

tomary emphasis. "First you declare him dead. Then, when you find him alive, you declare him under arrest. What for?"

"My dear aunt, isn't it obvious? He was seen about here after you discharged him—"

"To get me clo'es. That's what I come back fer."

"He gets into a frenzy of intoxication, and when in that condition, prepares his charge of dynamite and places it."

"Not me!" cried the accused man. "Drunk or sober, I'd not do that to ye, Miss Celia."

"Your temples are bandaged," went on Swart steadily, pointing to the patch of hair before the jury. "Do you deny that this is from your head?"

"Saint of me sowl!" half whispered Dennis. "It looks like it."

"And this handwriting?" He held up the "Black Hand" letter.

"I dun'no. I dun'no. How could it be? An' yet it seemin'ly is."

"But surely the man never planted that note after being mixed up in the explosion," said the foreman of the jury. "He wouldn't have been in condition to do it."

"There is where his accomplice comes in," explained Swart. "Presumably Boyle prepared the note beforehand. The bomb went off prematurely, and the accomplice, inferentially someone in the household, after helping Boyle escape, put the letter where it would surely be found, and then rifled the desk. Isn't the case clear?"

A sharp rapping on the Coroner's table focused attention upon that official.

"Come to order, Gentlemen," said he sharply. "This court is still in session. We now know that the alleged body upon which we are holding inquest is not that of Dennis Boyle; but there is no proof that it is not that of some other person, unknown. Hence I still hold jurisdiction. Professor Kent has suggested to me that there may be material in the so called oak room on the third floor pertinent to this inquiry. The jury will follow me there."

THE whole procession filed upstairs, Dennis Boyle jealously accompanied by the Inspector of police. Entering the room, the Coroner found a chair near the head of the bed, while Kent leaned against the wall back of him. On the bed lay a hatchet.

"In this room, Gentlemen," said Coroner Shurtleff, "Miss Wayland was in the habit of sleeping when she tired of her apartments on the floor below. Like the other sleeping room, the one wherein the explosion took place, this one is paneled with old, perforated woodwork. Professor Kent, whose powers of analysis have been tested in many difficult cases, believes that behind the paneling of the other room lay the clue to this tangled affair. But that can be only conjecture, since the secret is hidden in the wreckage. Here, however, in an analogous room, we have the opportunity of investigation; also the appropriate implement. Professor Kent!"

The scientist took the hatchet from the bed, which he pushed away from the wall. Touching the blade to the paneling, as if to insure his aim, he swung back.

"For God's sake wait!"

Robert Swart, livid with terror, was cringing toward the door.

Kent turned, his weapon still poised. "Wait?" he inquired mildly. "Why?"

"I—I—I—I don't know," stammered the wretched man. "There might be—"

"Not might be; *is*," amended the other. You know what is behind there. How do you know what is behind there?"

"Come! Speak up, Nephew Robert!" cried old Miss Wayland.

But Swart stood silent, staring in dismal fascination at the blade of the hatchet.

"Suppose you tell us what you know, Professor," suggested the foreman.

"To the best of my knowledge and belief," said Kent promptly, "there stands behind that panel a stick of dynamite partly wrapped in greased paper."

"Then will you kindly put down that hatchet?" said the Coroner nervously.

"Willingly; though I had not the intention of using it. My whole purpose was to frighten Mr. Swart into betraying his knowledge of what was behind the panel, which he has done. You will observe that he knew the dynamite to be there. I only surmised its presence."

"Did you surmise also the detail of the greased paper wrapping?" asked the Coroner.

"That I reasoned out from the nature of the remains on which we are holding this inquest. Inspector, I call upon you to arrest Robert Swart!"

ON what charge?" asked the policeman hesitantly. "I join in the demand," said the Coroner. "The charge is the attempted dynamiting of Miss Wayland."

"Oh, no," said Kent; "at least, not in the sense you have in mind. Swart never attempted to dynamite anyone; his methods are much more delicate. The real dynamiter is dead. He interfered with Swart's well conceived scheme, which would have worked out safely and surely but for the accident of the explosion."

"Accident!" cried Miss Wayland.

"Pure accident. Let me now outline the case. First,

Swart, upon whom I have had my eye since his paid perjury in the Wapiti lands investigation, has recently been in financial straits. To get out he has falsified the accounts of the Montfort Quarries and forged Miss Wayland's name."

"A lie!" croaked the accused man.

"Truth, simple and provable. There, then, is motive."

At the next quarterly meeting of the quarries company Swart was sure to be exposed, unless he could get rid of his aunt meantime. Now for the opportunity. Swart is a practical quarryman and understands dynamite, including one of its peculiar properties in repose, which only experts know about. He is a physician and understands drugs. Remember and connect these two points. He has the run of this old house and is thoroughly familiar with it. Two months ago he began to work on his plan; just about the time, you will note, that Miss Wayland, who had hardly known a sick day in her life, developed those singular headaches. He began by getting into the hollow partitions of the house and planting a stick of dynamite, wrapped in the thickly greased paper in which some dynamite comes, back of the wormholed panelings at the head of each of Miss Wayland's two beds, one in each room."

"But you've already said," objected the old lady, "that Robert never attempted to dynamite anyone."

"You have all heard Dr. Swart testify on the stand to the effects of acetanilid," pursued Kent, apparently disregarding the interruption. "That was in response to Coroner Shurtleff's suggestion of a suicidal motive on the part of the unknown rifler of the desk. I may now state that this theory was a purely artificial one—the attack on the desk will be made clear in good time—designed to lead on the witness without arousing his suspicions. He responded admirably to the point, stating that acetanilid in two and a half grain doses would serve to cure headache, and that in a twenty-five grain dose it would be fatal. Well, he was preparing to have Miss Wayland take a twenty-five-grain dose in such a way that no suspicion would fall upon himself."

