

The Cases of Alice Clement

True Stories of the World's Greatest Woman Sleuth as Told by Herself to Courtney Riley Cooper

The Clue on the Keys

(Copyright by W. G. Chapman.)

I suppose," I had begun, "chance often plays a big part in the catching of criminals."

Miss Clement and I were chatting between acts at one of the theaters. She allowed her eyes to narrow a bit.

"Chance has a great deal to do with it, in a way," she answered. "There is many a time when chance will give you the lead to a criminal, but it takes the detective instinct to work the case up to where the man or woman may be caught. And it is not everyone who can take advantage of the chance that will take advantage of the chance when it is offered. That is why there are so few really great detectives. Not every person can see the opportunity in a small chance. And then again," she added, "there are those who can."

"Including yourself," I supplemented.

"Well," she laughed, "I had no business in the case, and to tell the truth, I've never been credited with it over at headquarters. What's more, I don't care to be. When I know I've done my best, what's the difference? But here's the story."

"It was about four years ago, just before I went on the force as a regular detective. I had been taking a few assignments from the office, and on this particular night I was looking for an army deserter. I had the information that he was going to meet a girl in a parlor of one of the small hotels, and so I made up my mind that I would be waiting about the same time."

"Well, I went and waited. No one came. I wandered around the room for a while and finally sat down at the piano. I had just started to play when something on one of the keys caused me to stop. I looked closer. It was a tiny spot of blood. But that had no connection with my deserter, nor was there anything else to cause any excitement. So I went on with my playing, waited an hour or so for my deserter to show up, and then gave up the quest until I could get some new information. I was just leaving the hotel when I met one of the men from the central office."

"What are you doing over here?" he asked. "Working on the killing, too?"

"What killing?" I asked. It was news to me.

"Woman found dead up in her room here about 6 o'clock tonight. Skull fractured by a blow. Some chancy singer or something like that, but we haven't been able to find out her name yet. Don't you know anything about it?"

"No," I answered, "but I think I'm going to find out something mighty soon. I've got a little tip that may help you. What did you say her business was, cafe singer?"

"Yes, one of these chancy girls that work around the country singing in chop suey cafes. What do you know?"

"I laughed at him. 'I may know a whole lot,' I answered, 'and then I may not know anything. How long had the girl been dead?'"

"About two hours when she was found."

"That would make the killing about 4 o'clock. All right. Let's see some of the house managers."

"The central office man followed me rather blankly when I went to seek the house managers. I did not tell him what I had seen. I asked that all the bellboys who had been on duty that afternoon be summoned. When they arrived, I began to ask questions."

"Was the piano in the upper parlor played this afternoon?" I asked.

"One by one the bellboys thought it over. At last one answered in the affirmative."

"What time was it?" I questioned.

"About four o'clock."

"Did you see who was playing?"

"No."

"Can you remember what it was that was being played?"

"For a good many moments the boy struggled with his memory. Then his lips puckered."

"Can't name it," he said, "but I think I can whistle it."

"Go ahead."

He whistled a few bars then stopped.

"That's all I know."

"That's enough," I turned to go. "I guess I've got about all that's gettable. Now you think so?" I looked at the central office man.

"I can't see that you've got anything," he said. "I can't see where piano playing's going to help us out any. Now stop that smiling and tell me what you've got up your sleeve."

"I was smiling, too, because I had made up my mind to act mysterious with him. But at that, I had figured out a few facts in my mind."

"I'll make a little bet," I said, "that the room wasn't robbed."

"You're right there, but how?"

"I bet also that a man did the work."

"Why, he had to. A woman couldn't have struck the blow that he did."

"And I'll bet that he stayed in this hotel fully ten minutes after he had killed the girl. But we'll have to prove that later on. When you get him, you'll probably find him of a nervous, hysterical, emotional temperament. Want to make a few bets?"

"My Central Office man was staring at me with bulging eyes."

