

TRACKING A CRIMINAL.

OR
Paul Webber, The Detective.

CONTINUED.

"BUT I understand that your settling day losses are altogether £2,000?"

"Exactly. The operations to question resulting in a loss of £300, I tried to cover that loss, and lost again; and a third time the same bad fortune pursued me."

"Did not Forbes endeavor to stop you in this fatal way of covering a first loss?"

"No; he had seen me pay smaller losses over and over again without any hesitation, and he had no doubt about my solvency."

"And what was the end of all these speculations?"

"My insolvency; and Forbes being my broker, had to settle up. I must add, that upon my admission of the facts to him, together with an intimation that I should be able to meet all my liabilities if time were given to me, Forbes behaved himself very unhandsomely."

"In fact," said the magistrate, "it resulted in something very like a personal encounter, did it not, outside the doors of the stock exchange?"

"That is quite the truth."

"And what was the end of the dispute?"

"I undertook to give, and did give, him bills to the amount of £2,000."

"Where are those acceptances?"

"No doubt the police have found them in my chambers, since it is evident, as I gather concerning the over-coat, that my place has been over-hauled."

"Oh, yes; they have been found in your chambers. How came they there?"

"Very easily. I had met them, and taken them, as a matter of course."

"From whom?"

"Forbes himself."

"When?"

"The day of his death—the day upon which the bills fell due."

"But you called upon him that day, and found nobody at home."

"Quite true; and I was told he would not be home before the evening. So I followed him to the City, overtook him in Lombard Street, and paid my acceptances. Naturally, I was afraid of him after our quarrel; and dreaded that, if I did not at once pay before mid-day, he might protest the bills, and damage me for life as a man of honor."

"It appears to me," said the magistrate, "very strange that you should pay so large a sum of money in the open street."

"Not at all. Amongst City men, very great transactions are often effected at a street corner. I overtook him in Lombard Street; and then and there—for we did not care for each other's company—paid him; when, of course, I announced there was an end to all transactions between us."

"I am at a loss to understand that he should have the acceptances with him."

"Why not? Many a clerk has in the course of a single day acceptances to fifty times that amount in his pocket-book. Forbes had not put my acceptances into circulation. He looked upon them as private papers; took them home to his chambers, and probably carried them with him into the City, in the full hope of protesting them; and he certainly would have protested the documents if I had not prevented the act."

"But I must tell you that Forbes had remarked to several persons that he never expected to get a farthing of the money. He said nothing during the day to the effect that he had been paid."

"I know nothing about that. Perhaps he did not meet with any of our mutual acquaintances."

"Yes; he dined with two of them about five in the evening of the day when he was killed."

Sivory was not disconcerted by these pointed words. After a pause, he said, "I suppose he had something else to think about and talk about. Again, it is sometimes imprudent to say to a friend, 'I have received so much money, not a shilling of which I ever expected to possess.' Under such circumstances a friend is apt to propose a loan, and a refusal puts one sometimes in a position of much embarrassment."

"Certainly, Mr. Sivory, the man would be clever, apparently, who could embarrass you; you've always got an answer to every inquiry."

The magistrate was now speaking with extreme ill-humor. The other's utter calmness, and ability in defending himself, had, at last, totally irritated the magistrate.

"Can you answer me this question?" said the magistrate, after a pause.—"Where did you get the money with which you paid these acceptances?"

For the first time from the commencement of the interview, Austin Sivory appeared to be unprovided with an answer.

He was silent.

"Did you not hear me?" asked the

magistrate. "Are you preparing an answer?"

"Sir," replied Austin, smiling. "had I required to find an answer to that question, I should have been prepared with one. But you must see that this question is, to me, of the utmost importance. I hesitate because I know that the answer I must give will dissatisfy you—will create in you a prejudice against me."

"Let me see—let me see."

"You are an established gentleman, with a certain income; and of course, you must look gravely upon all ways of getting money which are extraordinary."

"What was your plan?"

