



CHAPTER XIV.

We were no nearer the truth than before. Rose Gernon had told us nothing new, comparatively speaking. Certainly she declared herself to be innocent of the crime and accused Strent, but if we found Strent he might declare himself innocent and accuse her. One or the other of them must necessarily be guilty, as they alone had seen Felix on that fatal night. Rose was being closely watched by a detective, so that we could obtain her evidence at any moment. It now remained for us to find Strent and hear his story. Francis believed Strent had killed his brother. I had my doubts, as I could see no motive for his committing the crime, whereas Rose, in a fit of blind anger, might have done so. Merrick's theory as to her guilt was more in accordance with my belief.

The Fen inn. You know, Denham, I have some skill in catching expressions and watching faces. The fellow struck me as such a smug scoundrel that I penciled a caricature of him while he moved about the dining room. It is not a photograph certainly. Still I think it is sufficiently like him. "Capital," said the doctor, rubbing his hands. "It's a good thing you employ your leisure in that way, Mr. Briarfield. It may do you a great service." "You think I am in danger?" "I think you stand in a perilous position," replied the doctor gravely. "Your very efforts to preserve your secret and baffle Denham will secure against you with the police. And you must tell them all, seeing you know where the body was to be found." "I'll tell them all and do the best I can," said Francis, turning pale, "but Rose can prove I was never out of my room." "No, she can't. Rose went to bed, and for aught she knows you might have come down and quarreled with your brother afterward. Your only chance, Mr. Briarfield, of proving your innocence is to find Strent. If you give that portrait to the detective watching Rose Gernon, I believe you'll lay hands on him, but it's a mere chance." "There is another means of identification," said I. "Strent is lame, so if a lame man calls on Miss Gernon my detective, aided by the picture, will know it is Strent." "Well, go and try my plan," said Merrick, looking at Francis with his hand on his forehead. "I hope for your sake, Mr. Briarfield, it will be successful." When we left the doctor, Francis looked pale and upset. He was just beginning to realize the predicament in which he stood. I was afraid myself that when all was known he would be arrested. His own actions looked black, though I knew they were done out of pure foolishness. Had he only trusted me to the end, all the trouble would have been averted. As it was, I determined to stand by him to the end. "Cheer up, Briarfield," said I, clapping him on the back. "If Merrick and I solved so much of the mystery, you may be sure we'll find out the rest." "It's the newspapers I'm thinking of," he said ruefully. "If all this foolishness gets into the press, Mrs. Bellin will never let me marry Olivia." "I don't think Mrs. Bellin will have much say in the matter," I answered dryly. "Olivia is not the kind of woman to give up her lover so easily, particularly when she knows the truth. She'll stick to you, as I intend to do. As to the press, you forget that in finding Strent, and where he was to be discovered none of us knew. Merrick's clever brain discovered a clue to the destination of the fugitive." "Did you ride to the Fen inn from Marshminster?" he asked Francis. "No. Had I come by train to Marshminster I would have gone to Bellin Hall, where my brother was staying, and seen him before Olivia." "It's a pity you did not go there," said Merrick thoughtfully. "All this trouble might have been avoided. Well, how did you get to the Fen inn?" "I took the train from London to Starby, hired a horse there and rode to the Fen inn." "How far is it from Starby to the Fen inn?" "About 12 miles." "And from the Fen inn to Marshminster?" "Ten miles." "Much about a march," said Merrick. "Did you tell Strent you had ridden from Starby?" "Yes. I had no reason to conceal my movements." "Quite so. Well, according to Rose Gernon, it was your horse Strent took to escape?" "It was. I wonder he did not take the horse of Felix." "For a very simple reason. He knew when the alarm was given that you and Denham would go to Marshminster. Therefore, to hide his trail the better, he went back with your horse to Starby." "Do you think so?" "I am sure of it. Go to the livery stable at Starby where you hired your horse, and I am certain you will find it there, restored by Strent." "Well," said I, in nowise satisfied, "suppose we trace him to Starby. That will be of no use. No doubt he took the train there for London." "Very probably," said Merrick coolly, "and waited there for Rose Gernon." "But she has not seen him since he fled from the inn." "So she says, but it is not true, for all that. When he killed Felix, and the evidence seems to point to him as the murderer, he told Rose to take the gig and go to Marshminster. Then he rode off to Starby and rejoined her in London." "But why should she conceal his movements?" "Because he knows too much about the crime," said Merrick decisively. "Either she did it herself and is afraid of his speaking, or he did it, and she wishes to screen him." "Why should she wish to screen a man who killed her lover?" "I can't answer all questions," said Merrick irritably, finding himself at a loss. "All this is pure theory, but I think it is so. I am certain there is an understanding between Rose and Strent. If that detective watching Rose only knew Strent, I am certain he would catch him paying her a visit." "Why not give the detective a picture of the man?" suggested Francis. "Why not indeed?" I retorted derisively. "Because we haven't got a picture." "I have one at my rooms," said Francis. "Where did you get it?" "I drew it while waiting for Felix at

