

# The Marathon Mystery

A Story of Manhattan  
By BURTON E. STEVENSON  
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"Grace!"  
It was Drysdale's voice and he stood there like a man struck suddenly to stone.  
And she? I turned a little giddy as I looked at her, at the shining eyes, at the quivering, smiling lips.  
Godfrey had sprung instantly to his feet.  
"Come, Lester," he said, in a voice very gentle, as the jailer opened the cell door, "we must catch our train; we've business in New York."  
Perhaps it was only my fancy that his step was not wholly steady as he went before me down the corridor.

### CHAPTER XXX.

NOT until the regular click click of the wheels told me that we were well under way did I open my mind to Godfrey; then I spoke with what I deemed a necessary frankness.  
"My dear Godfrey," I began, "I've watched you all day, smelling bottles, examining seracenes, trying to read faint ink marks on a blotter, puzzling over a broken cane and doing various other eccentric things from which you seemed to draw conclusions utterly invisible to me. I've heard you assure both Drysdale and Miss Croydon that the former will be cleared of suspicion at tomorrow's inquest and that the real culprit will be pointed out. You'll pardon me if I confess to some curiosity as to how all this is to be accomplished."  
"Did you see her face as she came through that door, Lester?" he asked, staring absently at the seat in front of us. "I tell you, it warmed the heart of even an old reprobate like me! And to think that we did it!" he added. "To think that we did it!"  
"You did it," I corrected. "I was in the chorus today—you had the center of the stage."  
"But you don't mind, Lester? I couldn't help it, you know."  
"Of course you couldn't—that's where you belong. But now that the curtain's down and we're alone together with plenty of time to talk, I'd like to understand—"  
"And you shall—down to the minutest detail. Let's see—this is the smoker, isn't it? Well, suppose we light up—I can think more clearly when I'm smoking."  
"All right; fire away," I said, as soon as the cigars were going.  
"Well," began Godfrey, "as I pointed out to you this morning, for good and sufficient reasons, I started out in this investigation with the assumption of Tremaine's guilt."  
"Of course," I observed, "you know it is the duty of every jury to start out with exactly the contrary assumption."  
"Certainly, I know that, but a detective has to work with some definite end in view or he never gets anywhere. In other words, a detective, after carefully studying the details of any crime, must form a theory concerning it and must work along that theory. As soon as he discovers any fact that fails to fit with his theory he must modify it or form another, and he must keep on doing this until he finds the theory which agrees with all the facts—not all but one or two, but with every one. A good many detectives fall into the mistake of being satisfied with the theory which fits most of the facts—a serious error, for the right theory must, of course, inevitably fit them all. That's the scientific method and the only safe one. When a detective hits upon a theory which fits all the known facts he's got as much right to assume it's true as an astronomer has or a physicist, who builds up the universe fit just the same way."  
"But that's a difficult thing to do," I remarked, "to find a theory that fits all the facts."  
"Exceedingly difficult sometimes," assented my companion, "because the facts often appear to be entirely contradictory. Really, facts are never contradictory—truth is always truth—the trouble is we can't always tell what is fact and what is fiction. The hardest part of a detective's work is to sift the wheat from the chaff—to get at the meaty, essential facts."  
"Well, as you know, I started out with the theory of Tremaine's guilt. More than that, I was morally certain that he was guilty, knowing what I knew of the man. And first of all it was evident to me that no criminal as careful as he is would run the risk of going through that boathouse and committing a murder on the pier outside with young Graham sleeping on a cot a few feet away. I therefore deduced this bottle. Smell of it?"  
He uncorked it and held it under my nose.  
"Chloroform!" I said.  
"Precisely." And he corked it carefully and returned it to his pocket.  
"The boy's story helped me to arrive at it. He had been awakened by that violent thunder clap, but for the first moment he had found himself unable to move—dizzy, as he explained it."  
"But how did you know where to look for it?" I asked.  
"Well, I knew that no experienced criminal would keep about him any such important evidence as a bottle that had contained chloroform. The odor clings to it for a long time. I committed the mistake at first of supposing that he had hidden it in the