For a moment or two longer Sivory hesitated; and then he said, with much reluctance, "I was much troubled as to how I should meet Mr. Forbes' bills, and had been so for some months, as they drew more and more nearly due. I knew that he disliked me, and that, probably, he would serve a writ as soon as legally he could—an act on his part, which would have ruined me. Rendered desperate, I had recourse to a means I know you cannot and will not approve—but it is common enough with men in my position. I went off to the German baths, and commenced putting into practice a scheme I had learnt, and which I quite believed no gaming table could resist. Very few ever succeeded in this venture, but I hoped to be triumphant. I sold almost every valuable I had at the commencement of October, borrowed twenty pounds of one friend, thirty of another; and managed by these means to make up about one hundred and twenty pounds. With this sum to start upon, I set out for Spa, where the gambling is very risky. I ventured forty here, and thanks to my combination, which I had calculated very deeply, I was successful enough to make four hundred pounds at Spa in two days."

The magistrate shook his head; but Austin did not, or would not, see this sign of doubt, and he continued: "From Spa I went to Baden, Hamburg, Wiesbaden, and in all these places I was as fortunate as the first. In short, sir, at the end of a fortnight or three weeks, I returned to London, three days before the bills were due, prepared to settle them. Such is my explanation, simple enough from my point of view, but, no doubt, from yours, it appears a very astonishing statement."

"Very astonishing," replied the magistrate. "But in a court of law it would only be valuable if you could prove that you were speaking the truth."

"Pardon me; the police have, no doubt, learnt that I did leave London early in October, and that I went abroad. I have all my hotel-bills at home from the different places where I stopped; and, if inquiries are made, my name and address will be found in the hotel-books at every house where I stopped. At Baden, I was at the Victoria Hotel; at the Belle-Vue, at Strasbourg; and the very ticket on my luggage will show upon what day I returned to town."

"But how will you prove that you gained the large sum of two thousand pounds?"

"I confess that will be difficult. If, now, I had won the money upon horses here in England, the thing would be simple enough. As it is, I cannot prove very closely that I was fortunate enough to win all this money. However, many persons saw me playing at the tables, and must have seen me win."

"Yes; foreigners—Frenchmen, Germans; not one Englishman that you knew, I doubt."

"Good heavens, sir!" cried the unhappy Austin Sivory, in a tone of half-angry despair, and overwhelmed that his word was still doubted. "When I was seated at the roulette-table, in Germany, I could not guess that upon my return to London I was to be suspected of murder, and that, in order to save my life, I should have to keep near me a witness to prove and swear to what I gained. If I had foreseen it, I would have got the croupiers to give me vouchers for my gains."

Without making any reply to this sarcastic outburst—and it formed the first example of ill-temper and passion which Austin Sivory had displayed—the magistrate fell into a profound train of thought.

He felt that he had been quite unable to find the least proof of guilt in Austin Sivory; that this gentleman had volunteered an explanation which apparently cleared him from suspicion; and yet Austin Sivory—and Austin Sivory alone—appeared to him to have any interest in the death of the murdered man. The magistrate felt it would be monstrous to issue a warrant upon which to arrest this gentleman for murder. Certainly, he might have lived a purer and better life than the one he admitted he led; but it did not follow, because a man is fond of cards and the roulette-table, and because he visits at houses where the best people will no longer go, that he is, therefore, an assassin.

He was disturbed in his profound abstraction by the slight noise Mr. Sivory made in rising.

He looked up.

"And what if I issue a warrant—and what if you are arrested?"

"I shall do my best to bear with the annoyance."

"Well, if I find it necessary to issue the warrant in question, I am pretty certain that you will be allowed to see your friends. You would not be kept in solitary confinement."

"Solitary confinement, if you like. When a man reaches my age, and when he has lived as I have lived, it is rather a pleasant change to be alone, to be retired, and to think out one's life. If I am thrown into prison my captivity will give me some rest; and when I turn out into the world again, I hope to be less feverish, and more robust. Therefore, sir, if you must order my arrest, pray do not give me the opportunity of seeing my friends."

