

to my aid. I remembered of having heard my folks speak of the Littlefield poisoning case when I was a boy. It had been the talk in every household, and I had recalled the circumstance after all these years. Why had I not thought of that when my narrator had told his story. I know now and then rose the question: Might not Maurice Stockton be right? might not his story be true? The "Littlefield Case" was a fact, his story was closely connected. Perhaps he was not so badly "off" as I had thought, it *was* a fact, very likely his troubles had made him so. His manner was merely *strange*, after all; perhaps he had been insane, which would account for his connection with the asylum, but was nearly recovered.

I resolved to investigate.

The next day I left for the city wherein was the college in question. Arriving there, I sought police headquarters, where I obtained much information from official records. I visited also the old college, the young lady's boarding-place, and also Mr. Stockton's boarding-place. Then I left for the town where the trace had been lost.

Entering the train, I secured a seat on the left about midway of one of the cars. On the right a few seats ahead, were a couple who attracted my attention. Why? Well, we detectives do a great many things we cannot give reasons for, and many detectives can and will tell you that they owe their successes in many instances to unaccountable suggestions, whose foundations are unknown. So it was in this instance. Then it passed through my mind that with a "little making up" the feminine part of the combination might make a passable *Marian Littlefield*.

Intuition prompted me to devote my attention to them. How? I wanted to get nearer to hear what they said. Fortune favored me. The seat directly behind them was vacated at the next stopping place. I quickly ensconced myself therein. They had not looked around once since I had entered the car, and therefore would not regard me with suspicion.

They were talking to each other in low tones, but on "straining my ears," as the expression goes, I heard them mention the name of the next station, also "Hubbard" and "*Littlefield*."

Ah, now I thought I saw. My unaccountable suggestions were evolving. "Hubbard," it came to me, was the name of the proprietor of a private madhouse in the town to which I was going—our next stopping-place. And then the mention of the name, "*Littlefield*," A theory suggested itself in my mind.

"Then," thought I to myself, "I'll bet they are bound there but won't get out there; but I will instead go two stations farther down the road and then 'back-track,' for an 'up' train would come along at the right time to take them up."

"Why two stations instead of one?" the reader may ask. Well, I reasoned thus: A change at the first station would necessitate a wait, whereby more conspicuity would ensue; whereas if they changed at the next station, all they would have to do would be to change trains, thereby courtless less attention.

My experience with criminals has taught me that the average one is no fool, as far as smartness is concerned.

I alighted at the next station. Thirty minutes later the "up" train came in, and among the passengers who alighted were my quiriies.

"I shadowed" them; as I expected, they made their way to the madhouse, though somewhat circuitously. They entered; I boldly followed, entering by means of a picklock which I always carried when "on cases."

I overheard enough to convince me that Marian

Littlefield was incarcerated there, and that the precious pair were none other than a certain "criminal duet," well-known to the police authorities all over the country, and whose whereabouts were at that time unknown. Though they were "wanted," and I could officially and legally arrest them, I needed a warrant to search the madhouse. These institutions—the private ones—are always objects of suspicion to the authorities, but something tangible must be obtained against them before they can be interfered with. Hence, deciding I could get out and obtain the necessity and return before my game would leave, I ran the risk and went at once to headquarters. Returning with two officers, and armed with a search warrant, I rang the bell; the proprietor, Hubbard, answered in person. At the sight of the officers he turned pale. At the mention of Marian Littlefield's name he turned still paler, and denied that she was there.

His denial convicted him, for I had said nothing about her being there, having merely asked him if he knew such a person.

I produced the search warrant, and then the doctor "came down," as the boys express it.

We entered and, as I expected, found Jim Shin and wife. They were arrested. We kept on, and under the leadership of the "doctor" was led to a room in which was confined *Marian Littlefield*. Of the criminal part of my story little remains to be told. The guilty parties were punished according to law.

The *modus operandi* of the crime came out at the trial. It seems that "Jim Shin" was something of a hypnotist, and through this medium got possession of Marian. Jim's partner then "made up" as Marian and went to the latter's home. As Marian she induced Mr. Littlefield to cash all available property and withdraw his money from the bank. Just how this was accomplished was not told, but probably hypnotism had something to do with it.

No lives would have been sacrificed in the consummation of the scheme had not old man Littlefield discovered the deception and imparted his discovery to his wife. To silence them murder was committed.

Leaving Marian in proper care for the restoration of her health, I left for home, and in my pocket was the *missing part of the severed stamp*.

I had told Marian the story of my meeting with her lover, of my hunt for her, and at my request she let me have the *severed specimen*.

Arriving home I went to the asylum. Soon I was in conversation with Maurice Stockton, who was about to be pronounced cured and was to be liberated the next day. To him I told the story of my success. He produced the right half, I *produced the left, the severed parts matched*.

It was still a "severed specimen," but not sundered. They were together as one.

As those separated parts met, so did my friend Stockton and Miss Littlefield a few days later; as were the sundered parts united, as were two loyal, loving hearts.

His trouble gone, Maurice was his old self again, and not a vestige of his mental trouble remained. After the several years of travel following his college experience he had become demented and was committed by friends where he had happened to be. He had nearly recovered and had escaped when I met him on the train; yet unwittingly he had come back.

They were quietly married, and went south for Marian's health.

They now have a magnificent stamp collection, but not a specimen therein holds place with THE SEVERED SPECIMEN.