THE STURGIS WAGER

A DETECTIVE STORY.

By EDGAR MORETTE.

CHAPTER XV.—CONTINUED.

Unconsciously Agnes had clung to Sprague's hand. Now, as the sense of danger disappeared, she became aware of what she was doing; and, in sudden embarrassment, she withdrew her hand from his reassuring clasp.

The artist, recalling the object of his visit, at once became grave and formal.

"I am sorry to intrude upon you at this unconventional hour, Miss Murdock, but I found this letter in my studio to-day. It was evidently dropped by you yesterday; and, thinking it might be important, I—"

"A letter? What letter?" asked Agnes, puzzled.

Sprague held out the sealed envelope. The young girl tore it open and cast a hurried glance at its contents. Then suddenly understanding, she tore the paper to shreds and threw these angrily into the fire which burned brightly in the large open fireplace.

"Oh, that!" she exclaimed, contemptuously. And then after a pause:

"Do you mean to say you thought—"

She stopped short, seized by a sudden shyness.

"What else could I think?" said Sprague, softly.

He was watching the fragments of paper as they flared upon the hearth. The flame which consumed them seemed to shed a radiant glow upon his heart.

"Then," he added, presently, and still more softly, "if there is nothing between you and—and him—perhaps—perhaps I may hope—Miss Murdock—Agnes—"

His hand sought hers and found it.

But the reaction had come at last, and the brave girl who had been able to control herself in the presence of a threatening madman now gave way to a fit of hysterical weeping.

Sprague, not being a medical man, could hardly have known what remedies to employ in an emergency of this kind. All he did was to whisper soothing words in the young girl's ear and to kiss the tears from her eyes. But apparently that was enough. Evidently for a layman he must have possessed considerable medical intuition; for, after sobbing awhile upon his shoulder, Agnes quieted down gradually and remained contentedly nestling in his arms, while the artist, doubtless fearful of a relapse, continued, for perhaps an unnecessarily long time, to ply the treatment whose effect had produced upon his patient so marked, so rapid, and so satisfactory a result.

The attention of the medical profession is respectfully called to a treatment which, though empirical, may possibly possess specific virtues.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ROENTGEN RAYS.

"I tell you, Sturgis, it is a wonderful discovery. I don't know what applications may ultimately be made of it in other branches of science, but I am convinced that it is bound to cause a revolution in surgical diagnosis," said Dr. Thurston, enthusiastically.

"Yes," replied Sturgis, "I have no doubt that Roentgen's rays will be of great assistance to the surgeon in the examination of features and in the location of foreign bodies which cannot be reached by the probe."

"As a proof of that, I must show you a beautiful photograph which I have just made. After leaving you on New Year's morning, I found a patient asleep in my office. He had been waiting several hours. It was the usual case of a pistol in the hands of a fool friend, who did not know it was loaded; and of course with the usual result—a bullet wound in my patient."

Sturgis was listening in an absent-minded way while his friend spoke.

"The wound was not severe; no bones broken. The bullet had entered the palm of the left hand and had passed up into the forearm."

A sudden light came into the reporter's eyes; but he maintained his listless attitude.

"Well, sir, probe as I would, I was unable to locate that bullet. At last I concluded to try the Roentgen rays, and here is the result. It is as pretty a shadow photograph as I have yet seen."

So saying, Dr. Thurston handed the reporter a photograph, which the latter studied carefully in silence.

"Notice how clearly you can see the peculiar shape into which the bullet has been flattened," said the physician.

"Yes," replied Sturgis, "I was observing that. Have you a duplicate of this that you can spare?"

"Yes; keep that one if you wish."

"Thank you; I am very glad to have it. Did you succeed in extracting the bullet?"

"I have not tried yet. I had to develop the photograph first."

"Of course. When do you expect the red-haired young man to return?"

"He promised to come back yesterday, but he failed to do so," replied Dr. Thurston. Then, suddenly:

"But who said anything about his being young or red-haired?"

"Not you, certainly, old man," replied Sturgis, smiling. "Don't worry; you have not voluntarily betrayed any professional secret. But, for all that, your patient is wanted by the police. He was bound to fall into their hands before long. The only effect of this discovery will be to hasten the denouement. I had traced him to your house, and I knew how he was wounded; so that I recognized him as soon as you mentioned his case."

