

The Bloomfield Times.

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Vol. VII.

New Bloomfield, Pa., Tuesday, May 20, 1873.

No. 20.

The Bloomfield Times.

IS PUBLISHED EVERY TUESDAY MORNING, BY
FRANK MORTIMER & CO.,
At New Bloomfield, Perry Co., Pa.

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Tried for Murder.

A Detective's Story.

I HAVE worked up many hard cases, and have cornered many notorious criminals, but never, before or since, have I engaged in a case so complicated, or one which was so hard to clear up, as that Stuart-Firststone murder case.

You know the Stuarts were very healthy and the old man had only two sons, Cecil and Gilbert; outlandish names they had, to be sure, but they were very proud of them, at least the younger one. As I said, he had only two to bother him, and to these, of course, he gave the bulk of his property. Cecil was a cripple, the result of being dropped by a careless nurse in infancy.

Gilbert, the younger of the two, was early known to all the sports as a jolly good fellow, partly because he would always stand a treat, and would play billiards and such games; and yet he was never known to win when playing for a wager. In this manner he sustained his reputation of being a free-and-easy fellow. But in the meantime his property was steadily decreasing until, at last, his share—which, in the first place, would have been more than enough for men like you and me—dwindled down to an insignificant sum, and he had to look in some other direction for money to pay his gaming debts. He had often applied to his brother for aid, and had often obtained it, together with good advice, which he promised to heed, but never did.

Cecil was always very studious, and had surrounded himself with all the old-fashioned books that he could hear of or obtain. And on account of his lameness this kind of company had a charm for him that we in good health would not feel.

Cecil was always very lenient toward his erring brother; but at last hearing from every source of his scrapes, he was compelled, by a sense of duty, to resolve to refuse his application for aid. And it was not long before he had to test his resolution, for Gilbert, after an "all night" of it at a gaming saloon, came to him and begged for more money. Cecil reasoned with him, and with tears in his eyes begged that he would quit his wild habits. But all was of no avail, and he was compelled, much against his brotherly feelings, to refuse him the aid he sought. At this Gilbert flew into a frenzy of rage and left the house, swearing that he would get the money in some manner.

As he was walking homeward, feeling anything but pleasant, he saw his deadliest enemy riding with a young lady, to whom he had been paying attention for some time, but who now gave him the "cut direct." Maddened at this, he rushed into a saloon near by, and calling for whisky, he swallowed a glassful in an instant, then went home and called his bosom friend and counselor to him.

Albert Firststone, the friend, was a broken-down gambler; a man who had spent a fortune on the turf, and was now nominally acting as a jockey for Gilbert Stuart, but was in reality his confederate in schemes of robbery, and, as the sequel will show, of murder. These two friends were closeted together for a long while, and time showed the result of their conference, though I would not spoil my story by revealing too soon their nefarious designs.

Of course you remember the excitement in the up-town circles when the news of Cecil Stuart's murder was circulated, and the astonishment of every one when it was known that his body had been found in the coal cellar of Roger Lyon's brownstone palace. Astonishment was increased manifold by the intelligence that Roger

Lyon had been arrested and charged with the crime of murder.

Although but few were intimately acquainted with Cecil Stuart, and a scarcely large circle barely knew him as a very eccentric man, yet the crime being committed at the very door of their mansion made it seem the most startling one in the records of our city; and as there were many influential personages who loved Roger Lyon better than all their friends besides, and many a poor washerwoman who blessed the day that he saved her bit of ground from the auctioneer's hammer—to have him, the people's favorite, charged with such a deed, seemed to be an outrage upon all classes of our citizens.

I well remember when Lansing, Lyon's lawyer, called upon me and begged me to try my best to clear up the mystery. At this time I had been in the detective force nearly four years, and of course, knew the ropes pretty well. But for a month I confess that at times I was nearly baffled.

But I will come directly to my story. As a first step, I went to the cellar where the body was found, and, as I had ordered it to be left there after the inquest till I could examine everything myself, it still remained there. Being something of a doctor, I naturally examined the wounds, and was satisfied they would not cause instant death. But I did not rely upon my own medical skill in this, but sent for a physician. He came—a sharp fellow named Denning—and probed the wounds. One of them went close to the heart, the other two were in the lungs, evidently intended to cause hemorrhage, which had followed, but not sufficient to cause death immediately.

