

The Corpus Delicti

another; it was a case of mistaken identity, a thing quite common. But the circumstances made it uncommon. The resemblance of the murderer to Mr. Byrne, the killing at the time and place and in accordance with the threat, the brutal and insensate rage which prompted the mutilation of the body, made the act either genuine or one of simulation. The statements as to the character of Mr. Byrne, as I had them, were not to be controverted; he was not a man of brutality, and since the murderer was not Mr. Byrne, why should it not be perpetrated by a man who much resembled him, upon Mr. Byrne's premises, and in accordance with Mr. Byrne's threat? This inquiry suggested the comedy, and, once conceived, the circumstances grouped to it; I had the key. The fact that the body was dragged to the boat was a rational effort to conceal the crime; but why conceal a crime so openly committed? Mr. Byrne might, in the heat of passion, fire the gun, but he would not do that. And yet it was to his interest to dispose of the body, and one prompted to enact such a scene would so reason. Hence, the boat was found floating down the bay with the anchor gone. If I had known of only the first proposition, I should have guessed the second. If the killing was a comedy, it was pre-arranged, and Mr. Byrne's movements were watched. The details clearly showed that the man who fired the gun, not being Mr. Byrne, must have come to the spot in the boat, properly attired and instructed as to