

any communication with her since he came to Tubber. I sent it at once, as you intimated that you were likely to act to-day; but indirectly, through Mrs. Quinlan, who has just gone into the chapel. I shall not hand it to her myself, of course."

(Let me remark here, in passing, that my agent was an uncommonly close fellow, and that I shall not mention the capacity in which he presented, and continues to present, himself to the harmless public of Tubber. How surprised they would all be if they were to find out the combination of his industries! But it would never do to tell them. I may have some more inspection and detection to do there some day.)

"The enclosed" was an envelope which had been directed, sealed, then discarded for some reason, crumpled up and thrown away. It was dusty with the black dust of coals lying unburned in an untidy grate in the summer, and torn where the seal had been broken open, and split in the twists, which my agent had carefully smoothed out; but the address, consisting of three lines, was quite distinct.

I laid the scrap of paper on the table before me, and looked at it for a good half-hour, during which my mind worked at more than one problem without finding a solution. But at the end of that time I had determined on a line of action. I made the first step by withdrawing the green blind from my Judas window, and looking through it while I struck a hand-gong on the table. The three heads bent over the desks in the outer office were lifted simultaneously, and the clerk left his seat and came round to the door of my room. I did not unlock the door; I merely replied to his knock, while looking through the window:

"Have the goodness to send Mr. Duggan here at once."

I saw him receive the summons, and rise slowly from his desk in obedience to it. Then I drew the curtain, unlocked the door, and waited for him, with the wadded envelope, neatly folded, placed conveniently in my waistcoat-pocket.

#### IV.

He came in, looking more easy and unconcerned than I had thought possible. In the one minute during which he had walked through the outer and along the passage into the inner office he had rallied his courage wonderfully.

"You sent for me, sir," he began, in a steady voice, as if he really believed himself summoned on ordinary business.

"I sent for you, Mr. Duggan. You are aware that I have been engaged for several days in the investigation of an error in Mr. Quinlan's accounts."

"I am aware of that, sir; but I believe you found mine all right."

"It is now my unpleasant duty to inform you," I continued, passing over his observation, "that the cause of this error is a very serious one. The missing money has been stolen, and I am here to detect the thief."

"Indeed, sir," I saw that he squeezed the soles of his feet tightly against the ground, but there was no change in his color, no hurry in his breathing.

"I think I have detected the thief, Mr. Duggan."

"Indeed, sir."

He put out his hand and caught the back of a chair with it, but the movement was free from hurry or agitation.

"Yes, I think I have detected the thief. The sum is a considerable one; it amounts to one thousand pounds. It is all in notes, many of them of small amount, and but two for one hundred pounds each. Steps have been taken to stop them." (Was I mistaken, or did his nostrils expand and contract?) "They have, in fact, been traced—presently I will tell you to what place. But I wish to tell you now that there is no escape for the person who has committed the crime, though there may be considerable mitigation of its penalty if the money, or any considerable portion of it, be given up."

He stood quite still and silent.

"You say nothing, Mr. Duggan. Have you nothing to say?"

"No, sir. This does not concern me. I conclude the person whom it does concern will avail himself of the opportunity you mention."

"Do you mean Mr. Quinlan?" I said suddenly and fiercely.

"I mean Mr. Quinlan. My cash being right and his being wrong, he is the accountable person, I believe. But you know best, sir. This is no business of mine; and, if you please, I would rather not know any more about it."

"I daresay, Mr. Duggan. That is a perfectly natural wish on your part; but unfortunately it cannot be indulged." I rose, walked to the door, locked it (at which he perceptibly started), and advancing to him, put my hand upon his shoulder. He tried to shake it off, and turned deadly pale; but I held him, and looked straight into his face.

"You must hear more of this, just because you know all about it, just because you are the thief who stole the money, Mr. Duggan. Hush! you had better make no noise, for your own sake; you will only find yourself handed over so much the sooner to the policeman who awaits my signal."

"This is false, I say—all false!" he muttered in a hoarse voice, while I forced him down into the chair he had been holding by. "You cannot prove it. Quinlan had all the money after me, and it was all right."

"It was all right until you came back at night, came back without Mrs. Quinlan's know-

ledge, as you were in the habit of doing, to drink—or pretend to drink—with Quinlan in the manager's room—for she, with her woman's instinct, dreaded your company for her husband—and drugged his whisky punch, and then pretended to go away, but waited till he fell asleep, and opened the table drawer with the key upon his watch chain."

