"Ah, you have come, Brett! I knew you would. Good God, isn't it awful?" And he buried his face in his hands—thin, wasted hands.

I had determined to find out at this interview whether there was a possible chance of his being innocent, so after a few minutes I asked the brutal question:

"What on earth possessed you to kill her, Fenton?"

He drew back as if I had struck him. Then he looked at me steadily, and replied:

"Brett, I thought you knew me! I murder Harriet? I would have given my life willingly for hers at any moment. Brett, by all that is holy, I swear I have nothing to do with her death."

"Tell me all that happened that awful night," I rejoined. "We are moving heaven and earth for evidence. Perhaps you may give me a clew."

"It's weary work going over it all again, Brett. Harriet and I had been out for a walk together, and as we turned toward Spiegeleisen's I again urged her to give some reason for refusing to marry me. She would not do so, and told me she wished I would leave her forever, as I was only making us both unhappy by my persistence. There was just enough in her words, or, rather, her tones, to make me hope, and I caught hold of her hand and begged her to pity me. She tried to withdraw it from my grasp, but I would not yield it. And this I suppose some passerby took for a quarrel. I could not make her alter her determination, and so I left her. I had not gone far away—certainly not more than a score of yards—when I heard a smothered cry and a dull thud. I looked back to see Harriet on the ground and a man running away. I rushed to her assistance, and the first thing I saw was that cruel weapon in her breast. In the agony of my despair I tried to withdraw the dagger, but the hilt broke off, and at that moment you came up. You know the rest."

"And the man?" I asked. "Could not you describe him?"

"Impossible. It was dark at the time and my thought was all for my poor love. He left absolutely no impression on my mind."

My heart sank as I heard him speak. If this was all he could say, I felt there was indeed no hope for him, for what jury would believe such a statement, unsupported by a tittle of proof, in face of all the evidence against him? I was eager to know him to be innocent, not only for his sister's sake, and because my marriage depended upon it, but because I liked the lad, yet I will honestly confess, when he told me what had occurred, I did not believe him. I am afraid my face must have shown what I felt, for he looked at me in a pained, troubled way, as much as to say, "If you, my friend, doubt me, what can I expect from those who do not know me?" But such thoughts were unprofitable. I came in search of a clew, and as yet he had given me none.

"Can you tell me anything about her people?" I asked. "The police seem utterly at fault, and according to them she was quite alone in the world."

Fenton shook his head.

"She could not have been without relatives and friends, but she would never speak about them."

"But why?" I asked. "What was the mystery about her, George?"

"I do not know. I felt there was a mystery all along, but I did not think I had any right to find out more than she chose to tell me, and that was little enough. She never mentioned her father or mother, or, in fact, anything of her past life. Sometimes I tried to lead her on to the subject, but she always seemed to scent danger and kept clear of all personal matters. This thing I know at any rate—she was of gentle birth and certainly had never been brought up with the idea of being a servant. Not only did I learn it by her many accomplishments—painting, music, singing, languages—which she went out of her way to hide from me, but which, nevertheless, would keep cropping up—but from her manner of looking at everything, one could see she spoke from a standpoint far above the position in which she was placed.

"I pictured her, Duncan, brought up in a refined English home, in easy circumstances, with every social and in-

Fenton stopped and once more covered his eyes wearily with his hands.

tellectual advantage. Then, perhaps, her father died and his affairs were found to be embarrassed. Grief and anxiety hurried her mother to a premature grave, and the daughter, their only child, too independent to owe anything to relatives, too proud to let her friends know what she was doing, set about to earn her own living, at first by the exercise of her talents, and, that failing, by accepting the situation in which I found her. At other times I thought it possible that an unhappy home had driven her out into the world, there to make her way as best she could. Of course, neither of these solutions of the enigma may be right, and yet it seems to me that either one or the other of them would account for all. I am utterly incapable of solving the mystery that surrounds her death. Without any special circumstances, mere robbery would hardly be sufficient reason for the murder; for I was so near that it would have been all but impossible for the murderous thief to have rifled her body, and then what likelihood was there of sufficient spoil to compensate him for the awful risk he ran?"

Fenton stopped and once more covered his eyes wearily with his hands. I felt it would be useless to dwell longer on the details of the murder. He had told me all he knew, and further discussion seemed needless cruelty to my friend. Besides, my time had expired. So I rose.

"By the bye," I asked, "have you no photograph of her you could let me have? I feel confident that we could throw some light on this awful mystery if we could only trace her antecedents. If you have her picture, it would no doubt help us."

"Yes," he replied, "I have one photograph of her which she gave me after much pressing and reluctantly enough in all conscience. I left it at home that awful night. You will find it in a leather case in the top left hand drawer of my dressing table, in which I keep my ties, under the paper at the bottom of the drawer. Ask Mabel to give it you."

