The Phoenix of Crim

THE PHOENIX OF CRIME

by Rodrigues Ottolengui

(from “Final Proof; or, The Value of Evidence”)

I

Mr. MITCHEL was still at breakfast one morning, when the card of Mr. Barnes was brought to him by his man Williams.

“Show Mr. Barnes in here,” said he. “I imagine that he must be in a hurry to see me, else he would not call so early.”

A few minutes later the detective entered, saying:

“It is very kind of you to let me come in without waiting. I hope that I am not intruding.”

“Not at all. As to being kind, why I am kind to myself. I knew you must have something interesting on hand to bring you around so early, and I am proportionately curious; at the same time I hate to go without my coffee, and I do not like to drink it too fast, especially good coffee, and this is good, I assure you. Draw up and have a cup, for I observe that you came off in such a hurry this morning that you did not get any.”

“Why, thank you, I will take some, but how do you know that I came off in a hurry and had no coffee at home? It seems to me that if you can tell that, you are becoming as clever as the famous Sherlock Holmes.”

“Oh, no, indeed! You and I can hardly expect to be as shrewd as the detectives of romance. As to my guessing that you have had no coffee, that is not very troublesome. I notice three drops of milk on your coat, and one on your shoe, from which I deduce, first, that you have had no coffee, for a man who has his coffee in the morning is not apt to drink a glass of milk besides. Second, you must have left home in a hurry, or you would have had that coffee. Third, you took your glass of milk at the ferry-house of the Staten Island boat, probably finding that you had a minute to spare; this is evident because the milk spots on the tails of your frock-coat and on your shoe show that you were standing when you drank, and leaned over to avoid dripping the fluid on your clothes. Had you been seated, the coat tails would have been spread apart, and drippings would have fallen on your trousers. The fact that in spite of your precautions the accident did occur, and yet escaped your notice, is further proof, not only of your hurry, but also that your mind was abstracted,-absorbed no doubt with the

difficult problem about which you have come to talk with me. How is my guess?”

“Correct in every detail. Sherlock Holmes could have done no better. But we will drop him and getdown to my case, which, I assure you, is more astounding than any, either in fact or fiction, that has come to my knowledge.”

“Go ahead! Your opening argument promises a good play. Proceed without further waste of words.”

“First, then, let me ask you, have you read the morning’s papers?”

“Just glanced through the death reports, but had gotten no further when you came in.”

“There is one death report, then, that has escaped your attention, probably because the notice of it occupies three columns. It is another metropolitan mystery. Shall I read it to you? I glanced through it in bed this morning and found it so absorbing that, as you guessed, I hurried over here to discuss it with you, not stopping to get my breakfast.”

“In that case you might better attack an egg or two, and let me read the article myself.”

Mr. Mitchel took the paper from Mr. Barnes, who pointed out to him the article in question, which, under appropriate sensational headlines, read as follows:

“The account of a most astounding mystery is reported to-day for the first time, though the body of the deceased, now thought to have been murdered, was taken from the East River several days ago. The facts are as follows. On Tuesday last, at about six o’clock in the morning, several boys were enjoying an early swim in the river near Eighty-fifth Street, when one who had made a deep dive, onreaching the surface scrambled out of the water, evidently terrified. His companions crowded about him asking what he had seen, and to them he declared that there was a ‘drownded man down there.’ This caused the boys to lose all further desire to go into the water, and while they hastily scrambled into their clothes they discussed the situation, finally deciding that the proper course would be to notify the police, one boy, however, wiser than the others, declaring that he ‘washed his hands of the affair’ if they should do so, because he was not ‘going to be held as no witness.’ In true American fashion, nevertheless, the

majority ruled, and in a body the boys marched to the station-house and reported their discovery. Detectives were sent to investigate, and after dragging the locality for half an hour the body of a man was drawn out of the water. The corpse was taken to the Morgue, and the customary red tape was slowly unwound. At first the police thought that it was a case of accidental drowning, no marks of violence having been found on the body, which had evidently been in the water but a few hours. Thus no special report of the case was made in the press. Circumstances have developed at the autopsy, however, which make it probable that New Yorkers are to be treated to another of the wonderful mysteries which occur all too frequently in the metropolis. The first point of significance is the fact, on which all the surgeons agree, that the man was dead when placed in the water. Secondly, the doctors claim that he died of disease, and not fromany cause which would point to a crime. This conclusion seems highly improbable, for who would throw into the water the body of one who had died naturally, and with what object could such a singular course have been pursued? Indeed this claim of the doctors is so preposterous that a second examination of the body has been ordered, and will occur to-day, when several of our most prominent surgeons will be present. The third, and by far the most extraordinary circumstance, is the alleged identification of the corpse. It seems that one of the surgeons officiating at the first autopsy was attracted by a peculiar mark upon the face of the corpse. At first it was thought that this was merely a bruise caused by something striking the body while in the water, but a closer examination proved it to be a skin disease known as ‘lichen..’ It appears that there are several varieties of this disease, some of which are quite well known. That found on the face of the corpse, however, is a very rare form, only two other cases having been recorded in this country. This is a fact of the highest importance in relation to the events which have followed. Not unnaturally, the doctors became greatly interested. One of these, Dr. Elliot, the young surgeon who first examined it closely, having never seen any examples of lichen before, spoke of it that evening at a meeting of his medical society. Having looked up the literature relating to the disease in the interval, he was enabled to give the technical name of this very rare form of the disease. At this, another physicianpresent arose, and declared that it seemed to him a most extraordinary coincidence that this case had been reported, for he himself had recently treated an exactly similar condition for a patient who had finally died, his death having occurred within a week. A lengthy and of course very technical discussion ensued, with the result that Dr. Mortimer, the physician who had treated the case of the patient who had so recently died, arranged with Dr. Elliot to go with him on the following day and examine the body at the Morgue. This he did, and, to

the great amazement of his colleague, he then declared that the body beiure him was none other than that of his own patient, supposed to have been buried. When the authorities learned of this, they summoned the family of the deceased, two brothers and the widow. All of these persons viewed the corpse separately, and each declared most emphatically that it was the body of the man whose funeral they had followed. Under ordinary circumstances, so complete an identification of a body would leave no room for doubt, but what is to be thought when we are informed by the family and friends of the deceased that the corpse had been cremated? That the mourners had seen the coffin containing the body placed in the furnace, and had waited patiently during the incineration? And that later the ashes of the dear departed had been delivered to them, to be finally deposited in an urn in the family vault, where it still is with contents undisturbed? It does not lessen the mystery toknow that the body in the Morgue (or the ashes at the cemetery) represents all that is left of one of our most esteemed citizens, Mr. Rufus Quadrant, a gentleman who in life enjoyed that share of wealth which made it possible for him to connect his name with so many charities; a gentleman whose family in the past and in the present has ever been and still is above the breath of suspicion. Evidently there is a mystery that will try the skill of our very best detectives."

"That last line reads like a challenge to the gentlemen of your profession," said Mr. Mitchel to Mr. Barnes as he put down the paper.

"I needed no such spur to urge me to undertake to unravel this case, which certainly has most astonishing features."

"Suppose we enumerate the important data and discover what reliable deduction may be made therefrom."

"That is what I have done a dozen times, with no very satisfactory result. First, we learn that a man is found in the river upon whose face there is a curious distinguishing mark in the form of one of the rarest of skin diseases. Second, a man has recently died who was similarly afflicted. The attending physician declares upon examination that the body taken from the river is the body of his patient. Third, the family agree that this identification is correct. Fourth, this second dead man was cremated. Query, how can a man's body be cremated, and then be found whole in the river subsequently? No such thing has been related in fact or fiction since the beginning of the world."

“Not so fast, Mr. Barnes. What of the Phoenix?”

“Why, the living young Phoenix arose from the ashes of his dead ancestor. But here we have seemingly a dead body reforming from its own ashes, the ashes meanwhile remaining intact and unaltered. A manifest impossibility.”

“Ah; then we arrive at our first reliable deduction, Mr. Barnes.”

“Which is?”

“Which is that, despite the doctors, we have two bodies to deal with. The ashes in the vault represent one, while the body at the Morgue is another.”

“Of course. So much is apparent, but you say the body at the Morgue is another, and I ask you, which other?”

“That we must learn. As you appear to be seeking my views in this case I will give them to you, though of course I have nothing but this newspaper account, which may be inaccurate. Having concluded beyond all question that there are two bodies in this case, our first effort must be to determine which is which. That is to say, we must discover whether this man, Rufus Quadrant, was really cremated, which certainly ought to be the case, or whether, by some means, another body has been exchanged for his, by accident or by design, and if so, whose body that was.”

“If it turns out that the body at the Morgue is really that of Mr. Quadrant, then, of course, as you say, some other man’s body was cremated, and—”

“Why may it not have been a woman’s?”

“You are right, and that only makes the point to which I was about to call your attention more forcible. If an unknown body has been incinerated, how can we ever identify it?”

“I do not know. But we have not arrived at that bridge yet. The first step is to reach a final conclusion in regard to the body at the Morgue. There are several things to be inquired into, there.”

“I wish you would enumerate them.”

“With pleasure. First, the autopsy is said to have shown that the man died a natural death, that is, that disease, and not one of his fellow-beings, killed him. What disease was this, and was it the same as that which caused the death of Mr. Quadrant? If the coroner’s physicians declared what disease killed the man, and named the same as that which carried off Mr. Quadrant, remembering that the body before them was unknown, we would have a strong corroboration of the alleged identification.”

“Very true. That will be easily learned.”

“Next, as to this lichen. I should think it important to know more of that. Is it because the two cases are examples of the same rare variety of the disease, or was there something so distinct about the location and area or shape of the diseased surface, that the doctor could not possibly be mistaken?—for doctors do make mistakes, you know.”

“Yes, just as detectives do,” said Mr. Barnes, smiling, as he made notes of Mr. Mitchel’s suggestions.

“If you learn that the cause of death was the same, and that the lichen was not merely similar but identical, I should think that there could be little reason for longer doubting the identification. But if not fully satisfied by your inquiries along these lines, then it might be well to see the family of Mr. Quadrant, and inquire whether they too depend upon this lichen as the only means of identification, or whether, entirely aside from that diseased spot, they would be able to swear that the body at the Morgue is their relative. You would have in connection with this inquiry an opportunity to ask many discreet questions which might be of assistance to you.”

“All of this is in relation to establishing beyond a doubt the identity of the body at the Morgue, and of course the work to that end will practically be simple. In my own mind I have no doubt that the body of Mr. Quadrant is the one found in the water. Of course, as you suggest, it will be as well to know this rather than merely to think it. But once knowing it, what then of the body which is now ashes?”

“We must identify that also.”

“Identify ashes!” exclaimed Mr. Barnes. “Not an easy task.”

“If all tasks were easy, Mr. Barnes,” said Mr. Mitchel, “we should have little need of talent such as yours. Suppose you follow my advice, provided you intend to accept it, as far as I have indicated, and then report to me the results.”

“I will do so with pleasure. I do not think it will occupy much time. Perhaps by luncheon, I—”

“You could get back here and join me. Do so!”

“In the meanwhile shall you do any—any investigating?”

“I shall do considerable thinking. I will cogitate as to the possibility of a Phoenix arising from those ashes.”

II

LEAVING Mr. Mitchel, Mr. Barnes went directly to the office of Dr. Mortimer, and after waiting nearly an hour was finally ushered into the consulting-room.

“Dr. Mortimer,” said Mr. Barnes, “I have called in relation to this remarkable case of Mr. Quadrant. I am a detective, and the extraordinary nature of the facts thus far published attracts me powerfully, so that, though not connected with the regular police, I am most anxious to unravel this mystery if possible, though, of course, I should do nothing that would interfere with the regular officers of the law. I have called, hoping that you might be willing to answer a few questions.”

“I think I have heard of you, Mr. Barnes, and if, as you say, you will do nothing to interfere with justice, I have no objection to telling you what I know, though I fear it is little enough.”

“I thank you, Doctor, for your confidence, which, I assure you, you shall not regret. In the first place, then, I would like to ask you about this identification. The newspaper account states that you have depended upon some skin disease. Is that of such a nature that you can be absolutely certain in your opinion?”

“I think so,” said the doctor. “But then, as you must have found in your long experience, all identifications of the dead should be accepted with a little doubt. Death alters the appearance of every part of the body, and especially the face. We think that we know a man by the contour of his face, whereas we often depend, during life, upon the habitual expressions which the face ever carries. For example, suppose that we know a young girl, full of life and happiness, with a sunny disposition undimmed by care or the world’s worry. She is ever smiling, or ready to smile. Thus we know her. Let that girl suffer a sudden and perhaps painful death. In terror and agony as she dies, the features are distorted, and in death the resultant expression is somewhat stamped upon the features. Let that body lie in the water for a time, and when recovered it is doubtful whether all of her friends would identify her. Some would, but others would with equal positiveness declare that these were mistaken. Yet you observe the physical contours would still be present.”

“I am pleased, Doctor, by what you say,” said Mr. Barnes, “because with such appreciation of the changes caused by death and exposure in the water, I must

lay greater reliance upon your identification. In this case, as I understand it, there is something peculiar about the body, a mark of disease called lichen, I believe?"

"Yes. But what I have said about the changes caused by death must have weight here also," said the doctor. "You see I am giving you all the points that may militate against my identification, that you may the better judge of its correctness. We must not forget that we are dealing with a disease of very great rarity; so rare, in fact, that this very case is the only one that I have ever seen. Consequently I cannot claim to be perfectly familiar with the appearance of surfaces attacked by this disease, after they have suffered the possible alterations of death."

"Then you mean that, after all, this spot upon which the identification rests does not now look as it did in life?"

"I might answer both yes and no to that. Changes have occurred, but they do not, in my opinion, prevent me from recognizing both the disease and the corpse. To fully explain this I must tell you something of the disease itself, if you will not be bored?"

"Not at all. Indeed, I prefer to know all that you can make intelligible to a layman."

"I will use simple language. Formerly a greatnumber of skin diseases were grouped under the general term 'lichen,' which included all growths which might be considered fungoid. At the present time we are fairly well able to separate the animal from the vegetable parasitic diseases, and under the term 'lichen' we include very few forms. The most common is *lichen planus,* which unfortunately is not infrequently met, and is therefore very well understood by the specialists. *Lichen ruber,* however, is quite distinct. It was first described by the German, Hebra, and has been sufficiently common in Europe to enable the students to thoroughly well describe it. In this country, however, it seems to be one of the rarest of diseases. White of Boston reported a case, and Fox records another, accompanied by a colored photograph, which, of course, aids greatly in enabling any one to recognize a case should it occur. There is one more fact to which I must allude as having an important bearing upon my identification. *Lichen ruber,* like other lichens, is not confined to any one part of the body; on the contrary, it would be remarkable, should the disease be uncontrolled for any length of time, not to see it in many places. This brings me to my point. The seat of the disease,

in the case of Mr. Quadrant, was the left cheek, where a most disfiguring spot appeared. It happened that I was in constant attendance upon Mr. Quadrant for the trouble which finally caused his decease, and therefore I saw this lichen in its incipiency, and more fortunately I recognized its true nature. Now whether due to my treatment or not, it is a fact that the disease did not spread; that is to say, it did not appear elsewhere upon the body."

"I see! I see!" said Mr. Barnes, much pleased. "This is an important point. For if the body at the Morgue exhibits a spot in that exact locality and nowhere else, and if it is positively this same skin disease, it is past belief that it should be any other than the body of your patient."

"So I argue. That two such unique examples of so rare a disease should occur at the same time seems incredible, though remotely possible. Thus, as you have indicated, we have but to show that the mark on the body at the Morgue is truly caused by this disease, and not by some abrasion while in the water, in order to make our opinion fairly tenable. Both Dr. Elliot and myself have closely examined the spot, and we have agreed that it is not an abrasion. Had the face been thus marked in the water, we should find the cuticle rubbed off, which is not the case. Contrarily, in the disease under consideration, the cuticle, though involved in the disease, and even missing in minute spots, is practically present. No, I am convinced that the mark on the body at the Morgue existed in life as the result of this lichen, though the alteration of color since death gives us a much changed appearance."

"Then I may consider that you are confident that this mark on the body is of the same shape, in the same position, and caused by the same disease as that which you observed upon Mr. Quadrant?"

"Yes. I do not hesitate to assert that. To this you may add that I identify the body in a general way also."

"By which you mean?"

"That without this mark, basing my opinion merely upon my long acquaintance with the man, I would be ready to declare that Mr. Quadrant's body is the one which was taken from the water."

"What, then, is your opinion as to how this strange occurrence has come about? If Mr. Quadrant was cremated, how could—"

“It could not, of course. This is not the age of miracles. Mr. Quadrant was not cremated. Of that we may be certain.”

“But the family claim that they saw his body consigned to the furnace.”

“The family believe this, I have no doubt. But how could they be sure? Let us be accurate in considering what we call facts. What did the family see at the crematory? They saw a closed coffin placed into the furnace.”

“A coffin, though, which contained the body of their relative.”

Mr. Barnes did not of course himself believe this, but made the remark merely to lead the doctor on.

“Again you are inaccurate. Let us rather say a coffin which once contained the body of their relative.”

“Ah; then you think that it was taken from the coffin and another substituted for it?”

“No. I do not go so far. I think, nay, I am sure, that Mr. Quadrant’s body was taken from the coffin, but whether another was substituted for it, is a question. The coffin may have been empty when burned.”

“Could we settle that point by an examination of the ashes?”

The doctor started as though surprised at the question. After a little thought he replied hesitatingly:

“Perhaps. It seems doubtful. Ashes from bone and animal matter would, I suppose, bring us chemical results different from those of burned wood. Whether our analytical chemists could solve such a problem remains to be seen. Ordinarily one would think that ashes would resist all efforts at identification.” The doctor seemed lost in thoughtful consideration of this scientific problem.

“The trimmings of the coffin might contain animal matter if made of wool,” suggested Mr. Barnes.

“True; that would certainly complicate the work of the chemist, and throw doubt upon his reported results.”

“You admitted, Doctor, that the body was placed in the coffin. Do you know that positively?”

