

The CONVICT COUNTRY: or FIGHTING for a MILLION

BY CHARLES MORRIS BUTLER.

Author of "The Demise of Parnell," "A Kinsman's Tragedy," "The Life of Charles Morris Butler."

CHAPTER XVII.

The Auction of Women.

After the noise had subsided and order had been restored, the crier announced that an allotment of women would then take place.

As was usual custom, upon the arrival of marriageable females into the community, balloting for the privilege of claiming a mate was about to take place. As explained by the crier there were eighty-three men who had registered their intention of competing for a wife. The mode of procedure was very simple: into a basket were placed as many slips of paper as there were competitors, and there were but twenty women, so also there were but twenty numbers, the balance being blank. The numbered tickets also gave the holder the privilege of choosing his mate. The women could refuse to marry the person who asked for their hand only by accepting some other person. The matter of choice, then, was slightly limited, and often led to the buying and selling of chances.

As the numbers were being placed in the basket, Lang said: "Place me on the list."

"And who," said Wilson.

"Take your places with the other contestants," replied the king. Lang and Wilson did so. Each read the other's thoughts; either if successful would ask Pearl Huntington to be his wife; there was no doubt in their minds that she, too, would be forced to enter the list.

The crier held aloft his basket. "In this basket," he said, "are twenty numbers and sixty-three blank slips. Those only who obtain numbered tickets have the privilege of choosing a wife. Ready?"

"One moment!" interrupted Golden, speaking at the people and at the same time to Schiller. "The crier announces 'twenty women' and often led to the owner of a successful slip can be only competitors. I count twenty-one women! This woman, Pearl Huntington, is in Paradise; if she belongs here, if she remains here, she should become a citizen. As a citizen she has a right to make a choice. I demand that she be put upon the list! The king, if he will, may enter the contest, can have the same opportunity as the rest of the citizens. I

and Pearl, placing her hand within that of Lang's, outstretched to receive her.

"Curse you!" said Schiller. "I will be even with you yet!"

"Be careful, Schiller!" calmly retorted Golden. "A threat—though you be king of Paradise—is a punishable crime."

Fearful of another scene, afraid to trust himself further, with a muttered curse he walked away to another part of the room.

Before the crowd dispersed there was a ballot taken by the assembly to see if a certain person condemned to die should expiate his crime (1) in a duel with another man; (2) or executed a mountain lion in a hand-to-hand encounter; (3) or go free. Three slips of paper were placed in the basket as before, with the three propositions written on the different slips. The condemned man being brought into the ring blindfolded, was assisted to take a slip from the basket. The person who drew the slip which condemned him to fight a duel to the death with some antagonist as soon as one could be furnished either by volunteer act, or by some other criminal.

"While the people were enjoying themselves visiting among themselves, the king and his council, which were Rogers, Golden and Albert Fish, the treasurer, law, had the candidates signed their names, and allotted them certain places to sleep and duties to perform. Everything passed off quite smoothly until it became Lang's turn. As was the custom, newly married couples were given a house to live in. Each woman was supposed to do the cooking and washing for two persons besides her husband. Pearl Huntington had never been brought up to do such work and when allotted her duties, foolishly made objection.

This was Schiller's cue. "Ignorance is no excuse," he said.

It was foolish of Lang to enter into discussion about the merits or demerits of the case; moral, like the rest of us, he retorted, "if it would have been safer and wiser for him to have held his peace. 'This is revenge,' he said to Schiller. 'You would overlook these faults in her did you not wish to be even?'"

The outbreak gave the king the advantage. Schiller did not blame Pearl—it was not natural for the impulsive and abused girl to be spiteful—but he was murderously revengeful at Lang for stepping between him and his desires.

"I will overlook your wife's shortcomings," said Schiller, "but your charges against me I will not overlook! For insubordination I hereby grant you to work in the mines for a year."

Golden and Rogers, though they were perfectly aware of the advantage Schiller was taking of Lang, did not interrupt the king. The main body of the populace had retired for the night, and without the restraining influence of the people it would have been open folly to have bitten themselves against the recognized head of the community.

The silence of his champions forced Lang to realize that he had made a mistake. Discretion being the better part of valor, then, with a sigh he tried to remedy the evil done without really understanding how he had gotten himself into trouble. "I am a new arrival here," he said, "and was not aware that to speak the truth even to the king was a criminal offense. It was a poor attempt at an apology without weakening."

