

The Split Button.

I often think that the aphorism which proclaims the truth that trifles make the sum of human things was invented by a member of the profession to which I have the honor to belong, for in no walk of life more than in the detective business is the accuracy of this statement more often and more positively born out. In a case which passed through my hands some seven years ago and which created a profound sensation under the name of "The Margrave Mystery," it was the presence of a tiny witness, about one-tenth of an inch in dimension, which enabled me to track the perpetrator of the crime, and to bring him to the scaffold which he merited.

One morning, early in June, I received a telegram from headquarters bidding me to proceed at once to the village of Margrave, in Berkshire, where a certain Dr. Powis desired to interview me immediately. Arrived at the doctor's residence after a 40-minute journey in an express from Waterloo, I was ushered into his library, and found him awaiting me with anxious eyes.

He was a broad-shouldered, firm-faced man, with eyes and mouth which proclaimed honesty and steadfastness of purpose, but it was obvious to me that he was under the influence of some terrible shock, and his very first words proved that my diagnosis of his emotions was correct.

"A horrible and painful episode has just occurred, Mr. Harding," he said, speaking very hurriedly. "My patient, Sir William Margrave, of Margrave Hall, has been poisoned by a bottle of physic sent to him from this house by me—understand that—a bottle of physic prepared by me, with my own hands, last evening and taken by my messenger to his house. Unless the mystery is cleared up before the inquest, I shall be in a dreadful position, and may even have to stand my trial at the assizes. For Heaven's sake, tell me what is to be done."

"I can tell you, Dr. Powis, what is not to be done," I answered, without hesitation, "and that is not to excite yourself thus unnecessarily. By preserving your calmness as much as possible, and giving me a clear and concise account of this affair, you will be helping the cause of justice, and I have no doubt that I shall be able to aid you to some extent."

"Very well, then," he exclaimed, rising and pacing the room nervously. "I may tell you at once that for some time past I have been attending Sir William for gout, and have been in the habit of sending him a bottle of physic every Wednesday evening, to counteract the effects of the complaint in some degree. Last night I prepared the medicine as usual in my surgery downstairs, and having despatched my messenger with the physic, I sat down to read the *Lancet* in my study until bedtime."

He paused, wrung his hands in anguish, and then went on: "All went on as usual, but about midnight I was summoned from my bed by a footman from the Hall. He merely announced that Sir William had been taken very ill—was in violent agonies—and that the servants believed him to be dying. Without a word I followed the man back to the house, and only arrived in time to find the poor old baronet on the point of death, whilst he gasped out to me, as I knelt over him, these words:

"Analyze the medicine! Analyze the medicine!"

"He never spoke again, and from the manner in which his body was contorted, and from the odor in the room, it was obvious to me that he had swallowed a dose of the deadly drug known as oil of almonds—in other words, prussic acid."

"Directly I had laid the dead man upon his bed (for in his struggles he had fallen to the floor) I turned to examine the bottle of medicine, and one whiff at the drug told me what had occurred. An infusion of prussic acid had been added to the gout mixture, and to its addition Sir William's death was to be traced."

"I sent for the servant who had summoned me and bade him ride to the police station and inform the night inspector of what had occurred, and then lay down upon the sofa in the dining-room till 8 o'clock, when the official inquisition arrived in company with the police doctor. The latter agreed with me that the deceased had met his death through poisoning by prussic acid, and I can assure you, Mr. Harding, that from his manner toward me it was plain he considered that I was to blame, and that through some criminal oversight I had committed a blunder and sent Sir William to his death."

"However, he said nothing of the sort to me, and, having taken an official note of the affair, went away. The body now lies at the Hall awaiting the inquest, which will doubtless be held on the day after tomorrow, and you will, therefore, appreciate my position, Mr. Harding. If something is not adjuvated by that time to show that the horrible affair has come about through no fault of mine my reputation will be shattered, and I shall be a ruined man."

"One moment," I said. "I should like to see this messenger of yours."

"You shall do so at once," returned the doctor, and, ringing the bell, he told the maid who answered it to send him in.

The messenger, Travers by name, was a tall, thin man, with bushy side whiskers and neatly-parted black hair. He answered my questions in a straightforward manner, and informed me that he had conveyed the medicine as usual to Margrave Hall, where he

returned to England, where he had resided at his London club for some five years. He was convinced that his relative had had no tendency toward suicide, and that the present tragedy must be attributed to something else. That was all he had to tell, and very well and very glibly he told it.

