

back of the house, and beyond that a huge warehouse.

"Nothing there," said the policeman as I shut down the window.

"Nothing there," I replied, "and now I should like to inspect the apartment that was broken open."

This was a plain stained deal piece of furniture, fitted up with drawers and pigeon-holes, and with a sloping front secured with a lock; the marks of the instrument with which it had been forced open were very distinct, the wood being soft; some of these were sharp and square, others jagged and diagonal.

There being nothing more to be seen, I returned to my inn, where I made a careful memorandum of all I had observed, and was obliged to confess to myself that it was not much. The only conclusions at which I had arrived were two, namely, that the entry had been made by the window, and that the chisel with which the desk had been forced had broken during the operation, which accounted for the inequality of the marks.

There were two things that led me to the conclusion I have mentioned concerning the window. In the first place, it was the only possible entrance; in the second place, it did not appear very difficult to bolt it after leaving, owing to the absence of the spring, and consequent looseness of the fastening. The little bit of tow-like stuff had suggested the mode of doing this to me; I supposed that it had been effected by a piece of string passed over the bolt, and the two ends brought outside through the crack between the sashes, then upon these being pulled the bolt would at once be returned to its place and the string withdrawn, but upon this withdrawal it had left the tow-like piece of tow sticking in the joint of the sash.

I was rather pleased with that discovery, but was still as far as ever from the object of my inquiry, namely, who was the guilty man? and the only thing was to proceed systematically. I and the police were working at different ends of the question, and besides my natural desire to clear my friend from the charge, I was also animated by a sense of rivalry that sharpened my wits wonderfully. They had marked down a man, and were striving to follow the clue from him up to the crime; I on my part marked down the crime, and strove to follow the clue from that to the man; in other words, they were working from a theory, I was working from a fact, and very desirous of proving that my system was the right one.

In pursuance of my plan, having now discovered, as I imagined, the place of entry, the next thing to be done was to find out how the murderer could have got there, and this was a difficult question. I made inquiries at the warehouse in the rear, and found that was closed every night at nine o'clock, so that there would be no one to overlook the back of Crawley Street. I measured with my eye the distance from the warehouse to the fatal window, and was satisfied that no one could have effected a communication between the two; I thought of the water-pipe, I thought of the narrow cornice, but could find no solution to the problem, and was getting very despondent.

So the week passed, and I was present at the adjourned inquest. Ormerod was also there, very nervous and agitated; but I carefully avoided meeting his eye, as I feared that in his present state he would forget the caution I had given him, and make some sign of recognition. The whole of the proceedings that day assumed the form of an accusation against my friend, and the police seemed quite confident that they had got their man. The old servant was recalled to give at what time he left Crawley Street, the waiter to give at what time he returned to the inn, and then came the most damaging piece of evidence of all—a note which old Hartley had received the very day of the murder was traced to Ormerod. The latter, who was now terribly agitated, insisted upon making a statement, the first part of which was all very well, being simply an explanation of how that note came into his possession, it being a part of the money his uncle had given him, but the last part completed the case of suspicion already raised against him—he could not tell the real reason for his absence that night, so he told a lie about it, and so transparent a lie that it was disproved at once.

The verdict was "Willful murder against John Ormerod," and he was committed on the coroner's warrant.

CHAPTER III.

Three more days passed in this hopeless way, and I had discovered no new light. I had paid more than one visit to the house and to the warehouse, and one day at the latter place came upon Martin or Martini. He informed me that he was engaged as a packer there during the day, and reminded me that I had not yet witnessed his performance. I also saw Miss L., and did not fall in love with her; but I resolved that if Ormerod remained obstinate, as I feared he would, I would not respect the confidence he had placed in me, but bring Miss L. into the witness-box, to state what she knew of the matter.

At last, one evening, when I was thoroughly worn out with my anxiety, I thought of my promise to Martin, and determined to have what relaxing the place of amusement could afford me; and that was the happiest resolution to which I could have come, for it gave me the first glimmer of the truth.

