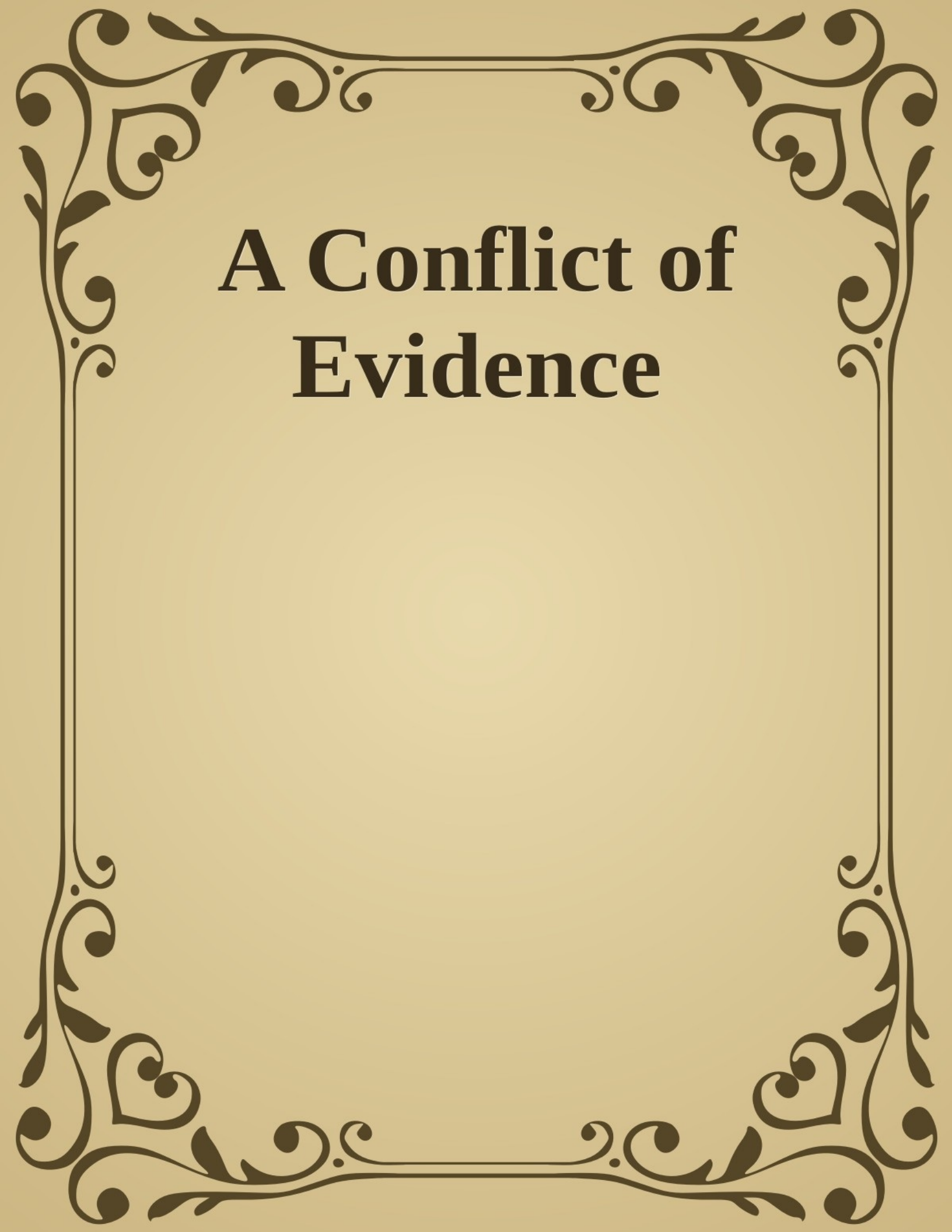


A decorative border with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns in a dark brown color, framing the central text.

A Conflict of Evidence

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By Rodrigues Ottolengui

Author of "An Artist in Crime"

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Chapter I

The Crime

“It’s my opinion they won’t catch him. Marvel’s no fool, if he is hot headed, and he knows enough to keep under cover now that they are after him.”

“That’s all right, Everly, and, as you say, I guess Marvel can hide away well enough. But what I want to know is, what’s he got to hide for? He an’t done nothin’ as I can see, ‘cept to fire off his pistol when he was mad as thunder.”

“And right he was, too,” said another loungee in the saloon where this conversation occurred. “I say any man of grit would have done the same. Why, didn’t the old man try to disgrace him right before his sweetheart and a lot of girls?”

“Well, anyway,” said the store-keeper, removing his pipe to speak, “smart or fool, I guess they’ll get him. I hear as how the Squire is terrible cut up about this thing, and he’s sent down to Boston for a regular detective.”

“The Squire’s sent to Boston for a detective?” said Everly. “I wouldn’t have believed that the Squire would do such a thing. To set a spy on the track of one of his neighbors! Why, it’s disgraceful!”

Over in the corner, on chairs drawn up close to the stove, sat two strangers. They had arrived in Lee, that morning, and after taking drinks at this the only tavern in the town, had apparently set about getting warm. The elder of the two here ventured a remark.

“Gentlemen,” said he, “if you’ll pardon the curiosity of a stranger, I’d like to ask you what crime this young man has committed?”

A pause followed, whilst the strangers became the object of a close scrutiny by all present. Finally, Will Everly stepped forward, and looking his interrogator steadily in the face, said:

“I am Will Everly—Walter Marvel’s friend. Before I answer any of your questions I must know who you are, and why you wish to know this story.”

“Your talk aroused my curiosity,” said the stranger.

“Will you deny that you are a detective?” Everly eyed his man closely, but not a sign indicated that the question had caused surprise. He was disappointed, for he had expected him to be disconcerted. The reply was simple.

“I shall not deny it, for I never lie.” He handed Everly a card upon which was neatly engraved:

“John Barnes. Detective. Boston.”

After reading it, conciliated by the detective’s honesty, Everly said:

“I thank you for your candor. I suspected you, for we seldom have strangers in Lee. As I am Marvel’s friend, and as you have come here to make trouble for him, you will pardon me if I give you no information which will be of use to you.”

“No need, young man; we’ll get along well enough without you!” Everly recognized the voice of Squire Olney, who had just entered, and he turned away. The Squire shook Mr. Barnes cordially by the hand, saying:

“You are Mr. Barnes, the man sent down by the Pilkingtons, I presume? I am glad you are so punctual. I expected to find you here, as I received a dispatch from your chief last night. As soon as you are ready, I shall take you up to Mr. Lewis’s house, for it is in connection with his affair that I sent for you.”

“I am ready to go with you at once,” said Mr. Barnes in an undertone; “but first, let me introduce to you my friend Mr. Burrows. He is a young man in whom the chief is interested, and he works with the older men that he may acquire experience. He is a beginner, but he is shrewd, and promises to become a first-class detective.”

Burrows arose, and the Squire shook hands with him, whereupon the three men exchanged a few words in an undertone. Meanwhile, another stranger appeared upon the scene. This was a man dressed in the garb of a sailor. He ordered a hot drink, for which he paid in advance. Then he asked one or two questions, whereupon the store-keeper called out:

“I say, Squire! Here’s a man you may as well see.”

Thus summoned, the Squire left the detectives and approached the new-comer.

“Well, my man,” he asked, “what can I do for you?”

“My name is John Lewis,” was the reply. “I have been at sea for several years, but have at last reached home again; or rather I should say my father’s home, for this is my first visit to Lee. I was asking to be directed to my father’s house, when this gentleman told me that you are about to go there, and might be willing to take me with you.”

“I shall be delighted to do so,” said the Squire, offering his hand to Lewis in cordial recognition. “I have often heard your father speak of you, and as I know that he loves you and longs for your return, it will be a pleasure to me to restore his son to him.”

“You can’t think how your words gladden me,” said Lewis, apparently overcome by emotion. “I ran away from home when I was a youngster; and now that I have come back it is good news to hear that a welcome awaits me.”

“Welcome? Yes, indeed! Your father has often said to me that he would cheerfully forgive your foolish escapade, if you would but return. But come, we must start at once. I have business of importance, with your father, this morning, and I am taking a detective with me to his house.”

“A detective?” exclaimed Lewis. He seemed startled, and Tom Burrows who was watching him, noted that he glanced hurriedly around the room, his__eyes resting finally upon Mr. Barnes and himself.

“Oh, you need not to be alarmed,” said the Squire, observing his agitation, “it is in your father’s interest that I have brought a detective from Boston. I will explain as we go along.”

“You must excuse my being startled,” said Lewis, “but it rather astounded me to hear that you were taking a detective to my father’s house. At the instant, the absurd, but horrible idea, entered my brain that you meant to arrest him.”

Tom Burrows thought it a significant fact that at the mention of the word detective, Lewis’s eye should have sought the very men who were detectives. When he imparted this suspicion to Mr. Barnes, the latter suggested that possibly Lewis had seen them before, and that their faces attracted him, because he partly

recognized them. Subsequently he learned that Lewis had seen them that same morning, on the train, but had reached Lee after them, because he had walked from Newmarket, whilst they had taken the stage.

Without further conversation the four men started on their way towards the home of John Lewis. As they walked, the Squire enlightened them upon the affair which had necessitated the presence of a detective.

“This business,” he began, “is particularly unpleasant, because the best people in the town are mixed up in it. John Lewis came to Lee, fifteen years ago, bringing with him a little girl, then about six years of age. Virginia, she is named, though her intimates call her Virgie. We knew nothing of Lewis, but he appeared to have money, for he bought Riverside farm, on which he has lived ever since. He made friends rapidly as the town’s-people came to know him, and he was reckoned an acquisition. The girl was not his own child, he explained, but an adopted one, the daughter of his sister, who had died. He mentioned having a son,” the Squire here addressed Lewis, “but we never saw you. How was that?”

“When my father came to Lee,” replied Lewis, “he left me at a military academy in New York; but I chafed under the restraint, and one day, very foolishly, ran away, and shipped for a voyage to China.”

“Ah! That explains matters. About five years after Lewis settled here, the Marvels came. At first it was only for the summer months, but finally they bought a place, and since then have been permanent residents. Naturally young Walter Marvel—an only son—met Virgie, and, from boyhood, he has been attached to her. But whilst she has not rejected his attentions, she has never acted so that anyone, even her-most intimate friends, could be sure that she loved him. There are two others connected with what I am about to tell you. Alice Marvel, Walter’s sister, and Harry Lucas, Walter’s friend, currently supposed to be in love with Alice, though there are some who claim that, were it not for the friendship between him and Walter, Lucas would court Miss Lewis himself. That is probably only gossip. However, these four young people are fast friends.

“They are constantly together, and are partners in many enterprises of a social or charitable nature. Another fact which has a not unimportant bearing upon the subsequent events, is that all four of these young people are expert shots with a pistol. Some two or three years ago, a circus appeared in this neighborhood, the star attraction of which was a young girl who was wonderfully clever with a

pistol. Virgie declared that she too could learn to shoot, and the result was that pistols were bought, and, I may say, a sort of shooting-club was formed, though only these four were members.

“Recently, Virgie attained her majority and arranged to celebrate it with a festival for all of her friends. As it was during the nutting season, the guests were invited to come for the day, the many nut trees near the river banks promising occupation to those who cared for that sort of amusement, whilst tennis-nets, and croquet were set upon the lawn. In addition, it was announced that there would be a shooting-match in which all could take part.

“All went merrily during the morning, and a sumptuous dinner, served upon tables in the open air, had been enjoyed by all, after which the party dispersed about the farm in small groups. I was sitting on a bench chatting with Lewis, when Virgie and Walter Marvel approached. The latter asked permission to speak to Lewis privately, and I therefore walked a little way from them with Virgie. At the time, I had no idea of Marvel’s object in seeking the interview with Lewis, and was startled a few moments later to hear them talking in angry tones; but that you may better understand the affair I will relate just what occurred, as it was told to me afterwards, by Lewis himself.

“It appears that the shooting-match that day had a greater prize at stake than the trophy which had been offered. Marvel had asked Virgie to be his wife, and begged permission to speak to her adopted father. With a smile, and womanlike, desiring to keep him in suspense as long as possible, her reply had been: ‘Beat me at the target and you may speak to father.’ This he had accomplished, though by only a single point, and it was to ask for the hand of Virgie that he had impatiently sought the private conversation with Lewis. Lewis confessed to me that he had not suspected that there was any attachment between them, and he was therefore surprised by Marvel’s request. He asked whether Virgie had given her consent, and receiving the affirmative reply, after a moment’s hesitation, he informed Marvel that he would not sanction his suit. Marvel of course urged his cause, and Lewis made some angry remarks which at last were loud enough to attract my attention. Virgie and I then went quickly towards the two men, and others did the same, so that when the _finale_ came there was quite a crowd of people about us. As we approached, Marvel said hotly:

“‘Virgie, Mr. Lewis refuses his consent, and will not give his reasons!’

“‘Why do you object—uncle?’ asked Virgie. She strongly emphasized the word ‘uncle,’ a title by which she had never addressed him before. This incident will give you an insight into that girl’s character; cool, self-possessed, and withal wilful and determined; though by wilful I do not mean that she is unrestrained by reason, but rather that once having formed a project she will carry it into effect at any cost. For a moment Lewis seemed staggered by her words, but he quickly recovered himself and replied:

“‘Because I will not allow my daughter to marry into a family of jail-birds!’

“‘What do you mean by that?’ fairly screamed Walter, trembling with barely suppressed anger.

“‘What do I mean?’ retorted Lewis, speaking rapidly, and as though actuated by intense hatred, ‘I mean that your uncle, the man whose vile name you bear, is a convict, and that he caused the death of an innocent girl!’

“With a wild cry of rage Marvel drew his pistol, which he had reloaded after the shooting-match, and fired at Lewis. The sequence of events had been so startling and so rapid, that none of us made a move to save Lewis, except Virgie, who exhibited her usual presence of mind. With a quick upward motion of her hand, she diverted her lover’s aim, so that the ball went into the air. Having thus saved the life of her adopted father, she turned to Marvel and said the single word ‘Go!’ Walter looked at her a moment with despair upon his face, then, as she made no answer to his mute appeal, he threw his weapon from him, and rushed from the place, threatening Lewis with his vengeance.

“He had scarcely departed when Lucas pushed through the surrounding circle and upbraided Lewis for what had occurred. Lewis, by this time beside himself with rage, ordered Lucas to leave the premises, and threatened to set his dog upon him if he would not do so, or if he ever should return. Lucas muttered some threatening words, but prepared to leave, whereupon Alice Marvel pressed forward and said:

“‘You are a coward to have insulted two gentlemen whilst they were your guests! I almost feel that I could kill you myself!’

“Alice is usually a quiet girl, but she is somewhat hysterical, and, as the two men were, the one her brother and the other her sweetheart, she was much overwrought. She and Lucas left simultaneously. Then Virgie, still maintaining

her dignity, said:

““Since my uncle has acted so churlishly to three of my guests, I advise the rest of my friends to retire, lest he should humiliate us further.’

“That she spoke of him as ‘uncle’ maddened Lewis, and he retorted angrily.

““Go! All of you, but,’ picking up Marvel’s pistol, ‘I call you all to witness that this is Walter Marvel’s weapon, and that with it, he attempted to take my life!’”

The Squire paused a moment, and then resumed:

“I was an eye-witness of this scene, and I assure you that I have not exaggerated it in the least. On the following day Lewis applied to me to procure a warrant for him. As I was once a justice of the peace, he knew that I understand such matters. I tried to dissuade him from his purpose, but he was determined to have Marvel arrested for assault with intent to kill. He procured the warrant, but thus far Marvel has kept out of the way. After several more unsuccessful attempts to persuade Lewis to abandon his object, I was obliged to give up the task. Then the continued absence of young Marvel began to worry me, and I feared that he might return and kill Lewis. Therefore, I have decided that it will be best to find him before any such calamity can occur. This, as much for his sake as for the safety of Lewis. So I have sent for you, Mr. Barnes, taking a step of which Lewis is ignorant. And now, may I ask you what in your judgment will be the chance of apprehending Marvel?”

“Oh,” said Mr. Barnes, “there will be no difficulty in finding him. I do not think he is hiding from the law. If at all, it is from the disgrace which he fancies that Mr. Lewis has cast upon him. But, if he really loves Miss Lewis, the thing is simple. We have but to watch her. He is sure to seek an interview, sooner or later.”

“There,” said the Squire, admiringly, “see how quickly you get at it. I should never have thought of such a mode of proceeding. You are right, too, as to your first conjecture. Marvel is high spirited, and I should not be surprised if he surrenders, as soon as he learns that he is wanted. That is why I have been worried by his disappearance. But here we are at the farm.”

The house was an elegant frame building of the Queen Anne style of architecture. The grounds were on the south side of the road, so that the dwelling

faced the north. It was recessed about fifty feet from a picket fence, and the party entered through a neat, painted gate, a brick-paved walk leading them up to the main door. This was standing invitingly open. Squire Olney seemed entirely at home, for he led the way straight in, without the formality of using the great brass lion's claw, which served as a knocker. This bold entry was not destined to go unresented however, for a huge mastiff appeared, coming from an inner room, and growled ominously. At a word from the Squire the dog assumed a less hostile demeanor, and prowled about the party, sniffing at their persons as though to make their acquaintance. When he reached Lewis, who was the last to enter, he raised himself up on his hind legs, and, planting his forepaws on his breast, tried to lick him on the face. Lewis resented the animal's familiarity, and seemed much annoyed as he brusquely pushed him down with an exclamation of impatience.

"Why, Mr. Lewis," said the Squire, "the dog acts as though he knows you. Can it be possible that he remembers you? I know that your father brought him here when he first came, but that is years ago, and he was a mere puppy then."

"I remember him well enough now, but I doubt if his recollection spans the interval between now and the time when I gave him bread and milk in his puppy days. I receive that kind of attention from nearly all dogs. Some of the fiercest have favored me at sight. Once, at a bench show in London, I bet that I could pat the head of any dog there. I won the wager, though the animal selected was a ferocious-looking bull-dog, over whose kennel was conspicuously displayed the warning placard: 'Dangerous, do not handle!' They say that a dog knows a friend instinctively, and I am certainly a friend of the canine species, ranking dogs next to human beings. But let us seek my father. I am anxious to meet him."

"Well, come in here," said the Squire, leading the way into a room on the left of the hall. "This is the parlor. Remain here while I hunt up Lewis."

The Squire had barely passed the doorway, when he uttered a cry of alarm, and hurried across the room. His companions hastened after him, and beheld the prostrate form of a man lying upon the rug, in front of the fireplace. The Squire leaned over the body for a moment, and then jumped up with horror depicted on every feature.

"There has been a terrible accident," said he. "My friend Lewis is here, dead!"

The others pressed forward. They saw the motionless body of a man. He lay on his side with his head near the fireplace, in which were the remains of a log fire. This fire must have been a hot one, as the face of the dead man, which had been covered in life with a heavy beard, was now scarcely more than a mass of charred flesh, and therefore entirely unrecognizable. In spots, there remained the burnt stubs of the hair on the face, and more on the head; but in many places it was burnt entirely away, exposing the flesh, a blackened human charcoal.

Lewis gazed in a dazed and semi-conscious way at the awful sight, and, in a low hoarse whisper asked:

“Is this my father?”

The Squire started at the question, and at once realized all the horror of the situation. He did not reply, but beckoned to the two detectives to follow him, and quietly left the room. Accompanied by them, he led the way across the hall into the library, and then repeated what he had exclaimed at first sight of the body, that it was that of John Lewis, in whose interest they had come to the house.

“But,” continued he, “I cannot understand how it is that we find him dead, and in such a position. It looks at first sight like heart disease, or apoplexy. How terrible that he should have fallen into the fire, and have been so dreadfully disfigured.”

“Did you ever fancy that your friend had any physical ailment of the kind?” asked Mr. Barnes.

“Why, no; I always considered him the stoutest, heartiest man of my acquaintance.”

“Is it not singular, then, that he should be taken away so suddenly as this?”

“Now that you suggest the idea, it does seem so. The whole thing has been so startling, and so unexpected, that I have not collected my thoughts sufficiently to analyze the situation. I find my friend dead, on the floor of his own house, after having seen him alive and well only last evening, and I suppose I have adopted the first theory which presented itself.”

“You say you saw your friend last evening?” asked Mr. Barnes, in a quiet voice, keeping his eyes steadily fixed on the Squire.

Something in his tone, or in his manner of asking the question, attracted the Squire, and he turned and faced his interrogator as he replied:

“Yes.”

“Where?”

“There in the very room where we now find his corpse. I came to talk about this business once more, and to try to dissuade him from pursuing it further.”

“Can you tell at what time you left him? Is there any circumstance by which you can fix the time accurately? Think well! It may be important!”

“Important?” echoed the Squire. “Why, man, what are you getting at? Surely you cannot think that—merciful heaven, do you suppose that my friend has been murdered?”

“Squire Olney, I cannot say that I have really formed such an opinion. But a man in my profession sees such things only too often, and, therefore, when he finds a dead body under anything like peculiar circumstances—such as these for example, his suspicions are aroused more quickly perhaps than might be the case with other men. But if you think our young friend, the son, may now have sufficiently recovered from his shock, we will go into the room again. An examination of the body may remove any doubts on this subject.”

Mr. Barnes then started towards the next room, and the Squire followed, hardly daring to think of what they might be about to discover.

Appreciating the fact that the business before them was very serious, the three men entered the parlor quite gravely. As they did so, Lewis, who was bending over the body, rose and said, in a low voice:

“Gentlemen, my father has been murdered!” The Squire sank into the nearest chair. His last hope was gone. Lewis continued: “I repeat he has been murdered! There is a bullet hole in his left side, where it is almost impossible for him to have shot himself; therefore suicide is out of the question.”

At the words “bullet hole,” Mr. Barnes became all attention. Here was something tangible. Here was real evidence. The position of the wound, too, that was quite important, and Lewis’s conclusion seemed logical enough. But he had used the

correct words when he said “almost impossible.” Mr. Barnes was a careful man in forming opinions, and experience had taught him that the seemingly impossible often occurs. Still, in the line of thought suggested by Lewis’s words, he turned to Squire Olney:

“Can you tell us whether your friend was left-handed?”

“Yes; I am sure he was not.”

“Then it is probable that he was shot by some other party than himself. Squire, the affair is now serious. It becomes our duty to try to find the guilty party.”

At the word “duty,” the Squire recovered himself instantly, and was all attention. Mr. Barnes continued:

“The coroner should be notified at once.”

“I am the coroner of the county,” replied the Squire. “In this town we have not needed such an officer within the memory of man. However, in this instance the duty devolves upon me. Therefore I am in charge of the case. Mr. Barnes, as you came down to serve me in a matter now at rest, I suppose you can place yourself at my disposal, and assist in finding the murderer?”

“Certainly,” replied Mr. Barnes; “I will simply notify the chief of the facts, and he will grant me more time than I should have asked for before. Do you object to my having Mr. Burrows as my assistant?”

“Of course not. I want to see you commence your work at once. No time is to be lost. I may have been anxious to hush up the other matter, but I am alive to the seriousness of this. Whoever he may be, and at whatever cost, the murderer must be found and brought to justice.”

“Very well, sir; from this moment we act under your orders. As you say, no time must be lost. The murderer has several hours start of us now, and we must catch up our end of the trail as quickly as possible. The first thing to be done is to examine the room and premises minutely for clues. I therefore suggest that you and Mr. Lewis leave us to work alone, while you summon men to form your jury.”

“A very good suggestion. I will act on it at once. Come, Mr. Lewis; a walk in the

open air will help you after the shock, which you have sustained.” Taking Lewis by the arm, the two left the room.

Chapter II

Seeking For Clues

Left to themselves, the two detectives remained silent until they heard the front door shut by the Squire, as he and Lewis went out. Then Mr. Barnes said:

“Well, Tom, you are in luck. A mysterious murder, which will, in my judgment, require much skill to discover the truth. Come, now, tell me where you would begin?”

“I have found a clue already,” quietly remarked Burrows.

“Good,” said Mr. Barnes, well pleased at his pupil’s shrewdness; “that is better than I expected. What is it?”

“I think that the murderer fired from the outside, through this window.” Burrows indicated a window opening on the lawn to the east. “You see that there is a hole through the centre pane. That it is of recent origin is evidenced by the broken glass on the carpet, which also shows that the bullet came from without, since the pieces have fallen inward.”

“Very well reasoned, Tom, as far as the time and origin of the shot goes, but you have jumped to one conclusion not as yet warranted.” Mr. Barnes went to the window and examined it closely. “You started by saying just now that the ‘murderer’ fired from outside. That is where you have gone beyond your evidence. This pane of glass with that hole, and the fragments on the floor, probably attest the passage of a bullet, but there is nothing as yet to show that said bullet was fired by the ‘murderer.’”

“Why, who else could have fired it?”

“I have heard that physicians make a diagnosis sometimes by exclusion, but it is a dangerous plan for a detective. Look again, and you will note that it is the lower sash which has the broken pane. Being raised as it is, the upper sash is between it and the point from which you argue that your pistol was fired. This proves conclusively—”

“That the lower sash has been raised since the shot was fired,” interrupted Burrows. “You see I have thought of that. I argue this way. Mr. Lewis was standing in the room when he was struck by the ball; he turned and threw up the sash, endeavoring to discover the identity of his assailant.. Then he staggered from the window, and fell a few feet away; as we find him, with his head in the fireplace.”

“It is of course possible. But, as he is in his nightdress, it is curious that he should have been in this room where an assassin, whose presence he did not suspect, could fire upon him. There is another chance, which is that someone has opened that window this morning. Now, looking out, what do we see?”

“A summerhouse directly opposite,” said Burrows. “A most convenient place for a man to hide in, and shoot his victim as he passed in front of a light in a room, at night.”

“I see,” said Mr. Barnes, “what we may be most grateful for, and that is fresh snow. We must extend our investigation presently, in the direction of the summerhouse, and search for footprints.”

He then turned towards the body. It was lying on the right side, thus plainly exposing a mass of blood which surrounded the wound. The burned condition of the head, owing to its proximity to the fire, has been mentioned. There was upon one finger a massive gold ring set with diamonds, which ring, Mr. Barnes thought, would necessarily be known to the dead man’s family, and, besides, he found the name “John Lewis” embroidered upon the nightdress.

“Evidently not the work of a burglar,” he remarked, pointing to the diamond ring.

“No,” replied Burrows, “for here on the mantel is a handsome gold watch and chain.”

“Notice, Tom, that he is in his nightdress. In connection with later discoveries that may prove a very significant fact. At present it puzzles me, for I cannot see why a man should be so dressed, in his parlor, and murdered without a sign of any struggle. The latter fact seems to strengthen your theory.”

“There is a door,” said Burrows, “let us see if it leads into his bedroom. In that event, he may have come here for any trivial purpose, and so have afforded the

murderer the opportunity for which he was awaiting.”

The younger man led the way, followed by Mr. Barnes. He opened the door and both entered, when they at once started back surprised. A young woman was sitting at a writing desk, a small upright cabinet, with one of the drawers open. This she hastily closed as the two men appeared. There was also a letter, sealed and addressed, lying on the desk, which she nervously concealed in the bosom of her dress, as she hurriedly rose and turned towards the intruders. This last motion caused a small object to drop from her lap, and roll half-way across the room, where it rested. The eyes of all three were attracted towards it. The woman moved forward to recover it, but Mr. Barnes, thinking it a thimble, with a quick “Allow me,” stooped and picked it up. He was about to return it when, suddenly realizing what it was, he looked the woman straight in the eyes, still holding the object between his thumb and forefinger, and said:

“Madam, pardon me. You are, I presume, Miss Virginia Lewis?”

“That is my name. But who are you, and why do you enter my apartment, unannounced?”

“I assure you that when we entered, we had no thought of disturbing anyone, least of all a lady. We came to the house with Squire Olney, on business with your uncle. In the parlor we discovered—”

“My uncle’s dead body!”

“Then you know “

“I found him, two hours ago, as you have seen him. I was naturally shocked and unnerved, and have been in here, ever since, trying to collect my thoughts.”

“Miss Lewis, we are detectives,” said Mr. Barnes, and making a brief pause, in order to watch the effect of his words, he noticed a slight tremor pass over her form; but it was barely perceptible, and he concluded that she was a woman of great self-control. Nevertheless, he detected an involuntary, instantaneous glance in the direction of the writing cabinet. Having gained this point, he continued:

“We came here with the Squire, at the request of your uncle, to discover if possible the whereabouts of his assailant, young Marvel.” This time she showed no emotion. “As your uncle is dead, the Squire has asked us to investigate. It was

whilst making an examination of the premises that we came in here, and I again ask your pardon for our intrusion.”

Virginia bowed, and silently awaited his next words. Mr. Barnes felt that he must retire, but was determined to venture once more an attempt to learn something from her. He would have liked nothing better than to hold her in conversation, that he might study her manner as much as her words, but he saw clearly that he could not force her to talk long.

“Miss Lewis, I am aware that this interview must be painful to you, and, if you will allow me to ask one or two simple questions, we will withdraw.” Receiving a sign that he might continue, he asked: “Can you tell me whether your uncle owned a weapon, or whether he had any cause to commit suicide? Some disease, for example, which he may have thought incurable?”

“My uncle did not own a weapon, to my knowledge, nor do I know of anything that would have induced him to take his own life.”

“Did you hear a pistol-shot, during the night?”

“I did not.”

Mr. Barnes left the room, followed by Burrows. Once more in the parlor, where lay the corpse, he said:

“Tom, did we discover anything in there?”

“Yes, I think so.”

“Well, as you are the younger at this business, I am anxious to give you the chance to think for yourself. I suggest that you give me your views and deductions, from the different points that turn up, before you hear mine.”

“Very well. Let me specify what I think we gained by going into the next room. We learned that we were not the first to find the body. Miss Lewis admits having been in this room. So she may have raised the window, which is especially probable since, as no other window is open, the room would have been full of the odor of the burned body when she entered.”

Mr. Barnes nodded acquiescence.

“She hid a letter when we went in. I think she wishes the name of her correspondent kept secret. By the way, she must be a woman of singular temperament, to find the dead body of her uncle, and then go into the next room and write a letter.”

“Exactly, and it may be of the utmost importance for us to learn the address of that letter and its contents, if possible. Anything more, Tom?”

“Yes, but first tell me what it was that you picked up from the floor. She dropped it from her lap as she stood up. Why did you keep it?”

“I thought it was a thimble, till I held it in my hand, and then I found it to be—the empty shell of a cartridge!”

“No wonder that you kept it. Now see this.” He handed Mr. Barnes a small round brush, attached to a twisted wire handle. “I took it from the washstand.”

“This fits my theory, exactly,” said Mr. Barnes. “This brush is still damp, and slightly blackened. It has recently been used to clean the pistol from which this empty shell was taken. That pistol is in her cabinet. I am satisfied of that, by her glancing in that direction when she heard me declare that we are detectives. Follow out the train of action, and you will see why, with all her self-possession—and she has so much that I fear we shall not again surprise her into betraying herself—she could not resist a hasty glance at the drawer which she had just quickly closed, on seeing us. By her own admission she knew of this murder before anyone—as far as we now know—except the murderer. She retires to her own room, and at once proceeds to destroy an important clue—a recently discharged weapon. Remember that this man was more than her uncle, in the ordinary sense of that relationship—she was his adopted child. She must have had a powerful motive for carrying out such an act. What wonder then, when she has just effected her purpose that, being suddenly confronted by the announcement that detectives are already on the scent—what wonder, I say, that her eye should instinctively seek the place where she had hidden the pistol? Especially when she knew that I had the empty shell between my fingers? But, as I said before, she is on her guard now, and whatever she wishes to conceal from us, we shall need all our skill to discover. She will determine on a plan of action and adhere to it.”

“Would we not have the key to the mystery, if we could learn her reasons for

acting as she has?”

“Not necessarily, though of course it might be so. For example, suppose she has committed the crime herself?”

“Why, do you suspect her already?”

“No; I should not make so serious a charge against a woman, even to myself, on so little evidence. Nevertheless, in a case like this, we must consider all things as possible. By her anxiety to destroy a clue, she proves that she does not wish the murderer to be known. This may be accounted for in two ways. First, that she would hide her own guilt; and second, that she might be shielding someone else.”

“That someone else must be one in whom she is deeply interested,” said Burrows, thinking over Mr. Barnes’s proposition. Then suddenly, as the idea came to him, “What if it be her lover— young Marvel? He would have a motive for killing Lewis.”

Mr. Barnes smiled approvingly at his companion’s quick perception of what he himself was thinking; but he replied:

“Not so fast! We have nothing against him yet, except the ‘motive.’ Many a man may have good and strong reasons for wishing another dead, and yet not stain his hands with blood. Besides, remember that the same motives which you attribute to Marvel, might equally well actuate the woman who loves him. However, at present, I do not think that Miss Lewis committed the crime.”

“If not she and not Marvel, whom then do you suspect?”

“I must have more evidence before I suspect anyone. It is a different thing, however, to think one ‘not guilty,’ and, at present, I believe Miss Lewis is innocent. Later I may find in her the criminal. But I cannot think so yet.”

“Surely, you are not influenced by her sex—you are not going to be sentimental—you, a detective?”

Mr. Barnes smiled faintly. He was amused and yet a little troubled, at his companion’s ardor. Why should not a detective have sentiment? Because it is his business to seek out and punish the criminal, must he necessarily be without a

heart? He could not accept such a theory, although he knew it to be one esteemed by the members of his craft. The majority of these men hunt down a criminal as a matter of business. A crime committed gives them work to do; a man found to fit the circumstances of that crime, and the detectives' work is completed.

It was not so with Mr. Barnes. He had a heart, and this very fact, though unrecognized by his superiors, made him the keenest man in the employ of the Pilkingtons. He did not work simply to fit a crime on someone 's, anyone's, shoulders; but rather that it should not be fitted to an innocent man. He sought diligently for the right man, that the wrong man might not be made to suffer, through the accident of implicating circumstances.

Replying to Burrows, he said:

"No, I would not think of her sex. A true detective should consider the evidence only. There is always danger, however, of our mistaking it, or rather to what it points. The evidence itself is always dumb witness of the truth. Unfortunately, our ability or skill too often fails to connect it. Now I will tell you why I think Miss Lewis innocent.

"It is plain, from the charred condition of the body, coupled with the fact that the fire has entirely burned out, that the man has been dead some hours. If Miss Lewis had done the shooting, herself, the probability is that she would have cleaned her pistol earlier. Still, she might have been disturbed, and, dropping her weapon in a hurried flight from the scene of the crime, she might have returned, later, to recover it. But, whilst I consider her a person of great willpower—from a physical standpoint quite capable of conceiving and executing a murder—yet, having done the deed, and accidentally having left her weapon, I doubt her having the nerve power to return for it after several hours had passed. She might, within a short period of time, but in that case, the cleaning would have occurred then, and not have been left for the morning; for, had she premeditated the killing, she would also have premeditated removing this evidence. But remember, this is reasoning, not proof. The most specious reasoning may be, nay, often is, disproved by the facts."

"But you must think she has some knowledge of the crime?" said Burrows.

"My theory is this," replied Mr. Barnes. "Miss Lewis entered this room this morning, perhaps opened the window, and then discovered the dead body—the

weapon—and perchance more; at any rate enough to make her suspect young Marvel. Here let me point out that the fact that she does so, is not sufficient reason for our suspecting him. It was not necessary for her to know him guilty for her to attempt to shield him. It was enough for her to entertain suspicion. Convinced of even the possibility of his guilt, she might try to save him from the consequences of the act.”

Burrows had listened quite attentively to all this, and was much impressed by the reasoning. After thinking a few moments in silence, he asked:

“Do you think that the letter which she wrote is to her lover?”

Again Mr. Barnes was pleased to note that Burrows followed his line of argument. He replied:

“Yes, I think the letter is to Marvel; but her writing to him might be a sequence in either case. Whether she committed the deed herself, or thinks him guilty, she would probably write to him.”

“It would be well then for us to get that letter?”

“Well, indeed! It would at least show us his whereabouts. But how to become possessed of it? That is the question. We need not expect to obtain it till it has left her custody, and be sure she will be very careful how she forwards it.”

“If we could get the pistol, might we not be able to find out who is the owner of it? That would be something, perhaps.”

“Assuredly! Besides, it is probable that though cleaned, one chamber may still be empty. We have the shell, and evidence of the recent cleaning. As soon as Miss Lewis leaves the house, as she will do to start her letter on its way, I will get the pistol from her cabinet.”

“Is there anything more that we can discover in this room?”

“Let us look.”

To approach the body they walked around a small table, which stood in front of the fireplace. On this was scattered loosely some papers. A drawer stood partly open, and a large cut-glass ink-well uncovered. Mr. Barnes glanced at these

things as he passed, and his eye was attracted by a half sheet of paper, with a bit of writing, which protruded from under the other clean sheets. He picked it up, more from curiosity than interest, but after he had read it his manner showed at once that he thought it important. Burrows looked at him inquiringly, but for a moment Mr. Barnes did not heed him. He was looking at the table before him, and seemed studying the situation. At length he spoke:

“Miss Lewis has destroyed, or removed, another clue! See this!” He handed the piece of paper to Burrows, who took it and read as follows:

The word “_is_” was followed by a huge blot, as though the pen had spluttered at that point. Burrows looked at Mr. Barnes in silence, and the latter continued:

“Mr. Lewis was not killed outright. He even saw and recognized his murderer. He attempted to warn his friends and insure justice. Fearing death before aid would reach him, he wrote that. Evidently excited, perhaps already growing weak, as he reached the name of his assailant his hand trembled, his pen spluttered and he threw it from him. Here it is, lying on a piece of paper, which it has blotted where it fell. However, he essayed again, and this time he succeeded, for see, he has placed the second pen carefully, the point on the edge of the ink-well, proving that he finished his note of warning. Miss Lewis undoubtedly found it. She read the name.

Whose was it? Her own?—or Marvel’s? If any other, why should she remove it?”

“What would Miss Lewis do if you showed her this paper, and demanded the other?”

“I cannot tell. She might deny having it. She might admit taking it and refuse to yield possession of it. She might treat me with scorn and deny my right to question her on the subject at all. However, I may conclude to test her. I may ask her the question.”

Burrows stood thinking and looking down, when suddenly he noticed something on the floor which attracted his attention. He stopped to examine it, and then called Mr. Barnes, who was still absorbed in the table and its contents. Mr. Barnes joined him, and looked at what Burrows picked up—some bits of plastering. Both simultaneously looked upwards, and saw just over their heads, a small hole in the ceiling.

“The mark of a bullet,” said Mr. Barnes. He walked over to the window where he stood for a minute, alternately looking out, and at the bullet hole in the plastering. “That shot came from without, passed through this window, and struck as we see overhead. The summerhouse there is just in the line. Evidently there was more than one shot fired, for that ball could not have passed entirely through the body and then have continued upward.”

“Shall we examine the grounds now?” said Burrows.

“Yes; I think we have learned all we can, at present, in here.”

Followed by his companion, Mr. Barnes then led the way out of the house.

Chapter III

Footprints in the Snow

The town of Lee, New Hampshire, though covering a large territory, is so sparsely settled that one might almost ride through it without meeting a half dozen persons. Indeed, it covers so much ground, that the various sections where there are clustered together any considerable number of houses all bear different names; as “Lee Hill”—“Lee Hook”—“Lee,” or “Lee Depot” as it is more commonly known, because of the railroad station—and lastly “Wadley’s Falls.”

Wadley’s Falls is the southernmost and most populous section of the town. It is in the immediate vicinity of the low falls in the Lamprey River, which runs through the place. This river, though at times so shallow that one might wade across in many places, yet turns numerous mills in its course. Both river and falls play an important part in this history.

A good road leads from the depot at Lee, and with a few easy turns winds its way up hill, passing the farm and homestead of the Lewises, and on a mile further, where the river is crossed by a bridge. Beyond one finds the Wadley’s Falls post-office and the saloon. The bridge being of some interest to us, must receive a moment’s description. To-day there is a neat iron structure at this point, but, at the time of which I write, a wooden ramshackle affair did duty for man and horse. It was situated about fifty feet to the south of the falls, and where the river winds under it, many a huge boulder projects, making the rushing stream the more noisy. Here, also, to the north, is a dam, and over on the east bank stands an old ruin which is still in use as a saw-mill.

The Lewis farm is bounded on the east by the Lamprey, and on the north by the road, which at this point runs eastward. After crossing the bridge it turns to the south, following a somewhat parallel course with the river, so that did one choose, he could leave the road on the south side of the bridge, and by crossing a narrow strip of land and the river, be upon the Lewis farm, which covers over two hundred acres.

That you may well understand the deductions which the detectives reached, from the study of the grounds, it will be best for you to follow closely a description of the place with the assistance of the accompanying map.