"How?" demanded the old lady with an air of lively but impersonal interest.

"By getting you into the habit of taking small regular doses, and then loading one of the powders with a deadly dose. You will observe that when a person who has been accustomed to take a drug regularly, dies of an overdose of that drug, the natural inference is overdose by error."

"But I was taking the powders for headache," said Miss Wayland, knitting her brows in puzzlement.



"For Heaven's Sake Wait!" Cried Swart.

"Exactly. And your nephew was giving you the headaches as well as the cure."

"Giving me the headaches! By what possible means?"

"By means of the dynamite planted behind your sleeping place."

"Stuff and nonsense! I never heard of such a thing."

"Very likely. But every practical quarryman has. The active principle of dynamite is nitroglycerin, which is not only a very high explosive, but also a very powerful drug, the fumes of which cause a peculiar and racking headache. It was those fumes, passing through the wormholed walls near your bed, that caused your troubles, Miss Wayland. And the dose of acetanilid in the headache powders soothed the pain thus caused."

"But the overdose, Professor Kent?" asked the Coroner.

"Duly provided for. In this last box of powders—the prescription which had been refilled several times, as I discovered by inquiry at the drugstore—was one that Swart had taken out, loaded with a fatal dose of acetanilid, and put back again. It was only a question of time when Miss Wayland would take it and be found dead in her bed; whereupon you, Mr. Coroner, would have had no choice but to find the death to have been from accidental overdose."

At this, Swart recovered himself from the shivering stupor into which he had fallen. "All very ingenious," he said with shaking lips; "but all pure theory and false theory for which someone shall dearly suffer. What shadow of proof have you of its truth?"

"The box of powders itself, and the analysis of the twenty-five-grain dose by a chemist of unimpeachable standing."

"You found the man who robbed the drawer?" cried Miss Wayland eagerly.

"I am the man who robbed the drawer," responded Chester Kent, with a slight smile. "It was necessary for me to get that box of powders without Mr. Swart's knowing that I had it. So, as soon as you left me alone in the library, I cut out the bottom, hid the papers in the bookcase, scattered some letters from the waste basket on the lawn for a blind, and, having ruined a good pair of trousers with a slash of my knife, gave the alarm. Your letters, Miss Wayland, you will find intact behind the third row of books to the right of the fireplace."

The old, worn, keen face lighted pathetically; but grew stern again as she turned to her nephew, who had collapsed against the wall.

"So that, Sir," she said, "is why you were anxious to have the powders back, lest, in the general investigation, they might be looked into! And my nephew's eagerness, Professor Kent, made it necessary for you to get the box that night?"

"Precisely," said the scientist. "Madam, you have the makings of a first rate detective."

"And you of a first rate thief, apparently," retorted the old lady. "And my nephew of a very tenth rate murderer," she added bitterly. "Not for a dozen of him would I have lost Denny. Denny, you come back to work now."

"Yes'm. Glory be!" said the bewildered Denny. "I didn't do it, an' I knew I didn't do it; but I never could a been sure I didn't do it."

"Stick to your job and wait for the storm to blow over, next time you are discharged, Boyle," advised Chester Kent, with a smile at Miss Wayland. "It's only fair to say for Swart that at first he honestly thought you dead and thought it would be good policy to fix the dynamiting officially on your uncontradictory fragments. To that end he forged the 'Black Hand' letter, imitating your writing (none too well, by the way), and put it where the maid would be sure to find it. When you appeared, alive but damaged, he still sought to make you the scapegoat. That bandaged head of yours might well have had disastrous effects as circumstantial evidence. Well, Inspector, is the case against Mr. Swart good enough for the police?"

"It certainly is, Professor Kent," replied the officer, with enhanced respect in his voice. He set his hand on Swart's shoulder and led him from the room.

THE foreman of the jury turned to Chester Kent. "What of these remains, over which we've racked our misdirected brains?" he inquired.

"Oh, that?" Chester Kent smiled benignly. "That is all we shall ever see of the perpetrator of the St. Allan's Place dynamite outrage. The dynamite, as I have indicated, lay wrapped in its greased paper somewhere within the partition, presumably on a beam. Our deceased friend, of the fine, gray hair, hopefully supposing that it was something of practical value to him, tugged at the paper and dragged the charge from its resting place. It must have fallen some little distance, and the explosion, whereby many plans were brought to naught, was the logical result."

A quick look of intelligence flashed in Miss Wayland's bright eyes. "Oh, poor Robert!" she cried with a burst of ringing and scornful laughter. "Poor fool Nephew Robert! All his subtle plotting overset, and by so insignificant an agency!"

"Let us all into the secret," besought the foreman.

"I'll give you a quotation for a clue," cried the old lady. "It's from Burns. 'The best laid schemes o' gang aft a-gley.'" She stopped, looking significantly at the mortuary patch.

The Coroner filled out the quotation. "'The best laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft a-gley.' Amouse, by Heavens! It was a mouse that nibbled at the greasy paper and brought the walls down in ruins about him."

"Near enough accurate to justify the quotation," said Chester Kent, with a bow to Miss Wayland. "Scientifically, our late friend was *Mus decumanus*, the common gray rat of our households."

Miss Wayland crossed over to him with outstretched hands. "And so," said she, "the ferret's task is ended."