boathouse. I should have known better. Naturally he would throw it into the bay. There was a single chance against me. If he had thrown it in uncorked it would probably have sunk. That was a point he didn't think of, and by just that much he fell below perfection. I think he probably administered the chloroform by pouring it upon one corner of the sheet and throwing it over young Graham's face. No doubt the odor would have been perceptible next morning had any one thought to look for it. There was only one point in the whole case," he added thoughtfully, "that was utterly at variance with my theory—and it worried me badly for a time."  
"What was that?" I asked.  
"That was the story the jailer told us—that Miss Croydon believed Drysdale guilty. But you have seen how naturally that was explained. I knew then, in that instant, that I was on the right track—that nothing could defeat me, but let us go back to the beginning—and I'd like you to point out any flaws you see in the story."  
"Very well," I said and settled back in the seat to listen.  
"Tremaine had two very powerful motives for the commission of this crime," began Godfrey. "He needed money and could take no more from Miss Croydon, since he was trying seriously to win her affections. He was determined to get Drysdale out of the way under circumstances as discreditable as possible, confident that in that case he would himself win Miss Croydon. Which," he added in a thoughtful aside, "from what you've told me of him, I don't think at all impossible."  
"Not in the least," I agreed. "I believe Tremaine could win any woman he really set his heart on."  
"At any rate, he learns of Drysdale's jealousy and of Miss Croydon's promise to explain things. He sees that at any hazard he must prevent that explanation. Monday morning he comes to town with Delroy, and the latter tells him that he intends giving the necklace the salt water treatment. You'll remember it was Tremaine who originally proposed this, though he could scarcely at that time have foreseen what would come of it."  
"Mere chance," I nodded.  
"Well, Tremaine takes the early train back to Edgemere and lays his plans. He writes the note—"  
"But you really haven't any evidence that he did," I objected.  
"For answer Godfrey took from his pocket the blotter he had found in Tremaine's room.  
"I told you that these letters aren't in Tremaine's hand," he said, "but if you'll compare them with the note you'll see how nearly they resemble Miss Croydon's. Again, they are only capital E's, G's and P's, which are the only capitals used in the note. That's pretty good circumstantial evidence. Tremaine, of course, burned the piece of paper he practiced on, but he didn't think to burn this blotter. It was only the freshest line at the bottom of the paper that left these marks."  
"But did Tremaine have a sample of Miss Croydon's writing?"  
"There's no reason to think he didn't have, but if he didn't he could no doubt have found plenty of samples among Drysdale's things. He's probably an adept at forgery as well as at most other branches of crime."  
"All right. Go ahead," I said.  
"Tremaine writes the note and leaves it in Drysdale's room," continued Godfrey. "Then he opens the trunk and secures the revolver. Perhaps he knew the revolver was there and perhaps he didn't. If he hadn't found it he'd probably have taken something else belonging to Drysdale for a weapon."  
"Having secured the revolver, he returns to his room by way of the balcony. What passed in the early part of the evening you already know. Drysdale goes to keep the rendezvous at the pergola, starting early, because the house with Tremaine in it has become unbearable to him. He stops for a chat with Graham, which the latter's son overhears, and then goes on to the pergola, which is quite at the other end of the grounds from the boathouse."  
"Meanwhile Tremaine has spent the early part of the evening talking with Delroy and Miss Croydon. At last he goes to his room on the pretense of writing letters, gets the revolver, lets himself down by the vine and starts for the pier. He enters the boathouse softly, feels his way to the cot, whose position he has already seen, and carefully administers the chloroform. The dose was no doubt nicely calculated, and the boy would probably have awakened naturally in a few hours."  
"That done, Tremaine walks boldly out upon the pier. Old Graham sees him, perhaps challenges him, but of course allows him to approach as soon as he recognizes him. They talk together for a moment. Then Tremaine, swift as lightning, knocks the other down. Graham probably fell without crying out. I fancy I can see Tremaine pausing to make sure his victim is dead before he goes on to the end of the pier to get the necklace."  
I shivered. I could see him, too, bending over in the darkness, with a horrible calmness.  
"That throwing of the pistol into the boat," continued Godfrey, "was one of those flashes of inspiration which come to a man sometimes. It was superb! It proves that our friend is really an artist. Not one man in a thousand would have thought of it. He must have laughed with sheer satisfaction when he heard it clatter safely into the boat."  
He paused for a moment to think of it, to turn it over, to taste it.  
"Well," he continued at last, "he secures the necklace, throws away the bottle and probably goes down to the water's edge to wash his hands."  
"Did he take the necklace with him to the house?" I asked.  
"No," said Godfrey decidedly. "There was no reason whatever for