Martin's performance was on the tight-rope, and very clever it was, I have no doubt; but I confess I am not interested in such things, and was not taking much notice of what was going

on, when some hitch occurred; Martin's foot slipped while he was on the rope, whereupon he descended and re-chalked his feet. Those white marks upon the brick cornice flashed across me at once, and I felt that the sudden excitement of the thought made me flush and tremble. However, I soon calmed myself, and sat out the rest of the performance—without observing it, however, for my thoughts were otherwise occupied; I felt there was a great difference between walking on a tight-rope and on a narrow cornice against a wall, for in the latter case the centre of gravity must necessarily be disturbed; but I could not then arrive at any satisfactory solution of that difficulty, and had to wait until the next morning, and that morning set my doubts at rest.

I was at No. 10, Crawley Street, the first thing, and any doubt I might have had was cleared up; I saw that the white marks extended from the window of that house to the window of No. 9, and no further. Then I examined the wall more minutely; what I had supposed to be the holes left by the vine-nails I observed with a fresh interest; they extended in an irregular line, about six feet above the cornice, and they also appeared only between the two windows. The inference was at once obvious—he who with chalked feet had crept along that cornice, had grappled the wall with some sharp hook or spike, and thus saved himself from falling.

I had forged the second link of my evidence, and it brought me at once to the man, but I still felt there was much to do before the case was completed. I remembered his statement that he had heard groans at half-past eleven, and I therefore assumed that was not the time the murder had been committed; I made no doubt that he had volunteered the statement to make himself doubly secure; that having planned the whole thing with consummate ability, and baffled the police as to the how, he had, to complete the mystery, also endeavored to baffie them as to the when, and had succeeded; but I was not without hopes that this final piece of cunning might prove too cunning, and to the means of putting another proof in my hands, knowing as I did that when criminals volunteered explanations they were pretty sure to commit themselves.

It will be observed that I already looked upon Martin's guilt as certain, and so did; but I had to convince other people of it, and caution was still necessary. I, therefore, rather avoided Martin for the next few days, and made my inquiries very secretly, confining them to two points: where was Martin at half-past eleven on the night in question? where was the broken chisel?

Having observed Martin leave the warehouse one day with a wagon-load of bales, and knowing, therefore, he was likely to be some time absent, I took the opportunity this afforded me of calling and asking for him. They of course said he was not in, and, moreover, added that he would not be back for an hour. So I waited awhile, chatting with the men, endeavoring to learn all I could of Martin's habits, and keeping my eyes about me, for which I was duly rewarded, for I presently spied an empty packing-case with the lid leaning against it.

"Who opened that case?" I asked.

"Goodness knows," replied one of the men, "we don't keep no account of that sort of thing. What makes you so curious about it?"

"Only this, that whoever opened it works with very bad tools. See there?"

The man looked, and said, "Ay, now I know. That's old Martin's mark, that is. He broke his chisel some time back, I remember."

"Where is it?" I asked; "I know something about steel, and should like to see a chisel that could break in that way."

"I don't know where it is," said the man; "besides, he had it ground down square the next day."

"Well," said I carelessly, "it is of no consequence; but that reminds me that I want some grinding done. Could you recommend me to a good man?"

They directed me to the man who did such work for them, and I left, saying I would call again for Martin in about an hour, and went in search of the cutter. He was easily found by the directions I had received, and I told him I wanted him to do some work, I forgot now what; that I had seen a chisel he had ground down for Martin, and liked the style in which it was done. Could he tell me how much he charged for that? He referred to his books and told me. And how long did he take over that job? He told me this also—four days, I think. "I believe it was left with you," I said, "on the 23rd October, was it not?" "Yes," said he, "I have got the date entered." The murder was committed on the night of the 26th.

Then I bought a bit of wax, and waited until the dinner-hour at the warehouse had arrived, when I called again for Martin, and of course he was again out. So I strolled into the room where I had seen the case, saying I would wait for him, and, being alone, took a careful impression upon the wax of the chisel-marks, with which I went away, and did not wait for him.

This was a good morning's work; but still more remained to be done: I had to find out where Martin was at half-past eleven on that night.

I knew the hall was not closed until nearly twelve o'clock, but Martin's performance was over much earlier, and therefore that told me nothing. After turning the matter over in my mind, I thought that the best thing I could do would be to watch Martin's movements for one night. I knew he generally left the hall about eleven, and stayed in the inn parlor, where I

had first seen him, for twenty minutes or half an hour, and then, it was presumed, went home; but I ascertained that on the night of the murder he was not at the inn, and ascertained it in this wise:—

I was sitting among the usual set that evening, waiting for my man, who had not arrived although it was beyond his time, when I made some remark to that effect.

