

The Sturgis Wager

A DETECTIVE STORY

BY EDGAR MORETTE

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CHAPTER I.

THE CABMAN'S FARE.

It was bitterly cold. The keen December wind swept down the crowded thoroughfare, nipping the noses and ears of the gray pedestrians, comfortably muffled in their warm wraps.

Broadway was thronged with the usual holiday shoppers and pleasure-seekers. Cabs with their jaded steeds driven by weatherbeaten jehus, and private carriages behind well-groomed horses handled by liveried coachmen, deftly made their way through the crowds and deposited their fares at the entrances of the brightly-lighted theaters or fashionable restaurants. A wizened hag, seated on the curbstone at the corner, seemed to shrink into herself with the cold as she turned the crank of her tiny barrel-organ and ground out a dismal and scarcely audible cacophony; while an anxious-eyed newsboy, not yet in his teens, shivered off the opposite side of the way, as, with tremulous lips, he solicited a purchaser for his unsold stock. One could hardly be expected to open a warm overcoat on such a cold night, for the sake of throwing a cent to an old beggar woman, or of buying a newspaper from a ragged urchin. Even the gayly decorated shop windows failed to arrest the idle passerby; for it required perpetual motion to keep the blood in circulation.

The giant policeman on the crossing, representing the majesty of the law, swayed the crowd of vehicles and pedestrians with the authoritative gestures of his ponderous hands, and gallantly escorted bands of timid women through the inextricable maze.

And withal, the cable cars, with their discordant clangor, rumbled rapidly to and fro, like noisy shuttles, shooting the woof of the many-hued fabric which is the life of a great city.

Presently from one of the side streets there came a cab, which started leisurely to cross Broadway. The big policeman, with his eyes fixed upon an approaching car, held up a warning hand, to which the driver seemed to pay no attention, for the reins remained slack and the listless horse continued to move slowly across the avenue.

Several people turned to look with mild curiosity at the bold cabman who dared thus to disregard the authority of blue cloth and brass buttons. Their surprise turned quickly to amazement and dismay when their eyes rested upon him; for his head had fallen forward upon his chest and his limp body swayed upon the box with every motion of the cab. He seemed unconscious of his surroundings, like one drunk or in a stupor.

At his side sat a young man closely muffled in his overcoat, and with a sealskin cap pulled well down over his ears. His face was deathly pale. Those who caught sight of his features saw that his bloodless lips were firmly set, and that his eyes glittered with a feverish light. He carried one hand in the lapel of his coat. With the other he shook the inert form of the unconscious cabman, in an effort to arouse him to a sense of the impending danger.

The situation flashed upon the gripman on the car. Instantly he threw his weight upon the brake-wheel, at the same time loudly sounding his gong. The policeman, too, understood in a twinkling what was about to happen, and rushed for the horse's head. But it was too late. The cab was fairly across the track when the car, with slackened speed, crashed into it.

Just before the collision, the young man in the sealskin cap sprang from the box to the street. He landed upon his feet; but, losing his balance, he fell forward upon his left arm, which still remained in the lapel of his coat. He must have hurt himself; for those standing near him heard him groan. But the center of interest was elsewhere, and no one paid much attention to the young man, who, arising quickly, disappeared in the crowd.

The cab, after tottering for an instant on two wheels, fell over upon its side, with a loud noise of splintering wood and breaking glass. The driver rolled off the box in a heap. At the same time, the panic-stricken passengers on the car rushed madly for the doors, fighting like wild beasts in their haste to reach a place of safety.

After the first frenzied moment, it became evident that, although badly shaken up, the passengers had received no injuries, except such bruises as they had inflicted upon each other in their mad struggle to escape. By this time a crowd had collected about the overturned cab, and several more policemen had come to the assistance of the first one, who was now seated serenely upon the head of the cab-horse, a precaution seemingly superfluous, for the poor beast, though uninjured, appeared to be quite satisfied to rest where he lay until he should be forced once more to resume the grind of his unhappy existence.