him to run that risk. He had doubtless picked out a safe hiding place for it in the afternoon. The necklace once deposited there, he hurries back to the house, climbs up to the balcony and re-enters his room. He assures himself that there are no blood stains on him anywhere, then he moves his table near the window and sits down to wait for Drysdale's return.  
"As soon as he hears him enter his room he gathers up the letters which he had, of course, written during the afternoon and goes downstairs. And it is here that he makes his most serious mistake. He fancies, perhaps, that he is to have only the country police to deal with—only your Hefelbowers—that he must clinch the nail, that he cannot make the evidence against his victim too strong. So when he places his letters in the bag on the hall rack he also tears off the top button of Drysdale's raincoat."  
"He returns to the hall, talks with Delroy, the storm comes up, and young Graham rushes in. They run down to the pier, kneel beside the body, try to discover signs of life—and Tremaine adroitly shuts the button within the dead man's hand. That, my dear Lester, is, I fancy, the whole story."  
I smoked on for a moment in silence, turning it over in my mind with a certain sense of disappointment.  
"It may be true," I said. "It seems to hold together, but after all, there isn't a bit of positive evidence in it. How are we to convince a jury that Tremaine really did all these things?"  
Godfrey blew a great smoke ring out over the seat in front of us.  
"I agree," he said, "that we haven't as yet any direct evidence against Tremaine. It may be that this whole structure will fall to pieces about my



"After all, there isn't a bit of positive evidence in it."

ears, but I don't believe it. I believe within an hour we'll be in possession of the one piece of positive, indisputable evidence that will outweigh all the rest."  
"What is that?" I asked.  
He turned to me with that bright light in his eyes that I had seen there once or twice before.  
"The necklace," he answered.

### CHAPTER XXXI.

THE necklace! Of course the necklace!  
"But, then," I objected after a moment, "if your theory's correct we're going right away from the necklace. You said that Tremaine had hidden it at Edgemere."  
"Yes, but he's no such fool as to come away and leave it hidden there. He's not the man to make the mistake Miss Croydon made—to conceal a thing in a place where he can't get it again without exciting suspicion. No, no; he took the necklace with him to New York. He ran no risk in doing that. Everything had happened just as he hoped it would. There was absolutely no suspicion against him."  
"He may have hidden it somewhere else in the meantime," I observed.  
"Yes, he may have done that," admitted Godfrey, "and yet why should he? He has no reason to believe that any such suspicion attaches to him. He'll naturally wish to keep the pearls by him until he has a chance to sell them, one by one. He can't do that yet. He'll probably arrange a trip to Europe to get rid of them. If the necklace is concealed at all it's concealed somewhere in his rooms. And if it's there we'll find it!"  
"Long Island City!" yelled the guard, slamming open the door. "Change for New York!"  
We took the Thirty-fourth street ferry and ten minutes later were in a cab hurrying downtown.  
"We'll get Simmonds first," said Godfrey. "I've a sort of reciprocity treaty with him. Besides, we've got to have an officer to make the arrest. Here we are."  
He jumped out, paid the driver and hastened up the steps, latter him. As we entered the room I saw that a clock registered half past 10.  
"Hello, Simmonds," said Godfrey to a grizzled, stockily built man who had sprung to his feet as we entered. "All alone?"  
"Yes. The other boys have turned in."  
"That's good. I've got something big for you."  
Simmonds' face flushed with sudden emotion.  
"Really?" he stammered. "Have you really?"  
"The biggest catch that's been made in many a day. But remember our

