

Would You Convict on Circumstantial Evidence?

Florence Campbell was a professional nurse in the New York State Hospital for the insane on Ward's Island, New York City. At the time when her case came to the attention of the New York Police Department she was assistant to Mrs. Jestly, the matron. She had been at this hospital about three years, and she brought a record for twelve years of excellent work.

Miss Campbell went on her annual vacation last September, returning on October 3. One morning a week after she was talking with the pharmacist in the hospital dispensary, when an orderly brought her a package of mail. On top was a square parcel.

"Some one has been sending you some candy," said King.

"Oh, I guess not," said Miss Campbell. She opened the parcel nevertheless; found that it was indeed a box of candy bearing the mark of Boston Candy Stores, New York. She held out the box to King as if to offer him a piece.

"Why, there's something wrong with the stuff," he exclaimed. They examined it. The candy—gum drops, as it happened—was dusted over with a fine, white powder. Some of the pieces, too, were broken, as if to let the powder penetrate.

"It looks queer to me," said King. "You want to be careful with candy that comes through the mails. You had better let me analyze some of that powder before you eat it."

Miss Campbell laughed at his caution; but King was in earnest. She finally left the box, and the pharmacist proceeded with the analysis. He found that the white powder was arsenic.

When he made this discovery King became suddenly cautious. Evidently there was a crime; he wanted to keep himself out of it. He returned the box to Miss Campbell therefore, saying only that the candy looked suspicious and that she should certainly have an analysis made before she ate any of it. She handed it over to one of the resident physicians. He found arsenic; and as in duty bound he reported the fact to Dr. Maybon, the superintendent. Dr. Maybon, remembering certain anonymous letters that had been received in the summer by both Miss Campbell and himself, reported the case to the District Attorney's office. So, by the regular city routine, it came to the Central Detective Bureau; and Lieutenant Carey, an experienced man in poisoning cases, was assigned to the case.

"I went to Miss Campbell the first thing," said Carey, "and I put in a whole afternoon with her. She was a tall woman, in her thirties, nice spoken and sharp as a whip. I asked her who might be her enemies. She could think of no one who would want to kill her, but finally she did admit, after I had grilled her the whole afternoon, that Mrs. Jestly, the matron, and a Mrs. Thorpe, another nurse on the island, had not been exactly friendly to her. They had shown no particular animosity, she said, but Mrs. Thorpe had just stopped speaking to her. Dr. Maybon had told me about the anonymous letters. She had received five of them—three in typewriting and two in hand writing. But she hadn't thought much about it at the time and had destroyed them. I asked who her friends and associates were. She named four different women, living in Manhattan. Three of them don't matter. The one to keep your eye on is Mrs. Jessie Morrow, who lives at No. 118 West Eighty-

fourth street.

"All the time Miss Campbell seemed a little frightened. I got the impression that she was trying to shield some one, and made up my mind that we couldn't expect much help from her. In fact, she asked me once if I couldn't drop the case, seeing that no harm was done."

Having taken Miss Campbell's statement, Carey turned his attention to that important piece of evidence, the candy box. It bore the brand of the Boston Candy Stores, a firm having two branches, one in Fourteenth street, the other in Third avenue, near Twenty-third street, New York city. The wrapper was a plain piece of manila paper. The address, which was in handwriting, was scratched on a separate piece of notepaper and fastened on by the twelve two cent stamps which had carried the package through the United States mails.

Carey spent some time with this address. The hand was plainly disguised. From every one who might be suspected he took samples of handwriting. The result was puzzling. Any one of three different persons might have written that address. The handwriting experts, called into court in important cases, are always cocksure of angles and speeds; the practical detectives know that this kind of expert testimony is characteristically unreliable. The most careful inspection of the handwriting only limited the field of suspicion.

The candy was what is known in the trade as royal gum drops. They in itself had a bearing on the case, for that was Miss Campbell's favorite candy. Plainly the sender knew her habits. Carey visited the Boston Candy Stores and discovered that the royal gum drops were sold only at the Twenty-third street shop. Further the wrapping paper was one of the kind used in this branch. The package had been mailed in the Madison square station of the Post Office Department, only two blocks away. One part of the transaction, therefore, became plain as day. Either the sender lived near Twenty-third street and Sixth avenue or he had done his work in a great hurry.

The next thing that specially claimed Carey's attention was one of the anonymous letters received by Dr. Maybon—he had kept only this one—a scurrilous attack upon him and his methods. It was typewritten, and it was mailed on August 4 from Station W, Manhattan. The writer, evidently uneducated in the cautions of crime, had made three slips. In the first place, the paper had been an ordinary letter size sheet, carrying a letter head. The writer to avoid detection, had torn off the letterhead, but he had incautiously left the printed date-line. There it was, and in singular black face type:—New York, 190—.