He was about to glide from the apartment when something that I had not noticed previously sprang to my gaze, and even as it did so an illuminating intelligence swept my entire consciousness.

Rising to my feet I said, in a loud, clear tone:

"Mr. Coroner, I must ask for an adjournment of this inquest, as I have new evidence to offer."

The coroner started, Margrave stood rooted to the floor, and the doctor's face lit up with joy.

"New evidence," said the coroner; "of what nature?"

"The nature of my evidence," I replied triumphantly, "will take the form of an accusation of 'wilful murder' against the last witness, Arthur Margrave."

A low murmur went around the room, and watching Margrave's face, I saw the color come and go. His knees shook, his hands twitched—if ever guilt was written in a man's face and in a man's figure, they were written in his face and his figure at that moment.

But I was resolved to lose no time in following up my master clew, and taking from my bag a pair of bushy whiskers and a black wig which I carried for the purposes of my business, I clapped them onto Arthur Margrave as he stood there, rigid and amazed, and then turning to Dr. Powis, who was regarding the scene with eyes of amazement, I cried out:

"Dr. Powis, do you recognize Mr. Margrave in his new character, or rather his old one?"

"Heaven have mercy on me!" shouted the doctor, leaping back. "It is John Travers, my missing messenger."

"Exactly so," I returned, as I removed the disguise and quietly handcuffed the terror-stricken scoundrel, "exactly so; and there is no doubt, doctor, that your old messenger knew what he was doing when he took up his situation with you. Further evidence will, of course, have to be collected as to Mr. Margrave's alleged residence at his London club during the past few months; and I venture to think that the club is a myth, and that we shall have no difficulty in proving it to be such. However, all the necessary evidence will be forthcoming at the further hearing, and in view of these developments I must ask, Mr. Coroner, for an adjournment."

"It is granted," he said, without a moment's hesitation. "I hereby adjourn the hearing until this day fortnight."

"By which time," I added quickly, "I have every reason to believe that my case will be complete."

Next morning I received a note from the doctor that ran thus:

"Dear Mr. Harding—The inquest is fixed for next Friday at 12 noon, at the Hall itself. I would have wired you the information, but as I have some other news to communicate I write instead."

"The news in question is that my messengers, Travers, has suddenly disappeared. He went out at 7 o'clock this evening and has not returned. Following so closely on the terrible tragedy at the Hall, the disappearance seems suspicious, and I presume you will use all your influence at Scotland Yard to have him traced."

Yours faithfully,
"CLAUDE POWIS."

"Now, what does this mean?" I asked myself, as I read and re-read the letter. "Why on earth should the messenger vanish at this point? Assuming even that he was responsible for the crime, what possible motive could he have possessed for committing it?"

However, it was of little use to question myself thus, and I went to work immediately to have the man traced. All our efforts in this direction proved useless, and when I went down to Margrave to attend the inquest on Friday, the man was still beyond our reach.

Dr. Powis, who looked exceedingly haggard, was very pleased to see me, but his face fell when I told him that Travers was not to be discovered.

The jury will say that I have got him out of the country for some reason of my own," he mumbled helplessly; but perceiving that the coroner was at this moment entering the library where the inquest was to be held, he checked his speech and followed the official silently into the apartment.

The jury were called in, sworn, and seats were allotted to them. The usual formalities followed, and then the examination of the witnesses took place. These included Dr. Powis, two of the Hall servants, and the present baronet, Arthur Margrave, who had read of his relative's shocking end in the papers, and who had come down to the Hall immediately to take up his residence there and to give the lawyers any aid that might be required.

The evidence of the servants was disposed of very quickly, and was of small service. The doctor's turn followed, and it was evident from the manner in which the coroner addressed him the latter believed the physician to have been guilty of gross carelessness in the handling of the drugs. The doctor felt that the coroner was taking this harsh view, and it did not help to make him more comfortable. On the contrary, it broke down completely what little nerve was left in him, and when, at length, he was curtly told that he might stand down, he collapsed completely, and was obliged to seek the nearest chair.

Arthur Margrave's turn now came. He was a tall, clean-shaven young man, with easy, confident manner and pleasant voice. We told how he had been wandering about the continent for the past few years, had recently

LIVING OVER A VOLCANO

THOUSANDS DWELL IN PEACEFUL HOMES ON VESUVIUS.

Scenes About the Historic Monster of Southern Italy—Indifference to Danger from Lava is Due Largely to the Trust and Faith in the Patron Saint.