"Who is he?" asked Thurston. "I am sure I have seen him somewhere before, but I cannot remember where."

Whereupon the reporter related the story of Chatham's connection with the Knickerbocker bank case.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE QUARRY.

Half an hour later Sturgis was walking briskly down Broadway, with his usual air of absent-minded concentration. Presently he turned into a side street and at once slackened his pace. He now sauntered along like a lounger at a loss how to kill a long, idle day. The show window of a bric-a-brac shop arrested his attention. He stopped to examine its contents.

A little farther up the street was a liquor saloon, outside of which stood a group of boisterous young rowdies. An older man, evidently in his cups, was seated on an adjoining stoop, where, with maudlin gravity, he seemed to be communing with himself.

On the opposite side of the way stood a low, dilapidated brick house. A painted sign over the windows of the ground floor bore the name: "MANHATTAN CHEMICAL CO."

The drunken man rose unsteadily to his feet and approached Sturgis with outstretched hand.

"Say, Jimmy, get on ter his nibs strikin' de bloke fur a nickel ter git med'cine fur his sick mudder!" exclaimed one of the young ruffians.

The wretched-looking individual thus designated seemed hardly able to stand as he steadied himself against an iron railing; but the eyes he turned upon Sturgis were bright with intelligence and the words he spoke were uttered in a low, firm voice:

"He's been here—been here twice."

"Twice?" echoed Sturgis, surprised. "Where is he now?"

"I don't know—"

"You don't know?"

"No, sir; but I guess Conklin does. This is how it was: It was my watch yesterday afternoon, when Chatham came the first time. He went into the Manhattan company's place through the basement at a quarter after five. So I just settled myself out here and waited. Well, I waited and waited, but there wasn't any sign of Chatham, and when Flagler came along to relieve me at ten o'clock Chatham hadn't come out yet. Flagler he spotted the place until six this morning, and then Conklin took his turn again until two o'clock, when I came on for my watch. Just as Conklin was telling me how things stood, who should come down the street but Chatham himself, large as life."

"Down the street?" exclaimed Sturgis.

"Yes, sir. And up he goes, as if nothing had happened, and into the Manhattan Chemical company's place again."

"He had put up the back-door game on you," said the reporter.

"Yes, sir; just what I said to Conklin. So, quick as a wink, I sent him around the block to keep his eye peeled on the next street, and I waited here. And here I've been ever since. If Conklin isn't on the block above, it must be because Chatham has made tracks again, and he after him."

"I'll go and find out," said Sturgis. "Has anyone else called at the Manhattan Chemical company's office since you have been on watch?"

"No, sir; but a couple of hours ago an express wagon came along and delivered a long wooden box; might have been chemicals for the wholesale department, for it was lowered to the cellar by the hoist in the areaway. The blond young man receipted for the box."

"Very well, Shrady. Hang on a little while longer, and I shall have you relieved just as soon as I possibly can."

So saying, the reporter, who had been pretending to look through his pockets for a coin, ostentatiously slipped a nickel into the outstretched palm before him. The light seemed to die out of the sharp eyes of the detective, and it was the miserable drunkard who staggered back to his place on the stoop next to the station, unmindful of the gibes of the young rowdies congregated there.

Sturgis walked up to the next street, where he found a second detective on duty.

"Anything new, Conklin?" he asked.

"No, sir; he's been lying low; looks like he knew he was spotted this time."

"Good. Stay here until I can notify the police that we have run down the quarry. It will be necessary to obtain a search warrant for the Manhattan Chemical company's place. In the meantime, if Chatham should attempt to make tracks, hang on to him like his shadow and send back word here as soon as you can."

"All right, sir."

Sturgis, after leaving Conklin, walked along the street which the detective was watching and carefully inspected every house on the block. Almost all were huge office buildings; but here and there an old-fashioned brownstone front stood out conspicuously against the broad expanse of brick walls and iron columns. Half-way down the street one of these old houses stood well back from the street line behind a small garden. The reporter stood near this and read the numbers on the adjoining buildings.

"This is directly back of the Manhattan Chemical company's office," he mused. "I wonder who lives here. It looks like a respectable place enough. One could obtain a good view of the rear of the Manhattan Chemical company's office from the back windows. H'm—"

He stood thoughtfully considering what pretext he could use to gain admission to the house, when suddenly he became aware of the presence of a man who had approached with noiseless steps.

