

The Home Reading Circle

THE MURDER AT OLDBY.

John Bridger, called the Boss 'Tec,' was out of humor with the world in general and with the village of Oldby in particular.

The crime he was investigating was too ordinary to attract one of those miraculous flashes of insight which he was so famous; in fact, had he not been longing for country air after his close application to the noted Vanglard-Vannes case, he would have turned the Oldby murder over to a coroner.

The stranger arrived on Wednesday by the 12:15 Liverpool street; at 6 that same evening Dr. Settle received an urgent summons to Lea farm, about two miles away.

A British earthwork, picturesquely crowned by elm and wild cherry trees, had been attracted to M. d'Hambu, for he had evidently climbed the style half-way down the lane, and crossed the "British Field" to the knoll.

"A tramp," he remarked parenthetically, "may mutter imprecations when sent away empty-handed, but he does not run amuck like a Malay fanatic."

"The station master was called. 'Had the 6:20 train set down any passengers?' 'Yes; one.' 'Who?' 'The doctor.'"

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"And if she isn't here now!" exclaimed the old woman, with a look of genuine gladness.

"Not—Not—You can't suspect her!" said the young man, vehemently, thus betraying his fears.

"I don't know, I'm here to suspect anybody and everybody—even you!" The expression of his host's face assured the detective that he was guilty.

"But don't be over-troubled. Of course the whole thing is a trouble, but still, much has to be proved yet; much may have to be unproved. Light may come with tomorrow's post."

"The morning's post brought the hoped-for light. From Brussels there was a brief note."

"The school is near the Pare Leopold; very quiet and well-conducted. Miss M. was liked by all; there is no escape of hers to record—her hobby was painting."

"From Paris the missive was bulkier: 'M. d'Hambu seems to have been simply a flaneur, whose sole aim was to be true chic. His brother cannot account for the murder; says Alphonse would not be a man to quarrel and thinks the motive must have been highway robbery.'"

"No, certainly not; she was too fair, too slight, too arch. John Bridger looked at her again and again, for his professional antennae detected that this girl had entered largely into M. d'Hambu's life."

"The policeman," said Mrs. Green, interrupting his study of the album. "Boss 'Tec' turned, to see in the man's hand a foreign dagger, half covered by congealed blood."

"The motive?" inquired Mr. Bridger, looking up suddenly. "The motive will ooze out at the trial sir. Motives are like rats in a hole; they flaunt out when you least expect 'em. Shall I get a warrant for her arrest?"

"Wait. I will see her myself. Come to me later." The light upstairs—the dagger—the jet beads—the evident bearing of a painful secret, murmured John Bridger; "clear circumstantial evidence, truly! The bench would bring in a verdict of guilty at once; and yet I don't believe Miss Marchden did it! That girl, for my husband's sake, I kept silent, she said, but would not have let Marjorie suffer."

"I wish to speak with you about this unfortunate affair. Perhaps, madam, as the intimate friend of Miss Marchden, you may help me a little. But I find I have left a paper I require in my room. Will you excuse me one moment? I will return when you return."

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The Fabulous Land Of South Africa.

Its Great Men, its Diamond Mines, the Tyranny of the Boers and Other Facts of Interest.

Interest in the singular career of Barney Barnato, the South African diamond king who recently committed suicide by jumping overboard from the ship which was carrying him from Capetown to England, prompted a Tribune representative to inquire, the other day of Rev. James Hughes, the Kimberley, South Africa, clergyman, who is now visiting relatives in this city, what he knew about Barnato.

"Take him all in all," said Rev. Mr. Hughes, "the man was a powerful man. I have excellent reasons for regretting his death, which I am convinced was due entirely to the strain incident to overwork. In my missionary labors at Kimberley among the Kaffirs, Mr. Barnato aided me frequently, generously and often without solicitation. He was a peculiar character, good natured to a degree, witty, never ill at ease. In any company, whether at a mining camp among the rough and ready characters often congregated there, or at a council board of dignified business men, he was ever equal to the surroundings."

"At the time I left Kimberley his wealth was computed at \$100,000; but while he had an eye always to the main chance, it was only necessary to convince him that a project offered beneficial results to win both his good words and his check. He had a marvelous mind for business enterprises on a large scale; in fact, he was what might fairly be termed Napoleon in America. You would call him a hustler."

"Speaking of that, let me tell you of one little incident. Near Kimberley, but over the line, two Englishmen were arrested for theft. There was an old law among the Boers which made theft a capital offense. It was never enforced against the Boers themselves, but on this particular occasion the law sentence was pronounced on these two Uitlanders. As a minister of the gospel, I protested against the excessive and inhuman character of the sentence. In reply I received from the Boers a written notice that the natives caught in the act of swallowing diamonds are kept under arrest until the gems are recovered. One day as I was passing through the mine hospital at Kimberley, the physician in charge, a personal friend, called my attention to a strapping big Kaffir who lay on a cot suffering from a wound in the fleshy part of the leg. The physician said he had dressed that wound twice a day for a fortnight, and it wouldn't heal. He was getting his attention awaited the result of the probing. From the wound, buried deep in the gashed flesh, diamonds to the value of \$150 were taken."

