A Detective's Story.

The Baby Witness.

THE Arnolds lived in the old brown house which you may yet notice at the right of the road just as you enter the village of L——, Pennsylvania, from the south. The house stands back about ten rods from the road, among peach and apple trees, and the little path running up from the gate is bordered with pinks and moss.

I should not speak so confidently; it is five years since I saw the village or the house, and perhaps the awful tragedy enacted under the moss-covered roof one night may have kept the house tenantless, and allowed time to tumble it down.

One day, in answer to a telegram sent from the nearest railway station to L——, a matter of a dozen miles, I rode into the quaint old village on the top of the stage, and at once reported myself to the town authorities. Every inhabitant of the village, even to the ragged urchin sitting on the tavern porch, carried a grave face and talked in whispers. Had I not known a double murder had been committed the night before, I could have read some news almost as bad by glancing at the faces of the townspeople.

While I was eating my supper at the only hotel the town clerk and the president of the village sat opposite and told me the story. It seems that Arnold, who was nearly sixty years old, had two sons in another part of the State, and, wishing to divide up his property before his death, had, a few days before the murder, disposed of a farm and some manufacturing interests in Pittsburgh, realizing several thousand dollars in cash. He intended visiting the sons and dividing the money between them, but had placed it in the village bank until he should be ready to go. Mrs. Arnold was old and gray-headed, and the couple would have been all alone had it not been for little Jack, as he was called, a child four years of age. The child had been abandoned by a woman passing through the village, and the Arnolds had taken it for company; in fact had made provision to adopt it.

The night before, at 9 o'clock, a citizen had seen Arnold at his gate smoking a pipe. No one heard any alarm from the house during the night, but about sunrise little Jack crept down into the village, his night-gown red with blood, and told the first one he met that, "Somebody has hit grandpa and grandma on the head with an axe."

There was an investigation and the aged couple were found at their house dead and terribly mutilated. The old man's head was nearly split in two, and Mrs. Arnold had a horrible wound in the temple, which had caused death almost instantly. The child was not in the least injured, but seemed to have been badly frightened.

This was the gist of the story I got while eating, but I found that none of the sensational points had been overdrawn when I reached the house. The corpses had been the subject of inquest and had been washed and placed in coffins, but the rooms had not been disturbed, A constable had been present all the time to see that any clue which might have been left of the murderer should not be erased by careless hands or feet.

The room where the tragedy occurred was a double bedroom on the ground floor. It contained two beds, one of which was occupied by the old man and little Jack. The murderer had come in the back door, bringing along the axe from the woodpile. He had passed into the bedroom, lighted a candle which stood on the stand, and had been some time in the room before using the weapon. I knew this because the top drawer of the old bureau was pulled out, its contents tumbled over, and there were no bloody finger marks on anything.—The three other drawers were daubed with blood, showing that he had searched these after the murder.

Something had aroused the old man from his sleep. He had started to get out of bed when struck by the axe. The old lady had heard the noise when the cruel implement descended on her head, the positions in which the bodies were found bearing out my theory. The night had been chilly and little Jack probably smuggled down under the quilts, and had thus escaped harm, though, as afterward shown, he had been a silent witness of part of the proceedings.

The murderer had made a thorough search of the house, taking his time about it. He had first felt under the old man's pillow after money, and then under Mrs. Arnold's, daubing his fingers with blood, and leaving his marks on the pillows. I counted five different places where he had rested his left hand on the pillows while searching with his right, and in every case there were only four daubs or spots. There should have been five. He would not put four fingers down and hold up his thumb. No; the thumb on the left hand was missing—cut off at least at the first joint.

This was a clue, and my subsequent investigations proved that I was correct in believeing so. There was another thing. The man had torn up the carpet of the bedroom in several places; had got out the bible and looked between its covers; had taken down and searched the clothing in the closet; and had been so cool and thorough in his search that I knew he was no ordinary offender. A common thief would have fled after committing murder or at most stopped only long enough to search the bureau. Whoever the man was he had not secured a dollar in money. He had, however, taken away an old-fashioned gold watch belonging to Arnold, which was out of repair, and here was something which if found, might prove a good clue.