"Ah, is that you, Mr. Sturgis?" said the calm, sardonical voice of Dr. Murdock.

The reporter started inwardly, but gave no outward sign of surprise.

"Were you about to do me the honor of calling?" continued the chmeist.

"Yes," said Sturgis, deliberately; "I was about to seek an interview with you. Can you spare a few minutes?"

"Who is it that asks for the interview?" inquired Murdock, with quiet sarcasm. "Is it Mr. Sturgis, gentleman; Mr. Sturgis, reporter, or ——"

Sturgis met a cold gleam from Murdock's inscrutable eyes.

"Or Mr. Sturgis, the famous detective?" continued the chemist with an imperceptible sneer.

"I represent the Tempest," replied the reporter, quietly.

Murdock glanced carelessly up and down the street. There was no one in sight.

"Oh! very well," he said, taking out his latchkey and leading the way to the house; "come into my study and let me hear what I can do for the Tempest."

On entering the house Murdock motioned Sturgis to the door leading from the hall into the drawing-room.

"If you will step into the parlor for a few minutes, I shall be with you directly," said he.

Sturgis nodded acquiescence, and while Murdock walked toward his study, which was at the extreme rear of the hall, the reporter opened the drawing-room door. He did not open it very wide, however, neither did he enter; for although the room was rather dark, his quick eye caught a passing glimpse of a feminine head cozily nestled upon a distinctly masculine shoulder, the owner of which had his back turned to him. Bachelor cynic though he was, Sturgis had not the heart to interrupt so interesting a situation; and, as the couple were so absorbed that they had not noticed the intrusion upon their tete-a-tete, he discreetly retreated and softly closed the door.

By this time Murdock had passed into his study, so that Sturgis found himself alone in the hall. He was glad of a short respite during which he might collect his thoughts; for, having been taken by surprise, he had not had time to select a plausible topic for the interview which he had solicited from Murdock. Not knowing that the house was that of the chemist, his sole object had been to gain admittance, so that he might be able to observe the Manhattan Chemical company's offices from the rear, and if possible to ascertain how Chatham had managed to give the detectives the slip the first time he appeared to them.

Now that he was in the house the reporter was confronted with the necessity of explaining his presence there without betraying his true purpose. This would not have been a difficult matter had the inmates of the house been total strangers; but he felt that it would be by no means so easy to offer an explanation which would be satisfactory to a man of Murdock's keen perception. And Murdock was the last person to whom he would have confided the true reason of his visit; not only because the chemist, as his opponent in the wager concerning the Knickerbocker bank mystery, was interested in thwarting rather than in aiding his investigation, but chiefly because he felt a strong instinctive distrust of the man.

As these thoughts were passing through the reporter's mind, he slowly paced the long hall, back and forth, with his hands behind his back. In so doing, he passed a door which was slightly ajar and caught a glimpse of long rows of bookshelves loaded with beautifully bound editions. The place was evidently the library. It occurred to him that a library is a public room and that he would be more comfortable in there than in the hall.

He pushed open the door and looked in. The room was empty. He entered.

The library occupied a space between the parlor and the rear room into which Murdock had entered, and it was separated from each of these rooms by folding-doors over which hung heavy portieres.

Sturgis was a lover of books; his interest was at once aroused in the collection before him. It was admirably selected from the standpoint of a philosopher and a man of science. Every department of history, of philosophy and of science had its section in which the volumes were classified and arranged with intelligent care. But curiously enough, poetry and art were but meagerly represented.

One section specially attracted Sturgis' attention. It was devoted entirely to the history of crime in all its phases and in all ages. Criminal statistics, criminal jurisprudence and the psychology of crime, as well as the biographies of all the noted criminals of ancient and modern times, were completely represented. Almost the only works of fiction in the collection were in this section, and included every book imaginable concerning criminals and their deeds. Many rare and curious volumes were there—some of them so rare that they could be found in only a few of the great libraries of the world.

Here Sturgis was in his element. He had himself collected a valuable library on the subjects kindred to his profession; but here were books many of which none but a Croesus could ever hope to own. He was soon absorbed in an examination of some rare volumes which he had often longed to possess.

