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three miles above Lutford Bridge. A bloodstained handkerchief, moreover, that was picked up in the housekeeper's room had been identified as Thurgood's, while a spoon and a memorandum book belonging to Mrs. Harding had been found in the kitchen of the alehouse.

"If evidence was worth anything, Thurgood was guilty, and it would have puzzled me to say why I thought him innocent. But I did. How came it then that circumstances were arrayed so strongly against him. Evidently there was a mystery somewhere.

"One thing that struck me during the proceedings at the Police Court was the look of horror which had overspread the features of a witness named Wilcox—a butcher in business at Northwood, the town three miles from the village. Wilcox was the man who had seen Thurgood on the river—the man who had picked up the blood-stained handkerchief at the Chase. His testimony told heavily against Thurgood, but the look I saw in Thurgood's face was not the consciousness of the man 'found out'; it was the consciousness of the man who had been trapped, and can see no escape.

"Wilcox, though one of my own witnessess, did not impress me very favorably. He gave his evidence with too much animus. This made me curious, and I kept an eye on him. Outside the court I saw him talking to a good looking buxom piece of goods, whose cherry-colored ribbons I remembered to have seen in the space reserved for the public.

"The woman was looking rather sober, while the man was talking rather earnestly. As I approached, however, they moved slowly away, the man throwing a backward glance at me over his shoulder. I knew that glance, I had seen it a good many times in the faces of a good many criminals. It was the glance of an uneasy conscience—and it puzzled me. Wilcox was a big man in Northwood, and I could imagine no circumstance that would connect him with the crime. Nevertheless, I determined to make a few inquiries about Mr. Wilcox, and the lady I had seen with him in Courthouse Lane.

"The woman was a Mrs. Waters, wife of a grocer and provision dealer in the town, between whom and Wilcox there existed a pretty close friendship. But I discovered also that Mrs. Waters was 'tar'ble put about' at the idea of anybody making inquiries about her—for I took care she should hear of it. Likewise I found that on two occasions since the remand, she had met Wilcox, apparently by arrangement, when he was driving, and he had picked her up.

"Wilcox himself was fast getting the face of a man with a secret to hide. I detected an anxiety to avoid me. That there was something between him and the woman—something which bore on the crime at the Chase. I was convinced. But what? I puzzled over it for days.

"I recalled Wilcox's hostility to

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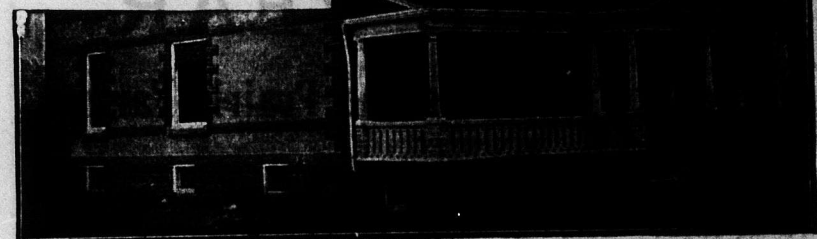
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