The volcano Vesuvius rises on the mainland about 15 miles from the city of Naples and about five miles from the coast, writes W. E. Curtis, in the *Chicago Record-Herald*. It is encircled by a railway at the base, and up to the height of 1900 feet is covered with cities, villages, farmhouses and vineyards. At least 80,000 people live in the midst of continual danger, to which they seem entirely indifferent. It seems strange that a section exposed to such constant peril should be so densely populated, and thousands among those who brave it must have witnessed the terrible destruction from the disturbances of 1872. There were eruptions in 1855 and 1859, which destroyed the road but did not other damage, although they were a loud warning to all who occupy the great amphitheatre within the range of volcanic catastrophe. Last May the machinery of the railway that carries people to the crater was partially destroyed, but little lava was thrown out.

From every window of the white houses which glare in the sun can be seen the floods of lava which have so often poured from the crater of the monster and forced their way down to the sea, burning and burying everything in their track. Yet the peasants continue working in the vineyards within a few yards of the significant streams, producing that popular wine with the blasphemous name, *Lacrima Christi* (tears of Christ). The lava is intensely fertile, which is one reason for the indifference to the danger. The material thrown out from the bowels of the earth is composed of elements especially adapted for growing of grapes. But the volcanic soil is equally productive of other crops.

The greatest security, however, is assured by San Gennaro, the patron saint of Naples, who has repeatedly averted earthquakes and relieved the anxiety of the frightened people. The remains of this saint repose in one of the churches, where there is also a crystal vial containing a quantity of his blood. Upon certain anniversaries the priests take this crystal from the depository. The sacred relic is first conducted at the head of a procession to different sections of the city, in order that as many people as possible may share in the adoration. At the end of the march high mass is celebrated by the bishop or archbishop or some prelate of distinguished rank, while the crystal vase stands upon the altar.

An image or picture of San Gennaro is to be found in every cottage on the volcano, within reach of the danger, and pious peasants will tell you how often the good saint has averted from their vineyards torrents of fire, which had crawled to a point where it seemed that not even divine power could avert destruction. So great is this faith that the thousands of people continue to live conscious of security upon the ground where thousands before them have perished. It is true that there has been no great loss of life of recent years, but Pompeii and Herculaneum were entirely destroyed, and 3000, 4000 and 2000 people have lost their lives on three different occasions within the last two centuries. The eruption of 1784 was the last in which many lives were sacrificed, although in 1872 20 people were killed by their own folly, being led to curiosity to near the point of danger.

Pompeii and Herculaneum were destroyed on the 24th of August in the year 79, when the country was devastated far and wide and buried under showers of ashes and vast streams of lava. It was then that the present cone of the mountain was formed. Previously it was a low ridge, not more than 2000 feet in height. Now the peak extends nearly 4500 feet above the sea and has increased from 3900 feet since 1845 and from 4255 feet since 1869. It is gradually growing, although with every eruption a few feet of the crater is usually knocked off. Last fall the height was reduced 242 feet.

The great naturalist, Pliny, who was also a naval officer, was in command of the fleet in the harbor of Naples during the eruption of 79, and lost his life. His nephew, the younger Pliny, gives a vivid description of the catastrophe in a letter to Tacitus, the historian—how the earth was shaken by internal convulsions and the day turned into night, the extraordinary agitation of the sea, the dense clouds overhanging land and sea and broken by incessant flashes of lightning and terrific thundering; the terrible floods of fire and ashes; and the terror of the people, who believed that the end of the world had arrived.

About once in 20 years these phenomena reappear, although none has since been so destructive. Near the foot of the cone is a meteorological observatory 2220 feet above the sea, perched among the streams of dead lava. It is equipped with seismographs and other apparatus for registering the movement of the earth, and the observer can predict several days in advance any unusual disturbance. But the cats, dogs and horses which live on the sides of the volcano are quite as sensitive and never fail to perceive the approach of danger as soon as the automatic instruments.

The crater which destroyed Pompeii and Herculaneum is extinct. Its work was done and was well done, and it has been gradually filled up by the overflow from other craters which

have broken out since. Every few years there is a break in the side of the cone. Today you can see the last one, which opened in 1899, and the yellow color of the surface of the earth around it is due not to sulphur, as people as first suppose, but to the heat still retained by the earth. The manager of the railway tells me that the rocks and the lava have not yet cooled, although two years have passed, and it is impossible to approach nearer than 50 or 60 yards on account of the heat. The temperature of the lava recorded by the observers in 1899 was 2000 degrees Fahrenheit. I am not able to understand how the record was taken, but give the fact as stated to me.

