# THE CRIME OF THE CENTURY

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SYNOPSIS.

Chapter I—Mr. Mitchel and Mr. Barnes, two celebrated detectives, became interested in a murder case. Matthew Mora, a multimillionaire, has been murdered with an Indian war club from his own collection of curios. His son, Matthew Mora, Jr., was seen by a night watchman to go in and come out of the house. Young Mora reported the murder. Mora senior left [illegible] one-half to his son, one-half to charity. The will is missing. Blood stains are found on young Mora's clothing, which he explains and is not held for the murder. He declares that he had been slumming on the night of the murder and had attended a ball at Apollo hall.

Chapter II—Mr. Mitchel hears of a child found in a graveyard and goes to the Metropolitan Foundling society's home in search of the child. There he meets Colonel Payton, one of the directors of the home. Mitchel finds the child and notices that the colonel and the child both have a deformity in the same finger.

Chapter III—Mitchel visits the graveyard where the child was abandoned and interviews Geverone Griffin, who lives near by and saw the child. He notes that she saw it the day after the murder. She refers Mitchel to Rebecca Poloski for further information. He visits Rebecca. She saw a man bury something in the graveyard. Mitchel secures it, and it proves to be a child's slip marked with a lily of the valley.

Chapters IV and V—Mitchel goes to Apollo hall to make inquiries concerning young Matthew Mora's presence there the night of the murder.

## CHAPTER VI.

SET A THIEF TO CATCH A THIEF.

Mr. Mitchel quickly decided that it would be absurd to attempt to deny his identity. This was no ordinary man, and he had called him by his proper name with a confidence born of certainty. He thought it best even to conceal his surprise, and therefore, as though conversing with an old acquaintance, he answered quietly:

"I cannot recall ever having enjoyed a lecture so much. You have a wonderful grasp of your subject and marked ability in presenting it intelligibly. Indeed I am in your debt."

Mr. Mitchel was a man of great self control and had that mastery of manner which made it possible for him entirely to subdue his emotions and to conceal his thoughts when he so desired. It was therefore Preacher Jim who was now astonished, and he did not hide his feelings so well. He had prepared his little coup with much anticipatory satisfaction. He had hoped to see Mr. Mitchel start in alarm on learning that his identity was known—alarm that it should be known among such company and in such a place. He was therefore piqued at the nonchalant reply and for a moment lost his own customary self possession.

"You do not seem surprised at my knowing you!" he exclaimed irritably and in almost a threatening tone.

"I meet so many people and am so very poor at recalling faces," said Mr. Mitchel suavely, "that when one addresses me by name I take it as a matter of course that we have met before, even though the fact may have escaped my own memory. And this has happened to me so many times that it seldom surprises me."

"But we have never met before," said Preacher Jim, still in ominous tones.

"Indeed!"

"Indeed!"

Mr. Mitchel made no further remark, but merely gazed intently into his companion's face and awaited his next

"Do you mean that Mr. Barnes set a spy upon me?"

words. The criminal, finding himself thus compelled to speak again, paused, reflecting how to proceed. Thus during a few critical moments the two men stood face to face in silence.

It was possible for this man to turn to his friends and announce that a spy was among them, and Mr. Mitchel's career of usefulness might thus be ended. He appreciated fully the danger of his position, but he was one of those men who are calmest in such supreme crises, and it was this entire absence of fear which must have appealed to the other man, himself afraid of nothing living. Presently, with an altered accent which showed that all antagonism had been laid aside for the time being, Preacher Jim extended his hand and said:

"Mr. Mitchel, I am pleased to make your acquaintance and glad that you have come here tonight."

Mr. Mitchel took the proffered hand and shook it cordially as he replied:

"I am equally pleased to know you and to be here."

"I wish to talk with you. Will you come with me where we will not be disturbed and have a chat and a cigar?"

Preacher Jim led the way and Mr. Mitchel followed until they entered a small private cabin in which were a table and a few chairs. The two men sat opposite each other, and the criminal summoned a waiter and ordered a bottle of wine. Then he began by saying:

"Mr. Mitchel, in spite of your well feigned calmness, confess that you did not expect me to call you by your name."

"I certainly was astonished, but you will admit that it would not have been wise to allow you to see that too plainly."

"It would have been very unwise. I was in a bad humor, and there are times, as you may judge by my lecture, when I might commit acts not strictly in accord with the laws of our country."

"You mean that you might have done me an injury. I realized that and acted in the manner which seemed best calculated to prevent any trouble."

