

CHAPTER XV.

"You see I was right," said Merrick when I met him at the station. "You have been right in every instance," I answered. "The inspector here quite agrees with me that you should be a detective. Where are your prisoners?"

"No, no! Not prisoners," replied Merrick, shocked at the word. "They are my guests, traveling companions—what you will, but not prisoners."

"Still I see my detective attends on them both," said I as Strent and Rose Gernon came along the platform. "It is well to take all precautions. How is Francis Briarfield?"

"Rather downcast. He is afraid of being arrested for the murder." "No fear of that," answered Merrick, casting a glance at Strent. "This gentleman's evidence will exonerate him fully."

Strent, smooth and unctuous as ever, rubbed his hands and bowed, but Rose Gernon turned her back on him with a gesture of disgust. Evidently she had not forgiven his hurried departure from the inn.

"What are you waiting for?" she said sharply. "Let us go on to the inn. I wish to get it over as soon as possible and return to town."

We took the hint and walked along to a room adjoining the morgue, where the inquest was being held. I introduced Merrick to the inspector, and after a short conversation they went into the morgue to examine the body. Not caring to see so ghastly a sight, I remained outside with Francis. In a quarter of an hour the doctor and the inspector returned, the former rubbing his hands with a well pleased expression, the latter looking somewhat astonished. What had passed in the morgue I know not, as Merrick refused to gratify my curiosity.

"Wait till you hear the evidence of Strent," he said significantly. The jury was made up of well to do Marshminster tradesmen, who took a profound interest in the proceedings, as the dead man was the brother of Miss Bellin's future husband. The Bellins were the great people of the neighborhood, and the tradesmen hoped to serve the hall when Mr. and Mrs. Briarfield settled there. They were, therefore, excessively polite to Francis, but their frequent marks of attention only drew from him a bitter smile.

"Would they treat me in this way if they knew all?" he whispered to me. "They will never know all," I answered in the same tone. I had spoken to the inspector, and he in his turn had talked seriously with the coroner. The latter had been told the whole story, and though astonished at the folly of Francis yet found it in his heart to be sorry for the young man. He said he would not question Francis more than was necessary, and we hoped to carry through the inquest without exposing the underlying romance.

The first witness called was a local doctor, who deposed to having examined the body of Felix. He gave it as his opinion that the young man had died of poison and explained the state of the blood with a lot of medical technicalities which none of the jury understood. It was, said the doctor, a case of blood poisoning, and the deceased had been wounded in the hand by some sharp instrument which was steeped in poison.

I came next and narrated how I had staid at the Fen inn on that night and had met there Francis Briarfield, who was waiting there for his brother. Then I told of the discovery of the corpse and the finding of the arrowhead in the fireplace. I said nothing about my tracking the trail to the pool, and if possible we wished that portion of the evidence to be passed over in silence. Fortunately the jury were a dull headed lot and submitted quietly to the guidance of the coroner. He only asked questions pertinent to the death without going too deeply into the subject. At this point I produced the arrowhead.

Francis explained that he had arrived from Chile on the 6th of June and had gone at once to the Fen inn at the request of his brother Felix. His brother had not arrived on that night, and he had gone to bed. He was unable to say how his brother had come to his tragic end. Then came the critical point which we wished passed over in silence. "Did you see your brother at the Fen inn, Mr. Briarfield?" asked the coroner. "I did not see my brother alive," was the evasive answer.

was very true. Still it was habitable, and Mr. Felix Briarfield had sent on food and provisions. As the former proprietor had left all the furniture, the rooms were fairly comfortable. She could not say why Felix did all this unless it was that he wanted to see his brother privately.

Such talk was very weak, and the jurymen looked significantly at one another. They knew the Fen inn and could not conceive that any one could be so mad as to dwell in it even for a night. It was said to be haunted, and, though such a superstition might be scoffed at, yet not one of those present would have passed 12 hours of darkness in that ill omened place.