agreement—yours the glory, mine the scoop. Not a word of this to anybody before daybreak."  
"Of course not; of course not," assented Simmonds, rubbing his hands together eagerly. "What is it?"  
"You've read about that murder and robbery at the Delroy place near Babylon?"  
"Yes, certainly. They've got the murderer in jail down there."  
"No, they haven't," retorted Godfrey sharply. "We're going to have him in jail here inside of twenty minutes."  
Simmonds' eyes began to glisten.  
"That would be a big thing," he said. "Are you sure of the man?"  
"Dead sure. But see here, Simmonds, I haven't time to tell you the whole story now; only I assure you, on my word, that I've evidence against the man which will convict him of one murder and perhaps of two. Is that enough?"  
"Yes," said Simmonds instantly, and he opened a drawer from which he took a pistol and a pair of handcuffs. "All right," he added, turning back to us.  
"That's good. Better have a lantern, too, though."  
"Think so?"  
He took down a little dark lantern, lighted it, tested it and put it in his pocket.  
"Now I'm ready. Have we far to go?"  
"Oh, no; just across the street."  
Simmonds started with astonishment.  
"You don't mean the Marathon?" he said.  
"Just that."  
"But who is it we're going after?"  
"A fellow named Tremaine."  
"Tremaine!" Simmonds' face grew bluer and bluer. "Why, I know him. He's been in here to see me. He doesn't seem at all the kind of fellow who would—"  
"So ho!" cried Godfrey. "It was you who told him about the clippings?"  
Simmonds colored to the eyes.  
"Who told you that?" he stammered.  
"No matter; it didn't do any harm; played right into our hands, in fact. But you didn't show your usual perspicacity there, Simmonds. That fellow is the most remarkable scoundrel I've ever run across. Perhaps it's just as well I never met him, or he'd have hypnotized me too. Come along."  
Higgins was just shutting the inner doors.  
"Do you know whether or not Mr. Tremaine is in his rooms?" asked Godfrey.  
"Yes, sir; he went up about an hour ago."  
"You have a key to his door?"  
"Yes, sir."  
"We want you to go up with us and open the door."  
"Oh, come!" protested Higgins. "That's going it pretty strong. What's Mr. Tremaine done?"  
"No matter. There's no use holding off, Higgins. Simmonds here can place you under arrest and force you to go."  
"Well, see here," said Higgins, turning a little pale, "if you break in on him like that there's apt to be some bullets flyin' around. He's hotheaded, he is. I wish you'd excuse me. Here's the key. Why can't you open the door yourself?"  
"That'll do," assented Godfrey and took the key.  
We went softly up the stairs and down the dimly lighted corridor to Tremaine's door. We could see by the transom that the room was dark.  
"I want to surprise him," whispered Godfrey. "If he has two or three minutes' warning he may be able to get rid of some evidence. He's probably in bed, and we must get to the bedroom door without his hearing us. How does the bedroom door lie, Lester, with reference to this one?"  
"Straight ahead," I answered hoarsely.  
"All right," said Godfrey. And he threw back the bolt and opened the door.  
The room was in absolute darkness save for the dim stream of light from the hall. We entered cautiously, Godfrey in the lead.  
"Have your lantern ready, Simmonds," he whispered. And I caught the odor of heated metal as Simmonds obeyed the order.  
Two, three, four steps we advanced, feeling our way; then I heard a startled cry from Godfrey; an instant's pause.  
"Quick, Simmonds, quick!" he cried in a stifled voice. "The lantern!"  
Instantly a brilliant band of light shot across the room, wavered, waggled to and fro, then settled upon Godfrey bending above some shapeless object on the floor.  
"What is it?" I cried, running to him, shivering with horror.  
"It's Tremaine." And he knelt on the floor and stripped back the clothing from the breast. "He's dead," he added after a moment.  
"Dead? But why? How?"  
He was in pajamas—I can see them yet—striped blue and white.  
Then I heard Godfrey's voice again. "My God!" he was saying, with an accent of utter horror. "My God! Bring the light closer, Simmonds!"  
I looked down too. The face was in bright relief now—but was it Tremaine? Could it be Tremaine, that staring, distorted thing, with wide open mouth? Then my eyes fell on the hand, clasped across the breast.  
"What is it?" I asked again inarticulately, frozen with dread. "What has happened?"  
I saw Godfrey stand erect with a sudden movement of loathing.  
"It's the fer-de-lance!" he said hoarsely. "He's been bitten by it. And it's still loose in the room somewhere!"  
CHAPTER XXXII.

