

# CHESTER KENT CURES A HEADACHE

IN TWO PARTS—PART II.

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**H**EADLINES, proper to so startling an event, announced the St. Alban's Place explosion and the death of the malefactor to the newspaper reading world the following morning. Both Miss Wayland and her nephew were quoted as being convinced of the guilt of Dennis Boyle, and this hypothesis was backed up by a police interview of characteristic cocksureness. Much more briefly it was noted that Professor Chester Kent, "a gentleman more eminent in scientific than in practical affairs," as one paper put it, dissented from the belief in Boyle's guilt, holding that the explosion was probably due to some other agent. The Coroner's inquest, it was announced, would be held over the remains that afternoon at Miss Wayland's house.

All of this Chester Kent read with his subdued smile. He was interrupted in his reading by a long distance telephone call from some individual in Baltimore who refused to give his name to the maid, but urged a matter of life and death; and the young professor's smile had expanded a bit when he hung up the receiver. Returning to his paper, he noted with satisfaction that the Coroner in charge of the inquest would be Dr. Shurtleff, who was indebted to him for a rescue from a potentially embarrassing predicament in the affair of the diplomat's monocle. Kent proposed now to give the Coroner opportunity to show his gratitude; for he designed to play an important, though as far as might be a thinking, part, mostly advisory, in the forthcoming inquiry. A call on Dr. Shurtleff served to arrange this, and to map out a general plan of the inquest, though the official was not let into the secret of the scientist's scheme of campaign. Next, Kent stopped at the laboratory of a prominent analytical chemist; and finally called to pay his respects to Miss Wayland at her hotel. He found the old lady as keen and unshaken as though she had never known either weariness or peril.

"Have you heard of the note?" was her greeting.  
"No, Miss Wayland."  
"Let me see then how gracefully you can acknowledge yourself in the wrong. Read this."

She handed to him an envelop of cheap make, addressed simply to her name. He held it in his hand as if weighing it.

"Did this come to the hotel?"  
"Robert Swart brought it to me. It was found on the side porch."  
"By whom?"  
"By one of the maids early this morning."  
"Hum! I'm sorry I didn't find it myself."  
"When could you have found it?"  
"Last night when I went back, after leaving you."  
"You returned to my house?"  
"Yes, I slept there, in the oak room."  
"Why?"

"I was interested to see if there were any developments."

"Were there?"  
"H-m-m-m—well, I developed rather a severe headache, the policeman on guard snored, and Mr. Swart complained of being restless. Otherwise, nothing."

"Oh! Aren't you going to read the letter?"  
"Presently. When is it supposed to have come?"

"It is not supposed to have come at all. It is known to have been thrust in from the outside of the porch just under the railing, sometime before the explosion."

Chester Kent examined the envelop. "That's odd."  
"What is odd?" demanded Miss Wayland with asperity.

"You remember we left your house last night in a hard shower?"

"Well?"  
"The side porch is practically unsheltered. Yet there are no rain marks on the envelop."

"Fiddle and faddle!" cried the old lady. "They could dry out, couldn't they? Read the letter."

From the envelop Chester Kent drew a single sheet of blue-ruled paper, on which the following was written:

Miss Wayland You and the idol Rich is marked for Death. Your name comes first. Beware but you cannot escape your Fate. BLACK HAND.

"Well?" said Chester Kent with a polite inflection of inquiry.

"Well," snapped Miss Wayland, "that is Dennis Boyle's handwriting. It is written on paper the duplicate of which was found by my nephew in Dennis's room over the stable. He wrote it to avert suspicion from himself, by casting it on the Italians. Black Hand—don't you see? Perhaps there's something you'd like to say to that!"

Kent returned the paper. "No, there's nothing I'd like to say. But I'd like to laugh."

Miss Celia Wayland stamped a well shod and angry foot. "Laugh, then! The crackling of thorns under a pot! Will nothing convince you?"

"My dear madam, the one merit peculiar to my very loose and casual method is that it keeps the mind always open to convictions. For example, I'm convinced that you wouldn't take my advice if I offered it."

"For once you are right. Nevertheless, let me hear it."

"That you do no positive identifying when you go on the witness stand."

"Do I believe in my own eyes, or do I not?" cried the old lady.

"You do not, unless you wish to be very badly deceived," returned the other. "Have you never seen a magician? He makes a living by fooling the eye. There is nothing easier to trick than the human eye, unless it be the human mind. Yet we poor creatures go blundering on through the world, believing what we see."

**N**EVERTHELESS, when the Coroner's jury sat solemnly that afternoon over the patch of gray hair, Miss Wayland swore to it as being that of Dennis Boyle. She also detailed the difficulty she had had with the gardener, culminating in his discharge. Following her, the police Inspector testified to the condition of Miss Wayland's sleeping room after the explosion. The principal damage had been done, he said, just back of Miss Wayland's bed.

"You have seen dynamite explosions before, Inspector?" asked the Coroner.

"One, Sir."

"In your opinion was this present one caused by a large or a small charge?"

"Rather small."

"Large enough to blow a man into indiscernible fragments?"

"Well—er—I don't know," hesitated the officer. "If he was carrying it in his hand—"

"You made a thorough search of the scene?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Were you able to find any part of the body other than the one under our view?"

"No, Sir."

"Were the walls bespattered with blood?"

"No, Sir, except a few small spots."

"May I ask a question, as representing the family, Mr. Coroner?" put in Robert Swart.

"It is somewhat unusual," said Dr. Shurtleff, smiling; "but I see no objection."

"Thank you. Now, Inspector, is it not true that the heat and force generated by the detonation of a high explosive are capable of consuming, in whole or in part, a substance like the human body?"

"I understand so, Sir."

