



saying, if he found a book on my table which had not been out; but I kept an ivory substitute for actual use, and preserved the agate and silver one for show. Bowman had to be satisfied with the ivory, while I submitted to his remarks about the absurdity of keeping a white elephant. If I said anything about ivory being more like white elephant than agate and silver, he solemnly failed to understand my reference and asked me to explain my meaning.

"That paper knife is like Bluebeard's key," said Sweepstone, "the crimson tints are indelible marks of blood. You cannot possibly wash them away, and therefore you are anxious to keep the proof of your guilt out of sight."

At that time I was classical master at the Millchester Grammar School. The school was situated in the middle of the town, near a river of filth. It was not surprising, there-

"Every man who has any self respect is a bit of a hypocrite," was Bowman's sententious reply.

Previous to my appointment at Millchester Grammar School I was for two years the private tutor of a young man whose education had been interfered with by ill-health. His name was Brayshaw, and he was nephew to Rumford Featherstone, a wealthy man, who died very suddenly, leaving his enormous fortune to a widowed sister, the mother of my pupil.

I had paid several visits to Rumford Hall with Brayshaw during his uncle's lifetime, and had often noticed the agate paper knife, with its massive silver handle. My pupil knew that I admired it, and promised me playfully that if ever it came into his possession he would transfer it to me. When he was at Oxford and I had settled at Millchester, I received



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fore, that I lived several miles away, at a place called Barnfield. Railway trains and omnibuses ran regularly between Barnfield and Millchester, so that, for all practical purposes, I was quite near enough to the scene of my labors, and I was glad to get away from the smoke and mud which prevailed in the town.

We had a bowling club at Barnfield, and it was in connection with bowls that I became acquainted with Bowman, Sweepstone, and other men who resided in the neighborhood. We called the club a bowling club because we had a bowling green and the name sounded like open-air exercise and innocent recreation, but I am afraid that other games were greater favorites with many of the members. "Give a dog a good name and he cannot have the hydrophobia," said Sweepstone, in reference to our institution, which was patronized by men who would never have entered it if billiards or cards had been mentioned in the official title.

a polite note from his mother begging my acceptance of the paper knife as a memento of her deceased brother. I thanked her for the handsome gift, and wrote to her son also, acknowledging the celerity with which he had taken time by the forelock and fulfilled his promise before the appointed time.

I never satisfied my Barnfield friends about the manner in which the paper knife came into my possession. One reason for this reticence on my part was that there were certain rumors in circulation, soon after Rumford Featherstone's death, which reflected unfavorably upon a young man called Woodrough, who had been his private secretary. Both Bowman and Sweepstone mentioned the subject in my hearing, and expressed their opinion that Woodrough had stolen the famous Featherstone diamond, which disappeared mysteriously at the time when Rumford Featherstone died.

I often smiled when I thought what a precious opportunity