

of the darkness, and the haste with which he departed, as well as the huge cloak he wore on his person, she had not had any distinct view of his face, and therefore, although there was every probability that he was connected with the murder, there was no possibility of tracing or identifying him. Under these circumstances, after the detective talent of the country Justices had been exhausted, the public mind sank in despairing apathy, and it was on all hands agreed that the murder was one of those mysteries which only the day of final Judgment would reveal.

At that time I happened to be residing at the house of a relative, within a mile or so of the place where the murder was committed, and I naturally took much interest in the attempt to investigate the matter.

I had been for some years engaged in the study of the law, and a too close attention to that exacting pursuit had somewhat impaired a naturally good constitution. Rest and freedom from study being recommended as a means for restoring me to health, I had sought for a time the retirement of the country and after three months spent in rustic life, I found myself in first-rate condition to resume my former pursuits.

Among the books with which I had beguiled my hours of retirement was the works of Edgar Allan Poe, and I was especially interested in these efforts of mental analysis and close reasoning which abound in his fascinating tales. I was an enthusiast in those days as most young men are, and I longed for an opportunity of putting into practice the exercise of that detective faculty which Poe illustrates so well. This mysterious murder gave me the wished for opportunity sooner than I anticipated, and in a way I had not dreamt of and certainly did not desire.

During the short time I had been in the neighbourhood the deceased had shown me much attention, and I had been frequently at his house. Indeed, a similarity in taste made us in a short time intimate friends, and a kind of mutual confidence had sprang up between us which is not often found in persons whose term of acquaintance had been so short as ours. I had obtained some slight insight into his former life, and found that before his marriage there had been many rivals in the field to contest with him for the affections of the young lady who afterwards became his wife. One of those was his friend, who became, after his marriage, his bitter enemy, and left the country shortly afterwards, parting with him not without words of bitterness and wrathful menaces. He believed he had gone to sea, although no person knew his fate with certainty. The name of this man was Charles Walters, and he was described as being tall and good looking, with dark eyes and hair, and a pleasing speech and manner. Indeed many persons wondered that he had not been preferred to the plainer and less ostentatious James White.

As soon as the authorities had exhausted their ingenuity in attempting to discover the murderer, I determined to take the matter in hand myself, and see what I could do towards solving the mystery. I, however, resolved for the present to allow no one to share my confidence excepting the father of the deceased, without whose aid I should have been unable to make much progress.

Singularly enough, I had from the first a suspicion that Walters must be in some way connected with the murder; although, on reflection, I was forced to admit to my own mind that the possibility of his being able to come into a neighbourhood where he was so well known, commit a murder, and afterwards get away without discovery, was very remote.

Obviously the first thing to be done in making an investigation was to examine the scene of the murder minutely, for the purpose of seeing if the assassin had left anything behind him by which he could be traced.

An attentive examination proved conclusively to my mind that only one person had been engaged in the deed, otherwise the struggle would have been slight where the parties came with the intention of murder. The struggle had been violent, as the state of the lane testified, therefore I argued that there was only one assassin immediately engaged in the murder.

After a careful search I found imbedded in the earth, where it had been evidently trampled during the struggle, a small copper waistcoat button. This button was of very peculiar pattern, being marked by the device of a crescent pierced by a crosslet. It was clearly such a button as was very unlikely to be worn by any resident of the Parish, and as it had evidently been torn off in the struggle, I was safe in assuming that the assassin, whoever he might be, did not reside in the vicinity.

A further search of the lane added nothing to my discoveries, and I was forced to be content with the very slight materials at my command. I had at least to a certain extent established two points—that the murder was committed by one person, and that this person was a stranger.

In a case of murder, one of the most essential ingredients to be considered is the motive for its commission. No one but a madman takes away the life of a fellow-man without some strong reasons for doing so, either revenge or the desire of gain, or some such cause must supply the impulse to commit the deed. What motive had the murderer of White? As I proceeded with my enquiries I was perpetually asking myself this question. Robbery was clearly not the motive, and White was too peaceable a man to have made enemies bitter enough to take his life.

At this stage of the enquiry I found myself at fault, when the deceased's quarrel with Walters, and the subsequent departure of the latter occurred to my mind. I determined at once to