"Again, I say you are a wise man. You are more than that—you are a brave one, for only courage could have carried you safely through. Now that my anger has passed I am harmless, I assure you."

"Perhaps, then, you would be willing to enlighten me as to how you chanced to know my name."

Mr. Mitchel, quick to read character, thought that he had detected a large share of vanity in this man, and he hoped to mollify him further by affording him an opportunity to boast a little. In this he was entirely successful, for the reply came with a touch of eagerness.

"Ah!" said Preacher Jim. "You should have thought twice before trying to steal a march on me. Do you suppose that I could have evaded the law officers and the laws as successfully as I have if the two eyes in my head were both half blind, as in the case of 99 per cent of men? No, sir. I have hundreds of eyes keeping watch. I knew that you were coming here tonight long before you came, and had I chosen to prevent it you could never have boarded this boat. But I considered the matter and decided to allow you to hear my lecture."

"Again I find that I am in your debt."

"But you wish to learn how I knew this. To explain thoroughly I must tell you something more of our organization. We 'crooks,' as the boys call themselves, are banded together for mutual protection. We are at eternal warfare with the police force. We are constantly spied upon by detectives. So much, of course, you know. We have therefore arranged a more or less perfect system of defense. When one of our members sees a detective, it becomes his business to spy upon that spy and report to officers of our society. In this way we often obtain valuable information, which frequently makes it possible for us to aid in the escape of the special prey for which the detective might be searching. Now, you will remember that when you were talking with Slippery Sam this morning that cunning young man recognized a detective and led you off in another direction. Very good. But it so chanced that another of our members was in the neighborhood, and he also saw the detective and at once began to shadow him. Can you guess what business called that detective into the neighborhood of Apollo hall this morning?"

"No."

"Yet he is employed by your friend, Mr. Barnes." Preacher Jim chuckled as Mr. Mitchel this time manifested his surprise when, by way of response, he asked quickly:

"Do you mean that Mr. Barnes set a spy upon me?"

"Just so. Friendly, wasn't it?"

"But with what object?"

Mr. Mitchel felt assured that he could answer his own question, but he wished to learn how much this man knew or suspected. His object was not attained, for the answer was:

"Ah! That's no affair of mine. You are not one of our members, and therefore our man would not have pursued the matter further had you not been in company with Slippery Sam."

"And why because of that fact?"

"It is always important to know whether there be among us any who would betray a friend for ready cash. You comprehend? So in this instance Mr. Barnes' man, who is a clever fellow, seeing that Slippery Sam had suspicions, kept in the background until you were around the corner, and then he began to shadow you most scientifically. But our man is skillful also, and he easily kept the whole party in sight until you parted with Sam. Then he tracked you to your home and obtained much information about you, all of which in due time reached me. It was not difficult to discover that Sam meant to bring you with him, and so we were forewarned."

"You do not mean that you could get that information from Sam himself? He seems too shrewd."

"He is sharp, but our system was too much for him. It was very easy, as you will perceive. He could not bring you with him without obtaining a pass for two. In applying for it he was obliged to give a full account of the person whom he wished to introduce. He did so, and with the information which we already had it was not difficult to take the true measurement of his imaginary 'crook' who worked at 'engraving bank notes' and who 'did not desire any new acquaintances.' It was really quite amusing to hear him expatiating upon the wonderful talents of his new found friend who was 'staking him for the present.'"

Preacher Jim imitated Slippery Sam so well that Mr. Mitchel laughed heartily. Then he asked:

"But why did you allow me to come on board?"

"I will tell you candidly. I had as much curiosity to learn your object in coming among us as you possibly had in seeing me and my friends. Why did you come?"

"I will be equally frank with you. I had no special object. The proposal was made by Sam, and it seemed to be attractive. I therefore accepted. I have always taken an interest in the so called criminal class and would not miss the chance of seeing them when free from restraint."

"Then you came merely as one goes to the park to see the wild animals?"

"With absolutely no other definite purpose."

There was a pause during which it was evident to Mr. Mitchel that his companion was still somewhat in doubt as to the wisdom of trusting him, and of this he was assured by the next question, which was asked suddenly, that he might be taken off his guard, or at least have no chance for preparing an untruthful reply.

"Why was that detective spying upon you?" asked Preacher Jim. Mr. Mitchel realized that it would be necessary to answer unhesitatingly, but he was accustomed to determine upon a line of conduct quickly, and now he decided upon a bold and possibly hazardous course.

