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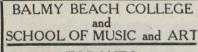
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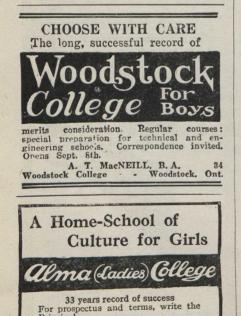
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For prosp Principal

St. Thomas

not disturb the boy?" She shook her head. "Oh, no! he would notice nothing of that sort. But there is improvement; I am certain of it—a sort of awakening. I am long-ing for Dr. Fraser to come again." Pridham beckoned to the inspector to enter, and they crossed the room to-gether. The inspector produced a long, narrow, flat tablet of rubber, one side of which he covered with printers' ink, which he squeezed from a col-

ink, which he squeezed from a col-lapsible tube on to it, afterwards roll-ing the ink quite smooth. Then, after carefully wiping Laurie's thumb and forefinger with a handkerchief on which he had sprinkled benzoline, he rolled them lightly on the tablet until they were covered with ink, and then repeated the rolling process on a fing-er-print form. The impression was taken and particularly clear.

and so shall I before quitting this neighbourhood. It will put an end,

once for all, to gossip, and doubtless it will prove that the last person who

had possession of the knife was not Mr. Laurence Pridham." His arguments prevailed and, with-out further protest, Mr. Pridham led

the way into the house and upstairs, to Laurie's room.

"Wait a minute here," he told Law-son, and went in alone. The nurse was sitting by the window, reading. She put down her book and came to-wards him. Neither of them spoke for some scenards but stead by the

wards him. Neither of them spoke for some seconds, but stood by the bedside, looking down at the thin, white face, chiselled by suffering into the appearance of a beautiful Grecian cameo. Laurie's eyes were closed, but he sighed occasionally, and some-times his fingers moved over the counterpane as if seeking for some-thing

thing. Mr. Pridham signed to the nurse to follow him towards the door, and she saw the tall man standing outside. "Another doctor?" she murmured;

and Mr. Pridham answered low, "He only wants to make a test; it would not disturb the boy?"

repeated the rolling process on a fing-er-print form. The impression was taken, and particularly clear. "That will do," «aid Lawson, as he laid Laurie's hand in the nurse's and directed her how to remove the ink. At this moment it seemed as if some strange telepathic message reached Laurie's brain, for he opened his eyes and looked at them fixedly. "Tubby!" he said quite loudly, "Tub-by, old man, I don't mean to give you away, whatever happens"—there was a pause, and Lawson moved quietly towards the door, then stood looking back, and listening.

back, and listening. Laurie spoke again. "Is it fair to the girl? You ought not to let her think—"" He broke off into a long Laurie spoke again. the girl? You ought not to let her think——" He broke off into a long sigh. "Too tired—but did he take the knife, or was it my——?" His eyes closed. He had relapsed into the land of dreams again. "You see he is beginning to think and speculate about things now—he is better," the nurse told Mr. Pridham earnestly, out in the corridor.

earnestly, out in the corridor. He made no reply, but with bowed head and slow step went after Lawson downstairs to the library below.

CHAPTER XIX.

When you say "nineteen to the dozen," you may imply that someone has been taken at a disadvantage— or perchance you may mean that someone has gone just a bit too fast and over-reached himself.

THE inspector had crossed the big bay window y

THE inspector had crossed to the big bay window when Mr. Pridham entered his library, and he was intent on examining the imprint of Laurie's fingers on the paper, and comparing it, by the aid of his magnifying glass, with the photographs he had brought to the house. He frowned and pushwith the photographs he had bodght to the house. He frowned and push-ed out his underlip as if what he saw was not altogether satisfactory, and contrary to his expectation.

was not altoget contrary to his expectation. Mr. Pridham sank down heavily in-to his customary seat by the bureau and moved the papers about im-patiently. At last he could bear the and moved the papers about im-patiently. At last he could bear the suspense no longer. "Well! what's the result? or is there none?"

Still Lawson remained silent, with eyes fixed upon the evidence beneath them.

At last his companion sprang up from his chair and went over to him, stretching out his hands to seize

those convincing bits of testimony Lawson jerked himself slight

Lawson jerked himself slightly aside, and by this manoeuvre still re-tained possession of the prizes. "Perhaps it would be as well, sir, if you did not see the result. We have to make very sure in these cases—it does not do to go by one or two to make very sure in these cases—it does not do to go by one or two similarities. I'll apprise you later on." Mr. Pridham felt he was being put off. Either the inspector did not trust him to handle the precious things, or else with professional jealousy he

else, with professional jealousy, he wanted to protect this special piece of information from the eyes of of

an outsider. "I wish to see it now," Mr. Prid-ham announced firmly, and the set of his jaw and the hard gleam of his eyes showed him very much in earnest.

earnest. "I don't know that I have exactly the right to show it to you." Lawson was trying to gain time, but the other man was not to be thwarted. "You undertook to let me know im-

"You undertook to let me know im-mediately what was the result, when I permitted you to go into my son's room. That was the primary induce-ment you offered, to relieve Mrs. Pridham's anxiety and my own. You won't dare to tell me, to my face, that you have been playing with me and making capital out of my trouble about my son, to gain your point! It's inhuman! It's devilish!" The inspector was manifestly at a

The inspector was manifestly at a lcss what to say or do. The unexpect-ed had happened, and for the moment he was nonplussed.

"Don't take it that way, sir. I beg of you not to think me capable of planning to carry my point by work-ing on your feelings as a father. That mould be inhuman indeed, under the ing on your feelings as a father. That would be inhuman, indeed, under the circumstances, and no mistake. When I asked your permission to let me take the impression of Mr. Laurence's hand, I never thought for a moment that this was in store for us-never, on my sacred word of honour."

THE man was genuinely concerned. He looked and spoke as if he were sorry.

"What are you driving at? I don't

"What are you driving at? I don't take your meaning." They confronted each other silently for a moment, then Lawson answered deliberately: "Can't you guess what I mean, Mr. Pridham?" Horatio Pridham's face had turned to a sickly, waxy tint. He breathed hard and eyed his companion with almost savage intensity. His voice was thick when he spoke again. "Show the damned things to me and have done with it." Then the inspector put the photo-graph in his hand, gave him the

graph in his hand, gave him the magnifying glass, and held the paper beneath it. He did not part with this latter paper beneath it. He did not part with this latter—it was too valuable an asset. Mr. Pridham stared from one object

to the other.

"You see, sir," said the inspector quietly, "what may seem to you absolutely conclusive in the similarity between the finger-marks on the knife absolutely conclusive in the similarity between the finger-marks on the knife and your son's impression on the paper, may be open to doubt. Here, for instance, is the same bifurcation with an upward line leading off— three lines away is an island, and beyond it an arch, just as in the photo; but we never go by one or two or several indications. We want twenty or more—the odds have to be thousands to one on before we take it as decisive. In any case it would not be considered evidence against your son if the finger-marks do tally. You see, the knife is in his own house—he has a right to touch it. If they were a stranger's finger-marks that would be very different, and would constitute a strong and im-portant clue. But in your son's case it is no clue at all."

The inspector was talking purpose-ly at some length to give Mr. Prid-ham time to recover himself.

A curious sound came from Mr. Pridham's throat; it might have been Mr. a groan or a smothered curse. Finally he threw the glass and photograph on to a chair beside him and walked away towards the fire place. There, with his back to the other man, he remained, with working face



Schools and Colleges

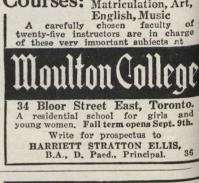
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