There was another and an even greater outbreak in 1895, from which flowed several streams of lava with a roar resembling the detonation of artillery. The roadway which had been built at great expense up the side of the mountain was buried under the floods of liquid lava and several hundred yards had to be rebuilt. So far as can be ascertained, that crater was only temporary, and has closed again; but the surface of the mountain is so hot that it cannot be reached.

Since 1872 there has been no eruption from the main crater at the top of the mountain, although a cloud of steam or a pillar of smoke continually arises. The effect of the steam is indescribably beautiful. Its form varies according to the direction and the violence of the wind. When the air is still it rises from the crest of the cone like a titanic plume. At other times it takes the form of a streamer, tapering off into the sky far distant, and again it will settle about the summit of the mountain like a pure white cloud. Occasionally the vapor ceases and volumes of thick, black smoke ascend, which throw a shower of soot over the surrounding country. At rare intervals flames have been seen to shoot up, and sometimes there is a glow at the base of the column of smoke which is explained by different people with different theories.

Notwithstanding the long list of publications by eminent scientists which have appeared since the art of printing was invented, the cause of these phenomena is still a matter of conjecture and controversy. The highest authorities believe that the pit of fire is intimately connected with the sea, and that the regular column of steam is due to the continual flow of water from it into the furnace. When the steam ceases and the black smoke appears they assume that the current of water has temporarily been checked, perhaps by dislodging some block of earth or lava in the interior of the crater, and the smoke continues until the obstacle is removed. But all this is disputed and nobody knows anything about it. There is also a theory, based upon a comparison of observations, that Mount Etna in Sicily is connected with Vesuvius underground, and that both volcanoes are only two chimneys of the same furnace.

QUAINT AND CURIOUS.

The only gem which cannot be imitated is the opal. Its delicate tints cannot be simulated.

Burns committed his poems to memory as he composed them, and when he sat down to write he had before him no labor of composition, but only the task of writing down what he had already finished.

The Siamese have an instrument which they call the *ranat*, a species of harmonicon, with 17 different wooden keys, united by cords and resting upon a stand, each strip of wood giving a different note. The instrument is played with two wooden hammers.

Holland is the cow's paradise; there the family cow is the family pet. She is washed, combed and petted, her tail is plaited up and tied with blue ribbons as carefully and elaborately as the hair of an only daughter, while her health, food and digestive powers are as carefully considered as an infant's.

A curious custom takes place in villages of the Luxemburg district, Belgium, every May. After Sunday service numbers of lads cluster round the church entrance, and as the girls come out seize them one by one, one lad grasping a girl by the shoulder and the other by the heels, the two lifting her well up while a third humpkin passes under the human bridge thus formed. This is done in the presence of the parents, who themselves have passed through the same ordeal.

A notorious old house is to be demolished in Edinburgh, Scotland. The den is situated in what has been known for generations as the West Port, where, in olden days, the heads and limbs of covenanters, witches and criminals of every kind used to be fixed to the gates. Here, in a hovel, known as the *Beggar's hotel*, lived Burke and Hare and carried on their nefarious traffic at a time when all the country was roused and excited over stories of "body-snatchers," as they were called. Stolen bodies and desecrated churchyards were terrible enough, but the wholesale smothering of human beings to procure bodies to sell to doctors for dissection was a crime undreamt of by even the most hardened "snatcher," till the disclosures following the arrest of Burke and Hare. The verb "to burke" remains in the language.

His Experience Was in Mines.

"Did you ever salt sheep?" asked the farmer of the new hired hand who came from Colorado.

"No," replied the new hired hand, "but I've had considerable experience in salting mines."—Ohio State Journal.

BUCKEYE STATE NEWS CONDENSED.

PENSIONS GRANTED.

Fire Fiend Insane—Released From Quarantine—Indian Relics—To Unite Veterans.

The following names are added to the pension roll during the past week. Thomas Francis, Stroughsville, \$6; Zora Lathrop, Zanesville, \$6; Jerry A. Kirby, Mechanicsburg, \$6; Daniel M. Fasing, Akron, \$12; Adams Smith, Oil City, \$17; George F. Au, Canton, \$17; John Williamson, dead, Massillon, \$72; Philip Field, Medina, \$10; George W. Deaver, Deavertown, \$12; Matthew Lennon, Zanesville, \$12; William Hughes, Newark, \$8; Samantha Leeper, Osgood, \$8; Adaline E. Williamson, Massillon, \$20; Catherine A. Vogelgesang, Canton, \$8; John H. Martin, Fredricksburg, \$8; Alba G. Martin, Marietta, \$17; David I. Kessinger, Athens, \$10; George H. Brush, Warren, \$14; William P. Schott, West Salem, \$24; Elias Stott, Zanesville, \$30; Catherine E. Waltemire, Fultonham, \$8; Mary A. Watson, Conshocton, \$12.