I said goodby to my friend as cheerily as possible and assured him that we were doing everything that could be done in his interests and that no stone would be left unturned to prove his innocence, but I left him with a heavy heart, for I felt the all but utter hopelessness of the task before us.

I got the photograph that same day. It was a cabinet vignette of a remarkably handsome girl, and for the moment I could not believe this was the poor woman, the memory of whom, huddled in the gutter as I had first seen her, would forever remain with me, but a second glance showed me that it was indeed the same woman before the storms and blasts of life had furrowed her cheeks and dulled her eyes. Here I saw a face breathing inward happiness and contentment—the face of a woman to be remembered. Beneath a wealth of dark hair were a broad forehead and eyes of marvelous depth and beauty. The chin betokened unusual decision, and it was evident she was not a woman to be lightly dealt with. On the other hand, her nostrils and lips gave the impression that she sought some one to care for and even lean upon and on whom the wealth of no ordinary love would be lavished in return. Altogether it was an exceptional face—one of a woman whose influence for good should have reached far and wide. What terrible fatality had warped her path so that it led through trouble to such a piteous end?

The photographer's name had been erased and I turned the card round, hoping to find some clew on the back, but it was blank. I say the name had been erased, but it had not been completely scratched away, and there were still indications of print, but so trivial that it seemed hopeless to expect any clew therefrom.

My next business was at Scotland Yard. There was just a hope that Harriet Staples had been advertised for as missing by her friends, and if so her photograph would probably be there. I explained my business to an official, and we soon had before us the albums of some years back. We went carefully through them, comparing each one with the photograph I had with me, but of the many thousands I saw not one bore any resemblance to it, and at last we gave up the search as hopeless. A young detective helped me in my search, and as I was about to place the picture in my pocket he pointed to the nearly obliterated letters at the foot.

"There's the clew, sir, take my word for it. If you could only restore the whole word from those fragments, you would have it at once."

"That's all very well," said I, "but I'm afraid it's an impossible feat."

"I wouldn't be too sure of that," he replied. "I've known a good deal come from a slenderer hint. Why not have a few facsimiles made of them and send them to experts?"

I left the place with this suggestion ringing in my ears, and as I turned it over in my mind it bore unexpected fruit. Capital! It should be as he suggested, but instead of a few facsimiles I would have hundreds of thousands struck off and carried the length and breadth of the land. How? By enlisting the popular press in my cause.

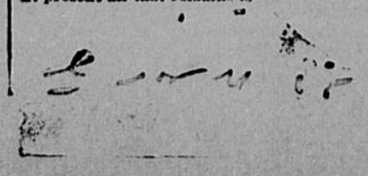
The next day I managed to obtain a letter of introduction to the editor of one of those weeklies which have so hit the public taste that there is scarcely one household in the country which does not buy its weekly copy. To him I broached my plan, which was nothing less than securing the services of his readers to aid me in my search. I asked him to print a facsimile of the almost erased letters in his next issue, with a prize of £50 for the first correct addition of the missing portions. The excitement which the murder had aroused was still great, and the public were following with scarcely abated interest every fresh development of the case.

The editor scented a big increase in his circulation if his paper became in any way identified with the mystery that surrounded the case. But I shrank from exposing this last move to the gaze of the idle and curious, so I stipulated that for the present, at any rate, the connection between the murder and the problem offered to the public should be kept a secret.

The editor was for a long time unwilling to meet my wishes, but at last a compromise was effected, and the announcement which appeared in that week's issue of his paper read as follows:

FIFTY POUNDS REWARD!

In order that justice may be done to a prisoner, now awaiting his trial, under suspicion of an awful crime, it is necessary that the all but obliterated words given below be restored. At present all that remains is



and we are empowered to offer a prize of £50 to the individual who first supplies correctly the missing portions of the letters. Bearing in mind that some of our readers must possess photographs taken by the same photographer, and presumably showing the same signature at the foot, we suggest that a careful comparison of the above facsimile be made with the printing at the bottom of any cabinet photographs each reader has. A chance of obtaining the prize therefore lies in many hands.

This is no mere puzzle for passing idle hours. A fellow being's life is perhaps dependent upon the correct solution of the problem, and we call upon the public of the United Kingdom to help us to assist the ends of justice and prevent an innocent man suffering death for another's crime.

Within four days 500,000 copies of the paper were in circulation and at least double that number of willing workers were assisting us.

The replies came fast and furious from within an hour of publication, and one of the staff and myself went through each reply. The majority were of course quite beside the point, and many utterly imbecile suggestions were offered. Some looked plausible enough at first sight, but a very little investigation served to show the senders had touched up the fragments to suit their own convenience. Six hours after the publication of the paper a wire was brought in to us:

"Rogers, Swansea," are the missing words. Letter follows. ROGERS.

