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Miss Holliday's Afternoon Nap.

By HOWARD FIELDING.

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CHAPTER II.

There is a police officer in West Point who has a considerable reputation as a detective. His name is Bernard Kelly. Within an hour after the message was sent out from Sunnyside Kelly arrived. Meanwhile we had made several important discoveries. First we questioned the servants. There were six. Three of them believed that they had heard a sound like a pistol shot, about the time when the crime must have been committed. The other three were sure that they had not. Of the latter, Hanley, the butler, was the most important witness. He was near to the Long Room during the critical period than any other person not actually within it. He had heard nothing, but he had seen something of consequence—namely, a man, whom he did not know, walking hurriedly away from the house. This person the butler had seen from a window. He attached no importance to the circumstance at the time; indeed, he did not mention it until I had sharply questioned him. This was just before Kelly arrived. My first vague suspicions had centered upon Hanley. They were founded only upon his demeanor at the time when he and I were together in the Long Room immediately after my discovery of the crime. Certainly there could not have been a more perfect picture of guilty terror than he furnished when, his horror of the body, and especially of the blood; his eagerness to escape from the room; his dread of questioning, were all suggestive. But I could not at first supply a motive for him. That came later, when

with Kelly's assistance, we examined more closely my uncle's desk. Our first examination of it had but one object; we wished to trace the course of the bullet. This was not difficult. After passing entirely through my uncle's body it had penetrated the back of the desk, and the wall also. I was amazed at the power of the projectile; but Captain Marshall was not. It supported his theory that the new explosive for small arms figured in this case. He was an expert upon this point; indeed, he was at that time conducting experiments with a rifle intended for the army. This dreadful weapon when fired on a level from the height of a man's shoulder would send a bullet nearly two miles, and at 2,000 yards would drive it through the bodies of seven men.

He stated these facts to me with professional calmness; he even offered to exhibit them to me if I would go some day to his laboratory and proving ground, which was on the outskirts of West Point. His knowledge of the subject was undoubtedly great, and the more I thought upon it the more important, in my mind, became the coincidence of the presence of such a man in that house at a time when a mysterious and terribly powerful weapon had been mysteriously employed.

My interest became horror when I found soon afterward that this circumstance impressed itself more strongly than any other upon the mind of Bernard Kelly. Through Margaret he learned from Mrs. Holliday that she had left Marshall alone in the parlor for fully ten minutes. He seemed not to have moved when she returned, but he had time to go to the Long Room and return.

Margaret told me of Kelly's questions, despite his warning to her to keep absolute silence about them. She said, frankly, that they indicated to her his suspicion that Marshall had committed the crime.

"That is not to be thought of," said the girl, in all others, had most reason to wish my father to live. Perhaps; yet it is true that a living father may change his mind about a daughter's marriage, but the expressed desire cannot be recalled when death has sealed the lips. Then came that other discovery relative to the desk, and it threw all my theories into confusion. On the forenoon of that day I had seen a pile of bank notes in a drawer of the desk, and the topmost had been of the denomination of one hundred dollars. How much was in the pile I did not know. My uncle had closed the drawer immediately. I had seen only one of the bills. When we searched the desk under Kelly's direction there was no money at all in it. My uncle had only a few dollars and a gold watch in his pockets.

pision was rampant. In my own mind Hanley, Marshall and Hilton figured in turn as the murderer. Then the absence of the weapon suggested the mysterious stranger whom the butler had seen. My thoughts were in a whirl, and their confusion became more as I perceived that both Hilton and Marshall were coming more and more closely into conference and conspicuously shunning me.