"I have no objection to telling you what I think of that," said he, "though, of course, I may be wrong. Mr. Barnes is working upon a mysterious case and has asked me to assist him. He values my assistance in an investigation, but at the same time he dislikes to admit that I could accomplish what would baffle him. I imagine that in this instance he has sent a man after me that I may not make discoveries which would be unknown to him. Thus he would hope to keep pace with me in any advance that I might make."

"If he is as clever a detective as his reputation declares him to be, he should be above such methods. Were I a detective I would use my brains and not rely upon this petty system of spies."

This was even better than Mr. Mitchel had hoped for, and he hastened now to lead the conversation into the channel which he had chosen to enter.

"I concur with you heartily, and I think your opinion upon a crime would be most interesting. I wonder if I would be going too far were I to ask you to discuss the one in question."

"You may do so if you wish. It will depend upon what crime it is and how much I may really know about it whether I would care to talk it over with you. You must not forget that I am a crook and that I am acquainted with the greatest criminals in this country. Any one of my friends might be the guilty man in this instance. Indeed I might be the criminal myself."

"Even in a case of murder?" asked Mr. Mitchel quickly, eying his companion closely.

"Why not?" was the calm reply. "It is natural for you to suppose that the degree of the crime matters, but with the born criminal, such as I am, there are no degrees, no limits, except those created by the exigencies of circumstances. For example, I might decide to steal a pocket handkerchief, and a chain of events might ensue which would lead to the necessity of killing a man. That would not, nay, could not, make me pause. It would be just as natural and just as unavoidable, with my heritage and character, as that one congenitally phthisical should take a slight cold which would lead to a cough and thence to consumption and possibly to death. You see, even the final event, death, is the same in each."

Mr. Mitchel had asked his question hoping to see this man show some sign of emotion which would indicate whether or not one of his secret and unsuspected crimes might be the killing of a fellow being, for already he had grown so interested in this criminal that the discovery of one of his unlawful acts would seem of more consequence than the unraveling of the Mora murder. Now he found that the man was so deeply in earnest in his theories of crime that he could not be surprised into showing any emotions which would inculpate himself. Nevertheless he still thought that the conversation could be continued to advantage along the lines which he was following and so proceeded:

"Of course I have no wish to induce you to betray either your friends or yourself, and it is scarcely possible that you have any connection with the Mora murder, which is the case in which I am interested."

"Ah, yes! You mean the rich man, who was killed with one of his own weapons? I have not the slightest objection to giving you my views on that subject. Ask me what you please."

"I hardly know where to begin. It just occurred to me that it is a crime the details of which had been skillfully managed and that as you are not only a criminal, for which assertion I have only your own authority, but also a student of criminology, your opinion would be interesting to me. Therefore I ventured to ask for it. You might tell me, to begin with, whether you would look for the murderer among the so called criminal class or elsewhere?"

"Ah, but you forget that, even though the man who has done this has never before been detected in crime, this act places him at once among what you term the criminal class. You could not seek a murderer elsewhere."

"You seem to be evading my question," said Mr. Mitchel boldly. "I will put it more plainly. Would you look for a man who has been guilty of other crimes, or would you say that this is an initial crime, the act of a man who has never sinned before?"

"Unquestionably the guilty man was far from innocent of other crimes. It was deliberately planned and studiously executed. Only a murder committed in the heat of passion could be a first offense. A premeditated killing proves the guilty party to be a regular criminal, though of course it does not follow that he has been previously recognized as such."

"Then you do not believe that the son is guilty?" asked Mr. Mitchel.

"What I believe on that score must have little weight, because I do not know the accused. He is not known to be a criminal. Therefore the presumption is in his favor. If he has never committed a crime before, I would stake my life on his innocence. But, if he has, then it is possible that he is the man. I only say it is possible."

"There seem to be many facts which point to his guilt. For example, the weapon used was part of a collection owned by the deceased. The son of course knew where to obtain it."

"That would be very poor evidence upon which to hang a man. What need had the murderer to know where the bludgeon was usually kept, since the old man had taken it to bed with him?"

Mr. Mitchel started at hearing this. The words gave him a new and important idea. He remembered Mr. Barnes' argument that the murdered man had not taken the weapon from the cabinet himself, as the door was found open. Preacher Jim advanced just the contrary view, and Mr. Mitchel determined to probe deeper in order to learn his reasons for his opinion.

"Ah, of course!" said he, with no outward exhibition of the increased interest which he felt. "If Mr. Mora took the weapon up stairs, any man might have found and used it. But the old man was very methodical, and I am assured that if he had done as you suggest he would again have locked the cabinet door, which, on the contrary, was found open in the morning, as though the weapon had been abstracted hurriedly by some one laboring under excitement. Does not this conflict with your idea?"