The cabman had been rudely shaken by his fall. He had lain as though unconscious for the space of a

few seconds; then, with assistance, he had managed to struggle to his feet. He stood now as though dazed by the shock, trying to understand what had happened.

"Are you hurt?" inquired one of the policemen.

The man, mumbling an unintelligible reply, raised his hand to a scalp wound from which the blood was flowing freely.

At that moment two men forced their way through the crowd which a circle of policemen had some difficulty in keeping at a distance from the wounded cabman. One was a middle-aged individual, who gave his name as Dr. Thurston and offered his services as a physician; the other was a young man with keen gray eyes, who said nothing, but exhibited a reporter's badge.

The physician at once turned his attention to the cabman; felt him, thumped him, pinched him; smelt his breath; and then delivered his verdict:

"No bones broken. The slight scalp wound doesn't amount to anything. The man has been drinking heavily. He is simply drunk."

The horse had by this time been unharnessed and the cab had been lifted upon its wheels again.

The reporter stood by a silent and apparently listless spectator of the scene.

Dr. Thurston turned to him: "Come along, Sturgis; neither you nor I are needed here; and if we do not hurry, Sprague's dinner will have to wait for us. It is a quarter to eight now."

The reporter seemed about to follow his friend, but he stood for an instant irresolute.

"I say, doctor," he inquired at last, "are you sure the man is drunk?"

"He has certainly been drinking heavily. Why?"

"Because it seems to me—Hello, we cannot go yet; the passenger is more badly hurt than the driver."

"The passenger?" queried the physician, turning in surprise to the policeman.

"What passenger?" asked the policeman, looking at the cabman. "Have you a passenger inside, young feller?"

"Naw," replied the cabman, who seemed to be partially sobered by the shock and loss of blood. "Naw, I ain't got no fare, barrin' the man wot was on the box."

The reporter observed the man closely as he spoke; and then, pointing to the step of the cab, which was plainly visible in the glare of a neighboring electric lamp:

"I mean the passenger whose blood is trickling there," he said, quietly.

Every eye was turned in the direction of his outstretched hand.

A few drops of a thick dark liquid had oozed from under the door, and was dripping upon the iron step. The cab door was closed and the curtain was drawn down over the sash, the glass of which had been shattered by the fall.

One of the policemen tried to open the door. It stuck in the jamb. Then he exerted upon it the whole of his brute strength; and, of a sudden, it yielded. As it flew open the body of a man lurched from the inside of the cab, and before anyone could catch it tumbled in a heap upon the pavement.

A low cry of horror escaped from the crowd.

The cabman's passenger was a man past middle age, neatly but plainly dressed.

As Dr. Thurston and a policeman bent over the prostrate form, the reporter shot a keen glance in the direction of the cabman, who stood staring at the body with a look of ghastly terror in his bulging eyes.

Presently the physician started to his feet with a low exclamation of surprise.

"Is he dead, doctor?" asked the policeman.

"He has been dead for some time," replied the physician, impressively;

"the body is almost cold."

"Been dead for some time?" echoed the policeman.

"Yes; this man was shot. See there!"

As he spoke he pointed to a red streak which, starting from the left side of the dead man's coat, extended downward and marked the course of the tiny stream in which the life blood had flowed to a little pool on the floor of the cab.

"Shot!" exclaimed the policeman, who turned immediately to one of his brother officers. "Keep your eye on the cabman, Jim. We'll have to take him in. And look out for the other man, quick!"

Then, addressing the cabman, upon each of whose shoulders a policeman's hand was immediately placed, he asked, roughly:

"Who is this man?"

The cabman was completely sober now. He stood, pale and trembling, between his two captors, as he replied solemnly:

"Before God, I don't know, boss. I never saw him before."

The policeman looked at the man in blank amazement for an instant. Then he turned away contemptuously.

"All right, young feller," he said, "you don't have to confess to me. But I guess you'll have a chance to tell that story to a judge and jury."