"You have made my apology," Lang retorted Schiller, haughtily, the flush of victory and power again appearing on his face. The opportunity occurring to him, he added, "I wish to show you sympathized with your ignorance. I hereby grant you the privilege of coming to earth each night."

Schiller smiled sneeringly.

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Louis managed to say, "I thank you, sir!" and added to show that he felt the force of the king's words: "I understand the honor that you do me, sir!"

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to him as if he were really what he purported to be.

"The lady, perhaps," said Schiller, noticing how Pearl clung to Louis, "would like her father to live with her?"

"Most gracious king!" said Pearl. It was the first favor she had deigned to accept at the second's hands.

"I grant your request," said the king. Pearl bowed. The reason for granting his concession, however, was made manifest. "As I have issued a decree to the effect that your father be housed in the haunted house until he desires to comply with the laws of Paradise and begin practice, in order for you to be with him I will have to compel you both to live in that forbidding place! It is your own fault, however," he said, as he noticed Pearl shudder. "I offered you a palace, you chose the hovel!"

"The haunted house was, of all the houses in Paradise, the one Louis Lang would have chosen to live in. It was not haunted to him, but on the contrary was the only entrance to freedom through the tunnel. He could not have lived in any other place, for the privilege of being there."

"You can report to Rogers in the morning, Lang," said Schiller, who could not help but show his exultation in his voice. "To-night your home is ready. You have been expecting Dr. Huntington to make trouble, and be a guest of the city's for some time, you will find the household in a better state than usual." Louis bowed. Wilson was standing aloof awaiting the outcome of his case. For the first time Schiller appeared to notice him. The king beckoned to him. "When you stand, show your friends to their home. As a reward for the blow you gave me yesterday you will work out a year's penitence in the mines. You seem to be pretty fond of Mrs. Lang. I also grant you the privilege of living under the same roof with her! Here are the keys to the house. Let me see if you will allow me to accompany Huntington out of the room allotted to him. You can see that he gets food, but at the same time give him no outdoor air or allow him no freedom in having done all the harm possible. Schiller then bid his company adieu.

As soon as the king departed Wilson led the way to the haunted house. There were no lights burning in any of the rooms and the dwelling presented a very deserted and dilapidated appearance. The house had been used for a prison some time, and the marks of the bars and bolts were still to be seen. The front door, which was held in place by being locked with a huge padlock.

The front room, so the story went (as told by Golden), was the scene of a most foul murder. A man had killed his wife by beating her to death with a heavy stone-poker. The noises heard on the inside of the house were the groans and screams of the blows and groans emitted at that time. Even Schiller, educated man that he was, believed that this place was haunted. Perhaps his crime made him cowardly in condemning Louis, Wilson and Pearl to live in this place, then, he imagined that he was inflicting upon them a most cruel punishment. This was true to a certain extent, but all but Lang to Lang, however, the place was a blessed spot, and had each room of his six been peopled with departed spirits, it would still have been the place of all places for him.

Not content with condemning our friends to live in this unholy spot, forever seeking a way to be revengeful on Dr. Huntington and his daughter, and now also Lang, who had snatched from him his revenge, Schiller, before retiring for the night, placed a spy upon the track of the trio to discover, if possible, some means of further venting his spite upon them.

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ILLINOIS NEWS

Choice items from over the state, especially selected for our readers

GOVERNOR VETES ROAD BILL.

Mr. Deussen Endeavors to Rectify Mistake of Legislature.

Another "bull" attending the rush which attended the closing days of the last legislature came to light recently, when Governor Deussen formally vetoed a bill which was designed to amend that incomprehensible bundle of statutes known under the general title of the road and bridge law. The bill was a measure introduced in the upper branch of the assembly by Senator Humphrey and undertook to change the manner of taking appeals to road and bridge cases. It passed the senate without opposition and received more than ninety votes in the house, but the record of the last named body contained the erroneous statement that it had failed and it was returned to the secretary of state along with the unpassed bills. Recently the mistake was discovered, for the bill was a part of the record, and in checking it up the mistake in the body of the report was made apparent. Senator Humphrey thereupon undertook to resurrect the bill and Governor Deussen, who had acted on the advice of the latter but vetoed the bill. Attorney General Stend interpreted the law as stipulating that bills which had passed the senate were allowed the governor after a delay of adjournment to pass on a bill; that there is an ambiguity in the record which would require a judicial determination as to whether or not that there is no regular channel through which the bill could be presented to the governor, there being no clerk of either house of the legislature at this time; that even if as a matter of law the bill could be approved at this time, it would certainly be a bad policy.