He had forgotten, too, to tear off the part bearing the water mark, which read "Victor." Further, he had used a very old typewriter, slightly out of alignment and showing certain peculiarities in the worn letters. Most conspicuous of these was the capital "W" repeated several times in the Maybon letter. From this the upper left hand corner was torn away. Typewriter experts, called into consultation, said that it was the work of a very old, worn-out Remington.

But that letterhead—Carey started there one of those elaborate, fine tooth investigations of the thorough city detective. He found first the jobbers who handled the paper water marked "Victor." It is the product of the Victor Mills. These jobbers reported that they sold such paper to about three hundred printers in New York. There opened before the detective a chase of appalling magnitude—to see every one of those printers and to find who, using Victor paper for his letterhead orders, used also that peculiar black type. Carey had half a dozen plain clothes men on this tedious search, when the developments in another line caused him suddenly to drop it.

The anonymous letter, as I have said, was mailed from Station W, Manhattan. This is at Eighty-fourth street and Columbus avenue. One evening, going over the notes he had taken from Miss Campbell, Carey suddenly stumbled on the address. Mrs. Jessie Morrow, No. 118 West Eighty-fourth street, is only a half block from Station W. He saw Miss Campbell's name on the postcard or other and wedged in among a hundred important inquiries about Mrs. Morrow. She was a new arrival in New York. She had been in about a month. Carey had just received a report that she had been in New York for some time.

gentleman who came to that house sometimes.

"I suppose that she was at her typewriter most of the time," said Carey offhand.

"Yes," said the janitress, she was always typewriting."

"A good Smith Premier typewriter is a great help," said Carey.

"I don't know much about typewriters," said the janitress.

She could not remember just when Mrs. Morrow moved. The real estate agents who rented that house could tell. And, having satisfied myself that Mrs. Morrow owned a typewriter—although he had failed to establish that it was a Remington—Carey saw the agents. Mrs. Morrow had moved on August 8, four days after Station W, at the corner, had stamped that anonymous letter.

The agents furnished another fact, a great deal more pertinent. Some of the correspondence regarding the rent had been conducted by Wm. H. Hall, and Wm. H. Hall wrote on a sheet of note paper water marked "Victor" and the date line on his notehead was in the same identical type as the date line on the anonymous letter to Dr. Maybon. Only the size of the paper differed. The anonymous letter was on letter sized paper. Evidently it was the larger brother of the note-paper which Mr. Hall had used in his correspondence with the real estate agents.

The next day the Central Office detectives started on two new scents. While half of the men looked up the antecedents of Wm. H. Hall, Carey and two assistants went to Mamaroneck, to which town he learned from the Post Office, Mrs. Morrow had moved.

The Manhattan squad found that Hall was a rich and retired fur dealer who had started life in the hat business. For future use they patched together a pretty accurate story of his life.

Carey found that Mrs. Morrow was living in a cottage on the outskirts of Mamaroneck. After looking over the ground he sent one of his detectives to the real estate man who owned that cottage with a tentative offer to buy it. The agents were willing, and the detective was shown "through the house. There, in the front room, stood an old battered Remington typewriter. The detective tried to get rid of Mrs. Morrow for a few moments while he took samples of a capital W; but she stuck to him like the bark to a tree. Neither could he get sight of any Wm. H. Hall letterheads. He pretended to take measurements and asked Mrs. Morrow for a sheet of paper to note down his figures. She produced a plain piece of notepaper, and the policeman was baffled again.

Two days later, while Carey was still watching the house, and meditating new plans, Mrs. Morrow suddenly began making preparations to move. Carey found from the transfer company that she was going to the neighborhood of Peekskill, a haul so short that she intended to take her goods by wagon instead of by train. The detectives watched the case of that typewriter go into the van at Mamaroneck, watched it taken out at the new house in Peekskill. Two days afterwards, when she was getting settled, they saw Hall, with whose face they had got acquainted, walk up the front path, ring the doorbell and enter the house.

The psychological moment had come. Carey sprang his mine. Accompanied by MacConaughy, a detective, who can use a typewriter, he called on Mrs. Morrow and stated the whole case plainly to her.

"And the best thing you can do," said Carey, "is to let me look at all your letter paper and give me samples from that typewriter." Mrs. Morrow became a volcano of wrath, then an iceberg of angry reserve. The police might do as they pleased, she said; she knew nothing of any poisoned candy; they had no rights out-

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