Roger Lyon's knife, with which the deed had been committed, a silver-mounted affair, lay near the wall.

The doctor soon finished his work, and giving me a look that I interpreted instantly, went out, taking Lansing with him, to whom he communicated the result of his examinations. When they had gone I walked over to the wall and picked up the knife. As soon as I stooped over to do this I saw some marks on the wall that appeared to have been made by a sharp instrument of some kind. While I was examining these Gilbert Stuart and Albert Firststone entered. I was about to call their attention to the marks when a sudden thought caused me to close my mouth upon the words that were almost on my tongue's end.

After obtaining permission they took the body to his late residence.

As soon as they were gone, I again examined the marks, and found they were a combination of letters and figures arranged like this:

S-1225-D

I copied them on paper, and then, taking the knife with me, I went to my office down-town, to study out, if possible, the cipher I had discovered. I had no doubt that it was made by Cecil, probably after he had been stabbed; and I was convinced that the cause of its being in cipher was, that no one would be able to notice it enough to obliterate it. But by what means could I obtain a key was now the puzzle.

Acting according to a suggestion of Lansing, I went to the library, and for a week I rummaged its shelves for any work that mentioned cipher writing. I continued bringing home books until my den looked more like a reading-room than a detective's office, while in their midst sat Lansing, searching every page, and occasionally jotting down something in a book by his side.

One day, as I entered, with my arms full of books, I noticed a look of triumph on his face as his pencil flew over the paper. In answer to my inquiry he handed me a slip of paper upon which he had copied a table giving the relative number of each letter that is used in common English words. I looked it over, and waited for him to speak. In a moment he looked up and said:

"You see that the table gives 'e' the prominence over others; call 'e' one. Then you see 't' is second best; call it two. Then run your eye up to the fifth in importance, and we have 'd' and 'l.' Take last number five, and the figures, with the addition of the two letters that were expressed, read, 'settled.' So you see I have translated the cipher in one way."

I admitted that it was a very ingenious translation, and was very much encouraged by it, although the word "settled" might not have any special relation to the case in hand. But I did not doubt that it was nearer the true rendering than any we had

reached, and it convinced me that the figures were to be changed, in some way, to letters, before the cryptogram could be entirely solved.

About a week after this, Lansing was called out of the city by the sickness of his mother. As I parted with him at the depot, I told him to keep up his courage, and to write out his defense, while I would attend to the remainder.

During all this time the opposing counsel were striving in every possible manner to make an adamant chain of evidence that should immediately condemn the prisoner beyond any shadow of doubt.

In this way nearly three weeks had passed away since the murder, when I received a telegram from Lansing informing me of his return to the city. All this time I had been shut up in my office, working. It must be confessed, with little hopes of success.

The day that I expected Lansing's return I went to the place where the body had been found, and examined carefully the marks on the wall, but I could find no other than the ones I had seen before, so I concluded that those were the only ones. As I stood looking at them, however, I saw what seemed to be a piece of stone lying on the floor of the cellar. As a detective sees a clue in everything, I picked it up, and found, to my surprise that it was a piece of putty. As soon as I discovered this I searched the whole wall to find where the piece came from, and at last I discovered that some marks near the others were filled with putty. I scraped it away, and the whole cryptogram appeared as follows:

S T-1226-D

124

A First One

(The letters and figures in italics had been concealed by putty.)

I took another copy and went back to my retreat, leaving orders for no one to be admitted to the cellar.

Here, now, was another mystery; and from the revelation which I had just received, I was astonished into the belief that Albert Firststone had something to do with the crime. But yet the cipher was still a mystery.

While I was studying these new developments, Lansing came in. I grasped his hand with a pressure that made him wince, as I showed him the other letters I had found. He looked at them a moment, and then springing from his chair fairly shouted:

"Firststone is the murderer, and his name is the key to the cipher!"