"Were you not afraid when you saw the lone inn," asked a jurymen. Rose shrugged her shoulders and laughed contemptuously. "I am afraid of nothing," she said coolly. "There are no such things as ghosts. Besides I had my brother with me."

"Your brother?" "Yes, Edward Strent."

The inspector gave a low whistle, and catching my eye nodded significantly. He remembered what I had said on the previous night, and now agreed with my theory that the secret of the commission of the crime lay in the relationship existing between Rose and Strent. They were, it appeared, brother and sister. I saw all kinds of possibilities now that such a tie was made clear. Meanwhile Rose proceeded with her evidence.

"Mr. Felix Briarfield came to the inn," she said, "after his brother had gone to rest. I saw and spoke with him and afterward went to bed myself. I understood that he was going to stay all night and see his brother in the morning."

"Was he alone in the room when you left him?" "No. He was with Strent. An hour or so after I retired Strent came to my door and asked me to go down stairs. I did so and found Felix lying dead on the floor. My brother had left the room, and on going out at the back of the house I found him mounting the horse of Mr. Francis Briarfield. I asked him what had happened, and he just said Felix was dead and advised me to fly lest I should be accused of the murder."

"That, I suppose, was also the reason of his flight?" "So he told me when I saw him in London, but he then declared himself innocent of the crime. I was afraid I would be accused of the crime, so took the horse and gig in which we had come to the Fen inn and drove to Marshminster. From there I returned to London."

"Why did you not give the alarm?" "I was afraid of being accused of the murder."

Here the inspector whispered something in the ear of the coroner. He nodded and again spoke to Rose Gernon. "Why did you not tell Mr. Denham where to find Strent when he was apparently guilty?"

"Strent is my brother," said Rose quietly, "and as he told me he was innocent I did not wish him to be arrested for the crime. But that he visited me yesterday and was seen by the men set to watch, so he would never have been caught."

Her examination lasted some considerable time, but the coroner did not succeed in eliciting anything new from her. She persistently held to the same story, so in despair the examiner desisted, and she was told to stand down. In her place Edward Strent was called, and then for we began the most interesting part of the case. I knew all that had been said hitherto, but I did not know how the crime had been committed, and waited to hear what Strent had to say. I quite believed him to be guilty, yet hardly thought he would accuse himself of the crime.

He first corroborated the story of Rose as to going to the inn and narrated all that had occurred up to the time when he was left alone in the room with Felix.

"When I found myself alone with Briarfield," he proceeded, "I had a quarrel with him." "About what?" "About my sister. He had promised to marry her, yet, as I well knew, was paying attentions to Miss Bellin."

"But Miss Bellin was engaged to his brother," remarked a jurymen. "I know that. It was about Miss Bellin he wished to see his brother. I insisted that he should marry my sister, and he refused. We had hot words. He was on one side of the table, I on the other. Between us lay the arrowhead which he had brought in his pocket."

"Why had he brought the arrowhead there?" "I don't know," replied Strent, lying with the utmost promptitude. "He took the arrowhead out of his pocket, said it was poisoned and laid it down on the table."

"Do you think he intended to kill his brother because he stood in his way with Miss Bellin?" asked an inquisitive jurymen of a romantic turn of mind. "I really don't know, sir," replied Strent, looking the jurymen straight in the face. "He said nothing to me. We were quarreling over the shabby way in which he had treated my sister, and the arrowhead was on the table between us."

minutes he was lying dead on the floor. I threw the arrowhead into the fireplace and tried to revive him, but it was of no use. He was dead."

"And you?" "I was afraid I would be accused of the death, as Mr. Denham or Mr. Francis might have heard us quarreling together. I lost my head altogether and only thought of flight. I ran up to my sister's room and told her Felix was dead. Then I saddled the horse. When she came to the door, I was mounting. I told her to take the gig and fly to Marshminster, and that I would explain all in London."

