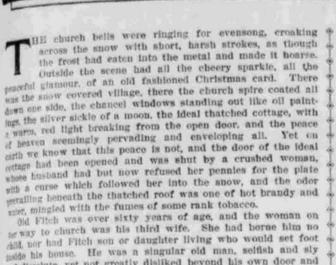
One of the Most Powerful Short Stories of Modern Times --- It Contains All the Elements of Tragedy Condensed With Admirable Skill

ACKNOWLEDGED BY CRITICS TO BE A MASTERPIECE OF LITERARY WORKMANSHIP



and dissolute, yet not greatly disliked beyond his own door and sithal a miracle of health and energy for his years. He drank to his heart's content, but he was never drunk, nor was Sunday's bottle ever known to lose him the soft side of Monday's bargain. Be trade be was game dealer, corn factor, money lender and nortragee of half the village; in appearance a man of medium height, with bowlegs and immense round shoulders, a hard mouth, shrewd eyes and wiry hair as white as the snow outside. The bells ceased, and for a moment there was no sound in the cottage but the song of the kettle on the hob. Then Fitch cached for the brandy bottle and brewed himself another steaming bumper. As he watched the sugar dissolve a few notes from the organ reached his ears, and the old man smiled ynically as he sipped and smacked his lips. At his elbow his tabacco pipe and the weekly newspaper were ranged with the brandy bottle, and he was soon in enjoyment of all three. Over the paper Fitch bad already fallen asleep after a particularly hearty midday meal, but he had not so much as glauced at the most entertaining pages, and he found them more entertaining new than usual. There was a scandal in high life running to several columns and subdivided into paragraphs labeled with the most pregnant headlines. 'The old man's mouth watered as he determined to leave this item to the last. It was not the only me of interest. There were several suicides, an admirable execution, a burglary, and-what? Fitch frowned as his quick eye came tumbling down a paragraph; then all at once he gasped out an oath and sat very still. The pipe in his mouth went out; the brandy and water was cooling in his glass. You might have hard them singing the psulms in the church hard by, but the old man heard nothing, saw nothing, thought of nothing, but the brief paragraph before his eyes:

"Escape from Portland. One convict killed, another wounded,

but a third gets clean away.

The greatest excitement was caused at Weymouth yesterday noming on the report being circulated that several convicts had decid their escape from the grounds of the Portland convict establishment. There appears to have been a regularly conested plan on the part of the prisoners working in one of the soliou gangs to attempt to regain their liberty, as yesterday mening three convicts bolted simultaneously from their party. They were instantly challenged to stop; but, as the order was bet compiled with, the warders fired several shots. One of the runiways fell dead, and another was so badly wounded that he was immediately recaptured and is now lying in a precarious condition. The third man, named Henry Cattermole, continued his course despite a succession of shots and was soon beyond mass of the rifles. He was pursued for some distance, but was altimately lost to view in the thick fog which prevailed. A and cry was raised, and search parties continued to scour the pelghborhood long after dark, but up to a late hour his tecapture had not been effected. Cattermole will be remembered 15 the map who was sentened to death some years ago for the murder of Lord Wolboro's gamekeeper near Bury St. Edmunds. but who afterward received the benefit of the doubt involved in the production of a wad which did not fit the convict's gun In spite of the successful efforts then made on his behalf, however, the authorities at Portland describe Cattermole as a most daring criminal and one who is only too likely to prove a danger to the community as long as he remains at large."

Fitch stared stupidly at the words for several minutes after he had read them through. It was the last sentence which at length fell into focus with his seeing eye. Henry Cattermole at large! How long had be been at large? It was a Sunday paper, but the Saturday edition, and this was among the latest tews. But it said "yesterday morning," and that meant Friday morning last. So Henry Cattermole had been at large since then, and this was the Sunday evening, and that made nearly three days altogether. Another question now forced likelf upon the old man's mind. How far was it from Portland prison-to-

Like most rustics of his generation, old Pitch had no spare knowledge of geography. He knew his own countryside and the read to London, but that was all Portland he knew to be on the other side of London. It might be 10 miles, might be 200, but this he felt in his shuddering heart and shaking bones, that tear or far, deep anow or no snow, Henry Cattermole was either emplared or else on his way to that cottage at that moment.