"Are you going to arrest me?" "No. There is not sufficient evidence against you. Besides I quite believe your story. Still, I wish to see you tomorrow. He may not believe you so easily as I." "What do you think is best to be done?" I asked dully. "Well, judging from what you have told me, I should think the best thing would be to find Strent," said the inspector. "He is the only man to solve the mystery. Failing him, you'd better get Rose Gernon down. Her evidence may go to prove that Mr. Briarfield was in bed at the time Felix was in the house." "I'll wire for her to come down at once," I said, jumping up. "It will be as well. I'll send a man over to Starby and find out if Strent delivered the horse to the livery stable keeper. I wish to heaven, Denham," said the inspector, raving at me, "that you had told me all about this at first." "I acted for the best." "I've no doubt you did," he replied ill temperedly, "but I hate your amateur detectives. They simply muddle things. I'd have straightened out this coil long ago had I taken it in hand." "I have my doubts of that," said I dryly and went off to the telegraph office. There I sent a telegram to Rose Gernon asking her to come down by the early train next morning and also informed the detective that I wished her to come. I knew quite well she would not dare to refuse, and, moreover, that my detective would send a man to watch her, while he waited round her house for the possible appearance of Strent.

When I got back to the inspector's room, I found that his ill temper had vanished, and he was doing his best to console Francis. "I've seen a man in a worse plight than is yours, Mr. Briarfield," he was saying when I entered, "and yet he came out all right in the end. The cause of his predicament was similar." "What was that?" said Francis, looking up. "Lack of moral courage. Had you told Denham at the time and then both of us had told me, we might have laid our hands on Rose Gernon and Strent. As it was, you gave them time to make up their plans and get away." "Rose hasn't got away," said I grimly. "She's safe enough and will be here tomorrow." "I wish we could say the same about Strent," said the inspector. "Do you think he is guilty?" asked Francis. "Upon my word, sir, after all my experience of the law, I am afraid to say who is guilty and who isn't. That theory of Dr. Merrick's regarding Rose Gernon is feasible enough. She certainly seems to have had more motive for killing your brother than had Strent." "It's my opinion," said I, "that there is a relationship between Strent and Rose. In such relationship lies the secret of the crime and her silence." "Humph! There's something in that," said the inspector. "They might be man and wife." "Or brother and sister," suggested Francis. "Or even lovers," I said, nodding my head. "Jealousy on the part of Strent might have spurred him on to killing Felix."



These, however, were all theories, and we parted for the night without coming to any decision as to who was the guilty party. In the morning I received a telegram from Merrick which went off with it at once to the inspector. It ran thus: "Have secured Strent. Am bringing him down with Rose. Arrive at noon. Hold over inquest if possible." "By Jove, sir," said the inspector, "that man is lost as a doctor. He ought to be a detective." [TO BE CONTINUED.]

Long Sleepers. When the heat of a tropical or semitropical summer dries up every pool and parches the ground to such an extent that it is difficult for animals not endowed with great powers of locomotion to obtain water, they compromise by nature by sleeping off the season of heat and scarcity. The winter sleepers are, in fact, the summer sleepers being for the most part inhabitants of tropical countries, far removed from the path of trained observers, we are less acquainted with the species practicing that means of escaping the heat and drought of summer. Indeed at present only one mammal, the tenec, a hedgehoglike beast of Madagascar, is known to do so. In South America and Africa various reptiles, the alligator, the land and fresh water tortoise, the boa constrictor and several sorts of the smaller kinds of serpent lie motionless during the hottest period of the tropical summer. But their dormancy is not so perfect as that of some hibernators. In Brazil, Australia and the Cape Colony lizards, frogs, tortoises and insects pass months of the rainless season incoiled in hard earth, and in India many species of fishes live during the hot season in a torpid condition, imbedded in the hardened clay.—Brooklyn Eagle.

His Minister. The mayor of a small Italian commune had to receive the king of Italy, who, with his accustomed kindness, pressed his hand like an old friend. Totally overcome with pride and emotion at this honor, the poor man lost not only his head, but his tongue altogether, and stammeringly exclaimed: "Now that I have seen your majesty you can die content."—Exchange.

WELCOME WORDS TO WOMEN. Many times women call on their family physicians, suffering, as they imagine, one from rheumatism, another from heart disease, another from liver or kidney disease, another with pain here or there, and in this way they all present to their easy-going doctor, separate diseases, for which he prescribes a different remedy, when, in reality, they are all symptoms caused by some womb disorder. The suffering patient gets no better, but probably worse, by reason of the delay, wrong treatment and consequent complications. A proper medicine like Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, directed to the cause would have promptly cured the disease. Mrs. HARRY TAPPAN, of Reynolds, Jefferson Co., N. Y., writes: "For two years I was suffering. A part of this time had to be carried from my bed. Was racked with pain, my hysteria was very nervous, no appetite and completely discouraged. A few bottles of 'Favorite' Prescription cured me perfectly. Sold by all dealers in medicine."

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