And showed me that the word "Firststone" in my copy was separated in two words, and that line read: "A First one." By this key the figures read, 'a b e,' and the cipher, with the addition to the part concealed, read:

Stabbed

by

A. Firstone.

We did not either of us about "Eureka" or anything else. But I looked at Lansing, who was trembling like a leaf, and said, "You ought to have been a detective."

Having written out the cipher according to his translation, and being convinced that I had been outwitted, or something of that sort, by a lawyer, I leaned back on my chair, and, I can't tell why, but I burst out into a hearty laugh, which Lansing soon joined.

After my risible powers were exhausted, I rang the bell for the errand-boy, and sent a note like this to Denning:

"Come up to my den this afternoon, and bring some handy instrument for the detection of foreign substances such as pieces of stone in blood."

After sending this I prevailed upon Lansing to go with me to luncheon. In an hour we returned, and found Denning, with a large microscope and several small vials. I immediately went to my desk, took out Roger Lyon's knife, and handed it to him, asking him to see if there were any pieces of stone in the blood stains which still showed on the knife. He knew my meaning in an instant. And taking a vial he carefully rinsed a portion of the stains with its contents, letting the liquid run upon a glass slide, which he had placed in the sun's rays.

Impatiently we waited and watched for the evaporation of the liquid. It was soon all gone, when he placed the slide in the microscope and turned the powerful eyeglass upon it. On looking in the lens, minute particles of stone, some stained with blood were plainly visible, thus proving that the knife had been used to cut the stone of the cellar after the blood had stained it.

"That is the result you wanted to reach, is it not?" asked Denning, looking me in the face.

"Yes," I answered.

Then taking a piece of paper I wrote for a moment, and then handed him what I had written, with a request that he would sign it, which he did. It was an affidavit certifying that, according to the best medical knowledge, the deceased must have lived some time after the fatal blow was received; and that, from minute particles of stone which adhered to the blade, it must have been used by some one, probably the deceased, to cut stone with after the blood stains were on it.

Here, then, was the evidence needed to prove the innocence of the prisoner. I could not resist the temptation to reveal it to Denning, and a happier trio could hardly be found than were assembled in that little down-town office.

The trial was to commence in about a week, and of course we were impatient for the time to pass.

At last the day came. The court-room was crowded, and many of the detective force were present. After some other business, our case was called up. The judge asked—

"Guilty or not guilty?"

"Lansing, in the behalf of the prisoner, broke the silence with the words—

"Not guilty," and added, "I would accuse Albert Firststone of the crime charged upon my client."

The looks of the wretch as he made this bold charge carried the conviction of its truth to every mind in the court room.

The attorney then went on to say that he knew the charge he made was a serious one, but if he also knew that he had sufficient evidence to prove its truth. He therefore asked the court to postpone the trial of his client until the charges he had made were investigated.

This request the court readily complied with, and Albert Firststone, was ordered into custody.

A preliminary examination was at once had, and a true bill was found against him, and in a few hours he was placed in jail to be tried for murder.

In the meantime, Lyon, was released on bail, until such time as a final disposition of the case could be had.

The next morning Albert Firststone, was found dead in his cell, and a slip of paper containing a confession of the deed, was found beside him.

He also implicated his friend Gilbert, as an accomplice, but that individual had taken care to save himself from further trouble by flight.

All this was very fortunate for us, for although we felt sure that we had caused the arrest of the guilty party, we might have had some trouble to convince a jury of the fact.

As it was, Mr. Lyon's case was the next day called up, and a formal verdict of "Not guilty" was entered on the records of the court, and as the real culprit was beyond the reach of human punishment, that was the end of the Stuart-Firststone murder case.

A Fish Story.

A very staid and worthy old gentleman resided in New Haven, whom a successful mercantile career of more than thirty years had placed in independent, if not affluent circumstances, but, through either custom or a desire to add to his already ample store, he still continued his business and his antepandrial visits to the counting-house. One morning the good wife had postponed the matutinal meal in consequence of his absence, until that rare and valuable thing in a woman—her patience—was well-nigh exhausted. At last, however, he made his appearance; and without any excuse for his tardiness, but looking especially glum and out of humor, he sat him down to eat. A cup of coffee partially restored him, and opening his mouth, he spake:

"Most extraordinary circumstance, most extraordinary indeed!"

