

LOST MAN'S LANE.

A SECOND EPISODE IN THE LIFE OF AMELIA BUTTERWORTH.

BY ANNA KATHARINE GREEN.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

The Enigma of Numbers.

"When I told you that Mother Jane was out of the question in this matter, I meant out of the question for you, she was a subject to be handled by the police, and we have handled her. Yesterday afternoon I made a search of her cabin. Here Mr. Gryce paused and eyed me quizzically. He sometimes does eye me, which same I am not bound to take as a compliment, considering how fond he is of concentrating all his wisdom upon small and insignificant objects.

This was a worst job than the other, and he took me an hour to rip apart the block I settled upon as the suspicious one, but it all came to nothing also. There was no hidden treasure in the quilt. The searchers who were using the measurements 20 by 28, but no result followed these endeavors, and what do you think I did then?"



"I wonder," said he, "what you would have done in such a case as that. It was no common one, I assure you. There are not many hiding places between Mother Jane's four walls." I felt myself begin to tremble, with eagerness, of course.

"DON'T GIVE HER THE BIGGEST COIN."

"I wish I had been given the opportunity," said I, "that is, if anything was to be found there." He seemed to be in a sympathetic mood toward me, or perhaps—and this is the likelier supposition—had a minute of leisure and thought he could afford to give himself a little quiet amusement. However that is, he answered me by saying: "The opportunity is not lost. You have been in that cabin and have noted, I have no doubt, his extreme simplicity. Yet it contains, or rather did contain up till last night, distinct evidences of more than one of the crimes which have been perpetrated in this lane."

"Ah, ah!" I cried out, somewhat amazed. "And number 28?" "That was a carrot, and it held a really valuable ruby surrounded by diamonds. If you remember, I once spoke to you of this ring. It was the property of young Mr. Chittenden and was being hidden in this willage. He disappeared on his way to the railway station, having taken, as many can vouch for, the short detour by Lost Man's lane, which would lead him directly by Mother Jane's cottage."

that you look as well as you do, madam. Truly you are a wonderful woman—a very wonderful woman." "A very wonderful woman," I cried. "If you know as much as your words show of what went on in that ill-omened house last night, you ought to show some degree of sympathy for me, for if it was not silly Rufus who was laid away under the flower parlor who, then, was it? No one for whom tears could openly be shed or of whose death public acknowledgment would be made, or we would not be sitting here talking away at cross purposes the morning after his burial."

"Tears are not shed or public acknowledgment made for the subject of a half crazy man's love for scientific investigation. He was a dog who was buried, madam—a favorite dog who Mr. Knollys loved, but which for all that could not escape that half monstrous passion for vivisection."

"Well," I cried, "you heard that?" "Madam, I heard that, and I do not think it any more than probable that word into the ear of a detective, but you may differ with me."

"Not much," I said. "Hannah who led me into the upper hall and Hannah who signed the papers, was expected of me. However, when, after the box was lowered into the cellar, Hannah drawing me away, Lucetta stepped up and whispered in her ear: 'Don't give her the biggest coin. Give her the little one or she may mistake our reasons for secrecy. I wouldn't like you to be seen even for a moment if the matter would remain lodged in Mother Jane's mind.'"

"Well, well," I cried again, certainly puzzled by these stray expressions of the sisters were a most interesting dictory not only of the suspicions I entertained, but of the facts which had so suddenly come to my attention.