“Yes. I called on the widow on the night previous to the funeral, and the body was then in the coffin. I saw it in company with the widow and the two brothers. It was then that it was decided that the coffin should be closed and not opened again.”

“Whose wish was this?”

“The widow’s. You may well understand that this lichen greatly disfigured Mr. Quadrant, and that he was extremely sensitive about it. So much so that he had not allowed any one to see him for many weeks prior to his death. It was in deference to this that the widow expressed the wish that no one but the immediate family should see him in his coffin. For this reason also she stipulated that the coffin should be burned with the body.”

“You say this was decided on the night before the funeral?”

“Yes. To be accurate, about five o’clock in the afternoon, though at this season and in the closed rooms the lamps were already lighted.”

“Was this known to many persons? That is, that the coffin was not again to be opened?”

“It was known of course to the two brothers, and also to the undertaker and two of his assistants who were present.”

“The undertaker himself closed the casket, I presume?”

“Yes. He was closing it as I escorted the widow back to her own room.”

“Did the brothers leave the room with you?”

“I think so. Yes, I am sure of it.”

“So that the body was left with the undertaker and his men, after they knew that it was not to be opened again?”

“Yes.”

“Did these men leave before you did?”

“No. I left almost immediately after taking the widow to her own room and seeing her comfortably lying down, apparently recovered from the hysterical spell which I had been summoned to check. You know, of course, that the Quadrant residence is but a block from here.”

“There is one more point, Doctor. Of what disease did Mr. Quadrant die?”

“My diagnosis was what in common parlance I may call cancer of the stomach. This, of course, I only knew from the symptoms. That is to say, there had been no operation, as the patient was strenuously opposed to such a procedure. He repeatedly said to me, ‘I would rather die than be cut up.’ A strange prejudice in these days of successful surgery, when the knife in skilful hands promises so much more than medication.”

“Still these symptoms were sufficient in your own mind to satisfy you that your diagnosis was accurate?”

“I can only say in reply that I have frequently—in the presence of similar symptoms—performed an operation, and always with the same result. The cancer was always present.”

“Now the coroner’s autopsy on the body at the Morgue is said to have shown that death was due to disease. Do you know what they discovered?”

“Dr. Elliot told me that it was cancer of the stomach.”

“Why, then, the identification seems absolute?”

“So it seems. Yes.”

III

Mr. BARNES next called at the home of the Quadrants, and was informed that both of the gentlemen were out. With some hesitation he sent a brief note in to the widow, explaining his purpose and asking for an interview. To his gratification his request was granted, and he was shown up to that lady's reception-room.

"I fear, madame," said he, "that my visit may seem an intrusion, but I take the deepest sort of interest in this sad affair of your husband, and I would much appreciate having your permission and authority to investigate it, with the hope of discovering the wrong-doers."

"I see by your note," said Mrs. Quadrant in a low, sad voice, "that you are a detective, but not connected with the police. That is why I have decided to see you. I have declined to see the regular detective sent here by the police, though my husband's brothers, I believe, have answered all his questions. But as for myself, I felt that I could not place this matter in the hands of men whom my husband always distrusted. Perhaps his prejudice was due to his politics, but he frequently declared that our police force was corrupt. Thus you understand why I am really glad that you have called, for I am anxious, nay, determined, to discover if possible who it was who has done me this grievous wrong. To think that my poor husband was there in the river, when I thought that his body had been duly disposed of. It is horrible, horrible!"

"It is indeed horrible, madame," said Mr. Barnes sympathizingly. "But we must find the guilty person or persons and bring them to justice."

"Yes! That is what I wish. That is what I am ready to pay any sum to accomplish. You must not consider you are working, as you courteously offer, merely to satisfy your professional interest in a mysterious case. I wish you to undertake this as my special agent."

"As you please, madame, but in that case I must make one condition. I would ask that you tell this to no one unless I find it necessary. At present I think I can do better if I am merely regarded as a busybody detective attracted by an odd case."

“Why, certainly, no one need know. Now tell me what you think of this matter.”

“Well, it is rather early to formulate an opinion. An opinion is dangerous. One is so apt to endeavor to prove himself right, whereas he ought merely to seek out the truth. But if you have any opinion, it is necessary for me to know it. Therefore I must answer you by asking the very question which you have asked me. What do you think?”

“I think that someone took the body of my husband from the coffin, and that we burned an empty casket. But to guess what motive there could be for such an act would be beyond my mental abilities. I have thought about it till my head has ached, but I can find no reason for such an unreasonable act.”

“Let me then suggest one to you, and then perhaps your opinion may be more useful. Suppose that some person, some one who had the opportunity, had committed a murder. By removing the body of your husband, and replacing it with that of his victim, the evidences of his own crime would be concealed. The discovery of your husband’s body, even if identified, as it has been, could lead to little else than mystification, for the criminal well knew that the autopsy would show natural causes of death.”

“But what a terrible solution this is which you suggest! Why, no one had access to the coffin except the undertaker and his two men!”

“You naturally omit your two brothers, but a detective cannot make such discrimination.”

“Why, of course I do not count them, for certainly neither of them could be guilty of such a crime as you suggest. It is true that Amos—but that is of no consequence.”

“Who is Amos?” asked Mr. Barnes, aroused by the fact that Mrs. Quadrant had left her remark unfinished.

“Amos is one of my brothers—my husband’s brothers, I mean. Amos Quadrant was next in age, and Mark the youngest of the three. But, Mr. Barnes, how could one of the undertakers have made this exchange which you suggest? Certainly they could not have brought the dead body here, and my husband’s body never left the house prior to the funeral.”

“The corpse which was left in place of that of your husband must have been smuggled into this house by someone. Why not by one of these men? How, is a matter for explanation later. There is one other possibility about which you may be able to enlighten me. What opportunity, if any, was there that this substitution may have occurred at the crematory?”

“None at all. The coffin was taken from the hearse by our own pall-bearers, friends all of them, and carried directly to the room into which the furnace opened. Then, in accordance with my special request, the coffin, unopened, was placed in the furnace in full view of all present.”

“Were you there yourself?”

“Oh! no, no! I could not have endured such a sight. The cremation was resorted to as a special request of my husband. But I am bitterly opposed to such a disposition of the dead, and therefore remained at home.”

“Then how do you know what you have told me?—that there was no chance for substitution at the crematory?”

“Because my brothers and other friends have related all that occurred there in detail, and all tell the same story that I have told you.”

“Dr. Mortimer tells me that you decided to have the coffin closed finally on the evening prior to the funeral. With the casket closed, I presume you did not consider it necessary to have the usual watchers?”

“Not exactly, though the two gentlemen, I believe, sat up through the night, and occasionally visited the room where the casket was.”

“Ah! Then it would seem to have been impossible for any one to enter the house and accomplish the exchange, without being detected by one or both of these gentlemen?”

“Of course not,” said Mrs. Quadrant, and then, realizing the necessary deduction, she hastened to add: “I do not know. After all, they—may not have sat up through all the night.”

“Did any one enter the house that night, so far as you know?”

“No one, except Dr. Mortimer, who stopped in about ten as he was returning from a late professional call. He asked how I was, and went on, I believe.”

“But neither of the undertakers came back upon any excuse?”

“Not to my knowledge.”

At this moment some one was heard walking in the hall below, and Mrs. Quadrant added:

“I think that may be one of my brothers now. Suppose you go down and speak to him. He would know whether any one came to the house during the night. You may tell him that you have seen me, if you wish, and that I have no objection to your endeavoring to discover the truth.”

Mr. Barnes bade Mrs. Quadrant adieu and went down to the parlor floor. Not meeting any one, he touched a bell, and when the servant responded, asked for either of the gentlemen of the house whomight have come in. He was informed that Mr. Mark Quadrant was in the library, and was invited to see him there.

Mr. Mark Quadrant was of medium height, body finely proportioned, erect figure, a well-poised head, keen, bright eyes, a decided blond, and wore a Vandyke beard, close trimmed. He looked at Mr. Barnes in such a manner that the detective knew that whatever he might learn from this man would be nothing that he would prefer to conceal, unless accidentally surprised from him. It was necessary therefore to approach the subject with considerable circumspection.

“I have called,” said Mr. Barnes, “in relation to the mysterious circumstances surrounding the death of your brother.”

“Are you connected with the police force?” asked Mr. Quadrant.

“No. I am a private detective.”

“Then you will pardon my saying that you are an intruder—an unwelcome intruder.”

“I think not,” said Mr. Barnes, showing no irritation at his reception. “I have the permission of Mrs. Quadrant to investigate this affair.”

“Oh! You have seen her, have you?”

“I have just had an interview with her.”

“Then your intrusion is more than unwelcome; it is an impertinence.”

“Why, pray?”

“You should have seen myself or my brother, before disturbing a woman in the midst of her grief.”

“I asked for you or your brother, but you were both away. It was only then that I asked to see Mrs. Quadrant.”

“You should not have done so. It was impertinent, I repeat. Why could you not have waited to see one of us?”

“Justice cannot wait. Delay is often dangerous.”

“What have you to do with justice? This affair is none of your business.”

“The State assumes that a crime is an outrage against all its citizens, and any man has the right to seek out and secure the punishment of the criminal.”

“How do you know that any crime has been committed?”

“There can be no doubt about it. The removal of your brother’s body from his coffin was a criminal act in itself, even if we do not take into account the object of the person who did this.”

“And what, pray, was the object, since you are so wise?”

“Perhaps the substitution of the body of a victim of murder, in order that the person killed might be incinerated.”

“That proposition is worthy of a detective. You first invent a crime, and then seek to gain employment in ferreting out what never occurred.”

“That hardly holds with me, as I have offered my service without remuneration.”

“Oh, I see. An enthusiast in your calling! A crank, in other words. Well, let me

prick your little bubble. Suppose I can supply you with another motive, one not at all connected with murder?”

“I should be glad to hear you propound one.”

“Suppose that I tell you that though my brother requested that his body should be cremated, both his widow and myself were opposed? Suppose that I further state that my brother Amos, being older than I, assumed the management of affairs, and insisted that the cremation should occur? And then suppose that I admit that to thwart that, I removed the body myself?”

“You ask me to suppose all this,” said Mr. Barnes quietly. “In reply, I ask you, do you make such a statement?”

“Why, no. I do not intend to make any statement, because I do not consider that you have any right to mix yourself up in this affair. It is my wish that the matter should be allowed to rest. Nothing could be more repugnant to my feelings, or to my brother’s, were he alive, poor fellow, than all this newspaper notoriety. I wish to see the body buried, and the mystery with it. I have no desire for any solution.”

“But, despite your wishes, the affair will be, must be, investigated. Now, to discuss your imaginary proposition, I will say that it is so improbable that no one would believe it.”

“Why not, pray?”

“First, because it was an unnatural procedure upon such an inadequate motive. A man might kill his brother, but he would hardly desecrate his brother’s coffin merely to prevent a certain form of disposing of the dead.”

“That is mere presumption. You cannot dogmatically state what may actuate a man.”

“But in this case the means was inadequate to the end.”

“How so?”

“If the combined wishes of yourself and the widow could not sway your brother Amos, who had taken charge of the funeral, how could you hope when the body

should be removed from the river, that he would be more easily brought around to your wishes?”

“The effort to cremate the body having failed once, he would not resist my wishes in the second burial.”

“That is doubtful. I should think he would be so incensed by your act, that he would be more than ever determined that you should have no say in the matter. But supposing that you believed otherwise, and that you wished to carry out this extraordinary scheme, you had no opportunity to do so.”

“Why not?”

“I suppose, of course, that your brother sat up with the corpse through the night before the funeral.”

“Exactly. You suppose a good deal more than you know. My brother did not sit up with the corpse. As the coffin had been closed, there was no need to follow that obsolete custom. My brother retired before ten o’clock. I myself remained up some hours longer.”

Thus in the mental sparring Mr. Barnes had succeeded in learning one fact from this reluctant witness.

“But even so,” persisted the detective, “you would have found difficulty in removing the body from this house to the river.”

“Yet it was done, was it not?”

This was unanswerable. Mr. Barnes did not for a moment place any faith in what this brother had said. He argued that had he done anything like what he suggested, he would never have hinted at it as a possibility. Why he did so was a puzzle. Perhaps he merely wished to make the affair seem more intricate, in the hope of persuading him to drop the investigation, being, as he had stated, honestly anxious to have the matter removed from the public gaze, and caring nothing about any explanation of how his brother’s body had been taken from the coffin. On the other hand, there was a possibility which could not be entirely overlooked. He might really have been guilty of acting as he had suggested, and perhaps now told of it as a cunning way of causing the detective to discredit such a solution of the mystery. Mr. Barnes thought it well to pursue the subject a little

further.

“Suppose,” said he, “that it could be shown that the ashes now in the urn at the cemetery are the ashes of a human being?”

“You will be smart if you can prove that,” saidMr. Quadrant. “Ashes are ashes, I take it, and you will get little proof there. But since you discussed my proposition, I will argue with you about yours. You say, suppose the ashes are those of a human being. Very well, then, that would prove that my brother was cremated after all, and that I have been guying you, playing with you as a fisherman who fools a fish with feathers instead of real bait.”

“But what of the identification of the body at the Morgue?”

“Was there ever a body at the Morgue that was not identified a dozen times? People are apt to be mistaken about their friends after death.”

“But this identification was quite complete, being backed up by scientific reasons advanced by experts.”

“Yes, but did you ever see a trial where expert witnesses were called, that equally expert witnesses did not testify to the exact contrary? Let me ask you a question. Have you seen this body at the Morgue?”

“Not yet.”

“Go and see it. Examine the sole of the left foot. If you do not find a scar three or four inches long the body is not that of my brother. This scar was the result of a bad gash made by stepping on a shell when in bathing. He was a boy at the time, and I was with him.”

“But, Mr. Quadrant,” said Mr. Barnes, astonished by the new turn of the conversation, “I understood that you yourself admitted that the identification was correct.”

“The body was identified by Dr. Mortimer first. My sister and my brother agreed with the doctor, and I agreed with them all, for reasons of my own.”

“Would you mind stating those reasons?”

“You are not very shrewd if you cannot guess. I want this matter dropped. Had I denied the identity of the body it must have remained at the Morgue, entailing more newspaper sensationalism. By admitting the identity, I hoped that the body would be given to us for burial, and that the affair would then be allowed to die.”

“Then if, as you now signify, this is not your brother’s body, what shall I think of your suggestion that you yourself placed the body in the river?”

“What shall you think? Why, think what you like. That is your affair. The less you think about it, though, the better pleased I should be. And now really I cannot permit this conversation to be prolonged. You must go, and if you please I wish that you do not come here again.”

“I am sorry that I cannot promise that. I shall come if I think it necessary. This is your sister’s house, I believe, and she has expressed a wish that I pursue this case to the end.”

“My sister is a fool. At any rate, I can assure you, you shall not get another chance at me, so make the most of what information I have given you. Good morning.”

With these words Mr. Mark Quadrant walked out of the room, leaving Mr. Barnes alone.

IV

MR. BARNES stood for a moment in a quandary, and then decided upon a course of action. He touched the bell which he knew would call the butler, and then sat down by the grate fire to wait. Almost immediately his eye fell upon a bit of white paper protruding from beneath a small rug, and he picked it up. Examining it closely, he guessed that it had once contained some medicine in powder form, but nothing in the shape of a label, or traces of the powder itself, was there to tell what the drug had been.

“I wonder,” thought he, “whether this bit of paper would furnish me with a clue? I must have it examined by a chemist. He may discern by his methods what I cannot detect with the naked eye.”

With this thought in his mind, he carefully folded the paper in its original creases and deposited it in his wallet. At that moment the butler entered.

“What is your name?” asked Mr. Barnes.

“Thomas, sir,” said the man, a fine specimen of the intelligent New York negro. “Thomas Jefferson.”

“Well, Thomas, I am a detective, and your mistress wishes me to look into the peculiar circumstances which, as you know, have occurred. Are you willing to help me?”

“I’ll do anything for the mistress, sir.”

“Very good. That is quite proper. Now, then, do you remember your master’s death?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And his funeral?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You know when the undertaker and his men came and went, and how often, I presume? You let them in and saw them?”

“I let them in, yes, sir. But once or twice they went out without my knowing.”

“At five o’clock on the afternoon before the funeral, I am told that Mrs. Quadrant visited the room where the body was, and ordered that the coffin should be closed for the last time. Did you know this?”

“No, sir.”

“I understand that at that time the undertaker and two of his men were in the room, as were also the two Mr. Quadrants, Mrs. Quadrant, and the doctor. Now, be as accurate as you can, and tell me in what order and when these persons left the house.”

“Dr. Mortimer went away, I remember, just after Mrs. Quadrant went to her room to lie down. Then the gentlemen went in to dinner, and I served them. The undertaker and one of his men left together just as dinner was put on table. I remember that because the undertaker stood in the hall and spoke a word to Mr. Amos just as he was entering the dining-room. Mr. Amos then turned to me, and said for me to show them out. I went to the door with them, and then went back to the dining-room.”

“Ah! Then one of the undertaker’s men was left alone with the body?”

“I suppose so, unless he went away first. I did not see him go at all. But, come to think of it, he must have been there after the other two went away.”

“Why?”

“Because, when I let out the undertaker and his man, their wagon was at the door, but they walked off and left it. After dinner it was gone, so the other man must have gone out and driven off in it.”

“Very probably. Now, can you tell me this man’s name? The last to leave the house, I mean?”

“I heard the undertaker call one ‘Jack,’ but I do not know which one.”

“But you saw the two men—the assistants, I mean. Can you not describe the one that was here last?”

“Not very well. All I can say is that the one that went away with the undertaker was a youngish fellow without any mustache. The other was a short, thick-set man, with dark hair and a stubby mustache. That is all I noticed.”

“That will be enough. I can probably find him at the undertaker’s. Now, can you remember whether either of the gentlemen sat up with the corpse that night?”

“Both the gentlemen sat in here till ten o’clock. The body was across the hall in the little reception-room near the front door. About ten the door-bell rang, and I let in the doctor, who stopped to ask after Mrs. Quadrant. He and Mr. Amos went up to her room. The doctor came down in a few minutes, alone, and came into this room to talk with Mr. Mark.”