With this, the Inspector gave up the stand to a frightened maid, who testified hysterically but credibly to the finding of the "Black Hand" letter on the side porch. She was followed by Robert Swart, who produced specimens of Dennis Boyle's handwriting, taken from among Miss Wayland's accounts. The jury commented upon obvious similarities in the writing. The witness then identified the gruesome object around which the inquiry revolved as being Dennis Boyle's hair.

"Your identification is positive?" asked the Coroner.

"Within the limits of human error, it is. Boyle was quite bald on top of his head; but his temples were fringed with a very fine, thick gray hair quite unusual and unmistakable. I can say with all confidence that the patch we have here was torn from one of his temples."

"Are you familiar with dynamite, Mr. Swart?"

"Not I!" returned the witness, with his ready smile. "I know too much about it. The men who thought they could get familiar with that stuff are mostly dead."

A ripple of amusement passed along the jury seats. The Coroner's grave face relaxed.

"But you are conversant with the properties of dynamite?" he amended.

"Yes, Sir; I've had some experience with it in the Montfort Quarries."

"Would you consider it possible for the man from whose head that strip was blown to be alive?"

"Anything is possible to dynamite," answered the witness. "It is as incredibly freakish as lightning. But I should say that there isn't one chance in a million of that man having escaped."

"Then an attempt made subsequent to the explosion to rifle Miss Wayland's desk must have been the work of someone other than the owner of this hair?"

"Unquestionably. Even if Boyle weren't killed,

which isn't really worth considering, he would have been bleeding so profusely that he must have left traces."

"Exactly. Keep the stand, please, Mr. Swart. I wish to interrupt your testimony briefly and informally. Professor Kent, will you kindly tell the jury of the condition in which you found Miss Wayland's desk?"

"The desk stands in Miss Wayland's library," explained Kent. "Half an hour after the explosion, when Miss Wayland sat at it, it was intact. Sometime within the next hour and a half the drawer in which she kept certain belongings locked was entered. This drawer is a large, flat one, above the open part of the desk beneath which the knees of one writing pass. The bottom was hastily and roughly cut, and most of the contents of the drawer were removed. Letters and papers were found just outside one of the windows of the room. There was no money in the drawer, according to the owner's best recollection. But certain papers and accounts are now missing; also a box containing headache powders."

"Thank you," said the Coroner. "Now, gentlemen of the jury, you will note the peculiarity of the powders being kept, while some of the papers were abandoned. This may have been accident; it may have been design. If the latter, I call your notice to the possibility of such powders being retained for suicidal use, in case of discovery."

Had the jury and the witness on the stand been less absorbed by the new turn of interest thus abruptly given, they might have perceived a telegraphic glance from the Coroner to Kent, followed by a nod of approving satisfaction from the professor. The smile broadened almost into a grin when a jurymen, rising, asked:

"Were these powders poisonous?"

"That is a matter that we will inquire into," replied the Coroner promptly. "Mr. Swart, you have been a physician?"

"Yes, Sir. To a limited extent, I still am. Those powders are of my prescribing."

"Did they contain a poison?"

"Why, yes, in a sense. They contained a very potent drug, acetanilid."

"That is a coal tar product, which relieves certain forms of headache by a depressing influence on the heart action, thus decreasing the flow of blood to the head?"

"Yes, Dr. Shurtleff."

"Please tell the jury whether it is dangerous to life."

"Not in the ordinary dosage that these powders contained, two and a half grains each."

"How much would be a certainly fatal dose?"

"Oh, ten times that, with reasonable certainty, for a normal person."

"Twenty-five grains. Were there enough powders in the box to make up, in total, that amount of acetanilid?"

"Hardly, if my aunt's recollections are correct."

"That is all, I think," said the Coroner, and the witness left the stand, patently puzzled by the strange diversion of the line of inquiry.

There followed an interim, during which Dr. Shurtleff conversed with Chester Kent in low tones, and the jury got their heads together in consultation. Presently the foreman rose.

"Mr. Coroner," said he, "without reference to the existence or nonexistence of an accomplice, we have reached our decision in this case."

"If the decision," began the Coroner, "concerns one Dennis Boyle—"

"It does."

"Then Professor Kent requests that it be postponed for the arrival of a belated witness."

**T**HE chug of a motorcar was heard outside. Kent, stepping to the window, beckoned. There entered a small, wiry, plainly dressed man, with his head and face so swathed in bandages that only the mouth, chin, and one keen, green eye appeared. Before the newcomer could speak, Miss Celia Wayland was on her feet and had him by the shoulder, which she proceeded to shake vigorously.

"Denny Boyle," she cried, and from that moment the examination became a most informal and irregular process, "is this you?"

"Yes'm," said the swathed figure.

"Where have you been?"

"I dun'no, Mum. Leastways, not till I come to in Baltimore, Mum."

"How came you in such a condition?"

"Well, Mum, I tuck a drop or two of somethin'—"

"Beast!" said Miss Wayland.

"Yes'm," meekly assented the swathed figure. "An' then I got into a fight, an' got the worst of it—"

"Ruffian!"

"Yes'm. So when I come to myself, an' seen in the papers that there was a dynamitin', an' that they was for puttin' it onto me, an' that Professor Kent didn't believe it, I telephoned to him from Baltimore, an' he says to come right over to his house, an' then he had me come here, an' here I am."

Robert Swart, who had been intently studying the newcomer during this dialogue, now addressed the Coroner. "Dr. Shurtleff," said he, "I'm a notable example of an expert gone wrong on his own specialty. Dynamite has performed another of its miracles. It has scalped a man without killing him. Our case is now clear. Reluctantly I am compelled to ask that you declare Dennis Boyle under arrest."

"No such thing!" interposed Miss Wayland, with cus-