"Say, he asked, 'what are you trying to do, kid me?'"

"Not a bit of it. I'm just figuring out a few things."

"But you're not wise to all this."

"I just said that I was figuring out a few things. A woman can some-

times do that, Jim. I'll tell you, for your own information, that the music the bellboy whistled was Quand L'Amour est Mort."

"Whatever that is."

"It's French for 'When Love Is Dead.' Now are you beginning to see?"

"Plain as mud."

"I allowed myself to grow serious then. I knew that I was working on a mighty slim amount of evidence. That bloodstain might have come on the keys in a hundred different ways—and yet, there was that peculiar coincidence that the room was not robbed, making the motive for killing something besides greed; there was the fact that no doubt the killing was done by a man, and if it was done by him, the motive must have been vengeance of some kind, or jealousy."

And so, in spite of my misgivings, I felt rather certain in my own heart that the man who had played the piano was the same one who had killed the girl. But with that, I had not progressed so very far, and I knew it. So I turned to the detective.

"Jim," I said, "I've got a little hunch on this thing. It may be right, and then again it may all be wrong. I'm going out to look up a little angle. You go ahead and see what you can find out and then we'll get together again, later on."

"It was still early, too early for the work that I wanted to do, and so I started to my house to attend to an important duty of the night, the tucking away in bed of my little kiddie, and giving her the good-night kiss. That's one thing I never can forget, my home life and the little kiddie there. It keeps me from risking many things that I might risk—and the keeping away from those risks has saved me more times than one. It's not best to be too foolhardy in this business."

"And so I went out home, stayed there and sang the little girl to sleep and then I hurried downtown again. It was far after ten by this time and my work was about to begin."

"I had changed my dress. I had rouged my cheeks and blackened my eyebrows. My lips bore a coating of carmine. I was a burlesque queen, in from a long run of 'tank towns' and taking a first good look at a big city after many months of absence. And, of course, I was traveling as fast as was possible."

"The loop district was my first stop. Cafe after cafe I entered, to linger a while, watch the crowds and listen to the music, and then take my cab again for another place. Gradually the loop district was worked. I started south, down toward the line of cafes which fringed Michigan avenue and lower State street. A moment or two I spent in each place, but finally there came one at which I lingered."

"The piano player was of a different type from the ordinary men who worked in the orchestras. There was something about his eyes that bespoke a veritable craze for music. Tall, slender, yet strong, his body swayed with the rhythm of the melody he played, his head shook with the thumping of the keys, while his whole soul seemed entwined in the music he was pounding forth. Something within my brain snapped. I suddenly became nervous as I watched him. I felt that I was shaking with a sensation I could not fathom. There was something about that man which made me desire to seize him, to drag him from that piano and force him to a police station. I guess there's a lot of intuition in me, I don't know. Just the same, I felt that the cabman outside would not have to carry me any farther; if my theory was any good at all, here was the person to try working it out on."

"Waiter," I called, and handed him a slip of paper, "take this to the pianist, please."

"The waiter obeyed. I watched the man at the instrument as he turned quickly and received the message from the negro. He gazed at the words I had written and started slightly. Then he raised his head, looked in my direction and smiled. I could see his lips move. It seemed that he said 'certainly.' On the paper I had written 'Please play "Quand L'Amour est Mort."'"

"He hesitated a moment as he turned to the piano again, and it seemed that there swept over him a feeling of revulsion. Then, almost by force, the hands were placed on the keys and the music began. For a moment it seemed ragged and untimely. Then, as the swing broke its way into his heart, everything changed. Pealing, almost thundering forth at times, plaintive, appealing, the notes trickling out like tiny brooks at other moments, he brought from that tinny piano a harmony that was almost divine. The loud chatter and brazen laughter of the cafe ceased. Men and women turned in their chairs to listen and to watch the better. Half drunken men leered silently; others who had gone farther into the cups that sometimes cheer and sometimes breed melancholy, began to weep on each other's shoulders and to apologize for all past misdeeds, real and fancied. Bar after bar, on went the music. Stronger, then weaker, rising and falling, the piece was played. It seemed that the pianist had lost every bit of knowledge of the world around him. He was now buried within himself, in a sphere apart. I looked at his face. It was lined and furrowed. The eyes had in them the appearance of intense suffering. I believed that I saw a tear drop to the keys. Silently, I rose from my table and left the cafe."