“How long did he stay?”

“I don’t know. Not long, I think, because he had on his overcoat. But Mr. Mark told me I could go to bed, and he would let the doctor out. So I just brought them a fresh pitcher of ice-water, and went to my own room.”

“That is all, then, that you know of what occurred that night?”

“No, sir. There was another thing, that I have not mentioned to any one, though I don’t think it amounts to anything.”

“What was that?”

“Some time in the night I thought I heard a door slam, and the noise woke me up. I jumped out of bed and slipped on some clothes and came as far as the door here, but I did not come in.”

“Why not?”

“Because I saw Mr. Amos in here, standing by the centre-table with a lamp in his hand. He was looking down at Mr. Mark, who was fast asleep alongside of the table, with his head resting on his arm on the table.”

“Did you notice whether Mr. Amos was dressed or not?”

“Yes, sir. That’s what surprised me. He had all his clothes on.”

“Did he awaken his brother?”

“No. He just looked at him, and then tiptoed out and went upstairs. I slipped behind the hall door, so that he would not see me.”

“Was the lamp in his hand one that he had brought down from his own room?”

“No, sir. It was one that I had been ordered to put in the room where the coffin was, as they did not want the electric light turned on in there all night. Mr. Amos went back into the front room, and left the lamp there before he went upstairs.”

“Do you know when Mr. Mark went up to his room? Did he remain downstairs all night?”

“No, sir. He was in bed in his own room when I came around in the morning. About six o’clock, that was. But I don’t know when he went to bed. He did not come down to breakfast, though, till nearly noon. The funeral was at two o’clock.”

“That is all, I think,” said Mr. Barnes. “But do not let any one know that I have talked with you.”

“Just as you say, sir.”

As it was now nearing noon, Mr. Barnes left the house and hastened up to Mr. Mitchel’s residence to keep his engagement for luncheon. Arrived there, he was surprised to have Williams inform him that he had received a telephone message to the effect that Mr. Mitchel would not be at home for luncheon.

“But, Inspector,” said Williams, “here’s a note just left for you by a messenger.”

Mr. Barnes took the envelope, which he found inclosed the following from Mr. Mitchel:

“Friend Barnes:—

“Am sorry I cannot be home to luncheon. Williams will give you a bite. I have news for you. I have seen the ashes, and there is now no doubt that a body, a human body, was burned at the crematory that day. I do not despair that we may yet discover whose body it was. More when I know more.”

V

Mr. Barnes read this note over two or three times, and then folded it thoughtfully and put it in his pocket. He found it difficult to decide whether Mr. Mitchel had been really detained, or whether he had purposely broken his appointment. If the latter, then Mr. Barnes felt sure that already he had made some discovery which rendered this case doubly attractive to him, so much so that he had concluded to seek the solution himself.

“That man is a monomaniac,” thought Mr. Barnes, somewhat nettled. “I come here and attract his attention to a case that I know will afford him an opportunity to follow a fad, and now he goes off and is working the case alone. It is not fair. But I suppose this is another challenge, and I must work rapidly to get at the truth ahead of him. Well, I will accept, and fight it out.”

Thus musing, Mr. Barnes, who had declined Williams’s offer to serve luncheon, left the house and proceeded to the shop of the undertaker. This man had a name the full significance of which had never come home to him until he began the business of caring for the dead. He spelled it Berial, and insisted that the pronunciation demanded a long sound to the “i,” and a strong accent on the middle syllable. But he was constantly annoyed by the cheap wit of acquaintances, who with a significant titter would call him either Mr. “Burial,” or Mr. “Bury all.”

Mr. Barnes found Mr. Berial disengaged, undertakers, fortunately, not always being rushed with business, and encountered no difficulty in approaching his subject.

“I have called, Mr. Berial,” said the detective, “to get a little information about your management of the funeral of Mr. Quadrant.”

“Certainly,” said Mr. Berial; “any information I can give, you are welcome to. Detective, I suppose?”

“Yes; in the interest of the family,” replied Mr. Barnes. “There are some odd features of this case, Mr. Berial.”

“Odd?” said the undertaker. “Odd don’t half cover it. It’s the most remarkable

thing in the history of the world. Here I am, with an experience in funerals covering thirty years, and I go and have a man decently cremated, and, by hickory, if he ain't found floating in the river the next morning. Odd? Why, there ain't any word to describe a thing like that. It's devilish; that's the nearest I can come to it."

"Well, hardly that," said Mr. Barnes, with a smile. "Of course, since Mr. Quadrant's body has been found in the river, it never was cremated."

"Who says so?" asked the undertaker, sharply. "Not cremated? Want to bet on that? I suppose not. We can't make a bet about the dead. It wouldn't be professional. But Mr. Quadrant was cremated. There isn't any question about that point. Put that down as final."

"But it is impossible that he should have been cremated, and then reappear at the Morgue."

"Just what I say. The thing's devilish. There's a hitch, of course. But why should it be at my end, eh? Tell me that, will you? There's just as much chance for a mistake at the Morgue as at the funeral, isn't there?" This was said in a tone that challenged dispute.

"What mistake could have occurred at the Morgue?" asked Mr. Barnes.

"Mistaken identification," replied the undertaker so quickly that he had evidently anticipated the question. "Mistaken identification. That's your cue, Mr. Barnes. It's happened often enough before," he added, with a chuckle.

"I scarcely think there can be a mistake of that character," said Mr. Barnes, thinking, nevertheless, of the scar on the foot. "This identification is not merely one of recognition; it is supported by scientific reason, advanced by the doctors."

"Oh! doctors make mistakes too, I guess," said Mr. Berial, testily. "Look here, you're a detective. You're accustomed to weigh evidence. Mow tell me, will you, how could this man be cremated, as I tell you he was, and then turn up in the river? Answer that, and I'll argue with you."

"The question, of course, turns on the fact of the cremation. How do you know that the body was in the coffin when it was consigned to the furnace?"

“How do I know? Why, ain’t that my business? Who should know if I don’t? Didn’t I put the body in the coffin myself?”

“Very true. But why could not some one have taken the body out after you closed the coffin finally, and before the hour of the funeral?”

Mr. Berial laughed softly to himself, as though enjoying a joke too good to be shared too soon with another. Presently he said:

“That’s a proper question, of course; a very proper question, and I’ll answer it. But I must tell you a secret, so you may understand it. You see in this business we depend a good deal on the recommendation of the attending physician. Some doctors are real professional, and recommend a man on his merits. Others are different. They expect a commission. Surprises you, don’t it? But it’s done every day in this town. The doctor can’t save his patient, and the patient dies. Then he tells the sorrowing friends that such and such an undertaker is the proper party to hide away the result of his failure; failure to cure, of course. In due time he gets his little check, ten per cent, of the funeral bill. This seems like wandering away from the point, but I am coming back to it. This commission arrangement naturally keeps me on the books of certain doctors, and vicy versy it keeps them on mine. So, working for certain doctors, it follows that I work for a certain set of people. Now I’ve a Catholic doctor on my books, and it happens that the cemetery where that church buries is in a lonesome place; just the spot for a grave-robber to work undisturbed, especially if the watchman out there should happen to be fond of his tipple, which I tell you, again in confidence, that he is. Now, then, it has happened more than once, though it has been kept quiet, that a grave filled up one afternoon would be empty the next morning. At least the body would be gone. Of course they wouldn’t take the coffin, as they’d be likely to be caught getting rid of it. You see, a coffin ain’t exactly regular household furniture. If they have time they fill the grave again, but often enough they’re too anxious to get away, because, of course, the watchman might not be drunk. Well, these things being kept secret, but still pretty well known in the congregation, told in whispers, I might say, a sort of demand sprung up for a style of coffin that a grave-robber couldn’t open, a sort of coffin with a combination lock, as it were.”

“You don’t mean to say—” began Mr. Barnes, greatly interested at last in the old man’s rather lengthy speech. He was interrupted by the undertaker, who again chuckled as he exclaimed:

“Don’t I? Well, I do, though. Of course I don’t mean there’s really a combination lock. That would never do. We often have to open the coffin for a friend who wants to see the dead face again, or for folks that come to the funeral late. It’s funny, when you come to think of it, how folks will be late to funerals. As they only have this last visit to make, you’d think they’d make it a point to be on time and not delay the funeral. But about the way I fasten a coffin. If any grave-robber tackles one of my coffins without knowing the trick, he’d be astonished, I tell you. I often think of it and laugh. You see, there’s a dozen screws and they look just like ordinary screws. But if you work them all out with a screwdriver, your coffin lid is just as tight as ever. You see, it’s this way. The real screw works with a reverse thread, and is hollow on the top. Now I have a screwdriver that is really a screw. When the screw-threaded end of this is screwed into the hollow end of the coffin-bolt, as soon as it is in tight it begins to unscrew the bolt. To put the bolt in, in the first place, I first screw it tight on to my screwdriver, and then drive it in, turning backwards, and as soon as it is tight my screwdriver begins to unscrew and so comes out. Then I drop in my dummy screw, and just turn it down to fill the hole. Now the dummy screw and the reverse thread of the real bolt is a puzzle for a grave-robber, and anyway he couldn’t solve it without one of my own tools.”

Mr. Barnes reflected deeply upon this as a most important statement. If Mr. Quadrant’s coffin was thus fastened, no one could have opened it without the necessary knowledge and the special screwdriver. He recalled that the butler had told him that one of Mr. Berial’s men had been at the house after the departure of the others. This man was therefore in the position to have opened the coffin, supposing that he had had one of the screwdrivers. Of this it would be well to learn.

“I suppose,” said Mr. Barnes, “that the coffin in which you placed Mr. Quadrant was fastened in this fashion?”

“Yes; and I put the lid on and fastened it myself.”

“What, then, did you do with the screwdriver? You might have left it at the house.”

“I might have, but I didn’t. No; I’m not getting up a combination and then leaving the key around loose. No, sir; there’s only one of those screwdrivers, and I take care of it myself. I’ll show it to you.”

The old man went to a drawer, which he unlocked, and brought back the tool.

“You see what it is,” he continued—“double-ended. This end is just the common every-day screwdriver. That is for the dummies that fill up the hollow ends after the bolts are sent home. The other end, you see, looks just like an ordinary screw with straight sides. There’s a shoulder to keep it from jamming. Now that’s the only one of those, and I keep it locked in that drawer with a Yale lock,and the key is always in my pocket. No; I guess that coffin wasn’t opened after I shut it.”

Mr. Barnes examined the tool closely, and formed his own conclusions, which he thought best to keep to himself.

“Yes,” said he aloud; “it does seem as though the mistake must be in the identification.”

“What did I tell you?” exclaimed Mr. Berial, delighted at thinking that he had convinced the detective. “Oh, I guess I know my business.”

“I was told at the house,” said Mr. Barnes, “that when you left, after closing the coffin, one of your men stayed behind. Why was that?”

“Oh, I was hungry and anxious to get back for dinner. One of my men, Jack, I brought away with me, because I had to send him up to another place to get some final directions for another funeral. The other man stayed behind to straighten up the place and bring off our things in the wagon.”

“Who was this man? What is his name?”

“Jerry, we called him. I don’t know his last name.”

“I would like to have a talk with him. Can I see him?”

“I am afraid not. He isn’t working with me any more.”

“How was that?”

“He left, that’s all. Threw up his job.”

“When was that?”

“This morning.”

“This morning?”

“Yes; just as soon as I got here, about eight o’clock.”

Mr. Barnes wondered whether there was any connection between this man’s giving up his position, and the account of the discoveries in regard to Mr. Quadrant’s body which the morning papers had published.

VI

“Mr. Berial,” said Mr. Barnes after a few moments thought, “I wish you would let me have a little talk with your man—Jack, I think you called him. And I would like to speak to him alone if you don’t mind. I feel that I must find this other fellow, Jerry, and perhaps Jack may be able to give me some information as to his home, unless you can yourself tell me where he lives.”

“No; I know nothing about him,” said Mr. Berial. “Of course you can speak to Jack. I’ll call him in here and I’ll be off to attend to some business. That will leave you alone with him.”

Jack, when he came in, proved to be a character. Mr. Barnes soon discovered that he had little faith in the good intentions of any one in the world except himself. He evidently was one of those men who go through life with a grievance, feeling that all people have in some way contributed to their misfortune.

“Your name is Jack,” said Mr. Barnes; “Jack what?”

“Jackass, you might say,” answered the fellow, with a coarse attempt at wit.

“And why, pray?”

“Well, a jackass works like a slave, don’t he? And what does he get out of it? Lots of blows, plenty of cuss words, and a little fodder. It’s the same with yours truly.”

“Very well, my man, have your joke. But now tell me your name. I am a detective.”

“The devil a much I care for that. I ain’t got nothin’ to hide. My name’s Randal, if you must have it. Jack Randal.”

“Very good. Now I want to ask you a few questions about the funeral of Mr. Quadrant.”

“Ask away. Nobody’s stoppin’ you.”

“You assisted in preparing the body for the coffin, I think?”

“Yes, and helped to put him in it.”

“Have you any idea how he got out of it again?” asked Mr. Barnes suddenly.

“Nit. Leastways, not any worth mentionin’, since I can’t prove what I might think.”

“But I should like to know what you think, anyway,” persisted the detective.

“Well, I think he was took out,” said Randal with a hoarse laugh.

“Then you do not believe that he was cremated?”

“Cremated? Not on your life. If he was made into ashes, would he turn up again a floater and drift onto the marble at the Morgue? I don’t think.”

“But how could the body have gotten out of the coffin?”

“He couldn’t. I never saw a stiff do that, except once, at an Irish wake, and that fellow wasn’t dead. No, the dead don’t walk. Not these days. I tell you, he was took out of the box. That’s as plain as your nose, not meanin’ to be personal.”

“Come, come, you have said all that before. What I want to know is, how you think he could have been taken out of the coffin.”

“Lifted out, I reckon.”

Mr. Barnes saw that nothing would be gained by getting angry, though the fellow’s persistent flippancy annoyed him extremely. He thought best to appear satisfied with his answers, and to endeavor to get his information by slow degrees, since he could not get it more directly.

“Were you present when the coffin lid was fastened?”

“Yes; the boss did that.”

“How was it fastened? With the usual style of screws?”

“Oh, no! We used the boss’s patent screw, warranted to keep the corpse securely in his grave. Once stowed away in the boss’s patent screw-top casket, no ghost gets back to trouble the long-suffering family.”

“You know all about these patent coffin-screws?”

“Why, sure. Ain’t I been working with old Berial these three years?”

“Does Mr. Berial always screw on the coffin lids himself?”

“Yes; he’s stuck on it.”

“He keeps the screwdriver in his own possession?”

“So he thinks.”

“What do you mean?” asked Mr. Barnes, immediately attentive.

“Just what I say. Old Berial thinks he’s got the only screwdriver.”

“But you know that there is another?”

“Who says so? I don’t know anything of the sort.”

“Why, then, do you cast a doubt upon the matter by saying that Mr. Berial thinks he has the only one?”

“Because I do doubt it, that’s all.”

“Why do you doubt it?”

“Oh, I don’t know. A fellow can’t always account for what he thinks, can he?”

“You must have some reason for thinking there may be a duplicate of that screwdriver.”

“Well, what if I have?”

“I would like to know it.”

“No doubt! But it ain’t right to cast suspicions when you can’t prove a thing, is it?”

“Perhaps others may find the proof.”

Just so. People in your trade are pretty good at that, I reckon."

"Good at what?"

"Proving things that don't exist."

"But if your suspicion is groundless, there can be no harm in telling it to me."

"Oh, there's grounds enough for what I think. Look here, suppose a case. Suppose a party, a young female party, dies. Suppose her folks think they'd like to have her hands crossed on her breast. Suppose a man, me, for instance, helps the boss fix up that young party with her hands crossed, and suppose there's a handsome shiner, a fust-water diamond, on one finger. Suppose we screw down that coffin lid tight at night, and the boss carts off his pet scfew-driver. Then suppose next day, when he opens that coffin for the visitors to have a last look at the young person, that the other man, mean-in' me, happens to notice that the shiner is missin'. If no other person notices it, that's because they're too busy grievin'. But that's the boss's luck, I say. The diamond's gone, just the same, ain't it? Now, you wouldn't want to claim that the young person come out of that patent box and give that diamond away in the night, would you? If she come out at all, I should say it was in the form of a ghost, and I never heard of ghosts wearin' diamonds, or givin' away finger rings. Did you?"

"Do you mean to say that such a thing as this has occurred?"

"Oh, I ain't sayin' a word. I don't make no accusations. You can draw your own conclusions. But in a case like that you would think there was more than one of them screwdrivers, now, wouldn't you?"

"I certainly should, unless we imagined that Mr. Berial himself returned to the house and stole the ring. But that, of course, is impossible."

"Is it?"

"Why, would you think that Mr. Berial would steal?"

"Who knows? We're all honest, till we're caught."

"Tell me this. If Mr. Berial keeps that screwdriver always in his own possession, how could any one have a duplicate of it made?"

“Dead easy. If you can’t see that, you’re as soft as the old man.”

“Perhaps I am. But tell me how it could be done.”

“Why, just see. That tool is double-ended. But one end is just a common, ordinary screwdriver. You don’t need to imitate that. The other end is just a screw that fits into the thread at the end of the bolts. Now old Berial keeps his precious screwdriver locked up, but the bolts lay around by the gross. Any man about the place could take one and have a screw cut to fit it, and there you are.”

This was an important point, and Mr. Barnes was glad to have drawn it out. It now became only too plain that the patented device was no hindrance to any one knowing of it, and especially to one who had access to the bolts. This made it the more necessary to find the man Jerry.

“There was another man besides yourself whoassisted at the Quadrant funeral, was there not?” asked Mr. Barnes.

There was another man, but he didn’t assist much. He was no good.”

“What was this man’s name?”

That’s why I say he’s no good. He called himself Jerry Morton, but it didn’t take me long to find out that his name was really Jerry Morgan. Now a man with two names is usually a crook, to my way of thinkin’.”

“He gave up his job here this morning, did he not?”

