arm chair, and then, casting a hurried look toward the door and failing to find any one watching him, he took up a pencil lying near by and scrawled hastily across the top of the packet the word "Suspicious." This he calculated would act as a warning to Mr. Gifford in case there was anything wrong about the package, and pass as a joke with him, and even the sender, if there was not. And satisfied that he had both earned his money and done justice to his own apprehensions, he turned to retrace his steps. As before, the corridors were alive with hurrying men of various ages and appearance, but only two attracted his notice. One of these was a large intellectual-looking man, who turned into the room from which he had just emerged, and the other a short fair man, with a countenance he had known from boyhood. Mr. Stone of Sutherlandtown was within ten paces of him, and he was as well known to the good postmaster as the postmaster was to him. Could any one have foreseen such a chance!

Turning his back with a slow slouch he made for a rear door he saw swinging in and out before him. As he passed through he cast a quick look behind him. He had not been recognized. In great relief he rushed on, knocking against a man standing against one of the outside pillars.

"Halloo!" shouted this man.

Sweetwater stopped. There was a tone of authority in the voice which he could not resist.

(To be continued.)



THE RESCUE OF SWEETWATER.

A Shooting Princess.

From the Pall Mall Gazette.

The Princess of Naples has retained, since leaving Montenegro, the habit, learned among her native mountains, of shooting, of which she is passionately fond, and which is an accomplishment very rare among Italian women. That she is an adept was proved last year during her journey in northern Russia and Scandinavia, when she hunted reindeer, equaling the most expert shots. In the magnificent park of Capo di Monte at Naples, where she lives, occupying the same apartments as did Frederick II, she has had targets set up, at which almost every morning she shoots with her husband, far surpassing him, although he is no mean shot. Often the princess rises very early for a shooting expedition, in which she is accompanied only by her lady-in-waiting, Countess Della Trinita. The other day, returning from one of these excursions, she entered the elevator of the royal palace, with her gun slung across her shoulder. The countess called her attention to the rifle being still loaded, remarking that in so narrow a place an accident might easily happen. Princess Helen put the muzzle out of the lift and shot her last cartridge, producing such a noise that the whole palace thought a bomb had exploded, and the people rushed to the spot to find the princess laughing at the commotion she had raised. It was at his wife's request that the Prince of Naples bought the Island of Monte Cristo, almost facing Pisa, which he has turned into a hunting lodge and park, after plans by Princess Helene.

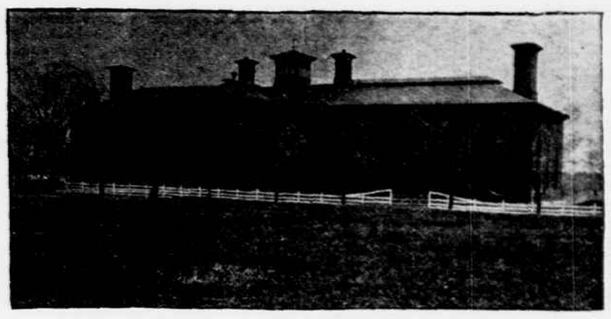
Not That Kind of Rest.

From Tit-Bits.

Doctor—"Your husband must have complete rest."

Wife—"I know it. I talk to him seven or eight hours every day so as to keep his mind off business."

Doctor—"On second thoughts, madam, I conclude that the one chance for your husband is to take him to the hospital, with instructions that no one but the trained nurse and myself be admitted."



UNITED STATES JAIL.

THE DISTRICT JAIL

Historic Prison in the Eastern Section of the City.

A MODEL INSTITUTION OF ITS KIND

The Gallows Upon Which Guiteau Ended His Days.

THOSE IN MURDERERS' ROW

In the extreme eastern section of the city, on 19th street between D and E streets south, stands a handsome, commanding building of brick and brownstone. The building faces the west, and is shaped something like a great Maltese cross, four great wings running east, south, west and north, respectively, from the central building. But for the fact that the great, high windows are strongly barred with ironwork, one would suppose the structure to be any other institution than it is, the United States jail for the District of Columbia; for it bears from a distance none of the distinguishing features of a prison. Yet it is a prison, and a model one, too, of its kind.

The jail is surrounded by extensive, well-kept grounds, and before the main entrance a neatly arranged grass plat adds to the attractive appearance of the great building and premises. As one approaches the entrance, a door of grated iron blocks ingress; but a touch of the bell is answered by the officer in charge, and, if the visitor possesses the proper credentials, the iron door swings noiselessly back and, through an inner door of stout oak, the visitor passes into the office of the prison. This office room runs the width of the western wing, and from it is a passageway to the rotunda of the jail, the rooms of the warden and deputy warden being on one side of this passageway, and rooms of the prison physician and the hospital steward being opposite.