"Why, not at all. You are probably repeating to me one of the arguments of your friend Mr. Barnes, which only shows how detectives always work to substantiate a theory, instead of allowing an investigation to lead where it will. Of course it is all guesswork about the movements of the man who was killed, but my solution of the mystery is that he expected trouble that night, and in that case, anticipating the approach of an enemy, he would have been sufficiently disturbed to have forgotten to lock the door of the cabinet again."

"I could readily agree with that if I could see any reason for thinking that he was expecting a disagreeable visitor. What evidence have you of that?"

"Oh, very good, I think. In one of the newspaper accounts I read that the watchman in his statement said that he saw young Mora enter the house, because he had been warned by his master to be doubly watchful. In fact, he had asked permission to take the night for himself, sending a substitute in his place, but his request was refused, and then it was that he was cautioned to be doubly on his guard."

"That is very significant and quite new to me. I wonder that Mr. Barnes omitted it from his report of the facts."

"Oh, you can't expect a detective to think of everything, you know!"

Here Preacher Jim laughed heartily, while Mr. Mitchel eyed him thoughtfully, wondering at his apparent unconcern and his seemingly genuine good humor. The man's manner did not agree with a half formulated idea which Mr. Mitchel was mentally considering, and therefore he carefully selected his words in continuing the conversation.

"Then if this watchman was so wide awake," said Mr. Mitchel, "surely it must count against young Mora when he swears that he saw him enter and leave the house at about the time of the murder?"

"Oh, no! The watchman only swears that a plaid suit of clothes went in and came out again. From that he concludes that he saw young Mora, but he might be mistaken."

"Oh, then you do not accept Mora's theory that the murderer put on the plaid suit in the house after committing the crime?"

"No, I do not. None but stupid officials would have accepted that trumped up story. Why, how can you say that the watchman was correct in identifying the clothing of the man when he came out of the house and deny his equally positive assertion as to what he saw going in? Mark my word, the watchman is both truthful and accurate. That plaid suit went in and came out again."

"And the man who wore it killed old man Mora?"

"Beyond all question of doubt."

"Then the discovery of that suit of clothes should be the first care of the police."

"It should, but the police will never find it. Some one else may and probably will. Do not forget that the police are often credited with more than they deserve. The publication of all the facts places all people on the scent. The guilty party is somewhere and necessarily comes into contact with persons any one of whom may read his fear in his face and report it to the police. So those clothes are hidden, and at any moment they may reach the central office because some one finds them and thinks it is his duty to take them to headquarters. After that it ought to be plain sailing."

"Why should not the murderer have burned the clothing or at least have destroyed them in some way?"

"Perhaps he has, but it is often risky. The smell of burnt cloth will rouse a whole tenement house full of people. Ashes found may excite suspicion, perhaps more so than the clothing itself, especially if the murderer was disguised. On the whole, and judging by what I should have done myself, I conclude that the plaid suit is still in existence. Another man, though, might act differently. When theorizing about human actions, we are all apt to measure them by our personal standards."

"And you say that if you had killed Mr. Mora, having worn these clothes as a disguise, you would not have destroyed them afterward?"

"I think not. Of course circumstances alter cases, and it might be that, having actually killed the man, my views would be altered. It is so easy to theorize, eh, Mr. Mitchel?"

"Yes, yes! You are right," said Mr. Mitchel abstractedly, and then he

"You mean that the murderer of Mr. Mora may be on this boat?"

paused a moment, presently continuing: "There is another point which tells against young Mora—the theft of the will. It makes him nine millions richer and would be valueless to any other man."

"Would it?" asked Preacher Jim.

Something in his intonation attracted Mr. Mitchel, and he quickly asked:

"Can you imagine any use another man might make of it?"

"I can."

"Will you tell me?"

"Mr. Mitchel, if I refuse you might be ingenious enough to think that I know more than I care to disclose, that I am endeavoring to shield some one, and you might even get it into your head that that person is myself. Therefore I will reply to your question, although I think it should not have been asked. It compels me to show you how much more useful property is to the criminal than to the rest of the world."

"Oh, pardon me! It was understood that I should not insist upon going any further than you chose. You need not answer if you prefer not."

"No. I can understand that it would interest you to hear my opinion, and I will give it. This will leaves half of the fortune to charity. By its suppression the son inherits all. Now, let us imagine that an enterprising crook, with a long head, conceives the plan of stealing the will and of killing Mr. Mora, so that the will should acquire immediate value. Can't you see now how that document might be useful to the thief?"