“Did he?”

“Yes. Can you tell why he should have done so? Was he not well enough paid?”

“Too well, I take it. He got the same money I do, and I done twice as much work. So he’s chucked it, has he? Well, I shouldn’t wonder if there was good reason.”

“What reason?”

“Oh, I don’t know. That story about old Quadrant floatin’ back was in the papers to-day, wasn’t it?”

“Yes.”

“Very well. There you are.”

“You mean that this man Morgan might have had a hand in that?”

Oh, he had a hand in it all right. So did I ind the boss, for that matter. But the boss and le left him screwed tight in his box, and Jerry he was left behind to pick up, as it were. And he had the wagon too. Altogether, I should say he hadthe chance if anybody. But mind you, I ain’t makin’ no accusations.”

“Then, if Jerry did this, he must have had a duplicate screwdriver?”

“You’re improvin’, you are. You begin to see things. But I never seen him with no screwdriver, remember that.”

“Was he in Mr. Berial’s employment at the time of the other affair?”

“What other affair?”

“The case of the young lady from whose finger the diamond ring was stolen.”

“Oh, that. Why, he might have been, of course, but then, you know, we was only supposin’ a case there. We didn’t say that was a real affair.” Randal laughed mockingly.

“Have you any idea as to where I could find this man Morgan?”

“I don’t think you will find him.”

“Why not?”

“Skipped, I guess. He wouldn’t chuck this job just to take a holiday.”

“Do you know where he lived?”

“Eleventh Avenue near Fifty-fourth Street. I don’t know the number, but it was over the butcher shop.” ,

“If this man Morgan did this thing, can *you* imagine why he did it?”

“For pay; you can bet on that. Morgan ain’t the man as would take a risk like that for the fun the thing.”

“But how could he hope to be paid for such an act?”

“Oh, he wouldn’t hope. You don’t know Jerry. He’d be paid, part in advance anyway, and balance on demand.”

“But who would pay him, and with what object?”

“Oh, I don’t know. But let me tell you something. Them brothers weren’t all so lovin’ to one another as the outside world thinks. In the fust place, as I gathered by listenin’ to the talk of the servants, the one they called Amos didn’t waste no love on the dead one, though I guess the other one, Mark, liked him some. I think he liked the widow even better.” Here he laughed. “Now the dead man wanted to be cremated-that is, he said so before he was dead. The widow didn’t relish the idea, but she ain’t strong-minded enough to push her views. Now we’ll suppose a case again. I like that style, it don’t commit you to anything. Well, suppose this fellow Mark thinks he’ll get into the good graces of the widow by hindering the cremation. He stands out agin it. Amos he says the old fellow wanted to be burned, and let him burn. ‘He’ll burn in hell, anyway.’ That nice, sweet remark he did make, I’ll tell you that much. Then the brothers they quarrel. And a right good row they did have, so I hear. Now we’ll suppose again. Why couldn’t our friend, Mr. Mark, have got up this scheme to stop the cremation?”

Mr. Barnes was startled to hear this man suggest exactly what Mark himself had hinted at. Could itbe only a coincidence or was it really the solution of the mystery? But if so, what of the body that was really cremated? But then again the only evidence in his possession on that point was the bare statement in the note received from Mr. Mitchel. Two constructions could be placed upon that note. First, it might have been honestly written by Mr. Mitchel, who really believed what he wrote, though, smart as he was, he might have been mistaken. Secondly, the note might merely have been written to send Mr. Barnes off on a wrong clue, thus leaving Mr. Mitchel a chance to follow up the right one. Resuming his conversation with Randal, Mr. Barnes said:

“Then you imagine that Mr. Mark Quadrant hired this man Morgan to take away the body and hide it until after the funeral?”

“Oh, I don’t know. All I’ll say is, I don’t think Jerry would be too good for a little job like that. Say, you’re not a bad sort, as detectives go. I don’t mind givin’ you a tip.”

“I am much obliged, I am sure,” said Mr. Barnes, smiling at the fellow’s presumption.

“Don’t mention it. I make no charge. But see. Have you looked at the corpse at the Morgue?”

“No. Why?”

Well, I stopped in this morning and had a peep at him. I guess it’s Quadrant all right.”

“Have you any special way of knowing that?”

“Well, when the boss was injectin’ the embalmin’ fluid, he stuck the needle in the wrong placefirst, and had to put it in again. That made two holes. They’re both there. You might wonder why we embalmed a body that was to be cremated. You see, we didn’t know the family wasn’t going to let him be seen, and we was makin’ him look natural.”

“And you are sure there are two punctures in the body at the Morgue?”

“Dead sure. That’s a joke. But that ain’t the tip I want to give you. This is another case of diamond rings.”

“You mean that there were diamond rings left on the hand when the body was placed in the coffin?”

“One solitaire; a jim dandy. And likewise a ruby, set deep like a carbuncle, I think they call them other red stones. Then on the little finger of the other hand there was a solid gold ring, with a flat top to it, and a letter ‘Q’ in it, made of little diamonds. Them rings never reached the Morgue.”

“But even so, that does not prove that they were taken by the man who removed the corpse from the coffin. They might have been taken by those who found the body in the river.”

“Nit. Haven’t you read the papers? Boys found it, but they called in the police to get it out of the water. Since then the police has been in charge. Now I ain’t got none too good an opinion of the police myself, but they don’t rob the dead. They squeeze the livin’, all right, but not the dead. Put that down. You can believe, if you like, that Jerry carted that body off to the river and dumpedit in, diamond rings and all. But as I said before, you don’t know Jerry. No, sir, if I was you, I’d find them rings, and find out how they got there. And maybe I can help you there, too,—that is, if you’ll make it worth my while.”

Mr. Barnes understood the hint and responded promptly:

“Here is a five-dollar bill,” said he. “And if you really tell me anything that aids me in finding the rings, I will give you ten more.”

“That’s the talk,” said Randal, taking the money. “Well, it’s this way. You’ll find that crooks, like other fly birds, has regular haunts. Now I happen to know that Jerry spouted his watch, a silver affair, but a good timer, once, and I take it he’d carry the rings where he’s known, ‘specially as I’m pretty sure the pawnbroker ain’t over inquisitive about where folks gets the things they borrow on. If I was you, I’d try the shop on Eleventh Avenue by Fiftieth Street. It don’t look like a rich place, but that kind don’t want to attract too much attention.”

“I will go there. I have no doubt that if he took the rings we will find them at that place. One thing more. How was Mr. Quadrant dressed when you placed him in the coffin? The newspapers make no mention of the clothing found on him.”

“Oh, we didn’t dress him. You see, he was to be burned, so we just shrouded him. Nothin’ but plain white cloth. No buttons or nothin’ that wouldn’t burn up. The body at the Morgue wasfound without no clothes of any kind. I’d recognize that shroud, though, if it turns up. So there’s another point for you.”

“One thing more. You are evidently sure that Mr. Quadrant’s body was taken out of the coffin. Do you think, then, that the coffin was empty when they took it to the crematory?”

“Why, sure! What could there be in it?”

“Suppose I were to tell you that another detective has examined the ashes and declares that he can prove that a human body was burned with that coffin. What would you say?”

“I’d say he was a liar. I’d say he was riggin’ you to get you off the scent. No, sir! Don’t you follow no such blind trail as that.”

VII

As Mr. Barnes left the undertaker's shop he observed Mr. Burrows coming towards him. It will be recalled that this young detective, now connected with the regular police force of the metropolis, had earlier in life been a *protog*[illegible] of Mr. Barnes. It was not difficult to guess from his being in this neighborhood that to him had been intrusted an investigation of the Quadrant mystery.

"Why, hello, Mr. Barnes," Mr. Burrows exclaimed, as he recognized his old friend. "What are you doing about here? Nosing into this Quadrant matter, I'll be bound."

"It is an attractive case," replied Mr. Barnes, in non-committal language. "Are you taking care of it for the office?"

"Yes; and the more I look into it the more complicated I find it. If you are doing any work on it, I wouldn't mind comparing notes."

"Very well, my boy," said Mr. Barnes, after a moment's thought, "I will confess that I have gone a little way into this. What have you done?"

"Well, in the first place, there was another examination by the doctors this morning. There isn't a shadow of doubt that the man at the Morgue was dead when thrown into the water. What's more, he died in his bed."

"Of what disease?"

"Cancer of the stomach. Put that down as fact number one. Fact number two is that the mark on his face is exactly the same, and from the same skin disease that old Quadrant had. Seems he also had a cancer, so I take it the identification is complete; especially as the family say it is their relative."

"Do they all agree to that?"

"Why, yes—that is, all except the youngest brother. He says he guesses it's his brother. Something about that man struck me as peculiar."

"Ah! Then you have seen him?"

“Yes. Don’t care to talk to detectives. Wants the case hushed up; says there’s nothing in it. Now I know there is something in it, and I am not sure he tells all he knows.”

“Have you formed any definite conclusion as to the motive in this case?”

“The motive for what?”

“Why, for removing the body from the coffin.”

“Well, I think the motive of the man who did it was money. What the motive of the man who hired him was, I can’t prove yet.”

“Oh! Then you think there are two in it?”

“Yes; I’m pretty sure of that. And I think I can put my finger on the man that made the actual transfer.”

The two men were walking as they talked, Mr. Burrows having turned and joined the older detective. Mr. Barnes was surprised to find his friend advancing much the same theory as that held by Randal. He was more astonished, however, at the next reply elicited. He asked:

“Do you mind naming this man?”

“Not to you, if you keep it quiet till I’m ready to strike. I’m pretty sure that the party who carried the body away and put it in the river was the undertaker’s assistant, a fellow who calls himself Randal.”

Mr. Barnes started, but quickly regained his self-control. Then he said:

“Randal? Why, how could he have managed it?”

“Easily enough. It seems that the coffin was closed at five on the afternoon before the funeral, and the undertaker was told, in the presence of this fellow Randal, that it would not be opened again. Then the family went in to dine, and Berial and the other man, a fellow with an alias, but whose true name is Morgan, left the house, the other one, Randal, remaining behind to clear up. The undertaker’s wagon was also there, and Randal drove it to the stables half an hour or so later.”

Mr. Barnes noted here that there was a discrepancy between the facts as related by Mr. Burrows and as he himself had heard them. He had been told by Berial himself that it was “Jack” who had left the house with him, while Burrows evidently believed that it was Jack Randal who had been left behind. It was important, therefore, to learn whether there existed any other reason for suspecting Randal rather than Morgan.

“But though he may have had this opportunity,” said Mr. Barnes, “you would hardly connect him with this matter without corroborative evidence.”

“Oh, the case is not complete yet,” said Mr. Burrows; “but I have had this fellow Randal watched for three days. We at the office knew about this identification before the newspapers got hold of it, be sure of that. Now one curious thing that he has done was to attempt to destroy some pawn-tickets.”

“Pawn-tickets?”

“Yes. I was shadowing him myself last night, when I saw him tear up some paper and drop the pieces in the gutter at the side of the pavement. I let my man go on, for the sake of recovering those bits of paper. It took some perseverance and no little time, but I found them, and when put together, as I have said, they proved to be pawn-tickets.”

“Have you looked at the property represented yet?”

“No. Would you like to go with me? We’ll go together. I was about to make my first open appearance at the undertaker’s shop to face this fellow, when you met me. But there’s time enough for that. We’ll go and look at the rings if you say the word.”

“Rings, are they?” said Mr. Barnes. “Why, I would like nothing better. They might have been taken from the corpse.”

“Haven’t a doubt of it,” said Mr. Burrows. “Here are the pawn-tickets. There are two of them. Both for rings.” He handed the two pawn-tickets to Mr. Barnes. The pieces had been pasted on another bit of paper and the two were consequently now on a single sheet. Mr. Barnes looked at them closely and then said:

“Why, Burrows, these are made out in the name of Jerry Morgan. Are you sure

you have made no mistake in this affair?”

“Mistake? Not a bit of it. That fellow thinks he is smart, but I don’t agree with him. He imagines that we might guess that one of those who had the handling of the body did this job, and when he pawned the rings he just used the other fellow’s name. It’s an old trick, and not very good, either.”

Mr. Barnes was not entirely convinced, though the theory was possible, nay, plausible. In which case, the tip which Randal had given to Mr. Barnes was merely a part of his rather commonplace scheme of self-protection at the expense of a fellow-workman. He was glad now that he had met Burrows, for his possession of the pawn-tickets made it easy to visit the pawnbroker and see the rings; while his connection with the regular force would enable him to seize them should they prove to have been stolen from the body of Mr. Quadrant. It was noteworthy that the pawn-tickets had been issued by the man to whose place Randal had directed him. Arrived there, Mr. Burrows demanded to see the rings, to which the pawnbroker at first demurred, arguing that the tickets had been torn, that they had not been issued to the one presenting them, and that unless they were to be redeemed he must charge a fee of twenty-five cents for showing the goods. To all of this Mr. Burrows listened patiently and then showing his shield said meaningly:

“Now, friend Isaac, you get those rings out, and it will be better for you. The Chief has had an eye on this little shop of yours for some time.”

“So help me Moses!” said the man, “he can keep both eyes on if he likes.”

But his demeanor changed, and with considerable alacrity he brought out the rings. There were three, just as Randal had described to Mr. Barnes, including the one with the initial “Q” set in diamonds.

“Who left these with you?” asked Mr. Burrows.

“The name is on the ticket,” answered the pawnbroker.

“You are inaccurate, my friend. A name is on the ticket, yes, but not the name. Now tell me the truth.”

“It’s all straight. I ain’t hiding anything. Morgan brought the things here.”

“Morgan, eh? You are sure his name is Morgan? Quite sure?”

“Why, that’s the name I know him by. Sometimes he goes by the name of Morton, I’ve heard. But with me it’s always been Morgan, Jerry Morgan, just as it reads on the ticket.”

“Oh, then you know this man Morgan?”

“No; only that he’ borrows money on security once in a while.”

“Well, now, if his name is Morgan, did you think this ring with a ‘Q’ on it was his? Does ‘Q’ stand for Morgan?”

“That’s none of my affair. Heavens, I can’t ask everybody where they get things. They’d be insulted.”

“Insulted! That’s a good one. Well, when I get my hands on this chap he’ll be badly insulted, for I’ll ask him a lot of questions. Now, Isaac, let me tell you what this ‘Q’ stands for. It stands for Quadrant, and that’s the name of the man found in the river lately, and these three rings came off his fingers. After death, Isaac; after death! What do you think of that?”

“You don’t say! I’m astonished!”

“Are you, now? Never thought your friend Morgan or Morton, who works out by the day, and brought valuable diamonds to pawn, would do such a thing, did you? Thought he bought these things out of his wages, eh?”

“I never knew he wasn’t honest, so help me Moses! or I wouldn’t have had a thing to do with him.”

“Perhaps not. You’re too honest yourself to take ‘swag’ from a ‘crook,’ even though you loan about one quarter of the value.”

“I gave him all he asked for. He promised to take them out again.”

“Well, he won’t, Isaac. I’ll take them out myself.”

“You don’t mean you’re going to keep the rings? Where do I come in?”

“You’re lucky you don’t come into jail.”

“May I ask this man a few questions, Burrows?” said Mr. Barnes.

“As many as you like, and see that you answer straight, Isaac. Don’t forget what I hinted about the Chief having an eye on you.”

“Why, of course, I’ll answer anything.”

“You say you have known this man Morgan for some time?” asked Mr. Barnes. “Can you give me an idea of how he looks?”

“Why, I ain’t much on descriptions. Morgan is a short fellow, rather stocky, and he’s got dark hair and a mustache that looks like a paintbrush.”

Mr. Barnes recalled the description which the butler had given of the man who had remained at the house when the others went away, and this tallied very well with it. As Berial had declared that it was Morgan who had been left at the house, and as this description did not fit Randal at all, he being above medium height, with a beardless face which made him seem younger than he probably was, it began to look as though in some way Mr. Burrows had made a mistake, and that Randal was not criminally implicated, though perhaps he had stolen the pawn-tickets, and subsequently destroyed them when he found that a police investigation was inevitable.

There was no object in further questioning the pawnbroker, who pleaded that as the owners of the property were rich, and as he had “honestly” made the loan, they might be persuaded to return to him the amount of his advance, adding that he would willingly throw off his “interest.”

Leaving the place, and walking together across town, Mr. Barnes said to Mr. Burrows:

“Tom, I am afraid you are on a wrong scent. That man Randal stole those pawn-tickets. He did not himself pawn the rings.”

“Maybe,” said the younger man, only half convinced. “But you mark my word. Randal is in this. Don’t believe all that ‘fence’ says. He may be in with Randal. I fancy that Randal pawned the things, but made the Jew put Morgan’s name on them. Now that we ask him questions, he declares that Morgan brought them to

him, either to protect Randal, or most likely to protect himself. Since there is a real Morgan, and he knew the man, he had no right to write his name on those tickets for things brought to him by some one else."

"But why are you so sure that Morgan is innocent? How do you know that he was the one that went off with old Berial when they left the house?"

"Simply because the other man, Randal, took the wagon back to the stables."

"Are you certain of that?"

"Absolutely. I have been to the stables, and they all tell the same story. Randal took the wagon out, harnessing the horse himself, as he often did. And Randal brought it back again, after six o'clock; of that they are certain, because the place is merely a livery for express wagons, trucks, and the like. The regular stable-boys go off between six and seven, and there is no one in charge at night except the watchman. The drivers usually take care of their own horses. Now the watchman was already there when Randal came in with the wagon, and two of the stable-boys also saw him."

"Now, Tom, you said that in your belief there was another man in this case,-one who really was the principal. Have you any suspicion as to that man's identity?"

"Here's my idea," said Mr. Burrows. "This fellow Randal was sounded by the man who finally engaged him for the job, and, proving to be the right sort, was engaged. He was to take the body out of the coffin and carry it away. The man who hired Randal must have been one of the brothers."

"Why?"

"It must have been, else the opportunity could not have been made, for, mark me, it was made. See! The widow was taken to the room to see the corpse, and then it was arranged that the coffin should be closed and not opened again before the funeral. That was to make all sure. Then came the closing of the coffin and the departure of two of the undertakers. The third, Randal, remained behind, and while the family lingered at dinner the job was done. The body was carried out to the wagon and driven off. Now we come to the question, which of the brothers did this?"