HEADS STATE BAPTISTS.

Henry R. Cissold was elected general of the Illinois Baptist General Association at the session of that body in Joliet. Mr. Cissold has been prominent in Baptist church circles all his life and is one of the leading citizens of Morgan Park, a suburb of Chicago.

GAINS BY ILLINOIS Y. M. C. A.

Edward A. Halsey of Chicago Elected President of State Association.

Remarkable growth in the Young Men's Christian Association work in Illinois is being witnessed at the third annual convention of the association at Bloomington. During the year four new associations were organized, and the present number of associations and their members are as follows: Eighteen new building movements have been under way during the year, and four buildings have been completed and occupied. The total amount of contributions for the year is more than \$300,000. Gifts of \$10,000 and over have been received by the association to the amount of more than \$50,000. A total of 1,340 professed conversions were recorded.

Tree Yields Two Crops.

Samuel Gillis of Brocton has an apple tree that is something in the way of a freak of nature. The fruit borne is of an early variety, and a large yield of apples was taken off in the early summer. A few weeks ago the tree blossomed for a second time, and is now covered with little apples about the size of a hulled walnut, which were maturing nicely when the frost nipped them. Had the frost stayed off a couple of weeks it is probable that the tree would have yielded two bumper crops of apples in the same season. Mr. Gillis is 68 years old, has always been engaged in agricultural pursuits, and is a close observer. He says that he has often seen trees bloom for the second time, but that never before in all his experience has he ever seen an apple tree bear the second crop of fruit in the same season. The curiosity is attracting great interest.

Peoria Plans Monster Revival.

As a result of disclosures in the case of Newton C. Dougherty, the ministerial association is making plans for a monster revival to be held in the Coliseum and all churches in Peoria. Dr. Toney of Chicago, Dr. Chapman and other noted men will help in the movement.

Husking Bees on Railway Tracks.

Farmer and stock raisers on the railroad rights of way have been a common sight in the vicinity of East Alton. Many thousands of bushels of shucked corn were washed away by the force of the water, and much of it stranded on the embankments of the railroads.

Dowry Judgment is Affirmed.

The supreme court at Springfield denied a rehearing to Alexander Dowie in the case in which Samuel G. Priddle of Chicago was awarded \$2,900 judgment against Dowie for detainer on the school board. By E. C. Roser, outside guard, John Schiffer; chaplain, J. W. Miller.

Widow Former Wife and Dies.

Dr. Albert H. Bosworth, widely known physician of Bloomington is dead. A week ago he sent for his divorced wife, from whom he had departed twenty years ago, and asked her to return with him to the last request of the dying man.

Religion Ends in Jail.

Beulah Bertha Stahl, aged 18, August 10th is now in the village jail at Annapolis. The girl's parents caused her arrest.

BAPTIST YOUNG PEOPLE ELECT

Frank W. Ives of Bloomington is Chosen President.

The Illinois Baptist anniversary came to a close at Joliet with the annual convention of the Baptist Young People's Union. The following officers were chosen: President, Frank W. Ives, Bloomington; vice presidents, B. D. Door, Chicago; Rev. F. J. Tate, Carbondale; Rev. W. A. Billings, Dixon; secretary, Blanch Aldrich; treasurer, John P. Pennington, Springfield; junior leader, Mrs. L. T. Barkman, Chicago; transportation leader, A. H. Lorus; educational leader, Rev. Geo. McClain, Joliet; Illinois member of international committee, H. H. West, Rockford; board of managers (George H. Shorney, Rev. A. A. Pendell, W. H. Channon, Rev. L. C. Trent, Rev. Orlo J. Price, Rev. C. J. James, H. H. West, Rev. J. B. Rogers, Rev. Wilson Garrett. At the closing session Rev. John Myers told of his fight against dances, gambling saloons and people everywhere to take up in an active and practical manner the work of enforcing the laws against similar places in other localities.