"You fled like a coward." "I suppose I did," said the man solemnly, "but I was beside myself with terror. I rode to Starby and gave the horse back to the livery stable keeper. Then I went to London and saw my sister. She agreed with me that it was best to keep quiet, so I did not come forward to give evidence. Had it not been for that detective who watched my sister, I should not be here now."

This evidence practically ended the inquest. Merrick was called to prove that the wound in the hand was such a one as might have been made by the downward stroke of the hand on a sharp point. This evidence was substantiated by the local practitioner, who had examined the body with Dr. Merrick. There was no doubt that the affair had happened as Strent said. Felix Briarfield had slapped his open hand on the table to emphasize his refusal to marry Rose Gernon. Unfortunately it came in contact with the poisoned arrowhead. The flint had an edge like a razor, and being steeped in virulent poison acted like a snake bite on the unfortunate young man. Felix had not been murdered, but died by misadventure.

That was the verdict brought in by the jury, and so the whole of this strange affair came to an end. Thanks to the astuteness of the inspector and the delicacy of the coroner, the jury were quite unaware of what had happened between the death of Felix and the inquest. The reporters of the Marshminster Gazette met in a short statement of the affair, and in a few days people ceased to take any interest in the Fen inn crime. It was a lucky escape for Francis, but I don't think the lesson was thrown away on him.

Rose Gernon and her brother went back to town the same evening. I never saw Strent again, but frequently had the pleasure of seeing his sister performing on the stage. She is now engaged to be married, but with the knowledge of her actions at the Fen inn I cannot say I envy the bridegroom.

After the burial of Felix I went abroad with Francis, whose health was quite broken down by the strain put on it during the last few weeks. He returned in six months and married Olivia. She was told all that had taken place in the lone inn, but he kept the information to himself. Mrs. Bellin never knew that Felix had substituted himself for Francis. I was best man at the wedding by particular request and saw the happy pair start for their honeymoon.

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moon. I hope they will be happy and am sure they deserve to be, seeing through what tribulations they have passed.

"What has become of the Fen inn?" asked Dr. Merrick one day when we were talking over the case. "Oh, the Fen inn is pulled down, I believe!" was my reply. "There will be no more tragedies there."

"A fit end for such a shambles," said Merrick, and I think he was about right.

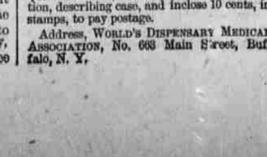
THE END.

How Carnot was Named. The way in which the late President Carnot was named after the Persian poet Sadi, who is little read nowadays, is interesting and recalls a deal of French history. Sadi was the favorite poet of the French revolutionists of the last century, and the literature of the day is full of quotations from him. Carnot's father of the directory was, like the rest, a great admirer of Sadi and named one of his sons after him. This son was the late president's uncle, and the name was continued in the family. After the death of his father the late president was simply M. Carnot. Before that he had been M. Sadi Carnot.—Chicago Tribune.

An Applied Lesson. A little girl went shopping the other day with her mother, who, making purchases at various stores, gave as the parting word, "Please charge them to my husband, 25 street." At night the little girl, half sleeping and tired out, said in conclusion, "I pray God to bless my mother and my father and my little brother, and send bill to papa, 25 street."—Springfield Republican.

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PROPOSAL OF A ROMANTIC MAN

He Was Fat and Forty but Had Been Unable to Ask the Important Question.

AT LAST HE WROTE A LETTER

He Intrusted It to a Servant to Deliver and After Many Adventures It Reached the Eyes of the Young Lady of His Choice an Hour After She Had, Out of Pique, Agreed to Marry His Rival.

Mr. Softheart had always been a romantic man, and he was still. Mr. Softheart had never desired to be a bachelor. He admired the other sex too much, but although he had been in love with four blondes, three brunettes and five young ladies who were neither one nor the other he had never been able to pop the question point blank, but delicately insinuated it in such a way that his meaning would have been a riddle to the sphinx, and was, naturally enough, never successful.