A beautiful grassy lawn is separated from the road by a neat paling fence, in which there are two gates, one opposite the main entrance to the dwelling, and the other opening into the grounds, about a couple of rods to the east (A A). Passing through the first of these a brick path (B) leads the visitor to a piazza (C) three steps above the ground, and extending the full width of the building. Entering, one finds himself in a spacious hall (D), which on the first floor divides the house in the centre, doors leading into the rooms on either side, and into one at the further end.

To the west is the library (G); back of that Lewis's bedroom (H), and beyond again the kitchen (K). On the east side, and facing the lawn and river, is the parlor (E), wherein the corpse was discovered; then Virginia's apartment (F), and the dining-room (I), which is as wide as the parlor and hall.

It will be seen by consulting the plan, that Virginia's room communicates with the parlor, hall, and dining-room, which latter has a door leading on to a small piazza, and thus, is approached readily from the lawn. "PPP" represent chimneys, each serving for two rooms, and "O" is the window looking towards the summerhouse (M N), alluded to by Burrows, and through which he thought the fatal shot had been fired.

The various dotted lines represent the different tracks or footprints in the new-fallen snow, but further allusion will be made to these, later, as this diagram is a facsimile of the one made by Mr. Barnes and used by him in his study of the case.

It will be remembered that just before leaving the parlor Mr. Barnes stood for a moment looking from the window. Whilst there, he noticed the piazza with which the dining-room communicated, and he deemed this a suitable way to get out on the lawn. So when in the hall, he looked for a way to reach the room into which he judged that the door on the piazza opened. Seeing the door at the end of the hall, he at once entered the dining-room, and went thence out to the porch. Before descending the steps, he stood a moment and looked about him, Burrows at his side. At length he said:

"Tom, I think we are in luck, for here we have a fresh fall of snow, and plainly there have been several people about, since I see footprints in every direction."

"How can they help us? They may have been made by the servants, or—"

“Exactly! They may have been, but were they? That is the question, the solving of which may throw considerable light on this mysterious affair. I intend to follow, as far as I can, the different tracks before us, from the beginning to end. That will at least show me the ground travelled over by those who have been here, even though it tell but little of the object or personalities of the visitors.”

“Well, since you say you will trace these footprints from beginning to end, we can commence here, for this seems to have been the point of departure for two people. See!” Burrows pointed to the ground before them. Mr. Barnes stepped down from the piazza, being careful not to destroy any of the impressions already in the snow. He examined the footprints closely a minute and then said: “As you say, here are two tracks. Which would you trace first?”

“The smaller,” answered Burrows, after a little consideration.

“Why?”

“Mainly because it leads to the summerhouse, which is what we intended to examine when we started out. Then, again, I notice that these two sets of footmarks are very different. One is so large it must be that of a man, and equally, the other is so tiny, none but a woman’s foot could have made it.”

“And you would follow the woman’s footsteps first, eh? What did you say awhile ago about not considering sex? But shall I tell you what you are thinking?”

Burrows looked up inquiringly, and Mr. Barnes proceeded impressively:

“Tom, you are making a great mistake; one which I cannot too much warn you to avoid, now and all through life. You have already formed your opinion of this case, and, unconsciously, perhaps, you are ready to fit to your theory any evidence that turns up.” Burrows attempted to disclaim any such intention. But Mr. Barnes continued:

“I don’t blame you exactly. You have youth and ambition as your excuse, and I am sorry to say I have known older and more experienced men drop into the same error. They are so anxious to discover a criminal—_a _criminal—mark the words!”

“But, really, you are mistaken—you misjudge me—I—”

“I am afraid not. I don’t wish to stay your zeal either, but in cases like this it is wisest to make haste slowly, as the proverb has it. Now let me show you what you have done in your own mind. First, you find a hole in a pane of glass, and because you can weave enough evidence to show that it is of recent origin, you conclude that the fatal shot passed in that way. The fact is, all that evidence proves, is that a bullet passed through the glass, last night. Anything further is merely a matter of circumstantial possibility, or perhaps, in this case, I might go so far as to say probability. Second, you find a woman who is certainly acting suspiciously. I don’t say you actually accuse her, but you incline to such a judgment. Thirdly, these footprints. Having in your theory settled that the shot came from without, and deeming it possible that a certain woman committed the crime, you would examine the woman’s footsteps first, and if possible prove thereby, that the woman whom you would implicate was in the position to fire through the window. Thus you would strengthen your theory.”

Burrows seemed confused, as though detected in a mean act. In truth he was to himself considering the chance of discovering the murderer by his own individual efforts, thus, if possible, forestalling the man with whom he was working. He was therefore not a little astonished at the accuracy with which his companion had read his thoughts.

“I am afraid you hit the nail on the head,” said he, “and I am ashamed to be forced to confess it. But tell me, which of these trails do you decide on tracing first?”

“The same as you selected, but for this reason. Notice that here the direction is towards the summerhouse, as you just now said; whilst on this side, the point of the toe shows that the owner of the foot returned to her starting-point. Unless we find another trail, leading from the house, we have here proof conclusive that this party has remained within doors.”

“How so? I don’t see that.”

“Yet it is simple. Notice that the steps away from the house are very indistinct, whilst those coming towards us are, on the contrary, clear, and sharply defined. The woman left this spot whilst it was yet snowing; so the snow filled up the tracks somewhat. Wherever she went, and that we shall find out perhaps by following the trail, she did not start for home, or to be accurate, she did not reach here, till the snow had ceased falling, as the clear marks testify.”

“Mr. Barnes, you are a genius. Why, all we have to do is to find out when the snow ceased, to have the time of this young woman’s promenade.”

“Why do you say young woman? You are smarter than I, if you can tell her age by these,” pointing at the ground.

Burrows seemed a little abashed as he replied:

“Surely, since you proved that the woman is still within the house, who else can it be but Miss Lewis?”

“Her maid, perhaps,” said Mr. Barnes, with some curtness. Of all things, he abjured conclusions which were too hastily, and therefore illogically drawn.

“Come,” he continued, “we will follow this trail as far as the summerhouse.”

He started, his head bent and his eyes fixed scrutinizingly on the snow. Burrows followed in silence, feeling rebuked, and just a little resentful. The tracks led in almost a direct line to the summerhouse, which they discovered to be divided into two parts. It seemed that the unknown person, whose movements they were tracing, had entered the southern half.

“This was a place of meeting,” said Mr. Barnes, “for notice that still another set of steps lead here, evidently a man’s, judging from their size.”

“Then you think the woman came here to meet some man?”

“Yes, and furthermore, the man arrived first, for his footprints, or at least those leading in, are more obliterated by the falling snow than are hers; similarly, arguing from the impressions which they have left for our examination, it is evident that they separated here, for the woman plainly walked off toward the river, whereas the man returned, as he had entered, through the little gate yonder.”

“Mr. Barnes, as there seem to be so many sets of impressions, would it not be well to make a drawing of the grounds and the general direction of the tracks, for convenience, as well as reference?”

“A good suggestion. We will act upon it at once. But wait here a moment. There is a man going along the road. I will question him about last night’s snow.” Mr.

Barnes hurried over to the fence, where he found the man awaiting him, having been attracted by a call from Burrows.

“Good morning, friend; do you live about here?”

“Yes, jest over the bridge.”

“Then, perhaps you can tell me about what hour it stopped snowing last evening. It may seem a trifle to stop you about, but I have a good reason for inquiring, and hope you won’t mind my troubling you?”

“No trouble ‘t all. Not the least in the world. Le’ me see, I don’t know as I kin tell you for sartin, ‘cause I went ter bed ‘airly last night. But stop a minute, come ter think I kin find out purty nigh, an’ kin give you some notion myself.”

“I shall be much indebted, and hope you can fix the time as near as possible.”

“Well, as I said before, I went ter bed ‘airly, seven o’clock in fact; ‘t was snowin’ hard then, an’ I ‘lowed ‘t would keep up all night; I slept purty sound but was waked up by the noise my girls made comin’ in from a visit ter a neighbor’s. You know how’t is when a man’s woke up? He’s kinder crusty, an’ more ‘an all, can’t tell whether he’s slept ten hours or ten minutes. So as the girls went by my door, I growled out: ‘An’t you purty late gittin’ home?’ ‘No, Pop, it’s just nine o’clock,’ come the answer. Seein’ as how I had a good night’s rest before me, I felt a leettle mite pleasanter an’ in a’ easier tone I said: ‘I s’pose the snow’s purty deep, an’t it?’ ‘Not very,’ says one on ‘em, ‘it stopped awhile ago, an’ the moon’s out now!’ That’s all was said. But you see that shows it didn’t snow after nine, tho’ ef you want it nearer, mebbe I kin find out from the girls.”

“I should thank you to ask them. Will you please give me your name?”

“Jef Harrison’s my name, an’ anyone’ll show you my house, ef you care ter come up an’ speak to the girls yourself?”

“I am much obliged, Mr. Harrison, and perhaps I’ll accept your invitation to call.”

“I’ll be glad ter see you. But, say, ther’ an’t nothin’ wrong, is ther’? Nothin’ speshul, hay?”

“No!” replied Mr. Barnes, not deeming it wise to tell of the death of Mr. Lewis, lest he be kept from his investigation by further talk.

“You an’t got track of young Marvel yet, is ye?”

“Not yet.”

“Well, good day ter you. Hope ter see you up ter the house by an’ by.”

Jef Harrison walked off slowly, evidently reluctant to leave. As he passed on he muttered to himself, “Guess he’s the detective they told about down to Lee Depot. Guess he’s a cute one. An’t much of a hand at answerin’ questions. A dog-goned sight better at askin’ ‘em. Wonder why he wants ter know when the snow stopped! Them fellers kin make a mighty sight out of durned little, that’s what I think,” and so he trudged on, still wondering at the presence of the detectives and what it all portended.

Mr. Barnes rejoined Burrows, and they followed each set of footprints thoroughly, the elder choosing his, and assigning the others to his companion. Then the two men returned to the parlor, where Mr. Barnes tore off half a sheet of paper from some which lay on the centre table, and upon it made a careful drawing, of which that upon page 41 is a facsimile. This completed, they discussed the situation.

“Well,” began Burrows, “now that you have finished your map of the movements of the several parties who were about these premises last night, what do you learn from it?”

“We found four sets of tracks,” said Mr. Barnes, “besides the dog’s, which latter may prove of value. Two of these we think were made by women, and two by men. For convenience, I have numbered them 1, 2, 3, and 4. I will consider number 4, first.”

“Why not take them in the regular order?”

“That is what I mean to do. But whereas I have numbered them in rotation as I discovered them, I will trace them in the order in which they were made.”

“You don’t pretend that you can do that?” said Burrows, incredulously.

“I think so, and commence with number 4. This was made by a woman. Unfortunately I can find no distinct continuation of any of the tracks outside the gates, for passing teams have obliterated them. We find the first of number 4, at the little gate. The woman went directly to the summerhouse, and into the northern side (M). That she was the earliest on the scene is evident, because the tracks which she made going in are almost entirely destroyed by the snow which fell since. I even go so far as to venture the opinion that this woman suspected a meeting and came to this spot as an eavesdropper.”

“Now you are going rather fast, are you not?” asked Burrows, sarcastically.

“I will give you reasons for all my deductions. The summerhouse faces the west, and the northwest wind last night drifted considerable snow in through the doors; enough, at any rate, to show me that this woman sat quite still in a corner all the time while she was inside, for the mark of her foot shows it. Had she moved about more, the snow would have been more trampled. I even think she sat on one foot, as many women do, for there is but one imprint near the bench where she must have sat, and that is exaggerated out of all shape, as though in her impatience at the slow flight of time, she had nervously kicked this one foot about, and into the drifted snow.”

“How much you make out of little things,” said Burrows, admiringly.

“She came probably to hear what passed between the man and woman in the next compartment. Certainly she sat as close to the partition as possible. She stayed until after they had left. This she would naturally have done, to avoid detection, but I have stronger proof, in the fact that near the gate, I find an imprint from the foot of the man, and across it, is one of the woman. The latter is plainer than the first and was consequently made last. By plainer, I mean that the outline of the sole is easily traced across the larger footprint, which it obliterates where the two cross. There is another thing worth noting. Observe that this woman went almost in a straight line from the gate into the summerhouse. In departing she came out in a straight line towards the house, and then turned and went to the gate. Just where this turn occurred she stopped for a moment.”

“Why, you seem to discern a great deal. How do you deduce that?”

“Very easily, and almost certainly. If one walks, or runs, the footprints must be single, and about equi-distant. At the point where I say that she stopped, I find

two imprints nearly side by side. So she stopped; but why?"

"Can you also tell that?"

"I think that I could make a very shrewd guess. But we will leave her, for the present, and take up the next set, number 3, a man's. He evidently had an appointment, for he too entered by the small gate and went directly to the summerhouse. He returned as he came, which strengthens the theory that his sole object in coming was to meet someone at this place. That it was not to meet the woman whose movements I have followed, is shown by the fact that his steps pass the compartment, M, and go to the other, N. There is another point of great interest. He was attacked by a dog!"

"What? You don't mean to say that the footprints tell you that?"

"As clearly as though they spoke. I cannot trace the dog's movements, for his marks are all over the lawn, but at one point on my diagram you will observe that number 3's feet show a great many imprints in one place. Here he was stopped by the dog whose footmarks are numerous at the point indicated. Their exaggerated shape, too, shows clearly that the dog jumped upon the man, and that in falling back upon his haunches, the mark of his whole leg was made. Again from this point towards the gate, I note that the stride of the man increased. This means that he ran away. You followed the other two. What did you discover?"

"I gave you my drawings, and you have them shown quite accurately. Number 2, made by a woman, commences as you know, at the steps of the dining-room piazza and leads to the summerhouse. From there I traced it over to the river, where I found a boat-landing. Thence, she returned to the steps again. Number 1, a man's, commences at the river bank about two hundred feet south of the landing, and leads directly to the steps. Thence it follows around the house and out through the main gate. Outside, unfortunately, our party this morning made so many footprints that I could not follow number 1."

"Did you cross the river, Tom?"

"No, but there is a boat there, and I meant to suggest that we go over together. I think we will find evidence on the other side that my lady crossed last night. Why else should she have gone to the boat?"

“Certainly, we will go at once; but first I have something more to communicate. Your theory was that the shot was fired from without, and by a woman, and you inclined to the belief that you knew the identity of that woman. What then do you think of this?” He handed Burrows a beautiful silver-mounted revolver, in the chambers of which were four loaded and one empty cartridge. The weapon had apparently been recently fired. Burrows looked at it a moment in amazement, and then asked:

“Where did you find this?”

“Outside of the summerhouse, lying in the snow, just where I claim that the woman stopped. Now you see what I meant when I said I could guess why she did so. But you have not seen all yet, there is a name on it—read.”

Burrows examined the butt more attentively, and there saw a piece of plate let into the stock, and neatly engraved thereon the name:

“_Alice Marvel._”

“_Mr. Barnes, what do you make of that?”

“I think that someone had that pistol last night and fired it. From other evidence that I have, I should say it is a circumstantial probability that Miss Marvel herself was here last night and fired her pistol.”

“This is the second time you have used that phrase, ‘circumstantial probability,’—won’t you explain it?”

“Certainly. We are considering a case purely on circumstantial evidence. I have all my life made a specialty of such, and I divide it into three grades, according to the logical deduction which it indicates. The first of these I call a ‘circumstantial possibility.’ For example, had the wound in this case been differently located, it might have been a ‘circumstantial possibility’ that it was a suicide. Second, we have a ‘circumstantial probability,’ such as I have here, and will explain. Third, the ‘circumstantial proof,’ where the attendant facts leave absolutely no room for doubt; in my experience a rare thing.”

“I understand. Now will you tell me why you think it a circumstantial probability that Miss Marvel was here and fired the pistol?”

“From the facts which I have already given you, I should say it was a question whether she was here, or whether someone else had her pistol. But I found another pistol.”

“The deuce you did!”

“And this one,” producing a duplicate of the one already shown, “also has a name—Harry Lucas. Now follow my argument. Squire Olney told us that these two young people are sweethearts. The tracks indicate that a woman played the spy on a man who came to meet another woman. The weapons bear the names of a man and his sweetheart. Is it not plain? Miss Marvel came to hear what the other girl had to say to her lover, and he to her?”

“You are right,” said Burrows, excitedly; “and is it not equally evident that the second woman is Miss Lewis? Remember, the meeting was in her own grounds.”

“I am more inclined to think so, than at first, though I do not commit myself, yet. But there is another matter worth considering. I found Lucas’s weapon in the snow at the point where I claim he was attacked by the dog. There is also a little blood-stain—”

“Ah! I see, you argue that he drew his pistol and fired at the dog, and so account for the empty shell there?”

“Yes. But the blood-stain is important. I think that came from a wound made by the dog’s teeth. As the discoloration is visible, although somewhat covered, I believe the snow stopped shortly after. Thus I reckon that he left about nine o’clock. The woman left after the snow had ceased.”

“You think Lucas shot at the dog and dropped his pistol in the scrimmage. Do you think Miss Marvel shot at the dog also?”

“That we must find out. I have shown you the probability of the case, ending with the idea that both of these pistols were fired at the dog. But there is another aspect which you must not neglect, and that is the ‘circumstantial possibility!’ Remember that both Lucas and this girl, according to the Squire’s story, had threatened the dead man. They both came here armed, an unusual thing for a woman at all events. Suppose that Lucas saw Lewis through the window, and shot at him. The noise may have attracted the dog, and thus that contest may have occurred after the discharge of the weapon, instead of before. Further,

suppose that, seeing that her lover had left, the girl had also taken aim at the same target. One shot may have made the hole in the ceiling, and the other may have reached the mark.”

“Why this becomes more complicated every minute—what about the pistol in Miss Lewis’s room?”

“Ah! That is the problem—but come, we will go across the river.”

Thereupon they proceeded to the boat-landing, marked “L” in the diagram, and crossed in a light row-boat, which they found fastened at that place. On the other bank they found a continuation of the footprints marked number 2. These led to the base of a gigantic maple around which a seat of boards had been arranged. Mr. Barnes examined the spot critically, and finally said:

“I guess it was Miss Lewis after all. See, this tree is covered with carved monograms of her initials and Marvel’s. Evidently this has been a trysting place for that pair of lovers. Here is another evidence that the snow stopped shortly after the meeting at the summerhouse, for whereas she came here directly, her footprints on this side of the river are quite distinct, showing that the snow ceased during her trip over to this place.”

“She met a man here too; see his footprints! Could it have been the lover this time! I mean Marvel?”

“Possibly. But let us see if we can trace him to where he crossed the river, if, indeed, it was he who did.”

They followed the tracks, but they entered the woods just back of the maple, and were lost. However, a diligent search along the river-bank discovered a track which emerged from the wood and approached the river. They got into the boat, rowed across to a point opposite, and found there the beginning of the track on that side, marked in the diagram, number 1.

“The directness of this trail from this point to the house,” said Mr. Barnes, “is circumstantial proof that the man crossed the river with the intention of visiting that place. For what? Whether he was, or was not Lucas, he had already had an interview with Miss Lewis, and therefore his visit was scarcely to her.”

“How could it be Lucas?”

“Supposing he intended to kill Lewis, after being interrupted by the dog, could he not have gone around by these woods, and returned later to complete his work? It is barely possible that the whole thing was planned; that the interview at the summerhouse was a preliminary, and that Miss Lewis went to the maple where she was later joined by Lucas, who told her the result of his first attempt and arranged the second.”

“How could he know that he had failed in his first shot?”

“I don’t like to follow this line of thought much, as it is all guess-work; still it is one of the possibilities, and in case it turns out wrong, will teach you how easy it is to misconstrue circumstantial evidence. To continue it, suppose that at the meeting over the river Miss Lewis and Lucas determined to finish what they had begun. The object would be that by killing old Lewis the prosecution of Marvel would cease, the complainant being dead. Miss Lewis undertakes to furnish a weapon, because he had lost his. She owns one as the Squire has explained. Therefore Lucas enters the house through the side door, and from the dining-room has access to the girl’s bedroom, where she gives him a pistol; thence he easily enters the parlor. Such an arrangement of events would readily account for her destroying the evidence that her weapon had been used. But don’t lay too much stress on all this, for as I said, it is purely guess-work. There is a flaw in it too. Why did Miss Lewis leave her coadjutor on the wrong side of the river when they separated, and thus force him to wade a stream of water on a cold night?”

“That may be discovered later. But look—there she is leaving the house!”

“Now, Tom, I will give you a chance to do some work alone. That girl has gone to mail her letter. The nearest post-office is in the vicinity of the bridge, and in a private house. See, she is going in that direction. By the road it is more than a mile. By the river you can readily reach there first, as it is shorter. Row as hard as you can, and hide near the post-office. If she enters, wait till she comes out and then go in and learn the address on the letter. You will find it in a cupboard in the hall, where the mail is kept. That is the main thing which we want. I will wait for you at the house, unless something should turn up to make me change my plans.”

Burrows was already in the boat, and started as soon as these last words were uttered. Mr. Barnes waited till the girl was out of sight, and then returned quickly

to the house. He went straight to Virginia's room and over to the writing cabinet in which she had placed the pistol. To obtain this, he meant to break the lock if necessary. Greatly to his surprise he found the key in the lock. He opened the drawer, but did not find therein the object of his search. Looking around the room he was startled to find the pistol lying on the bed. He picked it up and noted that it was of the same pattern as the other two which he already had, and like them, bore a plate with its owner's name, in this instance, "Virginia Lewis."

"Is my last guess correct?" thought Mr. Barnes, "and did that young girl instigate and assist at a murder?—Why, what is this? This weapon has an empty cartridge in it." He examined it closely, and gently raised the hammer. "By heaven, she has replaced a shell for the one which she removed. I see it all. She wishes to get the best of me in some way. She knows that I picked up the shell which she had drawn, and there would no longer be anything gained by reloading the pistol. Why, she has even taken the precaution to so place the cartridge that the hammer rests in the little indentation made in the rim when fired. And there on the desk is a little box of empty shells. Evidently if I showed the one which I have, she would laugh and show a box full. However, I still have the brush with which she cleaned the barrel. But I am wasting time. This girl will outwit Burrows. I must go after her myself."

When passing through the dining-room he had noticed behind the door several hooks on which hung some clothing. Hastening there he found these to consist of two suits of overalls, such as farm hands use when at work, and evidently left there when the owners had last taken them off at meal-time. In New England the farmers and their help often eat together. Mr. Barnes quickly donned one suit of these, and taking some whiskers from his pocket, was soon sufficiently disguised. Having finished these arrangements, he left the house and hurried towards the Wadley's Falls post-office.

Chapter IV

The Letter

When Mr. Barnes reached the road, he started on a run, for he was anxious to overtake Virginia Lewis before she should discover that she was watched by Burrows. After what he had just learned, he very much doubted whether his young assistant would be able to circumvent this shrewd girl. It is not as easy to shadow a person along a lonely country road, as it might be in a city, where the crowded streets offer ready opportunities for hiding.

As Virginia had only a few minutes start of the detective, and walked at a moderate gait, Mr. Barnes caught sight of her just as she began to cross the bridge. As she passed over it, he noted that she was attracted by something, for she stopped, looked over the rail, and then around her in every direction. Mr. Barnes was glad that he had found a chance to assume some sort of disguise, as there was no way of avoiding her gaze. In a moment she went on, and when he reached the bridge he saw at once what had aroused her caution. It was the sight of her own boat, which Burrows had used to reach the place. As she knew that she had left it up the stream the night before, its presence at this landing must have been sufficient to indicate to her that she was being followed, for she had evidently chosen the time for her errand when she knew the detectives had gone off exploring near the river-bank. It was easy for her to guess that her departure from the farm had been observed, and that her own boat had brought a spy after her.

Mr. Barnes was disappointed that she should have thus been placed upon her guard. She would now almost certainly not post her letter at the office. She walked on about a hundred yards beyond the bridge, and, from the alert glances which she cast about her, it was plain that she was looking for the detective, of whose presence she felt assured. She passed the post office and going a little farther entered a house on the opposite side of the road. Mr. Barnes did not follow, because there was nothing to be gained. She was beyond his reach for the present, and having seen him behind her, may have entered a friend's house merely to observe him as he went by, being suspicious of strangers. He therefore went into the saloon where he had met the Squire that same morning. If Virginia was watching him it would perhaps disarm her suspicion of him, since it was a

natural place whereat one dressed as he was, might stop. Furthermore, being near the post-office, he could watch that place and see if she mailed her letter herself, or by proxy, sending someone from where she was. He was scarcely within the doorway, before he became aware of the presence of Tom Burrows, who was seated near the window and evidently watching the post-office. Satisfied, therefore, that there was no immediate need for him to do so also, and noticing that the place was more than ordinarily crowded, and that the inmates were in deep conversation over some very absorbing topic, which he at once guessed must be the murder, Mr. Barnes moved to the back of the store and mingled with the loungers there.

Almost the first person whom he noticed was Will Everly, the young man with whom he had had the brief conversation in the earlier part of the day. He was still staunchly defending his friend Marvel.

"I tell you, Harrison," he was saying, "it is wrong in you to accuse Walter of this thing, when you know very well that he has not been in this neighborhood since the night of that party, when he and Lewis had the spat—"

"Spat? That's a mild way ter put it when he tried ter shoot the old man." The speaker was the man who had given the information about the snow. "But I say, Everly, I don't exactly accuse Marvel; I merely say it's a bad business for him, seein' as how he threatened ter do this very thing."

"Well, what if he did? A threat when a man is mad, is a very different thing from actually committing a murder. As to that, why, Lucas threatened him too."

"Why, of course I hope Marvel will come out all right. He's a fine fellow, and I like him. It's a lucky thing the Squire had them detectives right on the spot. They'll clear up matters mighty quick, I reckon."

"Whatever they do they won't find that Walter is in this ugly business. I can prove that he was not in town anyway."

"How kin you do that?" Mr. Barnes became interested at once.

"Why I have a letter from him this morning from Epping."

"Bosh! What does that amount ter? That's only five miles off."

Mr. Barnes noticed that Everly spoke louder than was absolutely necessary, and as he glanced towards Burrows occasionally, it seemed that his defence of his friend was, in a measure, meant for that detective's ears. At this point, a lad entered, and approaching Everly, said:

"Will, Miss Alice asks you if you can go as far as New Market for her."

"Tell her I'll be with her as soon as I can hitch up my horse." As Everly started to go, Mr. Barnes touched him on the arm, and said:

"Friend, if you are going to New Market I'll thank you to give me a lift, if you would be so kind. It will save me a long walk."

"Who are you?" Everly was suspicious of strangers.

"I live up on the Nottingham road, and am going to New Market to try for work on the new factory they are building. I am a carpenter by trade."

"All right," said Everly, after a little more hesitation, "look out for me as I come back, and I'll pick you up."

As soon as he had gone, Mr. Barnes took a notebook from his pocket, and, tearing out a page, wrote as follows:

"DEAR TOM:

"It is of no use. She saw the boat, and has taken the alarm. I think she means to send the letter to the post at New Market. If you see me remain in the wagon with Everly, you will know that this surmise on my part is correct. In that case I will take care of the letter. Tell no one where I have gone, even though I should not return for a day or two. Tell the Squire to empanel his jury, turn the body over to a doctor for a _postmortem, _and then adjourn until I get back. Meanwhile keep your eyes open. Watch young Lewis! Remember he is a stranger and should prove his identity beyond a doubt, especially if a will turns up drawn in his favor. Pump him all you can without his suspecting that you have a motive.

"BARNES."

Having written this note, the next thing to do was to give it to Burrows without

arousing suspicion of collusion. It must be borne in mind that every one present knew that the man by the window was a detective; and, further, that Burrows had failed to recognize Mr. Barnes in his disguise. The latter went to the door and stood there a few minutes, whistling a tune that was a great favorite with Burrows. He kept this up until at length he attracted his notice. As soon as this was accomplished, having his back to the others, he slightly lifted his false beard, thus revealing his identity, and then held up the note. Sure then that Burrows understood him, he dropped into a chair, picked up a copy of the _Boston Herald_ which lay there, and pretended to read, until Everly at length appeared in the road. He then simply laid the paper down, having hidden the note therein, and joining Everly was taken into the wagon. Thus nothing was left to Burrows but to possess himself of the newspaper and note, which he easily did.

Reaching the house into which Virginia had gone, the horse was stopped, and Everly jumped out. He started to enter the gate leading to the dwelling, when the main door was opened and a young woman, emerging therefrom, came down the gravel walk to meet him. She greeted him familiarly and they stood conversing in low tones for a few moments. Mr. Barnes watched them closely in his endeavor to see whether she intrusted a letter to his care. He did not actually detect her doing so, but he saw by the motion of Everly's arm that he carefully placed something in the inner pocket of his coat. Satisfied that this was the letter, the superscription of which he was so anxious to see, he determined to keep his seat and accompany Everly to New Market. On the road thither, he attempted but little conversation, fearing to reveal his identity, and thus destroy all hopes of success. As his companion seemed little inclined to talk, the trip, which occupied about three quarters of an hour, was made in comparative silence.

Arrived at New Market, he deemed it best to alight as soon as they reached the hotel. Entering, he posted himself so as to watch whither Everly should drive, and the latter, entirely unconscious as to whom he had brought with him, went straight to the post-office, situated about a block farther. With considerable satisfaction Mr. Barnes saw him presently emerge again, and immediately turn his horse's head homeward, thus showing that his sole errand to the town had been to post the letter.

As soon as Everly was out of sight, Mr. Barnes removed his disguise, and making a bundle of the overalls, intrusted it to the care of the hotel clerk to be kept until he should call again. He then hurried over to the post-office, where he

asked for the postmaster. To this official he declared himself to be a detective, and stating that in his belief a letter had just been mailed to an important witness in a case which he was investigating, received permission to examine the letters uncanceled. This he proceeded to do, and at length he found the object of his search. He held in his hand a letter, the contents of which he thought would throw considerable light on the mystery. He copied the address, which was as follows:

“Walter Marvel, Esq., Portsmouth, N. H.”

“Keep till called for.”

Leaving the office, Mr. Barnes hurried over to the railroad station, and purchasing a ticket for Portsmouth was soon on his way thither.

Arriving there that same evening, he lost no time in proceeding to call on the postmaster of the city, and, acquainting him with the nature of his business, easily arranged a plan whereby he hoped to discover Walter Marvel. As the man whom he was seeking was an entire stranger to him, it would be impossible to recognize him. Therefore he determined to station himself at the inquiry window, and arranged a signal whereby the clerk was to warn him when anyone should ask for a letter for Walter Marvel. As, however, he was informed that the mail just in would not be ready for delivery until the following morning, he went to a hotel and retired for the night.

The post-office opened at seven o'clock, and promptly at that hour Mr. Barnes commenced his vigil. He did not have his patience very sorely tried, for it was scarcely eight o'clock when he received the signal from the postal clerk, and saw the letter handed to a man at the window.

Not knowing whether this was Marvel himself or merely some messenger, Mr. Barnes determined, for the present, simply to follow him, more especially as he did not break the seal of the letter, but after glancing at the address consigned it to his pocket. Leaving the building, the man proceeded to a small hotel, at a considerable distance from the post-office, and in the vicinity of the docks. Mr. Barnes concluded that it was little more than a sailor's boarding-house, and it puzzled him to guess why Marvel had chosen this place. Entering the door which led in on a level with the street, the man seated himself on a chair, and then producing the letter, broke the seal and read.

The act satisfied Mr. Barnes that Walter Marvel was before him, but it suited him still to spy awhile upon his movements, hoping thereby to learn something. Of course Marvel could not guess that the man standing in the doorway was a detective, or that he was watched. Therefore he would act as his real intentions prompted him. He seemed wholly absorbed in the paper before him, which he read and re-read a number of times, ending by crumpling it up in his hand and starting up from his chair. He stood gazing from the window, awhile, and then paced nervously up and down. This lasted some minutes, when he suddenly resumed his seat, took the crumpled letter from his pocket where he had thrust it, and carefully smoothed out the creases on his knee. He again read its contents over and over. Suddenly, with a smothered ejaculation, he tore the letter into pieces and scattered them on the floor. Then he spoke a few words to the hotel clerk and hurried upstairs.

Mr. Barnes at once proceeded to collect the scattered fragments of the letter, and carefully placing them in an envelope, consigned that to his wallet until such time as he might be able to match the pieces together again. This done, he quietly seated himself and waited.

In about ten minutes Walter Marvel reappeared coming down the stairs, and hurried out to the street, Mr. Barnes following him.

He directed his course towards the wharves, and finally walked to the end of one where he went aboard a schooner lying there. By inquiring among the longshoremen the detective soon learned that this vessel, _The Eclipse_, was bound for the West Indies, and was to sail immediately. Mr. Barnes saw at once that it was now time to take active measures, or he would lose his man after all. Boarding the vessel he sought out the captain, and explained to him what he wished to do. The master seemed of a surly disposition and little inclined to render any assistance. He did not, indeed, refuse to let Mr. Barnes see Marvel, but he positively declined to take any part in the matter himself.

Descending to the cabin, almost the first individual whom he met was Marvel, and Mr. Barnes approaching him, addressed him as follows:

“Mr. Marvel, I believe?”

“That is my name; but you are a stranger to me!”

“Mr. Marvel, I have a very unpleasant duty to perform, and hope you will pardon

me if I proceed at once to explain, as I fear that the captain may sail at any minute.”

“You cannot explain too quickly to suit me,” replied Marvel.

“Mr. Marvel, how long is it since you left Wadley’s Falls?”

“Why do you ask?”

“Please answer me first, and I promise full explanations afterwards.”

“That arrangement does not suit me. You are a stranger to me—I do not even know how it is that you are acquainted with my name—and I, therefore, deny that you have any right to question me.”

“Mr. Marvel, I am a detective.”

“Well?”

“A murder has been committed at Wadley’s Falls, and—” Mr. Barnes paused to note the effect of his words, but Marvel seemed turned to stone, he was so impassive. “Will you venture to guess who the victim is?”

“John Lewis!” said Marvel, in a hoarse whisper. He dropped into a chair and buried his face in his hands. His trouble seemed so poignant, that for some minutes Mr. Barnes could not find it in his heart to disturb him. Finally, however, realizing that time was precious, he said:

“Mr. Marvel, will you return with me to Lee?”

“Why should I?” answered Marvel, looking up suddenly, aroused by the question.

“Because it may be necessary for you to prove your whereabouts on that night, in order to disarm suspicion, and—”

“Do you mean to accuse me of this crime?” said Marvel, vehemently.

“I never make an accusation till I have positive proof,” returned Mr. Barnes, “and that I have not in this case,—at least not yet. I advise you to keep your

temper, and be guarded in what you say, for your words may be used against you.”

“You are insolent! How dare you speak to me in that way—”

“Come, Mr. Marvel, time presses. Will you accompany me peaceably?”

“Do you mean as your prisoner?”

“No! Let us say as a witness,” but at that word Marvel recoiled and seemed alarmed. All the anger departed from his voice as he said:

“Have you a warrant for my arrest? Can you force me to go?”

Mr. Barnes shook his head negatively, and Marvel heaved a sigh of relief as he muttered, “Then I will not go—I cannot! I cannot!”

Mr. Barnes was nonplussed. He had counted on finding Marvel willing, nay, anxious to return as soon as he should know that there was any possibility of his being implicated in the crime. But what was he to do, now that he refused to go back? He could not compel him without a warrant, and that he not only did not have, but could not procure before the vessel would sail. He determined to try to induce the captain to delay starting, though with little hope of success, remembering how surly he had just shown himself. As he anticipated, the master declared that he would not change his plans.

Seeing that nothing was to be accomplished in this way, Mr. Barnes sought the cabin, hoping even yet to persuade Marvel that his best course was to accompany him, since if he were guilty he could not hope to escape extradition, which would be very simple, his destination being known; while if innocent, it was his duty to return and assist in clearing up the matter, thus removing all doubt.

He found Marvel sitting where he had left him, staring vacantly before him. He was so absorbed in thought, that the detective was obliged to touch him to attract attention, and then, before Mr. Barnes could say a word Marvel exclaimed:

“Is it you? I am glad. I will go back with you.”

“You will go back with me?” Mr. Barnes was much surprised at this sudden

change.

“Yes. I am sorry now that I refused at first. I see that it is the best course to pursue. Yet I had reasons, that seemed to me at the first moment of my surprise, to be unanswerable, and which led to my decision. I am now ready and anxious to accompany you.”

Mr. Barnes scrutinized Marvel closely, to determine whether this were a genuine or an assumed manner. He was puzzled.

“I am glad,” said he, “that you will go peaceably. You save me a great deal of trouble. I would have taken you back, even though it had been necessary to get a warrant and follow you to sea in a tug. Then you would have been under arrest. Now, since you offer no resistance, you shall receive every consideration. I will take you back as a witness.”

“I will not go with you as a witness. I will submit to arrest though you have no warrant, but if I go with you it must be as your prisoner.”

“As you please. It matters not, so long as you return.”

Mr. Barnes and Marvel left Portsmouth on the first train available, and reached Wadley’s Falls the next morning. Whilst on the train, Mr. Barnes found an opportunity to be alone in the smoking car long enough to piece together the fragments of the letter which he had picked up, when thrown away by Marvel. With mucilage which he had procured at Portsmouth, he pasted each piece to another sheet, so that finally the letter was once more legible. It read as follows:

“After the events of last night it is best that you leave the country. Do so without delay. It would be madness to think of marriage now. Farewell!

“VIRGIE.”

After studying this, for a long time, Mr. Barnes was forced to admit that the whole affair was as great a mystery as ever.

Chapter V

The Two Girls

Virginia Lewis, though living in New England, would never be mistaken for a native of that section. She lacked the phlegmatic temperament of the people about her, notwithstanding the fact that she had been reared among them. Her environment had undoubtedly affected her character to the extent that, outwardly, she moved, spoke, and acted like her neighbors. But there was a certain suppressed emotion, always distinguishable, however well controlled, that bespoke a birthplace in a warmer clime. However mildly she might address her friends, and there were few of gentler speech, the slightest antagonism betrayed by anyone present would be met with an instantaneous answering flash of her lustrous dark eyes, which betokened danger if the subject were pursued. No one, not even those most dear to her, had the courage to take liberties of conversation or of act, with Virginia Lewis. Nevertheless, she was the best beloved and most popular young woman in the township. Half the young men the country round were her admirers, ready to become obedient servitors in exchange for a friendly nod. Rarer still, she had no enemies among the women folk.

She was not beautiful, yet by many called so. I think this was because of the marvel of her eyes, which, always brilliant, and ever restlessly moving as though to absorb all about her, attracted with a fascination, or magnetism, which none resisted. It was no wonder that the rays of genuine intelligence shed by those orbs should have been mistaken for beauty, for, after all, it is expressiveness, rather than symmetry of lineament, which men most admire in a woman.

When at rest, there were hard, set lines about the mouth, which to the physiognomist unmistakably proclaimed her possession of that excessive willpower and dogged persistence, which Squire Olney truly mentioned as characteristic traits. Mr. Barnes had said that he would not expect to surprise her again into a betrayal of herself, or her purposes, and in this he showed a keen perception.

She had been very much startled by the abrupt entrance of the two men, and their subsequent announcement that they were detectives. She noticed that Mr. Barnes

had kept the empty cartridge shell which had dropped from her lap, but, in the moment of her surprise, she had not time to decide upon the best course consistent with whatever purpose she was bent upon accomplishing. When they left her she sat down and meditated for some time. Presently she arose, and it was evident that her plan had been formulated. She took the pistol from the cabinet, where Mr. Barnes had shrewdly guessed that it was.

Whatever had been her reason for removing the shell which Mr. Barnes had taken, it was plain that she now considered her purpose unattainable. Opening the drawer of her bureau, she took therefrom a small mahogany box, which she unlocked. In it were several pasteboard packages of ball cartridges. One, however, contained shells which had been exploded. She next withdrew a cartridge from the pistol, and in its stead inserted an empty shell, being careful to see that the hammer exactly rested upon the indentation in the rim. Thus, it is evident, that if she had removed from this pistol the empty shell which Mr. Barnes had picked up, she must have reloaded the weapon prior to his entrance. Now she was restoring it to its original condition. She threw the pistol on the bed, as though desirous that it should be readily found.

Next she opened a drawer of the cabinet, and took out two pieces of folded paper. One of these was a duplicate of that found by the detectives, bearing the words: "If I am dead in the morning, my murder is," except that, as Mr. Barnes had guessed, this one bore a name, the sentence being completed. Virginia scrutinized this for some moments, sighed deeply, and refolded it. The other was also a half sheet, and bore a few lines addressed to herself. She read this several times, and then folded it also, placing both papers in her dress.

Approaching the door which communicated with the parlor, she listened attentively for a few moments, and then entered that apartment, which was empty, the detectives, by this time, having gone out upon the lawn. Peeping from the window, careful that she herself should be hidden from sight by the curtains, she saw Mr. Barnes and Burrows near the summerhouse. She watched them until they were again approaching the house, whereupon she returned to her own room. Here she remained till the detectives had made the map of the grounds, and again sallied forth towards the river. This time she watched them from the window of her own room, and realized, from their actions, that they were studying the footprints between the house and the river. She also saw them get in the boat and cross the river.