"I would prefer not to guess, but to have you tell me."

"Very good. Young Mora inherits. Then the crook turns up some fine night with a copy of the will which he might claim to have found in an ash barrel. He might ask what Mr. Mora would give for the continued suppression of the will—how much per year, let us say. Would it not be fair, in exchange for the nine millions, for the heir to pay over to the crook at least the annual interest? At even 1 per cent that would be $90,000. Don't you think that a document which would yield that sum per year would be worth the stealing?"

"By heavens, you are right! But it would require a man of brains and courage to conceive and carry out such a scheme."

"There are several such men on this boat."

"You mean that the murderer of Mr. Mora may be on this boat?"

"He may be, of course. Stranger things have happened, one of which is your own presence here, as well as that of the man who promised to help you if you should need aid."

"Ah! You heard that?"

"I did."

"Then perhaps you recognized the man?"

"I did."

"Who was he?"

"I think you must excuse my not answering you this time. I prefer to let you discover for yourself. I never spoil sport."

"Oh, very well! As you will! And now, since you have been so kind as to discuss one crime with me, there is another in which I am even more deeply interested. Perhaps you might express your views upon that."

"Again I say it depends upon what crime it is and how much I may know."

"I am alluding to the child who was found in the graveyard."

"Yes. What of that?"

"I believe that I have obtained a clew which will unravel that mystery. I think I shall soon know who the child's mother is, though it was not she who placed the infant in the cemetery."

"You are sure of that?"

"Yes. It was a man and probably the father. Now I would like to ask you"—

"You must excuse me. I prefer not to discuss it. In fact, I have talked with you too much already. Good night."

With this abrupt speech Preacher Jim suddenly left the room. Mr. Mitchel looked after him a moment, with a smile of satisfaction, and then went on deck whistling softly.

## CHAPTER VII.

THE PLAID SUIT OF CLOTHES.

Mr. Mitchel reached his home that night in safety, his presence on the boat having apparently escaped the notice of any of the crooks.

On the following morning, precisely at the hour appointed, Mr. Barnes was announced and ushered in.

"Ah! Good morning, Mr. Barnes," said Mr. Mitchel. "I hope you have not overworked yourself on this case of yours. Feeling well this morning?"

"Quite well, I thank you," was the rejoinder. "Why do you ask?"

"Oh, I did not know but that you had been up all night watching somebody. Mr. Barnes, I have often admired the patience of detectives when I have read of one of them sitting all night watching a doorway through which he had seen a criminal pass. The fact that the criminal seldom comes out again does not seem to deter him at all. He watches on and hopes for the best. Some day a criminal may come back and be caught. Who knows? That sort of thing always makes me think of our cat. Remus is his name, and he is truly a wonderful fellow in many ways, only he has that inevitable failing of his kind—he must watch something. I suppose he feels it a sort of duty in repayment for his food and lodging. The first night on which he came to us he caught a mouse, and while he was playing with it the little creature escaped and ran into my wife's slipper, from which hiding place Master Remus soon dislodged him. But do you know whenever that cat sees that slipper lying about he sits down and watches it! It is really very amusing. Come up some night when my wife is at home, and I will have Remus go through his performance for you. It might prove a useful object lesson."

"I have listened patiently to your chaffing, Mr. Mitchel," said Mr. Barnes, with becoming dignity, "and I should be pleased to have you tell me why you have spoken thus. What have I done to deserve it?"

"You had me spied upon," answered Mr. Mitchel sharply.

"You are mistaken," said Mr. Barnes quietly.

"Do you mean to deny that one of your men followed me about yesterday?"

"No, but it was not at my instigation."

"Then why was it done?"

"He knew you, and, seeing you in the company of one of the shrewdest bunko men in town, he thought it best to keep you both in sight."

"Dear me! So your man thought that Leroy Mitchel is not capable of protecting himself in New York city! We will let that pass then. But now tell me why you followed me personally last night."

"How do you know that I did?"

"That is not answering my question."

"Well, Mr. Mitchel, while I certainly think you capable of taking care of yourself, from what my man told me I concluded that you meant to accompany Slippery Sam on last night's excursion. Not having the same confidence in that person which you seemed to have, I thought that as your friend it was my duty to be on hand in case of trouble. But I was not spying upon you."