Then he proceeded to examine the dead man's pockets. They were empty. "Looks like robbery," he murmured. "What is it, Jim? Haven't you got the other man?"

Jim had not found the other man; for the pale young fellow in the sealskin cap had disappeared.

The reporter was stooping over the body, while Dr. Thurston cut through the clothing and laid bare a small, round wound.

"Here is another bullet wound," said Sturgis, turning over the body slightly, and pointing out a second round hole in the back of the dead man.

He seemed to take great interest in this discovery. He whipped out a steel tape and rapidly but carefully took a number of measurements, as if to locate the positions of the two wounds. Then he stepped into the cab; and, striking match after match, he spent several minutes apparently in eager search for something which he could not find.

"That is strange," he muttered to himself, as he came out at last.

"What is it?" inquired Thurston, who alone caught the words.

But the reporter either did not hear or did not care to answer. He at once renewed his search on the brilliantly-lighted pavement in the immediate vicinity of the cab; examining every stone, investigating every joint and every rut, prodding with his cane every lump of frozen mud, turning every stray scrap of paper.

"Well, doctor," he said, when at length he rejoined his companion, "if you have done all that you can we may as well go. It is one of the prettiest problems I have met; but there is nothing more for me to learn here for the present. By the way, as I was saying when I interrupted myself a little while ago, are you sure the cabman is drunk? I wish you would take another good look at him. The question may be more important than it seemed at first."

A few minutes later the physician and the reporter were hurrying along to make up for the time they had lost; the cab and the cabman had disappeared in the custody of the police, and the cabman's greswome fare was jolting through Twenty-sixth street, in the direction of a small building which stands near the East river, and in which the stranded waifs of the new world metropolis can find rest at last, upon a stone slab, in the beginning of their eternal sleep.

Broadway had resumed its holiday aspect; the wizened hag at the corner still patiently ground out her plaintive discords; the tearful newsboy, with his slowly diminishing armful of newspapers, continued to shiver in the cold wind, as he offered his stock to the hurrying pedestrians; the big policeman again piloted his fair charges through the mass of moving vehicles, and the clanging cable cars started once more on their rumbfng course,



"I MEAN THE PASSENGER WHOSE BLOOD IS TRICKLING THERE."

as if the snapping of a thread in the fabric of a city's life were a thing of constant occurrence and of no moment.

A few tiny dark red stains upon the pavement were all that remained to tell the story of the scene which had so recently been enacted in the busy thoroughfare. Presently even these were obliterated by the random stroke of a horse's hoof.

The ripple had disappeared from the surface. The stream of life was flowing steadily once more through the arteries of the metropolis.

CHAPTER II.

THE WAGER.

"What I mean to assert," said Ralph Sturgis, with quiet conviction, "is that every crime is its own historian; that all its minutest details are written in circumstantial evidence as completely as an eyewitness could see them—aye, more fully and more truly than they could be described by the criminal himself."

The reporter was a man of about 20, whose regular features bore the unmistakable stamp of intelligence and refinement. In repose, they wore an habitual expression of introspective concentration, which might have led a careless observer to class Ralph Sturgis in the category of aimless dreamers. But a single flash of the piercing gray eyes generally sufficed to dispel any such impression; and told of keen perception and underlying power. The mouth was firm and kind, the bearing that of a gentleman and a man of education.

"But," objected the host, "you surely do not mean to express a belief in the infallibility of circumstantial evidence?"

"Why not?"

"Because you must know as well as

anyone how misleading uncorroborated circumstantial evidence is. I do not forget what remarkable results you have often accomplished for the Daily Tempest in detecting and following up clues to which the official detectives were blind. But, frankly, were not your conclusions usually the result of lucky guesses, which would have remained comparatively useless as evidence had they not been subsequently proved correct by direct testimony?"

"Let me reply to your question by another, Sprague," answered Sturgis. "When you draw a check, does the paying teller at the bank require the testimony of witnesses to your signature before admitting its genuineness?"