"Sir, you are free," said the magistrate. "I shall report to my superiors, and the police, that I do not consider that I should be justified in issuing a warrant. At the same time I warn you that you are liable to be indicted at the assizes: and that you may be, as far as I am concerned. However, I believe you to be perfectly innocent of any complicity in the murder of Graham Forbes. And now, good day."

Austin Sivory bowed, and left the magistrate's room. Apparently he was too moved for speech.

When he was gone—Margaret, who had so loyally kept her word, who by no sound or movement had betrayed her listening presence, opened the door of the side office, and came with a slow, measured step toward the magistrate.

Coming at last near him, she stopped, raised her right hand, pointed after Austin Sivory, and said, in a low, eager voice, "That man is Graham Forbes' murderer!"

CHAPTER V.
THE SPY.

Recovering the surprise he naturally felt upon hearing so direct an accusation as that made by Margaret against Austin Sivory, the magistrate, Mr. Caellem, leaped to the natural conclusion that Margaret's grief rendered her unjust. To put the most favorably construction upon the young lady's words, the man of justice felt that the unhappy Margaret, in her eagerness to avenge her affianced husband's death, imagined she saw the murderer in every man upon whom her sight fell.

But in reply to all the magistrate's arguments in favor of Austin Sivory, she could only find this answer: "I am not deceived."

"Have you, then, noticed," asked the judge, "anything in his attitude, looks or words, which struck you as unfavorable?"

"If not upon what do you base—not your suspicions, but your absolute conviction?"

"Upon nothing, and upon everything. For the moment that man entered this room, I felt that something strange was passing within my brain and heart. When he spoke, my every nerve trembled. Why, if he is innocent, should his presence produce in me this effect? Already I have looked upon two men as half-accused of Graham's death, and I was not moved. This man Austin Sivory is to me no stranger; though I never saw him before to-day. He is part of my life. I have suffered through him, and through him I shall suffer again. Of this I am certain—of this I am terribly sure."

"You are, perhaps, somewhat superstitious?"

"Perhaps; but not at this moment. I feel that all my reason is at work.—Whence came the unbounded, troubled terror I felt, when I saw this man, a total stranger as I supposed, for the first time? I say he is the guilty man!"

The magistrate was hesitating what to say, when the court usher entered, after obtaining permission, and handed him a note.

"Is he outside?" asked the magistrate, after glancing at the communication.

"Yes, sir."

"Let him come in."

A moment after, the door opened, and Paul Webber obsequiously entered the room.

"You wish to speak with me, I believe?" said the magistrate.

"Yes, sir. I have been instructed by the authorities to put myself in communication with you concerning the murder in Taggart's Inn."

"Did you call there upon this lady?" asked the magistrate.

"Yes, but the lady would not see me, sir," replied Paul Webber, glinting from under his blue spectacles at Margaret Mayter.

"Do you know all the details of this affair?"

"As well as anybody. I was one of the first of the police people to inspect the scene of the murder."

"Ah, I remember! By the way, there

were mentioned to me certain suspicions you yourself entertained in reference to the perpetrators?"

"Suspicious which I shall never forgive myself for having formed," said the detective, throwing a furtive glance in the direction where Margaret was standing. "For that matter, perhaps I shall be pardoned for having had these suspicions, if I say that I abandoned them as rapidly as I had engendered them. My suspicions are now directed to a totally different quarter."

"Upon whom do you fix your belief?"

"Upon a man to whom you yourself sir, have spoken."

"Mr. Austin Sivory?"

"The same."

"Here is the report I received before I requested him to see me to-day. Read it."

The detective bowed, took the paper, and left the magistrate to continue his conversation, in a low tone of voice, with Miss Mayter.

For a whole quarter of an hour did the detective study the report, to which the magistrate had added, during Austin's interview, such particulars as he thought would prove to the police that Mr. Sivory had completely exculpated himself.

"Well, what do you think of it?" asked the magistrate as the detective's face at last came up from the close examination he had bestowed upon the document.

"I think, after studying this report, and your remarks upon your interview with the accused, that it would be impossible to obtain a condemnation, and that it would be monstrous even to send a man from a police court to his trial upon such evidence."

