

morning, as he failed to appear at breakfast, a servant was dispatched to summon him. Knocking at the door, and receiving no answer, he finally opened it, and advanced into the room. What a sight did he behold! My poor father lay upon his bed, with his throat cut from ear to ear! Death must have come to him suddenly—so suddenly as to prevent any outcry—and the unknown assassin had no trouble in making his escape.”

“But,” I said, “I can’t see why any one should suspect Edgar of the murder.”

“That is the most mysterious part of the sad affair. This morning, when Edgar was told of the murder, he turned very pale, reeled, and would have fallen to the ground had not support have been given him. Some of the ignorant beholders of this scene thought his actions denoted guilt, and an officer was summoned, who at once insisted on searching his room. A razor, on which were several spots of blood, was found concealed under the carpet, together with an old suit of clothes belonging to Edgar, which were bespattered with blood. This was considered sufficient evidence to warrant his arrest, and he now lies in jail, charged with the awful crime of murder. Oh, Mr. Fergusson! if you can do anything to save him, and, at the same time, bring the guilty perpetrator of this deed to justice, I will amply reward you.”

“Do you know of any enemies of your father, or of Edgar, who would be likely to commit such a crime, either for robbery or revenge?” I asked.

“Oh, sir,” she replied, “it was not done for robbery, as everything in the room was as father left it the night before. His watch and pocket-book, the latter containing quite a sum of money, were found under his pillow, where he always placed them; so that the crime must have been committed to gratify a fiendish thirst for revenge.”

“Now, then, who of all your acquaintances could do such a thing?”

“I cannot possibly say. Father had not an enemy in the world, to my knowledge, or Edgar either, unless, perhaps, it might be Conrad Smithers, my father’s book-keeper and trusty clerk; but it would be impossible for him to do such a deed.”

“What reason have you for suspecting that he is not Edgar’s friend?”

“Only this: some time ago, Conrad, whom we have always regarded as one of the family, proposed for my hand, and I told him it was not mine to give. ‘I suspected as much,’ he muttered. And then, whilst his face grew dark as night, and his features assumed an appearance perfectly fearful, he continued: ‘But you shall never become the wife of Edgar Morton whilst I have life to prevent it.’ He then wheeled about, and abruptly left my presence. I was considerably alarmed, and thought of speaking to father about it; but during the afternoon, he returned, and begged my forgiveness for the words he had used, and made such professions of sorrow in regard to them, that I freely forgave him, and have since thought no more of the matter.”

“The fact is quite clear to me,” I said. “I know this fellow well, and the sort of company he keeps, and I should not be surprised to find that he committed the murder. Now, then, I want to see the body of your father, and the room in which the deed was done.”

“Well, sir,” she said, rising, and preparing to accompany me, “you will find everything as it was when first discovered. The officer concluded not to disturb anything until after the inquest, which takes place to-morrow forenoon.”