I did not expect to get much out of the boy, owing to his youth. Taking him on my knee, I made his acquaintance, gave him some pennies, and then asked him what he saw.

"You see," began the child very gravely, "I heard grandpa talking and getting up, and then I saw a big robber jump up and hit him with the axe.—Then grandpa fell down, and the big man went over and struck grandma.—Then he looked in the bureau, on the bed, in grandpa's box, in the closet, and then went off, and then I went to sleep.'

I dreaded to ask him how the man looked, for much depended on his answer. But he was ready with his reply, and all my cross-questioning could not alter his statement.

"Big man—red collar (necktie) on—great big breast pin—red whiskers like Mr. Johnson there—shiny ring on his finger—one eye most shut."

I tried to make little Jack believe that the murderer had black hair, and was a little man, but he stuck to his story. Then one of the constables talked to him about something else for ten minutes, and then questioned him as to the appearance of the man; but the story was the same as he told me at first. Several of us wrote it down, and I charged the child to remember it.

I was convinced that the murderer was a stranger in that part of the country. No one had seen him come or go; no one knew the hour of his arrival or departure, and he had left no clue behind—nothing but my theory that the thumb was missing from the left hand. I rode out to the toll-gates, but he had not been seen to pass. I questioned the stage drivers, but they could give no satisfaction. I went to the railroad station, but no one could remember having remarked the presence of a stranger on that night. The murderer had arrived and departed like a bird.

I was considerably discouraged in not striking his trail, but I was determined to pursue the case until there was no longer any hope, or until I had found the criminal. Visiting Pittsburgh and Harrisburg I laid my plans to trap him if he tried to dispose of the watch. I wrote letters to various officials, and then I could do no more. For six months I had the case uppermost in my mind, while transacting other detective business, but I had failed to find the least clue. Then one day I got a trace.

I was riding on the cars of the Pennsylvania Central railroad, when I observed an old lady shaking a gold watch in her hand and then holding it to her ear to see if it would run. Crossing over to her, I asked to look at the watch and she handed it over with the remark:

"It isn't much good, but I don't know as it ought to be. My husband only paid $10 for it."

I found out that her name was Allen; that she lived within a dozen miles of where the Arnolds had been murdered; that on the morning after the murder, as near as she could remember, her husband had purchased the watch of a traveler on the highway, who was looking for work and out of money. She remembered that the man was a large man, had red hair and full beard of the same color, but could not say that she had observed anything suspicious in his actions.

I found by questioning that the stranger had continued on the road to the west, and that if he kept on he must have struck the railroad after an hour's traveling. I was convinced that this was the murderer, and that he had made a long journey on the highway in order to baffle pursuit and hide his trail.

But it was little comfort to know it, as so many months had passed that the man might now be in Europe or under ground. I took the lady's address, allowed her to detain the watch I knew had belonged to the Arnolds, and again I lost the case for several months. I wrote over fifty letters, traveled three or four thousand miles on the lookout for a big man, and nothing came of it. But one day when approaching the village of Newfield, New York, by stage, two suspicious-looking chaps got into the vehicle, and they were my only company. I knew them to be "flash" as soon as I saw their faces, and their talk went to prove it. I pretended to be very deaf as soon as they got in, not replying to any of their questions. I assumed the tone of voice generally used by the deaf, held my hand to my ear, and moved over and expressed my regrets if I had offended them, saying that I could not even hear the rumble of the coach.

"Good!" exclaimed one of the men, as I sat down at the other end of the vehicle. "Now you can go on with your yarn."

Before proceeding the other one called me an old fool, a thief, a robber and various other things, closely watching my countenance to see if I could hear his words.