The feeling sucked the blood from the old man's vessels eren us his lips drained the tumbler he had filled with so light a heart. Then for a little he had spurious courage. He leaned back in his chair and laughed aloud, but it sounded strangely it the empty cottage. He looked up at the bell mouthed gun shere the chimneyplece, and that gave him greater confidence, for he kept it loaded. He got up and began to whistle, but stopped in the middle of a bar:

"Curse him." he said aloud, "they should he' hanged him, and then I never should be' been held like this. That'll be a good job if they take and hang him now, for I fare to feel afraid, I do, as long as Harry Cattermole's alive."

Old Fitch opened his door a moment, saw the thin moon stining on the snow, but no living soul abroad, and for once be was in want of a companion. However, the voices of the choir sounded nearer than ever in the frosty air and heartened him a little as he shut the door again, turned the heavy key and shot both boits well home. He was still stooping over the bottom one when his eyes fell upon a ragged trousers leg and a stout stocking planted close behind him. It was instantly joined by thother ragged leg and another stout stocking. Neither made sound, for there were no shoes to the catilke feet, and the stockings were remarkable for a most conspicuous stripe.

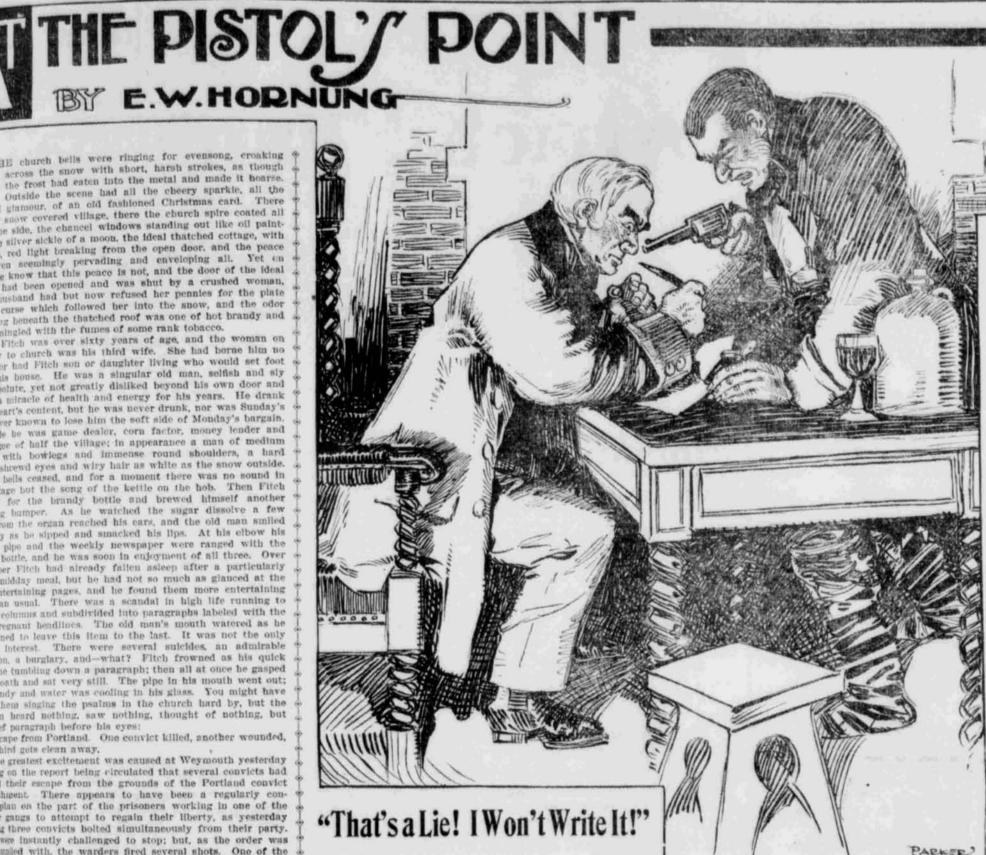
Then old Fitch knew that his enemy had found him out, and se could not stir. He was waiting for a knife to plunge into is center of his broad, round back, and when a hand slapped im there instead he thought for a moment he was stabbed buleed. When he knew that he was not, he turned round, still stooping, in a pitiable attitude, and a new shock greeted bimsid this be Henry Cattermole?

The peacher had been stout and thickset; the convict was sount and lean The one had been florid and youthful; the ther was reliew as parchment, and the stubble on the cropped head and on the fleshless jaw was of a leaden gray.