"Which have you decided upon?"

“Why, the object of this devilish act was to please the widow by preventing this cremation to which she objected. The man who concocted that scheme thought that when the body should be found it would then be buried, which would gratify the widow. Now why did he wish to gratify her? Because he’s in love with her. She’s not old, you know, and she’s still pretty.”

“Then you think that Mark Quadrant concocted this scheme?”

“No! I think that Amos Quadrant is our man.” It seemed destined that Mr. Burrows should surprise Mr. Barnes. If the older detective was astonished when he had heard Burrows suggest that Randal had been the accomplice in this affair, he was more astounded now to hear him accuse the elder brother of being the principal. For, had not Mark Quadrant told him that it was Amos who had insistedupon the cremation? And that Amos, being the elder, had assumed the control of the funeral?

“Burrows,” said Mr. Barnes, “I hope that you are not merely following your impulsive imagination?”

Mr. Burrows colored as he replied with some heat: “You need not forever twit me with my stupidity in my first case. Of course I may be mistaken, but I am doing routine work on this affair. I have not any real proof yet to support my theories. If I had I should make an arrest. But I have evidence enough to make it my duty to go ahead on definite lines. When the mystery clears a little, I may see things differently.”

“I should like to know why you think that Amos is in love with his sister-in-law.”

“Perhaps it would be safer to claim that he was once in love with her. The past is a certainty, the present mere conjecture. I got the tip from a slip of the tongue made by Dr. Mortimer, and I have corroborated the facts since. I was speaking with Dr. Mortimer of the possibility of there being any ill-feeling between the members of this family, when he said: ‘I believe there was some hard feeling between the deceased and his brother Amos arising from jealousy.’ When he had let the word ‘jealousy’ pass his lips, he closed up like a clam, and when I pressed him, tried to pass it off by saying that Amos was jealous of his brother’s business and social successes. But that did not go down with me, so I have had some guarded inquiries made, with the result that it is certain that Amos loved this

woman before she accepted Rufus."

"What if I tell you that I have heard that the younger brother, Mark, is in love with the widow, and that it was he who opposed cremation, while it was Amos who insisted upon carrying out the wishes of his brother?"

"What should I say to that? Well, I should say that you probably got that yarn from Randal, and that he had been 'stuffing you,' as the vernacular has it, hoping you'll excuse the vulgar expression."

It nettled Mr. Barnes to have his younger *confrere* guess so accurately the source of his information, and to hear him discredit it so satirically. He recognized, however, that upon the evidence offered Mr. Burrows had not yet made out his case, and that therefore the mystery was yet far from solved.

"Look here, Burrows," said Mr. Barnes. "Take an older man's advice. Don't go too fast in this case. Before you come to any conclusion, find this man Jerry Morgan."

"Why, there won't be any trouble about that."

"Oh, then you know where he is?"

"Why, he is still with Berial. At least he was up to last night."

"Ah, now we come to it!" Mr. Barnes was gratified to find that Burrows had not kept full control of his case. "Last night was many hours ago. Morgan threw up his job this morning, and left."

"The devil you say!"

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Barnes, determined nowto make Mr. Burrows a little uncomfortable. "I have no doubt he intends to skip out, but, of course, he cannot get away. You have him shadowed?"

"Why, no, I have not," said Mr. Burrows, dejectedly. "You see, I did not connect him in my mind with—"

"Perhaps he is not connected with the case in your mind, Burrows, but he is connected with it in fact. He is unquestionably the key to the situation at present.

With him in our hands we could decide whether it was he or Randal who pawned those rings. Without him we can prove nothing. In short, until you get at him the case is at a standstill."

"You are right, Mr. Barnes," said Mr. Burrows, manfully admitting his error. "I have been an ass. I was so sure about Randal that I did not use proper precautions, and Morgan has slipped through my fingers. But I'll find his trail, and I'll track him. I'll follow him to the opposite ocean if necessary, but I'll bring him back."

"That is the right spirit, Tom. Find him and bring him back if you can. If you cannot, then get the truth out of him. Let me say one thing more. For the present at least, work upon the supposition that it was he who pawned those rings. In that case he has at least two hundred dollars for travelling expenses."

"You are right. I'll begin at once without losing another minute."

"Where will you start?"

"I'll start where he started—at his own house. He's left there by now, of course, but I'll have a look at the place and talk a bit with the neighbors. When you hear from me again, I'll have Morgan."

VIII

Mr. Barnes returned to his home that night feeling well satisfied with his day's work. With little real knowledge he had started out in the morning, and within ten hours he had dipped deeply into the heart of the mystery. Yet he felt somewhat like a man who has succeeded in working his way into the thickest part of a forest, with no certainty as to where he might emerge again, or how. Moreover, though he had seemingly accomplished so much during the first day, he seemed destined to make little headway for many days thereafter. On the second day of his investigation he ascertained one fact which was more misleading than helpful. It will be recalled that Mark Quadrant had told him that his brother had a scar on the sole of his foot made by cutting himself whilst in swimming. Mr. Barnes went to the Morgue early, and examined both feet most carefully. There was no such scar, nor was it possible that there ever could have been. The feet were absolutely unmarred. Could it be possible that, in spite of the apparently convincing proof that this body had been correctly identified, nevertheless a mistake had been made?

This question puzzled the detective mightily, and he longed impatiently for an opportunity to talkwith one of the family, especially with the elder brother, Amos. Delay, however, seemed unavoidable. The police authorities, having finally accepted the identification, delivered the body to the Quadrants, and a second funeral occurred. Thus two more days elapsed before Mr. Barnes felt at liberty to intrude, especially as it was not known that he had been regularly retained by Mrs. Quadrant.

Meanwhile nothing was heard from Burrows, who had left the city, and, as a further annoyance, Mr. Barnes was unable to catch Mr. Mitchel at home though he called three times. Failing to meet that gentleman, and chafing at his enforced inactivity, the detective finally concluded to visit the cemetery in the hope of learning what had occurred when Mr. Mitchel had inspected the ashes. Again, however, was he doomed to disappointment. His request to be allowed to examine the contents of the urn was refused, strict orders to that effect having been imposed by the Chief of the regular detective force.

"You see," explained the superintendent, "we could not even let you look into the urn upon the order of one of the family, because they have claimed the body at the Morgue, and so they have no claim on these ashes. If a body was burned

that day, then there is a body yet to be accounted for, and the authorities must guard the ashes as their only chance to make out a case. Of course they can't identify ashes, but the expert chemists claim they can tell whether a human body or only an empty coffin was put into the furnace."

"And are the experts making such an analysis?" asked Mr. Barnes.

"Yes. The Chief himself came here with two of them, the day before yesterday. They emptied out the ashes onto a clean marble slab, and looked all through the pile. Then they put some in two bottles, and sealed the bottles, and then put the balance back in the urn and sealed that also. So, you see, there isn't any way for me to let you look into that urn."

"No, of course not," admitted the detective, reluctantly. "Tell me, was any one else present at this examination besides the Chief and the two experts?"

"Yes. A gentleman they called Mitchel, I believe."

Mr. Barnes had expected this answer, yet it irritated him to hear it. Mr. Mitchel had information which the detective would have given much to share.

During the succeeding days he made numerous ineffectual efforts to have an interview with Amos Quadrant, but repeatedly was told that he was "Not at home." Mrs. Quadrant, too, had left town for a rest at one of their suburban homes, and Mark Quadrant had gone with her. The city house, with its closed shutters, seemed as silent as the grave, and the secret of what had occurred within those walls seemed almost hopelessly buried.

"What a pity," thought the detective, "that walls do not have tongues as well as ears."

A week later Mr. Barnes was more fortunate. He called at the Quadrant mansion, expecting to once more hear the servant say coldly, "Not at home," in answer to his inquiry for Mr. Quadrant, when, to his surprise and pleasure, Mr. Quadrant himself stepped out of the house as he approached it. The detective went up to him boldly, and said:

"Mr. Quadrant, I must have a few words with you."

"Must?" said Mr. Quadrant with an angry inflection. "I think not. Move out of

my way, and let me pass."

"Not until you have given me an interview," said Mr. Barnes firmly, without moving.

"You are impertinent, sir. If you interfere with me further, I will have you arrested," said Mr. Quadrant, now thoroughly aroused.

"If you call a policeman," said Mr. Barnes, calmly, "I will have you arrested."

"And upon what charge, pray?" said Mr. Quadrant, contemptuously.

"I will accuse you of instigating the removal of your brother's body from the coffin."

"You are mad."

"There are others who hold this view, so it would be wise for you to move carefully in this matter."

"Would you object to telling me what others share your extraordinary opinion?"

"I did not say that it is my opinion. More than that, I will say that it is not my opinion, not at present at all events. But it is the view which is receiving close attention at police headquarters."

"Are you one of the detectives?"

"I am a detective, but not connected with the city force."

"Then by what right do you intrude yourself into this affair?"

Mr. Barnes knew that he must play his best card now, to gain his point with this man. He watched him closely as he answered:

"I am employed by Mrs. Quadrant."

There was an unmistakable start. Amos Quadrant was much disturbed to hear that his sister-in-law had hired a detective, and curiously enough he made no effort to hide his feelings. With some show of emotion he said in a low voice:

“In that case, perhaps, we should better have a talk together. Come in.”

With these words he led the way into the house, and invited the detective into the same room wherein he had talked with Mark Quadrant. When they had found seats, Mr. Quadrant opened the conversation immediately.

“What is your name?” he asked. “John Barnes,” was the reply.

“Barnes? I have heard of you. Well, Mr. Barnes, let me be very frank with you. Above all things it has been my wish that this supposed mystery should not be cleared up. To me it is a matter of no consequence who did this thing, or why it was done. Indeed, what suspicions have crossed my mind make me the more anxious not to know the truth. Feeling thus, I should have doneall in my power to hinder the work of the regular police. When you tell me that my sister-in-law has engaged your services, you take me so by surprise that I am compelled to think a bit in order to determine what course to pursue. You can readily understand that my position is a delicate and embarrassing one.”

“I understand that thoroughly, and you have my sympathy, Mr. Quadrant.”

“You may mean that well, but I do not thank you,” said Mr. Quadrant, coldly. “I want no man’s sympathy. This is purely an impersonal interview, and I prefer to have that distinctly prominent in our minds throughout this conversation. Let there be no misunderstanding and no false pretenses. You are a detective bent upon discovering the author of certain singular occurrences. I am a man upon whom suspicion has alighted; and, moreover, guilty or innocent, I desire to prevent you from accomplishing your purpose. I do not wish the truth to be known. Do we understand one another?”

“Perfectly,” said Mr. Barnes, astonished by the man’s manner and admiring his perfect self-control and his bold conduct.

“Then we may proceed,” said Mr. Quadrant. “Do you wish to ask me questions, or will you reply to one or two from me?”

“I will answer yours first, if you will reply to mine afterwards.”

“I make no bargains. I will answer, but I do not promise to tell you anything unless it pleases me to do so. You have the same privilege. First, then, tell me how it happened that Mrs. Quadrant engaged you in this case.”

“I called here, attracted merely by the extraordinary features of this case, and Mrs. Quadrant granted me a short interview, at the end of which she offered to place the matter in my hands as her representative.”

“Ah! Then she did not of her own thought send for you?”

“No.”

“You told me that the regular detectives are considering the theory that I instigated this affair. As you used the word instigated, it should follow that some other person, an accomplice, is suspected likewise. Is that the idea?”

“That is one theory.”

“And who, pray, is my alleged accomplice?”

“That I cannot tell you without betraying confidence.”

“Very good. Next you declared that you yourself do not share this viev. Will you tell me on what grounds you exculpate me?”

“With pleasure. The assumed reason for this act of removing your brother from his coffin was to prevent the cremation. Now it was yourself who wished to have the body incinerated.”

“You are mistaken. I did not wish it. On the contrary, I most earnestly wished that there should be no cremation. You see I incriminate myself.” He smiled painfully, and a dejected expression crossed his face. For an instant he looked like a man long tired of carrying some burden, then quickly he recovered his composure.

“You astonish me,” said Mr. Barnes. “I was told by Mr. Mark that you insisted upon carrying out your brother’s wish in this matter of disposing of his body.”

“My brother told you that? Well, it is true. He and I quarrelled about it. He wished to have a regular burial, contrary to our brother’s oft-repeated injunction. I opposed him, and, being the elder, I assumed the responsibility, and gave the orders.”

“But you have admitted that you did not wish this?”

“Do we always have our wishes gratified in this world?”

The detective, watching the man’s face closely, again noted that expression of weariness cross his features, and an instinctive feeling of pity was aroused. Once more the skein became more entangled. His own suspicion against Mark Quadrant rested upon the supposition that the act was committed with the intent of making capital out of it with the widow, and was based upon the theory that Amos wished to have his brother incinerated. If now it should transpire that after all it was Amos who managed the affair, his motive was a higher one, for, while appearing to carry out the wishes of his deceased brother, he must have aimed to gratify the widow, without admitting her to the knowledge that his hand had gained her purpose. This was ahigher, nobler love. Was Amos Quadrant of this noble mould? The question crossing the detective’s mind met a startling answer which prompted Mr. Barnes to ask suddenly:

“Is it true that, speaking of this cremation, you said: ‘Let him burn; he’ll burn in hell anyway?”

Amos Quadrant flushed deeply, and his face grew stern as he answered :

“I presume you have witnesses who heard the words, therefore it would be futile to deny it. It was a brutal remark, but I made it. I was exasperated by something which Mark had said, and replied in anger.”

“It is a sound doctrine, Mr. Quadrant,” said the detective, “that words spoken in anger often more truly represent the speaker’s feelings than what he says when his tongue is bridled.”

“Well?”

“If we take this view, then it is apparent that you did not hold a very high regard for your brother.”

“That is quite true. Why should I?”

“He was your brother.”

“And because of the accident of birth, I was bound to love him? A popular fallacy, Mr. Barnes. He was equally bound, then, to love me, but he did not. Indeed he wronged me most grievously.”

“By marrying the woman you loved?”

Mr. Barnes felt ashamed of his question, as a surgeon often must be sorry to insert the scalpel. To his surprise it elicited no retort. Mr. Quadrant’s reply was calmly spoken. All he said was:

“Yes, he did that.”

“Did she know?” ventured the detective hesitatingly.

“No, I think not—I hope not.”

There was a painful pause. Mr. Quadrant looked down at the floor, while Mr. Barnes watched him, trying to decide whether the man were acting a part with intent to deceive, as he had announced that he would not hesitate to do; or whether he were telling the truth, in which case the nobility of his character was brought more into perspective.

“Are you sure,” said Mr. Barnes after a pause, “that the body taken from the river was that of your brother Rufus?”

“Why do you ask that?” said Mr. Quadrant, on the defensive at once. “Can there be any doubt?”

“Before I reply, let me ask you another question. Did your brother Rufus have a scar on the sole of his foot?”

The other man started perceptibly, and paused some time before answering. Then he asked:

“What makes you think so?”

“Mr. Mark Quadrant told me that his brother had such a scar, caused by gashing his foot while in swimming.”

“Ah, that is your source of information. Well, when Mark told you that his brother had met with such an accident, he told you the truth.”

“But did the accident leave a scar?” Mr. Barnes thought he detected a carefully worded evasive answer.

“Yes, the cut left a bad scar; one easily noticed.”

“In that case I can reply to your question. If, as you both say, your brother had a scar on the sole of his foot, then there exists considerable doubt as to the identification of the body which was at the Morgue, the body which you have both accepted and buried as being that of your relative. Mr. Quadrant, there was no scar on that body.”

“Odd, isn’t it?” said Mr. Quadrant, without any sign of surprise.

“I should say it is very odd. How do you suppose it can be explained?”

“I do not know, and, as I have told you before, I do not care. Quite the reverse; the less you comprehend this case the better pleased I shall be.”

“Mr. Quadrant,” said Mr. Barnes, a little nettled, “since you so frankly admit that you wish me to fail, why should I not believe that you are telling me a falsehood when you state that your brother told me the truth?”

“There is no reason that I care to advance,” said Mr. Quadrant, “why you should believe me, but if you do not, you will go astray. I repeat, what my brother told you is true.”

It seemed to the detective that in all his varied experience he had never met with circumstances so exasperatingly intricate. Here was an identification for many reasons the most reliable that he had known, and now there appeared to be a flaw of such a nature that it could not be set aside. If the bodywas that of Mr. Quadrant, then both these men had lied. If they told the truth, then, in spite of science, the doctors, and the family, the identification had been false. In that case Rufus Quadrant had been cremated after all, and this would account for the statement in Mr. Mitchel’s note that a human body had been incinerated. Could it be that these two brothers were jointly implicated in a murder, and had pretended to recognize the body at the Morgue in order to have it buried and to cover up their crime? It seemed incredible. Besides, the coincidence of the external and internal diseases was too great.

“I would like to ask you a few questions in relation to the occurrences on the day and evening preceding the funeral,” said Mr. Barnes, pursuing the conversation, hoping to catch from the answers some clue that might aid him.

“Which funeral?” said Mr. Quadrant.

“The first. I have been told that you and your brother were present when the widow last viewed the face of her husband, and that at that time, about five o’clock, you jointly agreed that the coffin should not be opened again. Is this true?”

“Accurate in every detail.”

“Was the coffin closed at once? That is, before you left the room?”

“The lower part of the coffin-top was, of course, in place and screwed fast when we entered the room. The upper part, exposing the face, was open. It was this that was closed in my presence.”

“I would like to get the facts here very accurately, if you are willing. You say, closed in your presence. Do you mean merely covered, or was the top screwed fast before you went out of the room, and, if so, by whom?”

“Mark took our sister away, but Dr. Mortimer and myself remained until the screws were put in. Mr. Berial himself did that.”

“Did you observe that the screws were. odd? Different from common screws?”

Mr. Barnes hoped that the other man would betray something at this point, but he answered quite composedly:

“I think I did at the time, but I could not describe them to you now. I half remember that Mr. Berial made some such comment as ‘No one can get these out again without my permission.’”

