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GWEN DARROW.

The Darrow Enigma

By *Melvin L. Severy*



With Illustrations by
C. D. WILLIAMS

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THE EPISODE OF THE DARKENED ROOM

THE DARROW ENIGMA

CHAPTER I

What shall we say when Dream-Pictures leave their frames of night and push us from the waking world?

AS the part I played in the events I am about to narrate was rather that of a passive observer than of an active participant, I need say little of myself. I am a graduate of a Western university and, by profession, a physician. My practice is now extensive, owing to my blundering into fame in a somewhat singular manner, but a year ago I had, I assure you, little enough to do. Inasmuch as my practice is now secure, I feel perfectly free to confess that the cure I effected in the now celebrated case of Mrs. P— was altogether the result of chance, and not, as I was then only too glad to have people believe, due to an almost supernatural power of diagnosis.

Mrs. P— was not more surprised at the happy result than was I; the only difference being that she showed her astonishment, while I endeavoured to

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conceal mine, and affected to look upon the whole thing as a matter of course.

My fame spread; the case got into the medical journals, where my skill was much lauded, and my practice became enormous. There is but one thing further I need mention regarding myself: that is, that I am possessed of a memory which my friends are pleased to consider phenomenal. I can repeat a lecture, sermon, or conversation almost word for word after once hearing it, provided always, that the subject commands my interest. My humble abilities in this direction have never ceased to be a source of wonderment to my acquaintance, though I confess, for my own part, when I compare them with those of Blind Tom, or of the man who, after a single reading, could correctly repeat the *London Times*, advertisements and all, they seem modest indeed.

It was about the time when, owing to the blessed Mrs. P——, my creditors were beginning to receive some attention, that I first met George Maitland. He had need, he said, of my professional services; he felt much under the weather; could I give him something which would brace him up a bit; he had some important chemical work on hand which he could not afford to put by; in fact, he didn't mind saying that

he was at work upon a table of atomical pitches to match Dalton's atomic weights; if he succeeded in what he had undertaken he would have solved the secret of the love and hatred of atoms, and unions hitherto unknown could easily be effected.

I do not know how long he would have continued had not my interest in the subject caused me to interrupt him. I was something of an experimenter myself, and here was a man who could help me.

It was a dream of mine that the great majority of ailments could be cured by analysing a patient's blood, and then injecting into his veins such chemicals as were found wanting, or were necessary to counteract the influence of any deleterious matter present. There were, of course, difficulties in the way, but had they not already at Cornell University done much the same for vegetable life? And did not those plants which had been set in sea sand out of which every particle of nutriment had been roasted, and which were then artificially fed with a solution of the chemicals of which they were known to be composed, grow twice as rank as those which had been set in the soil ordinarily supposed to be best adapted to them? What was the difference between a human cell and a plant cell? Yes, since my

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patient was a chemist, I would cultivate his acquaintance.

He proceeded to tell me how he felt, but I could make nothing of it, so I forthwith did the regulation thing; what should we doctors do without it! I looked at his tongue, pulled down his eyelid, and pronounced him bilious. Yes, there were the little brown spots under his skin—freckles, perhaps—and probably he had an occasional ringing in his ears. He was willing to admit that he was dizzy on suddenly rising from a stooping posture, and that eggs, milk, and coffee were poison to him; and he afterward told me he should have said the same of any other three articles I might have mentioned, for he looked so hale and vigorous, and felt so disgracefully well, that he was ashamed of himself. We have had many a laugh over it since. The fact of the matter is the only affliction from which he was suffering was an inordinate desire to make my acquaintance. Not for my own sake—oh, dear, no!—but because I was John Darrow's family physician, and would be reasonably sure to know Gwen Darrow, that gentleman's daughter. He had first met her, he told me after we had become intimate, at an exhibition of paintings by William T. Richards,—but, as you will

soon be wondering if it were, on his part, a case of love at first sight, I had best relate the incident to you in his own words as he told it to me. This will relieve me of passing any judgment upon the matter, for you will then know as much about it as I, and, doubtless, be quite as capable of answering the question, for candour compels me to own that my knowledge of the human heart is entirely professional. Think of searching for Cupid's darts with a stethoscope!