"Toat-that sin't Harry Cattermole?" the old man whimpered. No, that sin't but 'twas once and means to be again! Lend the way in beside the fire. I wish you'd sometimes use that front parior of yours. I've had it to myself this half hour, and

Old Fitch led the way without a word, walked innocently up to the fire and anddenly sprang for his gun. He never reached The barrel of a revolver, screwed round in his ear, drove him resting across the floor.

"Silly old fuel;" hissed Cattermole. "Did you think I'd come you unarmed? Sit down on that chair before I blow your



"I-I can't make out," he stuttered, "why you fare to come

"Of course you can't," said Cattermole !ronically.

"If I'd been you I'd ha' run anywhere but where I was known so well. "You would, would you? Then you knew I'd got out, eh,

"Just been a-reading about it in this here paper." "I see-I see. I caught a bit of what you was a saying to yourself just as I was thinking it was a safe thing to come out of that cold parior of yours. So that was me you was locking

out, was it? Yet you pretend you don't know why I come! You know well enough. You know, you know!"

The convict-had seated himself on the kitchen table and was glaring down on the trembling old man in the chair. He wore t long overcoat and under it some pitiful rags. The cropped

head and the legs swinging in the striped stockings were the only incriminating features, and old Fitch was glancing from the one to the other, wondering why neither had saved him from this horrible interview. Cattermole read his thoughts, and his eyes gleamed. "So you think I've come all the way in these here, do you?"

he erled, tapping one shin. "I tell you I've walked and walked till my bare legs were frozen and then sat behind a hedge and slipped these on and rubbed them to life again! Where do you think I got these rotten old duds? Off a scarcerow in a field. did! I wasn't going to break into no houses and leave my tracks all along the line. But yesterday I got a long lift in a goods train or I shouldn't be here now, and last night I did crack a crib for this here overcoat and a bit of supper and another for the shooter. That didn't so much matter then. I was within twenty miles of you! Of you, you old devil-do you hear?"

Fitch nodded with an ashen face. "And now do you know why I've come?"

Fitch moistened his blue lips. "To-to murder me," he whispered, like a dying man.

"That rests with you," said the convict, foundling his weapon. What do you want me to do?"

"Confess!" "Confess what?" whispered Fitch.

"That you swore me away at the trial." The old man had been holding his breath. He now expelled it with a deep sigh, and, taking out a huge red handkerchief, wiped the moisture from his face. Meanwhile the convict had decried writing materials on a chiffonier and placed them on the table beside the brandy bottle and the tobacco jar. "Turn your chair round for writing."

Fitch did so.

"Now take up your pen and write what I tell you. Don't cock your head and look at me. I hear the psalm singing na well as you do They've only just got started, and nobody 'll come near us for another hour. Pity you didn't go, too, isn't it? Now write what I tell you, word for word, or, so help me,

Fitch dipped his pen in the ink. After all, what he was about to write would be written under dire intimidation, and sobody would attach any importance to statements so obtained.

He squared his cibows to the task.
"'I. Samuel Fitch.'" began Cattermole, "'do hereby swear and declare before God Almighty'-before God Almighty, have you got that down?- 'that I, Samuel Fitch, did bear false witness against my neighbor, Henry Cattermole, at his trial at Bury assizes, Nov. 29, 1887. It is true that I saw both Henry Cattermole and James Savage, his lordship's gamekeeper, in the woods at Wolhoro on the night of Sept. 2, in the same year. It is true that I was there by appointment with Savage, as his wife stated in her evidence. It is not true that I heard a shot and heard Savage sing out. "Harry Cattermole?" as I came up and before ever I had a word with him. That statement was a deliberate fabrication on my part. The real truth is' - But hold on. I'm likely going too fast for you. I've had it in my head that How much have you got down, ch?"

Tabrication on my part." repeated eld Fitch in a trembling voice as he waited for more.

"Good! Now pull yourself together," said Cuttermote, sud-denly cocking his revolver. "The real truth is that I, Samuel Fitch, shot James Savage with my own hand."

Pitch threw down his pen.
"That's a lie," he gasped. "I never did. I won't write it." The cocked revolver covered him.

"Prefer to die in your chair, ch?"

"I'll give you one minute by your own watch."

Still covering his man, the convict held out the other hand for the watch and had momentary contact with a cold. damp me as it dropped into his paim. Cattermole placed the watch on the table where both could see the dial.