"No; of course not."

"Precisely. He probably knows the signature of Harvey M. Sprague, the depositor, better than he does the face of Sprague, the artist. And yet the evidence here is purely circumstantial. I know of at least one recent instance in which the officials of a New York bank placed their implicit reliance upon circumstantial evidence of this sort, in spite of the direct testimony of the depositor, who was willing to acknowledge the genuineness of a check to which his name had been forged."

"I suppose you refer to the Forsyth case," said Sprague; "but you must remember that Col. Forsyth was actuated by the desire to shield the forger, who was his own scapegrace son."

[To Be Continued.]

AN ANGRY FATHER.

He Undertook to Intimidate a School-Teacher, But Got the Worst of It.

When Charles D. Folsom, the New York lawyer, left Phillips-Exeter academy, New Hampshire, he had a distinct feeling of pride that he was graduated from the same school that sent Daniel Webster to fight the battle of life, and, because Webster's second step was school teaching, and because he needed the money, he adopted this profession. From this time, on, to use his own words, all likeness between his own and the great statesman's career ended, says the Philadelphia Saturday Evening Post.

It was at Sanbornton Square, New Hampshire. There were four giants of boys in the school, all over 18 years of age, and Mr. Folsom was only 19. But he had the advantage of practical physical training on his side. One day the father of one of the giants, who had a bad reputation as a local fighter, drove up to the schoolhouse with an ax and asked for the teacher. He hammered on the door for several moments, and when the teacher appeared he returned to his buggy. The irate parent said:

"Young man, did you lick one of my boys yesterday?"

"I did, sir."

"Well, if you do it again I'll fix you."

"No, you won't," was the answer; "I'll whip your boys so long as they are under my charge and disobey the rules."

"Well, we'll see," said the man, preparing to get out.

It just then occurred to Mr. Folsom that this was his time, and he lifted the bed of the light buggy off the wheels and dipped it over. Into the ditch rolled the man with the ax, while the teacher and 35 school children looked on and grinned. It was too much for the man, and, adjusting the buggy top, he rode quietly away.

Took a Costly Nap.

To begin with, he's "a good fellow." That's a phrase easier understood by men than by women. It generally means—well, it means he's an all-round good sort in the male line, says the Philadelphia Press. The other afternoon he was feeling pretty good. He had been quite thirsty, if that he had taken was to be judged as a criterion. And the libations left him in a thoroughly good humor, and he felt at peace with the world. In this delightful mental and physical state he bethought him of a friend of his in Providence, R. I. And he further thought that he would call up that particular friend on the telephone. So he went to a Broad street hotel, told the young woman there who had charge of the phone that he wanted to speak to Mr. So-and-So in Providence, and wouldn't she kindly call up the party. The girl did as she was bade. "Party on the phone," she said, and the man went into the telephone box, sat down and put the receiver to his ear. And then he calmly and sweetly dropped off to sleep. When he woke up he owed the telephone company \$32.50. He said he wouldn't pay it—but he did.

Ready to Back It Up.

"Right ahead of us," resumed the traveler who was narrating his experiences, "yawned the mountain pass."

"Do you know," artlessly interrupted one of the younger women of the company, "that seems very queer to me? How can a mountain yawn?"

"Did you ever see Cumberland Gap, miss?" he asked.

"And there were no more interruptions."—Chicago Tribune.

'Twas Painted Badly.

Wife—We should have that back shed attended to right away.

Husband—I spoke to Dobbs, the painter, about it, and he says he's so busy he won't be able to touch it for a month yet.

"O, we can't wait that long. It needs to be painted very badly."

"All right, then, I'll do it myself."—Philadelphia Press.

For Ornament Only.

Visitor—Your smoking-room is beautifully furnished.

Mr. Henpeck—Yes; if only I were allowed to smoke in it!—Tit-Bits.



HAD HER OWN WAY.

Lucia di Lammermoor Impersonated by Little Adeline Patti in Raven Tresses.