Once more she entered the parlor. One would think, from her repeated visits to the place where lay the dead body, that it had some fascination for her. As though, indeed, this were the case, she went straight to where it lay, and bending down, gazed at it intently. Especially did she look upon the disfigured face. Finally, she turned her attention to the hand, and examined a ring on one finger. This seemed to satisfy her. In rising, she stepped on the hem of her dress, and fell to her knees, striking against the corpse, which was thus slightly turned over. This action brought into view the other hand, which before had been under the body. She shuddered as she jumped up, and then, noticing that the fist was doubled up tight, her curiosity was aroused, and she determined to investigate further. She endeavored to open the fingers, and though they were tightly clenched, she at length succeeded in relaxing two. This enabled her, not only to see that there was something within the dead man's grasp, but also to withdraw it. This done, she evidently had enough of the company of the corpse, for she hurried to the next room, and hastily closed the door after her.

She then examined the article which she had just obtained, and found it to be a small, gold locket. Opening it she saw that it contained a miniature of herself, which had been made when she was yet a child.

She was evidently disturbed at the discovery, for she gazed at it long and earnestly. Perhaps her conscience troubled her, and the thought came to her, that, even at the moment when he was killed, her uncle had just been looking at this picture of herself, thinking of the time, when, a young and attractive child, she had been his idol—, and then of the past week, when, before all their friends, they had antagonized their wills. She threw herself on the bed, buried her face in her hands, and for some minutes she sobbed like one in dire distress. Presently, rising from her recumbent position, controlling her emotions by an effort of will, she first hid the locket in her dress, as she had done with the letters, and then bathed her face, and went to the window. She looked towards the summerhouse, but saw nothing of the detectives. Turning, she hurriedly put on her hat, arranged her toilet, and started out from the house, in the direction of the post-office.

She thought that she had avoided the observation of the detectives, but in this, as she herself subsequently suspected, she was mistaken. Reaching the bridge, she noticed the boat, and as she had last seen the two men entering it, she concluded that they were now in the vicinity, though she did not yet guess that they had followed her. As she passed the saloon, however, she caught a glimpse of Burrows, and as he immediately withdrew, so as to hide himself from her view,

she at once decided that he was there to watch her movements. Thus she was compelled to abandon her project of mailing the letter herself, which had been her object in coming out. She went on to the house of the Marvels.

Being on terms of closest intimacy with the inmates, she unceremoniously entered, without knocking, and went into the parlor. Here, seated in front of a rousing log fire, she found Mrs. Marvel, busily engaged with some knitting, and evidently ignorant of the fact, that, at that very time, grave suspicions were entertained against her son. The old lady politely rose and welcomed her visitor, but Virginia, without accepting her invitation to be seated, at once inquired for her daughter Alice.

“Alice is not out of bed yet,” said the mother. “She sent me a message, at breakfast-time, that she had a headache, and preferred to sleep. But you can go up to her room, if you wish. I guess she is not seriously ill.” She smiled, well knowing that her daughter was fond of her morning nap, and that “a headache,” was often a convenient excuse.

Virginia at once went in search of her friend. Ascending one flight of stairs, she entered Alice Marvel’s bedroom. Alice was in bed, but not asleep. On the contrary, she seemed very wide awake, although completely absorbed with her thoughts.

A moment’s description of this young lady may not be amiss. Though, like Virginia, a brunette, she was nevertheless totally different in appearance. Her friends called her pretty, and the term was applicable; for though she possessed a charming face, she could be called neither handsome nor beautiful. Small, well-chiselled features, a rosy, pert little mouth, piercing black eyes, chestnut-brown hair, and a clear complexion with considerable color; these were the salient points in her favor. In stature she was _petite_. _But it was her manner, more than her physical charms, that was her chief attraction. Vivacious, impetuous, with powerful emotions, loving and hating with a degree of intensity foreign to the American-born, it was easy to detect that Alice Marvel had French blood in her veins.

Her father had chosen his bride in Paris, and continued his residence in that city until Alice was fifteen. Then he returned to America with his family, which included Walter, who was two years older than his sister, and immediately thereafter settled in Lee. Thus Alice was now in her twenty-fifth year.

Startled from her meditations by the abrupt entrance of her friend, Alice stared at her a moment in silence, and then suddenly exclaimed:

“Is he dead?”

“Is who dead?” asked Virginia, amazed at the question.

“Your uncle, Mr. Lewis?” replied Alice; at which Virginia was so bewildered that she stood speechless. Knowing that the fact of her uncle’s death had been so recently discovered, and also that Alice had not left her own room, Virginia was at a loss to understand how she had become aware of the true state of affairs. It occurred to her that perhaps, after all, the maid-servant had informed Alice, but in that case it should have been known also by Mrs. Marvel, whereas that lady had acted in a way which precluded the supposition that the news had reached her ears. Recovering somewhat from the first effects of her surprise, she asked:

“How did you know that he is dead?”

Alice started at this question, and then, as though awakening from a dream, replied:

—“I _don’t know what I have been saying. I think I was dreaming when you came in and—and—and I must have continued aloud what was passing through my mind.”

“Your dream, then, is wonderfully near the truth, for my uncle was found dead this morning, and he has undoubtedly been murdered.”

“Murdered! My God, this is frightful!” With a convulsive tremor, which passed over her whole frame, Alice lay back and buried her face in her pillow. Virginia gazed at her, not knowing how to construe her agitation. A moment later Alice, with one bound, leaped from the bed, and, rushing up to Virginia, exclaimed excitedly:

“You say he was murdered! How do you know it? Who can prove it? Did anyone see it? Who did it? Who did it, I say? Tell me—”

“Hush! Do you know what you are saying? If anyone heard you it would be suspected—”

“What would be suspected—what is suspected— tell me! I must know, I will know—I—”

“Silence! Are you still in a dream? You must stop this wild language! Stop it! Stop it instantly!” Taking Alice by the shoulders, she shook her, and by her words and manner Virginia at length subdued somewhat the intensity of her friend’s excitement. Then occurred the inevitable reaction. Alice threw herself on the bed, and abandoned herself to a wild paroxysm of tears. Virginia endeavored to calm and soothe her, but for a long time her attentions only aggravated the hysterical sobbing. After awhile, however, she became more quiet, and Virginia sought an explanation.

“Now, Alice,” said she, “you must tell me how you knew that my uncle is dead.”

“Hush! I cannot tell you! I cannot! I cannot!”

“But you must! Evidently you know something about this, and you must tell me!”

“It is impossible!”

“Can you not trust me? Come, Alice, you must be reasonable. We are wasting time that is most precious. Do you know who is, or will be, suspected of this crime?”

“Do you know? Then tell me?” said Alice, in feverish anxiety.

“Listen! There are two detectives—”

“What, already?” interrupted Alice, in a terrified voice, “and you say they suspect someone?”

“Alice, you too suspect someone . Who is it? If you and the detectives suspect the same man, I will help to shield him. You know that!”

“Him? Whom do you mean?” Now it seemed that Alice was puzzled.

“Whom do I mean? Who was it that quarrelled with my uncle? Who was it that threatened to kill him?”

“My God, you mean my brother!” Alice sank in a chair, and sat staring like one in a trance. Finally, by a great effort she aroused herself, and seemed to regain her self-possession.

“Virginia, you must think me out of my mind to have acted as I have; but I have had a terrible night. In my dreams I have seen your uncle murdered in a thousand fantastic ways. Therefore it is not strange that when you startled me, I should have addressed you as I did. It was a tremendous shock to have you announce that all, which my imagination had pictured, was really true.”

“Undoubtedly, Alice, but it is a strange coincidence that you should have had such dreams. What were you thinking of when you retired, that my uncle should have been so conspicuously in your thoughts?”

“I was thinking of him. But I will tell you the truth at once.”

“Stop a moment! I will listen to your story after awhile. It is of vital importance that no more time should be lost in warning Walter of the danger which threatens him.”

“Yes! But how will you do it? Do you know where he is?”

“He is in Portsmouth by this time, I hope. He will expect a letter from me tomorrow morning. I came out to post it, but I am certain that I am watched by the detectives. I did not dare to go to our office for fear that they would discover just what I do not want them to know. The only way left is to send the letter to New Market, and mail it there. How can we do that?”

Alice had entirely composed herself, and whilst her friend spoke, was rapidly dressing. She replied:

“I know the very one to trust, for, of course, it must be a tried friend, as the bearer of the letter will discover the address. Will Everly is the man for this emergency. Walter, you remember, saved him once, when he was nearly drowned, and since then I believe he has been ready to sacrifice his life for my brother at any moment.”

“Will is the man that I had in my mind. Can you send one of the boys to his house for him?”

“Wait here till I return, and I will fix it.” With these words Alice quitted the room. Left to herself, Virginia was at once thoughtful. She could not believe that all the agitation which she had witnessed in her friend, was solely due to the coincidence of a nightmare. Yet how could Alice have really known anything of the crime, since she had not been out of her own room, unless indeed she had been present the night before? Alice returned, and as she entered, said:

“I have sent Frank, one of the stable boys, for Will. Now, shall I tell you what I did last night?”

Virginia signified her assent, and her companion proceeded.

“Harry Lucas had promised to take me to drive, in the evening, but, during the afternoon, he called and told me that it would be impossible to do so, as he had received a note, which would make it necessary for him to leave town. I did not doubt his statement, and after a little conversation he left the house. After his departure, I found on the floor a note, which he must have dropped in taking his handkerchief from his pocket. Of course I had no right to read it, and I did not think of doing so until I recognized that the address was in your writing.”

Alice paused, but Virginia said nothing, though the color deepened on her cheek. Alice continued:

“I suppose that, knowing you had accepted my brother’s love, it was a contemptible thing for me to feel jealous. Nevertheless, I confess with shame and regret that such was the case. Therefore I opened the note. As you know the contents, you can readily imagine that what I read was scarcely calculated to dissipate my anger. You invited him to a secret meeting. The hour named was for last evening. Thus Harry had broken his promise to me, giving me a false excuse, in order to meet you. Impetuous, as you know I am, I at once determined to be present. You had specified that he should wait for you in the south side of the summerhouse on your lawn. I had only to go early, and conceal myself in the northern division. As I drew on my cloak, preparatory to starting, my eye fell on my pistol, which lay on my dressing-case, and, though I did not think of needing it, or of using it, in my excitement I took it up and slipped it into my pocket. I reached the place first, as was my intention, and patiently awaited your arrival. Harry came, and you joined him promptly. I need not tell you what occurred between you. I overheard every word, and you can imagine how much ashamed I was of my doubt of Harry, and of yourself, when I learned the real object of the

meeting. I felt like revealing my presence, and begging your pardon, but my pride prevented me. So I remained in my place of concealment until both of you had left. Then I hurried home.”

“But this would scarcely account for the dreams,” said Virginia, without commenting on the rest of the story.

“I have not finished. I said that I had taken my pistol with me when I went out. On my return, I was alarmed at not finding it, for, as you know, my name is engraved on the stock. My imaginative mind at once commenced to picture all kinds of trouble. What if someone should find the weapon, and commit a crime with it? Might not the finger of suspicion point at me? I felt inclined to return and look for it, but the distance is a long one, and besides, I could not be sure of recovering it. Therefore, trying to persuade myself that my fears were silly, I endeavored to go to sleep. But, oh! Virgie, what a night I have passed!” She shuddered at the recollection.

“I can readily understand, and am now not surprised at what you said when I came in. Shall we go down and see if the boy has returned?” The two girls left the room, and descended to the floor below. Here they found their messenger, and were informed that Will Everly would be ready to go on their errand as soon as he could get his horse out. A quarter of an hour later, Everly drove up, and Alice carried the letter out to him.

As soon as the horse and wagon were out of sight, on the road to New Market, Virginia prepared to return home, whereupon Alice expressed her intention to accompany her, hoping to recover her pistol, and together they started to walk to Riverside.

Chapter VI

Mysterious Noises

In pursuance of the directions left by Mr. Barnes, and communicated to him by Burrows, Squire Olney impanelled a jury, taking them to the Lewis farm and allowing them to examine the corpse, where it lay in the position as when discovered. He then adjourned the inquest until the return of the absent detective. Meanwhile he ordered Dr. Snow, a competent surgeon, to make an autopsy, placing the corpse in an upper room, and in charge of the physician.

The jurymen and assembled neighbors dispersed slowly, as though loath to leave the vicinity. Burrows mixed with them, hoping to extract some clue, by conversation, which might prove of value to him. In this he failed entirely. The greater number apparently suspected that Walter Marvel was implicated, and as he was a general favorite, they feared to speak with the detective, lest they should compromise their friend.

One man, however, voluntarily approached him, and said:

“They tell me as how you’re the detective?”

“You are quite right,” said Burrows, hopefully.

“My name’s Skene,” said the other. “Josiah Skene, station agent down to Lee Deepo’. I hearn ‘bout this here inquest, an’ tho’t I’d run up an’ see how ye’re gittin’ on. Anybody ‘rested?”

“Well, hardly,” answered Burrows, with a smile. “We have only been at work a few hours, you know.”

“Well, that only goes to show. I always tho’t as how them stories in the Borston papers wuz kinder farfetched. They make out’s though you detective fellers wuz quicker ‘n greased lightnin’. I guess you an’t no smarter than other folks. I guess I could put you up to snuff in this case anyway.” Mr. Skene took his long chin whisker in his left hand, stroked it once, and then turned it up so that he readily bit the end, the while looking at Burrows through the corner of his eyes, his head turned partly away, as though he were contemplating something on the distant

horizon.

“Do you know anything?” Burrows spoke with a little anxiety. He recognized that the man was an eccentric, and feared to do, or say something, that would antagonize him. After a long pause, came the reply:

“Mebbe!” Only this one word, muttered without removal of the whisker from, his mouth. Burrows waited for more, but was forced to continue the conversation himself.

“Mr. Skene, this is a dreadful business, and if you can help us to unravel it, I am sure you will do so.”

“An’t that what I ‘m up here for? D’ you s’pose I tramped up here for exercise? Not much! But the joke is that you should need me to tell you anything. You’re a detective from Borston. I tho’t as how you fellers wuz so cute like, that you jest looked at the dead man, and ‘rested the murderer straight off. Saw his likeness in the corpse’s eyes, or suthin’. I’ve read that in books, but I guess you reel detectives an’t so darned smart as all that, hay?”

“No, I am afraid not. We are no smarter than other folks, only we make a business of putting two and two together, that’s all. You could tell that it would make four, as easily as I could. But you have your railroad business, Mr. Skene, and I have to look for criminals. That is the only difference.” Burrows tried a little conciliatory flattery, and it operated to make Mr. Skene more communicative.

“By Jehosaphat! You hit it square that time. I kin smell a rat, but it an’t my place to hunt him down. So I guess I’ll tell you who killed Lewis, an’ let you ketch him. Only seems to me you oughtn’t to git all the glory, hay?”

“You give me the clue, Mr. Skene, and when I arrest the man you shall have full credit for giving me the clue.”

“Oh! I’m only jokin’. You ketch the feller, an’ I’ll be satisfied. I an’t lookin’ for no notoriety.” Nevertheless he wore a pleased expression, as when a shrewd New Englander has just arranged one of those typical Yankee “bargains,” in which each man swaps what he does not want for what he does want, and chuckles because he has cheated the other man. Mr. Skene thought a moment, as though deciding where to begin. Then he resumed: “You noticed that I said I

could tell you who killed Lewis?”

“I did,” said Burrows, “and I wondered whether you had seen the crime committed.”

“Seen it?” cried Mr. Skene. “Why, man alive, d’ you s’pose I ‘d have let the murderer escape? No, I didn’t ‘spect him last night, but I seen him, I seen him twice.”

“Whom did you see twice?”

“Why, an’t I tellin’ you? The murderer! I seen the murderer twice. The fust time wuz when the up train come along. When she stopped, he got off. I didn’t pay no speshal ‘tention to him till the train wuz gone, when he came up an’ spoke to me. He asked me how to git to the Lewis farm.”

“This is important. You say a man came up on a train last night and asked to be directed to the Lewis farm?”

“That’s jest what I said. I tol’ him, an’ then he asked for a time-table an’ wanted to know ef he could go back las’ night. I give him a time-slip, an’ off he went. I never tho’t no more of him till I seen him again, pacin’ up an’ down jest before the down train come in. I nagged the train to stop, an’ he boarded her.”

“Did you recognize him? That is, had you ever seen him before?”

“As fur’s I know, I never sot eyes on him till las’ night, tho’ once I tho’t as how his voice wuz kinder familiar. But don’t lay no stress on that, ‘cause I an’t no good rememberin’ sounds. An’t got no eer for music. All I can tell you is, he wuz a medium-size man with a full beard.”

“Did he have any baggage?”

“I wuz jest comin’ to that, ‘cause it is kinder queer. He didn’t have none when he come, ‘less it wuz on the platform an’ I didn’t see it, which an’t likely. But, when he come back from Lewis’s, he had a satchel.”

“Where did he go from here? That is, for what point did he buy a ticket?”

“He didn’t buy none from me. That wuz one thing made me sort of ‘spicious.

Then when I hearn of the murder, why it all come to me as plain as a pikestaff. That mysterious visitor come up expressly to kill Lewis. That's why he wuz so darned anxious to git outer town agin las' night. Under them circumstances, it an't likely as how he 'd buy a ticket from me."

"At what time did he arrive, and at what time did he leave?"

"He come in at 9.07, an' he ketched the 10.39 down."

"Which way do you mean by down?"

"Why, man alive, don't you know that much? Down is down. Down to'ards Nashuway, Wooster, an' that 'ere way."

"You must excuse my ignorance," said Burrows, humbly. "I don't pretend to know everything, you see. Now, one thing more. I must tell you, though I presume you know it already, that it is of the utmost importance, when a detective is trying to catch a criminal, that he should keep a close mouth. As you and I are working together, as it were, I must ask you to speak to no one but myself."

This speech was adroitly worded. Burrows was anxious that Mr. Barnes should not hear of this new clue, intending if possible to work it out alone. In order, therefore, to close the mouth of this egotistical countryman, he ingeniously included him in his work, having discerned that the fellow was anxious to have a tale to tell to the frequenters of the saloon, of how, "Me and the detective from Borston worked up the case." Mr. Skene, however, made one feeble protest.

"Well, as to that," said he, "I tho't as how I 'd have to go on the stand at the inquest, an' tell what I know?" He evidently counted upon the notoriety to be gained by such a procedure.

"Oh, of course!" said Burrows, hastily endeavoring to satisfy him upon this point. "I will tell the Squire, and he will call you, unless he should be afraid to let your story be known too soon. I think, though, that you will be called. What I meant was, that you must not speak until you are."

"Oh, that's diff rent," said Mr. Skene, quite satisfied, now that the prospect of being a real witness, in a genuine murder case, was still in prospect. "I guess I kin keep my mouth shet. I guess Josiah Skene knows enough, to know when to

talk, an' when to keep still. You kin count on me. Well good day. Let me know how you git on."

As he sauntered off, down the road towards the station, Burrows wondered whether he would really keep the story to himself. He doubted it, but as much as he should have liked to start in pursuit of this strange visitor of the night previous, he scarcely cared to leave before the return of his superior.

He had been standing in the road, near the main gate, during his conversation with the station agent, and now turning towards the house, he saw a young woman coming out. He recognized her as one who he had supposed was a servant, from the fact that he had seen her cooking in the kitchen whilst the inquest was started. He decided to question her, and as she came out, and was passing him, he said:

"Pardon me, but I wish to say a few words to you."

The woman faced him in silence and waited for him to speak.

"Will you tell me your name?"

"Sarah."

"Your last name also, if you please."

"Carpenter."

"Now will you tell me what you know about what occurred last night, and whether you heard any pistol-shot?"

"No I won't, and that's flat."

Before he recovered from his surprise at the asperity of her reply, she abruptly turned from him and proceeded along the road. He looked after her wonderingly. Was it possible that this woman held the key to the situation? If so, it became most puzzling, from the fact that it did not seem to fit any theory as yet advanced. Yet her manner was not that of one who was entirely ignorant. He decided to speak to Mr. Barnes about this, and to leave it to him to obtain her secret, if she had one. He went into the house in search of Squire Olney, and found him in the parlor conversing with Lewis. As he entered he heard the

Squire say:

“I suppose, Mr. Lewis, that you will sleep here tonight, as this house is now yours?”

It occurred to Burrows at once, that this was his opportunity to continue the line of inquiry suggested by Mr. Barnes in his note. Therefore, without waiting for Lewis to reply, he said:

“Squire, you say this house is now the property of this young man. I hope both of you will pardon my asking whether a will has been found.”

“I am not at all offended,” said Lewis, promptly. “That is a very proper question. Squire, do you know anything about this?”

“Why, yes! I should have spoken to you before. I have the will in my pocket now. It was given into my keeping by your father, some time ago. I do not, however, know its contents, except that I am named as one of the executors, for he had the document drawn in Boston and gave it into my hands in a sealed envelope. Here it is, as I received it.” He drew forth a legal-looking envelope of large proportions. “Shall I open it?”

Lewis nodded, and Burrows was too curious to know its contents, to call attention to the fact that it might be as well not to read the will, until notice could be given to other possible beneficiaries under its provisions. The Squire forthwith opened and read the paper. In substance it was to the effect that the house, and all available funds, should become the unconditional property of Virginia Lewis. There was a clause in which an allusion was made to the son, but, far from making him a legatee, it was plainly explained that Lewis _pere _considered that his son had forfeited all claim upon his bounty, and therefore no direct provision was made for his receiving any part of the estate. But there was a request that in case the young man should return home, Virginia should do for him whatever his circumstances seemed to require.

Burrows listened with close attention, and noted this clause with much interest. Here was evidence that the young man, then present, could not have committed the crime with the certainty of inheriting. Lewis then said:

“Well, gentlemen, it seems that I am not the owner of this house after all, and therefore I cannot sleep here without the permission of my cousin. But I suppose

you can arrange that much for me, at least?" He appealed to the Squire, who replied:

"I am sure of it. Virgie would not turn a stranger from her roof, and I am confident that when she understands that you are so near a relative, she will offer you the hospitality which is due to you. In fact, if I know her character, I doubt if she will accept the property at all, now that you have returned."

"Once more," said Burrows, "I hope you will see that I am speaking conscientiously when I remind you, Mr. Lewis, that you have given us no proof of your identity. Of course, your word alone was sufficient this morning, when we were coming here. We expected to find Mr. Lewis alive, and it would have been his privilege to satisfy any doubt. But now—under the peculiar circumstances—I hope you don't misconstrue my motives "

"Not in the least," replied Lewis. "You are investigating a murder, and are right to demand a thorough explanation of my movements and proof of my identity. I am a stranger to you, and you have but my unsupported word. I am more glad than sorry that I am disinherited by my father's will. I did not deserve any consideration at his hands anyway, and under the distressing circumstances, and considering my appearance just after his violent death, were I his heir it might seem—you understand? I might be implicated!"

"Nonsense! Nonsense!" exclaimed the Squire. "No one would think such a thing." The Squire's positive assertion made Burrows feel a little uncomfortable, for he was inwardly conscious that he was entertaining the very idea at that moment. Lewis continued:

"As to my identity, fortunately, I foresaw that the time might someday come when I should wish to prove to my father that I am indeed his son. Therefore I have carefully preserved the last three letters which I received from him, determined, should it ever be necessary, to produce them as proof of my identity, in the event of his failing to recall my changed face. Now he is dead, but the evidence thus attainable assumes, it seems, an increased value. I have preserved the letters in my pocket-book through all these years, and from frequent reading they are not in a very perfect condition, though I hope sufficiently decipherable for you at least, Squire, to recognize their genuineness." So saying, he produced a dilapidated wallet, and took from it three letters, apparently quite old. They were in envelopes that scarcely held together, and the edges of the folds of the

letters were almost worn through in places. Nevertheless the writing was sufficiently distinct to be legible. The Squire and Burrows looked through them, and the former unhesitatingly declared that he recognized the handwriting as that of John Lewis. The contents were not especially interesting, being simply such as a father would send to a son absent at school. A detective is naturally suspicious. He is apt to doubt and question to the last, and though Burrows was comparatively new, he nevertheless possessed this trait to a strong degree. He therefore examined the date of the post-mark, which was 1872. Although he could not but accept this as unimpeachable evidence that the young man's story was correct, still, without knowing exactly why he did so, he copied down the address on the envelopes, which was:

"John Lewis, Jr. Care T. Jamison, Esq., Washington Heights, New York City, N. Y.

"Mr. Lewis," said the Squire, "I am satisfied that you are my friend's son, and I am sorry that this will leave you nothing, by its provisions. I am sure, as I told you just now, that Virgie will do what is right. I will see her at once."

He tapped gently on the door of Virginia's room, and was admitted. Whilst he was absent Burrows took the opportunity to ask Lewis a few more questions.

"Mr. Lewis," said he, "how long is it since you were at sea, and why did you give up the life? Though perhaps you mean to return to it?"

"Oh, no! I have had enough of it. The beautiful ease and comfort of the mess-room, described in the books of adventure written for boys, is very much overdrawn, I assure you. It was this kind of literature which first made me long for the sea. After I became a sailor in earnest, the charm of the romance dimmed considerably before the stern reality. I was sorry enough that I had left home."

"Why, then, did you not return sooner?"

"Ah! That is easier said than done. I shipped for a voyage to China. There I was forced to leave my ship, and find another homeward bound, which was not easy, or else to follow the fortunes of my messmates. I chose the latter, the consequence being that it was five years before we reached the States again, and then it was on the Pacific coast. As there was little chance of finding my father, anyway, since I knew he had contemplated a trip to Europe, I scarcely felt like crossing the whole breadth of the country on the errand. So I shipped again; and

so it was from one ship to another, and the years rolled by.”

“Still, you have come home at last, and found out where your father was located, too?”

“Yes. My ship touched at Portsmouth. As we were so near to where my father last was, and as I was pretty well sick of the sea, I concluded to give it up and come to Lee, with the faint hope that I could hear something of my father’s whereabouts. The result you know.”

“Yes, and I sympathize with you very much, I hope, you will pardon my having appeared to doubt your identity. I am trying to discover a murderer, and it is my duty to make every one account for himself.”

“Let us say no more about it. I understood your motive exactly, and am really glad that you are so careful in your investigations. I hope you will be successful in finding the criminal. He must be discovered at all hazards. I may have been a bad son to my father whilst he was living. Now I must do all in my power to avenge him.” Lewis spoke with so much feeling that Burrows did not for a moment doubt his sincerity, and determined to redouble his efforts to be the one to place the murderer in custody.

At this juncture the Squire returned, followed by Miss Marvel and Virginia, both of whom he introduced to Lewis and to Burrows. To the former, the young ladies bowed cordially, and it was evident that the Squire had left no doubt in Virginia’s mind as to his identity, for she greeted him as a relative, though with no undue show of feeling.

Towards Burrows it was different. Though she offered him a room in the house during his connection with the case, it was done in a formal way, and with a certain *_hauteur_* of manner not easily misunderstood. However coldly offered, it suited Burrows to accept the invitation, and she showed him to a chamber on the next floor, just above the one which had been used as a sleeping-apartment by John Lewis. Virginia then descended to the parlor, and addressing Lewis, she said:

“If you do not mind, I will give you the same room that your father had?”

Lewis acquiesced, and followed her as she led the way.

The Squire thereupon started for his home, and escorted Miss Marvel to her residence.

Burrows retired early that night, intending to be as fresh as possible for the next day's work. He slept so soundly, that when he awoke with a sudden consciousness of having been disturbed by some extraneous sound, it was impossible for him to determine whether he had slept for hours or minutes. Indeed, he could not even understand thoroughly what it was that he had heard. It left the impression on his mind of an object, such as a chair perhaps, which had been overturned, but whether he had really heard anything, or only imagined it in connection with some vagary of dreamland, he could not be sure. However, though he had been sleeping soundly, he was now thoroughly aroused, and could not dismiss the idea that he had heard a distinct and loud sound. But whether in his own room, or in an adjoining apartment, or even downstairs, puzzled him. He lay quietly, straining to catch the least evidence of a repetition, but no sound reached his acutely attentive ear, save his own breathing and the ticking of his watch beneath his pillow. The latter, however, suggested that he might at least learn how long he had slept. Striking a match, he lighted the oil lamp, and found it to be but ten o'clock, whereas he had thought that it must be near day. Finding that there would be time enough to spare to an investigation, and still to obtain a good night's rest afterwards, he dressed and left the chamber. Crossing the hall, he entered the room on that side of the house, thinking that from that direction, had come the noise which had disturbed his slumbers. Looking about him, it seemed evident that nothing had been disturbed, or else it had been rearranged. He was about to prosecute his search further, when he fancied he heard footsteps. Listening attentively, he could almost have sworn that they came from the direction of his bedroom. Hurrying back thither, he found everything just as he had left it. What could this mean? The first sound might have been in a dream, but surely he was awake the second time? Nevertheless, though he had apparently heard someone walking in his chamber, when he reached it it was as vacant as when he had left it. There was the supernatural possibility that the ghost of the corpse in the adjoining room was promenading in the moonlight, but Burrows was above entertaining such an idea, and, as it occurred to him for a moment, he smiled as he thought "it is not midnight." However, if the footsteps had been in that room, whether of the living or of the dead, he could not discover, for the doctor had taken away the key. Was it possible that Lewis was up, and walking about downstairs? This seemed to promise an explanation, and Burrows at once went to the floor below. He entered the chamber which he knew had been assigned to Lewis. It was empty, and the bed bore no evidence of

having been disturbed. Was this last surmise correct then, and was it Lewis whom he had heard? If so, what was he doing prowling about at such an hour? And where was he at the present moment? This last question he would endeavor to answer, for, if he had just heard him walking, he must be in the house. But Burrows went into every room, except, of course, Virginia's, only to find them all empty. Determined to solve the mystery, he replaced the lamp in his bedroom, and, again descending the stairs, seated himself on a chair in the hall, where it would be impossible for Lewis to pass him unnoticed. To a detective, long vigils of patient watching become almost a habit, but sleep will overpower a man, even though he be a detective. Burrows kept awake for four hours, occasionally striking a match to note the passage of time. Finally, when it was nearing the hour of three, he would start up every little while from a doze. Finding at length that he must sleep, with commendable perseverance he still resolved not to abandon his self-imposed task. In his dilemma he decided upon a bold plan, which was to lock the door of Lewis's room, and tip his chair back against it. Thus he might sleep, rather uncomfortably, but yet with the knowledge that Lewis must disturb him to pass him. When he awoke again, it was once more with the consciousness of a loud noise near him, but this time it continued after he had jumped up. It was now day, and quite light. As he stood rubbing his eyes, trying to collect his senses, upon recollecting what had occurred he was astonished to find that the noise, which still continued, was occasioned by someone within the room shaking the door which he had locked. In wonder, he turned the key, and was amazed to see John Lewis standing before him. They looked at each other a moment in silence, and then Lewis, said:

"Good-morning! What was the matter with the door? I could not open it."
Burrows recovered himself at once, and replied:

"I don't know. I was just coming downstairs and heard you trying to get out. Seeing a key in the door, I turned it, but as I turned it more than once, I don't know whether you were locked in or not when I commenced.

"I hardly think that, for who would want to fasten me up? This is the only exit, as the other door leading into the library, is locked."

"I suppose it could not have been," stammered Burrows, a little confused. What could he think? How was it that Lewis had come out of this room, when he was sure that he had found it empty the night before, and had subsequently kept guard all through the lonely hours of the early morning? He left Lewis and went

into the library. Going to the door which opened from that room into the apartment which Lewis had just quitted, he found that it was locked as he had stated. Moreover, the key was in the lock, on the library side. Burrows unlocked the door and entered, curious to determine whether Lewis had slept in the bed or not, and upon investigation, decided that he had. More than ever puzzled, he regretfully concluded to await until Mr. Barnes should arrive, and seek his assistance in solving this mystery. As it was yet early, he went to his room, and was soon sleeping soundly.

Chapter VII

The Autopsy

After being released from his room by Burrows, Lewis crossed the hall and went into the parlor. Though New England farm people usually arise early, he judged from the stillness in the house that no one else was yet astir. He heard the detective go upstairs and close his door behind him. In the quiet of morning in the country, the least sound is heard afar off. He wondered how it was that Burrows had been in the hall so early, and why he had returned to his bedroom, but there was no way of having his thoughts answered. He stood near the fireplace for a long time with one elbow on the mantel, his head on his hand, gazing upon the spot where the corpse had been found, as though fascinated. There are some who avoid the presence of the dead, or places where the dead have been. These would strenuously deny the possibility that spirits of the departed return to earth, yet in their secret hearts they admit that it might be. They scoff at ghosts, yet avoid a chance of meeting one. There are others who would no more enjoy such an encounter, but who, having speculated little as to the possibilities, or probabilities, yet, in an undefinable half conscious way, wonder whether such things can be. These are attracted to the scenes of deaths, and especially of homicides. For, if any ghost shall have the desire to return, would it not be the grim spectre of one who has been forcibly ejected from his earthly shell? Might not his unfinished career contain some incompleted purpose, so strongly impressed upon the soul, that he would try to get back into communication with someone, whom he might inspire to do his bidding, so that he, poor ghost, might continue upon his long journey, lighter hearted? Or, in a case of murder, might it not be that the keen following of a scent by the quick mind of a shrewd detective, results from the whisperings of the spirit of the deceased which hovers about the scene, till justice be done? If this be a possibility, would it not be a probability that such would be the case, where suspicion had fallen upon some beloved one? For whether she, if a woman were suspected, were even truly guilty, might not a kindly, loving ghost, be willing to save her from vengeance even though some other, perhaps his enemy, would suffer in her place?

However this may be, the fact remains that though we may speculate, and speculate, we know nothing. And, knowing nothing, we speculate. Thus it was

not strange, that in that room, and on that spot, Lewis should allow his thoughts to wander afar off, so far indeed that we need not follow him. But whilst he stood there blind and deaf, as the abstracted always are, though their eyes and ears may be in perfect order for the reception of impressions, there entered one whom he neither saw nor heard. I use this pronoun although I am alluding to the great mastiff, for it was the dog who stalked silently into the room. I believe that religionists, in their egotism, have selfishly appropriated all the souls in creation, and bestowed them upon the king of all animals, man. To my mind there is something inherently wrong about this dogma. I have met too many good dogs, and too many bad men, to easily believe that man alone is immortal. For surely if there be any immortality at all, the good in the world must share it. So I think the good in the dog is more worthy of perpetuity, than the evil that resides in man.

The mastiff, having entered the room, went close to where Lewis stood, and after sniffing at his legs a moment, gently licked the hand which hung down, reaching it without an effort, so tall was he.

Lewis must have indeed been lost in thought, for he heeded not the “good-morning” of the brute. His salutation unnoticed, the mastiff dropped upon his haunches, and so sat staring up into the face of the man as though to ask wherefore he was not observed. There is the picture! The man leaning against the mantel, present in the body, but absent in mind or spirit, and the dog sitting, patiently waiting for the return of consciousness in the man, so that he might be recognized. As he continued to stare up at Lewis, who will say, that, dog though he was, he would not be able to note the first expression on the face, which would show that the man’s mind had returned from its pursuit of the unknowable? The position remained unchanged for many minutes, till at last the dog must have concluded that he deserved more than was accorded to him. He raised one of his huge paws and placed it upon the man’s leg, repeating the action, as though intentionally touching him to attract his attention. Still failing, he reached a little higher, and let his paw rest on Lewis’s hand. This aroused Lewis and even before he fully recovered from his revery he closed his fingers upon the proffered paw, grasping it tightly. He looked down, but as he met the mastiff’s eyes, they were turned away. What is there about a dog which causes him to do this? He will stare at you by the hour, but, look at him, and he turns away as though caught in an act of which he is ashamed. Is it a recognition of the superiority of man, and does he instinctively feel that it is a liberty for him so to stare, even though the proverb allows the cat to gaze upon majesty?

Lewis stooped and patted the huge head, and the dog turned his mouth up, so that he could lick the hand which caressed him.

“Poor dumb brute,” said Lewis, aloud, “I wonder if you know that I am in trouble, and are offering your sympathy?” He leaned farther forward, and the dog licked him in the face.

“You seem to be fond of dogs!”

Lewis looked up quickly, releasing the dog’s paw, and saw that it was Virginia who had spoken.

“Yes,” he replied, “I am devoted to the species. I feel quite complimented at the favors shown to me by this one. He does not look like a dog who would make friends with every one, and it is said that these intelligent brutes instinctively avoid the evil disposed.”

“You are the first man of whom Savage ever made a friend at sight,” replied Virginia. “I think that his name is a good exponent of his nature. There are few about this neighborhood who do not fear him. I wonder if what you say is true? I mean, that a dog can do what a man cannot—read character, and distinguish between the good and the bad?”

“I cannot be certain, of course, but I think so. It is all speculation, though there are stories in substantiation of that theory. However that may be, I am glad that Savage is friendly with me, since I am to be your guest. It would be very awkward otherwise. I should fear to leave my room at night.”

“You must not call yourself my guest,” said Virginia, in friendly tones. “Despite what the detectives, or others, may have told you of my recent unpleasantness with my uncle, I loved him dearly. As you are his son, I look upon you as his rightful heir, regardless of what the Squire tells me are the provisions of the will. You must consider yourself entirely at home.”

“You are very kind to the prodigal.” He paused a moment. “You said just now that you dearly loved my father.” His voice trembled a little, and he stopped, to regain control of himself. “I am glad to have you say that. I am glad that someone loved him.” Again he was obliged to pause. “You see I forsook him, and he must have been a very lonely man had you not given him your affections. Now that I have come back, in face of the dreadful calamity that has befallen us,

your kind words lead me to hope that—that you will give me your good opinion and, your good will, now, and that later we may grow to be firm friends, and, perhaps, affectionate cousins. Am I—am I too bold?”

“I told you the truth when I said that I loved my father—for he was a father to me. How could I help loving him? He was so good to me.” She was not answering his question directly, and as she said the last words she choked back a sob, and turned her head away to hide her emotion. For this reason she did not see an involuntary movement towards her which Lewis made. He stretched forth his arms, as though he would infold her with them by way of sympathy. Almost as quickly as he had been moved, he checked himself and seemed calm when she looked at him again. “Do you know,” said she, “your voice is very like your father’s? And you are like him, too.” Then after a moment, offering him her hand impulsively. “Yes, I think I can promise that we shall be friends.” Lewis took the proffered hand and held it without saying anything. Virginia immediately withdrew it, not resentfully, but yet firmly. Her emotions, aroused by the subject which they had discussed, had betrayed her into more demonstrativeness than was her custom. Now, she returned to her usual mood, and said a little more coldly, “Come, we will have breakfast. I came in to call you.” Lewis sighed as he followed her. The mastiff had sprawled off on the rug, lying on his side, his long legs outstretched, and appeared to be asleep. But as soon as the two left the room he jumped up and went after them.

It was about noon when Dr. Snow arrived, and by this time Burrows had arisen. Meeting the doctor, he asked if he had come prepared to make the _postmortem _examination, to which he received a reply in the affirmative.

“Will you go up to the room at once? May I accompany you?”

“Yes,” said the doctor, “I meant to come earlier, for I am anxious to make this examination as soon as possible, but I had to make a call on a very ill patient some miles away. As to your being present, it is what I wished. It is always best that more than one should witness such an investigation, in case anything of an unexpected nature should be discovered.”

“Very well, let us go at once, for you cannot be more anxious than myself to begin. In fact, there is another reason why I would like to see the inside of the room.”

“What is it?” asked the doctor, with some curiosity.

“Well, the fact is,” said Burrows, “last night I thought I heard someone in the room, and also that a chair, or other piece of furniture, was overturned. I am curious to see if we find any corroboration of it in the appearance of the place.”

“I doubt very much that we shall, for I have the key in my pocket, and so you see no one could have gained entrance.”

The two men then proceeded to the apartment where lay the dead body. The doctor unlocked the door, allowing the detective to enter ahead of him. Burrows gazed eagerly around, but nothing seemed to indicate that anyone had been in the place since it had been closed, the day before.

“You see,” said the doctor, “nothing has been disturbed. I am afraid your imagination played some trick upon you.”

Opening a satchel which he had brought with him, Dr. Snow produced his instruments, and immediately began his work. First he stripped the body, and found a considerable quantity of blood clotted about the parti.’, which with a sponge he carefully cleansed. He had scarcely done so, when Burrows, who had been following his actions with eager interest, excitedly exclaimed:

“Look, doctor, there seem to be two wounds!”

“As you say, so it seems,” said Dr. Snow, phlegmatically; “but before we make a positive assertion, let us examine further.” With these words he took up his probe. Passing it into one wound he worked in silence for some time, Burrows endeavoring to command his impatience. Finally he removed the instrument and inserted it into the second opening. With a little manipulation it passed superficially through the flesh, and then emerged again about six inches from the entrance, and towards the back. At length the doctor spoke:

“I think,” said he, “that you are correct in your surmise, and that two bullets have entered here. One I can feel with my probe, the other passed out, as you see this second track indicates. Both wounds are close together.”