"I was standing," Maitland said, "before a masterpiece of sea and rock, such as only Richards can paint. It was a view of Land's End, Cornwall, and in the artist's very best vein. My admiration made me totally unmindful of my surroundings, so much so, indeed, that, although the gallery was crowded, I caught myself expressing my delight in a perfectly audible undertone. My enthusiasm, since it was addressed to no one, soon began to attract attention, and people stopped looking at the pictures to look at me. I was conscious of this in a vague, far-off way, much as one is conscious of a conversation which seems to have followed him across the borderland of sleep, and I even thought that I ought to be embarrassed. How long I remained

thus transported I do not know. The first thing I remember is hearing someone close beside me take a quick, deep breath, one of those full inhalations natural to all sensitive natures when they come suddenly upon something sublime. I turned and looked. I have said I was transported by that canvas of sea and rocks, and have, therefore, no word left to describe the emotion with which I gazed upon the exquisite, living, palpitating picture beside me. A composite photograph of all the Madonnas ever painted, from the Sistine to Bodenhausen's, could not have been more lovely, more ineffably womanly than that young girl, radiant with the divine glow of artistic delight—at least, that is my opinion, which, by the bye, I should, perhaps, have stated a little more gingerly, inasmuch as you are yourself acquainted with the young lady. Now, don't look incredulous [noticing my surprise]. Black hair—not brown, black; clear pink and white complexion; large, deep violet eyes with a remarkable poise to them."—Here I continued the description for him: "Slight of figure; a full, honest waist, without a suggestion of that execrable death-trap, Dame Fashion's hideous cuirass; a little above middle height; deliberate, and therefore graceful, in all her movements;

carries herself in a way to impress one with the idea that she is innocent, without that time-honoured concomitant, ignorance; half girl, half woman; shy, yet strong; and in a word, very beautiful—that's Gwen Darrow." I paused here, and Maitland went on somewhat dubiously: "Yes, it's not hard to locate such a woman. She makes her presence as clearly felt among a million of her sex as does a grain of fuchsine in a hogshead of water. If, with a few ounces of this, Tyndall could colour Lake Geneva, so with Gwen Darrow one might, such is the power of the ideal, change the ethical status of a continent."

He then told me how he had made a study of Miss Darrow's movements, and had met her many times since; in fact, so often that he fancied, from something in her manner, that she had begun to wonder if his frequent appearance were not something more than a coincidence. The fear that she might think him dogging her footsteps worried him, and he began as sedulously to avoid the places he knew she frequented, as he previously had sought them. This, he confessed, made him utterly miserable. He had, to be sure, never spoken to her, but it was everything to be able to see her. When he could endure

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it no longer he had come to me under pretence of feeling ill, that he might, when he had made my acquaintance, get me to introduce him to the Darrows.

You will understand, of course, that I did not learn all this at our first interview. Maitland did not take me into his confidence until we had had a conference at his laboratory devoted entirely to scientific speculations. On this occasion he surprised me not a little by turning to me suddenly and saying: "Some of the grandest sacrifices the world has ever known, if one may judge by the fortitude they require, and the pain they cause, have occurred in the laboratory." I looked at him inquiringly, and he continued: "When a man, simply for the great love of truth that is in him, has given his life to the solution of some problem, and has at last arrived, after years of closest application, at some magnificent generalisation—when he has, perhaps, published his conclusions, and received the grateful homage of all lovers of truth, his life has, indeed, borne fruit. Of him may it then be justly said that his

". . . life hath blossomed downward like
The purple bell-flower."

But suddenly, in the privacy of his laboratory, a

single fact arises from the test-tube in his trembling hand and confronts him! His brain reels; the glass torment falls upon the floor, and shatters into countless pieces, but he is not conscious of it, for he feels it thrust through his heart. When he recovers from the first shock, he can only ejaculate: 'Is it possible?' After a little he is able to reason. 'I was fatigued,' he says; 'perhaps my senses erred. I can repeat the experiment again, and be sure. But if it overthrow those conclusions for which I have given my life?' he gasps. 'My generalisation is firmly established in the minds of all—all but myself—no one will ever chance upon this particular experiment, and it may not disprove my theory after all; better, much better, that the floor there keep the secret of it all both from me and from others!' But even as he says this to himself he has taken a new tube from the rack and crawled—ten years older for that last ten minutes—to his chemical case. The life-long habit of truth is so strong in him that self-interest cannot submerge it. He repeats the experiment, and confirms his fears. The battle between his life and a few drops of liquid in a test-tube has been mercilessly fought, and he has lost! The elasticity of the man is gone forever, and the only indication the

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world ever receives of this terrible conflict between a human soul and its destiny is some half a dozen lines in *Nature*, giving the experiment and stating that it utterly refutes its author's previous conclusions. Half a dozen lines—the epitaph of a dead, though unburied, life!”