"So you even went so far as to disguise yourself as a waiter and serve beer to a lot of crooks, just to be near me? I am truly indebted to you. But I do not admire this masquerading. It is too theatrical. It savors too much of the dime novel detective. And I suppose, of course, you had to bribe one of the regular waiters, who allowed you to take his place, eh?"

"Not exactly," said Mr. Barnes hesitatingly, somewhat abashed by the criticism upon his methods; "but, Mr. Mitchel, we cannot always choose. I have known of the uses to which this boat has been put all summer, and I realized that it would be wise and might become of extreme importance to me to have it in my power to be on board at any time. I therefore arranged matters with the head waiter and have played waiter on that boat so often that now my presence attracts no suspicion."

"That is just the conceit common to all of your profession. Your disguises are never penetrated. You are like the ostrich with his head in the sand, invisible—in your own mind. Now, the fact is your identity was very well known on the boat last night."

"Indeed! How do you know that?"

"The lecturer of the evening was talking to me about you. He considers you rather clever, but expressed his surprise that you should stoop to such antiquated methods as the employment of spies. He says that if he were in your place he would use his brains instead."

"Then he would accomplish little, for he has no brains." Mr. Barnes spoke angrily, for he had begun to lose patience. He thought that Mr. Mitchel went too far in his adverse criticisms, and in this perhaps he was right. But the truth was Mr. Mitchel was excessively annoyed, not so much because a spy had followed him, but because for the first time in his experience he had not himself discovered the fact. He had therefore given vent to his feelings by resorting to satire.

Mr. Mitchel had decided that Preacher Jim was possessed of quite a superior quality of brains, and consequently he was attracted by Mr. Barnes' words, well knowing that they were not idly spoken.

"What do you mean by that?" said he.

"The man is a monomaniac," Mr. Barnes replied.

"On what subject?"

"Oh, on the subject of last night's lecture! I know his history very well, having observed him for many years. One of his delusions is that he is himself a great criminal. If you could get him to talk with you, he would undoubtedly lead you to suppose that he has committed many crimes and that through his marvelous skill he has not only escaped arrest, but has even avoided suspicion."

"But is not this true?"

"True as to his keeping out of the clutches of the law, but that has not required any skill. He has committed no crimes since he left the reformatory, and he entered that place when a child. The man is not sound here," concluded Mr. Barnes, tapping his forehead significantly.

"He does not impress me as being unsound mentally," said Mr. Mitchel doubtingly.

"Very likely not at a single interview. Perhaps indeed you may even have concluded that he is endowed with unusual intelligence. But suppose that you were to meet him again and that his conversation should be substantially the same and that at many subsequent interviews with you he should always descant upon the same topics in much the same words! Such has been my experience, and I am satisfied that his apparent brilliancy is really lusterless. As I said at first, he is a monomaniac."

"Nevertheless, Mr. Barnes, he has proved the fallacy of one of your favorite theories with scarcely an effort of his feeble brain."

"What theory?"

"You argued that the theft of the will is good evidence against young Mora; that the will would be useful to him, because its suppression would double his fortune."

"I did, and my opinion remains unaltered."

"Very good. But let me give you Preacher Jim's idea—the idea, let us say, of a practical crook opposed to the theory of a skillful detective. That should be interesting, should it not? Well, then, suppose that any man—that is, any man except the son—knew of this will and first stole the document and then murdered old Mr. Mora to make it operative. Now, after this affair blows over and young Mora is in possession of the property, including nine millions bequeathed elsewhere, could not the possessor of the will draw interest, as it were, upon the capital by presenting this important paper, say quarterly, in substantiation of his claim?"

"So that is Preacher Jim's theory, is it? Well, it is precisely the sort of thing that a crazy man would work out, but which no sane man would either formulate or carry into effect. But, considering it for a moment as among the possibilities, it is easily demolished. No theory is of value which is not substantiated by collateral circumstances. Now, there are no facts to fit the supposition of a murderer from without, while the chain of evidence which encircles the son is almost complete. But, since you have been discussing this case with Preacher Jim, perhaps you spoke to him about the plaid suit of clothes. What are his views in that direction?"

"There he agrees with you—that is to say, he believes that the murderer wore them going in, as well as coming out, and that young Mora's suggestion that they were taken from his room to cover the blood stained clothes of the intruder is untenable."

"Thus, you see, he advances contradictory theories which substantiate mine as to his insanity. At one moment he thinks an outsider came in and killed the old man to get the will and use it against the son, and in the next breath he argues that the murderer wore the plaid suit, in which case the son must be the guilty party. So, you see, Mr. Mitchel, I fear you wasted your evening—that is, if you went aboard that boat with any idea of probing this mystery."