“Will you extract the bullet?” asked Burrows.

“Of course—it will give us a needed clue as to the bore of the weapon used.”

Thereupon he continued, determined to complete the task before him. Whilst he was thus busily engaged, Burrows stood looking from the window, and was deep in thought over this last point in the evidence.

In the talk between him and Mr. Barnes, both had thought that but one bullet had found its mark in the dead body. Now it was incontestably proven that there were two wounds. How to explain that, in connection with what they had already discovered, was the problem, and his astute mind quickly evolved a theory to fit the case. It will be remembered that the pistols found on the lawn had each one empty shell, and as but one shell, had been picked up in Virginia's room, he concluded that that weapon also had been fired only once. The tracks in the snow seemed to indicate that Virginia had met Harry Lucas (whose name was on one of the pistols), and then left him to go to the woods. Suppose, then, that Lucas had fired his weapon at Lewis, and that the ball had struck at the point where it made but a flesh wound, and then had passed out? From this point Burrows reasoned as follows: "Lewis, finding himself wounded, had taken the precaution to write the name of his supposed assailant on the paper which Mr. Barnes thought that Virginia had taken from the table. He had then retired to his bed, as was evident from his being in his nightdress. Then the man, whom Virginia had met across the river, and who had unquestionably visited the house afterward, as was easily shown by his tracks, had entered, and fired the shot which proved fatal." As he reached this point in the case which he was constructing to fit the facts, he started with a new idea. "As Virginia had been cleaning a pistol, suppose that it was her own weapon, and that it was she who, having planned the deed with Lucas, had finished it when she returned home and found her uncle still alive? This seems more probable, because Lewis might have left his own room to tell her of his wound, when she came in, whereas the man would have sought him in his bedroom, and have killed him there." Two points occurred to him in connection with his theory, and he approached the table where the doctor was at work, and asked:

"Can you tell from what distance these shots were fired?"

"I have just been looking into that point. Of one thing I am convinced, and that is, that one was fired at very close range, for the cloth of the gown is blackened with powder."

"Which wound was that?"

“That is the curious part of it. There is but one hole in the gown, and there are two wounds. I cannot be sure which bullet passed through the garment, because the wounds are so close together.”

This satisfied Burrows, and he came to his second point. If he could find the suit of clothes which the murdered man had on when the first shot struck him, and if he found a bullet-hole in the garments, it would bear out his theory that Lewis had received one bullet from without, and then had undressed, the second and fatal shot coming after.

Burrows was now anxious to search for the suit of clothes necessary to his theory of the crime, but was obliged to wait until Dr. Snow had concluded his investigation. This occupied some time, for he very carefully made notes of all the results. However, at last the doctor signified his readiness to dismiss the case for the day. The two men left the room together, Dr. Snow carefully locking the door and placing the key in his pocket. They passed down the stairs, and meeting no one they parted at the gate, the physician jumping into his wagon, and turning his horse's head homeward.

Left to himself, Burrows hastened to commence his search. First he satisfied himself that he was alone in the house, the others apparently having gone out. Feeling thus safe from danger of interruption, he unhesitatingly proceeded to the room which had been occupied by John Lewis. Here he found clothing in the closet, and in the drawer of a bureau. He examined everything most thoroughly, but was chagrined and disappointed by not finding what he sought. At length, however, he was compelled to admit that there was no sign of such evidence as he sought, and he commenced replacing things as he had found them.

Whilst thus occupied, he heard the door open behind him, and turning, saw Virginia.

“What are you doing?” said she. “Those are my uncle's things. Why are you disturbing them?”

Burrows flushed, as though detected in some dishonorable act, and though he felt that he had done but his duty, he would have been glad if Virginia had delayed her entrance by half an hour. However, he determined to tell the truth, and it even occurred to him that he might discover something by closely watching Virginia's face, as he disclosed his suspicions to her.

“Miss Lewis,” said he, “I confess it may seem strange that I should be thus engaged, but as a detective, endeavoring to find the murderer of your uncle, I suppose you will admit that I may use all means to compass that end?”

“I am not sufficiently versed in the methods of the thief-taker to be a judge,” replied Virginia, coldly. Burrows colored at the evidently intended slur, and with some asperity he answered:

“If I am a thief-taker, it is only the criminal who has need to fear my methods. The innocent can be in no danger—”

“You are egotistical! Beware that you do not make the innocent suffer for the guilty in this case!”

“Ah! You know who the guilty is, do you not? Tell me what it is that you know, and what you are concealing?” At these words Virginia drew herself up to the extreme height of her commanding figure, and with withering scorn, she replied:

“Mr. Burrows, you forget yourself! How dare you speak so to me.” Burrows was about to reply, but before he could sufficiently control himself, she continued: “Enough of this. I am not here to aid you in capturing the criminal, but I want to know what you are doing among my uncle’s clothing?”

By this time Burrows was determined to deal with her with entire disregard of her sex, remembering only that she was possessed of guilty knowledge, if nothing more. He watched her narrowly as he asked:

“Where are the clothes which your uncle wore when he was shot?”

The girl’s countenance did not change, save that a slight, a very slight smile crossed her lips.

“It appears that my uncle was in his nightdress when he was killed, therefore your question is unintelligible,” she replied.

“Your uncle was in his full dress when shot, and I am seeking the garments which he wore.”

“Have you found them?” asked Virginia, still with her countenance under perfect control.

“No, I have not,” admitted Burrows, a little disconcerted. Before he could continue, he was surprised to hear her say:

“Will you come in to dinner? I came to call my cousin, but he does not appear to be here.” Without waiting for his answer she left the room.

Burrows was disconcerted at the readiness with which she had dismissed the whole topic. Could it be, he thought, that after all, she knew nothing? He could not bring himself to admit this, remembering her evident interest in keeping some secret of which she was possessed. “The deeper I get, the more complicated the whole thing seems to be,” he muttered, as he followed his hostess to the dining room. At that moment he sincerely wished for the return of Mr. Barnes.

Nothing of any consequence occurred during the remainder of the day, and Burrows retired early to sleep that night. Once in bed, he could not help wondering whether there would be a repetition of the mysterious noises of the night before. His slumbers were undisturbed, and he awoke much refreshed the next morning. Immediately after breakfast he left the farm, and went to the saloon, where he and Mr. Barnes had stopped on their first arrival. Here he found, as he expected, that their trunks had been sent from New Market, and he was thus enabled to make a change of clothing, of which he felt sorely in need. This done, he proceeded to the Squire’s house, to ascertain if anything had been heard from his superior.

He was ushered into a most comfortable parlor, and was shortly joined by the Squire himself, who entered with a dispatch in his hand.

“Good morning, Mr. Burrows,” said he, advancing; “I presume you are anxious to know about Mr. Barnes. I have just received a message from him, sent from Portsmouth. He promises to be with us to-day. Do you know what called him to that city?”

“Not exactly, Squire, though I fancy I might guess. He left me, to find out the address on a certain letter, which he thought it of importance to have. I suppose he must have followed the letter to its destination, in order to come up with the party to whom it was written.”

“And who may that be?” asked the Squire, with considerable curiosity.

“I cannot say certainly,” replied Burrows, “but as the letter was written by Miss Lewis, I fancy it may be her lover, Walter Marvel. If this should prove to be the case, you will see how well Mr. Barnes foretold how he should find this man, when he said that he would only need to keep a watch on the movements of the lady.”

“But does he, that is, does Mr. Barnes think that Marvel is connected with this case?” The Squire’s voice quivered slightly. Evidently he was sorry to have this young man implicated.

“You will find, when you know Mr. Barnes better, that he is very slow to express any decided opinions in cases of this kind. In fact, it is commonly said among the men on the force, that, ‘When Mr. Barnes accuses a man, he always proves him guilty.’ Therefore, you see, it is impossible for me as yet to say just what he does think.”

Before the conversation could be carried any further, there was a loud rap on the knocker of the front door, and the Squire himself hastened to open it, ushering in Mr. Barnes and Walter Marvel. Squire Olney was as one struck dumb, when he saw and recognized the latter. How quickly this shrewd detective had accomplished what had baffled the efforts of so many others! In just twenty-four hours he had apprehended the man whom he had come to find. Marvel was the first to speak.

“Good morning, Squire! You seem surprised to see me!”

“I am,” rejoined the Squire, briefly.

“Mr. Barnes here has told me what I did not know. You have offered a reward for my capture?”

The Squire hastened to disavow any personal responsibility for that action, and continued: “I hope, Walter, you know that I am your friend? I have only done my duty.”

“I understand perfectly, Squire. However, under the circumstances, and because of later occurrences, I accepted the advice of Mr. Barnes, and returned at once.”

“Oh! Then you are not under arrest?” asked the Squire, anxiously. Walter changed color slightly, and Mr. Barnes hastened to relieve his embarrassment by

saying:

“No, Squire, he came with me voluntarily. But now, if you can offer us any refreshments, we should be grateful. We walked from New Market, and it has sharpened our appetites, has it not, Mr. Marvel?”

Walter nodded assent, and Burrows, who was watching the scene with interest, was surprised at the apparent good-will which seemed to exist between them. The Squire at once led the way to the dining-room, and his wife soon spread a bountiful repast before them.

Chapter VIII

The Inquest

It was decided that the inquest should be continued that same afternoon. The Squire had notified the district attorney at Dover, to be present and assist, and he arrived during the morning. All of the jurymen and witnesses were therefore notified to be present at the Squire's house at two o'clock. This was at the suggestion of Mr. Barnes, who had a special reason for not going back to the farm. He did not wish Virginia to know that Marvel had been captured until after she had testified. To further this end, Marvel was instructed to remain in one of the upper rooms, and though he was not actually under arrest, he felt constrained to obey.

Mr. Barnes learned from Burrows of the strange noises that he had heard on his first night at the farm, but told his young assistant that he had probably been dreaming. When informed of the singular behavior of Sarah Carpenter, he thought that of sufficient importance to have her name added to the list of witnesses. Burrows told nothing of the information imparted by Josiah Skene.

Mr. Barnes then sought the district attorney, and was closeted with him for an hour, during which they arranged their plans for conducting the examination.

The inquest was to be held in a large room on the ground floor. It was well adapted for the purpose, because of the fact that the Squire had allowed it to be used as a school-room whilst the selectmen were having the regular school-house enlarged and remodelled. Thus there was a raised platform at one end, upon which the Squire and the witnesses could sit, whilst the rows of benches readily afforded seats for the jurymen and the spectators.

News of any importance travels rapidly in a small town like Lee, and before the time set for the inquest, quite a motley crowd of people had congregated about the Squire's grounds. There were men and women, farmers, workmen, and idlers, all more or less interested in the proceedings which were about to commence. And each had some theory, all his own, as to the identity of the guilty one. One man remembered a farm-hand who had been discharged by Lewis, and who had left the town, breathing vengeance. Another had met a suspicious looking tramp prowling about Riverside on the very day of the crime.

Being reminded by a neighbor that he had spent all of Saturday and Sunday over in Dover, he was forced to admit that it might have been on Friday when he had met the tramp, but, nothing disconcerted, he continued to urge his opinion that that individual would yet be proven, to have a guilty connection with the affair. This proposition was ridiculed by another, for the simple fact that nothing had been stolen, would tend to exonerate a tramp, who could not possibly have any other motive but theft, and then he drew attention to the suspiciously close arrival of the man who claimed to be the son, and who would now come in for a share in the property. But yet another had only that morning heard that the entire property would go to the daughter, and so settled that theory. An old lady at this juncture mysteriously announced that the whole truth of the matter had been revealed to her in a vision, but just what it was she declined to state "till the proper time comes." So they argued and talked over the situation, till at length Mr. Tupper, the district attorney, appeared, walking with Mr. Barnes. All then knew that the investigation would at once begin, and forthwith pushed their way into the room which was to be the scene of the inquiry.

The proceedings began promptly. The Squire entered, followed by Mr. Tupper and the two detectives, and took a seat in a leather-covered chair, which had been brought from his library and "placed upon the stand, a similar one awaiting the witnesses. Mr. Tupper and Mr. Barnes took chairs at a small wooden table in front of the Squire, and Burrows went to a seat amongst the crowd. The jurymen were called, and, as they responded to their names, were directed to places on benches, placed laterally beside the stand, by the end nearest to the witness chair. It is worthy of remark, that though this was in a small, isolated country town, the composition of this jury was far above the average to be met with in large cities. Here, all were men of families, and identified with the interests of the community in which they lived. Each, as he sat, was the embodiment of earnestness and sincerity. Rough garbed though they were, they possessed shrewd minds and good common-sense, and therefore would make admirable jurors.

The preliminaries over, the examination was begun. Mr. Barnes was asked to take the stand, and he testified to the discovery of the crime, and the position and condition of the corpse as first seen by himself, when he accompanied the Squire to the house on Monday morning, and to other facts which have been already told.

The next witness was Dr. Snow. The Squire interrogated him.

“Dr. Snow,” he asked, “have you prepared a report of the autopsy, made by you yesterday, upon the body of the deceased?”

“I made a thorough examination, and have notes of all that I discovered, which could, in my opinion, be of the least assistance.”

“Very well! What then do you find to have been the cause of death?”

“The man was shot. The ball is of large size. I am not expert enough to give the exact calibre, but think it is a No. 32.”

“Did you succeed in finding the ball?”

“Yes, here it is!” He passed it to the Squire who, in turn, handed it to Mr. Tupper.

“Dr. Snow,” said the latter, “can you tell how long the deceased lived after the shooting?”

“I found the bullet lodged in the heart. Therefore death must have been instantaneous.”

“Did you find any other marks of violence?”

“In addition to the wound which proved fatal, I found another, which was only superficial.”

“Did you find that ball also?”

“No, it only passed a short distance through the body, and emerged again.”

“Can you describe the direction which it took?”

“From the front towards the back.”

“How was the body dressed?”

“In a nightdress, and it is a noticeable fact, that, though there are two wounds, there is but one hole through the garment.”

“Did the fatal bullet pass through that hole?”

“It would seem that it did, but as the nightdress is a loosely fitting garment, it is impossible to say, as the two wounds are so close together.”

Mr. Barnes whispered to Mr. Tupper, who then continued:

“Was this last wound above, or below, the other? What I wish to know is, was it high enough for the bullet to have come from a pistol fired from the lawn, and through the window?”

“Yes. I thought of that point, and therefore measured the height of the window-sill from the ground, and from the floor inside. I found by these measurements that the sill is about five feet from the lawn outside, and only two feet above the floor within. The wound which we are now considering is above the fatal one, though only slightly so, and is so located that, if the deceased had been standing, it would have been about four feet above the floor, and so two feet higher than the window-sill.”

“Then, in your opinion, that wound may have been made by someone on the lawn?”

“I am sure that it would have been possible. Of course, it might depend on how near Mr. Lewis stood to the window.”

As the doctor was about to withdraw, Mr. Tupper stopped him by asking:

“Will you please tell us if you found any marks, scars you know, or birth-marks, by which the identity of the corpse might be established?”

“Nothing whatever. The face and head have been burned beyond all possibility of recognition.”

“Were these burns of such a nature that they may have been the cause of death?”

“I should say not, but of course if a man were burned as badly as that, he might subsequently die, though not so quickly.”

Mr. Tupper, addressing the Squire, said:

“I suppose there is no doubt as to the identity of the body, but in the face of the fact that the features are so much disfigured, it would perhaps be as well to seek

some evidence in this direction.”

“I have no doubt,” said the Squire, “that Miss Lewis may be able to help us better than anyone, though I will say this much myself. When I first saw the body lying by the chimney, and leaned over it, I noticed that there was a name on the nightdress in large letters.”

“I saw that also,” said Dr. Snow. “It is in indelible ink, and done with a stencil-plate. As might be expected, the name is ‘John Lewis.’”

“That in itself seems almost conclusive,” observed the Squire, “but we can ask Miss Lewis about the matter when she is called.”

Dr. Snow was then allowed to leave the stand.

“Now,” said Mr. Tupper, “if we can, we must try to discover the time of the crime. I believe, Squire, you are the one who last saw Mr. Lewis alive? Can you tell at what hour that was, as near as possible?”

“I went to see Mr. Lewis on the night of the murder, and was in the parlor with him nearly an hour. I must have left about eight o’clock, for it was but half-past when I reached my own home.”

“Then of course he was alive at that hour. The detective, Mr. Barnes, has described to us the tracks which he found in the snow, and also the discovery of the two pistols. These, he thinks, were fired at the time when, or immediately after the snow had ceased falling last night. Whether either of these shots caused the death of Mr. Lewis, at least it is possible that one of them made the flesh wound which Dr. Snow has described. It will be well, therefore, to fix the time when the snowstorm ceased.”

Jef Harrison was then called, and swore to the facts which he had related to Mr. Barnes, and added that he had again questioned his daughters, and that they substantiated the opinion which he had given.

The next person called was Sarah Carpenter. She came in from an adjoining room, as did all the witnesses, it having been considered important that one should not hear the testimony of the others, prior to being examined. Miss Carpenter sat down rather stiffly, and it was evident that she was a reluctant witness.

“You are a servant at Riverside farm?” asked Mr. Tupper.

“I assist Miss Lewis in taking care of the house, but I do not call myself a servant,” was the reply. The lawyer had evidently gained her ill-will at the outset, but he took no notice of the asperity of her manner.

“Are there any servants at all?”

“I suppose so.”

“How many?”

“I don’t call any of them servants. There are four men who work on the farm, and a boy to do the chores.”

“Do any of these sleep in the house?”

“No, they all sleep in a separate out-building.”

“How far is that building from the main dwelling?”

“It is on the other side of the road altogether. Mr. Lewis bought the farm opposite his own, about two years ago, and, ever since, he has had the men sleep there.”

“And where do you sleep?”

“In my own house,” answered the girl with an indignant toss of her head, but her temper affected Mr. Tupper as little as though he had been made of stone. With perfect composure he continued:

“At what time do you leave Riverside for your own home?”

“When I feel inclined.”

“Come,” said Mr. Tupper with just a little sternness, “answer my question.”

“I did answer it.”

“Answer it again! What time do you leave the farm?”

“When I get through my work,” she answered, sullenly.

“Ah! That is better! Now then tell us about what time that is, usually?”

“I can’t tell. I have not kept track of it.”

“Well, then, at what time did you start for home on Sunday evening?”

“Look here, what right have you to ask me all these questions?” Then quickly turning to the coroner she continued: “Squire, have I got to answer everything this man asks of me?”

“You must tell all that you know,” replied the Squire.

“And what if I won’t?”

“You would be guilty of contempt.”

“And what of that?”

“I could have you confined in jail, and kept there until you be willing to answer the questions.”

She pondered over this awhile, and then turning to Mr. Tupper again, said sharply:

“Tell me at once what it is you are trying to get out of me?”

“I want to know at what time the shot was fired that killed Mr. Lewis?”

“How should I know?”

“You would have heard the report if you had been in the house.”

“And how do you know I was in the house?”

“That is what you must tell us.”

“Well, then I was not in the house.”

“If not in the house, where were you when the shot was fired?” But she was too

shrewd to be caught in this trap, and replied:

“I did not say I heard the shot.”

“You said you were not in the house when the shooting took place. How could you be sure of that unless you heard it from some other point?”

“You said I would have heard it if I had been in the house,” replied the girl triumphantly, but Mr. Tupper quickly went on:

“Ah! Then you mean to say that you did not hear the report?”

“I don’t mean to say anything of the kind,” she retorted with similar rapidity. This was a trick of Mr. Tupper’s, to get his witness excited, and then by rapid questioning to surprise her into such an admission as she had just made. The words were scarcely uttered before she saw their import, and she continued savagely: “You are making me say what I don’t mean. Why don’t you ask for what you want to know, without so much beating round the bush?”

“Well, then, come to the point. Did you hear the pistol shot on Sunday night?”

But the girl kept silent awhile, and then jumped off the stand and, dropping into a seat, burst into tears. Mr. Tupper and Mr. Barnes talked in low tones for several minutes, and then the former whispered to the Squire, who called to the stand the workmen alluded to by the last witness. The Squire himself questioned them, whilst the lawyer and detective consulted.

The witnesses appeared separately, but their testimony shed no light on the matter, as the four older men had spent the evening at the saloon, whilst the younger had retired to the house across the road, and had gone to sleep at seven o’clock on the evening in question, and he declared that he had heard nothing during the night. By this time Sarah Carpenter had recovered from her emotion, and was sitting quietly on the front bench. Will Everly was then called, and took the stand. As he did so, Sarah seemed much agitated, and with difficulty kept her composure. Mr. Barnes, who was watching her, noticed her discomfort, and smiled to himself as one conscious of being correct in some surmise. Mr. Tupper proceeded.

“Mr. Everly,” said he, “I believe you are a friend of Mr. Walter Marvel?”

“I hope so, sir.”

“You are under some obligation to him, I believe?”

“Yes, indeed! He saved my life.”

“How was that?” In reply Everly related the incident in detail. Mr. Tupper continued:

“You consider, then, that you owe your life to this young man?”

“I do, most emphatically. I should hesitate at nothing to do him a service.”

“I have heard that you have repeatedly said that you would risk your life for him. Is that true?”

“It is! Did he not risk his life for me?”

All through the above, Burrows, who was watching Mr. Barnes, was surprised to notice that Mr. Barnes was keenly scrutinizing the girl Sarah Carpenter, who was in evident distress, and he at length suspected that this examination of Everly was really, in some way, aimed at the young woman. Mr. Tupper continued:

“Were you present when Marvel quarrelled with the deceased?”

“He did not quarrel with Mr. Lewis,” answered Everly with some heat, “he simply did what any man would. He resented a gross insult!”

“I think he fired at Mr. Lewis, did he not?”

Everly was a little confused as he replied:

“He was very much excited and took out his pistol. I don’t think he would really have fired it, but Miss Lewis struck his arm, and the weapon was discharged. I think it was an accident.”

“But did he not utter threats against Mr. Lewis, as he went away?”

“He only said what was natural under the circumstances: that he would get even. But I know Walter, and I doubt if he remembered what he had said, as long as the next day.”

“Mr. Everly,” said the lawyer impressively, “it is very worthy of you to defend your friend, but be careful lest in doing so, you damage your own cause.”

And Burrows saw Sarah Carpenter shrink closer into the corner, vainly endeavoring to appear unconcerned.

“Why, what do you mean?” asked Everly.

“I will be candid with you. You have just admitted that you would imperil your life to serve your friend. You knew, after the quarrel between these men, that John Lewis would ever be a barrier to keep Marvel from marrying the woman of his choice. Do you see your position now?”

“Not clearly! Go on!” said the witness hoarsely.

“Unless you can prove that you were not at Riverside that night, it might be thought, I say it might be, that you committed this crime.”

Everly hung his head as he replied: “I was at the farm.” This statement was followed by a suppressed cry from the corner where Sarah Carpenter was sitting. All those present looked grave, for the words, as Everly spoke them, sounded almost like a confession of guilt. Mr. Barnes alone seemed not to be surprised.

“What were you doing at the farm?” asked Mr. Tupper, resuming the examination.

“I went there to see Miss Carpenter.” He blushed deeply.

“Are you in love with that lady?” The women present thought this a merciless question, but though the color deepened on his cheek, Everly straightened himself up as he replied:

“Miss Carpenter has promised to be my wife.” This caused quite a sensation. It was tolerably well known that they were fond of each other’s society, but every one had considered it a “boy and girl” affair, as the two had grown up together and had been schoolmates.

“How long were you at the farm, that night?” continued the lawyer.

“From six until half-past eight.”

“You left at that hour?”

“Yes.”

“Before you did so, did you meet Mr. Lewis?” Everly hesitated a moment, then replied:

“I think I would rather not answer that question.”

“As you choose. You need not criminate yourself. When you left Riverside, where did you go?”

“I went straight to the saloon.”

“Do you know at what time you reached there?”

“At a quarter to nine. I had an appointment with a friend at that hour, and just kept it.”

“Was your friend punctual also?”

“He was waiting for me. That is how I fix the time so accurately. He claimed that I was late, and we compared watches.”

“Could you prove this by your friend?”

“He lives near here. You can send for him, if you wish. It is Mr. Harrison’s son, Joe.”

Mr. Tupper requested the Squire to send for this man at once, and a messenger was despatched for him. Mr. Tupper continued:

“Do you own a pistol?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Can you send for it?”

“I have it with me.” Taking it from his pocket he handed it to the lawyer, who examined it closely and then said:

“I see that one barrel has been fired off. Did you discharge it?”

“I did.”

“When?”

“I prefer not to say.”

“What is the calibre of this weapon?”

“It carries a No. 32 cartridge.”

“Did you ever see the weapon which Mr. Marvel had, on the night of the trouble at the farm?”

“Yes, sir.”

“What kind of pistol is it?”

“It is of the same pattern as this. There are five, to my knowledge, in Lee.”

“Can you tell us who the owners of these weapons are, and how it happens that they are all alike?”

“Besides mine, there are four, owned, respectively, by Walter, Harry Lucas, Miss Marvel, and Miss Lewis. Each has the owner’s name engraved on the stock. About two years ago, the ladies expressed a desire to learn to shoot, and Harry Lucas bought the pistols. The four would frequently meet, and practise at targets. As to mine, I saw Walter’s, took a fancy to it, and got one.”

“I suppose you all are fairly good shots?”

“All are experts.”

At this moment the young man, who had been sent for, arrived, and Everly was allowed to leave the stand. The new-comer took his place and Mr. Tupper questioned him.

“What is your name?”

“Joseph Harrison, commonly called Joe.”

“Do you remember where you were last Sunday night?”

The witness hesitated and glanced towards Everly. To reassure him, the lawyer said:

“It is all right, you need not hesitate to speak. It was at Mr. Everly’s request that you were called.” At this he seemed much relieved.

“Oh! Very well! I met Everly by appointment at the saloon.”

“At what time did he reach there?”

“At a quarter to nine by his watch, but ten minutes to nine by mine. We compared watches.”

“Was there any special object in this meeting?”

Again did Harrison let his eyes wander towards Everly, but the latter held his head bowed on his breast, and gave no answering sign. The question was repeated and the witness answered:

“Yes, sir; he wanted me to take a letter for him.”

“Did he have it already written when he entered the saloon?”

“No, sir; he wrote it after I met him.”

“Where did you take this letter?”

“To Epping.”

“Why could he not have sent it by mail?”

“Well, you see, I don’t suppose as how it makes any difference, now that Mr. Lewis is dead. But at that time, they were tryin’ to find Walter Marvel and Will was afraid, if he sent a letter by the post, he might be puttin’ the authorities on the right track.”

“This letter then was addressed to Walter Marvel?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Did you deliver it to him that night?”

“No, not till next mornin’. I put up at the hotel, and then hunted him up in the mornin’.”

“Where did you find him?”

“His mother owns an old house down there. It is out of repair and an’t been used for years. But Walter keeps one room fixed up, so’s when he goes huntin’ he can stop over night, and it was there I found him.”

“Did Mr. Marvel read the letter before you, and did he make any remark?”

“Yes, and he said: ‘Will is a good friend and has done more for me than many would.’”

At this point Sarah Carpenter caused considerable excitement by jumping up and exclaiming:

“You are all going on the wrong track! Let me go on the stand again, and I will prove it.” Mr. Barnes smiled quietly, and Burrows knew from the expression of his face, that this was just what he had been counting upon. Her request being granted, the girl did not wait for the formality of questions, but spoke rapidly:

“I am sorry now that I did not tell all I knew, awhile ago. I did hear the report of a pistol, yes, and more than one. I did not tell before, because I was afraid it was Will who had done the shooting. But now I know it was not. He left me at half-past eight o’clock to keep his appointment, and I went into the house to get my things on. We had been up at the barn. When I was ready to start for home, I found that I had lost my key. Thinking I must have dropped it in the barn, I went there to look for it. Whilst there, and fully half-an-hour after Will had left me, I suddenly heard the report of a pistol, and then another, and I think a third, though I can’t be sure. I know though, that I ran to the door of the barn, and saw a man run across the lawn and down the road. I don’t know why, but it struck me it was Will at the time, and that is why I have been so troubled ever since. But now I know differently, for, thank God, he has proved that he went straight to the saloon. You suggested to him that he might have committed this crime to serve his friend, but none of you see that though he is innocent of having risked his life in that way, he is ready to risk it now, by letting it seem that he is guilty, that no suspicion may attach to Walter Marvel. My God, are you all blind?”

Chapter IX

Interesting Testimony

During the delivery of the statement made by Sarah Carpenter, there was the stillness of death. Her words caused a profound sensation, and even after she ceased, no one spoke, but eagerly waited to hear what those in charge of the investigation would have to say. The Squire at length addressed the witness:

“You say it was about half-an-hour after you had parted from Everly, when you heard the shots fired?”

“Yes, sir,” said the girl, eagerly. “I am certain it was as long as that, for I went to the house to get my things, as I said, and when I found that I did not have my key, I looked all about the room first, and it was some time before I concluded to search in the barn. When I did, I had to get a lantern, and it was quite a long time after I got to the barn before I heard the shooting.”

“Then, provided your estimate of the time which elapsed is correct, it must have been about nine o’clock when this occurred?”

“I am sure of it. I left just after and went home, and it was a quarter past nine when I wound my watch, before going to bed.”

“Miss Carpenter,” said Mr. Tupper, “how is it that, if you suspected your friend Mr. Everly, you did not go to him and ask him about this matter?”

“I came over here yesterday for that purpose, but Will had gone to New Market.”

“Was it snowing when you left the farm on Sunday night?”

“No, sir; it had stopped.”

She was then allowed to retire, and Mr. Tupper called attention to the fact that her evidence had corroborated the detective’s theory as to the time of the shooting.

The next witness called was Harry Lucas.

“Mr. Lucas,” asked the Squire, “do you recall the day on which Miss Lewis celebrated her birthday at Riverside?”

“Certainly! I was there,” answered Lucas.

“Do you recollect the trouble between Mr. Lewis and Marvel?”

“Yes, sir; perfectly.”

“When Marvel was leaving, did he utter any threat against Mr. Lewis?”

“He said some angry words. I should not care to state positively what they were. I was too much excited myself at the time.”

“Do you recall what you yourself said to Mr. Lewis?”

“Not exactly, sir.”

“Did you not threaten him?”

“I don’t recollect—I may have—I was very angry and quite excited.”

“You have heard of the death of Mr. Lewis, I suppose?”

“I have, sir.”

“Were you in Lee on the night of the murder?”

“I was.”

“Did you tell anyone that you intended leaving town that night?”

Lucas remained silent.

“I have been told by several parties, that you were heard to say that important business would call you out of town. Was that true?”

“I did tell several people that, but it was not true.”

“I am to understand then that you told a lie?”

Lucas colored deeply. "I did not look upon it in that way. I had good reasons for wishing people to think me out of town, and, under the circumstances, did not hesitate to speak as I did."

"Will you tell me what those circumstances were, which would make you think it excusable to resort to a falsehood?"

"I would rather not."

The Squire nodded to Mr. Tupper, who took the witness.

"Mr. Lucas," said he, "was it not because you intended to visit Riverside farm, that you spread the story of your absence?"

Lucas made no reply.

"Did you not go to Riverside that night to meet a lady?" Mr. Tupper spoke slowly, and Lucas started and looked confused, but still persisted in his silence. The lawyer continued:

"Did you not meet a lady in the summerhouse, and was not that lady Miss Lewis?"

"How did you know that?" blurted out the witness, at last aroused to speech, and evidently amazed. Mr. Barnes smiled slightly.

"How I know is of small consequence," said Mr. Tupper, "but I will tell you. The detective has been all over the place, and as fortunately there was snow on the ground, the imprints of your feet left no room for doubt that there was a meeting between a man and a woman in that summerhouse. All that was left was to discover their identity."

"And how have you done that, that is, if you have done so?"

"Do you deny that you and Miss Lewis met at that place, and on that night?"

"I neither deny, nor admit it."

"Perhaps you will later. You say you were in Lee. If not at the farm, where were you?"

“I was out for a time, and then went home.”

“Mr. Lucas, did you hurt yourself that night?”

“I believe not. How do you mean hurt myself?”

“Did any accident happen to you?”

“I don’t recall any.”

Mr. Tupper stooped and picked up a small paper covered parcel, which he unrolled, and taking therefrom a man’s white shirt, handed it to Lucas and asked:

“Do you recognize that as your property?”

“I can’t be sure,” faltered Lucas.

“It has your name on it,” suggested the lawyer.

“Where did you get it?”

“Never mind that, just tell us if it is yours.”

“It looks like one of mine.”

“Exactly. Now, if you please, how did you get the blood on the wristband?”

Lucas examined the garment more closely, and seemed a little nervous as he saw the blood mark.

“I don’t know how it got there,” said he, and then with some anger, added: “I won’t answer another question, till you tell me how you came in possession of this shirt.”

“It was sent to your washer-woman on the day following the murder, and as she had heard of the crime she kept the blood-stained garment.”

“Do you mean to say that you accuse me of killing Mr. Lewis?”

“I accuse no one, but I will remind you that it is the duty of every honest man to help, and not to hinder the machinery of justice. If you are an innocent man, you

should not hesitate to reply to my questions. That we may have no more evasion, I will tell you at once that I know how the blood got on your shirt.”

“How should you know, when I tell you I do not know myself?” asked Lucas, incredulously.

“The blood is your own. You were bitten by a dog!” continued the lawyer. Lucas started in surprise. “You went to Riverside and you were attacked by the mastiff.”

“You seem well informed!”

“I only state what is a fact.” Then suddenly producing the pistol, “do you recognize this weapon?”

At last the young man showed signs of distress, as he replied more humbly, “Yes, sir, it is mine.”

“It was found at the farm near the summerhouse. Will you admit now that you were there?” Lucas made one last effort:

“I may have dropped it there at any time—”

“In which case,” interrupted Mr. Tupper, “it would have been covered by the snow.” Lucas now seemed to recognize that further attempt at concealment would be useless, and Burrows even thought that he seemed relieved, as though, in fact, he had been previously playing a part which little pleased him.

“You have the best of me,” he replied. “Go on! I will answer your questions.”

“Very well. You admit, then, that you went to the farm to meet Miss Lewis, and that you did see her?”

“Yes, sir.”

“At what hour was your appointment with the lady?”

“A quarter to nine.”

“Miss Lewis left you at the summerhouse, and went towards the river, did she

not?”

“How do you know that?” Lucas was plainly very much surprised at the knowledge displayed by the district attorney, who of course had previously been posted by Mr. Barnes.

“Footprints,” said Mr. Tupper, tersely.

“Oh, well! You are right.”

“When did the dog attack you?”

“As soon as Miss Lewis left me I started for home, and the brute came for me.”

“Did he bite you?”

“Yes, sir, on the arm”; drawing up his sleeve, he showed that his arm was bandaged.

“Ah! Then that accounts for the blood on the shirt, as I supposed. Now then, Mr. Lucas, there is another matter. This pistol of yours has an empty shell in it. How do you account for that?”

“I used the pistol to defend myself against the dog, but he was too quick for me, and before I could aim at him he had buried his teeth in my arm. The weapon was then discharged.”

“You are sure,” said Mr. Tupper, speaking with great deliberateness and looking Lucas straight in the eyes, “you are sure that you did not fire this pistol first, and that the noise did not attract the dog, and make him attack you?”

“What should I have fired at?” asked the witness.

“Mr. Lewis, perhaps,” continued Mr. Tupper, in the same measured tones. Lucas seemed about to make an angry retort, but controlled himself and answered:

“The whole thing occurred as I have related it. As soon as the dog opened his jaws again I ran for my life, and, as I did so, I thought I heard two shots in quick succession.”

As this seemed to corroborate the story told by Sarah Carpenter, Mr. Tupper paused in his inquiries, and the Squire asked:

“Did you see who fired these shots?”

“No, sir, I did not think of looking around. I was too intent on getting away.”

“Can you say about what time this shooting occurred?”

“I met Miss Lewis at a quarter to nine, and we talked till about nine, I should say. It was a few minutes after, when I started to leave.”

Mr. Tupper resumed the examination.

“Can you tell me who it was that Miss Lewis went to meet on the other side of the river?”

“Did she cross the river?”

“Her footprints were found over there, and also those of a man. Now, you must know who that man is?”

“I don’t see how that follows.”

“Why did Miss Lewis have you meet her at so late an hour?”

“I do not think that this is my secret. I would prefer to have you ask the lady herself.”

“I think we may do that, Mr. Tupper,” said the Squire.

“Yes, yes, Squire, that will do quite as well,” replied Mr. Tupper, and, with a nod, the Squire dismissed the witness. He then called for Miss Marvel. The young lady appeared and plainly showed that she was very nervous over the prospect of testifying.

“Now, Miss Marvel,” began Mr. Tupper, “we are sorry to trouble you in this matter, but it is so very serious, that we are compelled to examine every one who, by any possibility, may be able to throw any light on the terrible crime.”

“How should I be able to do so?” asked Miss Marvel, already alarmed.

“We do not know that you can,” replied Mr. Tupper, hastening to reassure her. It was plainly evident that if anything was to be learned from this witness it would be by dint of the greatest care. “But,” continued he, “if you do know anything we feel certain that you would not hesitate to inform us at once.”

“But I tell you I do not know anything about it, except what I have heard.”

“Perhaps even that may prove valuable. But stop a minute,” for she was about to interrupt him, “let me ask the questions, and you answer. That will be the quickest way of proceeding. To begin, then, when did you first know of the murder?”

“Monday morning. Virgie came and told me.”

“You are sure you did not know of it sooner?”

“Virgie found me in bed, so how could I hear of it sooner?”

“I said ‘know,’ not ‘hear.’”

“Well, know then, it is all the same.”

“Were you at home on Sunday night?”

“Why—why—of course—where else should I be?” stammered the girl.

“You told my daughter that you were going to drive with Mr. Lucas,” interrupted the Squire, in his kindest tones.

“Mr. Lucas could not keep the appointment.”

“Do you know why?” asked Mr. Tupper.

“I suppose he had some business. In fact he told me so.”

“Did he say that it was out of town?” The girl started with surprise.

“Yes, sir; how did you know?”

“He told the same thing to others. Do you know why he should have told so many people that he was going out of town, and then not have gone?” Alice in

great perturbation looked appealingly towards Lucas, but the latter avoided her glance. Very hesitatingly she answered:

“Mr. Lucas could tell you better than I.” Her equivocal reply made Mr. Barnes conclude that she knew the reason, which, it will be remembered, Lucas had refused to give, and he gave the lawyer a sign to press the point.

“The question has been asked Mr. Lucas, but we want to hear what you know about the matter. Have you seen him since Sunday, when he told you that he meant to leave town?”

“That is the last time he called.”

“But have you seen him?” Alice was evidently troubled by the question, and the lawyer determined to come to the main point at once. He continued:

“After he left you on Sunday, where did you go?”

“I did not go anywhere,” stammered the poor girl.

“Come, you will best serve yourself and your friends by telling the truth.”

“The truth! Why, what do you mean?” She seemed greatly agitated, if not positively alarmed.

“After he left you,” continued Mr. Tupper, “you went to Riverside farm. You went there not to see your friend Miss Lewis, but—”

“How do you know I did not go to see Virgie?” interrupted Alice excitedly.

“You did not go to see her, because you had discovered that there was to be a meeting between her and Harry Lucas.”

“It is false—how can you say such a thing!”

“You went into the summerhouse and hid there, so that you might overhear what passed between the two.”

“It’s all a lie—a wicked lie!” cried the girl, hysterically sobbing between the words. “I did not go near the farm, and I did not go after Harry— and—it’s all

made up—and—” here she broke down utterly, sobbing so that it was necessary to delay the proceedings till she could recover from her agitation. Lucas, much disturbed, arose and addressed the coroner:

“Squire, is it necessary to continue the examination of Miss Marvel?”

“If it could have been avoided I should not have called her.”

“But can you not let it drop now, since you see that she knows nothing?”

“She knows what passed between you and Miss Lewis in the summerhouse,” said the Squire, sharply. “If I cease questioning her, will you give us the information which we want?”

“It is impossible,” said Lucas, despondently, “and I doubt that Miss Marvel knows anything about it.”

“We will let her answer that question; she seems to be recovering her self-possession.” Lucas reluctantly returned to his seat. As soon as Alice had sufficiently regained her composure, Mr. Tupper resumed:

“Now, Miss Marvel, you see that prevarication is useless. We are fully informed as to your movements on the night in question. What we want you to tell us is, what passed between Miss Lewis and Mr. Lucas?” A great weight seemed lifted from Alice’s mind, and she replied quite readily:

“Oh! If that is all I’ll tell you the whole thing.” Lucas barely suppressed a groan. “Before I go any further I must tell how I came to be at the farm. Mr. Lucas came to me on Sunday, and told me that he could not go driving, as we had planned, because he had to go out of town. Of course I believed him and was satisfied. After he had gone, I found a note on the floor, and, picking it up, knew that Mr. Lucas must have dropped it from his pocket, for it was addressed to him. I should never have thought of reading it, but I recognized the writing and knew it came from Virgie, so I read it at once.”