"It was nearly midnight when I found my man from the Central office."

"He had learned nothing new. Clues there were, of course, but those already investigated had turned forth nothing. He told his story and then looked questionably at me."

"What do you know?" he asked.

"I know our man, Jim. I feel sure of it," I answered; "but he's a queer one, just as I said. And I think there's only one way to make him own up. You can't start his passions much otherwise. I'm afraid that we're going to have to act a bit theatrically. That room up there where the girl was found dead has not been changed much, has it?"

"The body has been taken away."

"I know that, but otherwise?"

"No. Why?"

"See if the room next to it is vacant. And find out if there is a connecting door."

"I know that already." The detective grinned. "And you can bet that all the rooms around it are vacant. What do you want?"

"I want a piano moved into the room where the murder occurred, and I want some one who will be brave enough to stay in there and play it. Can you get him?"

"His eyes bulged again."

"What are you trying to—"

"He looked at me blankly a moment, then moved away. In ten minutes he was back."

"I've got it all fixed. Now, what do we do?"

"Make the arrest. Come on."

"On the way I explained things, and in an hour we had our musician in the room adjoining the one in which the murder had been committed. We had taken him into the hotel in a manner that left him in the dark as to exactly where he was going. It was plain that he did not recognize the surroundings. The door to the girl's room was closed. Jim began on him."

"Now, my friend, what's your name?"

"Thomas Withers."

"That, of course," explained Miss Clement, "wasn't his name. One thing I do not like to do is to tell the real name of a man whose case has been through my hands. Of course, he can't be hurt, but there are others who have remained behind whom it can injure, and so—she studied the face of a woman in a nearby box and went on—"well, I just don't like to do it."

"Jim continued:

"They say at the cafe that you

"You've killed her, that's all," answered Jim.

"Withers started in his chair. His eyes grew a bit furious, then calmed."

"You are mistaken," he said slowly.

"I motioned to Jim and he reached gently down by the side of his chair, pulled a cord that had been laid along the floor and into the next room. Then he turned, allowed the sowl to fade from his face, and sat smiling at the prisoner."

"For a moment there was silence, and then, from a distance, there began to drift the tones of a plaintive melody. Slowly it began, and softly. Gradually the tones grew in strength and seemed to float into the silent room from a hundred sources at once. I saw Withers look up. I saw him gaze about him in astonishment. Then his head dropped."

"Gradually, ever and ever more intense, the music grew. Withers edged forward a bit in his chair and folded his arms. I could see that his head waved a trifle with the action of the music. His face grew saddened."

"Quand L'Amour est Mort," he mused.

"An echo," said Jim, "of the same piece you played in the parlor of the hotel this afternoon."

"Withers turned sharply."

"I don't," he began.

"Oh, yes you do," Jim returned, and the smile still rested on his face. Then again he lapsed into silence, while he and I watched the man before us."

"The music was growing more passionate, more pleading, even more melancholy. Once it was played through, then again, Withers rocked in his seat. I could see that the tears were beginning to start from his eyes. I could see too that there was a music maniac, that his whole being, just as I had judged, was ruled by music, and by one bit in particular. At last he rose and began to pace about the room. He patted his hands nervously. His shoulders rocked."

"Who's playing that?" he asked, as he stopped nervously for a second.

"The girl you killed, probably," answered Jim with a smile.

"A toss of the head, an angry glint

came to this city from Pittsburgh. Is that true?"

