



THE CRIME OF THE BROKERS OFFICE

shop where Paxton received it, was explained. "Who do you suspect is your father's murderer?" asked Paxton. "Levi Kredgel," answered Reid Oakburn in a tone of conviction. "Why so?" "Because he was flush of money after the murder, and it was not marked money he had. I think he robbed my father's little private safe, after killing the old gentleman."

The detective questioned Reid Oakburn further, but nothing worthy of mention was elicited after that, so the interview was cut short by the arrival of one of Paxton's agents, with a note from the villainous janitor, who requested him to come to his cell as soon as possible, as he had decided to make a confession.

"Will he confess the murder? How will the mystery be explained?" wondered Paxton. "He felt that the denouement was surely near at hand, and he hastened without the least delay to the Tombs, where Levi Kredgel was confined."

As soon as he was in Kredgel's cell the janitor began: "I am going to make a clean breast of the job. I don't want to be put on trial for John Oakburn's murder."

"You've come to your senses at last," said Paxton. "On the night of John Oakburn's death, I entered the office through the rear window where you found my tracks. I had found out that John Oakburn kept a large sum of money in his little safe, and having a duplicate key to it, I meant to rob it."

I had entered the office, after forcing open the blinds and raising the window, and had robbed the safe and locked it up again just as I had found it after securing the money, nearly eighty thousand dollars on my person. When suddenly John Oakburn entered the outer office.

I had only time to hide behind a desk when he came into the interior office, and hastily unlocked his little private safe. "I shall never forget the cry of agony he uttered when he discovered that the safe had been robbed."

He reeled into the outer office and fell into a chair. "The old man had paid the seventy-eight thousand dollars he drew from the bank that afternoon, and which belonged to Garrison, to save a scapegrace son of his from arrest. Pratt and Weeks had captured that son, and to them John Oakburn paid Garrison's money, intending to replace it with the money which was left in the safe."

I remember the way the old man muttered as he sat there after he discovered the loss of his money. "I am ruined, I am an embezzler, I have appropriated my employer's money to my own use. I have betrayed a sacred trust. I have kept it a secret that I had saved a large sum of money, and that it was in my little safe. My story will not be credited. I will not live to suffer this awful disgrace, I whose one wish was to live an honest man, and dying leave no bad reputation. I will die by my own hand."

It was like that he went on, I almost remember his exact words. Then he seized a pen and began to write, I watched him breathlessly, and bad as I am, I meant to save his life, to prevent his committing suicide.

When he had written for some time, he came to his safe again, and took out a pistol. He carried the weapon into the outer office, and I heard him say: "I will kill myself in ten minutes."

I saw him sit down, pistol in hand, and watch the clock. The time was almost up, and I was about to rush out and disarm him, when he threw down the pistol saying, "I am afraid. I saw that he had troubled me to do that. After that he paced the room for a moment or so, but finally he picked up the pen and wrote a few lines. Then as if he had decided, he picked up the pistol again."

"I cannot face the weapon. The sight of the pistol unnerves me. If I could not see, I might have the nerve to pull the trigger."

Then he took up the pistol once more, opened a drawer and took out a ball of twine. Tying one end of the twine to the trigger of the pistol, after he had placed the weapon in a bracket at the side of the door, where there had been a lamp, and with the cord in his hand walked back to the table.

Let no man be accused of my murder. To the care of the good Lord I commend my soul, and I trust that he will forgive me that she may believe that I am unfortunate, not dishonest. (Signed) JOHN OAKBURN.

This letter had been written by John Oakburn there could be no doubt. It was, indeed, on a false trail, but the fact that the shot which killed Oakburn was clearly fired from a distance caused every one to exclude the possibility of suicide from the case, said Paxton.

The detective began to think the mystery of Marion's conduct was clearing up. "To shield her father's memory from dishonor and disgrace, the noble girl, who must have first discovered her father when Stuart Harland saw her stealthily leaving the office, removed the pistol with which he killed himself, and destroyed every evidence that might point to suicide, so that the impression might be given that he had been murdered and robbed. She is a true heart. She was, indeed, inspired by a noble purpose, and I take it, for granted."

You have stated the truth, I firmly believe, said Stanmore. "Yes, you have it at last. Marion Oakburn is as innocent as you are. As you say, she wanted to save her father's memory from dishonor and disgrace. But what about the money you stole? You haven't told us where you find that," said the detective.

"I've spent about three thousand dollars on it, and the rest is hid. It's safe, you can bet on that. I don't fret about it. I mean to keep it, and with you, I answered the scoundrel, with a cunning leer. "In what way?" "Promise me I'll be discharged and I'll give up the money."