Lucas started in surprise but did not speak. Alice continued:

“When I saw by the contents of the note that Virgie invited Mr. Lucas to meet her at night in the summerhouse, I determined to be there also. I did so because—” Here she seemed a little confused and her rich blood mantled her cheek.

“Well, because Virgie is engaged to my brother, and for the minute I could not understand why she made an appointment with another man.” Most of those present smiled at the girl’s _naive _explanation. “I reached there first and hid in one side of the appointed place. Not long after, they came. I heard nearly all that passed.”

“Tell us please as much as you can remember?”

“They talked quite a while, and then she left. What they said was all about my brother. It seems that he had written to Virgie, in the care of some friend, and asked her to meet him that night down by the river, and tell him whether she would marry him. He said that would be the only way he could come back, after what Mr. Lewis had done. Just at this point the dog commenced to bark, and they spoke lower, perhaps because they thought the dog had heard their voices, and they were afraid to attract attention. And in fact, after a minute, the brute did stop his noise, but it was hard for me to hear the rest of the talk. At any rate I made out that Virgie was afraid that Walter would be angry if she did not go away with him at once, and that, she said, was out of the question. She asked Mr. Lucas to meet my brother after she had seen him, so as to prevent him from doing anything desperate.”

“What did you understand her to mean by ‘desperate’?”

“I think she was afraid he might commit suicide.”

“It did not occur to you that she might be afraid he would kill her uncle?”

“No! Of course not!” Once more she seemed excited. “You surely do not think—my God! What have I been saying?”

“Come, come, Miss Marvel, there is no need to be worried. No one accuses your brother. Let us come to another point. Whilst you were at the farm, did you hear any pistol shots?”

She looked at him and trembled violently, but uttered not a word. The lawyer then produced the weapon with her name on it.

“Is this yours?” he asked.

Alice covered her face with her hands and groaned.

“Miss Marvel,” said Mr. Tupper, after a few moments’ pause, “pray calm yourself. A great deal depends upon your testimony. A man is in danger of being accused of this great crime, unless you can throw some light on the subject, which will corroborate his statements.” She seemed dazed, as she asked almost in a whisper:

“Who is he?”

“We found a pistol, with one chamber empty, lying near the summerhouse.” She shivered. “That pistol bears the name of Harry Lucas.”

“Is he the man whom you accuse?”

“It will depend on your evidence, whether we do, or not. His pistol is empty, and he admits having fired it there that night—”

The girl made a superhuman effort and spoke rapidly:

“And you think that he killed Mr. Lewis? It is not true! I know to the contrary, for I saw Mr. Lewis alive when Harry was running from the place.”

“Ah! Now, are you willing to tell us how that happened?”

She hesitated a moment, but she had gone too far to stop, and besides, her fear for her lover spurred her on.

“I was still in the summerhouse when I heard the growl of the dog. I looked out, and saw the beast attack Mr. Lucas. I heard the pistol fired, and also the sound of breaking glass. I guessed that he had tried to kill the dog, and his bullet must have entered the house through the window. But it did not strike Mr. Lewis. Of that I am positive, for, as I stepped to the door to see what was going on, I distinctly saw Mr. Lewis push up the sash and look out. What is more, he raised a pistol and fired at Mr. Lucas, who was running away from the dog.”

“Did you actually see Mr. Lucas fire his pistol?”

“No, I was then in the summerhouse.”

“Then, although you saw Mr. Lewis come to the window, it is possible that Mr. Lucas may have fired at the deceased instead of at the dog, which latter is only a

guess on your part?”

“I tell you Harry is innocent! I know that he is!”

“How can you know it?”

“Because, when I saw the coward fire at a man who was already fighting with a dog, I shot him myself!”

Then, overcome by the strain upon her nerves, Alice swayed, and fell forward in a swoon.

Chapter X

Virginia Lewis Testifies

When Alice made the statement that she had shot Mr. Lewis, all present, for a moment, sat dumb with amazement. When they saw that she had fainted, all were immediately possessed by the desire to minister to her wants; the result being, as is usual in such cases, that the prostrate form of the young woman was surrounded and she was deprived of all chance of fresh air. Fortunately, Dr. Snow was present, and calling upon Lucas to assist him, together they bore her from the room, permitting only a couple of women to follow them.

The Squire, utterly confounded at the unexpected turn of events, scarcely knew what to do next, and in order to gain time, declared a recess of ten minutes. The jurymen started to leave their seats, but the Squire requested that they would not do so, and that they would not converse about the case with the other persons present. The crowd fell to discussing the situation and a hum of voices filled the room.

Mr. Barnes and Mr. Tupper arose, and went on the stand with the Squire.

“Well, gentlemen,” said the Squire, “this is a surprising affair. What shall we do now?”

“Mr. Barnes,” said the lawyer, “you are more conversant with the case. What is your opinion of Miss Marvel’s statement?”

“Gentlemen,” said Mr. Barnes, “it is evident that Miss Marvel really believes that she killed Mr. Lewis. It is plain to my mind, however, that we should be most careful in accepting such a theory. In the first place, I would call attention to the evidence offered by Dr. Snow. He tells us that he found two wounds, one having passed through the nightdress, and the other not. This simple fact proves beyond doubt that the deceased changed his clothing, after receiving the first wound. Therefore, it is manifestly clear that the shot which Miss Marvel admits she fired at him could not have proven fatal, for, if so, we would be obliged to believe that the other wound was made by the bullet from the pistol of Lucas, in order to account for their being two wounds; but these shots followed in such close succession, that there was not time for him to have effected the change of

clothing. There is, however, a bare possibility that he had already received the first wound, and was in bed, when, attracted by the dog, he arose and went to the window. In that case, he might have been killed by the ball from Miss Marvel's weapon. Thus far, however, we have no evidence that would substantiate a suspicion of this kind. Miss Carpenter and Mr. Everly would have heard the report, if a shot had been fired earlier. Miss Carpenter heard shots at nine o'clock, the time when Miss Marvel discharged her weapon. There is, however, more convincing evidence which I can adduce to corroborate me, in the stand which I take. I am in doubt whether the wound which did not prove fatal was made by Miss Marvel or not, or whether by Lucas, either accidentally, as he claims to have fired, or with design. But I am positive that neither of the shots fired at that hour was the one which destroyed the life of the deceased."

"You allude to the scrap of paper of which you told me, do you not?" asked Mr. Tupper.

"I do," replied Mr. Barnes. "But let me explain to the coroner so that he may be convinced of the necessity of continuing. I found upon the table in the parlor, a sheet of paper, upon which was written,

'If I am dead in the morning my murderer is,'

the sentence being unfinished. This seems to prove that Mr. Lewis recognized his first assailant at least, and that, fearing death, he meant to warn us as to the identity of the person. True, the name does not appear, but the words are sufficiently significant. I presume there is no doubt as to the writing?" Mr. Barnes handed the paper to the Squire, who examined it closely, and with great interest. After a moment he replied:

"I recognize this as the handwriting of Mr. Lewis. I am perfectly familiar with it, and there can be no doubt."

"The deduction then is self-evident," continued Mr. Barnes. "Dr. Snow has testified that death was instantaneous. Consequently this writing refers to the first assailant. Therefore, unless it can be shown that he received a wound prior to nine o'clock, Miss Marvel did not inflict the fatal wound, if her shot reached him at all. There is a break in the plastered ceiling of the parlor, showing the furrow of a bullet. That was probably made by Miss Marvel, or by Lucas. We cannot determine which."

“Mr. Barnes,” said the Squire, “your reasoning convinces me, that whatever may have been the girl’s intent when she fired, her bullet did not kill Mr. Lewis. The worst that can be claimed is, that she is responsible for the lesser wound, and, as you say, even that would be difficult to prove. If you take the same view, Mr. Tupper, we will continue?”

“I certainly agree with Mr. Barnes in all his deductions,” said Mr. Tupper. “I am confident that we do not yet know who fired the last shot. It would help us if we could discover what name was meant to complete that sentence, and if you will now call Miss Lewis, acting upon a suggestion from Mr. Barnes, I hope to learn it.”

The Squire then announced that the inquest would be continued, and immediately all resumed their seats, and ceased talking.

“Gentlemen,” said the Squire, addressing the jury, “Mr. Barnes, the detective in this case, the district attorney, and myself are satisfied that a true verdict cannot be rendered without more evidence. Therefore, notwithstanding the words uttered by the last witness, we will proceed. I will merely call your attention to the fact that though Miss Marvel admits that she fired at Mr. Lewis, Dr. Snow testified that he found two wounds. Miss Marvel could not inflict two wounds by firing one shot, and cannot know herself whether or not she has committed a homicide. Call Virginia Lewis!”

Virginia entered and took the stand. Mr. Tupper conducted the examination.

“Miss Lewis,” he began, “I believe you are the only one, save the deceased, who slept at the farm on the night when your uncle died?”

“I believe that is true.”

“Did you hear any shot fired, whilst you were in the house?”

“I did not.”

“Then you have no idea who killed your uncle?”

“Any idea’ that I have would be no proof, and therefore is not worth consideration.”

“Oh! You suspect someone, do you?”

“Any suspicions which I may have would not be evidence.”

“Were you in the house all the evening?”

“No, sir.”

“At what time did you go out, and when did you return?”

“I did not expect to be questioned, and so made no note of the hours.”

“Will you tell us where you went?”

“I will not, as that is my private affair.”

“No one’s affairs are private when murder has occurred; however, since you refuse, I will tell you where you went. First, you met a man in the summerhouse, and then you crossed the river to meet another man.” The lawyer paused, waiting to note the effect of his words, but Virginia remained impassive.

“I will go further, and tell you that the first was Harry Lucas, and more, that you invited him to the meeting. Since I have shown you how much I know, you will doubtless see the folly of any attempt at concealment.”

“Since you seem to be so well informed, I cannot see why you appeal to me at all!”

“We do not claim to know everything. Will you please tell us why you asked Mr. Lucas to meet you?”

“I had a private commission to give him.”

“Do you refuse to give us any information as to the nature of this commission?”

“I do.”

“Miss Lewis,” said the lawyer, “I have intimated that we have discovered the identity of one of the men whom you met that night, and it is perhaps as well to tell you that we also know who the other was.”

“You appear to have learned a great deal,” replied Virginia, coldly.

“We have found out something, but not all that we wish to know. You met Mr. Lucas. Your conversation was overheard, and we therefore know that you sent for him to ask his aid. You expected to meet Mr. Marvel.” Mr. Tupper spoke in his usual measured tones, and both he and Mr. Barnes watched Virginia closely, but, even at this name, she did not flinch. Mr. Barnes wondered how she would act when they would produce the man himself. Mr. Tupper continued:

“You had been notified that he would await you in the woods across the stream, that night, and you were to determine whether or not you would elope with him. This you concluded not to do. Therefore you feared that he would become desperate, and you decided to have his friend, Mr. Lucas, opportunely meet him, after you left him, to see that he did no harm. Now will you tell us what you feared he would do?”

“I see that you have managed to discover all that Miss Marvel knew. Will not that suffice?”

“We wish to know why you were so fearful of leaving this young man to his own society?”

“I believe such a thing as ‘fear’ is unknown to me, so you are far from the truth. No man is in an enviable frame of mind when a woman rejects him. Was it extraordinary, then, that I should have wished his friend to join him at such a time?” She spoke with considerable feeling.

“No, Miss Lewis, your action under the circumstances was very commendable. But did you not have a deeper motive? Did you not think that he might become desperate enough to take life?”

“I admit that I did.”

“Whose? Your uncle’s?”

“No! No! I thought he might commit suicide—he is passionate and impulsive. I thought that, in a moment of despair, he might raise his hand against himself. He would never take another’s life.”

“He attempted to do so once before, I believe?”

To this Virginia made no reply, but her face assumed an expression of the utmost contempt.

“Miss Lewis,” continued the lawyer, “will you kindly tell us about how long you remained at the interview with Mr. Marvel? I don’t expect any exact reply. An approximate one will do.”

“I cannot tell very closely, though I know about when I reached the house again. But I will not answer unless you explain why you wish to know.”

Mr. Tupper had recognized, at the outset, that Virginia was not to be frightened into anything, and he determined to deal with her openly.

“I will do so willingly,” said he. “We have found that you left the summerhouse at, or near, nine o’clock. Soon after, several shots were fired, one at least at the deceased. We are not sure, however, that either of these killed your uncle. Now, if you can give us the time when you returned, it may be the means of proving whether he was alive, or dead, at that hour. These matters of time often prove of inestimable value.”

“Very well. It was half-past ten when I reached my room.”

“Thank you.” It was his cue to conciliate her as far as possible. “When you went in, did you pass through the parlor?”

“No, sir. I entered my apartment by the door opening into the dining-room.”

Mr. Barnes believed that this was true, for he had traced her footprints from the steps of the piazza by the dining-room, and, returning, they reached the same place. Thus she must have entered the house at that point, and naturally passed through the dining room to her own chamber. Resuming the examination Mr. Tupper asked:

“During the night, did you hear your uncle moving about?”

“No, sir.”

“Now let us come to the discovery of the crime. You will recall that when the detectives accidentally disturbed you in your room, the morning after, you admitted that you had already found out that your uncle had been murdered.

Thus you were the first to do so. Is that a fact?"

"I believe so. At least it is true that I knew of the death of my uncle at that time."

"Exactly! You had gone into the parlor, and you had found the body, which you recognized as that of your uncle, or I may say step-father, before the Squire and the others arrived?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you take anything from the room?"

"Yes, sir, I took a pistol."

"Where did you find this pistol?"

"On the floor."

"Why did you take it?"

"Because it is mine and has my name on the stock, and because, if found by anyone else, it might have been unpleasantly suggestive."

"I believe it showed evidence of having been fired off, did it not?"

"That was another reason why I was anxious to have it."

Virginia was causing profound astonishment by her admissions. Even Mr. Barnes himself was puzzled to understand why she should acknowledge that she had purloined the weapon to avoid suspicion, when that very confession would undoubtedly attract a closer investigation into her connection with the crime.

"Miss Lewis," said Mr. Tupper, "how came your pistol to be discharged?"

"I use it constantly, and therefore it is quite possible that I fired at something on Saturday."

"That is, the day before the murder?"

"Yes, sir."

“How did it happen to be out of your possession on Sunday night?”

“I had it when I started out, but changed my mind about taking it with me, and as I passed through the parlor I laid it on the mantel.”

This answer suggested the possibility that this was the pistol used by Mr. Lewis when he fired at Lucas, as had been testified by Miss Marvel. The next question was:

“Now, if you please, will you explain why, if you were so anxious to avoid suspicion by hiding the pistol, you should now be so ready to tell the whole story?”

“I never intended to conceal the fact that the weapon was found by me where it was, but I thought that if I offered it in evidence myself, I would avoid the suspicion which might naturally enough have been aroused, had any other person made the discovery.”

Mr. Barnes knew that this was not true, and that her first intention had been to destroy all trace of the use of the pistol, as was plainly proven by her having cleaned the barrel. He knew also that she was at present following out the plan which she had formed after she had seen him pick up the cartridge cap in her room, the first step in which had been to replace the empty shell with another. Her examination was continued.

“Did you remove anything else from the room where the corpse lay?”

“I did.”

This reply was a complete surprise to Mr. Barnes. He knew that Mr. Tupper was alluding to the paper, upon which, they thought, was written the name of the murderer, and he was astonished to find that she appeared about to admit its possession. The next question was:

“Will you kindly state what that was, and why you took it?”

“It was a medallion locket. I took that also because it is mine.”

Mr. Barnes now understood why she had admitted taking something, since it was not the paper. He was, nevertheless, curious about this new point.

“Where did you find this locket?” asked Mr. Tupper.

“I noticed that my uncle had his fist tightly closed, as though holding something, and, forcing it open, I removed the locket.”

“Have you it with you?”

“Yes, sir!” Taking it from her bosom, she handed it to him. Mr. Tupper examined it closely, and opened it. Looking at the portrait which it contained he asked:

“Do you know whose likeness this is?”

“It is mine. It was taken when I was quite a child.”

Mr. Tupper was about to pass the trinket to the Squire, when, as he closed it, something attracted his attention, and scrutinizing it more carefully, he dropped it into his pocket and asked:

“Miss Lewis, I think you said that this belongs to you?”

“Yes, sir, though I have not had it for some time.”

“Ah! How was that?”

“I had concluded that it was lost, but now I see that my uncle must have had it.”

“How can you be sure that this is yours? Has it your name, or any other mark by which you would know it?”

“No, there is no name on it, but I know that it is mine, for, as you see, it is of a peculiar pattern. I have been told that my mother had it made specially for my picture, and it has been in my possession, except lately, for as long as I can remember.”

Mr. Tupper pondered a second, but said no more on this subject at that time. Nor did he pursue the point about the piece of paper directly, but determined to approach that by another method.

“Now then, Miss Lewis, we will go back to the meeting across the river, if you please. Did you meet Mr. Marvel—but stop, you have already admitted as much.

Tell us whether you left him on the other side, or whether he crossed over with you?"

"We separated before I rowed back to the farm."

"Then you left him across the river?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did he say where he meant to go?"

"To Epping."

This seemed doubtful to Mr. Barnes in the face of the fact that he had found Marvel at Portsmouth; but then he remembered that Joseph Harrison had testified to meeting Marvel at Epping, on the morning after the murder. Mr. Tupper continued:

"Did he say where he would go after that?"

"He did not lay out a route, and furnish me with a complete plan of his movements for the future. He did, however, mention that he would return to Epping, from which place he had come that night."

"Do you think that he proceeded to that place immediately after leaving you?"

Virginia was very cautious, now that the subject involved information about her lover.

"How should I be able to reply definitely?", said she.

"Do you know, then, whether he crossed the river and visited the house, after parting with you?"

"I should say not, as I took the boat."

"Do you mean to say that you did not see him after you left him at the maple tree?"

"I mean to say that I have not seen him since then."

“Then why should he have crossed the river?”

“What makes you think that he did so?”

“I do not think! I know!”

“You cannot know unless you saw him, and that is impossible.”

“Miss Lewis, there was snow on the ground, and not only do I know from his footprints that he visited the farm, but that he actually went to the very door by which you had re-entered. Of course, I cannot know that he went in, for, unfortunately, there is no snow within, as without.”

Virginia was silent, and despite, her strong control of her features it was evident that she was troubled.

“Now then,” said the lawyer, continuing, “the question arises, why did Mr. Marvel visit your house at that late hour! You say he did not see you. Could it be that he sought your uncle, hoping to effect a reconciliation? I understand that the only obstacle to your union was his opposition, was it not?”

“That Mr. Marvel should have sought my uncle at that hour is preposterous. You say that he did come to the house, which I doubt, but even though he did not succeed in seeing me, is it not more probable that it was his object to do so?”

“If so, how is it that he did not succeed?”

“I retired as soon as I reached home, and did not hear anyone enter after me. That is why I doubt your theory, for I am a light sleeper.”

Mr. Tupper now executed a bold move. Taking the paper which Mr. Barnes had found in the parlor of the farm house, he folded it so that only the first half of the sentence could be read. Approaching Virginia, he suddenly held it up before her eyes and said:

“Did you ever see this before?”

This was so unexpected, that Virginia was thrown off her guard. At the first glance she smothered an exclamation, and hurriedly put her hand to her breast. Instantly, however, her agitation passed, and she replied quite calmly.

“No! Never!”

“I believe you, for had you done so, it would never have reached my hands. Now please take it and examine it closely.”

She did so and then said: “It looks like my uncle’s writing, and it would seem that he tried to communicate to us the name of his assailant.”

“Precisely, and more, he made another attempt, and—succeeded. Miss Lewis, the second paper is in your possession!”

“You are mistaken,” she replied, coldly.

“I am not. I say, not only did you take that paper, but you have it, secreted about your person, at this very minute.”

Virginia answered by a half scornful smile. Mr. Barnes showed some little excitement. He was accustomed to deal with wary criminals, but had never met a woman so provokingly self-possessed as this one.

“Come, Miss Lewis,” said Mr. Tupper, “it is useless to deny what I say. I set a trap for you deliberately, and you were caught, in spite of all your strength of will. When I showed you that paper, I well knew you had no idea that it existed, and therefore, my object was to see what you would do, believing that your first glance would make you think it was the other paper. As I expected, you at once feared that you had lost it, and instinctively felt for it in the bosom of your dress.”

“Did I?” with a shrug of the shoulders.

Mr. Tupper looked at her a moment and then, with his eyes still intently upon her, he said: “Call Walter Marvel!”

Chapter XI

The Verdict

There are some individuals whose nerves are so well trained that they can be made to sustain almost any strain without giving evidence of the tension to which they have been exposed. Virginia Lewis was of this kind. There is, however, in all probability, no force in nature that has not a breaking point, beyond which it is impossible for integrity to endure; and so it was in the case of this most remarkably strong-willed girl. She had passed through a fiery ordeal bravely, and I might say successfully, until, at last, the unexpected had come to destroy all her powers of control.

Nevertheless, she was not one to give way, like her friend Alice Marvel, and though she certainly started very perceptibly when her lover's name was called, she looked like a frightened animal, who, though awaiting a death blow, was yet prepared to die hard. As she stood expectant and defiant, she won the admiration of all the men in the room, a thing of no small consequence when it is remembered that twelve of these composed the jury. There was a painful silence until the entrance of the next witness. At last he came, and when Virginia saw him, and knew that this was no trick, that was being played to frighten her into revealing that which she had determined to conceal, she could not repress a slight cry, as she stepped from the stand and dropped into the nearest seat. Then she assumed a stolid expression, which defied the scrutiny of Mr. Barnes, or any of the others.

Marvel cast one hasty glance in her direction, and with his lips a little firmly compressed, he took his place on the witness stand. Mr. Tupper at once began:

"Mr. Marvel, do you remember the day of the _fete _given by Miss Lewis, at Riverside?"

"Most distinctly."

"I believe you attempted to kill Mr. Lewis on that occasion?"

"I drew out my pistol, under great provocation, and in anger. Miss Lewis struck my arm, and my weapon was discharged."

“Do you mean that when you took out your pistol, it was not your intention to fire it?”

“I cannot tell what my intention was. As I said, I acted under excitement. It is impossible to say what may or what may not have happened.”

“But did you not threaten Mr. Lewis as you left the lawn?”

“Perhaps! It would have been but natural.”

“Where did you go when you left the farm that night?”

“Home, of course.”

“But why is it, then, that you were not there when search was made for you the next day?”

“I was disheartened, and disgusted at the turn of events; and in sheer desperation I arose early and went off gunning.”

“Did you return?”

“After a day’s shooting, I went on to Epping, where I have a house.”

“That place was searched a few days later, and no trace of you was to be found.”

“I only stayed there one day, and then went to Worcester.”

“Why did you do that?”

“Because I knew of the plot which Mr. Lewis was forming against me.”

“How could you know that, since you left Lee before any steps had been inaugurated?”

“A friend warned me by letter.”

“Who was this obliging friend, and how did he know where a letter would reach you?”

“Before I left I told him where I meant to go. It is immaterial who he is.”

“I presume this was Mr. Everly, Was it not?” Marvel remained silent and Mr. Tupper did not press the point, but continued:

“Where were you on the night upon which Mr. Lewis was murdered?”

“I was at the farm.”

The lawyer was pleased at this straightforward reply.

“What were you doing there?”

“Is it essential to go into that?”

“It is very essential.”

“Well, then, I went there to meet Miss Lewis, having asked her for an interview.”

“Did you see her? If so, where?”

“She met me across the river.”

“How long did this interview last?”

“Of course I cannot be accurate, but I should say about an hour. The subject which we discussed was one of vital importance to me, and I was not anxious to bring the meeting to a close, before exhausting all the arguments at my command.”

Mr. Barnes reflected a moment, and calculated that if Miss Lewis left the summerhouse at nine o’clock, granting her fifteen minutes to cross the river, and as many more in returning, this statement of Marvel’s, that she talked with him an hour, would just fit the one which she had made, to the effect that she reached the house at half-past ten. This, therefore, satisfied him that he had the matter of time correct.

“Now then, Mr. Marvel,” said the lawyer, “please tell us what you did after Miss Lewis left you?”

“I started to walk to the Epping road, but before I reached it I retraced my steps.”

“Exactly! You crossed the river, did you not?”

“Yes, how did you know?”

“Never mind! Tell us how you crossed?”

“I meant to wade the stream, and looked for a shallow place, but I stepped into a hole, and was obliged to swim.”

“Very good. Now tell us why you were so anxious to cross the river so late at night?”

“It is a delicate matter, but as this seems to be of importance, I will be frank, and tell you the whole story. My first object in visiting the farm, was to persuade Miss Lewis to marry me, without her uncle’s consent, since he had refused to grant it. At the meeting between us, she would not do more than promise to send me a definite reply the next day by letter. After she had left me, I could not help thinking that she meant to refuse, and was only delaying the ill-tidings, especially as she insisted that I should go on to Portsmouth, to wait for her letter. I thought of some arguments which I had not used, and returned, hoping to find her still up, and so make one more attempt to win her. That, sir, is the full truth.”

“Did you see her when you reached the house?”

“No, sir.”

“Did you enter the house?”

“I did. I went into the dining-room, and as far as the door of Miss Lewis’s room, but as there was no light in her apartment, I concluded that she had retired, and I left the house as I had entered it.”

“Whilst in the house did you see Mr. Lewis?”

“Before I answer that may I ask you a question?”

“Proceed.”

“When you ask me if I saw Mr. Lewis, are you not trying to get me to make some admission which might connect me with this murder?”

Mr. Tupper was a little confused at this direct question, and hesitated a moment

before he replied:

“Mr. Lewis has been murdered, and there are suspicious circumstances which seem to implicate you. I am only giving you an opportunity to vindicate yourself.”

“You are very kind,” said Marvel, with a smile, “but it seems to me that it is the other way, and that you are simply hunting for the criminal. Now, if I admit that I saw Mr. Lewis that night, whether I killed him or not, I might be acknowledging myself to be the last person who saw him alive, and that might be construed into an evidence of guilt. I believe I have the privilege of refusing to criminate myself, and I will not reply to the question.”

“You are virtually admitting what you seem to wish to deny, since if you had not met him, there would be no reason for your hesitating to proclaim that fact.”

“You are wrong. If I say that I did not see him, that will be giving you a positive point. If I did not meet him, it would be proof presumptive that I did not fire the fatal shot. This might be helping to incriminate some other person, which I am equally unwilling to do.”

“It is your duty to tell everything that may lead to the discovery of the criminal.”

“It is your business, not mine, to trace the crime to its perpetrator.”

Mr. Barnes could not but admire the man’s cool logic, under the trying circumstances of his position, and it flashed across his mind that Marvel and Virginia were a well-matched pair. It piqued him, somewhat, to notice the quiet smile of satisfaction on Virginia’s face, as she sat in her seat, never once raising her eyes from the floor, throughout the examination of her lover. She seemed to have completely recovered her self-control. It was a question in the detective’s mind, whether Marvel was shielding himself, or someone else. The examination proceeded.

“Did you return to Epping that night?”

“Yes, sir.”

“How did you get there at that late hour?”

“I walked. It is but five miles.”

“Five miles, over a country road, through the snow, and at night, is no short walk, especially if one’s clothing be wet.”

“Mine were dry, however.”

“Did you not say that you swam across the river?”

“Yes, but after leaving the farm I went to my own home, and changed for a dry suit.”

“Then you walked to Epping?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Why did you go to Epping?”

“I expected a letter to reach me there at that time.”

This corroborated the story told by young Harrison. At this point Burrows passed to Mr. Tupper a piece of paper, on which he suggested a question. During the latter part of the examination, he had been thinking of the story told by the station-agent, and as Marvel claimed that he had been in Worcester, it seemed like a criminating admission, since the train which Mr. Skene said had brought a stranger had come from that city. Mr. Tupper next asked:

“Mr. Marvel, will you tell us how you were dressed on the night of your visit to the farm?”

“I wore a disguise that I bought in Worcester.”

Mr. Tupper had not quite understood the object of the question, but the reply at once arrested his attention, and he pursued the subject.

“Why were you disguised?”

“To avoid being recognized. I did not care to be arrested, and, as you know, the authorities were seeking for me on the charge trumped up by Mr. Lewis. “

“Describe the dress which you wore?”

“I had on a suit of my own clothing, but over it I wore a long, dark-colored ulster which completely concealed my other dress.”

“Did you attempt to change the appearance of your face in anyway?”

“I wore a false beard.”

This answer gratified Burrows. Mr. Tupper went on.

“What did you do with this disguise when you changed your things?”

“As they were all very wet, and, further, because I did not wish to leave behind me any evidence of my visit to the house, I made a bundle of the whole lot, and, as I crossed over the bridge, I threw it in the river.”

“Do you mean the bridge between Riverside and Wadley’s Falls?”

“Yes, sir; I crossed the river again, as that is the shortest way from my house to the Epping road.”

Mr. Tupper now sought information on another point.

“Mr. Marvel, did you ever see a medallion locket owned by Miss Lewis, which contains her portrait?”

Marvel colored considerably at this question, and seemed confused. After a moment, however, he stammered out:

“Y-e-s, sir; I have seen it.”

“When was the last time that you saw it?”

Marvel seemed more than ever troubled, and even Virginia changed her position, and, raising her eyes from the floor, seemed all anxiety. Marvel remained silent so long, that Mr. Tupper at length repeated his question. Marvel hesitatingly asked:

“Why do you wish to know?”

“Come, come, Mr. Marvel, that is not to the point. Answer my question. Is it not a simple one?”

“Well, then,” desperately, “if I must, I must. I confess that I did what many men have done. I stole the medallion, and—”

Virginia uttered a cry and started up as though about to speak, but the Squire quickly said:

“Sit down, Miss Lewis! You must not interfere now!” and she obeyed with a groan. Mr. Tupper turned to the witness who was evidently amazed at this little episode, and resumed:

“You had your name engraved on the medallion, did you not?”

“I had my initials put on.”

“Precisely. Now let us return to the question. When did you last see this locket?”

“I cannot say exactly. I have it about me at all times.”

“Have you it now?”

Virginia made another movement as though to interrupt, but the Squire again stopped her. Marvel promptly replied:

“Why, certainly.”

“Please let me see it?”

Marvel at once put his hand in an inner pocket of his vest, but after a moment’s search, he drew it out again with a cry of surprise, and exclaimed:

“I have lost it!” There was a silence for a moment, and Marvel rapidly searched his other pockets, but in vain. At last it seemed that an idea occurred to him suddenly, and he said:

“I am a fool, and have been very careless. I remember now that when I changed my clothes at home, after leaving the farm, I did not think of the locket. So it must be, at this moment, at the bottom of the river.”

“Ah! Then you admit that you had it with you that night?”

“Did I not tell you that I have always had it with me, since it has been in my

possession?”

“Would you recognize it again if you could see it?”

“Certainly.”

“Is this it?” He handed Marvel the locket given to him by Virginia. Marvel took it, and after looking at it replied:

“Yes, this is the same. Where could you have found it?”

“Can you not surmise?”

“No!”

“Well, then, I will tell you. It was found in the closed fist of the murdered man!”

“Great God! It is impossible!”

“It is true! At least it is true, if we can believe Miss Lewis, for it was she who found it.”

“Miss Lewis found it? This is terrible!”

The silence which ensued was most profound. Every one could plainly see the importance of this latest development, and how, by accidental circumstances, the net was being drawn around the witness. Mr. Barnes himself was considering how strange it was, that this young girl, who had not hesitated to destroy evidence which might implicate someone, presumably her lover, should, by the merest chance, have been the very one to produce the most criminating proof against him. The thoughts of all were suddenly disturbed by the voice of Virginia herself, who stood up defiantly, and with the mark of strong resolve stamped upon her features. She spoke in measured words, and her voice seemed dead to all sense of feeling; indeed, it sounded like only an echo of her natural tones.

“Stop!” said she, “this has gone far enough!”

“What do you mean?” asked the Squire, quickly, foreseeing that some startling development was at hand.

“I mean that you are wrongfully weaving a web around an innocent man!”

“Ah! Then you know who is guilty?”

“I do! I killed my uncle myself!”

This statement naturally caused the wildest excitement. Only two men present seemed not to be surprised; these were Marvel himself, and Mr. Barnes. The former dropped into a seat and buried his face in his hands, giving vent to a passionate outburst of grief. The latter remained almost as unmoved as Virginia herself, who stood like a marble image. A slight smile of satisfaction, however, seemed to play about his features. Burrows, who kept his eye intently on the face of his superior, whilst immensely astonished himself, was convinced of the fact that Mr. Barnes had only heard what he had all along expected. As soon as the commotion caused by Miss Lewis’s statement had subsided somewhat, Mr. Tupper resumed:

“Miss Lewis,” said he, “you have just made a most astounding confession. But you may not know, that you are not the first who has done so today. This being the case, however, we cannot but accept your words cautiously.”

“Do you mean that you doubt my veracity?”

“How can I be sure that you are telling the truth, when you accuse yourself of murder?” Virginia bit her lip and was silent.

“Come,” continued the lawyer, “take the stand again, and repeat under oath what you have just declared.”

“What use to be sworn?” replied the girl, scornfully. “You would not believe me any more!”

“Do you refuse to swear?”

“Oh, no, since you make a point of it!” She stepped upon the platform again.

“She will stop at nothing to save her lover,” muttered Mr. Barnes, under his breath. Mr. Tupper asked:

“Do you still persist in your statement that you killed your uncle?”

“I do.”

“How did it occur?”

“When I returned from my meeting with Mr. Marvel, I attracted the notice of my uncle, who, coming from his room, knocked on my door, and called me into the parlor. I went in and he asked me where I had been. I told him, he became violent, and we quarrelled. My pistol was on the mantle where I had left it, and in a moment of rage I grasped it and fired.”

“How was your uncle attired?”

“As he was found, of course.”

“Did he die instantly?”

“I do not know. I left the room at once.”

“How many times did you fire?”

“Once.”

“In making this statement you desire to be believed?”

“I do.”

“Then show me the piece of paper, on which your uncle wrote the name of his murderer, and which I am sure you have about you.”

If Mr. Tupper expected her to refuse, he was doomed to disappointment. Without a moment's hesitation, she drew it out and handed it to him. He read it and seemed puzzled. Then turning to Virginia he said:

“This paper reads, ‘If I am dead in the morning my murderer is Walter Marvel!’ How does that agree with your confession?”

“You forget that there are two wounds. My uncle wrote that after receiving the first!”

Mr. Tupper had not expected this reply, and the possibility of its being true disconcerted him.

“How do you know this?” he asked.

“During the quarrel which I had with my uncle, he told me of the wound he had received from the lawn, and charged my lover with the crime. It was at this moment that, overcome with anger, I shot him.”

“When did you find the paper?”

“In the morning. I think I have said enough, and will retire!” She stepped from the stand and resumed her seat on one of the benches.

“There is no more evidence to be brought before you gentlemen,” said the district attorney, addressing the jury, “and no more witnesses. Therefore, the next step is for you to consider what your verdict shall be. However, I should like to detain you a moment, that I may point out one or two things which I think should not be overlooked in rendering your decision. First, there is the matter of the locket. If Miss Lewis tells the truth, how did that trinket come to be in the hand of the dead man, when Mr. Marvel admits that it was in his possession on that night? It is plain that Miss Lewis was ignorant of this latter fact, for otherwise she would have suppressed that, as she evidently at first meant to do with the paper. This brings out another point. It must be remembered that her first, and her second stories, are widely different, and that the second was not offered until she saw how compromising the medallion had proven to her lover, Mr. Marvel. One more point. Her pistol has but one empty chamber in it. She claims that it was on the mantel. Mr. Lewis was seen to fire some weapon from the window. If it was not this one, what has become of the one which he did use?”

The Squire addressed the jury in a few well-chosen words, especially warning them to think well over their verdict, and bidding them to be most careful in charging the commission of so foul a deed to anyone, without thoroughly weighing all the evidence that had been brought before them, much of which indeed, he declared, was of a most conflicting nature. Finally, he sent them into an adjoining apartment for deliberation. In about an hour’s time, word was brought in, that a conclusion had been reached, and the jury having returned, the foreman announced the following verdict:

“We find that the deceased, John Lewis, came to his death from a gunshot wound, at the hands of his niece, Virginia Lewis, the latter having openly

confessed the commission of the crime!”

Chapter XII

John Lewis Supplies a Clue

Although the verdict had been anticipated by the majority of those who had been present throughout the examination, all were nevertheless horrified, even though they admitted its justice, in consideration of the evidence. There were some, of course, who stoutly maintained that Virginia was innocent, but they were chiefly her most intimate friends. These proclaimed themselves to be in a position to judge better than those who did not know her so well. Unhesitatingly they asserted, that her whole life and character made it utterly preposterous to harbor a suspicion of a crime of so heinous a nature. Said one: "Does an innocent girl become a hardened criminal in a moment?" But others gravely shook their older heads, and readily recalled instances where equally respectable individuals had been proven guilty of murder. After all, horrible as it is to take life, yet, viewed from a certain standpoint, murder is less dishonorable than theft. One who would scorn even to tell a lie, might yet in anger, or under great provocation, unhesitatingly send another to his last account. So respectability is scarcely a defence against a charge of murder.

The town of Lee is in Strafford County, and the county-seat is Dover; here the Grand Jury meets, and here the trial would take place if there should be one. Squire Olney, at the termination of the inquest, therefore declared that Virginia must be taken to Dover on the following day, together with the record of the evidence, which would, of course, be presented to the Grand Jury. It was decided that she should pass the night at the residence of the Squire, who would personally drive over with her, early in the morning. The Squire, in all his lifetime, had never been placed in a position so painful to himself, and so trying to all his pride in the morality of his town. It was bad enough to have a murder, but that the guilty party should be a woman, and she the most respected and admired female in the town, was simply terrible.

As soon as Mr. Barnes learned of the disposition to be made of the prisoner, for such she was to be considered now, he determined to seek rest at the earliest possible moment. Wishing to go on to Riverside and share the room which had been provided for Burrows, he sought for that young man, but could find him nowhere. He was somewhat annoyed at this, as he wished to talk with him on

some of the points brought out in the examination. Finally, concluding that Burrows must have gone to the farm, as it was already after dark, he decided to go there also, and so started immediately. He had walked but a few rods, when he overtook John Lewis, and recognizing him, said:

“Ah! Mr. Lewis, are you going to the farm?”

“I am, and supposing that you would put up there for the night, I have waited to join you as you passed. I could not see you at the moment when the inquest ended, for you were speaking to the Squire.”

“Yes! I wished to know what would be done with Miss Lewis. She will stay at the Squire’s house tonight, and be taken to Dover in the morning.”

The two men walked along, for some little distance, without speaking, until at length Lewis broke the silence; and, when he did so, Mr. Barnes noticed that he spoke very earnestly, as though the subject concerned him nearly. At first it seemed to the detective that this interest was more than was natural; but then he recalled to mind the fact that the girl was a relative, and, as such, would of course attract his sympathy.

“Mr. Barnes,” began Lewis, “what do you think of the result of the inquiry?”

As I have already stated, Mr. Barnes was most careful in forming definite opinions, and he was still more so in giving expression to them, he felt a double need of caution at this time, and determined rather to discover what his companion thought, than to commit himself by any direct reply to this leading question.

“Well,” he responded, “what other verdict could you look for under the circumstances?”

“I suppose none! Nevertheless, a stigma has been placed on that girl which she does not deserve. At least,” he continued, quickly, “that is my opinion.”

“You mean that you think Miss Lewis is innocent?”

“I do, decidedly.”

“Will you tell me your reasons?” This was exactly what Mr. Barnes most

desired; that someone should defend this girl to him. Therefore, if in the subsequent conversation he seemed to be accusing her, it was no evidence that he himself thought her guilty, but only that such a course was the one best calculated to draw out the strongest arguments in her favor, which might occur to Lewis. Mr. Barnes was wise enough not to underestimate the ability of any man. Very often in his experience most valuable hints had been given to him, by persons from whom he had least expected assistance.

“I will try,” said Lewis, in reply to Mr. Barnes. “Of course, I was present at the entire inquiry. I was not needed on the witness-stand, as all that I could have testified to would have been the discovery of the body, and that was not deemed of sufficient importance by the Squire. As the deceased was my own father, it is but natural that I should take a great interest in seeing the crime avenged. I therefore listened most attentively to all that was brought out in the examination of the several witnesses. And it is just this that makes me feel so sure that Miss Lewis is actuated more by a desire to shield someone else, than by any other motive.”

“Ah! But whom is she shielding? You must remember that she is doing a very dangerous thing when she accuses herself.”

“Miss Lewis is a much cleverer woman than you may believe her to be, and she knows, well enough, that she is in no real danger. She has confessed! What of that? When she is made to appear in court she will retract this confession. Then how will you convict her? What evidence is there against her besides her own words? She will tell you that she was excited, that she did not realize what she was saying. What will you be able to do? She is a woman, and the sympathy of the jury will be in her favor. American juries are proverbially lenient towards her sex. She will be acquitted, but where will your real criminal be? In some foreign land.”