"You are mad, sir—you are mad! Let me go. I will not listen to your accusations. You have no proof of any of these fancies."

He was struggling and writhing from his waist up, but he did not move his limbs, and he still pressed his feet tightly against the floor.

"You can leave the room this moment, Mr. Duggan," I said, taking my hand from his shoulder, and making a movement as if I were about to unlock the door: "but you go straight to the custody of the police, who are quite prepared for the charge. If you are in any sense a wise man—which I can hardly believe, so senseless and certain of detection has been your crime—you will sit still and listen to me. I have not studied this case or studied you for nothing, Mr. Duggan; and I am almost as familiar with the details of what has occurred as the most absolute frankness on your part could make me. I see you are making up your mind to listen to me; that is well and wise."

He turned to the table, placed his elbow upon it, and sat with his head supported by his hand, his eyes downcast, listening. After I had spoken for a few moments I saw that the hand had been slipped down and was covering the mouth.

"You have had this robbery in contemplation for some time, and you have made arrangements for increasing the suspicion which must necessarily fall in the first instance on Quinlan with a far-sighted skill. You have fostered his weaknesses, and talked of them where his circumstances were known and where his need of money has been commented upon. You have exaggerated his expenses, doubled the price he has paid for one horse, and belied the sum he has received for another; you have commented on his anxieties and the weakness by which he has sought to drown them. You have misrepresented him as an habitual sot, and exhibited the contrast of your own temperance. Michael Quinlan does not stand as well with his fellow-townsmen as he did when you came to Tubber; then the rumor of an act of dishonesty on his part would have been received with an incredulous laugh. You bided your time, and you chose it well."

I put one finger in my waistcoat pocket, and kept it there.

"But you did not contemplate the robbery—I'll come to the doing of it presently—without prompting, and I you did not plan it without assistance, or at least advice. The motive, the prompter, and the adviser are identical. You wanted the money, because a woman whom you loved would not marry you and share your narrow fortunes, and she has suggested how you might better them and share the gains with her."

He started up and took a step towards me. His face was wild and frightful now.

"Who—who?" he stammered.

"Hush!" said I, his excitement gaining a little on me: "keep quiet; do not criminate yourself in words just yet—your deeds have sufficiently betrayed you."

I went on rapidly now.

"You were to do this deed, and when the guilt had been fixed upon Quinlan you were to make your escape and join your companion in the iniquitous plan. And you carried it out well. Day by day Quinlan was falling more and more into your power, and you were accustoming him to your coming, slipping in for an hour or so while he was away from his wife in the evenings, and to the sleep which fell upon him about that time, just after you left him. And when the time came, when all was ready, and the woman for whom you were doing all this gave you the signal, then you hid yourself in the house and poured the drug into the water which Quinlan carried into the manager's room to mix his whisky with. I have learned all the habits of the household, and know that the kitchen is empty at that evening hour, and a small kettle is left upon the hob, which Quinlan brings up-stairs himself. On the night when you stole the money, one of the children was ill; there was confusion in the house, and every one except Quinlan was in the upper part of the house all the evening. He left the door of the manager's room ajar when he went there as usual, and you slipped in after him. Your presence would not have surprised him had he been aware of it, but he was not—the drug had done its work. Then you did yours: the keys were replaced; you left the house by the ordinary door unseen; and Quinlan, when he awoke from his lethargic sleep, bolted and barred it as usual, without a suspicion that any one had been there."

"A fine tale, truly," he said scowlingly, "and fit for grown men! You cannot conjure away my liberty with such rubbish. I was not in the house that night, and how can you prove that I had any drugs?"

I opened one of the drawers of the writing-table, and took out a soiled handkerchief. At the sight of it he turned violently red. It was spotted in several places with brownish marks, and in one end of it was screwed up a small cork.

"This was found behind the scullery-door," I said; "it is your handkerchief; it is marked with your name, and it is spotted with laudanum. This is the cork which you pulled out

of the bottle whose contents Quinlan unconsciously drank. You have bought a good stock of laudanum lately, for you have been suffering from toothache, and you have accustomed Quinlan to the sight and taste of it. You did your work well, Mr. Duggan, and you might have done it successfully—you might have gone to Amerci, and joined your lady-love, while Quinlan lay in prison awaiting trial, if Quinlan had sent for any one but me in the emergency."