"We'll see about that," said Paxton. "Yes, Marion must be consulted," said Stanmore. "I reckon the girl will be glad to consent to let up on me when she knows of the money," said Kredgel. "Now you understand my remarks which puzzled you heretofore. Take it, he replied. "Perfectly," replied Paxton, and accompanied by Stanmore he soon left the prison.

After this, some days elapsed, and then to Stanmore's inexpressible joy, the man's mind cleared, and he actually declared the crime of which he gave Stanmore the assurance that Marion would recover. "As soon as she was sufficiently recovered to warrant it, Stanmore told Marion of the confession made by Pratt and Weeks, and by Levi Kredgel, the janitor."

"We understand the mystery of your conduct now. You meant that your father's memory should be shielded. When you knew that he appropriated Garrison's money and committed suicide, you determined that the world should believe he had been robbed and murdered," he said. "Yes, that is the explanation. But I must tell you all. On the night of my father's death, I became alarmed at his absence, and without disturbing any one, I descended to the office, thinking it possible he might be there. He sometime worked in the office in the evening. When I entered the office, I found my father dead. On the floor beside him was a sheet of paper upon which he had written some lines. I remember them well. They were as follows: "Heaven bear witness that I was in intention innocent, but I have appropriated the seventy-eight thousand dollars belonging to my employer, which I drew from the bank to my own use. I have decided I shall die by my own hand, but I cannot face the pistol. I shall place it in the bracket by the door and discharge it by means of a string attached to the trigger, while my back is turned. Farewell, Marion, my daughter," said Marion.

"Ah, I understand. While Kredgel secured the first message written by your father, when he had decided to commit suicide, he did not find the message which you have repeated," said Stanmore. "When I read my dear father's message, I resolved that he should not be branded as a thief, that his memory should be revered, that he should leave behind him the reputation he dearly prized. Then I remembered the pistol, secured the tell-tale letter, and stole from the office. After concealing the weapon in my trunk, I went to Judith's room, and then we descended together to the office. What ensued you know."

"When I saw that I depended to prove my innocence when I knew I was suspected as being concerned in my father's death, was his last message. I despaired, when I discovered I had lost it. When, during the process of Stuart Harland's trial, I became convinced that he would be found guilty, I resolved to tell all, but Judith must have discovered my intentions, I think, for the night I made the resolution that on the following day I would confess to my crime, and I was abducted while unconscious from some anesthetic which had been administered when I slept, and when I awoke I found myself a prisoner in the house of the old woman who was called Mother Kitts. When after I escaped, I was dragged back to the prison-room from which he had liberated me, I secreted my father's last message, which was concealed in my bosom, in a hole in the wall of the fire-jack. Next morning, after a troubled sleep, I looked for the paper and it was gone."

Thus Marion explained, and, further, she confirmed Reid's statement that he had deceived her as to his real character. Now that she knew him she despised him, and a fierce desire that he should be punished for having indirectly been the cause of her beloved father's death. The lovers conversed tenderly for some time, and then left the room, leaving behind the fair invalid, and sought Paxton the detective, and together they proceeded to the house of Mother Kitts. The fire-place in the room where Marion had been imprisoned was demolished, and when it had slipped down, behind a brick from the aperture, in which Marion had concealed it, John Oakburn's message was discovered.

Everything was clear now. Of course it is hardly necessary to say that Paxton received from Judith Kredgel purporting to be the confession of the murder made by Marion, was a forgery, and that it was such Judith Kredgel subsequently acknowledged. Stanmore now revealed himself in proper personality as Donald Wayburn, and since he had the proof that he was an honest man, his friends of other days welcomed him home again.

It is hardly necessary to say that the man who had been driven by his father to suicide should be allowed to go unpunished in consideration of his reformation. A Russian athlete, M. Valovsk, having made a bet that he would cover the distance between Bordeaux and Angouleme, there and back on foot, a total distance of 145 miles, in twenty-four hours, started on a recent Sunday morning. He returned on the following Monday morning, having accomplished the double journey in forty minutes less than the stipulated time, thus winning the wager of 2,000 francs.

The Puritanical Wretches. The Puritan fathers, who settled in America, were greatly addicted to smoking; indeed, the practice became so common that even these strait-laced observers of time and seasons actually smoked in church. This custom soon caused very considerable annoyance, as the religious exercises were greatly disturbed by the clinking of steels and flints and the clouds of smoke in church.

Population of France. The increase of population in France during the last five years has amounted to only one-half of 1 per cent. The population of the great cities is increasing and that of the rural districts decreasing.

