

"He, himself, said that he did not know there were strangers at the Lodge. Yet he killed a woman there, and he must have struck instantly as he entered the screen door to the back porch. Why, then, would he kill this strange woman?

"And the answer came to me after careful thought:—*He killed Mary Forrest without knowing that it was Mary Forrest!*

"That conclusion was inevitable, and once I had convinced myself of the fact the rest came more readily. I knew that Mart Farnam was deeply in love with Esther Devarney. I knew that she had rejected him in favour of George Averyt. I knew, from Farnam's own lips, that he truly suspected that their relations were not of the kind to have stood the glare of the spotlight. The belief was absurd, of course, and could have emanated from no mind but the warped one of Farnam. But I will do him the justice of saying that I believe he thought it.

"He did not know that the Lodge was occupied; certainly he did not know that there was a woman there. He had been at Nixon's drinking—and as he himself said, drinking heavily. His own words were: 'I licker whenever I git a good squar' chanest!'