While thus engaged he became aware of the murmur of voices from the rear room. As the words spoken could not be distinguished, he paid no special attention to them; but, instinctively, he noted that one of the voices flowed in the calm, even tones so characteristic of Murdock's speech, while the other, whose timbre and modulations were unknown to him, betrayed the repressed excitement of the speaker.

It soon became evident that Murdock's interlocutor was fast losing control of himself; for he gradually pitched his voice in a higher key, until occasional words began to reach Sturgis' ears. The reporter was not the man to wantonly play the part of eavesdropper; therefore, although the isolated words which reached him brought no connected sense, he judged that it was time to move out of earshot of the conversation to which he was becoming an involuntary listener. Replacing upon its shelf the book which he had been examining, he started toward the hall door. As he did so, he heard the now thoroughly excited individual exclaim in loud tones:

"I don't care a damn for the money. I only went into the scheme because you promised she'd have me; and, by God, if I don't get her, I'll give the whole cursed thing away."

Sturgis, who had reached the hall door, pricked up his detective's ears at these words. But in another second he heard the knobs of the folding doors rattle, as though some one had placed his hands upon them.

Quick as thought he opened the door and glided out into the hallway. He had not time to pull the door quite to behind him when the folding doors opened and he heard Murdock say in his calm, frigid tones:

"Perhaps you have done that already with your dulcet voice."

Had Murdock seen him? The reporter asked himself the question. Probably not; for he heard the folding doors close once more.

[To Be Continued.]

PERSONAL AND IMPERSONAL.

Tawkiao is the name of a native king in New Zealand who edits a small eight-page paper, printed in English and the native tongue, and called the Pleiades of Seven Stars.

The late Lord Russell was fond of whist. At cards, however, as elsewhere, he was quick of temper, and the partner who satisfied him had to be a very good player indeed.

An organist who died in Sweden had held the position of choirmaster and organist in one church for 72 years without missing a service. He and his ancestors had played the organ in the same church for 200 years.

To Dr. George Robertson Sinclair, organist of Hereford cathedral, England, has been awarded the greatest musical prize, with the exception of the conductorship of the triennial festival, that Birmingham can bestow. He has been appointed conductor of the Festival Choral society, succeeding the late Dr. Swinnerton Heap.

The duchess of Cleveland, mother of Lord Rosebery, is one of the most remarkable octogenarians in English society. She can remember incidents of the queen's wedding, where she officiated as bridesmaid, and her memoirs, should they ever be published, ought to prove one of the most fascinating books concerning the social and political life of the Victorian era.

John Buetler, of Wapakoneta, O., has the original manuscripts of the code of Justinia, emperor of Rome, written in the fifth century; the original manuscripts of the annals of C. Cornelius Tacitus, written in Greek, from the ninth century; also other original manuscrits dating back centuries, which have descended from father to son since the sixteenth century.

The ingenuity of architects and builders is sometimes severely taxed to provide for the comfort of the dwellers in lofty apartment houses. In New York city plans have been filed for a gigantic building of this kind to stand on Fifth avenue, and to be connected with a well-known restaurant across the street by a tunnel, finely fitted up and lighted, whereby the occupants of the apartment house can go out to their meals in all kinds of weather without the necessity of putting on hats.

REASON OF HER LONG LIFE.

Queen Victoria's Longevity and Health Said to Be Mainly Due to Regularity.

An eminent physician of this city who has recently returned from London, where he had opportunities of learning much of Queen Victoria's habits of life, is of the opinion that not only her longevity, but also her wonderful exemption from the ills and aches to which humans are ordinarily subject, are due to the fact of the extraordinary regularity which is followed in the daily routine of her majesty's life, says the Chicago Record. Nothing makes a difference in this routine, for everything is arranged by rule and compass, in a fashion which no incidents whatsoever ever interfere with. The queen rises every morning at the same hour and retires at the same instant every night, her meals are served on the second, while her drives and airings are regulated with the same punctuality; indeed, the royal household of England far outdoes any great public business institution for scrupulous and perfect punctuality. This state of affairs has gone on, year in, year out, ever since the death of the late lamented prince consort, whose very irregularity and free and easy temperament frequently "got" a little on the queen's nerves and caused between the otherwise so united a couple a great many scenes which were the reverse of pleasant. So dear to Victoria is this abnormal punctuality that she has instilled it into all her children, and the prince of Wales' household, for instance, is almost as noted for its accurate appreciation of time as is that of his royal mother. The prince during his entire lifetime has never as yet been known to be five minutes late for any meal, either in his own house or in anyone else's. On one occasion a very popular and well-known English duchess, famous for her unpunctuality, gave the greatest offense at Marlborough house because she was a few minutes late for dinner. As she entered the drawing-room the prince pointedly glanced at a small clock which stood on the mantel shelf. The duchess' quick eye observed the action and she knew at once that a long time would elapse before she was ever again likely to receive an invitation to dine with her future king. With a somewhat constrained laugh she exclaimed: "Why, sir, it is not that hour." "No," replied the prince, "you are only four minutes late, but I like to have all my clocks five minutes fast, for it keeps unpunctual people up to the mark."