It strikes a chill through me even yet to recall the awful horror of that instant. The fer-de-lance—death in a few

heart beats, and such a death! A death that melts a man into an abomination! For a moment none of us dared move, scarcely dared breathe, and I saw the band of light from Simmonds' lantern wavering uncertainly across the floor, the walls, the ceiling—evidently poor Simmonds did not understand the exact nature of the danger, but only that it was a terrible one. I had a mad impulse to jump, shrieking, for the door, and should probably have done it had that quivering silence endured a moment longer.  
"Simmonds, give me your lantern," said Godfrey, with an admirable calmness. "Lester, have your cane ready."  
He threw a broad band of light upon the carpet and, keeping carefully within this path, approached the door, felt for the electric button and switched on the lights.  
Half blinded for an instant, we stood staring at each other, at the floor.  
"For God's sake!" gasped Simmonds, mopping the sweat from his face. "What is it?"  
"It's a snake," said Godfrey tersely, "the deadliest in the world. If you don't believe me look yonder!" And he pointed to the huddled mass on the floor.  
I did not look; I was afraid to; I had already seen too much. I was grateful when Godfrey jerked down a curtain and threw it over the body. Then he gave Simmonds the lantern and closed the door, which we had left open when we entered.  
"Now," he continued sharply, "there's no use in giving way to our nerves. We're in no danger, but that snake is hid around here somewhere and the first thing for us to do is to find it. Where there two snakes, Lester?"  
"No," I answered, as articulately as I could, "I think not. I never say but one."  
"I thought you said Cecily took that one with her."  
"So she did—wait; I didn't see it. She had a cover over the cage."  
Godfrey's face paled suddenly.  
"Good God!" he murmured.  
A giddiness seized me. I clutched at a chair for support.  
It had been no accident. She had left Fe-Fe behind to avenge her—and what a vengeance! She had not laughed and forgotten!  
Then in a flash I understood that last strange scene—the change in Cecily as she stood watching us from the deck of the receding boat, the frantic effort to shout a message to Tremaine. She had relented, she did not wish to kill him, she loved him yet! But of that warning he had caught only a single word.  
"The bed!" I cried. "The bed!"  
"Right!" agreed Godfrey insistively, and walked to the bedroom door. In an instant the inner room was ablaze with light. He armed himself with one of Tremaine's canes, and together we approached the bed.  
"Ready, now," he said, and with a sudden movement stripped back the covers. But there was nothing under them.  
"The pillow, perhaps," he said, and turned it over.  
There was a quick movement, a soft hissing, a vicious head raised itself, two eyes of orange fire glared at us.  
I heard the swish of Godfrey's cane, and the head fell. Fe-Fe would work no more evil.  
And then as I looked more closely at the coils I perceived something else there—something bright, iridescent, glowing.  
Godfrey lifted the mangled body with the end of his cane and threw it into the middle of the bed. Then he bent over and picked up—the necklace.  
"I was sure we should find it here," he said. "But look at it. Isn't it beautiful?"  
It was more than that—it was superb; not dead white now, but warm, full of life. Was it the salt bath, or was it that the cloud had been removed forever from its owner's life? As

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"Ready, now," he said, and with a sudden movement stripped back the covers. But there was nothing under them.  
"The pillow, perhaps," he said, and turned it over.  
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It was more than that—it was superb; not dead white now, but warm, full of life. Was it the salt bath, or was it that the cloud had been removed forever from its owner's life? As

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