My companion paused there, but I found myself unable to reply. He had spoken with such intensity, such dramatic fervour, that I was completely swept away by his eloquence; so much so, indeed, that it did not even occur to me to ask myself why he should have burst out in this peculiar strain. I have given you the incident in order that you may see the strange moods into which Maitland occasionally relapsed—at least, at that time. After a quick glance at me he continued, in a quieter vein: “All of us men of science have felt something, however little, of this, and I believe, as a class, scientists transcend all other men in their respect for absolute truth.” He cast another one of his searching glances at me, and said quickly: “This is precisely why I am going to confide in you and rely upon your assistance in a matter, the successful termination of which would please me as much as the discovery of an absolute standard of measurement.”

He then made the confession which I have already given you, and ended by asking me to secure him an introduction to Miss Darrow. I cheerfully promised to bring this about at the first opportunity. He asked me if I thought, on account of his having met her so frequently, she would be likely to think it was all a "put up job." "I do not know," I replied. "Miss Darrow is a singularly close observer. On the whole I think you had better reach her through her father. Do you play croquet?" He replied that he was considered something of an expert in that line. That, then, was surely the best way. John Darrow was known in the neighbourhood as a "crank" on the subject of croquet. He had spent many hundreds of dollars on his grounds. His wickets were fastened to hard pine planks, and these were then carefully buried two feet deep. The surface of the ground, he was wont to descant, must be of a particular sort of gravel, sifted just so, and rolled to a nicety. The balls must be of hard rubber, and have just one-eighth inch clearance in passing through the wickets, with the exception of the two wires forming the "cage," where it was imperative that this clearance should be reduced to one-sixteenth of an inch—but I need not state more

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to show how he came to be considered a "crank" upon the subject.

It was easy enough to bring Maitland and Darrow together. "My friend is himself much interested in the game; he heard of your superb ground; may he be permitted to examine it closely?" Darrow was all attention. He would be delighted to show it. Suppose they make a practical test of it by playing a game. This they did and Maitland played superbly, but he was hardly a match for the old gentleman, who sought to palliate his defeat by saying: "You play an excellent game, sir; but I am a trifle too much for you on my own ground. Now, if you can spare the time, I should like to witness a game between you and my daughter; I think you will be pretty evenly matched."

If he could spare the time! I laughed outright at the idea. Why, with the prospect of meeting Gwen Darrow before him, an absolute unit of measure, with a snail's pace, would have made good its escape from him. As it is a trick of poor humanity to refuse when offered the very thing one has been madly scheming to obtain, I hastened to accept Darrow's invitation for my friend, and to assure him on my own responsibility, that time was just then hanging heavily

on Maitland's hands. Well, the game was played, but Maitland was so unnerved by the girl's presence that he played execrably, so poorly, indeed, that the always polite Darrow remarked: "You must charge your easy victory, Gwen, to your opponent's gallantry, not to his lack of skill, for I assure you he gave me a much harder rub." The young lady cast a quick glance at Maitland, which said so plainly that she preferred a fair field and no favour that he hastened to say: "Your father puts too high an estimate upon my play. I did my best to win, but—but I was a little nervous; I see, however, that you would have defeated me though I had been in my best form." Gwen gave him one of those short, searching looks, so peculiarly her own, which seem to read, with mathematical certainty, one's innermost thoughts,—and the poor fellow blushed to the tips of his ears. But he was no boy, this Maitland, and betrayed no other sign of the tempest that was raging within him. His utterance remained as usual, deliberate and incisive, and I thought this perplexed the young lady. Before leaving, both Maitland and I were invited to become parties to a six-handed game to be played the following week, after the grounds had been redressed with gravel.

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Maitland looked forward to this second meeting with Miss Darrow with an eagerness which made every hour seem interminably long, and he was in such a flutter of expectancy that I was sure if

"We live . . . in thoughts, not breaths;
In feelings, not in figures on a dial.
We should count time by heart-throbs,"

he must have passed through a period as long as that separating the Siege of Troy from the "late unpleasantness." The afternoon came at last, however. The party consisted, besides Darrow and his daughter, Maitland and myself, of two young gentlemen with whom personally I had but a slight acquaintance, although I knew them somewhat by reputation. The younger one, Clinton Browne, is a young artist whose landscapes were beginning to attract wide attention in Boston, and the elder, Charles Herne, a Western gentleman of some literary attainments, but comparatively unknown here in the East.