"Yes, but I don't see why you are questioning me, or why you have brought me here. If you've got any charge to make against me, why don't you take me to a police station. I—"

"That'll be about enough of that," Jim interrupted. "You'll see the inside of a station soon enough. Now, where's that girl that came here with you?"

"Withers whirled. Then his face set."

"There wasn't any girl," he snapped.

"Wasn't there? Are you sure about that? You came here with her, then you told her that you didn't care for her any more and that she could go. Isn't that the truth?"

"Withers did not answer."

"You told her that you were fond of another and that she could get out of the way. Answer me!"

"Still no response came from the man before us. Jim fidgeted in his chair."

"You're going to talk before I get through with you," he threatened, and you might as well make up your mind to that right now. What was that girl's name?"

"There wasn't any girl."

"You've said that before. Now I want something different. What was that girl's name?"

"There—"

"Don't start that again. You know there was a girl and that you quit loving her and that she balked on the game. She knew something on you, game. She knew something to shift didn't she? Withers seemed to shift in his chair a bit. She was going to tell the other woman about it. Isn't that the truth? Isn't it?"

"Withers looked at Jim with dull eyes. His hands clasped and unclasped nervously. He ran his tongue about on his dry lips. He raised his head as if he were choking. But he gave forth no sound. Jim's face grew red."

"You're going to tell me the truth," he bellowed. "And you're going to do it right now. Now, you answer my questions!"

"Withers again looked at the detective and then looked at me."

"What do you want to know?" he asked at last, rather sullenly. "Ask

me something I can tell you about and I'll talk to you. I don't know anything about this business you're going so wild about. There isn't any girl, and suppose there was, what of it?"

"You've killed her, that's all," answered Jim.

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MINE ROMANCES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

SEEKING for treasure.

The words are as a magnet in the power they have over the minds of men. Let an explorer come home to tell of gold mines, of gems, and of pearls to be found in some region of utter desolation, amid peril, discomfort and solitude, and the great and small, gentle and simple rush in thousands overseas in pursuit of the golden spoil. Perhaps nowhere has the romance of seeking treasure been kept so actively alive as in the northern gold-producing regions of North America.

Even stranger than fiction is the tale told by Charles McLeod, an Edmonton prospector, who, while leading a party of gold-seekers through the wastes of the northwest section of British Columbia, stumbled over the bones of his two brothers and hit upon a location of auriferous quartz now bringing him in a colossal fortune.

One night in 1908, while "making camp" with his fellow-prospectors, McLeod found traces of an old campfire in the forest nearby, and in idle curiosity began to scrape among the ashes and bids of charred wood, presently to find on the trunk of a pine near at hand an inscription consisting of the date, "May, 1905," and the initials of his two brothers, who had been missing for several years. Later on, the discovery was made of two skeletons under a tree a little distance off the trail, and not far from the tree McLeod picked up a watch, which he at once recognized as having belonged to his brother Frank.

On the trees in the vicinity being closely examined a "blazed" trunk was found with much carving, but very few of the words were readable. Near the foot of the tree McLeod managed to make out sufficient to lead him to believe that a complete deciphering would probably mean his fortune.

The words that had remained decipherable referred to the locating of a gold "shaft," but the murderers,

ON AN ISLE OF BIRDS

Commodore Salisbury Tells of an Expedition to Laysan.

Retired Naval Officer With Party of Scientists Spent Eighty Days Gathering Data on a Mid-Pacific Island.

Kansas City, Mo.—Straight from the exploration of an uninhabited isle in the Pacific ocean, Commodore George R. Salisbury of the United States navy, retired, has arrived at the home of his brother, Mark Salisbury, two and one-half miles northeast of Independence. The contrast is great between life in this old mansion hidden among gigantic pines in a quiet Jackson county farm and life on the island of Laysan, where no man lives, and where myriads of water fowl darken the air or hide in the lowly sandy slopes, barely rising above the ocean level.