“Ah! He said that, did he? Yet some one must have gotten those screws out, for, if your identification was correct, your brother’s body was taken out of that casket after the undertaker had put in those screws, which he said could not be removed without his permission. How do you suppose that was accomplished?”

“How should I know, Mr. Barnes, unless, indeed, I did it myself, or instigated or connived at the doing? In either case, do you suppose I would give you any information on such a point?”

“Did your brother Rufus have any rings on his fingers when placed in the coffin?” asked Mr. Barnes, swiftly changing the subject.

“Yes—three: a diamond, a ruby, and a ring bearing his initial set in diamonds.”

“These rings were not on the body at the Morgue.”

“Neither was that scar,” said Mr. Quadrant, with a suppressed laugh.

“But this is different,” said Mr. Barnes. “I did not find the scar, but I have found the rings.”

“Very clever of you, I am sure. But what does that prove?”

“It proves that your brother’s body was taken from the coffin before the coffin was placed in the crematory furnace.”

“Illogical and inaccurate,” said Mr. Quadrant. “You prove by the recovery of the rings, merely that the rings were taken from the coffin.”

“Or, from the body after it was taken out,” interjected Mr. Barnes.

“In either case it is of no consequence. You have rooted up a theft, that is all. Catch the thief and jail him, if you like. I care nothing about that. It is the affair of my brother’s death and burial that I wish to see dropped by the inquisitive public.”

“Yes, but suppose I tell you that the theory is that the man who stole the rings was your accomplice in the main matter? Don’t you see that when we catch him, he is apt to tell all that he knows?”

“When you catch him? Then you have not caught him yet. For so much I am grateful.” He did not seem to care how incriminating his words might sound.

“One thing more, Mr. Quadrant. I understand that you retired at about ten o’clock on that night—the night prior to the first funeral, I mean. You left your brother Mark down here?”

“Yes.”

“Later you came downstairs again.”

“You seem to be well posted as to my movements.”

“Not so well as I wish to be. Will you tell me why you came down?”

“I have not admitted that I came downstairs.”

“You were seen in the hall very late at night, or early in the morning. You took the lamp out of the room where the casket was, and came in here and looked at your brother, who was asleep. Then you returned the lamp and went upstairs. Do you admit now that you had just come downstairs?”

“I admit nothing. But to show you how little you can prove, suppose I ask you how you know that I had just come downstairs? Why may it not be that I had been out of the house, and had just come in again when your informant saw me?”

“Quite true. You might have left the house. Perhaps it was then that the body was taken away?”

“If it was taken away, that was certainly as good a time as any.”

“What time?”

“Oh, let us say between twelve and two. Very few people would be about the street at that hour, and a wagon stopping before a door would attract very little attention. Especially if it were an undertaker’s wagon.”

“An undertaker’s wagon?” exclaimed Mr. Barnes, as this suggested a new possibility.

“Why, yes. If, as you say, there was an accomplice in this case, the fellow who stole the rings, you know, he must have been one of the undertaker’s men. If so, he would use their wagon, would he not?”

“I think he would,” said Mr. Barnes sharply. “I thank you for the point. And now I will leave you.”

IX.

Mr. Barnes walked rapidly, revolving in his mind the new ideas which had entered it during the past few minutes. Before this morning he had imagined that the body of Rufus Quadrant had been taken away between five and six o'clock, in the undertaker's wagon. But it had never occurred to him that this same wagon could have been driven back to the house at any hour of the day or night, without causing the policeman on that beat to suspect any wrong. Thus, suddenly, an entirely new phase had been placed upon the situation. Before, he had been interested in knowing which man had been left behind; whether it had been Morgan or Randal. Now he was more anxious to know whether the wagon had been taken again from thestable on that night, and, if so, by whom. Consequently he went first to the undertaker's shop, intending to interview Mr. Berial, but that gentleman was out. Therefore he spoke again with Randal, who recognized him at once and greeted him cordially.

"Why, how do you do," said he. "Glad you're round again. Anything turned up in the Quadrant case?"

"We are getting at the truth slowly," said the detective, watching his man closely. "I would like to ask you to explain one or two things to me if you can."

"Maybe I will, and maybe not. It wouldn't do to promise to answer questions before I hear what they are. I ain't exactly what you would call a fool."

"Did you not tell me that it was Morgan who was left at the house after the coffin was closed, and that you came away with Mr. Berial?"

"Don't remember whether I told you or not. But you've got it straight."

"But they say at the stables that it was you who drove the wagon back there?"

"That's right, too. What of it?"

"But I understood that Morgan brought the wagon back?"

"So he did; back here to the shop. He had to leave all our tools and things here, you see. Then he went off to his dinner, and I took the horse and wagon round to the stables."

"Where do you stable?"

“Harrison’s, Twenty-fourth Street, near Lex.”

“Now, another matter. You told me about the loss of those rings?”

“Yes, and I gave you the tip where you might find them again. Did you go there?”

“Yes; you were right. The rings were pawned exactly where you sent me.”

“Oh, I don’t know,” said the fellow, airishly. “I ought to be on the police force, I guess. I can find out a few things, I think.”

“It isn’t hard to guess what you know,” said the detective, sharply.

“What do you mean?” Randal was on the defensive at once.

“I mean,” said Mr. Barnes, “that it was you who pawned those rings.”

“That’s a lie, and you can’t prove it.”

“Don’t be too sure of that. We have the pawn tickets.”

This shot went home. Randal looked frightened, and was evidently confused.

“That’s another lie,” said he, less vigorously. “You can’t scare me. If you have got them, which you haven’t, you won’t find my name on them.”

“No; you used your friend Morgan’s name, which was a pretty low trick.”

“Look here, you detective,” said Randal blusteringly, “I don’t allow no man to abuse me. You can’t talk that way to me. All this talk of yours is rot. That’s what it is, rot!”

“Look here, Randal. Try to be sensible if you can. I have not yet made up my mind whether you are a scoundrel or a fool. Suppose you tell me the truth about those tickets. It will be safest, I assure you.”

Randal looked at the detective and hesitated. Mr. Barnes continued:

“There is no use to lie any longer. You were shadowed, and you were seen when you tore up the tickets. The pieces were picked up and put together, and they call

for those rings. Don't you see we have you fast unless you can explain how you got the tickets?"

"I guess you're givin' it to me straight," said Randal after a long pause. "I guess I better take your advice and let you have it right. One afternoon I saw Morgan hide something in one of the coffins in the shop. He tucked it away under the satin linin'. I was curious, and I looked into it after he'd gone that night. I found the pawn tickets. Of course I didn't know what they were for except that it was rings. But I guessed it was for some stuff he'd stolen from the corpse of somebody. For it was him took the other jewels I told you about, and I seen him with a screwdriver the match to the boss's. So I just slipped the tickets in my pocket thinkin' I'd have a hold on him. Next day I read about this man bein' found in the river, and I stopped to the Morgue, and, just as I thought, his rings was gone. I worried over that for an hour or two, and then I thought I better not keep the tickets, so I tore them up and threw them away."

"That, you say, was the night after this affair was published in the papers?"

"No; it was the same night."

"That is to say, the night of that day on which I came here and had a talk with you?"

"No, it was the night before. You're thinkin' about the mornin' papers, but I seen it first in the afternoon papers."

This statement dispelled a doubt which had entered the mind of the detective, who remembered that Mr. Burrows had told him that the pawn-ticket incident had occurred on the evening previous to their meeting. This explanation, however, tallied with that, and Mr. Barnes was now inclined to credit the man's story.

"Very good," said he. "You may be telling the truth. If you have nothing to do with this case, you ought to be willing to give me some assistance. Will you?"

Randal had been so thoroughly frightened that he now seemed only too glad of the chance to win favor in the eyes of Mr. Barnes.

"Just you tell me what you want, and I'm your man," said he.

“I want to find out something at the stable, and I think you can get the information for me better than I can myself.”

“I’ll go with you right away. The boy can mind the shop while we’re gone. Charlie, you just keep an eye on things till I get back, will you? I won’t be out more’n ten minutes. Come on, Mr. Barnes, I’m with you.”

On the way to the stable Mr. Barnes directed Randal as to what he wished to learn, and then at his suggestion waited for him in a liquor saloon near by, while he went alone to the stable. In less than ten minutes Randal hurried into the place, flushed with excitement and evidently bubbling over with importance. He drew the detective to one side and spoke in whispers.

“Say,” said he, “you’re on the right tack. The wagon was out again that night, and not on any proper errand, neither.”

“Tell me what you have learned,” said Mr. Barnes.

“Of course the night watchman ain’t there now, but Jimmy, the day superintendent, is there, and I talked with him. He says there was some funny business that night. First I asked him about the wagon bein’ out or not, and he slaps his hand on his leg, and he says: ‘By George!’ says he,’ that’s the caper. Didn’t you put that wagon in its right place when you brung it in that afternoon?’ he says to me. ‘Of course,’ says I; ‘where do you think I’d put it?’ ‘Well,’ says he, ‘next mornin’ it was out in the middle of the floor, right in the way of everything. The boys was cussin’ you for your carelessness. I wasn’t sure in my own mind or I would have spoke; but I thought I seen you shove that wagon in its right place.’ ‘So I did,’ says I, ‘and if it was in the middle of the stable, you can bet it was moved after I left. Now who moved it?’ ‘I don’t know,’ says he, ‘but I’ll tell you another thing what struck me as odd. I didn’t have nothin’ particular to do that night, and I dropped in for an hour or so to be sociable like with Jack’—that’s the night watchman. ‘While I was there,’ he goes on, ‘while I was there, who should come in but Jerry Morgan! He didn’t stop long, but he took us over to the saloon and balled us off’—that means he treated to drinks. ‘Next day I come round about six o’clock as usual,’ says Jimmy, goin’ on, ‘and there was Jack fast asleep. Now that’s the fust time that man ever dropped off while on watch, and he’s been here nigh on to five years. I shook him and tried every way to ‘waken him, but it didn’t seem to do no good. He’d kind of start up and look about dazed, and even talk a bit, but as soon as I’d let up, he’d drop off

again. I was makin' me a cup of coffee, and, thinkin' it might rouse him, I made him drink some, and, do you know, he was all right in a few minutes. At the time I didn't think much about it, but since then I have thought it over a good deal, and, do you know what I think now?' 'No,' says I;' what do you think?' 'I think,' says he, 'I think that Jimmy was drugged, and if he was, Jerry Morgan done the trick when he balled us off, and you can bet it was him took that wagon out that night.' That's the story Jimmy tells, Mr. Barnes, and it's a corker, ain't it?"

"It certainly is important," said Mr. Barnes.

Once more he had food for thought. This narrative was indeed important; the drowsiness of the watchman and his recovery after drinking coffee suggested morphine. The detective likewise recalled the story of the butler who claimed that he had seen Mark Quadrant asleep while he was supposed to be guarding the coffin. Then, too, there was the empty paper which had once held some powder, and which he had himself found in the room where Mark Quadrant had slept. Had he too been drugged? If so, the question arose, Did this man Morgan contrive to mix the morphine with something which he thought it probable that the one sitting up with the corpse would drink, or had Amos given his brother the sleeping-potion? In one case it would follow that Morgan was the principal in this affair, while in the other he was merely an accomplice. If his hand alone managed all, then it might be that he had a deeper and more potent motive than the mere removal of the body to avoid cremation, the latter being a motive which the detective had throughout hesitated to adopt because it seemed so weak. If Morgan substituted another body for the one taken from the coffin, then the statement of Mr. Mitchel that a body had been cremated was no longer a discrepancy. There was but one slightly disturbing thought. All the theorizing in which he now indulged was based on the assumption that Randal was not deceiving. Yet how could he be sure of that? Tom Burrows wouldhave said to him: "Mr. Barnes, that fellow is lying to you. His story may be true in all except that it was himself and not Morgan who did these things." For while he had thought it best to let Randal go alone to the stable to make inquiries, this had placed him in the position of receiving the tale at second-hand, so that Randal might have colored it to suit himself. For the present, he put aside these doubts and decided to pursue this clue until he proved it a true or false scent. He dismissed Randal with an injunction to keep his tongue from wagging, and proceeded to the house of the man Morgan, regretting now that he had not done so before.

The tenement on Eleventh Avenue was one of those buildings occupying half a block, having stores on the street, with narrow, dark, dismal hallways, the staircases at the farther end being invisible from the street door, even on the sunniest days, without a match. Overhead, each hallway offered access to four flats, two front and two back, the doors being side by side. These apartments each included two or three rooms and what by courtesy might be called a bathroom, though few indeed of the tenants utilized the latter for the purpose for which it had been constructed, preferring to occupy this extra space with such of their impedimenta as might not be in constant use.

When one enters a place of this character asking questions, if he addresses any of the adults he is likely to receive scant information in reply. Eitherthese people do not know even the names of their next-door neighbors, or else, knowing, they are unwilling to take the trouble to impart the knowledge. The children, however, and they are as numerous as grasshoppers in a hayfield, not only know everything, but tell what they know willingly. It is also a noteworthy fact that amidst such squalor and filth, with dirty face and bare legs, it is not uncommon to find a child, especially a girl, who will give answers, not only with extreme show of genuine intelligence, but, as well, with a deferential though dignified courtesy which would grace the reception-rooms of upper Fifth Avenue.

It was from such an urchin, a girl of about twelve, that Mr. Barnes learned that Jerry Morgan had lived on the fifth floor back.

“But he’s gone away, I guess,” she added.

“Why do you think so?” asked Mr. Barnes.

“Oh, ‘cause he ain’t been in the saloon ‘cross the way for ‘bout a week, and he didn’t never miss havin’ his pint of beer every night’s long’s he’s been here.”

“Do you think I could get into his room?” asked Mr. Barnes.

“I could get you our key, an’ you could try,” suggested the girl. “I reckon one key will open any door in this house. It’s cheaper to get locks in a bunch that way, I guess, an’ besides, poor folks don’t get robbed much anyhow, an’ so they ain’t got no ‘casion to lock up every time they go out. What little they’ve got don’t tempt the robbers, I guess. Maybe the ‘punushment fits the crime’ too quick.”

“‘The punishment fits the crime,’ you think,” said Mr. Barnes with a smile. “Where did you get that from?”

“Oh, I seen the Mikado oncet,” said the girl rather proudly. “But I didn’t mean what you said; I said it fits ‘too quick’; that’s too snug, you know, though sometimes it’s ‘quick’ too. You see, I guess they don’t get enough out of flats like these to pay for the risk.”

“You are quite a philosopher,” said Mr. Barnes, approvingly. “Now run and get the key, and we will see whether it fits or not.”

She hurried upstairs, and was awaiting Mr. Barnes, with the key in her hand, when he reached the third landing. This she gave to him, and then followed him up the remaining flights, where she pointed out the door which led into Morgan’s flat. The key was not needed, as the door was not locked, and the detective pushed it open and entered. The room seemed bare enough, what little furniture there was being too evidently the product of a second-hand furniture store. There seemed little hope of finding anything helpfulto his investigation in this room, yet the detective, with his usual thoroughness, examined every drawer, and every corner or crevice in which anything might have been hidden, or have been accidentally dropped, and at last he did discover something which more than repaid him.

In the darkest corner of the dark closet, whereperhaps it had dropped unperceived, he found an old vest, of no value in itself. But a search of the pockets brought an exclamation of gratification to the detective’s lips, as from one of them he drew forth a folded paper still containing a whitish powder. Mr. Barnes was certain that this powder was morphine, and at length he felt his feet on solid ground in trailing the criminal. No longer need he doubt Randal. His story of the probable drugging of the night watchman at the stable now became not only credible, but probable. Thinking that he might gain something by further questioning the girl, Mr. Barnes said:

“Why, here is some medicine! Perhaps he was sick and has gone away for his health.”

With the keen intelligence of her class, the girl replied:

“Some folks go away for their health without bein’ sick.”

“How do you mean?”

“When it gets so it ain’t healthy for them to stay in town, you know.”

“You mean for fear of the police?”

“Sure! What else?”

“But do you think that this man Morgan would do anything that would make him afraid of meeting a policeman?”

“Oh, I don’t know. But ‘birds of a feather flock together,’ you know. One of his pals was pinched, and he’s workin’ for the country now, on the Island.”

“Who was that?” Mr. Barnes did not regret the time spent in talking with this observing youngster.

“I don’t know his right name. They called him Billy the Red, over to the saloon.”

Mr. Barnes started. This was a clue indeed. This was a well-known criminal whom she had named; one who had earned his sobriquet by killing two men in a barroom fight, when he had been one of the celebrated Whyo gang. If Morgan consorted with such as he, there could be little doubt as to his social status.

“You say Billy the Red was one of Morgan’s pals. Did he have any others that you know of?” Mr. Barnes continued.

“Well, he used to be with him most till he went up, but lately he’s been travellin’ with Tommy White.”

“Where can I find him; do you know?”

“Better look him up on the Island, too, I guess. He ain’t been round here for quite some days.”

“Perhaps he does not come because Morgan is away?”

“Oh, no, that can’t be, ‘cause he stopped showin’ up before Morgan left. The neighbors was beginnin’ to wonder and talk, just ‘bout the time Morgan skipped. You see, Tommy White he lived right next door, in the next flat, him and Nellie.”

“Ah, he had a wife?”

“I don’t know about that. She was his girl anyway, though some thought Morgan was sweet on her too.”

Mr. Barnes thought the fog was lifting.

“Where is this Nellie now?”

“You can search me! She’s gone too. The hull three has skipped out.”

“What, all three at the same time?”

“No, that’s the funny part of it. That’s what makes folks talk. You see, we didn’t see nothin’ of Tommy White for two or three days, but Nellie she was round all right. But when Morgan he cut it, Nellie she lit out too.”

“Let me get this right, my girl. And mind you make no mistake, for this is important.”

“I ain’t makin’ no mistakes, mister. I’m givin’ it to you dead right, and that’s more ‘n you’d get out of anybody else in this castle. But I’ve got my reasons, and,”—this she added with a sly wink,—“you ain’t fooled me any, you know. You’re a detective, that’s what you are.”