There is nothing about Mr. Herne that would challenge more than passing attention. If you had said of him, "He is well-fleshed, well-groomed, and intellectually well-thatched," you would have voiced the opinion of most of his acquaintances.

This somewhat elaborately upholstered old world

has a deal of mere filling of one kind and another, and Mr. Herne is a part of it. To be sure, he leaves the category of excelsior very far behind and approaches very nearly to the best grade of curled hair, but, in spite of all this, he is simply a sort of social filling.

Mr. Browne, on the other hand, is a very different personage. Of medium height, closely knit, with the latent activity and grace of the cat flowing through every movement and even stagnating in his pose, he is a man that the first casual gaze instantly returns to with sharpened focus. You have seen gymnasts whose normal movements were slowly performed springs, just as rust is a slow combustion and fire the same thing in less time. Well, Clinton Browne strongly suggested that sort of athlete. Add to this a regularly formed, clearly cut, and all-but-beautiful face, with a pair of wonderfully piercing, albeit somewhat shifty, black eyes, and one need not marvel that men as well as women stared at him. I have spoken of his gaze as "somewhat shifty," yet am not altogether sure that in that term I accurately describe it. What first fastened my attention was this vague, unfocussed, roving, quasi-introspective vision flashing with panther-like suddenness into a direct-

ness that seemed to burn and pierce one like the thrust of a hot stiletto. His face was clean-shaven, save for a mere thumb-mark of black hair directly under the centre of his lower lip. This Iago-like tab and the almost fierce brilliancy of his concentrated gaze gave to his countenance at times a sinister, Machiavellian expression that was irresistible and which, to my thinking, seriously marred an otherwise fine face. Of course due allowance must be made for the strong prejudice I have against any form of beard. However, I'd wager a box of my best liver-pills against any landscape Browne ever painted,—I don't care if it's as big as a cyclorama,—that if he had known how completely Gwen shared my views,—how she disliked the appearance of be-whiskered men,—that delicately nurtured little imperial would soon have been reduced to a tender memory,—that is to say, if a physician can diagnose a case of love from such symptoms as devouring glances and an attentiveness so marked that it quite disgusted Maitland, who repeatedly measured his rival with the apparent cold precision of a mathematician, albeit there was warmth enough underneath.

This singular self-poise is one of Maitland's most noticeable characteristics and is, I think, rather re-

markable in a man of such strong emotional tendencies and lightning-like rapidity of thought. No doubt some small portion of it is the result of acquirement, for life can hardly fail to teach us all something of this sort; still I cannot but think that the larger part of it is native to him. Born of well-to-do parents, he had never had the splendid tuition of early poverty. As soon as he had left college he had studied law, and had been admitted to the bar. This he had done more to gratify the wishes of his father than to further any desires of his own, but he had soon found the profession so distasteful to him that he practically abandoned it in favour of scientific research. True, he still occasionally took a legal case when it turned upon scientific points which interested him, but, as he once confessed to me, he swallowed, at such times, the bitter pill of the law for the sugar coating of science which enshrouded it. This legal training could, therefore, it seems to me, have made no deep or radical change in his character, which leads me to think that the self-control he exhibited, despite the angry disgust with which I know Browne's so apparent attentions to Gwen inspired him, must, for the most part, have been native to him rather than acquired.

Nothing worthy of record occurred until evening ; at least nothing which at the time impressed me as of import, though I afterward remembered that Darrow's behaviour was somewhat strange. He appeared singularly preoccupied, and on one occasion started nervously when I coughed behind him. He explained that a disagreeable dream had deprived him of his sleep the previous night and left his nerves somewhat unstrung, and I thought no more of it.