"Why, what do you mean, my dear?" demanded the lady.

"Mean? Here have I had to open the shop with my own hands, and after sitting in the doorway a full hour, waiting for my boys, not one of them made his appearance, and I was forced to close the shop again to come to breakfast!"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the lady with unfeigned horror, "you have not been to the shop? Why, it is Sunday!"

"Sunday!" returned he; "Sunday! Impossible madam; we did not have fish for dinner yesterday!"

DIVIDE ET IMPERA!

How Does a Light Engine Draw a Heavy Train.

THE first locomotive was patented twenty years ago. Driving only one car, if lightly loaded it did very well; but when the load it drew was heavier than its own weight, its wheels would not bite—that is, they would turn round and round without advancing. Hence a cow-catcher was needed behind to guard against cattle running into it in the rear. It seemed at first impossible to make a less weight move a greater on an up grade; and, for 27 years afterward, no one invented an engine able to draw three times its own weight. At the present day, however, locomotives sweep along with trains more ponderous by 15 or 20 times than themselves. One means of gaining this vast increase of power for the locomotive, was by dividing the load. It was found, that an engine powerless to stir five times its weight of freight when concentrated in one car, could readily draw it when distributed in a dozen cars loosely shackled together. It was heavier than each single car; and it had overcome the inertia of each one, a moment before it encountered the inertia of another. It was thus more than a match for each car taken singly; and, pulling them successively, it drew after it a train as long as a comet, and the farther it ran the more strength it had to run further. Here was the story of little David over again. Ordinarily the stripling's weight, as he told Goliath, was one hundred and twenty, but whenever he got mad he weighed a ton. Moreover, the engine forced the momentum acquired by every car it had started, to swell its own potency in overcoming the resistance of all that remained still motionless.

"This railroad achievement (making a light engine draw a heavy train), if not so common would seem miraculous; and it is analogous to an expedient for securing a farm which is equally simple and equally efficacious. It is this: 'Divide your payments.' Buying, as 4,525 settlers have bought of the Burlington and Missouri River Road in Iowa or Nebraska, within the last three years, on ten years' credit, and six per cent. interest, you pay in eleven instalments spread over half a life time,—the first not due till the beginning of the third year. Besides, every acre you buy adds to your paying power, as the headway of every moving car reinforces the tractive energy of the locomotive."

In purchases made since 1873 nothing is due on the principal until the beginning of the fifth year, and then only one seventh annually.

"Divide to conquer" is the maxim of Satan when he sows discord among brethren. Use it for your good as Satan will for your harm, and as Stephenson did to multiply the magical forces of his immortal and world-moving locomotive. "Get mad and weigh a ton." Own land and nobody shall ever own you. Be your own man!

A Pickpocket's Discomfiture.

A woman who was riding in a Broadway omnibus, not long since, became aware that the "gentleman" on her right was feeling for her pocket under her cloak. For a moment a cold shiver passed through her, but as it was broad daylight, and as there were evidently many persons in the omnibus to whom she might apply for protection, she took courage, and recollecting that in the dress she wore her pocket had, much to her previous annoyance, been sewed on the wrong side of the skirt, concluded to sit still and wait the course of events. After having been sufficiently entertained by the vain efforts of her neighbor to find the pocket, she turned to him and said quietly, "My pocket is on the other side, sir." The man immediately jumped up, pulled the strap, and disappeared with most amazing rapidity, the coolness of the lady having been too much for his artistic nerves.

Idle Girls.

It is a painful spectacle in families where a mother is a drudge to see the daughters elegantly dressed, reclining at their ease with their drawing, their music, their fancy work and their reading, beguiling themselves of the lapse of hours, days and weeks, but as a necessary consequence of neglect of duty, growing weary of their useless lives, laying hold of every newly invented stimulant to arouse their drooping energy, and blaming their fate, when they dare not blame their God, for having placed them where they are. These individuals will often tell you, with an air of affected compassion (for who can believe it real), that poor, dear mamma is working herself to death, yet no sooner do you propose that they should assist her, than they declare she is quite in her element, in short, that she would never be happy if she had only half so much to do.