Mr. Barnes listened with considerable interest to all this, for it was precisely what had been passing in his own mind. He very well knew that a confession of so grave a crime as murder would not by any means assure a conviction, and he had by no means underrated the girl's ability as a bold plotter. Still, he would not dismiss from his mind the possibility that, after all, she might be guilty. The story which she had told was a most plausible one. Moreover, its very simplicity seemed to prevent a suspicion that it had been manufactured. Besides, it fitted so well all the most complicated points in the case. Then, how did she know that

there were two wounds? Neither the doctor, nor Burrows, would have told her, and as she was the last witness to enter the room, she could not have heard the previous testimony.

Addressing his companion again, he said: "All that is very true, but suppose that Miss Lewis does not retract?"

"But I tell you she will! Why should she allow herself to suffer the penalty—and such a penalty—when she is innocent? As soon as the real criminal has had time to get away safely, she will tell a very different tale. You will see!"

"Why are you so sure that she is acting a part?"

"Why did she not tell the truth at once, if it was her intention to do so?"

"Ah! Who can be sure of the workings of a human mind, and of the motives which actuate any given course?"

"In this case it seems to me quite simple. When she first testified, she thought that the murderer was safe."

"Whom do they suspect, then?"

"Can you be in doubt? Walter Marvel, of course. Whom else, but her lover, would she risk her life to save?"

"But the dead man was her uncle, her adopted father! Did she not love him enough to refuse to leave him for this very lover? Then why should she not wish to avenge his death?"

"Granted that she loved him, he is dead, while her lover is alive. She will care more for the living than the dead. The uncle cannot be restored; therefore the lover must not be sacrificed. Do you know what she will do? She will exert every effort to save him, and then she will still refuse to marry him. She is a strange woman!"

"How do you know her character so well?" said the detective, sharply. Lewis started slightly, but replied quickly:

"I do not know! I am simply telling you my opinions, formed on the little that I

have seen of her.”

Mr. Barnes was satisfied with this answer, at least he did not let it appear if he was not, and resuming the thread of their discourse he asked:

“Have you any special reason for thinking that Marvel is guilty?”

“If not guilty, how did his locket come to be in the possession of my father? It is very evident that, even if Miss Lewis tells the truth, she has not accounted for that mystery. This is a point that Mr. Tupper mentioned.”

“I mean to investigate that matter, of course, but I have seen stranger things than that explained away.”

“Well, then, let me call your attention to another point. Do you remember the story that the Squire told us, of the row at the birthday _fete?” _

“Certainly.”

“Very good! If you do, you will recollect that the Squire said that my father kept Marvel’s pistol. Now what has become of that weapon?”

Mr. Barnes saw at once the value of this, and it had certainly not occurred to him. He was thankful for this conversation.

“We have not looked for it,” he replied.

“You may not have done so, but I have searched everywhere, and it is not to be found.”

“Perhaps the Squire may have it.”

“I have asked him, and he assures me that my father would not part with the evidence of the assault which had been made on him. More than that, the Squire told me that he kept it locked in a drawer in the parlor.”

“How then could Marvel have obtained it?”

“My idea is this. I think that, after his interview with Miss Lewis across the river, Marvel, as he admits, came to the farm. I think he sought an interview with my

father, that they quarrelled, and that my father took up the pistol, whereupon Marvel got it away from him and shot him.”

Mr. Barnes shook his head. “There is no sign of a struggle. Besides, if that is the truth, how could your father have written the name of Walter Marvel on the slip of paper?”

Lewis thought a minute and then replied:

“I have it! When my father heard the barking of the dog outside, he took Marvel’s pistol, and fired at the man whom he saw there. At the same moment a bullet struck him. This was either from Lucas’s pistol, or else was the shot fired by Miss Marvel from the summerhouse, as she declared. Then, when Marvel came, the weapon may have been on the table right at hand, for, as father was wounded, he would scarcely have thought of locking up the weapon again. As for the writing, that may be as Miss Lewis guessed. My father thought Marvel had fired the first shot, and so wrote a line to that effect, not realizing to what extent he had been wounded.”

“But what about the empty shell in Miss Lewis’s weapon?”

“Perhaps her first statement was correct, and she had previously fired it; or again, my father may have fired it at Marvel in self-defence.”

A silence followed, and Mr. Barnes did not speak, for several minutes, during which time he was thinking deeply. At last however he said:

“You are right; it is of importance to find this missing pistol, but where can we look for it? That is the question!”

“I think I can guess that too,” said the other, eagerly—a little too eagerly, thought Mr. Barnes,— although he reflected that, when a novice is working out a mystery of a great crime he is usually impetuous. Lewis continued: “Marvel himself described his movements, on leaving the farm. First he went home, then making a bundle of his wet clothes he threw them into the river, and lastly he went to his old house in Epping. Now either he threw the pistol in the river, or else, remembering that it has his name on it, as young Harrison testified, he was shrewd enough to take it with him, and hide it in the Epping place.”

“Your reasoning is very good, and it may be as well for me to go to Epping, in

the morning.”

“Do so, and whilst you are gone I will have the river dragged, in the hope of recovering the clothing!”

Mr. Barnes stopped, looked at Lewis a moment, then slowly and distinctly he said:

“Mr. Lewis, I would prefer that you go with me to Epping.”

“Oh!” said Lewis, quickly, “I should like that, but I thought you detectives preferred to work alone.”

“We do, as a rule, but I will make an exception in this case,” returned Mr. Barnes, dryly.

By this time they had reached Riverside, and both at once retired to rest.

Mr. Barnes awoke early, and called Lewis, who was still abed when he entered his room, and together they went to Squire Olney’s house, where Mr. Barnes explained that something had turned up which would prevent his accompanying him to Dover. With Lewis, he then hastened to the depot where he was just in time to catch the train which passed at 6.30, and getting aboard they reached Epping a few minutes before seven o’clock.

After a little time spent in inquiries, Mr. Barnes learned the locality of the house of which he was in search, and at once repaired thither. Arrived at the place, which was about a mile beyond the more densely built portion of the town, he found it to be as described, in a terribly dilapidated condition, and, recessed considerably from the road, it was almost hidden amidst an overgrowth of trees and shrubbery. Without any hesitation, the two men entered the place, but scarcely had they crossed the threshold of the door, when Mr. Barnes uttered an exclamation of astonishment, for there in front of him stood Tom Burrows, examining a pistol which he held in his hand.

Chapter XIII

The Station-Agent's Clue

Tom Burrows had naturally taken no active part in the coroner's inquest. He was but an assistant to Mr. Barnes, and consequently bound to remain quiet, lest, by intruding, he should interfere with the older detective's plans. For whilst the district attorney ostensibly conducted the examination of the witnesses, Burrows very well understood that he was but following the suggestions of Mr. Barnes.

When Marvel was testifying, however, he could not resist the desire to have him interrogated as to whether he had worn a disguise, and so had sent up his written suggestion. When Mr. Tupper brought out the admission that a disguise, practically similar to the one described by the station agent, had been used by Marvel, Burrows decided that there was no doubt as to the identity of his man. He more than ever determined to follow up this clue alone.

To do this he knew that he must be cautious. He was too well acquainted with the sagacity of Mr. Barnes, not to realize the fact that he must have aroused suspicion by his action in sending his question to the district attorney. He consequently decided to avoid Mr. Barnes at the conclusion of the inquest, and so escape a catechising. In this, the sensational close of the proceedings assisted him, so that it was not difficult to slip away unobserved. Thus, when Mr. Barnes looked for him, he was already on his way to Lee Depot, bent upon taking the same train which had carried the mysterious stranger away from Lee on the night of the murder. Reaching the station he found Mr. Skene, and, without preamble, he approached his subject.

"Do you remember, Mr. Skene," said he, "that you gave me a hint as to the identity of the man who killed Mr. Lewis?"

"Do I remember?" ejaculated Mr. Skene in an angry tone. "Do I remember? Well, darn me ef you an't the cheekiest critter I've seen meanderin' down that road!"

"Why, what is the matter?" asked Burrows, taken aback.

"Matter? Matter enough! Look a' here, you goldarned eejiot! Why an't you done

nothin'? Why didn't you call me on the stan'? Why didn't you stop 'em?" Burrows endeavored to answer, but Mr. Skene waved his hand as a sign to him to be silent, and continued, more excited: "Didn't you git the straight tip from me in this here bisnis? Didn't I tell you who killed Lewis? Didn't I tell you I seen him with my own eyes? Didn't I tell you I seen him twice? Didn't I tell you what train he come on, an' what train he went away on? How much more do you want, you blunderin' lune? Mus' I leave my station an' ketch the man myself? I reckon that's what ye're waitin' on. You want me to ketch him, an' put him in your han's all tied, so he couldn't hurt you, hay?" Mr. Skene stopped to breathe. It is doubtful whether he would have ceased talking except from this necessity. Burrows saw his chance, and tried to speak before the irate old man could resume. But he was not allowed to say much.

"It is all right, Mr. Skene," he began. "There is time enough!"

"Time enough?" interrupted Mr. Skene. "Why, darn your hide, an't the hull thing ended? An't you been an' 'lowed them lunatics to tack the crime onto the fines' woman in this State? An't Virgie bro't in guilty of killin' her uncle?"

"Certainly not," said Burrows, hoping at length to have an opportunity to speak; but again he was interrupted.

"D' you mean to tell me they an't bro't her in guilty? An't Jef Harrison jest druv by an' tole me the verdic'?"

"But, Mr. Skene, that is only the verdict of the coroner's jury. This is not a regular trial."

"Don't you s'pose I know that? I an't a goldarned fool, ef I an't never been to Borston. But what's the diff'rence, I 'd like to know? She's disgraced, an' the hull county'll be talkin' 'bout her. You can't hender folks from talkin', kin you? Well then!" This last ejaculation presumably meant that an unassailable argument had been launched, and he could afford to let his antagonist speak.

"Of course you believe her innocent?" ventured Burrows, and in a moment Mr. Skene was as excited as ever.

"B'leve she's innocent? Do I b'leve it? Say, look a' here! Ef all them white angels that went up an' down Jacob's ladder, as they tell on in the Bible, wuz to let down a rope-ladder right here on this spot, an' as they come' down, they wuz

to kneel before me an' swear they seen her do it, it wouldn't budge me a mite. I 'd b'leve they wuz mistaken in the party. Man, I don't b'leve Virgie's innocent! I jest know it, plain an' simple!" This old man's trust in Virginia was impressive. Faith, such as this, might weigh with a jury against a multiplicity of facts.

"But how can you know it? You may think so, but how can you know that she is innocent?"

"How do I know it?" Mr. Skene said this with a sneer, and paused a moment. "How do I know it? How do I know you're a lune? I don't know how, but I know it!" With this sally he turned on his heel and walked towards the baggage-room. Burrows thought he knew how to bring him back.

"Mr. Skene, you misunderstand me. I believe Miss Lewis is innocent also. Won't you help me to prove it?"

The old man turned instantly and came back. He looked sharply at Burrows a moment and said:

"Say, don't come none of your Borston tricks on me! They won't work, an' ef I ketch you lyin' I'll maul you, so help me!"

"There will be no need. I will explain. I am not the only detective working on this case. It was not my fault that Miss Lewis was accused by the verdict." Burrows here adroitly left it to be inferred that it was the fault of Mr. Barnes. It was not a nice thing to do, but he was anxious to divert this man's anger from himself, that he might use him to further his ambition. In this he succeeded too, for the station-agent listened to him patiently, for the first time since the beginning of the interview. Burrows continued, following up the good impression. "I asked you to keep your information secret, because I wished to follow it up personally. This is the first chance that I have had to do so, and I have come to you for assistance. If you give it to me, I think there is no doubt that I can apprehend your man. In that case, of course Miss Lewis will be released. May I count upon you?"

"Kin you count on me? Say, mebbe I wuz hasty! I an't overpatient, I'll 'low, but I wuz riled when I hearn 'bout that verdic'. But no man an't quicker 'n me to 'low he's wrong, so there's my han'." Burrows shook the proffered hand gladly, delighted to have conciliated the old man. "Now then," continued Mr. Skene, "tell me what I kin do, an' I'll do it quicker 'n a streak."

“Listen! You told me that this man did not buy a ticket from you when he left. Therefore, he must have obtained one from the conductor on the train. That will be enough to have impressed the circumstance on his mind. If not, the ticket itself can be found, and that will tell us where he left the train. What I want you to do is, to introduce me to the conductor when the train comes in, and arrange it so that he will not hesitate to tell me all that he may know as we go along, for I mean to take that train tonight.”

“That’ll be simple enough, for Berry, the conductor, is a nice feller. He’ll do all he kin to help you.”

“Very good. What time did you say that train leaves?”

“Ten thirty-nine.”

Prompt to the minute, the train which he was so anxiously awaiting came along, and was stopped by the agent’s flag. Mr. Skene found the conductor and introduced Burrows to him, at the same time giving a hint of what was wanted. As soon as they had started, the two dropped into conversation, for there had been no other passengers to take up, and therefore there were no tickets to be collected.

“Mr. Berry,” said Burrows, “to make no mystery about what I want, I will say at once that I am a detective, and am looking for a particular man. One, answering his description, boarded this train last Sunday night. I desire you to tell me where he was going.”

“I should like nothing better than to oblige you, Mr. Burrows, but, really, we see so many passengers that it is not an easy matter to know all about where they get on or off, especially after the lapse of several days.”

“Of course not, but consider for a moment! It cannot be a common thing to get a passenger at this hour, at so small a place as Lee.”

“No, you are right about that. Nevertheless, I get them all along my route, and there are many stops as unimportant as this one.”

“I see I must assist your memory. This man did not buy a ticket from the agent at the station, and consequently he must have done so on the train. Can you not recall that circumstance?”

“Y-e-s—yes—it seems to me that I do. Ah! I have it! The man you want had a full beard and wore a long overcoat—he also had a large satchel— and I remember that he would not let me send it to the baggage-room—but where did he want a ticket for? That I don’t get, somehow.”

“Haven’t you the ticket which you sold him?” asked Burrows, anxiously.

“No, we turn our tickets in at the end of each trip. Of course they would have it at the main office. But stop a minute, perhaps I have the stub.” Burrows watched him as patiently as possible, whilst he looked through his book, turning to the right date and glancing over the stubs of the tickets which he had sold on the train. This occupied a few minutes only, at the end of which the conductor continued:

“I am sorry, but it is not here. You see, I use that book when I sell a ticket for any distance, and as there is no stub for anything from Lee, it must be that your man only made a short ride. The farmers along the line often do that, and we let them simply pay the agent where they stop off, the agent giving us the ticket.”

“Can you tell then where this man got off?”

“I cannot be sure about it. He must have left the train either at Epping, the next stop, or one station beyond that, for we seldom let a man ride farther, in the way that I have described. But stop here a minute, and I will ask my brakeman if he knows.”

The conductor was gone but a few moments, and returned with disappointment on his face.

“No, he knows nothing; doesn’t remember the man at all. But, see here, the thing is simple enough! All we must do is to ask the agent at Epping, and if not there, it must have been at the next.”

Epping, a much larger town than Lee, is but five miles from that place, and therefore it was not long before they reached the station. Immediately, Burrows and the conductor leaped from the train, and went up to the station-agent, who was delivering the mail-bags. It took but a moment to explain what was wanted, and at once the agent replied:

“Oh, yes, I remember the man well enough. He paid me for his ticket. I hope

there's nothing wrong?"

"This gentleman will tell you," replied the conductor in a hurry, because he could not keep his train waiting; then turning to Burrows he continued: "Mr. Burrows, let me introduce you to Mr. Jennings, he will give you the information which you want. Good-night, I wish you luck!" A moment later he and his train were lost to view around a curve, though a deep rumbling noise remained on the air for many minutes. Burrows turned to the man beside him and said:

"I am glad to meet you, Mr. Jennings, and I hope that you may be able to lend me some assistance in the matter which I am investigating."

"I am at your service, sir. If you'll tell me what I can do for you, I'll be only too happy," replied the agent, politely.

"I am a detective, and am after a man. I don't say the one who came here on Sunday is he, but I think so, from the mysterious way in which he acted at Lee. If you can tell me anything about him, you will earn my gratitude."

"Well, I don't know as I can help you much. I remember the fellow, partly 'cause he stopped off from such a late train, and partly 'cause he had no ticket, and so had to buy one when he reached here; but I am afraid there an't much more I can tell you."

"Didn't he ask you any questions? Where he could find a place to sleep, at so late an hour, or anything of that kind?"

"Not a word. He just took his satchel, and marched off, as if he knew all about the place he meant to stop at."

"You say he took his satchel with him?"

"Stop a minute; that gives me an idea. You want to find where he put up, an't that the point?"

"That is precisely what I am after."

"Very good! As I said, he asked no questions, but marched off. That's what he did do, but your question about the satchel reminds me. It seemed so large, that his going off on foot, with it in his hand, attracted some attention, and as one of

the neighbors noticed that he started off in his own direction, he jumped into his wagon, and as he drove off he said to me, "I guess I'll give the stranger a lift, with his bag!"

"Do you know whether the man accepted his offer or not?"

"Oh, yes, he had not turned the corner there, when Weston caught up with him, and I saw him climb into the wagon."

"Who is this Weston? Where can I find him?"

"I should say he's the very man you want, for more reasons than one. Not only he can tell you where he dropped his company Sunday night, but as he keeps the hotel here, he can put you up for the night."

With a few necessary directions as to how to find the hotel kept by this man Weston, Burrows started towards that place. The hotel in question would scarcely be granted so high-sounding a name in a city, but as it was the largest hostelry in the place, perhaps it was well enough so to designate it. The young detective reached it without any difficulty, and as easily found the proprietor. After engaging a room for the night, he at once approached the main object of his visit.

"Mr. Weston," said he, "I have been informed that you picked up a stranger at the depot last Sunday night, and gave him a lift in your wagon?"

"Yes, that's true enough."

"I would be much obliged to you if you will tell me where you put him down."

"Well, look here, what might be your reasons for askin' about him? I an't a man to git another into trouble, an' excuse me, but you're a stranger to me."

"Well, was not the other man a stranger also?"

"Yes, but for all that I won't do nothin' to git him into any scrape." He looked in a decidedly suspicious manner at the detective. Burrows considered for a moment, and from the manner of his host he almost thought that, despite his assertion that the man was unknown to him, he had recognized him. He also decided that it would not be wise to reveal his real object in hunting up this man.

He determined upon a bold stroke.

“Mr. Weston,” said he, “I am glad that the secret of my friend is in such safe hands. I thank you for your discretion. Can we finish this conversation where we will not be overheard?”

Weston seemed puzzled, but led the way into a small room at the back of the building.

“Now then,” resumed Burrows, “I must see my friend at once, and since you seem to be his friend also, I shall count on your assistance.”

“You shall have it, but first you must prove you’re his friend.”

Burrows now felt certain that he was right in his conjecture that the hotel proprietor had recognized his companion.

The next question was, whether he himself had guessed the man’s identity. He continued:

“I suppose you know that our friend has been hiding from the authorities for some time?”

Weston nodded.

“I am a friend of his, and a lawyer, and he wrote to me asking that I should come on here and look after his interests. I started at once, but when I reached the place where he asked me to meet him, he had left there. I have followed him to this town, but, as I am a stranger, I have no idea where he would be likely to stop. I heard at the depot that you had taken him up, and so came straight to you.”

“If our friend wanted to see you, how is it he didn’t leave his address for you?”

Burrows was compelled to think quickly here, but he was equal to the emergency.

“That is what puzzled me at first, but then it occurred to me that he could not do so, without risking some detective’s finding it out also.”

“Well, look here, I must be sure you’re talkin’ straight, so jest tell me the name of the man? We might be talkin’ about different parties, after all.” This was a trying moment to Burrows. He had hoped, by prolonging the conversation, to surprise Weston into an accidental mention of the name. Now that the question was put, he was compelled to give the name which he suspected to be the right one.

“I am endeavoring to meet my friend Walter Marvel.”

Burrows could almost hear his heart beat as he watched the face of his host, but Weston gave no sign, and remained silent for a few minutes.

“Well, I guess it’s all right. Mr. Marvel was here Sunday night.”

Burrows felt a shiver pass over him, he was so relieved at this reply. Restraining himself as much as possible, in his endeavor not to seem too elated, he continued:

“You say he was here? Did he stop over night in your house?”

“No, he only came in for a minute, then he went on to his own place.”

Burrows at once thought of the evidence given by young Harrison, which this statement corroborated.

“You mean the place where he goes to put up, when he is out shooting, do you not?”

This acquaintance with Marvel’s habits evidently disarmed Weston of any lingering doubts as to the intentions of the detective, for he replied in a much more friendly tone:

“Yes, that’s where he went. Whether he’s still there or not I can’t say, for I haven’t seen him since that night.”

“I suppose you can direct me how to find it in the morning?”

“Oh, yes, but if you want to ketch him at home, you ‘d better start early. I guess he’s off with his gun most of the day.”

“I shall act on your advice. I suppose that you have known Marvel a long time, since you are so friendly?”

“Why, no, not exactly. You see it an’t any special friendship I have for Marvel, that made me so careful. In fact I don’t know much about him at all. I haven’t seen him more ‘n once or twice altogether.”

“But I thought you were his friend?”

“I’m any man’s friend when he’s down. I heard all about the trouble he had with Lewis, and as I didn’t see as how he’d done any different to what I would myself, I wouldn’t be the one to help to ketch him.”

“But if you don’t know Marvel, how can you be sure that he was the man whom you picked up Sunday night?” Burrows was beginning to fear some mistake. However, he was reassured by the positive reply of his host.

“Oh, there an’t any chance of a mistake. I suspected who ‘twas, by the way he was all muffled up, and because he went off luggin’ a big bag without sayin’ a word to anyone at the station. So I just called him by name, and he owned up, but he begged me not to tell anyone of his bein’ in town. And I haven’t!”

“I believe you, Mr. Weston, and I thank you for your discretion. Now if you will show me to my room, I’ll thank you, and ask you to call me about six o’clock.”

Burrows was well pleased with himself, and with the progress which he had made so far, in the investigation of his clue. He thought that he had managed Weston with considerable adroitness. All that he had hoped when he had started was to find some clue to prove Marvel’s identity with the late visitor at Riverside. He had succeeded beyond his hopes, for here was a witness, however unwilling, who could be made to testify that in the stranger, and despite his disguise, he had been able to recognize Marvel himself. Moreover, he now felt satisfied that Marvel had lied, when he said that he had thrown his disguise into the river, and he even hoped to find some trace of it at the old house.

Promptly at six, Burrows was called, and in a very little time he was ready to start. Weston gave him full directions as to how to find Marvel’s house.

After walking about a mile beyond the more populous portion of the town, Burrows reached his destination, which he readily recognized from Weston’s

description. The house itself could barely be seen from the road. It was in the midst of a number of large trees, and besides, as no care had been given to the place in years, it was surrounded by dense shrubbery and covered with vines. Thus everything about it being green, it would scarcely have attracted the attention of a casual observer. Burrows thought it a very good retreat for a man anxious to avoid the scrutiny of his fellows, and entered, more than ever satisfied that some important developments awaited his examination of the interior.

Pushing open the door, which moved noiselessly on its hinges, despite the dilapidation everywhere apparent, he found himself in a small but well-lighted room. In this, which had been originally a kitchen, there was some slight evidence of civilized habitation. The stove bore no signs of rust, and the ashes of a recent fire attested the fact that the owner used it, perhaps for cooking, as a kettle, partly filled, still rested in one of the holes. Burrows observed this at a glance, but the dust apparent in all other parts of the room satisfied him that, except for making a cup of coffee, or other light cooking, the apartment had been abandoned. He thought that he must look further for the room in which he hoped to find some evidence.

He passed through a door and found himself in the dining-room, as a table and cupboards proved. A casual peep into the latter, showed a small store of canned meats and fruits, biscuits, butter, sugar, and the like. The next apartment was the sitting room, but the dust and dirt everywhere bespoke an absence of all care on the part of the occupant. Ascending one flight, he explored two rooms in a similar condition of neglect, before he reached one in which there were any signs of habitation. This was plainly, if not rudely furnished, and contained nothing but what was absolutely necessary in a sleeping-room. A cot-bed; a metal wash-bowl, and a pitcher on a painted wooden stand; a looking-glass without a frame, tacked to the wall; an old dressing case with the top, which originally held a glass, entirely missing; a few chairs, and the inventory is complete. It was evident that the house was used, as has been stated, only as an occasional sleeping place. The few odds and ends had been gathered from the general wreck, and put in this one room, in the endeavor to make it at least habitable. Any further trouble or expense had been considered unnecessary. There was a commodious closet, which had probably decided the selection of the room, for it was filled with a miscellaneous collection of articles, arranged with evident care and neatness, comprising outfits for gunning, fishing, *etc.*

Burrows glanced about for the clues for which he was searching. The first point

to determine was, had the man hidden his disguise in this place? To learn this, he did not go searching blindly about the place, but adopted methods which he had seen used by Mr. Barnes, on similar occasions. Although he was jealous of Mr. Barnes, he admired his ability, and did not hesitate to imitate him. He dropped into a chair and glanced around, looking about him keenly, whilst he endeavored to discover what he wished, by reasoning it out, rather than by chance. Mr. Barnes would say: "Undoubtedly chance is a great factor in all investigations, but the man who uses his brains will have more of these 'lucky accidents,' than he who waits for things to 'turn up.'" Burrows felt the truth of this, and acted accordingly. At this moment he wished to know what had been done with the disguise, and reasoned as follows:

"Marvel crossed the river, therefore, the things were wet. He says he changed them at his house, and threw the bundle into the river. Did he make the change, and, if so, did he throw the things into the river? He had a satchel, and it is probable that it contained the clothes. If so, he made the change, but did not throw them in the river. According to Weston, he took the satchel with him when he started for this house. As this is his sleeping-room, he probably brought it in here, whatever he may have done later. Although cleaner than the rest of the house, there is still a considerable quantity of dust about this room; yet, it is not likely that I can find out, from such a source, where he laid down his satchel. However, if he took out the wet clothes, and laid them down, the water would have converted the dust into mud, and would have left a distinct mark on the floor. There is nothing of the kind about, so he did not put them on the floor. What did he do with them? What would I do under similar circumstances? Burn them, perhaps. But they were saturated with water. Still it is always dangerous to conceal such evidence, for someone generally finds the best-hidden articles, when a crime is connected with them. Therefore, I should have burned them at all cost of time or trouble. I should have burned the satchel with them, building a large log fire and putting it with its contents on top of the logs. In this way, by the time the fire had destroyed the satchel, the clothes would be dry enough to burn. Then I should have raked out and thrown away the ashes, a point which would not strike a criminal as quickly as a detective. At least it seems that it seldom does. I think, I may as well examine the fireplace."

Reaching this point in his reasoning, he went to the chimney and found some ashes. He carefully brushed the pile on to a piece of newspaper, which he took from his overcoat pocket. This done, he laid the whole on the floor near the window, and then, with a piece of stick, gradually moved the soft ashes from the

centre to the side. As he did this, he was careful to examine every particle, searching for anything that may have escaped combustion. It was not long before his patience was rewarded, for, first a few iron buttons, and then several other pieces of iron, or metal of some kind, were separated from the _debris. _The buttons, of course, proved that something more than an ordinary fire had been made on the hearth, and it was but fair to suppose that clothing had been burned. The other things, however, puzzled him a while, for though not entirely destroyed, he still found it hard to tell exactly what they were. After some thought he concluded that the majority of the metal had originally belonged to the frame-work of the satchel. One piece still remained to be accounted for. This was a bit of wire. Burrows was almost on the point of throwing this away, as unimportant, when it suddenly occurred to him that it must be all that was left of the false whiskers. There was nothing more that he could make out of the ashes; still he carefully wrapped all up and placed the package in a small satchel, which he had brought with him. Burrows smiled as he thought to himself, "Marvel lied, when he said the locket was still in his pocket. There is no trace of it here, so it is evident that the one found was the same which he had with him that night."

Burrows was now anxious to find the pistol. He recollected that the Squire had told of the pistol which Marvel had left at the house, and as he knew that it had not been found, he deemed it probable that it was the weapon used in the murder. This was not so readily reasoned out as the other matter, for, as a pistol could not be burned, it must be hidden; and as there was no way of guessing the hiding-place, there was but one course open to him, namely, to hunt. This he did, as thoroughly as Mr. Barnes had taught him to do, and, when he went downstairs again, he felt almost sure that the weapon had not been concealed above. He was just as thorough in going over the rooms on the lower floor, and finally reached the kitchen, without having found it. He had not looked long in this place, however, before he noticed that the tiles in front of the stove had been disturbed. One of the stones had been so poorly replaced, that Burrows muttered to himself, "He must have wanted this to be found." Removing it, he disclosed a hole below, in which was a pistol. He took this out, and another object attracted his attention. This proved to be a small piece of silver-plated metal, and a closer scrutiny revealed the fact that a name was engraved thereon. This name was, "John Lewis."

"Better and better," thought the detective. "How nicely the precautions of a criminal, as usual, serve to convict him. This is a plate which he wrenched from the satchel, and the name proves that he got that at the farm. I am not surprised

any longer that he did not disturb any of his own people that night, for he did not go home at all. He obtained a change at the house of his victim. He is a cool hand, to kill a man, and then wear his clothing away from the scene of his crime.”

Burrows now turned his attention to the pistol, and at once noticed that there were three empty chambers. He concluded, from this, that Marvel must have fired both shots found in the body. Still looking at the weapon, he noticed that a name was engraved on the stock. He approached the window for more light, and read, “Walter Marvel.” At this moment the door was opened, and Mr. Barnes and Lewis stood on the threshold.

Chapter XIV

When Detectives Quarrel?

When Burrows saw Mr. Barnes in the doorway, for a moment he was confused, but almost immediately he concluded that it was too late for the older detective to take any of the glory away from him. Summoning up his courage, he said:

“Good morning, Mr. Barnes! You are just in time to hear the news. I have discovered the real murderer.”

Mr. Barnes looked at him keenly, as he asked:

“Who is it?”

“The man whom I suspected from the start, Walter Marvel!” replied Burrows, with a tinge of exultation in his voice.

“And pray how do you prove this?” asked Mr. Barnes, quietly. Burrows was nettled at the tone of his superior, and answered with considerable asperity:

“Oh, there is proof enough. I am sure of what I say, or I should not make the assertion.”

“I hope you are not making any blunder, Burrows? Remember, it is a serious thing for a detective to make a charge of murder against anyone, unless he can assure a conviction at the trial.”

“I know that, but I tell you there is no mistake here. I have tracked my man to and from the scene of the crime, and can give you incontestible proof of what I say.”

“Go on, I am listening.” Mr. Barnes sat down on a chair near him. Burrows forthwith entered into a minute and detailed account of the facts, from which he had reached the conclusion which he had just so positively asserted. During the narration Mr. Barnes made absolutely no comment, and when Burrows reached the end of his story, he was impatient to know what would be said. He already saw that he would not receive the praise which he considered was due to his

efforts. Mr. Barnes pondered over the situation for a few moments, and then said:

“Do you realize what you have done, Mr. Burrows?” Burrows did not like to have Mr. Barnes call him “Mr.” Burrows, for he knew at once now, that Mr. Barnes was angry, and, determined as he had been to pursue this examination alone, he had by no means counted on a quarrel. Therefore, in a troubled tone, he answered:

“Do I realize what I have done? No harm, I hope?”

“You have been the means of fixing a terrible imputation on the character of a girl, who is the pride of this county.”

“How so?”

“It was distinctly your duty to report to me the conversation which you had with the station-agent. I am in charge of this inquiry, and, by your stupidity and vanity, you have caused irreparable harm.”

“I don’t see that!” Burrows was getting angry now. He did not relish being thus chided before Lewis. But Mr. Barnes did not appear to notice his rising temper.

“I suppose not. Like all young men, you do a wrong act, and then, instead of having the manhood to acknowledge the error, and in some way endeavor to atone therefore, you persist in defending the course pursued. But you shall not make any more mistakes in this case. From this moment you may consider that you have no further connection with it.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean that you will go back to Boston, and remain there.”

“And let you take all the credit for my work, I suppose? Mr. Barnes, you are presumptuous.”

“I am in charge of this case, and I order you to have no more to do with it.”

“What if I refuse?”

“I will dispatch a message to the agency, and request your recall.”

“Do so, if you wish! Perhaps I shall send a message also, that will place a different aspect on what you ask them to do. I have discovered the true criminal, and I doubt if I shall be recalled for so doing.”

Mr. Barnes stopped a moment to reflect. He did not wish to force Burrows into any hasty action, and preferred, if possible, still to control him. So abandoning for a moment his tone of command, he asked:

“Since you have assumed charge of the affair, will you mind telling me what you wish to do next?”

“I believe that the evidence is all to be given to the Grand Jury to-day. I should go to Dover at once, and relate to them the facts which I have just told you.”

“In other words, not satisfied with the trouble which you have already given to Miss Lewis, you will now go and obtain the indictment of her lover, notwithstanding the fact that he is innocent!”

“Innocent?”

“Of course he is innocent! You have proved it by your work. Only, by your delay, you have lost all traces of the real criminal.”

“But how can you say that he is innocent, when I have proved that he came here straight from the farm; that he was recognized—”

“By a man who does not know him.”

“But here, in his own house, are signs of his guilt.”

“Burrows, if this were not so serious a case, I would let you have your way, and then, at the trial, show you what an idiot you are. But as I wish, if possible, to avoid any more mistakes, I will show you how easy it is for me to overturn your castles in the air. According to your latest theory, you make Marvel commit murder and leave the town on a train which started from Lee at 10.39 P.M. Now Miss Lewis left him across the river, went directly to her room, and reached there at 10.30 P.M. Therefore it is plain that Marvel has an easily proven alibi.”

Burrows flushed at this, but he was not willing to give up his theory without one more struggle.

“The only way in which he could prove that, would be by the testimony of his accomplice, and—”

“Stop! For shame, Mr. Burrows! Would you, resort to so base a thing as slander simply to have the gratification of finding a criminal? To make your chain complete, would you implicate a girl, against whom you have not a particle of evidence?”

“She has confessed her share in the crime.”

“She is a noble woman, and is trying to shield her lover from the mistakes of such detectives as you are proving yourself to be.”

“You ought to go on the stage,” sneered Burrows; “you would make quite a heroic actor, Mr. Barnes.”

“Come,” said Mr. Barnes, sternly, “no impertinence! Respect my age and experience, if you do not respect me. And now, since I cannot turn you from your folly, which in this case will possibly be a crime, I must resort to compulsion, and again, as your superior, I order you to abandon your project.”

“And I refuse!” returned Burrows, hotly.

“Very well! I will give you one more chance. Whatever little ability as a detective you may have, you have imbibed most of your best methods from association with me. Let me tell you that if you do not obey me in this instance, you must never expect any assistance or advice from me again. Moreover, I swear to find the guilty man and to right the wrong which you will have done to two innocent people. Act as you have said you will, and you will live to rue the day when you quarrelled with Jack Barnes.”

Burrows regretted the turn of events, but he felt too sure of his position to give it up. He thought Mr. Barnes was actuated to some extent by jealousy, and that he would find it difficult to accomplish all that he threatened. He had no pity for Marvel, for he believed him to be the guilty man, and so he determined to go at once to Dover with his new evidence. In reply to Mr. Barnes he said:

“You have made the quarrel, not I! I am doing my duty.”

“What will you do, Mr. Lewis?” asked the elder detective.

“I shall go on to Dover with Mr. Burrows, and see the thing through. I don’t say that I think he is right, for, as you say, I should be obliged to accept the theory that Miss Lewis is guilty also, and whilst I thought Marvel the murderer, as I told you before I started here, I must say that I would rather think him innocent, than believe that my cousin had a hand in the affair. Still, she may have been mistaken about the time. However, I must wait for older heads than mine to solve this problem.”

“I am glad that you are not as easily convinced by this array of evidence, as our young friend thinks the jury will be. As I suppose you want the truth, I promise you that I will use all my best skill to unravel this mystery.”

“Do so, Mr. Barnes, and I will give you a thousand dollars. I have saved some money, and although that is a large sum, I would give it cheerfully.”

“Thank you for your generous offer, but I am going to work now, as a duty. The innocent must not, and shall not, suffer if I can prevent it. Besides, my professional pride is aroused in this, now.”

The three men then turned their steps towards the town, and walked along in silence. All of the party had much with which to occupy their thoughts, and besides, the recent scene had caused rather a restraint, at least between two of them. Just before they reached the hotel, however, Mr. Barnes asked Burrows:

“How many shots were fired from that pistol?”

“There are three empty shells in it.”

“That is to say, it has been used twice since the shot which Marvel fired at the birthday party?”

“Evidently.”

Mr. Barnes said no more, and, in a few minutes later, they all were at the hotel, whence they went to the depot. Burrows and Lewis started by train for Dover, and Mr. Barnes for Boston. Reaching that city, he went directly to the agency,

and reported all that had occurred. He was closeted with the chief for over an hour, but was unable to convince that personage that Burrows was on a wrong scent. On the contrary, he seemed to think that the young man had shown considerable ability in ferreting out the truth of the matter.

“Well,” said Mr. Barnes, “you must choose between me and him. If you refuse to recall him from the case, you must accept my resignation from the agency.”

“I should be sorry to lose our best man,” responded the chief, “but, really, your request seems a little unreasonable to me. Burrows has only done what we must consider a service, and it would be manifestly unjust to let him suffer for it.”

“Then you refuse to call him home?”

“Well, I don’t see—”

“There are no half-way measures which you can adopt. It must be either Burrows or Barnes. Come, decide at once! I have no time to waste!”

“Well, then, since you will have it, you force me to accept your resignation, though I regret it very much.”

“Sentiment is unnecessary,” said Mr. Barnes, dryly, “good morning!” Before the chief could say a word, he was gone, and his superior more than half doubted the wisdom of the course which he had pursued. But that is only man’s nature. We often decide quickly, only to regret as soon as the decision is irrevocable.

Leaving the agency, Mr. Barnes proceeded to a telegraph-office, and sent a dispatch to the clerk of the court at Dover, asking for news as to the result of the examination before the Grand Jury. This done, he went to his home and dined, after which he waited impatiently for a telegram from Dover, because he had decided to do nothing until he should hear from the court officer. The afternoon passed, and the evening, till at length he concluded that he would not hear till the following day, and therefore retired to rest. Early in the morning he received the dispatch which read:

“Marvel indicted for murder.”

This was only what he had expected, but he could not repress an exclamation of disgust, at what he still thought was the consequence of criminal interference on

the part of Burrows. What should he do next?

That was the point to settle, but whilst he ate his breakfast and pondered over this point, a servant announced that a lady wished to see him. He at once repaired to his parlor, whither she had been shown, and was astounded to see Virginia Lewis.

“You are no doubt surprised that I am here?”

“I confess that I am!”

“I have been set at liberty, and Mr. Marvel has been indicted by the Grand Jury.”

“I have just received a telegram to that effect.”

“What will you do next? I went to the agency in search of you, and learned that you have severed your connection with the case. Will you tell me why you did so?”

“Because they refuse to recall Mr. Burrows.”

“Then you do not think that the evidence which he discovered proves the guilt of Mr. Marvel?”

“Miss Lewis, I must tell you that I did not credit the story which you told, implicating yourself, and if I believe in your innocence, I must also believe in Mr. Marvel’s.”

“Why so?”

“Burrows is no doubt right in claiming that the murderer is the man who made the trip to Epping that night, but I think he is wrong in his identification of this man.”

“I thought he had that all thoroughly explained?”

“Miss Lewis, I imagine, from your coming here, that you wish my aid.”

“I have come to you because I fancied that you believe Mr. Marvel innocent. I wish you to try to prove it.”

“Precisely! Meanwhile you yourself suspect that he is guilty, do you not?”

“I do not say so!”

“It is so, nevertheless. But we shall not get along in this way. You must not fence with me any more. We are on the same side now, and though Burrows has not had as much experience as I have, it will take all my skill to destroy the case which he has made out against your lover.” Mr. Barnes used this word purposely to arouse her to action.

“I trust you, Mr. Barnes, and place our affair in your hands. Ask me what you please, and I will reply.”

“Very good! In the first place tell me, am I not right in saying that you have believed that Mr. Marvel is guilty?”

“Yes! You are right.”

“Very good! That proves your innocence. Now I will demonstrate his, to your satisfaction at least.” He explained the discrepancy, as to time, in the theory of the other detective.

“But then,” said Virginia, “the real murderer must have placed the pistol where it was found, so as to throw suspicion on Mr. Marvel?”

“Exactly! You are quick to see things, quicker than our adversary, Mr. Burrows. Before we go into that, however, tell me why you consider Marvel guilty? You must have more reason for that opinion than is known to me.”