Quite recently, at her dainty little theater at Craig y Nos, Mme. Patti appeared as Lucia di Lammermoor. She dispensed with a wig in this part, for she has bleached her own raven locks a fiery gold. This fact is significant and recalls this same Lucia, these same "raven locks" and a rare performance of "The Bride of Lammermoor" in New Orleans one night in the early '60s.

In the autumn of 1869 Adeline Patti, then a slip of a girl barely 16 years of age, with ropes of jet black hair and the throat of a nightingale—the throat which has since made her rich and fa-



"OH, NO; IT IS NOT ABSURD."

mous—sang for the first time in public the part of Lucia in that fine old opera, "The Bride of Lammermoor," to a New York audience. As the Scottish heroine, of course, Adeline was compelled to cover up her ebon braids with a wig of flaxen hair. Later on she reached New Orleans. In that city Patti, with her sister Carlotta and her brother Carlo, had spent her early childhood, and she knew and loved nearly all of those who came to greet her as an operatic star at the French opera house.

Just before the curtain rose on the opening night Mr. Strakosch, who was to conduct the opera, appeared in the greenroom and was amazed to find the bride of Lammermoor waiting to go on the stage with her own black tresses waving down her back, instead of the pale, corn-colored locks of the Scottish lassie.

"Why, Addie, what does this mean?" excitedly inquired the great impresario.

"That I am going to wear my own hair to-night," answered the budding prima donna.

"But you must not. It is inartistic. Inaccurate, absurd."

"Oh, no, it is not absurd," calmly responded Patti. "My old friends in New Orleans only know me as a black-haired, skinny little Italian, and not as a golden-crowned Scotch girl. Besides, I will not disguise myself to-night to please anyone."

The distracted manager argued, protested, threatened and cajoled, but "Addie" stood firmly to her purpose. A tremendous welcome was accorded the youthful diva, but the audience greeted Lucia not as a fair-poled bride, but as their own "black-haired, skinny little Italian."—Chicago Chronicle.

PRESERVING SEASON.

Suggestion Regarding Putting Up Fruit That Should Be Regarded by Wise Housekeepers.

In putting up fruit see that all the essentials are on hand before beginning work. Don't wait until the fruit is in the preserving kettle before running to the corner grocery for sugar. It is economy of time to buy sugar in 25 or 50-pound bags, for you will need it right along, suggests a writer in the Washington Star. See that all utensils are in perfect order, that a supply of new rubber bands is on hand and that the cans and glasses are as clean and sweet and clear as soap and water can make them. If every time a can has been emptied it has been carefully washed and dried and put away with its own top screwed on this part of the work will be greatly simplified. Yet, even if cleaned before putting away, they will need to be scalded just before using. Have ready a small sharp-pointed knife for paring; a silver-plated fruit knife ground to a fine edge and kept expressly for this purpose is best. Have a half pound of paraffin on hand for covering jellies, several long-handled wooden spoons, a ladle, a colander, a bright tin strainer, a small skewer or silver nutpick, several large bowls and platters and a couple of large porcelain or granite kettles. Never use tin vessels for cooking fruit, nor yet iron. Brass, when thoroughly cleaned, is pleasant to use, but its expense and the labor necessary to keep it in good condition preclude its adoption in the ordinary kitchen. A plentiful supply of cheesecloth and towels, and a large-mouthed funnel to use in filling jars should also be in readiness.

The size of the cans to be used may depend largely on the size of the family. For a small family the pint-sized jar is best for nearly everything, taking pains to select those with wide-mouthed tops. Half-gallon jars will be found useful for large whole fruits.

Another Pet Theory Exploded.

The bottom has melted out of the theory that the drainage canal has any effect on Chicago's climate.

WIVES OF PRESIDENTS.

Personal Appearance of the Charming American Women Who Have Ruled the White House.

