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A Tree on a Steeple. The spectacle of a tree standing upon a tower of the Unitarian church in the city of Utica, N. Y., has aroused much interest as well as discussion as to what is really essential to plant life in order that development may continue.

This mountain ash has been growing for 30 years upon a narrow ledge of sand stone, sprouting from a joint in the masonry less than an inch in width. The main stem, just above the stone, at the present time has a diameter of 5 inches. The tree is 15 or 20 feet in height, and possibly 3 feet across its widest part; the branches are thick and numerous, and for some years each autumn they have been bright with the vivid scarlet berries peculiar to this species of tree.

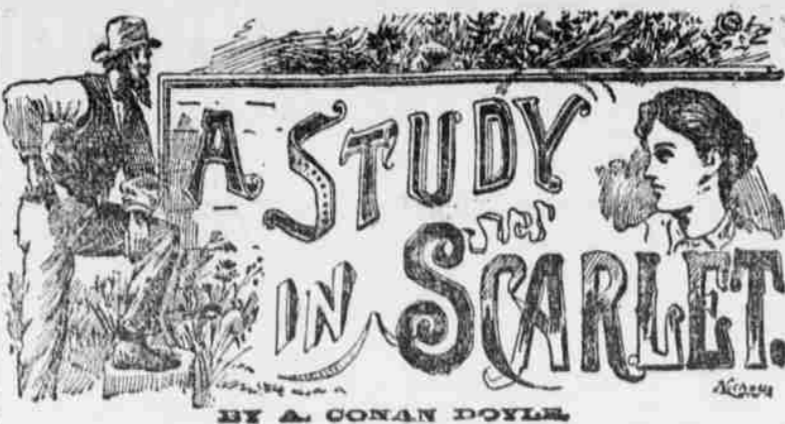
Protruding from a chink in a mortared wall, 45 feet above the street, exposed to the glare of the sun in the summer and the frosts of many severe winters, its roots only having the mortared interstices of masonry through which to penetrate in search of nutriment, the question may well be asked, Where does this tree obtain the elements that enter into the composition of all plant life? Is it possible that it is sustained like the known air plants, by absorbing from the air and through its foliage the elements upon which it lives and thrives? Or does dust settle in the crevices?—American Agriculturist.

Orange Growing in Palestine. It is only of recent years that Jaffa oranges have obtained a worldwide reputation, for but some 18 years since they were scarcely known save at Beyrout, Alexandria and Constantinople. A special feature of the Jaffa orange is that it will keep 30 or 40 days, and if properly packed for two and sometimes even three months. The port of Jaffa is surrounded on the land side by orange groves, covering an area of 1,760 acres. Now orange groves are constantly being planted, and there are now orchards as many as there were 15 years ago. Each orange garden contains about 2,000 square feet of planted area, equal to about 1,300 trees to 2 1/2 acres. The trees begin to bear the fourth year after planting, but it is estimated that it takes seven and sometimes eight years before an orange orchard yields a paying crop. During all this time and even afterward the orchards have to be watered continually, and this irrigation is the most difficult and laborious part of the work, the water having to be drawn by means of primitive waterwheels from wells dug in the garden 60 feet and even 100 feet deep.—Planters' Gazette.

Italy Gains Time. Italy has gained 10 minutes in time by changing its standard from 50 minutes earlier than Greenwich to exactly an hour. On the question of time the countries of Europe are now divided into three groups, that of the west, consisting of England, France, Spain and Portugal, Holland and Belgium, which take their time from Greenwich; the central group of Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Switzerland and Italy, whose standard time is exactly 60 minutes earlier, and, finally, the oriental group of Russia, Turkey, the Balkan states and Greece, whose time differs two hours from that of Greenwich.—Exchange.

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BY A. CONAN DOYLE

CHAPTER IV. WHAT JOHN RANCE HAD TO TELL. It was one o'clock when we left No. 3 Lauriston gardens. Sherlock Holmes led me to the nearest telegraph office, where he dispatched a long telegram. He then hailed a cab and ordered the driver to take us to the address given us by Lestrade.

"There is nothing like first-hand evidence," he remarked; "as a matter of fact, my mind is entirely made up upon the case, but still we may as well learn all that is to be learned."

