



THE CRIME OF THE BROTHERS OFFICE.

Meanwhile when Judith Krodge saw Stuart Harland a prisoner in the power of the officers of the law, her venomous eyes flashed with malicious triumph.

"You will take the oath and then we will listen to any statement you desire to make," said the coroner as Stuart did not reply to his last remark.

The young man was duly sworn and then the inquest opened and new and startling developments ensued.

"My explanation is most simple. I can only say that important business called me away suddenly, and I did not see fit to publish the fact of my intended departure. As for my having any connection with this crime, those who know me will not for a moment entertain such a thought.

"He thought of the old 'confrontation' rule, and the lives term it, and suddenly arising he said to Stuart: 'Look here, sir!'

The young man promptly stepped to the side of the police sergeant, who then turned to the body of the murdered man and suddenly uncovered his face.

"I shall do so," the broker replied, but he secretly thought: 'And yet if the motive for his secret night journey was what I suspect it to be, I dare not ask Stuart to tell the truth.'

"Do you think Mr. Harland can be imprisoned on the strength of the evidence which has thus far been elicited?"

"The jury can hardly find against him yet, I think, but much will depend upon Mr. Harland himself. His explanation will govern the coroner's jury. However, he cannot be compelled to answer any question which may implicate himself," replied Paxton.

"At what time did you leave the house last night, Mr. Harland?" was the first question propounded by the Coroner.

"It was not quite one o'clock. I had set my alarm-clock to ring at one precisely, and without removing my clothing, I fell asleep. I was awakened by some loud noise, though what it was I cannot tell. Springing up, I glanced at the clock, and I saw it was exactly twenty minutes of one o'clock. I left the house in a few minutes."

"Ah! he confesses he was in the house at the time of the murder. He does not know about the clock that was overthrown here, and that the time of the assassination has been positively determined," whispered the police sergeant, turning to Paxton.

"Wait until the examination is concluded, my friend, your exaltation until then," retorted the detective.

"Why did you leave suddenly last night, as you did?" the Coroner then asked.

"I have told you that I was called away by important business. I was on my way to see a friend of mine."

"But you have not told us what the nature of your business was."

"It was a strictly private matter. It had no reference to this unfortunate affair."

"Perhaps so. But you can at least tell us your friend's name?"

man who was imperiling himself for his sake, and as he reflected that if Stuart was sacrificed Edna would not survive the blow, his torture was inexorable.

Marion Oakburn had listened to Stuart Harland's examination with the deepest interest, and as she comprehended that the suspicion against him seemed destined to bring him into deadly peril, although they had heretofore been but passing acquaintances, she felt that the strands of their lives which led into the unexplored future were now woven together by a fatal fatality without the knowledge of either.

The cashier's daughter was not a fatalist; but she could not think that the singular combination of events which had recently transpired had come about by mere chance.

In view of all the circumstances of this case, I order that Stuart Harland be searched."

"What! Am I to be subjected to this indignity, as though I were a common thief?" he exclaimed.

"Justice is no respecter of persons. In quest of truth, she seeks for information everywhere. If need be, she enters the sacred precincts of a minister. No man is exempt from her search."

"So be it then. Let this farce continue to the end," and he bowed his head.

The officer named came forward and proceeded to search him.

He first examined Stuart's overcoat pockets, and Stuart assisted him, saying confidently: "You will find nothing to reward you."

"So be it then. Let this farce continue to the end," and he bowed his head.

"This is fate! I had forgotten about the cast; I am lost!" he exclaimed, scarcely knowing what he said.

This last startling discovery produced a profound sensation and the greatest excitement.

Mr. Garrison was like one stunned by a heavy blow.

Marion Oakburn, with her hands clasped upon her heart, and an agonized look in her eyes, covered in her chair. Paxton was absolutely amazed.

Had a thunderbolt descended at his feet, the detective could not have been more disconcerted.

Here it seemed was the positive evidence of the guilt of the man for whose innocence he had vouched in the strongest terms.

The detective's prophesied opinion seemed to be proven worthless before all the assemblage, and he felt abashed, humiliated and defeated.

The police sergeant was exultant. "Who was right, friend Paxton?" he said jeeringly. "What has become of your fine theory of this man's innocence? I grant you it was stupid for him to run away as he did after committing the crime, but his conduct was not without precedent. The great Vidocq used to explain the stupidity of certain crimes committed by men of superior intelligence, by saying that they act under the influence of a kind of vertigo. That they become dazed after the crimes."

or recording Stuart Harland's explanation as to how the skeleton keys and wax impressions came in his possession, we will relate certain adventures which befell Harland after he left his room on the night of the murder.