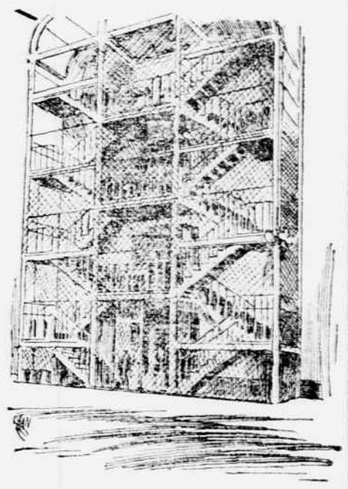
The rotunda of the prison is a large, square-shaped room, and from its stone floor to the arched roof no obstruction meets the eye. Northward and southward from the rotunda run the two wings in which the male inmates of the jail are confined. Beyond these two wings, but in no way directly connected with them, outer walls run. A light, but substantial iron framework obstructs entrance to these inner wings, entrance being had through doors which are always kept securely locked. In each of these two inner wings are four tiers of cells, there being thirty-four cells in each tier, or 136 in each wing. Placing but one man or boy in each cell, accommodations are provided for 272 male prisoners. But at the end of each tier there are two double cells, capable of accommodating two or more prisoners. In some instances these double cells are used as bath rooms.

Wall Intervenes.

The cells in these two wings are face to face, but a thick brick wall, rising from the floor of the first tier to the height of the uppermost tier, prevents communication with and observation of the occupants in the opposite row of cells. The single cells in these wings are about 5 feet by 8 feet in dimensions, the doors being heavy open ironwork, and the small window in each being similarly secured. Between these inner wings and the outer walls of the prison runs a broad, well-lighted corridor, heavily-barred high windows admitting plenty of light and air. So, should a prisoner by any means escape from his cell, he would still have to go through the outer of these walls to get clear. Another feature which adds greatly to the perfect ventilation consists of the open floors of the corridors above, they being of grated ironwork.

Until within a few weeks the female prisoners were confined in the western wing of the jail, in large rooms. Now they are confined in modern steel cells in the east wing, above the prison kitchen. There are forty-eight of these cells, placed back to back, sixteen being in each of the three tiers. The face of the cells is of open steel work, and two swinging bunks are provided in each, so that in the event of the necessity arising, ninety-six female prisoners can be accommodated. This number, however, has never been reached since the jail was built, there being at the present time but thirty-three female prisoners, all colored but one. The female department of the prison is in immediate charge of two matrons, who alternate in their watches. No communication is permitted between the male and female prisoners, and, save when they are on their way to or from the prison, they never meet. The cells in the female department are slightly more commodious than those in the male department.

The western wing of the jail is now used by Warden Harris as a hospital, and also as a place wherein to isolate any suspicious case of illness. Just now the prison is in a state of quarantine, because of the prevalence of smallpox in the District, and all general visiting has been prohibited since early in February. There has been no case of the disease discovered in the jail during the present outbreak, and as all prisoners are vaccinated upon their arrival, and the entire prison thoroughly disinfected every day, Warden Harris has little fear of this disease, or any other of a contagious character, obtaining a foothold there.



The Cage.

Pleased With the Fare.

The District jail has long been noted among those who most frequently visit it through the judgment of the courts as serving a most excellent bill of fare, and as those sentenced to undergo imprisonment in it are not required to labor, a jail sentence here is said to be looked upon in criminal circles as anything but harsh punishment. Indeed, it was a notorious custom some years ago for local criminals to steal some petty thing during the winter months in order to secure for the season a term in jail, where they were sure of warmth and plenty of good, substantial food. So general became this custom that the matter was brought to the attention of Congress, with the result that a second offense of petty thieving was made a penitentiary offense. This in a measure put an end to the practice, but it would appear, from the increased number of prisoners during the cold weather, that they have adopted some other line for the purpose.

As will appear from the following bill of fare, which prevails at the prison the year round, the inmates enjoy variety as well as a plenitude of good food:

Monday: Breakfast—Herring, white bread, coffee and potatoes. Dinner—Corn beef, potatoes and corn bread.

Tuesday: Breakfast—Hash, white bread and coffee. Dinner—Corn bread, fresh beef and vegetable soup.

Wednesday: Breakfast—White bread, mackerel, coffee and potatoes. Dinner—Corn beef, corn bread and potatoes.

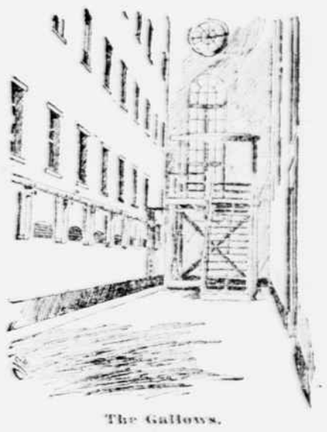
Thursday: Breakfast—Hash, white bread and coffee. Dinner—Fresh beef, corn bread and vegetable soup.

