

## LITERARY MAGAZINE

"Revenge. Alfred Bigelow owns a large interest in a hat factory, somewhere in Connecticut. It was the brother's idea that he had got some of the workmen down on him—and all that. I didn't take any stock in that view of the case, and events proved that I was right. When I did find Alfred, I wired the brother at once, and—"

"Wired him? Where was he?"

"He had gone to Boston, on his own hook, to inquire among their friends in that city. He thought Alfred might have gone there."

"Were you present when the brothers met?"

"No. When I found Alfred, I took him home. I didn't see either of them again till a week later. In fact, I have never seen Alfred since I took him to his home from the East River hotel. But I saw George; I think it was the third day after that. He asked me to call on him; wrote me a letter, you know, and I went to the house. He made me a present of a hundred dollars. I stated the fact in my report."

"You did not see Alfred at that time?"

"No; he was in the house, but I didn't see him."

"Do they live together in the same house?"

"Yes, sir. They are bachelors; both of them."

"All right, Savarin. I think you had better run out to Winepauk and see what you can do at that end of the case. Probably not much. The trail is a trifle old. If you decide that he returned to New York, let me know at once. You may go, now Mac, what have you done about the automobile? There should be no difficulty in tracing that car."

"I've got two men on it, already. We have a good description of it. It had two license numbers. We won't be long in nailing that part of the mystery—if there is a mystery at all."

"No; probably not. You said something about a case of jumping into the river. What did you mean by that?"

"George Bigelow is of the opinion that his brother has done away with himself. I was only voicing this idea."

"Oh, yes. Bring in George Bigelow. Leave him here alone with me for a time. As soon as he goes aw? return to me."

GEORGE Bigelow was one of those men for whom any general description would suffice. He was neither tall, nor short; fat nor lean. His eyes were a faded blue; his brows were shaggy and red. His hair was sandy brown, but grey over the temples. His face was smooth shaven; his dress faultless. His manner when he entered the presence of the chief was one of rather forced assurance.

"This isn't the first time your brother Alfred has disappeared," began the chief, abruptly. He did not ask Bigelow to be seated, but the man dropped upon a chair, nevertheless, and slid himself down into it until the weight of his body rested upon his spine.

"No; it is the third time," he replied. "One of your men found him for me the last time; I found him myself the first time. I am afraid he won't be found at all this time."

"Why?"

"He has been drinking harder than usual of late. He had fits of despondency, during which he threatened to kill himself. I can't get it out of my head that he has done that very thing."

"And taken the automobile with him—wherever he went—eh?"

"Oh, well, of course, the automobile will soon be found, somewhere. That goes without saying, doesn't it? I have made a desperate effort to get trace of it; but I haven't succeeded."

"How is it," the chief asked, quietly, "that when your brother disappeared the last time you thought he had met with foul play, while this time you are equally positive that he has killed himself?"

"Oh, I don't know. It's my idea, that's all."

"Were you and your brother on good terms?"

"We tolerated each other. There wasn't any love lost between us. Don't run away with the idea that I shall wear mourning for him, indefinitely, chief, because I shan't. If he is alive, I want him found. If he is dead, I want to know it."

"You're a nice, affectionate brother, aren't you? The inspector tells me that you offer ten thousand dollars reward. That is rather an excessive amount, isn't it? And will you tell me how you are going to pay it, if it is earned?"

George Bigelow coolly took a cigar from one of his pockets and lighted it before he replied. There was a certain air of studied insolence about the act and his manner of consummating it, which might have been the consequence of any one of several different incentives. But the chief was accustomed to reading men accurately, and quickly. There was never a slightest move, an expression or a characteristic gesture that escaped him; and he had a method of applying one to another, and fitting them together as one would do with a jigsaw puzzle, which rarely led him astray, and which nearly always supplied a revelation—or the beginning of one. This case came to the chief just as all cases came to him; without previous ideas concerning them. He applied to each one the purely practical methods of his office and his profession. He despised all suggestion of theory,

and relied only upon fact: Fact, and the machinery of his department to supply it.

"I shall pay the reward, when it is earned, with money, of course," was the half surly reply. "I suppose you are referring now to the known fact that my annuity from the old man's estate amounts to the same sum I have offered as a reward."

"Naturally," replied the chief, half smiling and



The discovery beneath the floor of the old building.

permitting his lids to droop so that the full expression of his eyes could not be seen. "This case of your brother does not come directly in the criminal class—unless it is your idea that he has somehow met with foul play out there along the Connecticut roads; and then it would be a case for the Nutmeg officials to deal with. It wouldn't be under my jurisdiction at all. So, if I do take it up—if I should so far transcend my prerogatives as to assign one of my men to search for your missing brother, it is reasonable that I should know where the money is coming from to pay the reward you offer."

IF Bigelow had known the chief as well as he might have done, had he been in daily contact with the man, he would have been put on his guard by this long and rather conciliating speech; long indeed for a man whose natural form of expression is described by the word abrupt, and strangely conciliating for one who never conciliated anybody without having a distinct reason for doing so. But it seemed quite the proper thing to say, under the circumstances, and, according to George Bigelow's estimate of "coppers" in general and police officials in particular, the amount of reward should be of infinitely more importance to the chief than the mere clearing up of a mystery. He blundered directly into the trap which a more astute man would have seen, and shied from.