"I see clearly that, in event of an examination in open court, it would be quite necessary to set the prisoner at liberty. There is positively nothing against him."

"Yet—"

"Yet?" asked the magistrate.

"I said, 'Yet.'"

"Then have you any further evidence against the man?"

"Not yet. But I'm worming it out, sir; I'm steadily worming it out."

"If," said the magistrate, "if, indeed this gentleman, Austin Sivory, is guilty—"

"Guilty, I declare him!" here suddenly cried Margaret, who had not lost one word of this conversation, which had not been carried on in a low voice.

"You are convinced that he is the murderer?" said the police agent, turning suddenly upon the grief-worn girl.

"Absolutely convinced."

"Good!" cried the detective, eagerly, and quite forgetting that he was in the presence of a magistrate. "He is lost, for now I am certain to track him down!"

"He is an able man, this Sivory."

"Clever, sir; that is the word. It would be the worst policy in the world to arrest him; for in prison he would never say a word; while free, and let him think the eyes of the police are off him, and who knows but he may fall into the trap? If he was a common criminal, it would be well to arrest and remand him. While in prison, or remand, he might say something to some old comrade he might meet, and who would turn Queen's evidence. But as it is, he would hold his tongue in prison. He will not be silent out of jail."

"And what if, being at liberty, he leaves England?"

"No, he won't roam. If he was inclined to roam, he would have been off before this time, and directly after he committed the murder, if he did commit it."

"The prisoner is free, and you are at liberty to watch him," said the magistrate. "What are your projects? What is your plan?"

"My plan? Oh, it is not yet planned. I must set it all out when I am alone," said the detective. "But it is here," he said, tapping his forehead; "it is here, and let him look to himself."

The magistrate accustomed rapidly to judge of men by the appearance they present, at once saw that he had before him one of those men who are turned to account by a trade or profession, rather than men who live by a given shape of industry. He saw at once that Webber would bring Austin Sivory to justice, if he was indeed guilty of the crime of murdering Graham Forbes. And at once he determined to use all his authority and influence to enable the detective to do his best.

Of course it is not the duty of a magistrate to have any business directly with a detective police-constable, but Mr. Caellem had already arrived at the conclusion that the mystery at Taggart's Inn was one which would call for all the acumen of the police to solve it, and he felt that Webber was a man who, to extreme acuteness, added positive devotion to this terrible business.

"So you answer for your success?" he said, suddenly, to Lord Arlington's protégé.

"If Sivory is guilty," he replied, without hesitation, "I will undertake to

bring you proofs of his guilt. But I must make certain conditions."

"Let us see the conditions."

"In the first place, it is to be understood that he is only to be arrested when I apply for a warrant."

"I agree to that."

"Will you sir, let the reporter to your court know that the accusation made against a certain gentleman (name not given) of having been the murderer of Graham Forbes—an accusation made by the police—was perfectly groundless. This will still more throw him off his guard."

"I will see what can be done," said the magistrate. "Anything more?"

"Anything more?" replied the detective, sharply. "That is just it. I want to be alone in this affair, not to be interfered with, and to do exactly as I like, without any reference to Scotland Yard."

"I will do what I can," said the magistrate.

"Then," said the detective, "all I have to do is to lay my plans, and submit them, sir, to your notice, when I hope that you will feel that in helping me you will then be doing the proper thing."

Then turning to Margaret, who had stood by perfectly silent and patient during the conversation between the magistrate and the detective, and in whose opinion Webber had become the very embodiment of the power who was to track Graham's assassin, he said, "Miss, before long I may want to see you. Will you give your people orders that I am to be admitted when I do call?"

"Certainly," said Margaret. "Call when you will, and at any hour. I shall always be grateful to see you."

The detective smiled, saluted the magistrate, and withdrew, softly. Immediately after, Margaret was shown by the magistrate to the cab waiting for her, and he himself returned to his court to finish the day's business.—Continued next week.

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JOHN SHEETS,
CHAIRMAN.

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