"Which, of course, I did not," interrupted Mr. Mitchel.

"Well, anyway I have to report that I did not waste my day. What would you say, Mr. Mitchel, were I to tell you that I have found that plaid suit and that it is at present in my possession?"

"I should say that you are a very clever man unless"—

"Unless what?"

"Unless some one found the things and brought them to you. That was a possibility prophesied by Preacher Jim."

"Oh, indeed! But he probably meant the regular police. I do not have important clews and evidence thrust upon me in that manner. No; I discovered these things by the system which you deprecate—by spying."

"This is becoming interesting. Give me the details."

"I am to understand, then, that you will work with me on the case? You asked for 24 hours in which to consider the matter, but you have not given me your decision. You have spent the last half hour chaffing me."

"Oh, I meant no offense! Surely you have taken none. There's my hand. Yes, I will study out this problem with you, but I stipulate for perfect liberty to proceed as I please."

"Very good. Then I will relate what has happened since we parted. You speak sneeringly of spies and make a plea for the use of brains alone. But it is only in fiction that a detective listens to the story of a crime and finds the solution without visiting the locality in which it was committed or seeing the suspected parties. In practical experience the analytical work goes hand in hand with what you call the spy system. If suspicious circumstances point to a certain man, we watch his movements, and often we very soon discover that he is innocent or guilty, especially when we can spy upon him before he knows that he is suspected. With that knowledge, of course, the criminal uses more caution. To my mind, it was almost a certainty that young Mora killed his father. I argued that he was unaware of the fact that he had been observed by the watchman until he heard it on the following day. He had changed his clothing because of the blood spattered upon him, and to offset the watchman's testimony he denied his first visit to the house."

"I follow you. Proceed."

"Think a moment. If a man can make a change of clothing away from his own home in the middle of the night, reappearing in garments which are not new and which he is known to have worn before, the logical deduction is that he must have another residence in which he is sufficiently at home to keep a part of his wardrobe there."

"Yes; you are right. Go on."

"Having removed his blood stained garments and having replaced them with a fresh suit, he would hurry home to be the one to discover and report the crime, but when he then learns that he had been seen in a suit conspicuous because of its pattern he would naturally become anxious about

"He hurried to the river, where he tossed the bundle overboard."

that suit. Fearing that it might be found in that closet at his other house, where he had hurriedly left it, he would take the first opportunity to remove it. Since the murder young Mora had been held to await the result of the inquest. Yesterday he was released, the district attorney evidently considering that to be the wisest course until he can obtain better evidence to present to the grand jury. Yesterday, therefore, the man had his first opportunity to go after the clothes. Therefore I watched him. I knew that he would be cautious, and so I was compelled to use the double spy system. I ordered another man to follow him, which he did until, by doubling on his tracks, always in itself a suspicious circumstance, young Mora had succeeded in discovering that he was being followed, whereupon my man desisted. After that I had no difficulty in continuing the chase, for, having rid himself of a spy, he was no longer suspicious. I may say, in passing, that just after this my man met you with Slippery Sam near Apollo hall, for we were in that neighborhood. Mora went straight to a house, which he entered, using a night key. Half an hour later he came out again with a bundle. This time he looked about for spies; but, seeing no one whom he mistrusted, he hurried by the nearest way to the river, where he tossed the bundle overboard. You see, it was no part of his intention to destroy the clothes. Indeed I have no doubt that he hopes that they will be found, whereupon he will claim that the assassin has thrown them into the river. But, unfortunately, such a claim will not be only useless, but it will now injure his cause, for I have some ideas about these garments which may prove puzzling to him."

"I would like to hear them."

"We will come to that better, I think, when we meet Mr. Mora face to face."

"And when will that be?"

"I have taken the liberty to write him a letter asking him to call here on business of vital importance."

"And do you think that he will come?"

"Yes. He is playing a bold game. It is time he were here now, because I asked him to be with us by 10, and it is now half past. Therefore let me conclude. After recovering the bundle, which of course I did very promptly, I returned to the house, and there I discovered a pretty little woman who calls herself Mrs. Morton. Moreover, I am convinced that Morton and Mora are one and the same."

"You mean to say that he is secretly married under an assumed name?"

"So it appears at a superficial glance. What we may learn when we probe deeper remains to be seen. Ah! There is your bell. It is he."