"I will know how to find the money when it is up to me to pay it," he said.

"How will you find it? You haven't it yourself. I have a power of attorney; it is the same thing, practically."

"Oh! I see. Do I understand that you are now empowered to draw against the bank account of your brother? Have you filed a copy of your power of attorney with his bankers, and have they accepted it?"

"They have accepted it all right."

"How is that? Tell me about it. The opinion of a shrewd banker would go far toward convincing me. I'll tell you quite frankly, Bigelow, that I know something about the existing relations between you and your brother, and also something about how your father regarded you—in relation to money matters. I confess that I do not understand how your brother could have been prevailed upon to put a power of attorney into your hands; especially one which would empower you to draw against his bank account. And it occurs to me that the officials of a bank, where your brother did business, would be rather slow to accept your authority, unless they had pretty good proof that your brother did really intend that you should exercise it."

"Look here, chief, I can see that you don't like me, and I don't care a damn whether you do or not; but you do like the sound of the reward I offer. All you care to know is that you'll finger the dough in case you find my brother Al. Well, I'll go from here to the bank, if you desire it, and deposit there a certified check for the amount of the reward, payable to you when my brother is

found, or when you have given me proof that he is dead. Now, you can take the case, or leave it, according to those terms."

"Oh, I'll take it fast enough, Bigelow."

"I thought so. I won't conceal from you that I'd as soon you find his dead body as his living one, either."

"I quite believe you. Will you tell me how he happened to give you the power of—"

"No; I won't. It's none of your business, as I view it. Now, if you have got all the information you want, I'll leave you. I didn't expect that you would feel like exerting yourself particularly about a mere disappearance; but now that there is a reward in sight, possibly you'll be interested."

WHEN he was gone the chief touched a button which brought the inspector to him; but even after that official entered the room the chief sat for a long time silent and motionless. When he did speak, it was with his usual abruptness.

"It's a murder, Mac. George Bigelow has done away with his brother. He has the assurance of knowing that his brother is dead. He wears the arrogance of knowledge—and he has got what he considers a perfectly good reason for believing that we can't bring the crime home to him. The fellow would have increased the amount of the reward, in case of finding a dead body, if such a thing would not have had the appearance of paying a premium for murder. But we won't bother our heads about George Bigelow's personal character, just now. Has Savarin started for Winepauk?"

"Yes."

"Wire him to give his attention only to the search for the lost car. Then assign one of your men to find out where Alfred Bigelow kept his bank account. If he had more than one account, let's know it. When you have the information, I want you to go, in person, to see the bank officials and find out from them just what method was followed in their acceptance, under a power of attorney, of George Bigelow's right to draw against his brother's account."

"There is only one account, chief, and I know where it is. Bigelow told me. I can have the information for you in an hour."

"So much the better. Bring it to me the minute you have it. Put two more of the men on that automobile—at this end of the route. You know the make? Well, wire the factory to send one of their expert machinists to you. Assign two men to shadow George Bigelow. I want to know every time he moves, and what move he happens to make. Is Sheridan in the office? All right, then. Let him dig up the past of Alfred. That disappearing habit of his might have been a new thing. George says this is the third time; we thought it was the second. Now, another thing. Tell your men to notify you if George Bigelow starts off anywhere on a trip that will be likely to keep him away from the house for a few hours. I want to see the inside of that house, myself. You and I will go there together if the opportunity offers—possibly we will go anyhow, a little later. There is another thing that I want, too. Telephone to the station house of that precinct—where the Bigelow house is—and have the officer on that beat instructed to be near the house at 4 o'clock this afternoon; then, at 4 o'clock telephone directly to the house itself and ask for the valet—you have his name, I suppose."

"I have the name of Alfred's valet."

"Well, that's the fellow I want, but I don't wish him to know I want him. He must be told something over the phone which will bring him out of the house at once—as far as the sidewalk, anyhow. Have one of your men there, to get into a row with the valet, so that the officer on the beat will arrest both of them. I'll be at the station house when the valet is taken there. Let Coyle do the scrapping act, if he's not out; and tell him to look up the chauffeur, as soon as he's through with the valet. He can bring the chauffeur here. I want a chat with him, too. That's all, for the present. No; there is just one thing more. While you are at the bank, borrow two paid and cancelled checks that were signed by Alfred Bigelow; one of recent date, and one as old as they may have in their possession; also get one that is known to have been signed by George Bigelow, under his attorneyship—and anything else that interests you. That's all, inspector."

AT ten minutes past 4 o'clock that afternoon the chief walked into the station house of the precinct in which the Bigelow home was located and he was behind the desk with the lieutenant when Sheridan and the valet were brought before it by the officer on that beat. There was no intention of holding the valet, of course, and when the questions asked the man had elicited the fact that he was employed by the Bigelow family, the chief stepped from behind the desk and called the man into the captain's private office, where he closed "I am the chief of police," he told the valet. "I was thinking of sending for you to come to me at

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\*If the reader will review carefully these instructions to the inspector, the grasp of detail evinced by the chief will be better appreciated; also, the lines upon which he had decided to work out the case will be understood.