Now, at 40, and growing extremely stout, he was as romantic as ever. Mr. Softheart was very well off and not ill looking.

For six months Belinda Bellows had been waiting for Mr. Softheart to propose and growing every day more certain that he positively intended to place his brownstone mansion and bank account at her disposal.

But, though Mrs. Bellows was kind enough to allow the cook to summon her to consultations when Mr. Softheart called, and so leave the pair tete-a-tete, and although Miss Angelina was equally considerate, and invariably remembered that something she wanted very particularly was up stairs when her mother went to speak to the cook, poor Mr. Softheart could never bring himself to the point of saying, "Will you have me?"

"I'll do it by letter," he said to himself after long consideration. "Women, so far, have misunderstood me. I'll do it in black and white now."

And so, on the last day of March, Mr. Softheart wrote an offer of his hand and heart, enveloped, sealed it and put it in his pocket before he made his evening call on his beloved Belinda.

Now, it so happened that that very evening Belinda herself had come to a resolution. Her twenty-fifth birthday was approaching, and she could not afford "to waste time."

If Mr. Softheart meant anything, he should say it; if he did not, she would accept young Spooney.

When Mr. Softheart rang the bell, he found the field quite clear at the Bellows'. Miss Belinda had artfully contrived that it should be so. That perfidious young person had actually purchased tickets for a concert; requested young Spooney, who was half mad with joy at the idea, to accompany Angelina and herself and on the evening in question was smitten with a terrible attack of neuralgia; but, after all, Mr. Spooney should not have his trouble for nothing—mamma and Angelina would go.

Ten minutes after the departure of the trio Miss Belinda, arrayed in blue silk, was playing at such a rate on the piano that it seemed quite certain that the demon neuralgia must have vanished.

She did not even hear Mr. Softheart's ring and started in sweet confusion on his appearance. "I'm all alone," she said, "Mamma and Lina won't be home until 11 o'clock," and the two talked together in very low voices, sitting very close to each other on twin chairs.

Mr. Softheart looked and sighed and uttered romantic sentiments, but he did not pop the question. Miss Belinda did all that a modest young lady could do further this object, but in vain.

She did not know—how should she?—that at the door Mr. Softheart had said to Biddy: "Look here, girl, put this in Miss Belinda's room, where she will be sure to see it, and I'll give you a quarter."

And had presented her with the billet containing his proposal, crowned by a silver 25 cent piece.

If the man did not avail himself of such a chance after six months' courtship, plain even to the servants in the kitchen, why, he meant nothing. And the unhappy, unlucky Mr. Softheart did not utter the expected words and left at 10:45.

"He's a contemptible thing," said Miss Belinda. "I'll show him my heart is not broken. I'll marry Spooney." And Belinda wept, for she was bitterly mortified, and Spooney did not own a brownstone house.

And up stairs she stomped and knocked at Belinda's door. "Misther Softheart bade me give yo this, mum," she said. "I'll teach you to tell lies," said Belinda. "You know Miss Angelina gave it to you."

Biddy was confounded. "He gave it to me last night, miss, as true as I hope to go to heaven," she said. "Last night?" said Angelina, with a warning glance, supposing Biddy to have forgotten her lesson. "I mean this morning," said Biddy, taking the hint. "Give me the letter," said Belinda. Then, snatching it, she tore it deliberately into four pieces and threw them on the floor.

That evening Spooney called to inquire after Miss Belinda's health and found her well enough to walk out with him, and Angelina and her mamma began to compare notes. Then, and not till then, the letter began to be a mystery, and Biddy, being sent for, explained that, to the best of her belief, Mr. Softheart gave it to her to put in Miss Belinda's room the night before. Then in dismay the ladies rummaged the dust bin and after an hour's search appeared in the parlor with dusty dresses and soiled hands and nine little pieces of paper. These, deftly pieced together, made a whole note, which, being perused, revealed a proposition.