"No," replied one of the frequent visitors, "Martin don't look in o' Monday nights, he has something else to do."

"Does he go courting?" I asked.

"Not he! It goes over to Marlock to give his mother her bit o' money. He gets away from the 'all early on purpose, and walks over. He's very good to his mother, he is."

Upon receiving this information, I saw I must give up my idea of watching him, and wait until the morning for the completion of my case. I was annoyed at this, for I feared the tell-tale packing-case might be removed, or that Martin might hear of my inquiries and take the alarm. However, there was no help for it, so that evening I wrote out a rough statement of all I had learned, which I intended to complete and lay before the detective as soon as I had got this additional evidence, and then went to bed.

On inquiring the next morning, I found that Martin had left the hall on a Monday night at half-past nine, and that the distance to Marlock was a little over three miles, and this would allow for his return by the hour he had named. Any one going to Marlock this way would have to cross the river by a ferry, but there was another road by the bridge which nearly doubled the distance. I determined to go by the ferry.

I am not usually given to talking with strangers, I suppose I ought to call myself a shy man in that respect, but during my stay at Pitborough I had to make it my business to do so, and I had now to introduce myself to another stranger, namely, the ferryman. He was very loquacious, and it would be tedious to set down all he said during that leisurely pull across the river, so I will merely give the substance of what was to my purpose. He began grumbling at his hard life, and the small pay his labor obtained, "and as if that wasn't enough," he said, "a beastly old barge cum and stole me in the other day, and I lost better nor two days' work by it. The parson, he says it was all through a working on Sunday, but I don't think myself that had anything to do with it—or 'p'raps the barge oughtn't to ha' been working on Sunday, however."

"What Sunday was that?" I asked.

"The Sunday afore last that ever was. However, as I was saying, on Monday o' course no one would work, they never does except me, and so it was Tuesday night afore I got my boat right again, and lost two good days' work."

"And how did people get across in the meantime?"

"They just had to go round by the bridge, on Shanks's mare, and I hope they liked it. I know I laid in bed all day."

I paid that man liberally, and astonished him somewhat, and then I walked on to Marlock. I found this a little straggling village, and there being only one public-house in it, I made sure Martin would look in on his visits, and in all probability take a glass before starting homewards, so I went boldly in and said, "Is there a man named Martin here?"

"No, but he was here last night."

"Dear, dear, what a pity! Is he often here?"

"He comes in every Monday night."

"Not every Monday night, I think. I understood the Monday before last he was elsewhere." (I am afraid I told a good many untruths during this mission of mine.)

"Oh, yes, he was; that was the night there was no ferry."

"Yes."

"And he stayed later than usual, because he didn't need to catch the boat; it was past eleven before he left, for I remember we had a most to turn him out to look up, he seemed so reluctant like to go."

There was my case complete.

I hurried back to Pitborough, added this last piece of information to my statement, and armed therewith, and the wax model of the chisel-mark, sought an interview with two detectives who had the management of the case. He was inclined to be suspicious and reserved when I first stated my motive in waiting upon him, but I could see, as I proceeded to bring forward proof after proof, that his interest was awakened, and that he entered into the matter with great zest.

"And now," said I in conclusion, "if you act at once on this information you will secure the packing-case from which I took this impression. You will also find, I think, that this man's hook which he uses for grappling the barge will be found in the wall, and that the money stolen from No. 10 will be found in the upper room of No. 9, Crawley Street."

"I believe you've got the man," said he, "but why did you not communicate with us?"

"Because you had got your man," said I, "and that was enough for you."

"Well, it is a beautiful case," he said, and then added, as though he suddenly remembered it had been got up unofficially, "but there was a good deal of chance in it, you know."

On after-consideration I was somewhat inclined to his opinion, I think there was a good deal of chance in it, but that did not justify Ormerod's ingratitude.