We tried to fit in these words to the original, but could not do so, and put Mr. Rogers' telegram aside, pending the arrival of his letter, but regarded the issue of it as extremely doubtful. Then we turned to the next replies that came to hand and went steadily on, but with no success. On my arrival at the newspaper office next morning a large batch of letters was awaiting us, but there

"Then this is one of your photographs?" said I.

was no communication from Mr. Rogers. He was, however, better than his word, for at 11 o'clock he was announced in person.

"I thought it better to come myself," he said, "and make sure of it."

"Well, we've tried your words, Mr. Rogers, but we can't make them fit in any way," I replied.

"I'm not surprised at that, sir, for it is special fancy lettering, of which I only had one batch printed. See, this is one of my cabinet mounting cards. You will fit it to a T."

Rogers
Swansea

He was right; it did.

Trembling with excitement, I handed him the fateful picture.

"Then this is one of your photographs?" said I.

He glanced at it and replied:

"It is."

"And the lady—do you know who she is?"

"I am not likely to forget. She is Lady Florence Mostyn, daughter of the Duke of Lundy."

CHAPTER VII.

AT THE DUKE OF LUNDY'S.

I never paid away £50 in my life with greater pleasure than I did to Mr. Rogers. I was overjoyed at the success of my plan, and I felt that now, at any rate, we had advanced one step toward the solution of the awful mystery.

The announcement of the identity of the murdered Harriet Staples with the missing daughter of the Duke of Lundy increased a thousandfold the interest of the public, for the case was now transplanted to aristocratic regions and surrounded with a halo of romance, and when it was further known that the discovery was the result of the missing letter competition the excitement was rendered still more universal.

For the moment I was puzzled to know how it was I had not noticed the photograph of Lady Florence Mostyn in the albums at Scotland Yard; for I distinctly remembered seeing her mentioned. I returned there to make inquiries, and to my great surprise found an altogether impossible photograph over her name. No wonder nothing had come from my search. The officials to whom I pointed this out were considerably interested, and the Duke of Lundy was written to on the subject. He replied that the photograph in the album was not the one he had sent when his daughter disappeared and was one, in fact, that he never remembered to have seen before. So here was a further mystery, and the eventual solution of it turned out to be of great consequence to us in our quest.

It was now of the greatest moment to learn something more of the history of the unfortunate lady about whose life so much terrible mystery had hung, and I hastened to put myself into communication with the Duke of Lundy.

His grace was a very peculiar man—a man one instinctively felt it impossible to like, and yet a person whom it would be equally impossible not to respect. He was a patrician to the backbone—faultlessly courteous, but icily cold. The death of his daughter must have affected him terribly, but he pre-

(To be Continued.)

HAPPENINGS AT BELL

James Turner of Charter Oak was at Bell Tuesday on business.

F. M. Arnold and Frank Odell were at Denison Saturday.

Geo. Drake and family called on Paradise friends Thursday.

Thos. Bruner of Dow City made a business trip to Bell Monday.

Peter Hollowell has shipped two car loads of wood to Charter Oak.

Sol. Miller and Frank Burkhofer were at Charter Oak Monday between trains.

Miss Decky Wiggins of Dow City visited Mrs. Jay Bell one day last week.

W. B. Evans of Arion was called to Wm. Rule's Monday. We learn that their baby is sick but hope it will soon recover.

Mr. Downs of Arion, accompanied by one of the leading grain dealers of the Kansas City grain company, called on some Bell people Tuesday.

Last Friday night several of Miss Nettie and Lizzie Jordan's friends gathered at their home to give them a surprise which proved to be success and a pleasant time was had by all.

JACKSON JOTTINGS.

P. J. Lawler took a business trip to Breda Saturday.

Annie Quigley is recovering from an attack of the la grippe.

Wm. Kelley and Jim O'Donall were those who shipped cattle to Chicago Saturday.

Henry Dreesen and family spent New Years in West Side at the home of Henry Pahls.

Jim O'Donall and Frank Kelley left for Chicago where they will visit a few days with friends.

Dieter Bros. are as usual buying a large quantity of corn. Farmers are hauling from all directions.

Hog cholera is again in full bloom. Wm. Dettbond and John Lacey have lost several hogs during the past week.

Bert Tracey has decided not to return to his home in Jefferson county, but will remain in this vicinity another season.

C. E. McAlpin has a carpenter at work making some repairs about his will be residence. Charlie this looks suspicious.

The diphtheria which has been held in check for the past month at Wall Lake, has again broken out. Two cases are reported.

Tead Abbott is not yet able to be about. His ankle, which was at first supposed to be sprained, was found to be out of joint, and may lay him up for some time.

J. E. Brown of Carroll, who represents the Standard oil company, was soliciting orders from some of the Jackson threshers for their next year's supply of oil, last Monday.

A few of the young folks assembled at the home of Dan Lawler and enjoyed themselves a few hours in dancing and music. Everyone present reports a good time. It was the first on the program for the New Year.

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