I heard one of the servants say to another that Captain Marshall had done it, and the reply was that, who- ever had fired the shot, Margaret Holliday was certainly a party to the crime. Another servant in response to my questioning said that he had seen Han-



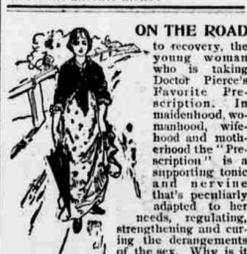
Conspicuously Shunning Me.

ley enter the Long Room from the dining room which adjoined it, not ten minutes before any discovery of the murder. Hanley, with white lips, denied that he had been in that room since morning. Marshall and Hilton divided between them the care of the body and did not consult me. I passed the night in torment, relieved only by an occasional sight of Margaret, who twice or thrice came from her mother's room to speak with me. She would not see Marshall. I think that she believed him guilty. At 8 o'clock I was standing on the veranda in front of the house when the sound of wheels startled me, and I saw a carriage containing Bernard Kelly and a man who leaned far back with his face in the shadow. It flashed across me in a second that Kelly had solved the riddle, arrested the murderer, and was bringing him to the house. If that was so, the prisoner could be no other than the man whom Hanley had seen. And then I thought of the steps that I had heard, and had supposed to be Marshall's, as I lay in the hammock. Had the murderer passed the hammock. Had the murderer passed me?

The carriage rapidly approached. In a few seconds it was near enough for me to see the face of the shadow. Kelly's companion was Horace Preble. I hope to get through this mortal life without suffering such a shock as that again. "In heaven's name what is this?" I demanded. The young man looked disconsolately down upon the ground. He had at first extended his hand toward me and had withdrawn it. "This thing had to come out," he said. "I've tried to cover it up as much as I could, but it was no use. You might as well know the truth." "Speak!" I cried. "Why, you see, about two years ago, when I lost all my money, was in a desperate fix, I had hoped to live

without work and that hope failed me. I got into bad straits, and at last—of course you'll regard this as confidential!" "Confidential!" "Well, it's known to a few. Every time a thing of this kind happens to me, somebody has to be let in." "Look here, Preble," I exclaimed. "I'm altogether too nervous to stand this strain any longer. Since yesterday I've been suspected of murder by half a dozen people, and have convicted, in my own mind, half a dozen others in town. I convicted you, when I saw you with Detective Kelly. But of course when I stand here face to face with you, I know it can't be true. Yet you have some part in the shameful secret, as you have confessed to me. What is it? Don't keep me in suspense!" "A sickly smile distorted Preble's handsome face. "I am a detective in the pay of the New York police department," he said. "I'm here professionally."

He shuddered at the thought. "It's a little different from the old times," he continued. "I'm heartily ashamed of it, my boy, but it can't be helped now. There's little to choose between detective and criminal in my opinion. The criminal inflicts an injury on society, and the detective inflicts an injury on the criminal; and the best defense that the detective can make is the old school-boy claim: 'The other fellow began it.' Why can't we all let one another alone?"



ON THE ROAD

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I was leaning upon the railing of the veranda and laughing weakly, almost hysterically. To see Preble out of that scrape was too much happiness for me. Little I cared about his profession. I thought it as good as most others and much better than the law. But I knew him well enough to be sure that whatever profession he had chosen would immediately seem to him the most disgraceful and unbecoming that men's needs had ever produced.

"We wired to New York for a man," said Kelly, "and Byrnes sent up Mr. Preble. Between us I guess we can sift this matter down. Would you like to look at the body, Mr. Preble?" "Not yet," he replied. "Let us have a look at the room."

Capt. Marshall joined us while we were busy there. Preble was examining the bullet hole in the desk and in the wall. He enlarged the latter until he could see through it, and then he looked out, following with his eyes as nearly as possible the direction of the ball. "There's a chance that we can find it," he said, and led the way to the grounds at the rear of the house. Fifty yards back we came to a large tree, and in its rough bark, near the ground, after most careful searching, Preble found a bullet hole. Five minutes later he held in his hand the leaden missile that had killed Gen. Holliday.

"Capt. Marshall," he said, "you, as an expert, will be able to tell us what sort of weapon carries such a bullet." "You know already," replied the captain, with a sort of gasp. "I can see that in your face. It is the bullet which the rifle I am testing carries. There is no other like it."