“I have. After we separated across the river, as you shrewdly discovered, he returned to the farm. He admitted to you that he had entered the house, but he did not tell you that he had left a note for me. I found this in the morning and, as I see now, I misconstrued it. That was the secret motive of all my actions thereafter.”

“Have you the letter now?”

“Yes, here it is.” Taking it from her pocket, she handed it to Mr. Barnes. It read as follows:

“When we parted tonight you spoke as though you could not give me the answer that I wish. Perhaps when this reaches you, you may see things differently. By morning what now seems an obstacle in your judgment may be removed and you may feel free to decide your own and my fate yourself. Should you decide against me, write to me as agreed, and I will leave you and this country forever.

“WALTER.”

Mr. Barnes read this carefully, and then said: “I see your mistake. In reading it you placed a comma after the word ‘judgment,’ whereas he meant it to be after the word ‘obstacle.’ However, this paper alone will prove the _alibi _so necessary to Mr. Marvel, and so you may rest easy, although I shall not until I have found the man who manufactured all this evidence against Mr. Marvel. There is another point which I wish cleared up. How did you know there were two wounds in the body, and so be able to arrange your story to meet the requirements of the case so well?”

“When Alice fainted, and was brought out of the room, Harry Lucas came with her, and, whilst the doctor was attending to her, I questioned Lucas.”

“Of course! Of course! I was a fool to let him leave the room, but then, a man cannot think of everything. You are a clever woman, Miss Lewis, and it will be a pleasure for me to serve you. Now one thing more. Tell me why you did not destroy that paper upon which your uncle had written Mr. Marvel’s name, accusing him of the crime? That was a dangerous bit of evidence to keep, if you wished to shield him.”

“Yes, I know, but it is just because it seemed so conclusive, that I did keep it. I thought that I should be able to prevent its existence from being discovered, but in that I was sadly mistaken. I kept it for this reason. I was willing to shield Mr. Marvel at any sacrifice, because—because I love him. But I should never have received him again, so long as I knew him to be, or thought that he was, a criminal. Suppose that he had gone away, and then should return after a year or two, never having been publicly accused? Don’t you see how terrible my position would be? To be obliged to accuse him of a crime, when I had no proof?”

“Exactly. You were willing to suppress the evidence to save him; but you preserved it to save yourself. Very proper perhaps, but, you see, very risky,

considering your primary purpose. Of course that paper will tell against him now. Then, there is the matter of the locket. That certainly looks very bad. How do you account for that?"

"Why—why—don't you see? That was my last hope destroyed. When I heard that Walter—Mr. Marvel—had taken the locket, and remembered that I had found it tight in my dead uncle's hand, the whole thing seemed too terribly certain. But now "

"Ah! You have a theory?"

"Mr. Barnes, you men never quite understand us women. We love a man, and after that we cling to him forever. We hope against reason, and manufacture reasons upon which to build hope. So, ever since the inquest, I have striven to find an explanation of this locket affair. There is one possibility that has occurred to me. Mr. Marvel certainly entered the house after I had retired, and probably whilst my uncle was yet alive. May he not have dropped the locket, and may not my uncle, disturbed by some noise, have searched the house, and accidentally have found the locket?"

"That is very well argued, Miss Lewis, but I fear that it will not prove to be true. Unless Mr. Lewis was killed immediately after, he would scarcely have retained the locket in his hand. Still, it is a possibility. It would do at a pinch, in trying to confuse a jury: But, unless I be greatly mistaken, nothing of that sort will be necessary. I hope to discover the whole solution of this singularly complex affair."

"Where will you begin?"

"Where Burrows did, only I will go the other way. He followed the man away from the scene of the murder, and allowed himself to get on a false scent. I will trace him to the place from which he came, and there discover his identity. Meanwhile, you must go home again. When is the funeral?"

"It is to be this afternoon."

"Then I go back with you. But first, there is something that I can find out even here in Boston. If you will wait for me, my housekeeper will get you some breakfast, whilst I do my errand."

Miss Lewis agreed, and Mr. Barnes went out. He proceeded to the main office of the Boston & Maine Railroad and asked for the superintendent. Being shown into the presence of that official, he at once explained the object of his visit.

“I am tracing a man,” said he, “and know that he reached Lee, New Hampshire, on the train which is due there about nine o’clock. Can you find the ticket which he gave to the conductor on that train, last Sunday night?”

“Very easily, provided he was the only passenger for that place.”

Calling an attendant, he gave him orders to find the ticket, and a few minutes later Mr. Barnes held it in his hand. It read:

“WORCESTER TO LEE.”

Mr. Barnes was troubled, for he remembered that Marvel had testified that he had been in Worcester, hiding from the authorities. He examined the ticket closely, and noted that it was rough on one edge, as though a portion had been torn off. He handed it to the superintendent, and asked:

“Can you tell me where this ticket was bought? I see that one or more coupons have been torn off. Therefore, the passenger must have started from some point the other side of Worcester.”

The superintendent looked at the ticket, and replied:

“This was originally sold in New York, and is the form used by the Norwich line of steamers. But your man may have bought this half of the ticket from a scalper in Worcester.”

Mr. Barnes thanked the superintendent, and left the office.

Chapter XV

Mr. Barnes on His Mettle

Mr. Barnes and Virginia returned to Riverside farm, reaching there just as the people were assembling for the funeral services. The Squire greeted Virginia cordially, and looked interrogatively at Mr. Barnes, evidently a little confused at seeing them together. Virginia hastened to explain.

“Squire, I hope you will be glad to hear that Mr. Barnes is now working in my interests? He does not believe that Walter is guilty.”

“Is that true?” said the Squire, quickly interested. “I am glad to hear it, for though Burrows seems to have made out a complete chain of evidence, if you, Mr. Barnes, with your experience, are unconvinced, there must be a weak spot in it. Tell me, how is it?”

“Mr. Burrows is mistaken,” said Mr. Barnes. “His evidence is all good, and most important. His deductions, however, are incorrect. As you say, there is a flaw. I pointed it out to him, but he is obstinate and refuses to see it. He cannot convict Marvel without proving that Miss Lewis here was an accomplice after the fact, if not before.”

“God forbid that he should do that.”

“I was afraid that he would have brought out this point before the Grand Jury, and that Miss Lewis, as a consequence, would have been still in prison. That he has not done so, shows that he secretly fears that he could not sustain the charge.”

“Well, but do you think you can clear Marvel? If so, who did kill Lewis?”

“Your last query is a hard one to answer, but I must do so if I am to prove Marvel’s innocence. All I can say now is, that I hope to accomplish that. Now, I wish to see the body again. Will you come with me?”

The Squire and the detective moved towards the parlor, where was the casket containing the remains. Virginia went to her own room. The two men stood

beside the coffin, a moment, in silence. Mr. Barnes gazed intently at the charred face, bandaged in silk handkerchiefs to conceal the disfigurement, and the Squire wondered of what he was thinking. In truth, Mr. Barnes scarcely knew himself. He had a dimly defined idea within his mind, and was awaiting its development. Presently, his eyes wandered down to where the crossed arms of the corpse lay upon the breast, and he noted the diamond ring.

“Squire,” said he, “I think a mistake will be made if we do not interfere.”

“What do you mean?”

“There is a ring on the finger of the corpse. It should not be buried.”

“Why not?”

“Because the man was murdered, and anything connected with the body may become an article of value, as evidence of some kind.”

“How can a ring amount to anything?”

“I don’t say it will, but it may. We detectives, as you know, are cautious, and I should be indebted if you will remove it.”

“Oh! certainly, if you specially wish it.” The Squire removed the ring with some difficulty.

“I wish, Squire, that you would keep that yourself. Should anything occur which will make it useful to me, I shall know where to get it.”

“Yes, I will keep it, and it shall not leave my possession unless I let you know first.”

“I thank you, but may I look at it now, for a moment?”

“Certainly!” The Squire handed it to him. Mr. Barnes examined it closely, and noticing an inscription on the inside of the band, went to the light to decipher it. It proved to be “W. to M.” The detective started, and muttered: “The same initials as were on the locket!” Then returning the ring to the Squire, he asked:

“Have you that locket? Though that is a foolish question, as I suppose you gave

it to the authorities at Dover, with the other things in evidence.”

“Yes. They were given up yesterday.”

“I wonder,” thought the detective, “if I have made a mistake. I may wish to see that locket once more, and I must question Miss Lewis.”

At this moment, the minister arrived, and the ceremonies commenced. John Lewis came in with him, and then went to call Virginia, but she declined to leave her room. At this there was little surprise, for what girl would care to show herself before so many people, after such an experience? The service was brief, the main point in the discourse being to impress upon the minds of those present the transitoriness of human life, and the extreme uncertainty as to how long a man might live, or how soon be called away from all that he holds dear on earth; and, therefore, the policy and wisdom of so arranging earthly affairs that one might be ready to answer the call at any time. Whilst the worthy man spoke nothing but truth, it is doubtful if any of his hearers even so much as made their wills the next day, so far off do most men feel from death.

The body was interred in a private cemetery belonging to the estate, situated at one end of the farm, near a growth of timberland. After the funeral, the people dispersed.

Mr. Barnes approached Will Everly, as he was about to leave, and said:

“Do you remember me, Mr. Everly?”

“Certainly; you are Mr. Barnes. Miss Lewis tells me that you are now devoted to the interests of Mr. Marvel. Is that true?”

“It is, and now I wish to intrust to you an errand that may serve him. Will you undertake it?”

“Just give me a chance.”

“Have you a fast horse?”

“I have, and can get a faster if there be any need.”

“What I wish done is very simple, but it must be done without delay, for I wish

to have word tonight, as I shall be obliged to leave here to-morrow.”

“I can go where you wish at once.”

“Go then to Dover and hunt up the clerk of the court. His name is Ainsley—”

“I know him very well, and where to find him.”

“All the better. See him, and tell him that you wish to look at the locket which has played so conspicuous a part in this case. If he has not the custody of it, he will be able to take you to the one who has. See the locket tonight, if possible. Look on the outside and find out what the inscription is. Whether it is ‘W. M.’ or ‘W. to M.’ The word ‘to,’ if on the trinket will save your friend’s life. Lose no time.”

Everly needed no second bidding, but was off on a run at once. Mr. Barnes seemed satisfied, and turned into the house. Here he found Lucas, and spoke to him.

“This is a sad business, Mr. Lucas.”

“Indeed it is. I would gladly take the place of the prisoner for the sake of his sister, if not of himself.”

“Miss Marvel has passed through a trying ordeal. How is she now?”

“She is very ill. Of course she was prostrated at the inquest because of the part which she took in it herself; so much so, that we did not dare to tell her of the charges against Miss Lewis. But through the stupidity of a servant she heard to-day of the fact that her brother is now the accused, and she has been delirious ever since. I have waited after the others to tell Miss Lewis this, but now I am anxious about Miss Marvel and will leave you. I hope that you may be successful in your defence of Walter. I cannot believe that he is really guilty.”

“It shall not be for want of honest endeavor, if I fail.” Mr. Barnes bowed courteously as Lucas retired.

A moment later Miss Lewis appeared.

“I am glad you are here, Mr. Barnes,” said she, “for I want to get to work at

once.”

“Very well. Let me ask you a few questions. What was your mother’s name?”

“Matilda; I don’t know her married name. Everyone knows that ‘Lewis’ is only the name given to me by my adopted father. That was his name, and, as I am his sister’s child, of course she must have changed hers when she married; but to what, my uncle never would tell me. So I have been Virginia Lewis, in spite of myself.”

“But perhaps you know your father’s first name, if not his last?”

“No. Whenever I asked any questions, my uncle would say, ‘You never had a father.’”

“Well, your mother’s name was Matilda, that is, the first name has ‘M.’ for the initial. And I feel satisfied that your father’s initial was ‘W.’”

“Is it a matter of any importance?”

“It may be. The ring that your uncle wore bore the inscription ‘W. to M.’ I have sent Everly to Dover to find out if the same is on that medallion. I may have overlooked the word ‘to’ when I had it in my hand, and, if it is there, it will indicate that there were two of those lockets.”

“And that would help to prove that Walter is innocent, would it not?”

“It would help, for it would show that the one which you found in the dead man’s hand was not the one which Mr. Marvel had.”

“God grant it! Otherwise I should never forgive myself for furnishing that evidence against him. But what about the clothes which he says he threw into the river? The Squire told me that he and my cousin, Mr. Lewis, have had the stream dragged, but did not find anything.”

“I mean to have a try at that myself. Now I have another point, which I wish to investigate, and if you will excuse me I will be off.”

“You will return and take supper with me, will you not? The proprieties will not be invaded, for Sarah is here with me, and will stay as long as I wish her.

Therefore, you can have a room here if you desire.”

“Thank you very much. Don’t lose heart, Miss Lewis; if it be in the power of man, I will clear your lover from this charge.”

Virginia showed gratitude in her face, and the detective went away. From the farm he went to the house of Dr. Snow, and was fortunate enough to find him at home, though he had but just returned from a visit to Miss Marvel, whom he reported as slightly improved. Mr. Barnes proceeded to ask a few questions of the old physician, about the people most nearly connected with the crime and its consequences. Finally he said:

“There is a question that I would like to ask, doctor. Would a man’s fingers swell, or would they shrink, after death?”

“That would depend upon the circumstances of the case. If the death was from dropsy, or from some poisons, they would swell, but ordinarily of course they would shrink. Again, the time has something to do with it, for in all cases the tissues must waste eventually.”

“Since there is some doubt about it, I must give you a specific case. Take the body of Mr. Lewis, for example. Would you expect any shrinking of his fingers?”

“I think I should, though they may not have done so to any considerable extent in the few days which have elapsed.”

“They would not have swollen?”

“No, I am positive that they would not.”

“Thank you, doctor, you have settled an important point for me. When the trial comes on, please remember this interview, in case you should be questioned about it on the witness-stand.”

“I will testify, of course, though as yet I cannot see what it is that you are trying to prove.”

“Pardon me if I say no more at this time. I must think only of the interests which I am serving, and I deem it wisest to work quietly, as yet. Will you oblige me by

not mentioning this to anyone?”

“I will be discreet, since you seem to think it is important.”

Leaving the doctor’s house, Mr. Barnes went to the bridge from which Marvel claimed that he had thrown the bundle of clothing. Looking over the edge, into the water, he concluded that on whichever side it had been thrown, the bundle must have been carried by the current towards the dam; otherwise it would have been found on the banks, which were shelving on the south side of the bridge.

Next, he left the bridge and went to the side of the stream north of the dam, and from that point studied the apparent conditions. “Well,” thought he, “if Marvel had sought for a place to lose a thing he could not have chosen better.” This conclusion was most probable, for he saw a large number of enormous boulders of jagged rock projecting from the water, which is shallow as it passes over the stones, and these rough projections made innumerable eddies and smaller currents. A bundle of clothing might easily be caught and held among these rocks, and held there against all time, or at least long enough to be of no practical value to Walter Marvel.

The detective saw that he had almost a hopeless task to make this river yield up its secret, if indeed it held one. However, he was not a man easily daunted by obstacles, and he determined to make an attempt that night. He chose the night for his experiment, deeming it wisest to make the conditions, as nearly as possible, similar to those under which the accused had acted. He thought that the currents among these rocks might be different at night, as then the mills would not be working. He closely examined the dam, and conceived a new idea. The dam was made of wood, and as its construction must be clear to you in order that you may understand the course pursued by Mr. Barnes, it becomes necessary to describe it.

The bridge is about a hundred feet south of the point where the water goes over the dam. Standing on this bridge, one notices a smooth body of water flowing towards the place where it rushed over the dam, ‘but he forms no idea of the power of the current from this point of view. On the line where the stream dashes downward, he sees some boards projecting above the surface, from each side of the river, towards the centre, for a distance equal to one quarter of the width of the stream. Between these points, where the dam rises above the level, the water rushes over the dam, which is two feet lower along the centre than at the sides.

Going below the dam, that is to the north of it, one easily sees how it is constructed. Immense triangles of timber are laid along the rocks, resting on the short sides. Thus their hypotenuses face the south, and on them are nailed the boards which form the dam. Therefore, as the water rushes over, there is a space under the dam where it is comparatively dry. At least, no great amount of water finds its way there, as only what leaks through, drips down.

It was whilst looking at this space, that the new idea occurred to the detective. In order to turn the mill-wheels, sluices are built, which conduct the water in the desired direction. When these are open, it is evident that a strong current sets in the direction of the mill. This is so powerful and there is such a suction downward, that objects on the surface would be drawn below and carried into the mill, were it not that the sluice-gates are furnished with gratings, to keep out such jetsam. Studying this point, it became evident to the detective that if the sluices were open on Sunday night, the bundle of clothing must be looked for at these gratings.

He therefore went to the mill, and asked for the man who had the care of the sluices. From him he learned that they had been closed on the night of the murder, and then persuaded him to have them closed this evening also, so that the conditions might be the same.

Leaving the vicinity of the mill, he went back to Riverside, and enjoyed his supper with Miss Lewis. After the meal, he said:

“Where is Mr. Lewis? Is he not staying here?”

“He accepted an invitation to visit the Squire tonight.”

“All the better; the fewer people who know what I do tonight, the more pleased I shall be. Now then, I want a suit of your uncle’s clothing; old ones will do.”

“I will get what you want.” Virginia left the room, returning a few minutes later, with some clothing. The detective placed the articles in a pail of water, allowing them to become thoroughly wet before he removed them. Next he rolled them into a compact bundle, which he tied securely.

“I am now ready for my experiment. My idea is to go to the bridge and throw that bundle over, as Marvel claims that he did, and then see what becomes of it. I am sorry that I cannot ask him at just what point he did this, but I must do the

best I can, without this knowledge. The probability is, that he tossed the bundle over as soon as he got on the bridge, and with his right hand. Therefore he would have thrown it over on the side nearest the dam. At any rate, that is what I shall do.”

“I see what your idea is, and am anxious to have the experiment tried. Shall we go at once?”

“No. I cannot tell what difference the hour may make on the currents, and, so many days after, they may be totally different. However, I shall go at the same hour as he did. At least it will insure our not being observed. Besides, I wish if possible to see Everly, and I think he will return before eleven o’clock.”

“You will wait till that hour?”

“Yes. You left Marvel at the river and reached your room at 10.30. He came here after that, then went to his own house, and back to the bridge, where he must have arrived at or about 11.30.”

The evening passed slowly, most of the time being consumed by these two in a discussion of the subject which absorbed their minds, until, at about a quarter to eleven, a horse’s hoofs sounded without, and a moment later they were joined by Will Everly.

“Well,” said the detective, “what news?”

“I found Ainsley, and through him, was enabled to see the locket.”

“Very good! What is the inscription?”

“Simply ‘W. M.’ the word ‘to’ does not appear, and the letters are so close together, there is no chance that it ever was there. It occurred to me that it may have been, and have become worn out, but that is impossible.”

As this hope was dispelled, Virginia seemed much disappointed.

“What do you think now, Mr. Barnes?” said she. “This is discouraging, is it not?”

“Do you know if your mother had more than one name?”

“I cannot be certain, but I never heard of any other except ‘Matilda.’”

“Still, she may have had another, and it may have been ‘Winona’ or some other with ‘W.’ for the initial. We must look that up. If the initials are hers, it will answer our purpose as well. Now we will start on the other errand. Mr. Everly, you may come with us if you wish. We are going to try to recover the clothes which Marvel says he threw over the bridge.”

“I should like to go with you, but I doubt if you will succeed. Young Mr. Lewis inaugurated a regular search, and besides I went myself and looked thoroughly, more than once since the inquest. I think I should have made up a bundle for them to find, only I could not supply the locket which he said is in the pocket.”

“No! No! We must not resort to manufacturing any evidence. If Marvel is guilty, he must suffer, but if he is innocent he must be saved. Let us work only for the truth.” So saying he took up the bundle of wet clothing and started. Virginia and Everly followed in silence, neither of them relishing the last speech of the detective, however just they knew it to be. The trio soon reached their destination, and Mr. Barnes stopped at a point near the rail.

“Here,” said he, “if my calculations are correct, is the place from which I think Marvel must have thrown his bundle. I will now explain to you what I expect will happen. I have soaked my bundle, because his was wet. If dry, the clothes would float nearer to the surface of the water, and would soon be hurried over the dam, as the current here is very rapid. But being wet, and therefore more weighty, this bundle will float below the surface, if at all.” His companions listened with much interest. He continued: “I will now commence my experiment. Fortunately the moon is bright and we can see easily. First, I will take a piece of wood.” He looked about, and soon found a large heavy piece of timber near the saw-mill. Approaching the rail he said: “Now I will throw this over, and you will see that it will be carried, first, against the boarding which projects above the level, and then be swept towards the centre, and over.” He let it drop and the result was exactly as he had predicted. “That much was easily foreseen. But my next may not be so accurate, for it is but a surmise on my part. My idea is this. That wood went over readily. But with a bundle of clothing it may be different. If it is first taken against the projecting portion, and then drawn towards the centre, it will go over more slowly than if carried directly. Now, if the weight is sufficient to hold it some distance below the surface, and there are any ragged edges to the wood-work of the dam, the cloth would most likely

catch on them. In that case it would not fall into the stream below, but would remain suspended awhile, finally dropping into the space under the dam. Mr. Everly, you will go around to the other side, so that in case it does go over, you can see where the currents take it.”

Everly at once obeyed, and, receiving the signal that he was in his position, Mr. Barnes dropped his bundle. Virginia scarcely breathed, so great was her anxiety as to the outcome of the trial. As in the first experiment, the bundle, which could just be seen as it floated below the surface, drifted straight to the projecting ridge; thence slowly it went towards the centre, where it remained stationary for a moment. This moment seemed an age to the girl. She almost thought that her lover’s fate depended on that bundle of clothing. At last it moved again, and slid over, partly disappearing, but, as had been predicted, it seemed to catch and remain hanging. Virginia was about to utter an exclamation of joy, when to her dismay it was forced from its slender hold, and carried down into the rapids below. Virginia uttered a groan as she thought the experiment had failed.

“Come, come,” said Mr. Barnes, reassuringly, “what did you expect? Surely not that my bundle would drop on top of the other? That would have been miraculous. You noticed that, as I predicted, it caught on the edge? Perhaps the other dropped below, even though mine did not. I may have tied my parcel tighter than the other, and so have left less chance for the cloth to be caught. Come below, and we will search under the dam. Let us see what Everly will report.”

Virginia accompanied him, but when they reached the spot where Everly had last been seen by them, he was nowhere in sight. His coat and hat, however, were on the bank, and from this the detective concluded, that the young man, in his zeal, had entered the stream in pursuit of the bundle, and Mr. Barnes decided to await his return before proceeding further with his plan. As the minutes passed, however, first Virginia, and then Mr. Barnes himself became alarmed at Everly’s prolonged absence, and he was about to make some search, when a loud shout arrested their attention. It came from the direction of the dam, and Mr. Barnes realized at once that Everly, instead of following the bundle which had just been thrown over, had gone under the dam in search of the original one. A few moments later he was seen emerging from among the timbers which supported the dam, presenting a very wretched and bedraggled appearance. He held a large bundle in his hands, and exclaimed as he came towards them:

“God bless you, Mr. Barnes, you were right! As soon as I saw your bundle catch, I could not wait, but taking off my coat, I went under the dam and searched for what we were after. What is more, I found it not ten feet the other side of where yours would have fallen had it dropped.”

“You have done well, and if this is really the bundle that Marvel threw over, you have repaid your debt to him, and saved his life.”

Virginia and Everly were anxious to open the bundle at once, but the detective would not permit it until they should reach home.

“We might lose the locket here in the road,” said he, “and, besides, Mr. Everly is all wet.” So they were guided by him, and returned to the farm, where the detective insisted on a change of garments for Everly, before he would examine the bundle. When it was opened, Virginia claimed that she recognized the clothes as those worn by Marvel on the night of the murder. Mr. Barnes next searched the pockets of the vest, which Marvel had designated as the garment wherein he had placed the medallion, and withdrawing his hand, laid before the delighted gaze of the others a locket, the exact counterpart of the one found in the hand of the corpse.

Chapter XVI

Mr. Barnes on the Scent

As soon as it was settled, beyond all doubt, that the clothes and locket found under the dam, were the ones on which the fate of Walter Marvel depended, Mr. Barnes was all activity again.

“Now,” said he, speaking rapidly, “there is not a moment to lose. We have saved the innocent, but we must yet find the guilty, and he has a week the start of us. How soon can I get away from this town?”

“A train passes Lee depot at one o’clock. You have three quarters of an hour in which to catch it. My horse and wagon are at your disposal, of course.”

“Thank you, Mr. Everly; you must drive me to the station. Before I go, I will give you some instructions; though, on the whole, all I wish is, that you two will not tell anyone of what we have found, until you hear from me again.”

“But whilst you are gone, must Walter remain in prison?” asked Virginia.

“Yes! It will not hurt him. Neither of you must go to him, for if you do, you might betray what I wish kept secret. Do you promise?”

“But may I not tell Alice that her brother is safe? She is desperately ill, and I fear that she may lose her reason if she does not soon hear that there is no danger threatening Walter.”

Mr. Barnes considered a moment and then said:

“If you find it necessary, you may tell her that your uncle, Mr. Lewis, is not dead.”

“Not dead!” exclaimed his two auditors in a breath.

“Yes, tell her that he is not dead. That will certainly relieve her mind.”

“But how can I explain that, when she knows to the contrary?”

“You must exercise your ingenuity. Tell her that there has been a mistake as to the identity of the corpse, or anything that occurs to your mind, only do not tell her about the finding of this bundle. I do not wish Mr. Burrows to know what I have done, for fear that he may make trouble for me, and perhaps defeat the ends of justice. Now I must be off. Use your judgment, and, above all things, whatever you do tell your sick friend, keep it from getting out. Good-bye! Trust me!”

Mr. Barnes was fortunate in finding trains to meet him as he pursued his way to New York, by a circuitous route. The one which he boarded at Lee, took him as far as Worcester, and thence he went on to Albany, knowing that, from that point, he could easily reach New York. As it was, he arrived in that city before noon on the following day. Leaving the train, he hurriedly proceeded up-town to Washington Heights. Consulting his memorandum book, he turned a few pages, then paused at one which contained the following address:

“John Lewis, Esq.

Care T. Jamison,

Washington Heights, N. Y.

This he had obtained from Burrows, to whom, it will be remembered, had been shown three letters by John Lewis, who claimed that they had been written to him by his father whilst he was at school. Mr. Barnes made inquiries, and very readily found that Mr. Jamison kept a large boarding-school for boys, and that he had done so for the last thirty years. Receiving the correct address, he at once proceeded to the school-house, and was soon in the presence of a pleasant old man.

“Good morning, Mr. Jamison,” began Mr. Barnes, “I am looking for a man who has recently inherited some property, but he cannot be found. He is supposed to be dead, and probably is. The case therefore stands thus: If he had a son, that son would inherit, but if not, the property goes elsewhere. I have heard that he did have a son, who was for some time at your school, and so I have ventured to trouble you, hoping that you might be able to assist me.”

“I am at your service, and if you will give me the name, I will look over my books and see what I can find.”

“The name is John Lewis, and it is about fourteen or fifteen years since the lad was supposed to be here. Moreover, it may help you to remember him, if I tell you that it is further supposed, that he ran away from school and went to sea.”

“I am afraid you have been misinformed,” said the schoolmaster, shaking his venerable head. “Nothing of that kind ever occurred here. I do not recall such a name of a pupil, but I knew a man by that name once, and have good reason to remember him.”

“Will you tell me about it?”

“Certainly! Now let me see! It must have been about the very time that you mention, though I could give you the exact date. A gentleman called here and wished to see the school; he said that he had a son whom he wished to place in a military institution such as this. His name was Lewis. After I had explained our methods to him, he went away, promising to call again. This he did, and, on his second visit, he told me that his son had refused to go to a military academy, and that he had placed him elsewhere. However, he seemed very much interested in the school, and made several suggestions as to improvements. When I explained to him that there were no funds for any such purpose, he generously offered to pay any bills that might be incurred. I protested at first, but he persisted. He even came here himself to superintend the alterations.”

“You say that he lived here a short time?”

“Yes, about a month.”

“Can you tell me whether his mail was received here?”

“Oh, yes! He was a stranger in the city, and had no other address whilst he was here. So of course his letters came to the academy.”

“Whilst he was with you, did his son ever come to visit him?”

“No, I never saw the boy, but he constantly spoke of his son, and if he is the party for whom you are looking, I have no doubt that he has, or had, a son. That seems to be the fact which you wished to substantiate, I believe?”

“Yes, that is all that I wish, except that I would like to find the son. However, as you cannot aid me there, I bid you good morning, and I thank you for your

courtesy.”

Leaving the academy, Mr. Barnes walked as far as the nearest station of the elevated railroad, and went down-town to Grand Street; thence he walked to the office of the Norwich line of steamers. Addressing the clerk he said:

“Do you keep a passenger list?”

“Well, hardly that, in the strict sense of the term. But we keep the names of all who take state-rooms.”

“Can you let me see that list for last Saturday night’s steamer?”

The list was handed to him, and he carefully ran his finger over the column until it rested on the name, “Walter Marvel.” He copied the number of the state-room assigned, and left the dock with a smile of satisfaction. “I think I may have some dinner now,” said he to himself, and he entered a restaurant where he partook of a substantial meal, after which he went to Police Head-quarters, asked for the Inspector, and was at once shown into the private office of that official.

“Good morning, Inspector,” said Mr. Barnes, “I would like to ask whether there has been a report of anyone missing in this city during this week?”

“Why, yes, there has!” The Inspector eyed him keenly. “Mr. Barnes, what do you know?”

“I am working on the Lewis murder case, Inspector. Up in Lee, New Hampshire, you know.”

The Inspector nodded, and Mr. Barnes continued:

“I have left the Pilkingtons, because they permitted another man to interfere with me. If my theory be correct, I must trace a man from this city to Lee.”

“If you have left the Pilkingtons,” said the Inspector, “I will help you. A woman reported here yesterday that her husband has been missing since last Saturday, and that she feared foul play. I put a man on the case, and he has traced him as far as a Sound steamer, so he is probably down your way.”

“Is any name given?”

“Yes, but as you must be in a hurry, take the papers with you. I intrust the whole matter to your judgment.”

Mr. Barnes thanked the Inspector for this mark of confidence, and then left the building. Half an hour later, he was at a fashionable up-town hotel, and had sent his card up to the woman named. In a few minutes more he was in her presence.

“I see by your card that you are a detective,” began the woman, “and I suppose that you have brought me news of my husband?”

“I have found out that he left the city last Saturday night. Did you know of his intention to do so?”

“I did not, but it does not surprise me that he has done so. Where has he gone?”

“I came to see if you can help me on that point. All I know is that he went away on a Sound steamer. Have you any idea of any object which would call him East?”

“Yes, but I may be wrong, and would prefer not to commit myself. I might be betraying what he wishes kept private.”

“Will you answer a few other questions?”

“I will answer all that I think I should.”

“First, then, tell me how long your husband has been in New York.”

“We arrived about two weeks before he disappeared.”

“You say ‘arrived.’ Am I to understand that you came from abroad?”

“Yes. We have been in Europe for many years.”

“Had your husband any special reason for returning to America?”

“Yes. But I cannot explain that to you, further than to say that it is a purpose which for many years he has wished to accomplish.”

“Why then did he delay the matter so long?”

“I must not tell you that.” She colored deeply.

“I do not desire to appear too inquisitive, madam, but if you wish me to accomplish anything, you must give me more information. Tell me this. Do you suppose that it is in pursuance of this purpose that your husband has gone out of the city?”

“I fear so.”

“You fear so! Is there any danger then that he risks?”

The woman bit her lip at this slip, and said: “There might be. I do not know.”

“Has he gone in search of an enemy?”

“I cannot say!” She seemed decidedly uneasy at the questions of the detective. The latter paused a moment considering, and then asked:

“Do you know the name of this man who is your husband’s enemy?”

“I did not say that it is a man, or that my husband has an enemy.”

“You did not, but that is evidently the case. Now, do you happen ever to have heard of John Lewis?”

The woman started up in dismay, and excitedly exclaimed:

“What do you know of that man?”

“Then you admit that you know him?”

“I know who he is, but what is it that you know, and why do you mention his name?”

“I know, madam, that your husband left this city for the East on Saturday night last, and that on the following night John Lewis was murdered!”

“My God! This is terrible!” cried the woman, as she sank into a chair, and covered her face with her hands. Mr. Barnes waited a moment for her to recover from her surprise, and then said:

“I will tell you more. An innocent man has been arrested for the crime, and is in prison.”

“How does all this interest me? Of course it shocked me to hear so suddenly that one whom I knew, has been murdered, but further than that, what is it to me?”

“That is what I am trying to find out. Was Mr. Lewis a friend of yours?”

“A friend? Far from it, “she answered almost fiercely.

“Ah! Then it is not his death that troubles you?”

“Who says that I am troubled?”

“I do, and I think it is because you know, or think that your husband went to that town expressly to kill Lewis!”

“He did nothing of the kind,” she answered, quickly, losing her self-possession in her excitement. “My husband only wanted to recover his child, whom that man had stolen from him!”

“At last we have it!” said Mr. Barnes, with satisfaction. “Your husband then is the father of the girl. In that case you must be her mother, and therefore Lewis’s sister?”

“His sister? Her mother? You are mad!”

“Explain it then!” Mr. Barnes was puzzled.

“I will explain nothing! You have got more out of me now than I should have told.”

“Then I will hunt for your husband, for he must be the man who killed Mr. Lewis. Let me tell you that I have tracked him backwards, from the scene of the crime, to this city. Another detective followed his trail from the murder, but he did not succeed in apprehending him.”

“Then, thank God, he is safe!”

“You are wrong. The other detective failed, but I will not.”

“You dare to tell me this, and want my help?”

“We must think of the innocent!”

“What do I care for the innocent? I do not know them.”

“Let me tell you who they are. There is the girl, the daughter of your husband!”

“Ah! Is she accused?”

“She is thought to be an accessory.”

“Good, I am glad! And the other, who is that? You spoke of a man.”

“The other is thought to be the murderer. It is Walter Marvel!”

“What, young Walter? This is worse than I could have imagined! Well, so be it! I care nothing for him either.”

“Madam, have you no heart? Would you see the innocent suffer for the guilty?”

“The innocent? How do I know who is innocent? You say these people are accused. The authorities must know what they are doing; there must be evidence against them, and most likely they are guilty. Why should I do anything, and what can I do, anyway?”

“All I ask of you is, to give me the information that I wish.”

“What information?”

“Tell me the exact relations which exist between your husband and John Lewis?”

“I will tell you nothing.”

“You are determined?”

“I am! Do your worst!”

“Very well, madam! Perhaps I may yet find a way to make you suffer for your stubbornness.”

“How dare you threaten me? I’ll have you turned out of this hotel!”

“Stop a minute! You forgot that I am a detective. If you ring, I will arrest you.”

“Arrest me? And pray what charge will you make? I am not easily frightened.”

“I will charge you with complicity in the murder of John Lewis!”

“That is farcical. I have been in New York only.”

“You are an accessory before the fact. You knew that your husband went out of the city with a murderous intent. Therefore I think that in this state, under our penal code, you could be indicted as a principal.”

“Curse you, you are a demon!”

Mr. Barnes considered a moment, and then said:

“I have half a mind to arrest you anyway!”

“Do so if you wish! But I will tell you nothing, though I should be kept in prison forever.”

“I haven’t time to wait in the city, or I would try the experiment. As it is, I must be sure that I can get you when I want you.” So saying, Mr. Barnes stepped up to the electric call, and pressed the button. A moment later, a bellboy knocked at the door. Mr. Barnes opened it and said:

“Call a district messenger, and bring me some writing materials!”

“What do you mean to do? asked the woman.

“You shall see.”

In a short time the bellboy returned, and with him, the messenger. Mr. Barnes took a piece of paper, and wrote as follows:

“Send me your best shadow. Important.

“BARNES.”

Placing this in an envelope, he sealed it, and addressed it to the Inspector whom he had seen at Police Head-quarters. Handing it to the messenger he said:

“Deliver that as quickly as possible. Here is an extra quarter for yourself.”

He then sat down, and commenced to read a newspaper. The woman said nothing for a time, but at the end of half an hour, during which the imperturbable detective had not raised his eyes from his paper, she jumped up, walked to the window, and stood looking out. Mr. Barnes may not have seen her move, so little notice did he seem to take. After a few minutes at the window, she went in the direction of the door, but apparently with no special object in view. Suddenly, with the agility of a cat, she made a dart for the knob, and grasped it. Still the detective made no sign. She turned the knob, and gave the door a pull, but it did not open as she had expected, and after a few futile attempts, she turned on Mr. Barnes like a fury:

“How dare you lock my door?”

“Is it locked?”

“Of course it is, and you locked it!”

“You are mistaken!”

“How is it fastened, then?”

“You said it is locked, did you not? I have not examined it.”

“How did it get locked?”

“Since you are so anxious to know, I will be more amiable than you, and tell you. I asked the bellboy to turn the key on the outside.”

“Why did you do that?”

“I did not wish to lose your pleasant company, until the arrival of my friend, for whom I have sent. Ah! There’s his knock.” Going to the door he said: “Turn the key and come in.”

The lock shot back and a man entered. Addressing Mr. Barnes, he said:

“I am No. 56.”

“A shadow?”

“A shadow.”

“What is the meaning of this impertinence?” said the woman, in a rage. But neither of the men appeared to notice her. Mr. Barnes continued:

“Look at this woman well. I will expect you to know where she is when I ask you for her, do you understand?”

“I do.”

“Good-morning.” No. 56 left the apartment.

“Now perhaps you will explain what this means?”

“I was about to do so. Understand that if you make any attempt to leave the city, that man will prevent it. You may change boarding-places, as often as you please, but remain in the city! That is all! Good-morning.” Before she could say a word he had gone.

Mr. Barnes went directly to the Grand Central railroad depot, and started for Lee, where he arrived early on the following morning. Reaching the farm, he found Virginia in the parlor. She advanced to meet him with a cordial greeting.

“I am so relieved to see you back again. What news have you?”

“I have discovered the murderer.”

“You have? Who is he? Tell me at once!”

“It is the man who has passed as your cousin!”

“My uncle’s son?”

“No, not your uncle’s son, though that is what he called himself. I must find him at once! Where is he?”

“He has gone.”

“Gone! Gone where? I will follow him to the end of the earth. He shall not escape me. Where has he gone?”

“We do not know. I told you, when I last saw you, that he would pass the night at the Squire’s, but it seems that he must have retired to his room, after the funeral, for he was here at breakfast.”

“Well? Go on! Go on!” The detective was impatient.

“After breakfast, he again went to his room. We saw nothing more of him until dinner-time. Then I went in to call him, but he was not there. He has not been seen since.”

“Perhaps he went to the Squire’s?”

“I went over to see Alice this morning, and learned that no one had seen him since the funeral.”

“Too late! Too late, after all my trouble!” moaned the detective. He leaned his head on his hands and seemed almost about to weep. Virginia did not know what to say to him, so thinking it best to leave him to himself, she noiselessly left the room. Mr. Barnes remained in one position for fully ten minutes, but suddenly he jumped up, and seemed all animation again.

“Miss Lewis! Miss Lewis!” he cried, in great excitement. At the sound of his voice Virginia came hurrying in, and was astonished at the change in his demeanor.

“Miss Lewis,” said he, speaking rapidly, “you say that he went to his room and has not been seen since?”

“Yes, he must have come out—”

“Never mind that! Tell me, is it the same room which he occupied when he slept here on the night after the murder?”

“Yes! Thinking that he was my uncle’s son, I gave him my uncle’s room.”

“Your uncle’s room? Of course! It is as clear as day. During that first night, Burrows heard mysterious noises. He came down into this man’s room, and

found it empty. Burrows sat by his door all night, to ask him where he had been, and, although he did not pass him, nevertheless in the morning the man was in the room. Do you understand?”

“Not clearly!”

“It is very simple! There is a secret apartment in this house, and the murderer is at this moment concealed in it.”

“A secret room! It is impossible!”

“Anything else is impossible, you mean.. This is not the day of miracles, and a man cannot disappear, in this way, in broad daylight.”

“But how will you find it, if it exists?”

“It will be easy enough to find it, if we know that it is in existence. In the first place, there must be a way to enter it from that room in which your uncle slept. Come, we will go there first.”

Together they went to the room, and Mr. Barnes looked about for some sign that would guide him aright. After reasoning for a moment, as Burrows had done at the Epping house, he said:

“I have it. I will go straight to it. Burrows heard this man in the secret apartment, and Burrows was upstairs, so I am sure that the place of which we are in search is above. Now what is its exact location? It must be accessible to this room, and yet the room which Burrows occupied is as large as this. Now observe that the closet, in the corner, projects out into the hall. In your room there is a similar closet. On this floor, in the hall, between these two projections for the closets, is the little passage leading from the main hall into the dining-room. I have noticed that upstairs, there are no closets, and of course no such passage-way. Therefore, the space occupied by them below indicates where the secret room is to be found on the next floor.”