William McBride was badly burned by an explosion at the American Ship Building company's plant at Lorain, which may cost him his eyesight. He had charge of the amalgamated iron furnaces, which are heated by oil, and when he lighted them the accumulated gas let go, and burned his head, face, chest and hands.

A movement is on foot, favored, it is said, by President Roosevelt and General Charles Dick, for the unification of the two societies of the veterans of the war with Spain now in existence. These two societies are the Veterans of the War With Spain and the Spanish American War Veterans.

Sarah Robinson, colored, was sentenced at Canton, to serve 17 years in the penitentiary for the killing of Walter McNair in Massillon last April. Mrs. Robinson was indicted for murder in the first degree, but in the midst of the trial offered to plead guilty to manslaughter.

Funeral services, attended by Methodist clergymen from all over Ohio, were held at Bellefontaine, over the remains of the Rev. Walter Leatherman, drowned in the Miami river, together with Earl Needham, whom he was trying to save from death.

Police Judge Wacheneimer at Toledo, sentenced John Cornet, father of the ten-year-old girl burglar, Frances Cornet, to 30 days in the workhouse and \$100 fine on charge of receiving and concealing stolen property.

W. C. Etaley, of Urbana, has gone to New York to assume the duties of secretary and assistant treasurer of the United Box Board and Paper company, the new trust among strawboard mills. The salary is \$10,000 a year.

Official intelligence was conveyed Attorney-General Sheets that the habeas corpus proceedings instituted by former Insurance Commissioner Wm. M. Hahn in the Circuit Court at Mansfield had been dismissed.

The Ohio Gas and Fuel company drilled in an immense gas well on the Miller farm south of Mt. Vernon. The well is worth 5,000,000 cubic feet a day and is the third strongest one drilled in on this farm.

Elder C. B. Fockler, the central figure of the Powitee trouble at Mansfield two years ago, returned for the first time since he received a coat of tar. He conducted a funeral in the country.

Many human bones and a corduroy road were unearthed by sewer diggers at Marion. The bones and the road are considered evidence of battles fought between Indians and early settlers.

County Commissioner W. F. Lightbiser, of McConnellsville, injured in the wreck died, Robert James, of Pennsylvania, and Charles Bailey, the Marietta traveling man, may recover.

Oats and corn crops, orchards, barns and small buildings were destroyed by a hail, wind and rain storm in Hardin County. The spire was torn from the Salem Church. The loss is heavy.

A report reached Ashtabula that the Christy School of Methodism and Pedagogy, a summer school for teachers, was closed at Austintown, on account of a case of smallpox in the town.

The attendance at the Chautauque meeting, near Urbana, is quite large, and better than anticipated. The only trouble is with the electric road in getting the crowds to the grounds.

Rev. W. H. Leatherman, pastor of the Methodist church at DeGraff, was drowned near Bellefontaine while endeavoring to save Earl Needham, a 12-year-old boy, who also perished.

James E. Burk, the Somerville railway mail clerk, who was reported to the police of many cities as missing, has returned to his home. He was ill in a hospital at Richmond, Ind.

Dr. Walter Brown reported to Judge Jones at Hamilton, that Mark Welborn, the 15-year-old boy who burned the Franklin and Forham paper mills, is insane from melancholia.

Lightning destroyed John Ulery's large barn at Bloomdale, containing three acres of wheat, 30 tons of hay and farming implements. Loss \$2,500, partially insured.

Fired by lightning the barn of A. E. Cheny, at Marion, the finest in the County, was destroyed, with all contents, entailing a loss of \$7,000.

The Shiloh campmeeting association will hold its 65th annual session at the Shiloh campmeeting grounds at Goshen, Clermont county, commencing August 15.

Francis M. Starr of the Scioto Lime and Stone company of Delaware, has filed a suit for the appointment of a receiver.

Frank Snyder, a farmer of near Wooster, while talking to his wife, was struck by lightning and killed instantly.

Jos. W. T. Dubel, of Wapakoneta, has been appointed to a position in the Agricultural Department.