A look of genuine surprise, of true absence of comprehension of my meaning, had succeeded to the convicted scowl that settled on his features while I was telling the story of the crime—correct, I have no doubt, in every particular, but evolved purely from my analytic faculty and the collateral evidence of the handkerchief and the cork. This expression was so remarkable and so unmistakably genuine that it stopped me in what was perhaps an ungenerous exhibition of triumph—ungenerous even towards this wretched treacherous thief.

"Followed her! America! I have no notion what you are talking about!" he stammered.

"O yes, you have, Mr. Duggan," I said. "You know perfectly well that I refer to the person to whom you wrote the letter, and no doubt forwarded the money that did not go in this envelope."

With these words, I held out close before his eyes the crumpled cover directed by himself, which my agent had so dexterously conveyed to me. He looked at the paper; the words upon it were these: "Miss Kate Whelan, the Bull Hotel, Birmingham." I withdrew it, replaced it in my pocket, took my seat, and said quietly: "The game is quite up, Mr. Duggan. She has got off, you know. You may make better terms for yourself by acknowledging how much she has got off with."

He lifted his hand to his neckcloth, made an ineffectual effort to loosen it, and lurching heavily against the table, fainted before my eyes.

I drew aside the curtain and tapped at the Judas window. Quinlan looked up; I beckoned to him, and he came round at once to the door. I sent him for some water, with a hint to be cautious, and before he returned had contrived to lay Duggan, still senseless, down on a huge black sofa. As noiselessly as we could, we used such restoratives as were procurable, and at length he revived. When I saw consciousness in his face, I made a sign to Quinlan to stand at the back of his head, and I waited, quite motionless, beside him.

"Speak when you are able, but do not move," I said to him.

Some minutes, they seemed many, passed before he attempted to speak, but at length he said:

"Will you have sufficient mercy on me—you see how weak I am—to explain the meaning of what you have said about—about her?"

"You mean the person to whom you wrote—Kate Whelan?"

He made a gesture which meant that he did mean her.

Slowly, in the plainest words that I could use, I told him that the finding of the discarded envelope, and the discovery of the name upon it, and the name of the girl to whom he was known to have been attached, were identical, had completed the edifice of proof against him which I had been building since my watch began, by supplying the motive hitherto wanting for the crime, and indicating the direction in which search might reasonably be made for the stolen money. He listened to me with strained painful attention, and with a conquered manner. He seemed to have forgotten that he had been making any fight, attempting any defence. Quinlan stood behind him, the very image of distress and compassion. I went on to explain that I had at once reached the conclusion, which might have seemed only a very hazardous guess, in consequence of the coincidence which had occurred at Birmingham.

"I was staying at the Bull Hotel when your letter to Miss Whelan was asked for; the postmark had previously caught my attention; I saw it handed to the person who asked for it, and when the envelope reached my hands this morning, the manner of the robbery was as plain to me as the fact had been from the beginning."

"The person who asked for it?" he said, in the puzzled painful voice of one groping after a suspicion. "What was it not she herself? How asked for it?" He put this query with striking vehemence, and caught hold of my coat.

"It was not she who asked for the letter, though I saw her afterwards—I will tell you how—it was a man, a fast, slangy-looking man, who came to the inn in a fly with her, but he left her outside; the landlord gave him the letter."

"Describe him—describe him more fully—tell me all you can remember; she has never written—tell me!" he gasped, and struggling up into a sitting posture, he perceived Quinlan's presence. But it evidently had no effect upon him. A strange transformation had come over the scene; unawakened we felt ourselves in the presence of mystery of quite another kind than that which had been occupying us, of other and far-deeper passions. In the strange aspect of the guilty man, in his sudden pitiable physical weakness, in the terrible something which we clearly discerned beneath his distracted questions, Quinlan and I were for the moment completely absorbed. What was it that had thus changed the guilty man before us, had broken down all his defences and unmasked him? Was it fear for her, for the woman he loved, thus in-

volved in the detection and exposure which had come upon him? Hardly; for my first communication had revealed her escape with such share of the spoil as he had sent her. That he had sent it to her my recollection of the eager anxiety with which Kate Whelan's companion had inquired for the letter with the Tubber postmark did not permit me to doubt.

