



THE CRIME OF THE BROKER'S OFFICE. BY LEVI MOTT.

CHAPTER XXVI. Despite his resolution to appear brave, Kregde uttered a terrible cry.

"It's a lie! It's a lie! I know nothing about John Oakburn's murder!" he said.

Paxton answered calmly. "We know where you were every moment on the night of the murder, and look here!"

Thus speaking, the detective suddenly drew from his pocket the coin-bag which he had found in the closet of Kregde's apartment.

"Do you recognize this, Levi?" he asked, holding the bag up for Kregde's inspection.

The prisoner's knees shook, and there was an awful expression of terror on his evil face.

"Ah, I see you do recognize this money-bag. Shall I tell you where it came from? It was in John Oakburn's little private safe until the night before his murder. Since Oakburn's murder I found this coin-bag in your room. You see, Levi, denial is useless. The proof is overwhelming."

"You jeering devil!" cried Kregde, suddenly leaping up from the couch on the side of which he had been seated.

It seemed that in the agony and madness of the moment he was about to attack the detective.

Paxton did not recoil, but his glittering, steady eyes met the prisoner's blazing orbs, and involuntarily Kregde sank back cowed by the power of the detective's gaze.

"Look here, Paxton," he said presently, with a desperate effort at calmness. "You have me in a tight place, I'll admit, but I didn't kill Oakburn, I swear I didn't; I'll take my oath I'm innocent, even on the gallows."

To the detective's mind, the returned memory of the conversation he had overheard between Judith and the janitor, when the former said she believed Levi had nothing to fear in consequence of Oakburn's murder, because he was not guilty.

The detective thought Judith was sincere in thinking thus, but the janitor's flight and Paxton's clew seemed to indicate the fellow's connection with the crime.

"It is folly for you to thus protest your innocence. Your only hope is in a confession," Paxton said.

"I tell you, once and for all, I have not John Oakburn's blood on my hands," replied the janitor, again repeating his denial.

Then it is useless to waste time with you; the law must take its course. But, by the way, Levi, where did you get the ten thousand dollars you thought of investing in Newburgh real estate?" asked Paxton.

The janitor's jaw fell. He tried to speak, but only an inarticulate sound emanated from his lips. He was momentarily stricken dumb, it seemed, by this sudden revelation that the detective knew what he must have regarded as a profound secret.

Paxton saw the impression he had made, and he followed it up. "You little dream how well informed I am regarding your private affairs, Levi," he said.

"I don't know what you mean. I am a poor man. I never had any money," answered Kregde, at last.

"I know all about that. But tell me, what have you done with Marion Oakburn?"

"I know nothing about the girl. How should I?"

"Look here, Levi, your lies are wasted. I am the man who attempted to rescue Marion Oakburn from Malvin's Hotel. Now, mark my words, you infernal scoundrel, if that poor girl is harmed in any way, I shall exact a fearful retribution."

Levi shuddered, but he protested his entire ignorance regarding Marion's whereabouts.

Paxton could not prolong this interview further, and he believed he had made an impression on the mind of the wretch which would result as he desired.

The detective counted upon Kregde's sending for his sister Judith, and implored her to save him by the revelation which we know she had informed him she could make.

When Kregde found himself alone after Paxton's departure, he gave vent to his thoughts in these words: "If Judith fails me, it is either hanging or a long term of imprisonment. But I can save myself from the gallows if it comes to that. I think, at the cost of a confession which will surely condemn me for years."

What was the meaning of this? Could it be that there was some secret of this dark mystery which no man suspected locked in the heart of Levi Kregde?

Half an hour later, as the guard passed his cell, Levi Kregde called to him through the grating of his cell door. "What's the row?" demanded the prison guard, rudely.

"One moment, Mr. Paxton, I believe you are too hasty. I, too, have concealed a certain item of knowledge regarding this crime, because I did not wish to bring suspicion and disgrace upon one whom I believe to be innocent, despite the evidence of my own sight, from my knowledge of her character," said Stuart Harland.

"This is becoming interesting," said Paxton. "Do you confirm this woman's story?" demanded Stanmore.

"Listen, sir," answered Stuart, and then he went on to relate how on the night of the murder, as he was leaving the house just after the crime must have been committed, he saw Marion step out of the office with a paper in one hand, and something from which the light glared, as though it might have been reflected from a polished metallic surface in the other.

He also told how frightened Marion looked, and how she had fled up the rear stairs.

In conclusion he said: "After all, I have so much confidence in Marion, as I have said, that I believe there is some explanation of her conduct yet to be made which will leave us all without doubt of her innocence."

As Stanmore listened to Stuart Harland's story he uttered a groan and buried his face in his hands.

Both Stuart and Paxton regarded him wonderingly, and they asked themselves: "What is Marion Oakburn to Mr. Stanmore?"

As Stuart concluded, Stanmore arose and he looked as though the room was stilling him, as though he could not breathe, and he went out reeling like a drunken man.

"Have I done right in telling all this?" asked Stuart of Paxton.

"You have. Justice demands that all possible light should be cast upon this case," answered the detective.