“What makes you think so?”

“Oh, there ain’t much to guess. People dressed like you don’t come to a place like this and nose into another man’s rooms just for amusement. Not much they don’t. It’s business with you.”

“Well, never mind that. Tell me, are you sure that White disappeared first, and that the girl was here afterwards, but that she has not been seen since Morgan went away?”

“That’s right. You got it straight the first time. Now what do you make of it? I know my own opinion.”

“Suppose you tell me your opinion first,” said Mr. Barnes, anxious to hear her answer.

“Well,” said the girl, “it’s very simple, what I think. I think Tommy’s been done for.”

“Done for?” Mr. Barnes comprehended her meaning but preferred to have her speak more plainly.

“Yes, done for, that’s what I said. They’ve put him out of the way, those two. And if that’s right, it’s a shame, ‘cause Tommy was a good fellow. It was him took me to the theatre, that time when I seen the Mikado.”

Evidently this one visit to a theatre had been an event in her weary little life, and the man who had given her that bit of pleasure and had afforded her that one glimpse of what she would have described as the “dressed-up folks,” had by that act endeared himself to her childish heart. If he had been injured, her little soul longed for vengeance, and she was ready to be the instrument which might lead Justice to her victim.

Mr. Barnes began to believe that the solution of this mystery was near at hand. He left the building, thanking the child for what she had told him, and promising to find out what had become of her friend Tommy White. Crossing the street he entered the saloon where the girl had told him that Morgan had been in the habit of buying his daily pint of beer. By talking with the bartender he hoped to elicit further information.

The gentlemanly dispenser of liquid refreshment, whose constant boast was that he knew how to manufacture over three hundred different mixeddrinks without using any intoxicant, stood beside the mahogany counter, polishing up the glasses, which he piled in an imposing pyramid on the shelf at the back, where the display was made doubly attractive by the plate mirror behind. His hair was scrupulously brushed and his short white coat was immaculately clean. Fortunately there was no one else in the place, so that the detective was afforded a good opportunity for free conversation. He asked for a Manhattan cocktail, and admired the dexterity with which the man prepared the drink. Raising it to his lips and tasting it as a connoisseur might, Mr. Barnes said:

“Could not be better at the Waldorf.”

“Oh, I don’t know,” said the fellow, deprecatingly, but pleased at the implied compliment.

“Your face is very familiar to me,” said Mr. Barnes; “have you ever met me before?”

“Never in my life,” said the bartender, without the slightest change of expression.

“That’s odd,” said Mr. Barnes, pursuing the point with a purpose; “I am pretty good at faces. I seldom forget one, and just as seldom make a mistake. I would almost swear I have seen you before.”

“I was tending bar at the Astor House for two years. Perhaps you saw me there,” suggested the man.

“Ah, that is it,” said Mr. Barnes, pretending to accept this explanation; “I often take my luncheon there. By the way, I suppose you are pretty well acquainted around the neighborhood?”

“Oh, I know a few people,” said the man, cautiously.

“You know Tommy White, of course?”

“Do I?”

“Don’t you?”

“I might, without knowing his name. Our customers don’t all leave their cards when they buy a drink. I don’t know your name, for instance.”

“Yes, but I do not live in the neighborhood. White must come here often.”

“Well, he hasn’t been in lately,” said the bartender, and then stopped short as he noted the slip that he had made. The detective did not choose to appear to notice it, but asked:

“That is the point. Isn’t it odd that he should have disappeared?”

“Oh, I don’t know. A man can go out of town if he wants to, I guess. “

“Do you know that White went out of town?”

“No.”

“Have you seen Tommy White since Jerry Morgan skipped?”

“See here! what the devil are you asking me all these questions for? Who are you, anyway, and what are you after?”

“I am Jack Barnes, detective, but I’m not after you, Joe Allen, alias Fred Martin, alias Jimmy Smith, alias Bowery Bill, alias the Plug.”

This sally left the man stolidly unmoved, but it affected his attitude towards his questioner, nevertheless, as he sullenly answered:

“There’s nothing you can get against me, so I don’t scare even if you know me. If you don’t want me, what do you want?”

“Look here, Joe,” said Mr. Barnes, in friendly, confidential tones, “a bluff does not go with me, and you know it never did. Now why did you not acknowledge that you knew me when I first came in?”

“What’s the use of courtin’ trouble? I wasn’t sure you’d remember my face. It’s quite a time since we met.”

“True. It is five years since that Bond Street affair, and you got three years for that, if I remember rightly.”

“Well, I served my time, didn’t I? So that’s ended, ain’t it?”

“Yes. But what about that little business of the postage-stamp robbery out in Trenton?”

“Why, I didn’t have no hand in that.”

“Well, two of your pals did, and when they were caught and sent up they were square enough not to peach on you. The Mulberry Street crowd did not know how thick you were with those boys, or you might have got into trouble. But I knew, and you know that I knew.”

“Well, what if you did? I tell you I wasn’t in that.”

“You would not like to be obliged to prove where you were that night, would you?”

“Oh, I suppose it’s always hard to prove I was one place, when fellows like you go on the stand and swear I was somewhere else. So, as I said before, what’s the use of courtin’ trouble?”

“Now you are sensible, and as I said, I am not after you. All I want is some information. Give me another cocktail, and have one yourself.”

“Thanks, I will. Go ahead with your catechism; I’ll answer so long as you don’t try to make me squeal on any of my friends. I’d go up before I’d do that. And you know that.”

“That’s all right. I know you’re square, and that is why I feel sure you would not be mixed up in a murder.”

“Murder?”

This time the fellow was frightened. How could he be sure that this detective was not trying to entrap him? How could he know positively that he had not been accused by some pal who wished to shift responsibility from himself to another? This is the Damocles sword that ever hangs over the head of the wrong-doer. His most chosen companions may either tell of what he has done, or accuse him of crime which he has not committed.

“I am afraid so. But what are you worrying over? Did I not tell you that you are not in it? Listen to me, Joe. This Jerry Morgan has skipped out of town, and it looks as though he took Tommy White’s girl Nellie with him. Now, where is Tommy White?”

“I don’t know a thing. I swear I don’t.”

“Yes, you do. You do not know what has become of him, but you know something. Morgan isn’t any pal of yours, is he?”

“No.”

“Very well. Then why not tell me what you know? If he has done anything to White, he ought not to go free, ought he? You do not stand in with murder, do you?”

“No, I don’t. But how do I know there’s been any murder?”

“You don’t know it, but since I suggested it to you, you think so. I see that in your face. Now, what do you know?”

“Well, I don’t know much, but what I know I don’t want used to make another fellow go to the chair.”

“That is no affair of yours. You are not responsible for what the law does. Come, I have no more time to waste. Tell me what you know, or say right out that you will not. Then I will know what to do.”

The implied threat decided the man, and without further attempt at evasion he said :

“Well, I suppose there ain’t any use my runnin’ any risk for a man that’s nothin’ to me. It’s this way: Morgan’s an old-time crook—I suppose you know that?” Mr. Barnes nodded, although this was news to him. Allen continued: “He’s been at it since he was a kid. Was in the reformatory, and learned more there about crooked work in a year than he would have picked up in ten outside. He’s never done time, though, since he graduatedfrom that institution. Learned enough, I guess, to keep out of sight of your crowd. Two years ago he moved into this neighborhood and since then I’ve seen him in here a good deal. He took up with Tommy White—a young fellow that would have lived straight only he was in bad company, and was railroaded with a gang for a job he really had no hand in. That settled him. When he came out of Sing Sing he wasn’t likely to go for a straight job at a dollar a day, when he could lay around idle and pick up a good thing every now and then that would keep him going. I guess he and Morgan done a good many jobs together; anyway, they never was short of money. One thing was funny about those two—nobody ever seen them in the daytime. They used to say they was ‘workin’,’ but that didn’t go with the crowd that hangs out here. Neither Morgan nor White would work if they could help it. They was just like brothers, those two, till White took up with this girl Nellie. I think Morgan was jealous of his luck from the first, ‘cause the girl is a peach. One of your real blondes, without no bleachin’ stuff. She’s got a skin like velvet, and hands and feet like a lady. White soon found out that his pal was sweet on the girl, and many a time they’ve rowed over her. Finally, about two weeks ago the two of them was in here, and they was drinkin’ pretty hard and just ready for a scrap, when the’ girl comes in. Morgan goes up to her and puts his arm around her and kisses her plump. White was mad in a minute, but he turned on her instead of him and he says, says he: Nellie, I want you to hammer that duffer over the head

for doin' that,' and he picks up a beer glass and hands it to her. Nellie she takes the glass, and she says: 'I've heard of a kiss for a blow,' she says, 'but a blow for a kiss is a new one on me. It ain't that way in the Bible, Tommy, so I guess if you want any hammerin' done, you'd better do it yourself. I'm thinkin' of joinin' the Salvation Army, you know.' This made Morgan and the crowd laugh, and White got fierce. He snatched the glass out of Nellie's hand and made for Morgan. But Morgan he ducks and lets White go by him, and he picks up a beer glass too; then when White came for him again he landed a terrible blow with the glass right back of White's ear. Tommy went down in a heap and lay on the ground quiverin'. The whole thing happened so quick nobody could interfere. Morgan got sober in a second, I tell you, and he was scared. Everybody crowded round, and the girl she was a wonder. You'd think bein' a woman she'd cry and make a fuss? Not a bit of it. She got some ice and put it on White's head, and threw water in his face, and she puts her ear down to his heart, and then she looks up after a bit, and she says, as cool as could be: 'Boys, he's only stunned. He'll come round all right. Some of you help get him home, and I'll look after him. He'll sleep off his liquor and he won't know what hurt him when he wakes in the mwnin'.' Well, Morgan and the others they did what she said. They took White up and carted him over to his flat, and put him to bed. My! but he was limp, and his face was that blue—it's been before me ever since."

"Did White get over that blow?"

"That's the point. Nellie and Morgan said he did; that he was a bit sore next day and had a headache. That was likely enough. But when you talked about murder a while ago, I admit I got scared, cause White's never been seen since that night."

"You are sure of that?"

"Dead sure. Nellie said he was gone out of town, and the boys swallowed the story. But when both Morgan and Nellie skipped it looked bad, and folks began to talk. As for me, I've been nervous for days. Why, when that body was picked out of the river I just couldn't keep away from the Morgue. I just had to have a peep at it. I was sure it would be White, and that Morgan had pitched him over. My, but wasn't I glad to see it was another man!"

Assuring Allen that his story would not be used in any way that would bring him into conflict with the authorities, Mr. Barnes left the saloon and went to his

office, feeling that at last this problem had been solved. Evidently White had died of his wound, and when Morgan learned that the coffin of Mr. Quadrant was not to be opened before it was consigned to the crematory, he had conceived one of the most ingenious schemes ever devised for disposing of a murdered body. By placing White in the coffin and allowing his body to be incinerated,all traces of his crime would seem to have been obliterated. To accomplish this it was necessary to have the use of the undertaker's wagon, and this he had managed by drugging the watchman, as well as Mark Quadrant. The transfer made, he was still left with the other body, and his disposition of that was the most ingenious part of the plan. By throwing the corpse of Rufus Quadrant into the water he apparently took little risk. It could not be recognized as White of course, and if correctly identified a mystery would be created that ought to baffle the detectives, however clever they might be. Mr. Barnes felt that he had been fortunate to learn so much from such unpromising clues.

At his office he found a telegram and a letter, both bearing on the case. The telegram was from Mr. Burrows, and informed him that Morgan had been captured in Chicago, and would be in New York on the following day. This was more than gratifying, and Mr. Barnes mentally praised the young detective. The letter was from Mr. Mitchel, and read:

"Friend Barnes:

"At last I have fathomed the Quadrant mystery. Will drop in on you about noon to-morrow and tell you how the affair was managed. You will be surprised, I am sure.

"Mitchel."

"Will I?" said Mr. Barnes to himself.

X

Mr. BURROWS arrived at the offices of Mr. Barnes about eleven o'clock on the following morning, which much pleased the older detective, who wished to have his case complete before the arrival of Mr. Mitchel.

"Well, Tom," said Mr. Barnes, cordially, "so you have caught your man and brought him back?"

"Did I not promise you that I would?" replied Mr. Burrows.

"Yes, but even a cleverer man than yourself cannot always hope to keep such a promise. Do you know that this fellow, Morgan, is a professional crook who has never been caught at his work before?"

"So he has told me," said Mr. Burrows, modestly refraining from any boastfulness.

"He told you the truth in that instance, and I trust you have also succeeded in getting a confession from him as to his connection with this Quadrant matter?"

"He has pretended to make a clean breast of it, but of course we must verify his story. One cannot place too much faith in the confessions of a crook."

"Does he admit that he took the rings?"

"Yes, it seems you were right there."

"Does he explain how and why he took the body from the coffin?"

"On the contrary, he denies having done so."

"Then he lies," said Mr. Barnes. "I have not been idle since you went away, but my tale will keep. Let me hear first what Morgan's alleged confession amounts to."

"He admits that he stole the rings. He has a duplicate of that screwdriver of which old Berial is so fond of bragging, and when he was left alone with the body, he opened the coffin and took the rings, and, in keeping with his limited

standard of morals, he offers a rather ingenious excuse for his act."

"I should like to hear a good excuse for robbing the dead."

"That is his point exactly. He says that as the dead cannot own property, the dead cannot be robbed. As the family had declared that the coffin was not to be opened again, Morgan says he considered the rings as practically consigned to the furnace, and then he asks, 'What was the use of seeing stuff like that burned up, when it was good money to me?' It is a nice point, Mr. Barnes. If the owner elects to throw away or destroy his property, can we blame a man for appropriating the same?"

"We may not be able to blame him, but we certainly have the power to punish him. The law will not accept such sophistry as palliation for crime. What else does the fellow admit?"

"The rest of his tale is quite interesting, and I think would surprise you, unless, indeed, you have discovered the truth yourself."

"I think I could make a shrewd guess," said Mr. Barnes.

"Well, I wish you would tell me your story first. You see, after all, I am the legally employed investigator of this matter, and I should like to hear your story before telling mine, that I may be absolutely certain that your results have been arrived at by a different line of work, though of course you understand that I do not for a moment imagine that you would intentionally color your story after hearing mine."

"I understand you perfectly, Tom," said Mr. Barnes, kindly, "and I am not at all offended. You are right to wish to have the two stories independently brought before your reasoning faculties. Morgan tells you that he stole the rings in the afternoon. Perhaps he did, and perhaps he took them later. It does not now seem to be material. The subsequent facts, as I deduce them from the evidence, are as follows: Morgan had a pal, who was sweet on a girl called Nellie. By the way, did you get any trace of her?"

"She was with Morgan when I found him and she has come back with us."

"Good. Very good. It seems that Morgan also admired the girl, and that finally he and his pal had a saloon fight over her, during which Morgan struck the other

man with a beer glass. This man fell to the floor unconscious, and was taken to his home in that condition. He has not been seen in the neighborhood since. Now we come to another series of events. Morgan admits taking the rings. Suppose we accept his story. He then left the house and drove the wagon back to the shop. Randal took itfrom there to the stables, but later in the evening Morgan visited the stables and induced the night watchman to take a drink. That drink was drugged, and the drug was morphine. The watchman slept soundly, and there is little doubt that while thus unconscious Morgan took the undertaker's wagon out of the stable on some errand. There is an interesting series of links in this chain which convicts Morgan of using morphine to accomplish his purpose. First, it is nearly certain that the watchman was drugged; second, a witness will testify that he found Mr. Mark Quadrant sound asleep, when he was supposed to be watching the coffin; third, I have taken from the pocket of a vest found in Morgan's rooms a powder which a chemist declares is morphine. Is not that fairly good evidence?"

"It is good evidence, Mr. Barnes, but it does not prove that Morgan took that body from the coffin."

"What, then, does it show?"

"It makes him an accomplice at least. He undoubtedly drugged the watchman and took the wagon out of the stables, but beyond that you can prove nothing. You have not offered any motive that would actuate him in stealing the body."

"The motive is quite sufficient, I assure you. His pal, whom he struck down with the beer glass, and who has not been seen by his neighbors since that night, must have died from the blow. It was his body that was cremated."

Mr. Burrows shook his head, and seemed sorry to upset the calculations of his old friend.

"I am afraid you cannot prove that," said he. "Tell me, what was the name of this pal? Have you learned that?"

"Yes; Tommy White."

"Do you know him by any other name?"

"No; but as he is unquestionably a crook he probably has a dozen aliases."

“One will suffice at present. Tommy White is none other than your disinterested informant, Jack Randal.”

“What!” exclaimed Mr. Barnes, recognizing instantly that if this were true his whole edifice tumbled to the ground.

“Yes. I think that Morgan has told me a clean-cut story, though, as I said before, we must verify it. You see, he is a crook and ready to acquire other people’s property, but I think he has a wholesome dread of the electric chair that will keep him out of murder. He was at one time a pal of Billy the Red, now in Sing Sing. After that fellow was put away he took up with Tommy White, alias Jack Randal. Randal, it seems, induced Morgan to join him in his nefarious schemes. The undertaker has told you, perhaps, as he has told me, that he invented his patent coffin because of numerous grave robberies that had occurred in one of the cemeteries. He little suspected that the robbers were his two assistants. These fellows would steal from the dead, while preparing the bodies for burial, if it seemed safe, as, for example, was the case with Mr. Quadrant, where it was known that the coffin was notagain to be opened. In other cases they would visit the grave together. Sometimes they merely appropriated what jewelry there might be, but in not a few instances they stole the bodies as well, disposing of them to medical students.”

“What a diabolical partnership!”

“Yes, indeed. Now, coming to the saloon fight, you are correct enough except as to the results. White, or Randal, was unconscious during the greater part of the night, and in the morning had but a dim recollection of what had occurred. He understood, however, that his injury had been the result of a fight with Morgan, and also that the girl Nellie had ‘thrown him over,’ to adopt the vernacular. He therefore left the neighborhood, and though the two men continued to work for Berial, they did not resume their friendship. White evidently was nursing his grievances, and only awaited an opportunity to make trouble for his old pal Morgan. This he hoped to accomplish by the information which he gave to you.”