Belinda returned very late with a very conscious look upon her face and stared in astonishment at the dusty objects, who met her with excitement on their countenances. It was a good while before the truth could be extracted from the interjections and ejaculations with which she was greeted, but when at last it was made manifest Belinda listened like one in a trance. She had indeed been made an April fool. Mr. Softheart had really proposed. The brownstone house had been offered to her, the bank stock and all that made the bachelor an eligible match, and she that very evening had accepted Spooney.

It was not very complimentary to her betrothed, but she went into hysterics at once and kept them up for an hour or two.

As for Mr. Softheart, he never proposed to any one again.—Toledo Blade.

Clever Japanese Devices. The Japanese have a mode of preparing stencils which is better than ours. In our method complicated figures must be divided by broad lines of paper in order to glue the paper together and make the stencil strong enough for use, and these bands of paper leave blanks in the design which must often be filled in by hand. The Japanese cut their stencils out of two or sometimes three thicknesses of thin but tough paper.

Then between each two of these sheets they lay, crossing one another in all directions, human hairs or fibers of raw silk. These are especially laid across the open parts of the design, and when the several layers of the stencil are glued together they serve the same purpose as the bands of paper left by our stencil cutters, but they form no obstacle to the application of the color and leave no blanks in the design.

The same clever workers use rice paste, applied with the brush or with stencils, for "stopping out" in dyeing or in painting with dyes. When the color is fixed, the rice paste can be washed away. They also obtain the opposite effect on silks of European or American manufacture. Having found that these often fade quickly, they execute a design on them in rice paste, then treat them with chloride of lime until they are bleached. The rice paste is then washed away, leaving the design in the original color.—Art Amateur.

Discharged and Resigned. The other day I heard one gentleman say to another, "I hear you have resigned your position as cashier of the Blank bank." "Oh, no," was the surprised and immediate reply, and the young fellow lifted his chin an inch higher as he spoke: "I was discharged. I should never think of resigning as good a position as that. I took a long look at that young man, because I made up my mind instantly that the first time I owned a bank that young man should be my cashier. Discharged! Why, bless me! I haven't heard the word for years. Everybody 'resigns' now."

Another peculiar order of things I have observed. Nobody in these happy days ever greets another by saying, "borrow or steal a situation. The situation, on the contrary, runs about seeking the man, and forces itself upon him, and finally, growing ashamed of his hard heartedness, he 'accepts' it, and everything is tranquil. There is nothing so dreadful in the mere word 'discharged.' It is frequently a more honest word than 'resigned.' Because one person doesn't want you is not so bad, you know. Buckle on your armor and see if some other man or woman isn't just dying for you.—West Shore.

An Encounter With a Lion. People who are curious concerning the notions of being attacked by a lion will be interested in the following observations by Mr. Inverarity, a noted Nimrod, in "Royal Natural History." "So large an animal coming at full speed against you of course knocks you off your legs. The claws and teeth entering the flesh do not hurt as much as you would think. The only really painful part of the business is the squeeze given by the jaws on the bone. * * * I adopted the course of lying quiet still, which I believe is the best thing one can do, as you are quite helpless with a heavy animal on you, and they are inclined to make grabs at everything that moves, and the fewer bites you can get off with the better."

Beating the Egg Tariff. Since the duty on eggs has been the rule many devices have been thought of for manufacturing them. The idea of a No. 9 gales man is, however, the only feasible scheme up to date. His proposition is to feed hens on the cheap grain of Mexico and have them lay in the United States. For this purpose a long building will be placed on the line, half in Mexico and half in the United States. They will feed and water in the Mexican end, and when they want to lay they go to the farther end of the building, and in that way escape paying the duty. The projector of this enterprise came from Maine.—Tombstone Express.

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From the N. Y. Tribune, Nov. 1, 1894.

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