"Keep quiet, and I will tell you everything," I said; and then, seeing that he was making great efforts to control himself, I told him the story of my short stay in Birmingham, my recognition of the man and woman at the terminus at Liverpool, and the strong circumstantial evidence of their having sailed for New York on the following morning.

He listened—listened with an intensity most painful to witness—and during the latter portion of my narrative he covered his face with his hands and shivered. When I had quite concluded, he looked up, and said, in a very humble quiet voice, "Would you be so good as to describe her to me, sir? Some one might have found out that she was to get such a letter, and might have persuaded her—though there's hardly any hope of that," he spoke as if to himself. "But if you will describe her, I shall be sure."

I described her, the beautiful bold woman who had so impressed my memory by her beauty and her boldness. At each trait Duggan nodded his head with a quick involuntary movement; and when I had done, he said, "You have described her, and it is enough. She has gone away, she is safe." (There were no Atlantic cables in those days, and the game of sending out an officer to catch Miss Whelan with her portion of the spoil would not have been worth the candle to the bank.) "And she has betrayed me."

"Not so," said I; "accident, or rather justice, has betrayed you. The finding of this envelope was only an episode in the story of your detection."

"But what you saw at Birmingham is the fullness and completion of it."

He rose, and, standing upright, addressed us both, with a singularly forlorn voice and manner, as follows. I listened without any external sign of emotion, while Quinlan, who was made of more yielding stuff, had tears in his eyes.

"I confess my crime. I committed the robbery; and I did it in precisely the way in which you, sir, have described, though how you found it all out I do not know. I did it for her, for Kate Whelan, and I sent her five hundred pounds in large notes: one a Bank of England note for one hundred pounds, a second Bank of Ireland note for one hundred pounds, the rest of the money in twenties and tens, all of them Banks of England and Ireland, according to her express directions. She was to have left England for Jersey on the receipt of the money, and I was to have joined her there. There is no use in talking of my guilt or my misery, nothing can repay either: so I will say no other word about them. She has betrayed me; she has taken the proceeds of my crime, and I given them with herself to my rival. She will have my blood upon her head and the heads of her children. Gentlemen—he looked from me to Quinlan, who turned his head away and could not bear to look at him—"I give myself up to justice."

"What have you done with the rest of the money?" I asked him.

"I will place it in your hands without leaving this room, if Mr. Quinlan will take a message to Mrs. Bourke for me."

Mrs. Bourke was his landlady. I interrogated Michael by a glance, and he replied by a nod.

"Mr. Quinlan will take your message."

Duggan drew a letter from his breast-pocket, and wrote upon the back of it, in pencil:

"Please give to the bearer, Mr. Quinlan, the mahogany box which stands on the chest of drawers in my bedroom."

"J. DUGGAN."

He handed the memorandum to Quinlan, who left the room without a word. I locked the door, and silently stood by the window. On the other side of the way was the policeman in plain clothes whose attendance I had bespoken. So far, so good. I watched the playing out of this drama with curiosity and interest indeed, but without apprehension. The thief was self-avowed, and five hundred pounds of the money would, in every human probability, be recovered. Duggan sat still, crouched into a corner of the sofa, with his eyes closed and his chin upon his breast. The minutes passed slowly, but they did pass, and Michael Quinlan returned. Under his arm he carried a brass-bound mahogany box, which he handed to Duggan in silence. Duggan took a key from his waistcoat pocket, and opened the box. When the lid was lifted, a pair of large pistols, of the old-fashioned duelling order, disclosed themselves. As Duggan took one of them in his right hand, both Quinlan and I started involuntarily; Duggan smiled—such a wan wild smile.

"I am not going to do either of you harm, gentlemen. What good could that do me?"

Then, holding the pistol towards me, he said, "The stolen notes are in the barrel."

I took it eagerly; Quinlan and I bent over the weapon, and, turning up the barrel, found it was indeed plugged with a tight roll of paper, so artfully compressed and rammed into it that we could not extricate it with our fingers, and had to resort to the blade of a desk-knife. Quinlan was pushing aside some papers on the desk in search of the requisite implement, and I was