Stuart reached the depot and boarded the train which he desired to catch just as it was moving out of the station.

He saw several persons on the platform whom he knew, and he exchanged greetings with them.

In the coach which he entered he recognized an unwelcome acquaintance, but he had not gone far when he had struck up acquaintance, as people sometimes will on a railway train, though inclined to be exclusive elsewhere.

A young gentleman who seemed inclined to make himself agreeable found an opportunity to open a conversation with Stuart, and the two young men were eventually favorably impressed.

They were soon chatting familiarly. Finally, at the request of the stranger, Stuart accompanied him to the smoking-car, where, as it chanced, the coach was overheated, they both removed their overcoats.

Excellent cigars were produced by Stuart's new acquaintance, who, by the way, represented himself to be a Bostonian and a scion of a wealthy family whose name was familiar to commercial men.

For some time the new acquaintances smoked and chatted pleasantly, but as the night drew on their conversation gradually flagged, and both seemed inclined to nap.

It was not long before silence fell between them, and soon Stuart's heavy, regular breathing assured his companion that he was sleeping soundly.

The young man did not awake until the loud voice of the brakeman smote upon his ears as he shouted: "Albany!"

This was Harlan's destination, and he sprang to his feet just as the train began to move.

As he hurried on his overcoat he glanced about for his recent companion, but he was gone, and then Stuart discovered that it was not his own but his late companion's coat which he was donning.

But his own coat was gone, and surmising that his new acquaintance must have taken it through a very ordinary mistake, which there was no opportunity to rectify just now, Stuart buttoned up the coat which was left to him by this exchange of garments, and concerning himself no more with the matter, he leaped from the train just in time.

Meanwhile, Stuart Harland's recently made acquaintance had not slept at all, though for a time, until he was sure of the former's somnolence, he had feigned to do so.

When he was confident that the oblivion of sleep held Stuart's senses enthralled the young stranger coolly arose and appropriated his coat.

There were but few other persons in the coach, and they were all sound asleep.

Deliberately the young man who had secured it donned Stuart's overcoat, and then removing his hat he threw it out of the window. From his pocket he produced a skull-cap, which he drew down over his eyes, and he turned the collar of Stuart's overcoat up about his ears.

The garment was a long ulster, such as was then the prevailing style, and it reached to the stranger's heels, completely concealing his undergarments.

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CHAPTER V. - (Continued.)
A telegraph messenger entered as Paxton became seated, and placed a dispatch in the hands of the police sergeant.

Marion's face told that she feared the telegram contained some intelligence inimical to the interests of the young man of whose innocence she was positive.

Mr. Garrison shook the detective's hand warmly when he had taken his seat, and said:

"I thank you, sir, for what you have said in behalf of my young friend. He should have been leaving the city. That circumstance may be made to tell against him. You are his friend, Mr. Garrison, and at the first opportunity you should warn him to make a complete explanation of his conduct," whispered the detective.

"I shall do so," the broker replied, but he secretly thought:

"And yet if the motive for his secret night journey was what I suspect it to be, I dare not ask Stuart to tell the truth. Weak, miserable, guilty man that I am, I find myself in a situation of the most trying character, and a document I dread may come at any moment."

Marion Oakburn touched the detective's arm, and he turned toward her as she whispered:

"Do you think Mr. Harland can be imprisoned on the strength of the evidence which has thus far been elicited?"

"The jury can hardly find against him yet, I think, but much will depend upon Mr. Harland himself. His explanation will govern the coroner's jury. However, he cannot be compelled to answer any question which may implicate himself," replied Paxton.

A moment subsequently there was a stir at the door.

A thrill of excitement and expectancy ran through the throng, and Marion Oakburn started to her feet, involuntarily.

Mr. Paxton and the broker also arose, as Stuart Harland was marched into the room by the police officers.

The suspected man glanced about him fearlessly, and seeing Mr. Garrison and Marion, he bowed and smiled, and he also affably greeted his fellow clerks who were present.

Addressing the coroner, he said, calmly:

"I am informed that I am arrested on suspicion of having murdered my old friend, John Oakburn. Will you please inform me why I am accused of so heinous a crime?"

It was evident to all that Stuart Harland was in a state of intense mental excitement, and that he only restrained his indignation by a determined effort of will power.

"I regret to say, Mr. Harland, that the fact of your midnight departure coupled with certain circumstances, such as your knowledge that there was a large sum of money in the safe and the like, has made it necessary that you should explain your conduct," answered the coroner impressively.

Jason Paxton knew that his daughter's life would sound up with that of the

This Judge Rotkin of Kansas seems to be a picturesque and interesting person, but fate has been unkind to him. He ought to be in Congress.