

Wrapping myself up in my great-coat, we set out, and, after a brisk walk of ten minutes, reached the palatial residence of my companion. I was at once shown to the room of the murdered man, and then began making such an examination as only a detective knows how to make. Circumstances of the most trivial character, which would be overlooked by an ignorant person, are often seized upon by a skillful detective, and sometimes constitute the most damning evidence of guilt. In this case, however, everything had been done in the most skillful manner, and I could not succeed in making any discoveries.

I was about to leave the room in despair, when glancing towards the bed, I noticed what appeared to be a slight scratch on the neck of the murdered man, just upon the gaping wound which had so cruelly let out his life's blood. On examination, I found it to be nothing more than a hair, which had, in some manner, probably become loosened from the head of the assassin, and had settled on the neck of the victim, where it now lay, a silent, yet truthful, witness, pointing out the guilty wretch to the eye of justice. The hair was of a deep red color, which was totally unlike that of any of the household. It was, indeed, the same color and shade as that of Conrad Smithers.

I placed it carefully in my pocket-book, and, saying nothing to any one of my discovery, started for the residence of Smithers, intent on doing a little acting. I found him, as his attendant said, ill in bed, and on no account must he be disturbed. "This sickness is but a ruse," I thought, "to divert suspicion." Telling the woman that I wanted to see him but for a moment on the most urgent business, she finally reluctantly consented to my entrance. I found him lying upon a bed, apparently in great pain. In my youth I had studied medicine, and was consequently well informed on such matters, and I saw at once, with a quick glance, that he was only feigning sickness. He started up somewhat angrily as I entered, but I silenced him with a motion of my hand.

"Conrad Smithers, this is a desperate game you are playing, but it will avail you nothing."

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed, springing to his feet, his sickness all gone.

"I mean that the game is up, and the murderer of John Randolph is discovered."

Thrown completely off his guard, as I had anticipated, he sank into a chair, and burying his face in his hands, sobbed out:

"Lost! lost!"

"Do you confess the murder, then?"

"I do," he answered, "now that concealment is no longer of use."

I took him at once into custody, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing him change places with Edgar Morton, who was overjoyed at his release.

Conrad Smithers was tried for the murder, and knowing that any defense would be useless after his confession to me, pleaded guilty, and threw himself upon the mercy of the court, which sentenced him to imprisonment for life.

About a year after, I received an envelope containing an invitation to the wedding of Cecilo Randolph and Edgar Morton, who lived long and happy together, and never ceased thanking me that Edgar was saved by a hair.—*Keystone*