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January, '14

"Did you leave that there?" he asked. "I hung it across the back of

THE CANADIAN THRESHERMAN AND FARMER

the chair," answered Sedgwick. "North window closed?"

"Yes, as you see it now." "And west one open?"

"Nothing has been changed, I tell you, except this." Sedgwick's hand, outstretched toward the destroyed portrait, condensed itself involuntarily into a knotty fist.

"The lock of the door hasn't been tampered with," said Kent. 'As for this open window," he leaned out, looking around, "any man gaining access here must have used a ladder, which is unlikely in broad daylight."

"How about a pass-key for the door?"

"There's a simpler solution near at hand, I fancy. You didn't chance to notice that things have happened to the coat, as well as to the easel."

"Then the invader went through the coat and, not finding what he was looking for, smashed my picture," cried Sedgwick.

"Through the coat, certainly," agreed Kent, with his quiet smile. "Now hang it across the chair back just as it was, please.'

Sedgwick took the Norfolk jacket from him. "Why, there's a hole throught it !" he exclaimed.

"Exactly: the path of the invader."

"A bullet !"

"Right again. Instead of murdering, as you pine to do, you've been murdered. That the picwas destroyed is merely a bit of ill fortune. That you weren't inside the coat when the bullet went through it and cut the prop from your easel, is a bit of the other kind. Hang up the coat please."

Sedgwick obeyed.

'There," said Kent viewing the result from the window. "At a distance of, say, a quarter of a mile, that arrangement of coat and cap would look uncommonly like a man sitting in a chair before his work. At least, I should think so. And yonder thicket on the hillside," he added, looking out of the window again, "is just about that distance, and seems to be the only spot in sight giving a straight range. Suppose we run up there."

Sound as was his condition, Sedgwick was panting when he brought up at the spot, some yards behind his long-limbed leader. As the scientist had surmised, the arrangement of coat and cap in the studio presented, at that distance, an excellent simulacrum of the rear view of a man lounging in a chair. Bidding the artist stay outside the copse. Kent entered on hands and knees and made extended exploration. After a few moments the sound



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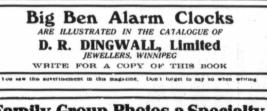
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