HOT COUNTY BEAT FIGHT IS ON

Gibson City Boomers Wear Buttons Showing New Courthouse.

Boosters for Gibson City as county seat of Ford county are wearing buttons showing a picture of the new courthouse which Gibson City proposes to give to the county in case Gibson City is chosen as the county seat in place of Paxton at an election soon to be held. The building is to be of fireproof, two stories high, with a tower, in front ninety-two feet high. The building is to be built on strictly Norman lines of dark brick with light colored stone trimmings of gray Bedford stone.

Former Convict in Trouble.

The police at Springfield have received a report from the Austrian killer, who was released from Chester penitentiary in 1904, after he had served a term for the robbery of the Springfield postoffice twenty years ago, has been arrested for the robbery of a bank at Vienna, Austria. The consul asked the police to forward a picture and a record of his crimes. Killoran was given a light sentence for the crime, because of his advanced age, 65 years, and he left prison in a daze. The police at St. Louis have a record of the Springfield postoffice by obtaining the postmaster's key long enough to make an impression in wax, duplicating the key.

Object to an Increase in Dues.

A suit was filed in the East St. Louis city court against the Catholic Knights of Illinois, restraining the Knights from increasing their dues. John Dorgan and John Sayers, because they refuse to pay the assessments asked by the lodge. The plaintiffs claim that at a meeting of the grand lodge in East St. Louis last July was illegal, and it was at that meeting that the dues and assessments were raised to almost double.

Sheriffs Seek Bloodhounds.

De Wolf of Peoria county and De Wolf of Fulton county visited Colchester to buy four noted bloodhounds to hunt down thieves and desperadoes in central Illinois. The hounds are well trained animals and have never failed in the performance of their duties. The sheriffs say that the four bloodhounds would put a damper upon a lot of the petty thieving going on in their counties.

Live Wire Kills Two Men.

Joseph Taylor of St. Louis bridge was instantly killed at Chatsworth by coming in contact with an electric wire while changing his hat, which had been blown off. William F. Taylor, who was standing by, saw the man's body from the wire, met a similar fate.

Illinois Grows Larger.

Posse county, Indiana, has just lost 1,100 more to Illinois by treaty of the Wabash river. The strip of land, which has long been known as London Island, has been annexed to Illinois by the action of the water. The island was formed many years ago by the Black cut-off, a mile long, the old river some six or seven miles around having since practically filled in and attached to the land solidly to Illinois at the north end. The same thing is slowly but surely happening in the river around Ribeye island.



"Will you be my wife?"

more you that such be the will of the people!"

"So be it!" came the cry.

"This is an outrage!" thundered Schiller, white with rage. "This is a scheme to cheat me out of my revenge!"

A mighty combing of derision was the only answer he received, and realizing that it was useless to plead, Schiller bowed to the people's will.

Pearl Huntington, who had been her secret admirer, said to her, "Mr. Golden," she said, in a voice choked with emotion, "thank the people for me, for their small favor! Tell them that rather than become the wife of such a man as Schiller, I would take my own life!"

"The law is," said Golden sternly, "that you take a husband! If Schiller is the only person to ask for your hand tonight, the law will grant him!"

"Between two evils," let me remind you, "choose the least."

"I understand you!" she said.

The ballot box being held aloft King Schiller stepped to the front, placed his hand and drew out a paper. Whether it was luck or chance, or through the power he wielded, Schiller drew a numbered ticket!

Wilson, who had been so scornful against him—the paper he drew was blank! "It all depends on you, Lang!" said he.

Lang quietly put in his hand and drew out a paper.

Mrs. Huntington as he opened the packet. It contained a number.

King Schiller was standing before Pearl, "I ask you my lady, to be my wife!" said Schiller. "Think well before you refuse—I have you in my power!"

"I do refuse!" said the indignant girl.

"Miss Huntington," said Louis Lang, stepping to her side, with his slip in his hand, "will you be my wife?"

"I will!" said Pearl stepping to the side of her husband. There was a look of shame upon her face.

"Then by virtue of the law, I pronounce you man and wife," said Golden, quickly stepping between Schiller



Henry R. Cissold