"The natives employed in the diamond mines make away with many valuable gems." "They sometimes try to, but the system of espionage in vogue in the mines leaves little chance for a theft to pass undetected. There is at Kimberley a regular quarantine department, where natives caught in the act of swallowing diamonds are kept under arrest until the gems are recovered. One day as I was passing through the mine hospital at Kimberley, the physician in charge, a personal friend, called my attention to a strapping big Kaffir who lay on a cot suffering from a wound in the fleshy part of the leg. The physician said he had dressed that wound twice a day for a fortnight, and it wouldn't heal. He was getting his attention awaited the result of the probing. From the wound, buried deep in the gashed flesh, diamonds to the value of \$150 were taken."

"Kimberley is situated on a table land about 1,200 feet above sea level. This table land has a circumference of about 9 miles. Almost in the center there is a big rock. A shaft has been sunk perpendicularly through this rock to a depth of 1,200 feet. On top of the rock around the rock there is a twelve-foot layer of yellowish deposit resembling stone but somewhat porous. This substance, so far as known, is valueless. Beneath it is a bluish soil which extends entirely across the table land and to a depth not yet estimated. Test holes show that it is 1,200 feet thick at least, but how much more is not known. This bluish soil contains the diamonds. From the shaft chambers are extended horizontally into this diamond-bearing earth. The earth is excavated, loaded on small cars and hauled to the surface. Next it is spread out on immense floors in the sun and covered with water. The evaporation of the water tends to disintegrate the chunks of earth. This is put through a crushing machine, treated to a bath which washes most of the free soil away, raked over by a machine with teeth which break the remaining lumps, and lastly is examined for diamonds. The average yield per car-load of blue soil is from one to one and a quarter carats, worth from \$100 to \$125. The mine at Kimberley has hardly begun to touch the diamond-bearing blue soil at its command. There are diamonds enough there to make them as cheap as rhinestones if they were all dug out and thrown on the market at once. The great problem at Kimberley is to keep from turning them out too rapidly."

"What, in your opinion, is likely to be the outcome of these troubles?" "In the fulness of time, a united South Africa, Cecil Rhodes' dream of empire is plainly destined to become a reality sooner or later. The same reasons which hold the American States together and point to a continental American republic as the new world's manifest destiny are at work in favor of a confederation of the various colonies of modern Africa. Such a summation would be an incalculable blessing to all humanity, since it would open up an inviting new territory for the relief of the more congested populations of the world, afford opportunities for profitable employment to the thousands in Europe and also, I fear in America, who now starve in idleness, and convert what until late years was a waste place into a great center of agriculture and industry."

"You are, then, an admirer of Cecil Rhodes?" "I have been brought into contact with many of the administrative geniuses of the British empire, and show no hesitancy in saying that Cecil Rhodes impresses me as possessing intellectual and executive qualities of the very highest order. That which I have noticed particularly during my frequent conferences with him is his keen and unaffected interest in the social life of the people. There does not seem to be any limit to his anxiety to aid in building up the new territory over which he was, until recently, presiding factor, of conserving industrial and educational influences. He has been called the empire builder, and in an unusual sense the designation is apt. He builds with a care and patience and foresight remarkable even in these days of successful colonization. My gratitude to Mr. Rhodes for assistance rendered in my own work is so great that at the time when, in consequence of the Jamieson affair, he has to some extent fallen under a passing cloud it gives me added pleasure to testify to the noble qualities of the man. My work at Kimberley, as you know, had to do largely with the industrial training of the natives. We went in to them with the Bible in one hand and the hammer in the other, and though we did not neglect to teach them to pray, we placed emphasis on the necessity of learning to work. Several times Cecil Rhodes voluntarily went into his pocket to help us; at one time he gave us 9,000 acres of land from his own private possessions to endow three centers of industrial mission work among the natives. No broader-gauged man walks the earth than Cecil Rhodes."

"How does the Kaffir in Africa respond to your efforts to civilize him?" "Character-building is a slow process. The Kaffir is a slow man. We have made progress, but there is much yet to be done. The Kaffir has three predominant characteristics. He is dull and stolid in his mental processes; he is by nature disinclined to physical exertion and he has a hereditary and sometimes apparently irresistible inclination toward theft. He is in mind like a new-born Kaffir, but in his state. After a time, he becomes a fairly good workman at the rougher labor on the farms and in the mines, his enormous bodily strength generally counterbalancing the weakness in his intellectual department. But the Kaffir says that he evinces much capability for executive positions. He was evidently destined by nature to be the heaver of wood and drawer of water."

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