"Your minute begins now," said he, and all at once the watch was ticking like an eight day clock

Fitch rolled his head from side to side.

"Fifteen seconds," said Cattermole. The old man's brow was white and spangled like the snow

"Half time," said Cattermole,

Five. ten, fifteen, twenty seconda passed. Then Fitch caught up the pen. "Go ou," he greaned. "I'll write any lie you like. That'll do you no good No one will believe a word of it." the perspiration was streaming down his face. It splashed upon the paper as he proceeded to write in trembling characters at

"The real truth is that I. Samuel Fifth, shot James Savage with my own hand. The circumstances that led to my shooting him I will confess and explain becauter. When he had fallen I heard a shout and some one running up. I got behind a free, but I saw Harry Caffermole, the poncher, trip clean over the body. His gun went off in the nir, and when he tried to get up again I saw he couldn't because he'd twisted his aukle. He ever saw me. I slipped away and cave tay false evidence, and Harry Catterniole was caught escaping from the wood on his hands and knees, with blood upon his hands and clothes and an empty gan. I gave evidence against him to stop him giving evidence against me. But this is the whole fruth and nothing but the truth, so help me God?"

Cattermole paused. Fitch finished writing. Again the eyes of the two men uset, and those of the elder gleatned with a

"How-how did you know?" he asked, lowering his voice and leaning forward as he spoke. "Two and two," was the reply. "I put 'em together as soon

as ever I saw you in the box!

"That'll never be believed got like this." "Will it not? Wait a bit. You've not done yet. 'As a

proof of what I say'-do you hear me 3-'as a proof of what I say the gun which the wad will fit, that saved Henry Cattermole's life, will be found'"

Cattermole waited until the old man had caught him up "Now," said be, "you finish the sentence for yourself." "What?" eried Fitch.

"Write where that gun's to be found-you know, I den't-and then sign your name. "But I don't know"-

"You do." "I sold it."

"You wouldn't dare. You've got that somewhere. I see it in your face. Write down where and then show me the place, and if you've told a de" The revolver was within a foot of the old man's head, which

had fullen forward between his hands. The pen lay blotting the wet paper. Cattermole took the brandy bottle, poured out a stiff drain and pushed it under the other's gose "Drink" he cried. "Then write the truth and sign your

Maybe they won't hang an old man like you; but, by ? God, I shan't think twice about shoeting you if you don't write

Fifth guiped down the brandy, took up the pen once more and was near the end of his own death warrant when the convict sprang lightly from the table and smed intening in the center of the room. Fitch saw him and listened too. In the church they were singing another hyten. The old wan saw by his watch, still lying on the table, that it must be the last figure and in a few minutes his wife would be back. But that was not all. There was another sound-a nearer sound-the sound of voices outside the door. The handle was turned, the door pushed. but Fifth himself had locked and builted it; more whispers; then

a loud rat-tat "Who is it?" cried Flich, trembiling with excitement, as he started to his feet.

"The police" Let us in or we break in your deer?" There was no answer. Cattermole was watching the door. Suddenly he turned, and there was Fitch in the act of dropping his written confession into the fire. The convict selzed it before It caught and with the other hand hurled the old man back

"Finish it." he said below his breath, "or you're a dead man! One or the other of us is going to swing! Now, then, under the floor of what room did you hide the gun? Let them hammer; the door is strong. What room was it? Ab, your bedroom!

A deafening crush; the lock had given; only the bolt held firm.
"Sign!" shricked Cattermole. A cold ring pressed the old
man's temple. He signed his name and fell forward on the table in a dead faint.

Cattermole blotted the confession, folded it up, strode over to the door and smillingly flung it open to his pursuers

CTRATAGEM HSIAO C'HING'S

BY G. W. STILES.

[Copyright, 1903, by 5. S. McClure Company.] HE beart of Shu Nu was gone from her keeping, which was a shameful thing in a malden who was not betrothed. Moreover, it was a foreigner who had bewitehed the daughter of Li Amel, a certain strongly made Englishman named Thorndyke, who for his sins was forced to live in the province of Hupel.

Wilklus was the man Thorndyke succeeded in office, and Wilkins climited into the antiquated rall couch and traveled constward, but Thorndyke remained behind, full of enthusiasus for his work and the Chinese,

Li Amel, the father of Shu Nu. was a third runk mandarin and a man of great learning—that is to say, be had repeated by memory the four classics and the five canons, a feat worthy of Confucius bimself. This man felt an interest in Thorndyke, So Li Amei made the Englishman welcome to his yamen.