Commodore Salisbury was busy writing out a report of his voyage to the government, but not too busy to tell a representative of the Kansas City Star of some of the strange sights on the island.

He was in charge of an expedition sent out by the department of agriculture, which has charge of the bird reservation of United States territory. With him were three naturalists. The party left San Francisco December 5, 1912. In the United States revenue cutter Thetis, their destination was the island of Laysan, eight hundred miles northwest of Honolulu.

Laysan is peculiarly rich in bird life. Eighty days were spent there. They returned to Honolulu March 22, and a few days later took passage on the United States transport Sherman for San Francisco. They reached that city April 11. There specimens taken on the voyage were shipped to Washington. After a few days spent in the coast city, Commodore Salisbury started back to Independence, arriving there last Sunday.

A map of the island of Laysan made during their stay shows it to be of peculiar formation. It is about two and one-half miles long and one mile wide. In the center, occupying about one

hundred and sixty acres is a lagoon. This gives the island the appearance of an elongated doughnut. At no place does the island rise more than twenty-five feet above ocean level.

The place swarms with birds. "I learned more about birds on this trip than I had ever dreamed of before," Commodore Salisbury said yesterday afternoon. "We brought home with us 175 rare specimens. These will be mounted and placed in the government museums."

"We found two varieties that are found nowhere else. One is the Laysan rail. It is about the size of a quail and has small wings, but they do it little good, for it cannot fly. We started home with eighty living specimens of the rail, but the return trip was so cold that all except five died. The survivors were left at the Golden Gate park in San Francisco. The other bird peculiar to the island is the Laysan duck, a fowl smaller than the mallard duck, but resembling it in general appearance. Incidentally, we found a pair of mallard ducks that had come over from the mainland of California, thousands of miles away."

LAST RELICS OF THE MAINE

Six Thousand Pounds of Brass and Bronze Fittings Stripped From Vessel Cast in Tablets.

New York.—Six thousand pounds of relics from the U. S. S. Maine, which were taken from the battleship before she was towed out to sea from Havana and given her final resting place, have arrived at the John Williams bronze foundry, to be cast into a fitting and permanent memorial.

This disposition of the brass and bronze fittings of the battleship which for twelve years had lain beneath the sea is in accordance with an act of congress.

The parts of the wreck that were thought to be suitable for the purpose were first sent to Washington, where they were melted together, purified and cast into thirty-pound ingots. It is in this form that all that is left of the Maine has just arrived in New York.

One thousand tablets, designed by Charles Keck of this city, are being cast by the Williams foundry, and will be delivered upon request to patriotic societies all over the country. Two hundred applications have already been received at the office of the assistant secretary of the navy.

The tablets will have a natural bronze finish; they will weigh twelve and half pounds and measure 13 by 18 inches.

Nabs Burglars With Pencil.

New Haven, Conn.—Henry Wetland and Alexander Drummond were captured by R. L. Davidson of Dayton, Ohio, a Yale senior, at the point of a silver pencil, while they were ransacking his room in Vanderbilt hall on the Yale campus. They thought the pencil was a pistol. Wetland had a loaded revolver at the time.



Bird Island of Laysan.

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Why George, what a condition you are in! Where have you been?"

"It's all right. Been to say goo' bye to Charlie Scapple."

"Where's Charlie going?"

"Charlie's going to girdle th' globe."

"What?"

"Girdle th' globe."

"Say it slowly."

"Global th' gird."

"Once more."

"He's going round th' earth in eighty days! What's th' matter with you?"

"Ah, he's going to girdle the globe, is he? Well, you girdle your way to bed."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.



HE BURST FORTH INTO WILD SOBBING.

came to this city from Pittsburgh. Is that true?"

"Yes, but I don't see why you are questioning me, or why you have brought me here. If you've got any charge to make against me, why don't you take me to a police station. I—"

"That'll be about enough of that," Jim interrupted