The man Martin was tried and convicted, and in the end confessed his crime, so that Ormerod was completely cleared of the charge, and he expressed himself much obliged to me, and declared there was nothing he would not do to

serve me in return; and it was then I related to him the whole course of my proceedings, and even informed him of the resolution I had come to of bringing Miss L. forward, had it been necessary.

On looking into his uncle's affairs, he found the property of such value, and all devised to himself, that he plucked up heart, and made formal proposals for her hand, which were accepted. I think, after marriage, he told her of what I had intended to do. I know that he ruled him with a rod of iron, and was not likely to let him keep any secret to himself; I also know that she behaved very coldly, not to say rudely, to me on several occasions; and that he, poor Ormerod, soon after cut me in the street in the most heartless manner.

That, with a ten-pound note which I am bound to say he presented to me on his release from prison, as an earnest of future favors, was all I gained by this my first and last detective experience.

DINING WITH A DOG-OWNER.

Among the many miseries of human life the *Pall Mall Gazette* avers, there are few more trying than to dine with a friend who has a valued dog of unsuppliable disposition. The moment you enter the room your troubles commence—the beast declares war by barking furiously. Civility prevents your taking up the poker as a weapon of self-defense, and when at last your assailant is induced by threats or entreaties to retire under the table, he asserts himself by periodically making snaps at your legs, and keeps your nerves on edge the whole evening by his interesting ferocity. The painful part of the affair is that if the dog is small your host ridicules the idea of your really objecting to being bitten by him. Yet small dogs can not only give disagreeable bites, but are often almost demoniacal in the tenacity with which they cling to their victims, as is shown by the conduct of a fox-terrier one day last week, who fastened himself on the head of a fox hanging from the saddle of a whipper-in, causing the horse to run away, and was only dislodged by the jerk occasioned by the leap of the animal over a five-barred gate; and even then the dog followed the horse with the evident intention of making another dash at its prey. This terrier would no doubt equally cling to the leg of a live guest as to the head of a fox, and the incident is worthy of note as showing that only weak-minded and foolish dogs are fit for admission to family circles. Strong-minded dogs, the *Gazette* thinks, be they large or small, however faithful to their owners, are often dangerous nuisances to those who are not honored with their friendship.

THE AIRLESS MOON.

Among the illusions swept away by modern science was the pleasant fancy that the moon was a habitable globe like the earth, its surface diversified with seas, lakes, continents and islands, and varied forms of vegetation. Theologians and savants gravely discussed the probabilities of its being inhabited by a race of sentient beings, with forms and faculties like our own, and even propounded schemes for opening communication with them, in case they existed. One of these was to construct on the broad highlands of Asia a series of geometrical figures on a scale so gigantic as to be visible from our planetary neighbor, on the supposition that the moon people would recognize this object, and immediately construct similar figures in reply! Extravagant and absurd as it may appear in the light of modern knowledge, the establishment of this Terrestrial and Lunar Signal Service Bureau was treated as a feasible scheme, although practical difficulties, which so often keep men from making fools of themselves, stood in the way of actual experiment; but the discussion was kept up at intervals, until it was discovered that if there were people in the moon they must be able to live without breathing, eating, or drinking. Then it ceased. There can be no life without air. Beautiful to the eye of the distant observer, the moon is a sepulchral orb—a world of death and silence. No vegetation clothes its vast plains of stony desolation, traversed by monstrous crevasses, broken by enormous peaks that rise like gigantic tombstones into space; no lovely forms of cloud float in the blackness of its sky. There daytime is only night lighted by a rayless sun. There is no rosy dawn in the morning, no twilight in the evening. The nights are pitch dark. In daytime the solar beams are lost against the jagged ridges, the sharp points of the rocks, or the steep sides of profound abysses; and the eye sees only grotesque shapes relieved against fantastic shadows black as ink, with none of that pleasant gradation and diffusion of light, none of the subtle blending of light and shadow, which make the charm of a terrestrial landscape. A faint conception of the horrors of a lunar day may be formed from an illustration representing a landscape taken in the moon in the centre of the mountainous region of Aristarchus. There is no color, nothing but dead white and black. The rocks radiate passively the light of the sun; the craters and abysses remain wrapped in shadow, fantastic peaks rise like phantoms in their total cemetery; the stars appear like spots in the blackness of space. The moon is a dead world; she has no atmosphere.