The magistrate possessed the habit of sleeping frequently. and while Li Amel slept Thorndyke roamed about the outer courtyard. A wall suggests secreey and is therefore interesting. and one afternoon he ventured to place his hands on the wall and draw his head above the top.

Shu Nu was reclining upon a wadded comforter stretched on

the grass and beneath the jasmine blossoms. The next day he dropped over the wall and lay at her feet The jasmines were between the wall and the women's quartors. Thorndyke had picked up quite a liftle of the colloquial dialect, which is not so difficult as people imagine, and, as he

had made love before, he got along extremely well. So here was a pretty affair taking place in the bonorable courtyard attached to Li Amei's yamen, and when Hsiao C'hing discovered it be turned a dozen somersaults in his deadly rage and swore vengeance. Unfortunately he made a mistake, for be reclimbed the plum tree from whence he had beheld the courtship of the foreign fleud and L! Amer's daughter. She had heard his choke of horror and caught a glimpse of his pale face as he

lipstantly she told Thorndyke of their misfortune, and he

turned cold. "What shall we do?" he asked

"Walt," replied Shu Nu. "Helian Ching does not think I saw him; consequently he will return for another look. If he returns you must leap the wall and proclaim loudly that you caught him desecrating my father's house. I will rush inside the wamen's quarters and cover my head and relate how some native has looked upon my face and that I am dishonored."

Thorndyke scanned the girl in amazement, for he had not fathomed the subtleness of the oriental,

Meanwhile they heard the sough-sough of Heine Ching's garments as they scraped over the bark of the plane was no more than securaly fixed in the crotch of the first limb before Shu Nu pressed the knee of her layer. He was over the wall and beneath the tree in a moment, while the girl can shriesing into the house. When the attendants through into the outer courtward they discovered Halao C'hing in the tree, covered by the engineer's revolver.

The unfortunate man was haled before the coddon's aroused magistrate, and since he was taken in the not he was given

eighty strokes with the bamboo and imprisoned Ten days after this trick of Shu Nu. Helao C'hing was retensed, as Li Amer's anger had cooled, but while Heino C'blag went up the plum tree in love with Shu Nu he came down hating Thorodyke, and your true Celestial is thorough in emotions.

Under the navice of Shu Nu. Thorndyke proposed marriage with his danghter to Li Amel. He played skillfully on the old tenn's motives touching avaries strongly. Then Li Amel consented

Then was fixnio C'hing! overwhelmed with rage, because the man he hated and the girl he loved were happy together. Helao C'hing went about telling every one that he was afraid

for his life because the foreign devil had threatened him. The next morning be was dead in the capal, and from the sand under his nalls and the obsence of all mortal wounds it was

evident that he had committed suicide by drowning Li Amel comprehended hadantly this stratugem of Helao Ching Nevertheless he caused the witnesses to be summoned

and disputched runners to bring the Englishman before him. Then Li Amel perceived that Thorndyke was both ignorant and foulish since, with a railroad at his command, he remained

In the roundhouse instead of going to Tientsin, where he would have been in safety. The engineer did more than fulfill his boast that an English-

man could stand off twenty natives. He and the four white men who were to charge of the machinery kept a thousand Chinese oniside the iron walls. By hight there were 10,000 men around that roundhouse, and the fires, which were burning every few rods, glimmered and flashed over the strangely restleniating figures. The men in the roundhouse fired up their furiest become tives. When all was in readiness the circular dears were opened to the steam power and the engine moved out

For all they knew the track was toro un less desen places but the number contered little. One would suffice to settle their affairs. It rained snears, builters and arrows for the first half mile, but the readbed was secure, and, although slightly wound ed, they were all alive when the engine pulled fate the Tientsia

Thorndyke hunted up the superintendent: whom he found at the club playing whist. The official was an aid resident in Circus. and a man of rare personal asowess. He distance change to the young engineer's tale, which suded with a request for hole to

order to return to his post "You would not be safe there," he said, not necessare can in the east. You are brave enough, but you not one essential to

success in China, and that is tact " Thorndyke came west once more and son ha Condanghor of Li Amei, went for blin quiter the vettor fusioned, him Li Amet swore a great outh by men and gods that never again-