Friday: Breakfast—Mackerel, potatoes, white bread and coffee. Dinner—Corn bread and bean soup.

Saturday: Breakfast—Herring, potatoes, white bread and coffee. Dinner—Fresh beef, corn bread and vegetable soup.

Sunday: Breakfast—Hash, white bread and coffee. Dinner—Corn beef, cabbage and corn bread.

The working men get three meals per day—7:30, 12:30 and 5:30. They get coffee three times a day, and one-half loaf white bread at each meal. Their last two meals are generally alike.



The Gallows.

The other prisoners get two meals a day—8 and 2:45—and get one-half loaf white bread at breakfast and corn bread at dinner. The women get one-half loaf white bread at each meal.

The Workers.

The working men, mentioned in the bill of fare, are those serving jail sentences who are employed in the prison kitchen, a most excellent and well-equipped establishment, by the way, and those who are engaged in doing the small chores about the building and grounds. This work is eagerly sought by the prisoners, for the reason that the work is of a light character, and because in performing it they obtain a release from their cells and certain small privileges. Warden Harris regrets very much that through lack of facilities he cannot employ those of his charges sentenced to imprisonment in the institution in regular channels of labor, for the enforced idleness of the great majority of the prisoners not only tends to their further moral degeneration, but also prevents him from making the prison in part, if not wholly, self-supporting. There is authority of law for requiring those sentenced to imprisonment in the institution to labor, but as there are no workshops provided and no wall about the prison, it is practically impossible to work them, save in the kitchen and in other light labor.

There is another feature of the institution which the warden regrets exceedingly, and that is the necessity of confining juvenile offenders in close contact with those old and hardened in crime. To overcome this very serious evil as much as possible Warden Harris confines the boys sent to jail for punishment or for trial in the uppermost tier of cells in the south wing. But, through those mysterious channels of communication which prevail, despite the earnest and persistent efforts of the officials in all prisons, the boys come more or less in contact with their older associates, and such contact, although limited as much as possible, results in many instances in the complete ruin of the boys, even of those who are for the first time undergoing imprisonment. The warden agrees with other authorities on the subject that young boys or girls should in no case be confined in jail, not even when awaiting trial. Juveniles of both sexes, he believes, should be held in the reform schools, and for that reason he hopes to see the laws obtaining here so amended as to permit the courts to send youthful offenders to reformatories instead of to the jail or to the workhouse. The District Commissioners are of the same opinion in the matter, and it is understood that they, together with the judges of the Criminal and Police courts, will join with Warden Harris and Intendant Stoutenburgh of the District workhouse in asking such a change in the laws by Congress.

Occupants of South Wing.

In addition to the boys, there are confined in the south wing of the jail, set apart for males, those who are awaiting trial for alleged penal crimes and those sentenced to the penitentiary or to death. The north wing is utilized for the confinement of men sentenced to imprisonment in jail. The lower tiers of the south wing are, as a rule, given over to those charged with or convicted of the most serious offenses, and the cells on either side of the corridor nearest the rotunda are occupied by convicted murderers, of whom there are at the present time four, three of whom have been sentenced to die early next month. Cell No. 2 of this wing is the one in which Charles J. Guiteau, the assassin of President Garfield, was confined after his conviction, and into which Sergeant Mason fired his rifle for the purpose of cheating the gallows of its victim. This cell is now occupied by Smith, the negro murderer, who is to hang Friday next. In cells 1 and 3, opposite him, Strather and Winston, who were hanged yesterday, were confined up to the time of their execution.

The instrument of death stands in all its grimness at the extreme end of the eastern corridor of the north wing of the prison. On it Guiteau was executed and a dozen or more murderers since then. It is always ready for instant use, and is a model of effective simplicity. Stout posts support a platform about ten feet wide by about five or six feet deep, the platform being reached by a stairway of about a dozen steps. A great cross beam rises above the center of the scaffold, from which the fatal ropes descend. A trapdoor, which, upon the signal of the warden, swings noiselessly downward and backward, occupies the center of the platform, with accommodations for three or four criminals. The trapdoor is held in place by iron bolts beneath it, which are released at the proper moment by a pull on a rope with which they are connected, and which runs into a cell opposite. In this cell stands the real executioner, who is hidden from sight, and who is unknown save to the jail officials. When all is ready the warden gives the signal by a motion of his handkerchief, the rope is pulled by the man in the cell, the bolts fly back, the trapdoor falls and the condemned man plunges into eternity.

The District jail is not only a model one in point of construction, but also in neatness and cleanliness, and the health of the inmates, despite its close proximity to the Eastern branch, is invariably good, very few cases of serious illness occurring. A few days ago the number of prisoners was 305, of whom 261 were colored and 44 white.