I looked anxiously at Preble, and saw, to my surprise, that he was not regarding Marshall. He was looking over the captain's head. I turned and saw a man running through the grounds. He was bent double, and seemed to fancy himself to be shielded by some low shrubbery. I recognized Hanley, the butler. "You'd better go after him, Kelly," said Preble, and Kelly obeyed, exhibiting a surprising swiftness of foot. He overtook Hanley before he had reached the road which bounds the estate upon the south; and in a few minutes the trembling servant stood before Preble. The detective nodded to Kelly, who instantly began to search Hanley. In one of his pockets was a package of two one-hundred-dollar bills. "Now, let's have your story without a moment's delay," said Preble, sternly. "I swear to you, sir," replied the butler, solemnly, "that I had no hand in what I saw. I looked on, but I did not kill him. It was this way; I went into the Long Room to speak to him. Miss Margaret was asleep on the couch. The general also seemed to be asleep with his head on his desk. And right there in plain sight was all that money. "I've been hard pressed, sir, of late. There's been some bad as me at a disadvantage and have used their power. It's their fault, sir, that I took the money. I'm no thief at heart. I did it in sheer nervousness at the sight of what I needed so much. "The general never stirred. He was dead then, sir, I've no doubt, but I didn't know it. I got away with the money and hid it in my room. Then when the murder was discovered I was near frozen with horror. I would have restored the money, but there's been no chance. Somebody has been in that room all the time. So this morning, when I learned that one of the servants had seen me go into that room,

and had told on me, I resolved to run for it. That's the whole truth, sir, and I'm glad to have it off my mind." "I believe you, my man," said Preble. "It's never a good thing in this world to be too smart, and it's your good fortune that you're not nearly smart enough to have committed this crime, supposing that it is a crime at all." He directed Kelly to keep an eye on Hanley and then we all went into the Long Room. We found Margaret and



The Search for the Bullet.

Dr. Hilton there. Margaret greeted Preble with great cordiality. She said that she felt much relieved at having had advice and aid, for she had always thought him to be gifted with an exceptionally clear mind. "If my present theory of this terrible mystery proves to be correct," said Preble, "I think we shall all feel greatly relieved. It is only a theory at present, and its basis is no more than this: He opened his hand and showed a splinter of wood about an inch and a half long. For my part I had no idea of its bearing upon the case. The others seemed equally at a loss. "I found this on the floor at that end of the room," he said, pointing away from the general's desk. "It was knocked off the inside of the wall by the bullet which killed your father. It surprises me, gentlemen, that when you had found where the bullet went out you should not have looked for the place where it came in."

"But, Preble," I exclaimed, "you are not going to tell us that the murderer fired through that wall and across the whole length of this room?" "And a mile of open country besides," said Preble, calmly, "if my theory is true. Capt. Marshall, will you tell me whether I am correct in saying that a line drawn from the spot where Gen. Holliday was struck down and extended through the wall one foot to the left of that window would pass close to your laboratory on the other side of the valley?"

Marshall's forehead was wet with perspiration. "It is true," he said, in a low voice. "I am afraid that your theory is right." "You mean," I cried, "that the accidental discharge of a rifle which was being tested is responsible for this terrible calamity?" "You have seen the bullet," said Preble, "and I have proven the direction in which it came. The weapon could not have been fired near the house or you would have heard the report. The shot must have been accidental, for the distance and the impossibility of seeing into this room preclude the possibility of intent. I can see no other explanation. However,

we need not be long in doubt. If Capt. Marshall will accompany me to the spot we can learn whether there was an accidental discharge of a rifle at the hour named.

"I may add," he continued, "that the whole aspect of this case indicates the work of chance. It had not from the first the appearance of human device. The absolutely impartial bearing of the facts, which implicated equally every person who could have been physically present, showed a broader grasp of detail than any man can claim. The minor crime of Hanley strikes in discordantly with the rest. You can readily see the difference between design and fate which can have no purpose. This terrible event is the forerunner of many which will follow upon this new development of modern arms. And the tragedies will not all be accidents. If a murderer can be repeated trials at last strike down his victim at the distance of more than a mile, he will be less often restrained by mere cowardice."

He bade us good-bye and went away with Marshall and Kelly. In an hour we received a telephone message from the last named, that Preble's theory had been confirmed. [The End.]

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