Judith Kregde seemed delighted at Stuart's unexpected confirmation of her statement.

"Now you will believe me!" she cried. "Yes, we believe your statement that you saw Marion Oakburn as described, but we do not yet admit her guilt as proven," answered Paxton.

"If more evidence is wanted, it is furnished by her flight. She ran away because she became alarmed and feared she would be arrested," continued Judith.

"And so you are guilty of compounding a felony, Miss Judith," said Paxton suddenly.

"I—I don't comprehend."

"I presume not. Let me refresh your memory. Marion Oakburn bribed you to keep it a secret that you saw her leave the office on the night of the murder."

"No! No!" "I know it is true. You wrung the last dollar she possessed from that poor girl, and I also suspect you compelled her to give you her jewelry."

"It is false."

"We have a faculty for making discoveries. I know all about your bank account, and I have seen Marion Oakburn's locket which was pawned by you."

"I deny it."

"It will do you no good to deny what we can prove. It is a criminal attempt to compound a felony, or in other words to conceal a crime. If you expect any mercy at my hands, truthfully answer my questions. Do you know where Levi was at the time of the murder?"

"No," said Judith, answering the question.

"Do you know where Marion Oakburn is?"

"No."

Paxton reflected for a moment in this wise: "Since she has a powerful motive in seeking to place the crime on some one besides her brother, were it not that Stuart Harland has confirmed her story, I should not credit it. And yet if Marion Oakburn is innocent, why did she bribe Judith to keep her secret?"

Entering Marion's apartment, Judith said, pointing to a trunk: "Search for yourselves."

The trunk was locked, but Paxton forced the lid, and in a moment he discovered a strange-looking pistol of large caliber at the bottom of the trunk.

It was indeed the very weapon which Marion Oakburn concealed there on the night of the murder.

Eagerly Paxton examined it. "It is an air pistol," he said in a moment, pointing to a trunk.

Then producing the large peculiar shaped bullet which had caused John Oakburn's death he added: "Now for the supreme test. If this is the pistol from which the shot that killed Oakburn was discharged, this bullet will fit it."

Then he tried the bullet in the pistol. There was no longer a doubt. The bullet fitted the pistol perfectly.

"We have found the weapon with which Oakburn was killed," said Paxton, now fully convinced on this point.

"I told you so," said Judith, triumphantly.

J. C. LEWIS, LOSEE & BROWN. DEALERS IN Poultry, Veal, Hides, Tallow, Wool, Etc. Highest Cash Price for Old Iron. East Mazon Ave., DWIGHT, ILL.

Watchmaker and JEWELER. All work done promptly and satisfaction guaranteed. East St., DWIGHT, ILL.

J. SCHOTT, Merchant Tailor. A Fine Line of Samples of the Best Quality of Piece Goods. All work guaranteed to give satisfaction. Give me a call before buying elsewhere. Over Reeder's Barber Shop, DWIGHT, ILL.

For a First-Class Shave SHAMPOO OR HAIRCUT, 60 TO ANTON J. DIFFENBACH'S Barber Shop. Special attention given to Ladies' and Children's Hair Cutting. Razors and Sissors sharpened in a first-class manner. CIGARS, TOBACCO and PIPES at all styles always on hand.

Pure & Full Weight. Aiken B. Whiskey. ALLEN B. WRISLEY'S OLD COUNTRY SOAP. Economical & Popular. Russian Restriction. In Russia a child 10 years of age cannot go away from home to school without a passport.

TOCK BROS., Blacksmith & Wagon SHOP. Wagons, Carriages, Road Carts, Buggies. The best workmanship. Satisfaction guaranteed. Prices very reasonable. REPAIRING A SPECIALTY. All work done promptly and guaranteed to give satisfaction. East Mazon Ave., Dwight, Ill.

City Bakery! P. WEICKER, Prop. Fresh Bread, Rolls, Cakes and Pies. Also a full assortment of Cakes and Fancy Groceries, Green and Canned Fruits. CIGARS, TOBACCO, &c. ICE CREAM and OYSTERS IN SEASON. Ice Cream made to order in any quantity on short notice. The best brands of Flour always on hand. Give me a call.

JOHN GEIS, Manufacturer and Dealer Cigars, All kinds of Tobacco and Pipes kept constantly on hand. WEST STREET, DWIGHT. DAVID McWILLIAMS, L. A. NAFEDIGER, PROPRIETOR, CATHIER, ESTABLISHED 1885.

Why do I Laugh? Because I have been over to SEYMOURS THE DRUGGIST And purchased a pair of his PERFECTED SPECTACLES. By using them, I am enabled to see as well as in my Youth. A full supply of Spectacles constantly on hand at Seymour's Drug Store, Next to the Electric Light Plant. JESSE SLYDER & SON, PRACTICAL AUCTIONEERS! All orders left at this office will receive prompt attention.

CHAPTER XXVII. "Mr. Stanmore, you forget yourself," said Paxton, and then to Judith Kregde: "Go on, give us the proof of this incredible admission of yours."