Of mistresses of the white house one of the most popular was Mrs. James K. Polk. Like Mrs. Cleveland, she was a brunette, and of fine presence; it was often remarked that not a crowned head in Europe could queen it more royally than the wife of the republican president. Poets penned verses in her honor, and on the last Sunday of her stay in Washington a clergyman addressed her from the pulpit. She was treated with great distinction, and after leaving the white house was visited every New Year's day by the legislature in a body.

Mrs. George Washington also had dark hazel eyes and brown hair. She was not a beauty, but she had a good form, rather below middle weight, and her manners were frank and engaging. She dressed plainly, and at a ball given in her honor she wore a simple russet gown and white handkerchief about her neck. One of her dresses, which she herself manufactured, was of cotton, striped with silk, which she obtained from ravellings of brown silk stockings and old crimson chair covers.

Mrs. Monroe was considered a beauty. She was tall and gracefully formed, polished and attractive in society. Mrs. John Adams was never beautiful, but she was of imposing appearance and very intellectual. Mrs. John Quincy Adams was famed for her charming manners, and Mrs. Andrew Jackson for her amiable temper and kind heart. Mrs. Martin Van Buren, who died before her husband became president, was a pretty woman, with modest, unassuming manners and a gentle disposition.

The first Mrs. Tyler was one of the belles of eastern Virginia, and was most attractive in her striking loveliness of person and character. The second Mrs. Tyler was the first woman to marry a president. Before her marriage she was, for the one season she spent there, the belle of Washington.

A sparkling brunette was Mrs. William Henry Harrison. She was very handsome, with a face full of animation, and her health, which was robust, added a glow to her features, which increased her charms. "Upon her countenance," it is recorded, "nature had been profusely liberal."

Mrs. Thomas Jefferson was remarkable for her beauty. Her complexion was brilliant; her large, expressive eyes of "the richest tinge of auburn." A little above middle weight, she was slightly and delicately formed. She danced, sang, played the spinnet and harpsichord and rode with great skill.

Mrs. James Madison was a pretty, buxom woman, with a smile and a pleasant word for everyone. She had regular features and sparkling eyes.

Mrs. Zachary Taylor was a quiet woman, but had great strength of char-



MRS. ULYSSES S. GRANT.

acter and the true spirit of the American heroine, enduring patiently privation incident to life on the frontier, where her husband, as Maj. Taylor, was stationed. She had no ambition beyond making her home happy.

A blond of rare beauty was Mrs. Millard Fillmore, with a skin of dazzling whiteness and auburn hair. She was quite tall, with a fine figure and of commanding presence. She is ranked with the wives of the two Adamses as a learned woman, and it was through her that her husband asked for and obtained an appropriation of congress to buy books for the white house. Up to that time there had been a Bible there, and little more.

Another woman of rare beauty was Mrs. Franklin Pierce. She also had many accomplishments. She was very refined and quiet, shunning society.

Mrs. Abraham Lincoln as a girl was very attractive and she had many suitors. When she became the mistress of the white house she was "fair and forty." That she was the successor of the popular and accomplished Miss Lane was not a point in her favor. At the first levee she appeared in pink silk, décolleté, short-sleeved dress and a floral headdress, which ran down to her waist and destroyed what comeliness simplicity might have given her.

Mrs. Andrew Jackson possessed the beauty of face and form which rendered her mother one of the most beautiful of women. Mrs. Grant was a blond of delicate figure, rather below middle stature. Mrs. Hayes was of very attractive appearance. Mrs. Garfield was noted for her tact, and her husband once said that he never had to explain away any words of his wife.

Mrs. Arthur, who died before her husband became president, was known as "the beautiful Miss Herndon with the marvelous voice" before her marriage.

Mrs. Harrison was fair as a girl and possessed the blond style of beauty, which also belongs to Mrs. McKinley.—N. Y. Sun.

How to Make French Toast.

To make French toast plunge a slice of bread into milk and then into an egg, the white and yolk of which have been beaten together thoroughly and seasoned with salt. Fry a golden brown in butter.