"The old smooth-bore is as deaf as a stone," he remarked, having satisfied himself as to my deafness, and then he went on with a narrative which had been interrupted.

I soon ascertained that they were on their way to Penfield, to rob a merchant. They had everything arranged to commit the crime the next night, and the one who "put up" the plan gave all the details as to how the robbery was to committed, where they would "run" to, and gave a guess as to each one's share.

"What about Luke?" inquired the other, after the plot had been fully discussed.

"Oh, Luke will be there on time," replied the man. "He has kept devilish shady since that business at L——, but now wants to make a haul and dig out for the far West. You needn't fret—we can depend upon him."

Before we got into the village the men tried me again, but I could not hear except when they shouted in my ear, and they were sure that the conversation had been strictly private. While they put up at the hotel, I went to the house of a deputy sheriff, intending to remain concealed all the next day. I had of course, to state my buisness to the officer, as I must have his aid, and he, the simpleton that he was, related the whole story to his wife after they had retired. Thus it naturally came about that next day, while I was laying shady, but planning how to capture the burglars, the woman was retailing my plans to the neighborhood. When night came there were six of us ready to pounce upon the criminals, but there were no criminals to be found. The fellows had got wind of the affair and were off, and I had lost the second only reliable clue to the Arnold murderer which I had ever been able to find. Some time after this, while in the city of Rochester, I caught sight of a hand resting on the window sill of a horse car—a large red hand. The hand was nothing strange, but the thumb was missing.

I did not wait an instant to think. I leaped from the car, entered the other, and there sat my friends of the stage-coach on either side of the owner of the hand—"a big man with red hair and whiskers." They all jumped up as I entered, but I hung fast to Luke and soon had the bracelets on him, allowing the others to get away. He had no idea who I was, and I took care not to hint at the charge against him until I had him back at L——.

My arrival created much excitement, as pursuit of the murderer had, from the first been deemed hopeless. Many contended that I had not secured the right man, and Luke professed never to have been in that part of the State before. The child was several miles away from the village, but I sent for him. It had been a year since the murder. Little Jack had almost forgotten the circumstance, and of course the murderer had changed some. But I had strong hopes that the child would be able to identify the man, and I was not disappointed.

Waiting until evening, I conducted Jack into a room where Luke and a dozen citizens were sitting. The little fellow had no knowledge of what we intended, and for some time did not see the murderer. When he did, he uttered a loud shriek, ran to me and exclaimed:

"There's the big man who hit grandpa and grandma!"

Luke braved it out to the last; even when the purchaser of the watch testified to his identity he kept a bold face and went to some pains to attempt to prove an alibi; but when convicted, mainly on the testimony of little Jack, who shivered and trembled at the sight of the man, the prisoner knew he was done for, and cried out in anger:

"Well I am the man! I saw the boy's eyes looking at me after I had finished the old 'uns, but I had done enough, and could not kill him, cuss the brat! I regret nothing except that I did not split his head open!"

And standing on the gallows, about to be launched into eternity, the man used his last moment to curse the child-witness who had convicted him of the awful crime.

☞ Money in your purse will credit you—wisdom in your head adorn you; but both in your necessity will serve you.

For THE TIMES.

History of the Perry Co. S. S. Association.

It was organized at Loysville, Aug. 24th, 1871, by Rev. S. E. Herring and others. Of the ministers then present Rev. R. Macpherson and Rev. J. Edgar, are, it is believed the only ones still in the county. Rev. S. E. Herring was the first President and the Constitution then adopted, ordered as now the last Tuesday in May as the day of annual convention, (but dates given below show earlier meetings,) and provided, as at the present that the officers of the Convention should be a President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and an Executive Committee consisting of five members. The first Constitution also ordered the Association to meet as an Institute each Fall and so the second meeting was held at Bloomfield, Nov. 14th, 1871. Over forty delegates were present.