“You will hardly expect me to believe that Morgan gave up his position and left town without some better reason than a mere quarrel with his pal, and a petty theft?”

“Morgan did not give up his position, nor did he leave town of his own volition.

He was sent away."

"Sent away? By whom?"

"By the principal in this case. I told you from the first that there were two in it. He has admitted to me what I did not know, but what I believe nowbecause you tell me the same story. He confesses that he drugged the watchman at the stables and then drove the wagon away. But he denies that he either took Quadrant's body from the coffin, or indeed that he drove the wagon to the Quadrant house. In fact, he says he was paid to get the wagon unknown to the watchman, and that he was furnished with the powders with which he was to drug the man."

"Am I to understand that one of the dead man's brothers hired Morgan to do this?"

Mr. Barnes was thinking of his conversation with Amos Quadrant, during which that gentleman had suggested that an undertaker's wagon might approach the house at any hour without attracting attention. He was consequently astonished by the younger detective's reply.

"No," said Mr. Burrows; "he does not implicate either of the Quadrants. He declares that it was old Berial who hired him to do his part of the job."

XI

New possibilities crowded into the thoughts of Mr. Barnes as he heard this unexpected statement. Berial hired Morgan to procure the wagon! Did it follow, then, that Berial was the principal, or was he in turn but the tool of another? Amos Quadrant had confessed that secretly it had not been his wish to have his brother cremated. Yet his was theauthority which had engaged the undertaker and directed the funeral. Had he chosen to avoid the cremation without permitting the widow to know that his will accomplished her wish, how easy for him to engage the. undertaker to carry out his purpose, oddly planned as it was! How readily might the poor undertaker have been bribed by this wealthy man to take the risk! After all, if this were the explanation, wherein lay the crime? By what name would it be designated in the office of the district attorney? Yet, even now, when all seemed known, two unexplained facts stood out prominently. How was it that the foot of the deceased Quadrant showed no scar? And what of the assertion made by Mr. Mitchel that a human body had been cremated? Could it be that Berial, taking advantage of the opportunity offered by his employer, had secretly disposed of some other body, while merely supposed to have removed Rufus Quadrant from his coffin? If so, whose body was it that had been cremated, and how could identification be looked for among the ashes in the urn at the cemetery? Mr. Barnes was chagrined to find such questions in his mind with no answer, when Mr. Mitchel might arrive with his promised surprise at any moment. Perhaps Morgan was lying when he accused the undertaker.

“Have you been able yet,” asked Mr. Barnes, “to verify any part of this man’s story?”

“Well, we only arrived at six this morning, but I may say yes, I have found some corroborative evidence.”

“What?”

“I have the shroud in which Rufus Quadrant was dressed in his coffin.”

“That is important. Where did you find it?”

“In quite a suggestive place. It was locked up in old Berial’s private closet at the shop, which we searched this morning.”

“That certainly is significant. But even so, Tom, how do we know that this Morgan, who robs the dead and has duplicate screwdrivers for opening patented coffin fastenings, would hesitate to place a shroud where it would seem to substantiate his accusation of another?”

“We do not know positively, of course. We have not fully solved this mystery yet, Mr. Barnes.”

“I fear not, Tom,” said Mr. Barnes, glancing at the clock as he heard a voice asking for him in the adjoining office; “but here comes a man who claims that he has done so.”

Mr. Mitchel entered and saluted the two men cordially, after receiving an introduction to the younger.

“Well, Mr. Barnes,” said Mr. Mitchel, “shall I surprise you with my story, or have you two gentlemen worked it all out?”

“I do not know whether you will surprise us or not,” said Mr. Barnes. “We do not claim to have fully solved this mystery; that much we will admit at once. But we have done a great deal of work, and have learned facts which must in the end lead to the truth.”

“Ah, I see. You know some things, but not all. The most important fact, of course, would be the identity of the body which is the centre of this mystery. Do you know that much?”

“I have no doubt that it has been correctly identified,” said Mr. Barnes, boldly, though not as confident as he pretended. “It was the corpse of Rufus Quadrant, of course.”

“You are speaking of the body at the Morgue?”

“Certainly. What other?”

“I alluded to the body which was cremated,” said Mr. Mitchel quietly.

It has not been proven that any body was cremated,” replied Mr. Barnes.

“Has it not? I think it has.”

“Ah, you know that? Well, tell us. Who was the man?”

“The man in the coffin, do you mean?”

“Yes. The man who was cremated in place of Mr. Quadrant.”

“Have you any suspicion?”

“I did have until an hour ago. I supposed that the criminal who managed this affair had thus disposed of the remains of a pal whom he had killed in a saloon row—a man called Tommy White.”

“No, that is wrong. The body cremated was the corpse of a woman.”

“Of a woman!” exclaimed both detectives in concert.

“Yes, gentlemen,” said Mr. Mitchel, “it was a woman’s body that was placed in the furnace. Ithink, Mr. Barnes, that I suggested such a possibility to you on the day when you first called my attention to this affair?”

“Yes. You said it might be a woman as well as a man. But that was merely a caution against hastily deciding as to the sex of the victim, supposing that a murder had been committed and the criminal had thus proceeded to hide his crime. But subsequent investigations have not brought to us even a suspicion that any woman has been foully dealt with, who could have been placed in the coffin by any who had the opportunity.”

“Which only proves,” said Mr. Mitchel, “that as usual you detectives have worked in routine fashion, and consequently, by beginning at the wrong end, you have not reached the goal. Now I have reached the goal, and I venture the belief that I have not done one half of the work that either of you have been compelled to bestow upon your investigations.”

“We cannot all be as intellectually brilliant as yourself,” said Mr. Barnes testily.

“Come, come, Mr. Barnes. No offense meant, I assure you. I am only upholding the argument, which I have advanced previously, that the very routine which gentlemen of your calling feel bound to follow often hampers if it does not hinder your work. I am merely a tyro, but not being professionally engaged on this case I was perhaps freer to see things with eyes unblinded by traditional

methods of work. It is just as the onlooker often sees an opportunity to win, which the men playing a game of chess overlook. The player has his mind upon many combinations and sees much that the onlooker does not see. So here. You and Mr. Burrows have probably discovered many things that I do not even suspect, but it has been my luck to get at the truth. If you care to hear it, I will describe in detail how I worked out the problem."

"Of course we wish to hear the truth," said Mr. Barnes reluctantly; "that is, if indeed you have learned what it is."

"Very good. As I have said, hampered by the seeming necessity of following your investigations along customary lines, you probably began with the body at the Morgue. I pursued the opposite course. The case seemed so unique that I was convinced that the motive would prove to be equally uncommon. If the body at the Morgue were really that of Mr. Quadrant, as seemed probable from the identifications by the family and the doctor, I was sure that it had been taken from the coffin to make room for the corpse of another. No other motive occurred to my mind which appeared to be adequate. Consequently I thought that the first essential in unravelling the mystery would be'the establishment of the fact that a human body had been cremated, and then, if possible, to discover the identity of that body."

"In other words, to identify the ashes of a cremated body," interjected Mr. Barnes, with a slight sneer.

"Just so. That in itself was a problem so novel that it attracted my interest. It is usually considered that cremation has the objectionable feature that it offers a means of hiding the crime of murder. This idea has contributed not a little to thwart those who have endeavored to make this means of disposing of the dead popular. Would it not be an achievement to prove that incineration is not necessarily a barrier against identification?"

"I should say so," said Mr. Barnes.

"So thought I, and that was the task which I set myself. I visited the chief of the detective bureau, and soon interested him in my theories. He even permitted me to be present at the examination of the ashes, which was undertaken at my suggestion, an expert chemist and his assistant going with us. At the cemetery the urn was brought forth and its contents spread out on a clean marble slab. It

was not difficult to discern that a human being had been cremated?”

“Why was it not difficult?”

“When one hears of the ashes of the dead, perhaps it is not unnatural to think of these human ashes as similar to cigar ashes, or the ashes of a wood fire. Where complete combustion occurs the residue is but an impalpable powder. But this is not commonly the result in the cremation of the dead, or at least it does not invariably occur. It did not in this instance, and that is the main point for us. On the contrary, some of the bones, and parts of others, sufficiently retained their form tobe readily distinguishable as having come from the human skeleton.”

“As I have never examined a cremated body,” said Mr. Barnes, “I must admit that your statement surprises me. I had supposed that all parts of the body would be brought to a similar state. But even if what you say is true, and granting that from pieces of charred bone it could be demonstrated that a human being had been burned, still I would like you to explain how you could differentiate between man and woman.”

“Perhaps it would be difficult, or even impossible, judging from the charred bits of skeleton alone. But if we remember that a woman’s garb is different from the dress of a man, we might find a clue. For example, if you saw what could unmistakably be recognized as parts of corset steels, what would you think?”

“Of course the deduction would be that the body had been that of a woman, but I should think it an odd circumstance to find that a body prepared for burial had been corseted.”

“The same thought occurred to me, and from it I drew an important deduction, since substantiated by facts. I concluded from the corset steels that the body had not been prepared for burial.”

“I follow you,” said Mr. Barnes, now thoroughly interested in Mr. Mitchel’s analytical method. “You mean that this woman was placed in the coffin clothed as she had died?”

“Practically so, but I did not decide that she had necessarily died clothed as she was when placed in the coffin. My conclusion was that it must have been as essential to dispose of the clothing as of the body. Thus the clothing would have been placed in the coffin with her, even though perhaps not on her.”

“A good point! A good point!” nodded the detective, approvingly.

“So, you see, the ashes of the dead had already revealed two clues. We knew that a human being had been cremated, and we could feel reasonably sure, though not absolutely positive, that it had been a woman. Next, the question arose as to the identity. If cremation would hide that, then the criminal might hope to escape justice by this means.”

“It seems incredible that the ashes could be identified, unless indeed some object, provably connected with a certain person, and which would resist i fire, had been placed in the coffin.”

“No, that would not satisfy me. A false identification could thus be planned by your thoughtful murderer. What I sought was some means of identifying the actual remains of a cremated body. I have succeeded.”

“You have succeeded?”

“Yes. I had a theory which has proven to be a good one. If some of the bones of the body resist cremation, or at least retain their form though calcined, it should follow that the teeth, being themost resistant bones, and, moreover, protected by being imbedded in other bones, might well be expected to remain intact. If not all, at least a sufficient number of them might be found to serve the ends of justice.”

Even if you could find the teeth with shape undisturbed, I fail to see how you could identify the remains by them.”

“The method is as reliable as it is unique. In these days of advanced dentistry, the people of this country have been educated up to such an appreciation of their dental organs that, from the highest to the lowliest, we find the people habitually saving their teeth by having them filled. I knew by personal experience that it is a common practice among dentists to register in a book of record all work done for a patient. In these records they have blank charts of the teeth, and on the diagram of each tooth, as it is filled, they mark in ink the size and position of the filling inserted. Now while the teeth themselves might resist the heat of the furnace, retaining their shapes, we would not expect the fillings, whether of gold or other material, to do so. Thus, I expected to find the teeth with cavities in them. I did find fourteen of the teeth fairly whole, sufficiently so that we might identify them, and know what position in the mouth they had occupied. No less

than ten of these teeth had cavities, which, from the regularity of their outline, it was fair to assume had been filled. These I took to my dentist for an opinion. He was at once interested,because it seems that members of the dental profession have long urged upon the police the reliance that may be placed upon the dentist in identifying living criminals or unknown dead bodies. He examined the charred teeth, and taking a blank chart of the mouth, he plotted out the size and positions of the fillings which once had been present. Another very interesting point was that we found two teeth, known as the central incisor and the cuspid (the latter commonly called the eye-tooth), united together by a staple of platinum. This staple had of course resisted the heat because platinum melts at so high a temperature. My dentist pointed out to me that this staple had been a foundation for what he called a bridge. One end of the staple had been forced into the root of one tooth, the other end passing similarly into the other. Thus the space was spanned, and an artificial tooth had been attached to the bar, thus filling the space. He also pointed out that the bar was covered with a mass which was evidently the porcelain of the tooth which had melted in the furnace."

"This is very interesting," said Mr. Barnes, "but unless you could find the man who did that work, you still could not identify the person cremated."

"My dentist, as I have said, made out for me a chart of the person's mouth, which you may examine. You will see that it is quite specific. With that number of fillings, occupying definite positions in special teeth, and coupled with the presence of the tooth bridged in and the manner of making the bridge, it would be an unexampled coincidence to find that two persons had obtained exactly similar dental services. Would it not?"

"That is sound reasoning," said Mr. Barnes.

"Very well. I had a statement published in the four leading dental magazines, accompanied by a *facsimile* of the chart made by my dentist, and I solicited correspondence with any dentist who could show a similar chart in his records."

[CHART FURNISHED BY MR. PHOENIX'S DENTIST.]

"That was a good method, provided, of course, the dentist who did the work subscribed to one of these magazines."

"Of course the advertisement might not meet the eye of the dentist who treated the dead woman, but even though he were not a subscriber he might hear of this

matter through some acquaintance, because, as I have said, this subject of identification through dental work is one that widely interests the dentists. However, success rewarded us. I received a letter from a dentist in one of the New Jersey towns, stating that he believed he could match my chart. I lost no time in visiting him, and, after examining his book, was satisfied that the person who had been cremated that day was an elderly, eccentric woman, named Miss Lederle, Miss Martha Lederle."

Mr. Mitchel, you have done a remarkably clever bit of work, and though you have succeeded where I have failed, I must congratulate you. But tell me, after learning the name of the woman how did you trace her to this city?"

"I deserve no credit for that. It seems that Miss Lederle had long had a little fleshy tumor on the inside of her cheek, which had had an opportunity to grow because of the loss of a tooth. Her dentist often advised her to have it removed, lest it might become cancerous. She put it off from time to time, but recently it had grown more rapidly, and at last she called on the dentist and asked him to recommend a surgeon. He tells me that he gave her the names of three, one residing in Newark, and two in this city. Of the New York men, one was Dr. Mortimer."

"By Jove! Doctor Mortimer!" exclaimed Mr. Barnes. "I begin to see daylight. It was he who supplied the morphine powders, then?"

"Ah, then you know so much? Yes, Dr. Mortimer instigated the transfer of bodies. As soon as I charged him with murder, he thought it safest to tell me the truth and throw himself upon my mercy."

"Upon your mercy?" said Mr. Barnes, mystified.

"Yes; the man has not committed a crime, at least not the crime of murder. It seems that on the afternoon of the day before that fixed for the funeral of Mr. Quadrant, this Miss Lederle called at his office and requested him to remove the tumor from her cheek. He consented, and suggested the use of cocaine to deaden the parts. The woman insisted that she must have chloroform, and the doctor explained that in the absence of his assistant he would not care to undertake the administration of an anaesthetic. But the woman was persistent;she offered a liberal fee if the operation could be done immediately, since it had required so much time for her to bring her courage to the point of having the tumor

removed; then the operation itself seemed so simple that at last the surgeon was overruled, and proceeded. He did cause the patient to remove her xorset, and, her garments thoroughly loosened, she was placed on the operating-table. He says he administered very little chloroform, and had not yet attempted to operate when the patient exhibited dangerous symptoms. In spite of his most untiring efforts she succumbed, and he found himself in the dreadful position of having a patient die under an operation, with no witnesses present. He closed and locked his office and walked from the house in great mental agitation. He called at the Quadrants', and heard there that the coffin would not again be opened. Then a great temptation came to him. The woman had not given him her address, nor had she stated who had sent her to Dr. Mortimer, merely declaring that she knew him by reputation. There was no way to communicate with the woman's relatives except by making the affair public. He recalled that a similar accident to an old surgeon of long-established reputation, where several assistants had been present, had nevertheless ruined the man's practice. He himself was innocent of wrong-doing, except, perhaps, that the law forbade him to operate alone, and he saw ruin staring him in the face, just at a time, too, when great prosperity had appeared to be within his grasp. The undertaker, Berial, was an old acquaintance, indebted to him for many recommendations.

"The plan seemed more and more feasible as he thought of it, and finally he sought out Berial, and confided to him his secret. For a liberal fee the undertaker agreed to dispose of the body. Dr. Mortimer supplied him with a drug with which to overcome the watchman at the stables, so that the wagon could be taken out unknown. He himself visited the Quadrant house, and, under the plea of relieving Mark Quadrant of a headache, gave him also a dose of morphine. At the appointed time Berial arrived at the doctor's office and took away the woman's body, first replacing the corset, which, of course, they were bound to dispose of. Together they went to the Quadrants', and there exchanged the bodies. Subsequent events are known to you. Thus the truth has arisen, Phrenix-like, from the ashes of the dead. The question remaining is, what claim has Justice upon the doctor? Gentlemen, is it needful to disgrace that man, who really is a victim of circumstances rather than a wrong-doer? He tells me, Mr. Barnes, that he has not had a moment of mental rest since you asked him whether ashes could be proven to be the residue of a human body."

"I recall now that he started violently when I spoke to him. Perhaps, had I been more shrewd, I might have suspected the truth then. The difficulty of hushing this matter up, Mr. Mitchel, seems to be the friends and relatives of the dead

woman. How can they be appeased?”

“I will undertake that. I think the real estate which she leaves behind will satisfy the one relative. I have already communicated with this man, a hard, money-grubbing old skinflint, and I think that with the assistance of Mr. Berial we can have one more funeral that will satisfy the curiosity of the few neighbors.”

And thus the matter was permitted to rest. There was yet one point which puzzled Mr. Barnes, and which never was made clear to him.

“What of the scar that I could not find on Rufus Quadrant’s foot?” he often asked himself. But as he could not ask either of the brothers, he never got a reply. Yet the explanation was simple. Mark Quadrant told Mr. Barnes that his brother had such a scar, his object being to baffle the detective by suggesting to him a flaw in the identification. The idea occurred to him because his brother Amos really had such a scarred foot, and he so worded his remark that he literally told the truth, though he deceived Mr. Barnes. When the detective repeated this statement to Amos, he noticed the care with which his brother had spoken, and, in turn, he truthfully said that his brother had spoken truthfully.