"You amaze me, Holmes," said I. "Surely you are not as sure as you pretend to be of all those particulars which you gave me."

"There's a room for a mistake," he answered. "The very first thing which I observed on arriving there was that a cab had made two rats with its wheels close to the curb. Now, up to last night, we have had no rain for a week, so that those wheels, which left such a deep impression, must have been there during the night. There were the marks of the horse's hoofs, too, the outline of one of which was far more clearly cut than that of the other three, showing that just as we saw a new shoe. Since the cab was there after the rain began, and was not there at any time during the morning—I have Lestrade's word for that—it follows that it must have been there during the night, and, therefore, that it brought those two individuals to the house."

"That seems simple enough," said I; "but how about the other man's height?"

"Why, the height of a man, in nine cases out of ten, can be told from the length of his stride. It is a simple calculation enough though there is no use my boring you with figures. I had this fellow's stride, both on the clay outside and on the dust within. Then I had a way of checking my calculation. When a man writes on a wall, his instinct leads him to write about the level of his own eyes. Now, that writing was just over six feet from the ground. It was child's play."

"And his age?" I asked.

"Well, if a man can stride four and a half feet without the smallest effort, he can't be quite in the mere and yellow. That was the breadth of a puddle on the garden walk which he had evidently walked across. Patent-leather boots had gone round and round the puddle, but he had stepped on it at all. I am simply applying to ordinary life a few of those precepts of observation and deduction which I advocated in that article. Is there anything else that puzzles you?"

"The finger-nails and the Trichinopoly," I suggested.

"The writing on the wall was done with a man's forefinger dipped in blood. My glass allowed me to observe that the plaster was slightly scratched in doing it, which would not have been the case if the man's nail had been trimmed. I gathered up some scattered ash from the floor. It was dark in color and flaky—such an ash as is only made by a Trichinopoly. I have made a special study of cigar ashes—in fact, I have written a monograph upon the subject. I flatter myself that I can distinguish at a glance the ash of any known brand either of cigar or of tobacco. It is just in such details that the skilled detective differs from the Gregson and Lestrade type."

"And the florid face?" I asked.

"Ah, that was a more daring shot. Though I have no doubt that I was right. You must not ask me that in the present state of the affair."

seeing that I had to prop him up—me and Murcher between us. He was a long chap, with a red face, the lower part muffled round—"That will do," cried Holmes. "What became of him?"

"We'd enough to do without looking after him," the policeman said, as an aggravated voice. "I'll vager he found his way home all right."

"How was he dressed?"

"A brown overcoat."

"Had he a whip in his hand?"

"A whip—no."

"He must have left it behind," muttered my companion. "You didn't happen to see or hear a cab after that?"

"No."

"There's a half sovereign for you," my companion said, standing up and taking his hat. "I am afraid, Rance, that you will never rise in the force. That head of yours should be for use as well as ornament. You might have gained your sergeant's stripes last night. The man whom you held in your hands is the man who holds the clew of this mystery, and whom we are seeking. There is no use of arguing about it now; I tell you that it is so. Come along, doctor."

We started off for the cab together, leaving our informant incredulous, but obviously uncomfortable.

"The blundering fool!" Holmes said, bitterly, as we drove back to our lodgings. "Just to think of his having such an incomparable bit of good luck, and not taking advantage of it."

"I am rather in the dark still. It is true that the description of this man tallies with your idea of the second party in this mystery. But why should he come back to the house after leaving it? This is not the way of criminals."

"The ring, man, the ring; that was what he came back for. If we have no other way of catching him we can always bait our line with the ring. I shall have him, doctor. I'll lay you two to one that I have him. I must thank you for that. I didn't have you for you, and so have missed the finest study I ever came across; a study in scarlet, eh? Why shouldn't we use a little art-jargon? There's the scarlet thread of murder running through the colorless skin of life, and our duty is to unravel it, and isolate it, and expose every inch of it. And now for lunch, and then for Norman Neruda. Her attack and her bowing are splendid. What's that little thing of Chopin's she plays so magnificently?—Tr-la-la-lira-lira-lira."

"Leaving back in the cab, this man's blood-bound carol away like a lark, while I meditated upon the many-sidedness of the human mind."

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