“But how shall we get in?”

“I think it will be difficult for you to do so, for I expect that the entrance is through the ceiling of the closet in this room. I will now look.”

Mr. Barnes opened the closet door, and then started back, as he saw the great mastiff lying on the floor within. The dog arose and went up to Virginia, whining pitifully. Then he went back into the closet, raised himself upon his hind legs, rested his forepaws against the wall of the closet, and with head upturned, howled in a horribly suggestive manner.

“Do you see,” said Mr. Barnes, “the brute knows that there is something wrong up there.” Virginia coaxed the dog away from the closet, and the detective stood on a chair and examined the ceiling. In a moment he announced:

“I have it. Here is the trap-door.” A minute later he had drawn himself up through the aperture and disappeared. Very soon, however, he returned; and, as he dropped to the floor, he said:

“He is up there—dead! Suicide, I suspect. You must go at once for the Squire. Pardon my not doing so, but I have a reason for wishing to remain with the body until it be turned over to the coroner.”

Virginia gladly hurried away upon an errand which she knew promised the speedy release of her lover.

Chapter XVII

The Confession

As soon as Virginia had departed, Mr. Barnes re-entered the secret chamber, passing, as before, through the ceiling of the closet.

His first endeavor was to learn how this man had taken his life. This was not difficult. A small charcoal furnace, and the strong odor of gas permeating the place for some time after he had opened the skylight, which was the only means of ventilation and light, plainly suggested suicide. This point being settled, he examined the other things lying about. These were necessarily few, as the place was very small. The only articles of furniture, were a table and a chair, unless account be taken of a small closet nailed against the wall, in which was a stock of provisions. He also found a suit of clothes. Mr. Barnes pondered over this for a few minutes, and then the idea occurred to him, that it was to bring these, the garments which Lewis had worn on the night of the crime, and for which, it will be remembered, Burrows had searched in vain, that the man had entered the secret room on the night when Burrows was disturbed by his movements. It will also be recalled to mind that the younger detective had a theory which would, in a measure, be substantiated if these were found to be perforated by a bullet, as that would tend to show that the deceased had been shot, that he had then undressed and retired to his bed, to be afterwards awakened and killed by a second shot. Mr. Barnes examined these articles with interest. If there were any bullet-hole it would not fit his own theory of the case. 'It was therefore with much satisfaction that he soon determined that there was none. Next he turned over the papers with which the table was littered, and soon an ejaculation of surprise and pleasure attested the fact that he had made an important discovery. He held in his hand a bundle of manuscript bearing the ominous heading:

“_My Confession,” *followed by the words:* “for Mr. Barnes, should he find this first.”_

With impatience and curiosity Mr. Barnes sat on the one chair, and read the following, occasionally emitting a grunt of satisfaction as point after point in the mystery was explained, and all fitted in with his own theory of the crime. The confession is here given verbatim;

“After years of preparation I find that my plans have miscarried. However, I am a Fatalist, and therefore bow to the inevitable. I have been bitterly wronged, but in some degree I have had a revenge. Now I am forced by the immutable laws of circumstance to choose between my own miserable life, and that of her whom I love most dearly, and I do not hesitate to sacrifice myself that she may live and be happy, even though it be in the arms of a man whom I should like to grind beneath my heel. Yet what has he done to me? Nothing! He is one of the same family as the villain who wrecked and destroyed the life of my dearly beloved sister. Beyond that there is nothing. Strange, that mother and daughter should both love the same name! It is the finger of Fate, and yet there are many who scoff at the idea of predestination. But as I wish to be understood by the one who may find this paper, and that one I am confident will be Mr. Barnes, I must be more explicit. Therefore it will be as well to give a detailed account of the sequence of strange events in my life.

“At the outset, let me say that my name is John Lewis. But, as that is also the name under which I have passed since the tragedy of Sunday night, I will add that I am the man who is supposed to be dead. The corpse is that of Walter Marvel, the uncle of the young man at present accused of my murder. I will now go back to my youth, and relate the events in the order of their occurrence.

“I was born in Richmond, Virginia, and my family was aristocratic. Of course, when the Civil War began, our sympathies were all with the Secessionists. My father entered the Confederate service, and soon, by his gallantry, won distinction, being advanced several times on the field, until at length he had reached the position of colonel. It was during his absence with his regiment, that, in the latter part of ‘63 some prisoners of war were brought into Richmond. Some of these were wounded and sent to the hospitals. It is a curious fact that however eager men may be, in battle, to destroy each other, after the fight is over they appear to be just as anxious to save the lives of those who may yet have a lingering spark within their veins.

“My sister, together with many other noble women, gave her entire time to the nursing of the wounded, and so spent all her days among the soldiers in the hospitals. Thus, when these prisoners of war were brought in, and the sufferers placed in the kind care of these women, my sister met and nursed many of them. Among the number was Walter Marvel, an officer in the Union army. At once she was attracted to him. How, or why, let those explain who disbelieve in Fate, for he was neither handsome, nor pleasant, either in countenance or manners.

Besides, he was the avowed enemy of all that we held to be our sacred right, and for which our young men were pouring out their life's blood on many fields. She was one of the fairest daughters of the South, and it was not surprising that Marvel soon found himself fascinated by her charms. After a time, he recovered sufficiently to be removed from the hospital, and, in the natural order of events, would have been taken to prison, but for the interest which my sister evinced in him. Naturally she possessed much influence with the officers, and she represented to them that, though well enough to leave the hospital, he was still so weak, that if confined in a cell he would probably not survive. Thus she succeeded in having him paroled. So there was opportunity for them to meet and exchange loving vows, although they conducted matters so adroitly that I, who was present all the time in the home, never suspected the true state of affairs.

“At last came the end of the war, and, stricken at heart by the outcome thereof, my father returned home. Moreover, he had been severely wounded, and his wound not having received proper attention, had never thoroughly healed. Great care was necessary to insure it's not giving more trouble. Meanwhile, it subsequently transpired, that during the latter part of '64, Marvel had lured my sister into a secret marriage, a pitfall into which so many innocent and inexperienced women fall, forgetting that their parents have their interests at heart, and therefore are entitled, at least, to advise about so important a step. She would have confessed to my father 911 his arrival, were it not for his weakened physical condition, and the danger which any great excitement might entail.

“So time passed until, at length, it became imperative that she should make the disclosure. She was just about to confide her story to my father, when unfortunately he discovered it himself. He questioned her, and was at first relieved to hear that at least she was a married woman, but when he learned that her husband was a detested 'Yankee,' his rage was simply terrific. He stormed and raged until his strength was exhausted, and he fell to the floor in a swoon. My sister screamed for help, and the servants rushed in and picked up their master. They bore him up to his own chamber and laid him on his bed, but an ominous train of blood marked their progress from the room below, and when, in response to a hasty summons, the doctor arrived, he found that the wound had opened and was bleeding dangerously. Other surgeons were summoned, and after great difficulty the flow was stopped; but the loss of blood in his already weakened condition left him scarcely any strength. Besides, his mental trouble, occasioned by the news which he had that day heard, made his condition critical indeed.

“When the doctors had made him as comfortable as they could, and there was a moment to spare to other considerations, I thought of my sister and sought for her, but one of the servants informed me that she had left the house. I suspected at once that she had gone to her husband, and knowing where he resided, I hurried thither. I rushed into the house, and was horrified to find the apparently lifeless body of my sister stretched on the parlor floor. Assistance was summoned, and as soon as it was safe to do so, she was removed to our own home. It was not until months after, that I learned the events which led up to this last catastrophe. It seems that she had, as I had supposed, sought for the villain who should have been ready and anxious to care for her. When he heard that her father had refused to acknowledge the marriage, he coolly told her that, in that case, it would be best to part. That he ‘would not separate a girl from her father,’ and other things equally as heartless. Then he left her.

“It was not surprising that my sister’s little girl should have been prematurely hurried into the world by these exciting scenes. Afterwards the mother improved slowly, but surely, day by day. With my father it was different. For months, he lay between life and death. When my sister had sufficiently recovered her own health, she divided her time between her baby and her father, and her experience as a nurse now became invaluable. At last there came a change, and one morning my father awoke, apparently better.

“Matilda, my sister, was at the moment having her breakfast, and was out of the room, I taking her place for the time. Father spoke to me, asking me to relate all that had occurred. I tried to answer evasively, but he immediately showed signs of excitement, insisting on a reply to his inquiries. Under the circumstances I deemed it best to tell him the truth. He listened without comment, until I told how her husband had deserted her, at which he gritted his teeth as he muttered ‘the villain.’ When I told him of the little stranger in the house his expression softened, and he asked me to send my sister to him. As I left the room to obey he said:

“‘Tell her to bring little Virginia with her.’

“I must say here that as yet no name had been chosen for the baby; but Virginia is our native State, and as father called the little one by that name, Matilda would never call her by any other name, in the years that came after.

“The interview between my father and Matilda was touching in the extreme. She

avowed her contrition for the deception which she had practised, while he asked forgiveness for his harshness.

“‘To think,’ said he, ‘that I should have endangered the life of this dear little blessing!’ and stretching out his arms, he took her child and kissed it, whereupon my sister dropped upon her knees, buried her face in the bed-clothing, and wept like a child. My father soothed her, and deeming it best I slipped from the room, leaving them alone.

“‘After that these three were inseparable and seemed as happy as could be; so much so, indeed, that we were all lulled into the belief that my father was getting well. All except my father himself. He said nothing, but, when the end approached, declared that he had expected it all along. When it was clearly evident that he would soon die, he called me to him one day, and taking me by the hand, he said: “‘John, my son, you have always been a good boy, and I wish you a long and prosperous life. Yet I desire to do something that may seem unjust to you. I hope you may be able to see it as I do. I should die happier!’

“‘Do not speak of dying, father,’ I cried in a choked voice. ‘What is it you wish? I will accede to it cheerfully.’

“‘That is my brave boy,’ said he, with a smile, and then he paused a while. As last he continued: ‘John, I wish to make a change in my will. As it stands, my property would be divided equally between you and Matilda. I wish to alter it so that each of you will have one third. The balance must be invested so that the little one will have something when she is of age. I will arrange so that in case of her death her share must go to her mother, and in the event of the mother’s death that portion must be similarly invested for the little one. I wish you to be the executor. Will you do this for me, my boy?’ I nodded acquiescence, and he went on:

“‘This is just, John! You will soon be a man, and can care for yourself. Matilda is a woman. By a mistake, she has wrecked her chance of winning a worthy protector, and so I must arrange that she and her child shall not come to want.’ I assured him that he was only acting as I should wish, and he seemed to be more contented. The lawyers were summoned, and all was arranged as he directed. A few days later, whilst he was clasped in his daughter’s arms, his spirit passed away.

“I will not prolong my tale in order to give a complete narrative of all that passed, but will simply confine myself to those events most closely connected with this recent tragedy.

“The months rolled by, and never was a word said about the man who had caused all our trouble. Matilda seemed to lavish her whole wealth of love upon her little girl, and as Virgie grew, I cherished the hope that the wound in her mother’s heart was healing. How little does a man understand what a woman means when she says that she gives him her heart. Despite all the outward appearances, I was yet to find that Matilda still thought of, and longed for, her husband.

“One morning, when Virgie was about five years old, I was sitting at my breakfast, and Matilda, who had already eaten, was amusing herself with the morning’s paper, when a sudden exclamation from her attracted my attention. I anxiously asked what it was, and she handed me the paper, pointing to the following paragraph:

“‘We are gratified to see that the Government is recognizing the services rendered by our soldiers in the late war. Especially is it pleasant for us to record, that Lieutenant Walter Marvel has been appointed to a diplomatic mission abroad. This gentleman, by his heroism on the field, has demonstrated the sterling qualities of which he is made, and doubtless will fill his new position with honor to himself and to his country. He will leave for Paris this week. It may not be amiss to mention the rumor, that the gallant officer will take a bride with him.’

“I was much troubled at this, and scarcely knew what to say, for I could not guess how it would affect my sister. However, she spoke first.

“‘John, my brother, will you take me to him?’ To say that I was amazed at this request would but mildly express it.

“‘Take you to him?’ said I, ‘after all that has happened?’

“‘He is Virgie’s father, John! You forget that!’

“‘Evidently he does also.’

“‘He does not even know that he has a child. John, I have thought of this

constantly, and it is not right that I should keep him in ignorance, as I have done all these years.'

"Why, Mattie, what are you saying? What claim can he have on you, after the cowardly manner in which he abandoned you?"

"Hush! You must not think and speak thus of my husband. If I have suffered, do you not think he has also? He did not abandon me. He saw what was my plain duty, and had the courage to show it to me. I, in my selfishness, would have left my father for him, but he knew that it was my duty to remain at home, and therefore he went. That is the simple truth.' I was almost speechless, so great was my surprise at her defence of him, but I made one more effort.

"But has he not forgotten you, is he not about to marry again?"

"Stop, John! You do not know what you are saying. Do you think that I believe for a moment what a newspaper says, when I know my husband as I do? I should have little faith, indeed! John, I must see him before he goes away! If you will not accompany me, I must go alone!"

"I was amazed, but what could I do? She was determined, and I could not allow her to go alone. So she easily induced me to promise to go with her. Preparations were rapidly arranged for the journey to New York, but all of our plans, at the last minute, were upset by the sudden illness of the little girl. Believing, as I do, in Fate, I looked upon this as a sign that we should abandon the idea of seeking out the father. I could not, however, make my sister see it so, and though the steamer had sailed long before Virgie was well enough to travel, she insisted on joining her husband, even though it entailed the necessity of crossing the ocean. She anticipated a happy reunion with her husband, and a future life of happiness and love. As I saw her looking brighter and brighter, day by day, even in the anticipation, much as I detested the man I could not find it in my heart to thwart her. She was so sure of the joyous welcome with which she would be received, that she had the child's portrait painted, and placed in a locket. In fact she had two made, one for herself, and one which she intended to send to her husband, on her arrival in Paris. This last was the counterpart of the other, save that she had his name, or rather his initials, engraved on the gold case.

"To shorten my narrative as much as possible, that I may surely finish it before I am discovered here in my retreat, I will at once come to our arrival in Paris. It

was with little difficulty that I learned of Marvel's whereabouts, for his official duties made him a man of some note. My sister wrote a most affectionate letter, telling him all that had passed since he had left her, and of the birth of the child; with it she inclosed the locket and portrait. This was forwarded, and she waited impatiently for him to hasten to her side. But the days passed and no word came. She made every excuse for him, urging that his new duties must detain him, and making other similar pleas in his behalf. Meanwhile, I instinctively knew that he was but a heartless villain, and I never expected him to behave towards his wife as a man should. At length, even Matilda commenced to doubt, until the thought entered her brain that perhaps her letter had never reached him. Then she determined to seek him in person. I endeavored to dissuade her from this project, but it was impossible to detain her, and so I went with her to his hotel. We asked to see him, and were shown into a private parlor connected with his suite. There we were allowed to wait but a few moments, and then were joined by a tall, handsome woman, who inquired why we had called. We said we wished to see Marvel in person, to which she replied:

“He is engaged at present, but I am his wife.’

“What!” exclaimed my sister, ‘His wife? Woman, you are mad! I am his wife!’

The other did not so much as start, but coolly replied:

“Oh! I see! You must be that little rebel that he met down in Richmond. I have heard all about that affair. He told it to me before we were married.’ (Here Mr. Barnes uttered a particularly loud grunt of satisfaction.) ‘So you have come to claim him, now that he is somebody of consequence! Quite romantic, I declare! But it won't do, you know. He never will acknowledge you!’

“You forget yourself, madam!’ said I. ‘By your own words you have admitted my sister's claim as this man's wife, and therefore must see that you are not his wife at all!’

“Oh! Indeed? How pleasant of you to come and tell me! But I tell you it will not do! He will not be bound by such a marriage as your sister tricked him into, when he was a prisoner.’

“I thought it best to take my sister away, but she would not stir.

“I will not go,’ said she, ‘until I have seen him!’

“‘Oh! Very well, if you insist! Though it is useless, I assure you.’ The woman turned and left the room. A moment later Marvel entered.

“‘Well, madam,’ he began, addressing my sister, ‘what can I do for you?’

“‘Walter—”

“‘Excuse me, but you may spare yourself. I have heard from my wife the object of your call, and, besides, I received your letter and so am aware of all the circumstances. I regret the whole affair, I assure you, and since there is a child, which you say is mine, why of course anything that I can do in a pecuniary way to relieve your wants I would be most willing—’

“‘You villain!’ I began, and was about to grasp him by the throat to strangle him, when my sister caught me by the arm, and with more calmness than I could have expected, she said:

“‘No, not that way! He must suffer as I shall. I must be avenged, but death is too tame for my wishes!’ With these words she hastened from the room. Hardly knowing what to do, I followed. We entered the carriage which awaited us, and were borne to our hotel, Matilda keeping silent during the trip. As soon, however, as we were in our parlor, she said:

“‘John, go at once for a lawyer!’ I immediately divined her intention and went out, only too glad that, at last, this fiend was to have his deserts.

“It will suffice here to state that we readily had Marvel arrested and tried. For, however lax the Parisians may be in morals, bigamy is a crime there, as elsewhere, and with but little trouble we secured his conviction. His appointment to his foreign mission had hastened his going abroad, but the newspaper had made a mistake in saying that he would take a wife with him. He had been engaged to marry this woman, but she and her parents had been spending some months in Paris, and their wedding had taken place there, only a short time prior to our arrival. Thus the crime had been committed on French soil, and was punishable there. My sister maintained her strength, and appeared at the trial to testify against Marvel, a circumstance which greatly assisted in securing his conviction; but immediately after, she became quite ill, and died before I returned to America. Thus ends the sad history of my sister and her wrongs. Now, about myself.

“At the trial, when Marvel was sentenced to the full penalty of the law, he started up, and uttered the most horrible invectives against my sister. Then turning to me, he said:

“‘As for you, you infernal rebel, you are the one who have hounded me down, and I warn you that when I get out of this trouble, wherever you may hide away, I will find you, and I will kill you, so help me God!’ It was terrible to hear him, and as he spoke, I knew that if ever he should have the chance, he would execute his threat.

“It was the certainty of this which instigated me in my subsequent course. I concluded that when we should meet, one of us must die; and I felt that common justice made it but right that he should be the one. Not satisfied with hastening the death of my father and my sister, he must also threaten my life! So I made my plans. If he should come with murderous intent, I would be ready, and if he did not, no harm could accrue.

“I foresaw that some shrewd detective would discover that this man had crossed the ocean to commit a crime, and I determined to let it appear that he had succeeded. I would kill him, dress him in my clothing, and let it seem that I was the murdered man. But as I must further be able to account for my own presence, I plotted to reappear as my own son. To this end, I visited an academy on Washington Heights, and spoke of placing my son there, though I afterwards informed the schoolmaster that I had sent him elsewhere. However, I interested myself in his institution, and offered to make some needed repairs. Then I spent some time at the school, and whilst there, I wrote to parties out of town, enclosing self-addressed envelopes for their replies. These were, in due time, returned to me properly post-marked, and it was an easy matter for me to write fictitious letters, as though to my son, and place them in these covers. These, when the time should come, would be proof enough of my identity, and as I knew that years would pass before I could use them, I concluded that no one would doubt that they were genuine.

“Next, I allowed my beard to grow to its full length, that being the style in which Marvel always wore his. I knew that his would be shaved as long as he remained in prison, but I thought that he would allow his beard to grow again as soon as he should regain his liberty, as it hid a scar from a wound that would otherwise greatly disfigure him. Then I dyed my whiskers, eyebrows, and hair black, in imitation of his, my own being quite red. I had no relatives, and absolutely no

friends nor acquaintances in the North, and I determined not to revisit Richmond. Consequently I had all my Southern property converted into cash and forwarded to me. I then looked about for a suitable place to live, and selected Lee.

“I did nothing more in furtherance of my plans, except to speak to all of my new friends of the son who had left me and had run away. I was quite young at this time, but nineteen in fact, although I was fully matured, and looked much older.

“The years rolled by, and nothing occurred to disturb the serenity of our home in this little New England town, except that the Marvel family came here to reside. This I considered another fatality, and for that reason I did not move away.

“At last came the birthday which would make it necessary for me to explain more to Virgie than I had ever yet done. After dinner, I was listening to Squire Olney, but at the same time I was moodily thinking over the past, with its terrible memories, when young Marvel asked to speak to me. I was then startled to hear him, another Walter Marvel, declare that he had won the heart of my little girl. Was it surprising that I should act as I did, and deny his suit? Or, that in my anger I should blurt out a part of the truth? The events which followed are too well known to need iteration here. So I will come at once to the night of the murder.

“I was sitting in the parlor, pondering bitterly over my position. I had begun to realize the fact that if I should pursue the course which I had begun, and should prosecute Marvel, it must be at the cost to myself of Virgie’s love. I was debating as to the most sensible course to adopt when, suddenly, I heard a pistol-shot, and a bullet broke through the pane. I jumped up, hurried to the window, and distinctly saw a man grappling with my dog. The snow had ceased to fall, and there was light from the moon, which was visible through the clouds as they broke away. I thought this was young Marvel, and that he had deliberately fired through my window, in pursuance of the threat made on the day of the party. I had seen Virgie pass through the parlor and leave her pistol on the mantel, so, quickly possessing myself of it, I fired at the retreating figure. At the same moment, a second shot was fired, this time at me, for it struck me on the head, though it inflicted but a slight wound.

“I learned at the inquest that these shots were fired respectively by Lucas and Miss Marvel; the first accidentally and the second deliberately, though at the

time I did not see whence the latter came, and supposed that it was from the man's weapon.

"A very few minutes after this, I heard the knocker at my front door. Thinking that it might be young Marvel still desirous of injuring me, I concluded to go prepared, and took a weapon in my hand. I did not again take Virgie's, for I had time to think before acting, and as I was possibly about to take a life, it occurred to me, that it would not do to use Virgie's pistol, because it has her name on it. At the same moment it flashed across my mind, that young Marvel's also bore his name, and that it was in my possession. I took it from the drawer where I kept it, and went to the front door, where the man outside was again knocking. I opened it and a bearded man entered. When I saw that it was not young Marvel, I led the way back to the parlor. Reaching there, I faced the man and inquired his name.

"'Walter Marvel!' he replied. 'And your day of reckoning has arrived.' For a moment I was dazed, and I did not think of, or remember, that there were two who bore this name.

"'That is impossible!' I exclaimed. 'I do not recognize you.'

"'You will in a moment,' he answered, and put his hand to his hip-pocket. Immediately I understood! This was the elder Marvel, and the time had come for him to take my life, or for me to take his.

"I was certain that he was at that moment getting out a weapon, though as it proved later it must have been that as evidence of his identity, he meant to show me the locket which my sister had sent to him. I think that he wished to know where his daughter was, before going to extremities. Be that as it may, I thought that he was about to raise his hand against my life, and so, having a pistol already in my hand, I shot him, and he died almost without a struggle.

"I at once proceeded to carry out my long prepared plan. I stripped the body, cutting the garments away, with the exception of the long coat which, with much difficulty, I succeeded in removing without destroying, as I decided to wear it away from the house. There was not a moment's delay, for I had long been ready for this emergency, and so acted promptly. I got one of my own shirts, making sure that it was marked with my name, and slipping this on him, made it appear that I had been aroused after going to sleep. Next I arranged the shirt so that it

touched the wound and allowed some of the blood to soak through. This served as a mark, and I fired at it, in order that there should be a bullet-hole through the garment, and near enough to the other, for both shots to have entered the same spot. I suppose that my hand trembled somewhat, and that is why, as the doctor testified, this was but a slight wound, and the bullet passed out again. It can be found in the floor, of course, if it be deemed necessary to substantiate my statement in that way.

“Next, to make the identification complete, I placed upon the finger of the corpse the large diamond ring which I had always worn, and which is well known. This was again fatality, for this is a ring which he gave to my sister when he engaged her affections. It was with some difficulty that I got the ring on, for his finger was much larger than mine.” (Again Mr. Barnes uttered an ejaculation, and thought to himself: “Exactly, and it was so small a thing as that which led me finally to suspect the truth. If the finger could not swell after death, as the doctor claims to be the fact, then the ring should not have been so tight.”) “I then built up a roaring fire and held the head of the dead man in it long enough to scorch and disfigure him beyond recognition. I then laid him down near the hearth so that it would appear that he had dropped there, and had been burned afterwards. Next I hurriedly wrote the slips of paper found by Virgie and the detectives, through which I meant to point to young Marvel as the murderer, forgetting that science would prove that death had been instantaneous, and therefore that the victim had not had time to make such an accusation.

“When I first bought this house, foreseeing the necessity for this crime, I caused this secret room to be constructed, to do which, it was only necessary to close up the closets which originally opened into the adjoining rooms. Here I had everything that I would need in this emergency, and therefore came to this room and quickly shaved off my beard. Then I washed out my hair and eyebrows, using a liquid which I kept specially for this. Thus they were restored to their natural red color, and would easily prevent my identification. Any resemblance in face or voice, I hoped would be accepted as a natural inheritance of a son from his father. I left my own clothing in my sleeping-room to give color to the theory that I had retired. The dead man’s effects I packed in a satchel, except his overcoat, which I slipped on over the sailor’s suit which I had adopted. I easily caught the train, which passes Lee depot at 10.39, and thus it will be seen that the crime occurred whilst Virgie and young Marvel were together across the river. I left the train at Epping. Here Fate favored me, for a hotel man gave me a lift in his wagon, and claimed that he recognized me as young Marvel. So I

admitted that he had guessed my name. Leaving him, I went to the old house belonging to Marvel, and here I burned the articles that I had in the satchel, among which there must have been some wire, which Burrows afterwards, to strengthen his theory, erroneously claimed was a part of a set of false whiskers. Next I hid the pistol, and the piece of plate which had my name engraved on it, and which I broke from the satchel. In rearranging the stones, I did so in such a clumsy way, that anyone would discover what was hidden beneath.

“It was now but half-past eleven, and thinking there was sufficient time before me, I threw myself on the bed and tried to sleep. I had not been there, more than two or three hours, however, when I heard someone enter the house. I started up, and sprung to the window. The boughs of a huge elm were quite near, and I easily stepped into the tree. Here I remained, hidden by the dense foliage, for, despite the danger, I could not resist the curiosity to know who it was that was in the house. In a very few moments a light appeared, and I clearly saw that it was young Walter Marvel himself. Everything seemed to favor my plot. Waiting until his light was extinguished again, and until I could slip out of the tree without attracting his attention, I stole silently away. I walked to New Market Junction, where I boarded the early morning train for New Market, for, though I could easily have continued on to that place on foot, I wished to give color to the story which I intended to tell, of having come from Portsmouth, by being seen to leave the proper train. During this short ride, the conductor pointed out to me two men, and told me that they were detectives. It was these same two whom I afterwards recognized at the saloon, when the Squire informed me that he was taking detectives to my house. I was startled, not unnaturally, to learn that experienced men would be on the scene of the crime so early, and in my agitation I almost betrayed myself, as I know, because Burrows questioned me afterwards.

“Another unexpected event, was when my dog recognized me at the house, and plainly showed his friendship. Strange as it may seem, this possibility, obvious as it should have been, had not even occurred to me. A man who commits a crime always overlooks something. I was so taken by surprise, that I scarcely knew what to do, for the animal is so savage, that it would of course look strange to the Squire to see him fawn upon a stranger. However, I made a lame attempt at explanation, but poor as it was, it served to lull suspicion.

“That night, as Fate would have it, I was assigned to my own room, and, thinking over the whole affair, it suddenly occurred to me that a _post-mortem_ would reveal the fact that one wound had caused instantaneous death, and for all

that I could tell at that time, the other might be of the same character. However, I saw at a glance that the only way to explain the presence of the paper which I had written, would be by supposing one wound to have been made by either of the shots which had been fired from the lawn. In that event, the position of the wound on the body would lead the detectives to search for the corresponding hole through my clothing. I therefore determined to secrete these garments in this apartment, and to let their disappearance be a part of the mystery.

“Everything went as I had planned, except that the paper fell into the hands of Virgie, and led her to believe in young Marvel’s guilt. Thus, in her efforts to save him, she herself became entangled in the affair, and even accused herself of the crime. To prevent the consequences of this I led Mr. Barnes to where he would find the evidence which I had manufactured against young Marvel. I wished to remain behind, to search for the bundle which he claimed to have thrown into the river, and I would have destroyed it if I had found it. But the shrewd detective would not allow me to leave him. When we reached Epping, we found Burrows ahead of us. He had ferreted out all that I wished to be discovered. I congratulated myself that all would yet be well, when Mr. Barnes at once demonstrated the fact that Marvel could prove an *alibi*, or else that Virgie must be considered an accomplice.

“Thus I have no recourse but to die. The truth must be known, that the innocent may not suffer. It is hard that what I have so long and earnestly guarded, should at last be revealed. I have been a victim of circumstances, rather than a criminal, and it seems unjust. I suppose I should not have raised my hand against my fellow-man, and though it was, as I thought, in self-defence, still it is true that I had long premeditated the killing; and so I bow my head to the stroke of Fate. The one pang that I suffer is, that after all these years, my niece must learn what a villain her father was, and that her uncle is a murderer and a suicide.

“I am confident that Mr. Barnes suspects the truth, and that his skill will place him in a position to unravel the mystery. Should he be the one, as I think likely, to discover my dead body, and this writing, it is the last prayer of a doomed man that if his fertile brain can invent a tale, whereby Virgie could be kept in ignorance of my sin, he will exert himself to that end. If not, I humbly pray that Virgie will pardon me for the misery which I have caused her; that she may enjoy long years of happiness, and that, in time, she may come to think of me as one who loved her dearly, and who now cheerfully sacrifices his life to insure her safety. And now, God’s will be done, and may He have mercy on my soul!”

“Amen!” exclaimed Mr. Barnes.

Chapter XVIII

Detective Barnes Surprises Detective Burrows

“Anoble man destroyed by a cruel chain of circumstances,” thought Mr. Barnes, as he concluded the perusal of the tale. He then leaned his elbow on the table, and, with his mouth partly open, beat a tattoo upon his teeth with his finger ends, a habit of his when lost in thought, and intent upon some knotty problem. He sat thus for more than a quarter of an hour, and then muttered:

“I have it. That man’s secret shall be preserved!”

Carefully placing the document in his pocket, he then gathered up all the writing materials that lay on the table, his idea being to prevent anyone from entertaining the suspicion that the dead man had left any tell-tale writing behind him. Satisfied that this was accomplished, he descended to the room below, and awaited the arrival of the Squire, who, in due time, came with Virginia, accompanied also by Burrows and Dr. Snow.

“Ah! Mr. Barnes,” said the Squire, “Virgie tells me that you have solved the mystery of this murder?”

“Yes, sir! Chance has favored me, and I am glad that I have succeeded in saving the accused, without the necessity of a trial.”

“Are you sure you can do that?” asked Burrows.

“Oh, yes! I could demand Marvel’s discharge, even though I had not discovered the real murderer; for I have the disguise which he threw into the river, and in the pocket of the vest I found the locket which he said would be there.”

Burrows was astounded, but was unwilling to give up his pet theory without a struggle.

“How do you account for the initials of the accused being on the locket found in the dead man’s hands?”

“They also appear on the one which I found in the vest and which I have here.

You may examine it, and you will observe that it is the *facsimile* of the other. Thus it is plain that there were originally two, and I presume that, by a coincidence, these are the initials also of Miss Lewis's mother. She is not certain, as she only knows one of the names, 'Matilda.' The other must have begun with 'W.' "

Mr. Barnes knew better than this, but he had decided to suppress the truth, and therefore he accounted for this point as best he could. He then related the means by which he had recovered the bundle, and Burrows, at the conclusion of his tale, exclaimed:

"Well, Mr. Barnes, you have entirely overturned my theory, and the only satisfaction left to me is, that the innocent will not be made to suffer through me."

"Mr. Barnes," said the Squire, "you have not told us yet who the murderer is, and how you discovered him."

"It is very simple. By an unaccountable prejudice, I suspected that this man was not what he claimed to be. You recall his story of having been at school in New York? I repaired thither, and learned that no such boy had ever been there. Mr. Lewis, it seems, made a present to the academy years ago, and this man must have found some of the letters which Mr. Lewis received whilst stopping there, and, using the envelopes to get the dates right, forged the inclosed letters which he showed to you."

"Then you came back here, I suppose, to arrest him?"

"Exactly, and I find him dead. That would seem to prove that he feared discovery, and took his life, to evade arrest. However, that is not sufficient for me. I must find out the exact object of this crime and will do so. I promise you, that if you will delay the inquest till Tuesday, so as to give me a chance to follow up a clue which I have, I will endeavor to clear up the whole matter."

The Squire willingly acquiesced. Mr. Barnes hastened to New York as speedily as possible, and learned from the spy, that the woman had made no effort to change her place of residence, perhaps realizing the uselessness of so doing after what had taken place in her apartment. He went at once, to the hotel, and, sending his name up, was shown into her presence. As soon as he entered she began:

“I do not know why I have allowed you to come up to see me!”

“I do!” replied Mr. Barnes, tersely.

“Then tell me.”

“Curiosity.”

“You are clever. Now, satisfy my curiosity.”

“I came here to tell you all that I have discovered!”

“Well?”

“I was engaged to find your husband!”

“Yes! Go on!”

“I have found him!”

“Where?”

“Where I told you that I would! He left this city with a murderous intent, and I looked for him in the vicinity of the crime!”

“He has not killed anyone! I will not believe it!”

“No, his guilty plans reacted on himself!”

“What do you mean?”

“He is dead!”

“Merciful God!”

“Yes, the Almighty has been merciful to him, if we consider the wrong that he had done, and still meditated. His victims have suffered far more than he. Now, Madam, let us come to business at once. You must go with me!”

“Go with you? Where?”

“To New Hampshire! Listen! Your husband, as you call him, went up there to commit a crime which he had threatened many years ago, namely, to kill this man Lewis. He reached the house and met Lewis, but the latter had long awaited his coming, and was prepared for his arrival. Before your husband could carry out his design, a bullet ended his career.”

“This is terrible! Why did he go? I warned him that the man would not allow himself to be harmed!”

“Ah! Then, as I supposed, you knew his intentions before he went. However, as he did not succeed, you cannot be held on that charge. To continue. Lewis, as I have said, killed Marvel. He then succeeded in making every one believe that it was his own body which was found, whilst he passed off for his son, just returned from sea. This might have been a successful ruse, had not a strange chain of circumstances implicated his niece in the affair, and, despairing of proving her innocence in any other way, he committed suicide, leaving a full confession.”

“I don’t see what I have to do with all this.”

“You will, in a moment. If the truth is exposed, the knowledge must come to this girl of who and what her father was, besides the fact that her uncle killed him. This I have determined shall not be. Justice makes no such demand, and I choose to give this girl a future, unclouded by such a past.”

“How will you hide the truth?”

“I must invent a tale which will fit the circumstances, and you must substantiate the story.”

“I will do nothing of the kind!”

“Oh! Yes, you shall! You will have no choice in the matter!”

“I tell you I will not! Who is this girl? The daughter of the woman who crossed the sea to take my husband away from me!”

“You and that man, by your heartless treatment of that woman, hastened, I may say caused, her death.”

“What do I care for that? If you think I will help you to spare the delicate feelings of this girl, you do not know me!”

“It is just because I imagine that I do know you that I am so confident that you will aid me!”

“What do you mean?”

“You must choose between obeying me, and absolute poverty.”

“How so?”

“I will explain. Marvel married this girl’s mother, and she is his child. His wife was alive when you married him, and, according to your confession to her, when she met you in Paris, you knew of this first marriage, but chose to ignore it. If you had been united in this State, I could easily have you imprisoned for that bigamous marriage, but fortunately for you, you were married abroad. However, I will not let you slip through my fingers for all that. I think you did what you attributed to the real wife. You were anxious to share Marvel’s position and his fortune, and therefore I believe you will do anything for money. So I intend to manage you through your cupidity. If you persist in your obstinacy, I will reveal all that I have learned, and will see that steps are taken to gain possession of Marvel’s property for his rightful heir, his daughter. Moreover, you shall be made to give up whatever moneys you now have of his, as they become a part of his estate. This will be simple, for, as you can easily be shown, by the records of the Parisian court, to be the bigamous wife only, of course you would be entitled to no share in his property.”

“How is it that you are so well informed?”

“It is my profession to be well informed. I have no time to spare. Choose!”

“You are a devil!” Then, after a few minutes’ hesitation, “What is it that you wish me to do?”

“So! You decide that my way is best, do you? You are wise! Well, then, you will return with me, and on the way I will explain what I require of you. Obey me and no harm shall come to you.”

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The inquest over the dead body, which had been found in the secret room, attracted even more interest, and a greater crowd than had the first. All looked eagerly forward to the explanation promised by Mr. Barnes, and loud were the praises which he received on every side. At length, the moment arrived, and the woman whom the detective had brought with him against her will, was made to take the stand. Prompted by Mr. Barnes, Mr. Tupper conducted the examination of this witness:

“Will you give your name, if you please, madam?”

“Mrs. Horace Paul.”

“You have seen the body of the deceased?”

“I have!”

“Do you recognize it?”

“I do! It is the body of my husband!” This caused a sensation.

“Can you give any reason why he should have wished to harm Mr. Lewis?”

“He knew Mr. Lewis long ago, and did some work for him. My husband was an architect and a practical carpenter. Mr. Lewis engaged him, when he first came to this town, to build a secret apartment in his house. Mr. Lewis was very anxious that no one should know of this hiding-place, and that is why he brought a man from a distant city to do this work. His anxiety to keep his secret, coupled with the fact that he paid my husband an immense sum of money, and stipulated that he should never return to Lee, made my husband suspect that it must have been as a storehouse for money that he wished to use it. He spoke so often of this, that, fearing he might be tempted to investigate it, at length I persuaded him to go with me to Europe. Lately, however, he insisted on returning, as we had used up most of our means. I did not believe, after so many years, that he would again think of this ‘hidden treasure,’ as he was wont to call it. But now I see it must have been that which brought him here.”

After this testimony, she was allowed to retire, and Mr. Barnes took the stand to make a statement.

“Before we give this case to the jury, I should like to say, that I think this man

remained after the crime was committed, with the intention of searching for the treasure. Mr. Burrows will testify that he heard him in the secret chamber during the first night after the murder. I think he assumed the personality of the dead man's son, as the best means of enjoying the fortune which he expected to obtain, as well as to avoid suspicion most effectually. Failing to find any treasure, or to inherit under the will, it was still his only means of safety, to remain. Fear, or remorse, at last impelled suicide, a not unusual thing with criminals of an intellectual order."

The verdict of the jury placed the responsibility for the murder on the dead man, and indeed, though they little understood the true facts of the case, that was where it justly belonged.

There still remained one or two points about which Mr. Barnes felt a curiosity, and at the first opportunity, after Marvel's release, he questioned him.

"Mr. Marvel," said he, "how is it that you thought that Mr. Lewis was dead, as we supposed him to be, when I spoke to you, on the vessel, at Portsmouth?"

"I guessed it. I had received a letter from Miss Lewis, in which she used the words 'after the events of last night .' I did not quite understand this at first, though I placed no special importance on them, until you told me that a murder had been committed. It flashed over my mind in a moment, that it was to this that Virgie had alluded, and I feared that she and her uncle had quarrelled on her return to the house after leaving me, and that in a fit of passion she had killed him. That is why I refused to go back with you. I did not wish to be a witness against her. Afterward it dawned upon me that I myself must have been suspected, or you would never have come after me. Then I was anxious to return."

"That explains the point in question, but there is one other matter. Why was it that Mr. Everly sent you a letter that night, and that you went to Epping, instead of going to Portsmouth?"

"I formed the idea of going to Portsmouth, after I reached the farm that night. Previously I had sent word to Everly, asking him to get some money for me, and explaining how he could forward it, without betraying my whereabouts. If he had brought it himself, his presence in Epping might have excited suspicion, as he was well known to be my friend. I knew that we could trust the matter to

Harrison, and I suggested him as the bearer of the letter and money. To receive these, I was compelled to go to Epping.”

Some months later Mr. Barnes received cards to the nuptials of Virginia Lewis and Walter Marvel, and was pleased to attend the ceremony. The bride and groom went abroad on their honeymoon. A few days after their departure, Squire Olney sent to the detective a certified check for five thousand dollars, with the information that it must be accepted from the newly married couple, as Virginia happily expressed it, “In part payment for our happiness, which we enjoy through you.” . They had delayed making this presentation until they should be out of the country, lest Mr. Barnes might endeavor to return the gift.

Appreciating the intentions which prompted its bestowal, Mr. Barnes accepted the money. He is now his own master, being chief of a private bureau which he has established in New York. I may as well mention also, that Burrows manfully apologized to Mr. Barnes for his actions in this case, and was once more received into the good graces of the more experienced detective.

The End

(e-text prepared by Joe Harvat)