The third session was held at Newport, May 14th, 1872. Rev. H. C. Cheston was elected President. The fourth session was held at Duncannon, Oct. 16th, 1872. Eighteen of the twenty-odd schools there represented reported 196 teachers and 1540 scholars. The fifth Convention was held at Millerstown, May 13th and 14th, 1873. Rev. Jas. Crawford was elected President. Thirty-seven schools reported by delegates, nineteen of which furnished their statistics; 351 officers and teachers and 1618 scholars, total 1969. The rule requiring fall meetings was abolished at this Convention. The sixth Convention was held at Bloomfield, May 12th 13th, 1874. Hon. B. F. Junkin was elected President. Forty-eight schools sent delegates and reported 3254 scholars, 578 officers and teachers; average attendance 2422, books in libraries 11528, with a valuation of $3,900.

The seventh Convention was held at Landisburg, May 11th and 12th, 1875. Rev. Wm. Winbigler was chosen President. Treasurer reported $71.72 in hand. The statistics of twenty-three schools were handed in, viz: 226 officers and teachers, 1962 scholars, average attendance 1148, number of books 6875, value, $2545. The eighth Convention was at Newport, May 30th and 31st, 1876. F. M. McKeehan was elected President. Treasurer reported $75.20 in hand. Forty schools were represented by 98 delegates, but statistics were not put on record. The ninth Convention met at Loysville, May 29th and 30th, 1877. W. W. M'Clure was elected President. A revised Constitution reported by committee chosen at last Convention was adopted. Thirty-two schools reported 309 officers and teachers and 2392 scholars.

The tenth Convention was held in Ickesburg, May 22d and 23d, 1878. Rev. T. S. Lindiman was chosen President. By the earnest efforts of the Secretary then and now holding office, D. Mickey, of Bloomfield, the statistics of 73 schools were obtained although probably but about one-half that number were represented in Convention. The 73 schools reported a total of 874 officers and teachers, 4873 scholars, 3410 of an average attendance. Of 67 of the schools, 34 reported as open 12 months in the year, 2, 9 months, 10, 8 months, 8, 7 months, 10, 6 months, 1, 5 months, 1, 4 months and 1, 3 months, and only 9 of the whole number reported "no" as to the use of Lesson Leaves, all others answering yes. These are the latest and best statistics thus far put on record with regard to the Sabbath Schools of the county.

The eleventh Convention was held at Blain, May 27th and 28th, 1879. Its statistics are,—officers and teachers 842, scholars 5463, attendance 4012, open whole year 43, less than year 31; use lesson leaves 69; do not use lesson leaves 5; delegates, 37; schools reported, 76. Hon. Jno. A. Baker of Bloomfield, the worthy Treasurer of the last few years sent report there of $63.40 as handed to him and that he also paid out in 1878 for programmes $4.00, blanks $1.00, postage $4.65, and janitor's fees, (Ickesburg) $5.00. Balance $48.75 plus $2.43 interest, total $51.18. All funds put at interest in the Perry County Bank. Blain receipts and expenses not yet put on record. The statistics and further work in the county depends on S. S. men responding at once to the inquiries lately sent out by Secretary Mickey, (even sending statistics where not written to, as many addresses are unknown) and all attending the Twelfth Convention to be held at Bloomfield, Tuesday and Wednesday, May 18th and 19th 1880.

A Soldier's Presence of Mind.

A Russian paper contains the following among several hitherto unpublished anecdotes of the late Emperor Nicholas. One day the emperor, who was one of the strictest and most in flexible of disciplinarians, met in a street in St. Petersburg a drunken dragoon, who was riding in a drosky. In great rage the Czar stopped the drosky and angrily asked the soldier what he was doing.—The imminence of his danger partially sobered the latter. He rose in his carriage, drew his sword, and, saluting the Czar, said:

"I am taking a drunken soldier to the guard-room, your Majesty."

The Emperor smiled, gave the soldier a five-rouble piece, and told his coachman to drive him not to the guard-room but home.