For two or three years eminent architects have claimed that the definitive type of commercial architecture had been found in what is known as the "Chicago system," namely, a rigid framework of steel forming the pillars, floor joists, and partitions, supporting the roof and upholding the structure without aid from the exterior walls, which are a mere veneer of brick, stone, or terra cotta. Now, however, comes Gen. Sooy Smith, himself an engineer of the highest standing in the country, and declares that the steel or iron framework must be discarded and solid stone pillars substituted if absolute safety against fire is sought. It is evident that the adoption of Gen. Smith's suggestion would greatly decrease the available area in a building, as the size of the columns necessary to support a given weight will be greater in stone than if they are made of metal. And as owners seek the maximum amount of income-producing space it is likely that the "Chicago system" will be adhered to despite this scientific criticism of its qualities as a fireproof type of construction.

Business methods have at last been applied to the work of raising money for the Grant monument in New York. Had this been done seven years ago the monument would now be finished, and a pride to New York instead of a disgrace. That city gave as freely to the fund for the relief of Johnston as any other in the country. There was method in the management of that fund. There were committees to solicit subscriptions from all departments of trade, and a large amount of money was raised in a very short time. The same method is to be applied to the Grant monument subscription, and, if it be thorough, the different committees ought to raise the money necessary to complete the monument in a few weeks.

RECORD OF FOUR FLOODS.

High Water of This Season Compared with That of 1844, 1851 and 1858.

As the present flood in the Mississippi appears to have reached its culmination, it is interesting to review the record of the usual June rise in the Mississippi—some account of the record of previous floods in the same stream may be of interest.

There have been three previous floods in the section of the country, which are well remembered by persons now living, and in which the rise reached about the same point as the present. These were in 1844, 1851 and 1858, and the limit above the low-water mark at St. Louis in those years was as follows:

1844	41.9 feet 1858	39.2 feet
1851	35.3 feet 1854	36.7 feet

It will be seen from these figures that the flood of 1892 has not reached a point equal to those of 1851 and 1858, though within a fraction of each, but still falls short of each of the other two. The present flood has been sufficient to cover about the same area in Illinois as the previous ones, in spite of the increased height and strength of levees, except at St. Louis, where the levee construction has been effective in preventing a portion of the town. Owing to the vastly increased area under cultivation, both on the Mississippi and Missouri, the loss from the destruction of crops and the carrying away of houses and other property was greatly increased over that of former years.

The statistics given show that the flood of 1844 is entitled to rank as the most memorable as to height. Like all the others, it was the result of a long season of spring melting, followed by an unexampled June rise in the Missouri caused by the melting of heavy snows in the Rocky Mountains. Previous to this date little if any progress had been made in the construction of the levee system above the mouth of the Ohio, and consequently the stream was not confined to a comparatively narrow channel as now. As a consequence, after it began to overflow its banks a greater volume of water was required to cause a moderate rise at St. Louis, where the river, by overflowing the American Bottom, spread to a width of eight to ten miles. Yet it then reached a height of nearly forty-seven feet above low water, covering the whole of what is called "The Levee" or levee street, where now the lower railroad bridge crosses the river, and flooding the business houses on that street to a depth of several feet. As the city has since been extended to the bottom lands, both above and below the old city, some idea may be formed of the extent of the inundation in the days of the present floods. The whole of the "American Bottom" opposite St. Louis, extending from Alton to Chester, and covering an area of one to ten miles wide by ninety miles in length, was completely submerged with the exception of a few mounds and ridges, so that steamboats reached the Illinois bluffs from eight to ten miles from St. Louis. It has since become one of the most highly cultivated and productive sections of the State, and the loss in the destruction of the levee system, by preventing the planting of other crops, and the loss of other property, is almost incalculable.

Of course all these floods, with others which occurred at later periods, inflicted immense damage upon the lower Mississippi, where the levee system was not so complete as it is now. In 1852, 1853 and 1854, 1855, 1856, 1857, 1858, 1859, 1860, 1861, 1862, 1863, 1864, 1865, 1866, 1867, 1868, 1869, 1870, 1871, 1872, 1873, 1874, 1875, 1876, 1877, 1878, 1879, 1880, 1881, 1882, 1883, 1884, 1885, 1886, 1887, 1888, 1889, 1890, 1891, 1892, 1893, 1894, 1895, 1896, 1897, 1898, 1899, 1900, 1901, 1902, 1903, 1904, 1905, 1906, 1907, 1908, 1909, 1910, 1911, 1912, 1913, 1914, 1915, 1916, 1917, 1918, 1919, 1920, 1921, 1922, 1923, 1924, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1938, 1939, 1940, 1941, 1942, 1943, 1944, 1945, 1946, 1947, 1948, 1949, 1950, 1951, 1952, 1953, 1954, 1955, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1965, 1966, 1967, 1968, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 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