Within a few minutes the door opened to admit a young man faultlessly dressed in a suit of black. Young Mora was a beardless youth, with only the first suspicion of a mustache, but there was that in his manner which betokened a keen intellect and sharp wits. His eyes wandered from one to the other of the two men fearlessly and with a look which rather challenged them. His chin was large and his jaws firmly set, indicating great power of self control. Withal he was a manly fellow and rather handsome, with his well chiseled features and black hair parted evenly in the middle, but brushed so that it did not seem effeminate. Mr. Mitchel eyed him narrowly, and a new interest in the case sprang up within his mind. Could this be a murderer? If so, he fancied that it would be difficult to prove. He therefore awaited the interview between Mr. Barnes and the newcomer with anticipations of enjoyment. It was to be a battle of wits, which always allured him.

"You asked me to call here, I believe, Mr. Barnes," said Mora, himself beginning the conversation.

"I did," replied the detective. "Permit me to present you to Mr. Leroy Mitchel. And now, if you please, be seated."

The two men bowed, and Mr. Mitchel handed a chair, which Mora took.

"Mr. Mora," continued Mr. Barnes, "you may wonder why I have asked you to call here. I will therefore clear up that point at once. Since your release from the hands of the police I understand that you have offered $10,000 reward for the arrest and conviction of the man who murdered your father. Am I right?"

"Quite correct."

"In that case I mean to earn the reward."

"I shall be as pleased to pay it to you as to any other man."

"Ah, no doubt! But would you be pleased at all at the arrest and conviction of the criminal—the real criminal, I mean?"

Mr. Barnes spoke slowly, with significant emphasis upon some of his words, and both he and Mr. Mitchel observed the young man closely, but detected no sign of uneasiness. His reply was terse and pertinent.

"I should. It is the only absolute proof of my own innocence which will be convincing to the world."

"Always supposing, of course, that you are innocent," said Mr. Barnes mercilessly.

"My innocence is not a supposition. It is a fact," retorted Mora quickly, but without any show of temper.

Mr. Mitchel was delighted with him, though his perfect defense against the attack of the detective was only what he had been led to expect from what he had heard of him.

"So you have insisted," resumed Mr. Barnes. "Your innocence, then, being a fact, as you call it, you have no fear of any investigation that I may make?"

"I have no fear of any truths that you might unearth. I am only afraid of your blunders."

"Well, then, in order to avoid my blundering, would you be willing to reply to a few questions which, if truthfully answered, might prevent my slipping into error?"

"If you can convince me of your good faith, I would."

"And what do you mean by my good faith?"

"I will tell you frankly. If you are trying honestly to unravel the mystery of my father's death, I will assist you to the extent of my ability. If, however, you are merely piecing together evidence upon which you hope to prove my own guilt, why, I am not such an ass as to help you."

"No, of course not. Well, then, Mr. Morton, I can assure you of my good faith. I am honestly trying to find the real murderer. Will you answer my questions?"

Mr. Barnes called him Mr. Morton to note the effect of his words, and he was satisfied, for, though the detective did not act as though aware of having used a wrong name, but continued so that one might readily have thought it a chance slip of the tongue, Mora started perceptibly, bit his lip and strained every muscle in his body in his effort to preserve his self control. All of this Mr. Barnes saw, and he considered that his maneuver had succeeded.

Mr. Mitchel, closely observing both men, also comprehended the intent of the detective as well as its effect, but he decided that Mr. Barnes had made a grave error. It seemed more than probable that Morton was an alias of the man before them, and so much had been proved by taking him by surprise. But at the same time he was now on his guard and could better prepare his defense, especially as Mr. Barnes could not play his trump cards at once. The situation, therefore, to Mr. Mitchel was increasing in interest.

"I will answer whatever you choose to ask," presently came Mora's reply.

"You have suggested, Mr. Mora, that the murderer of your father took your plaid suit of clothes and wore them over his own when leaving the house. Do you still adhere to that theory?"

"I never said that I believed it," was the answer.

"You did not claim to believe it?" exclaimed the detective, thoroughly astonished.

"No," said Mora coolly. "Let me explain. I think it was you who advanced a theory that because a man in a plaid suit was seen at our house it stood proved that I was there. To parry your attack I suggested a theory equally tenable, which agreed with my claim of innocence as well as your theory sustained your charge of guilt. But you cannot find it in the records that I said that I believed my own proposition. It was the first that occurred to me, and I utilized it. I could think of others equally good, perhaps better, for that one had a flaw in it which I was surprised to see passed unnoticed."

"Perhaps you would not mind telling me the flaw in your own proposition," said Mr. Barnes, with a slight sneer.

"With pleasure," answered Mora,