Strange Reptiles.

A western writer thinks one of the severest tests ever put upon his risibles was endured at a London dinner table. He was seated next a lovely, rosy-cheeked, gray-eyed English girl, who displayed a most absorbing and flattering interest in his native land. She appeared to have imbibed some extraordinary ideas about the perils to be encountered in the newly-settled regions of the United States, and tried not to look incredulous when she was assured that things were really not as bad as she imagined. "I'm sure it's pleasant to be told there are not rattle snakes in all the gardens," she said with a pretty smile, "but my cousin wrote not long ago that he had seen over 40 wigwams in one little village. Perhaps," she added, as her companion made no immediate reply, "the wigwams are not as venomous as rattlesnakes, are they?"—St. Louis Republic.

Hard to Account For.

Hicks—I have read that book all through, and I can't see that there is anything improper in it.

Wicks—Well, what made you think there was?

"Why, it has sold 300,000 copies."—Somerville Journal.

Old-Home Week.

So successful has "old home week" been in New Hampshire, and then Maine, that in all probability Connecticut, Rhode Island and Vermont will take up the movement next year —Philadelphia Press.

What Will Become of China?

None can foresee the outcome of the quarrel between foreign powers over the division of China. It is interesting to watch the going to pieces of this ancient but unprogressive race. Many people in America are also going to pieces because of dyspepsia, constipation, blood, liver and stomach diseases. We are living too fast, but strength, vigor and good health can be retained if we keep off and cure the above diseases with Hostetter's Stomach Bitters.

Probably Not.

Elsie—Yes, dear, my husband is a doctor, and a lovely fellow, but awfully absent-minded.

Ada—Indeed!

"Only fancy! During the marriage ceremony, when he gave me the ring, he felt my pulse and asked me to put out my tongue."

"Well, he won't do the latter again."—Spare Moments.

Gratitude.

Young Lady—Give me one yard of—why, haven't I see you before?

Dry Goods Clerk—Oh, Maud, can you have forgotten me? I saved your life at the seaside last summer.

Young Lady (warmly)—Why, of course you did! You may give me two yards of this ribbon, please.—Boston Journal.

Difficulties in the Way.

"I will make your name a hissing and a byword," savagely spoke the rejected lover.

"You may make it a byword," the proud beauty answered, with majestic contempt, "but your own good judgment will tell you that you can't do much hissing with such a name as Delia Miller."—Chicago Tribune.

One on the Clerk.

He thrust the sealed letter through the window and put down two cents.

"Well, what do you want?" asked the stamp clerk gruffly.

"An automobile, please," he replied, sweetly.—Philadelphia North American.

It is not until a man has occasion to put up a sign offering his farm for sale that he comes into an adequate sense of the importance of learning in youth just which way the printed letter S crooks.—Detroit Journal.

Bixby—"Your father must be a humorist." Mrs. Bixby—"What do you mean?" Bixby—"When I asked him for you, he said: 'Take her and be happy.'"—Town Topics.

One of the peculiarities of the obstinate man is his inclination to marvel at what he regards his own yielding nature.—Washington Post.

If we were half as anxious as we try to make people think we are we would accomplish twice as much as we do.—Ram's Horn.

No man proposes to remain single. When he proposes he expects to get married.—Philadelphia Record.

She says least who talks most.—Chicago Daily News.

All is not gold that glitters. Sometimes it is a diamond.—Chicago Daily News.

A. N. K.—G 1884