When the light failed we were all invited into the parlour to listen to a song by Miss Darrow. The house, as you are perhaps aware, overlooks Dorchester Bay. The afternoon had been very hot, but at dusk a cold east wind had sprung up, which, as it was still early in the season, was not altogether agreeable to our host, sitting as he was, back to, though fully eight feet from, an open window looking to the east. Maitland, with his usual quick observation, noticed his discomfort and asked if he should not close the window. The old gentleman did not seem to hear the question until it was repeated, when, starting as if from a reverie, he said: " If it will not be too warm for the rest of you, I would like to have it partly closed, say to within six inches, for the wind is cold "; and he seemed to relapse again

into his reverie. Maitland was obliged to use considerable strength to force the window down, as it stuck in the casing, and when it finally gave way it closed with a loud shrieking sound ending in the bang of the counterweights. At the noise Darrow sprang to his feet, exclaiming: "Again! The same sound! I knew I could not mistake it!" but by this time Gwen was at his side, pressing him gently back into his seat, as she said to him in an undertone audible to all of us: "What is it, father?" The old gentleman only pressed her closer by way of reply, while he said to us apologetically: "You must excuse me, gentlemen. I have a certain dream which haunts me,—the dream of someone striking me out of the darkness. Last night I had the same dream for the seventh time and awoke to hear that window opened. There is no mistaking the sound I heard just now; it is identical with that I heard last night. I sprang out of bed, took a light, and rushed down here, for I am not afraid to meet anything I can see, but the window was closed and locked, as I had left it! What do you think, Doctor," he said, turning to me, "are dreams ever prophetic?" "I have never," I replied, anxious to quiet him, "had any personal experience justifying such a conclusion." I did not tell him of

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certain things which had happened to friends of mine, and so my reply reassured him.

Maitland, who had been startled by the old gentleman's conduct, now returned to the window and opened it about six inches. There was no other window open in the room, and yet so fresh was the air that we were not uncomfortable. Darrow, with ill-concealed pride, then asked his daughter to sing, and she left him and went to the piano. "Shall I not light the lamp?" I asked. "I think we shall not need it," the old gentleman replied, "music is always better in the gloaming."

In order that you may understand what follows, it will be necessary for me to describe to you our several positions in the room. The apartment is large, nearly square, and occupies the southeast corner of the house. The eastern side of the room has one window, that which had been left open about six inches, and on the southern side of the room there were two windows, both of which were securely fastened and the blinds of which had been closed by the painters who, that morning, had primed the eastern and southern sides of the house, preparatory to giving it a thorough repainting. On the north side of the room, but much nearer to the western than the

eastern end, are folding doors. These on this occasion were closed and fastened. On the western side of the room is the piano, and to the left of it, near the southwest corner, is a door leading to the hallway. This door was closed. As I have already told you, Darrow sat in a high-backed easy-chair facing the piano and almost in the centre of the room. The partly opened window on the east side was directly behind him and fully eight feet away. Herne and Browne sat upon Darrow's right and a little in front of him against the folding doors, while Maitland and I were upon his left between him and the hall door. Gwen was at the piano. There are no closets, draperies, or niches in the room. I think you will now be able to understand the situation fully.

Whether the gloom of the scene suggested it to her, or whether it was merely a coincidence, I do not know, but Miss Darrow began to sing "In the Gloaming" in a deep, rich contralto voice which seemed fraught with a weird, melancholy power. When I say that her voice was ineffably sympathetic I would not have you confound this quality either with the sepulchral or the aspirated tone which usually is made to do duty for sympathy, especially

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in contralto voices. Every note was as distinct, as brilliantly resonant, as a cello in a master's hand. So clear, so full the notes rang out that I could plainly feel the chair vibrate beneath me.

"In the gloaming, O my darling!
When the lights are dim and low,
And the quiet shadows falling
Softly come and softly go.
When the winds are sobbing faintly
With a gentle unknown woe,
Will you think of me and love me
As you did once, long ago?

"In the gloaming, O my darling!
Think not bitterly of me,
Though I passed away in silence,
Left you lonely, set you free.
For my heart was crushed with longing.
What had been could never be:
It was best to leave you thus, dear,
Best for you and best——"

But the line was never finished. With a wild cry, more of fear than of pain, Darrow sprang from his chair. "Gentlemen, I have been stabbed!" was all he said, and fell back heavily into his seat. Gwen was kneeling before him in an instant, even before I could assist him. His right hand was pressed to his throat and his eyes seemed starting from their sockets as he shouted hoarsely: "A light, a light! For God's sake, don't let him strike me again in the



"SO CLEAR, SO FULL THE NOTES RANG OUT."

1888

1889

1890

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dark!" Maitland was already lighting the gas and Herne and Browne, so Browne afterward told me, were preparing to seize the assailant. I remembered, after it all was over, a quick movement Browne had made toward the darkest corner of the room.

The apartment was now flooded with light, and I looked for the assassin. He was not to be found! The room contained only Gwen, Darrow, and his four invited guests! The doors were closed; the windows had not been touched. No one could possibly have entered or left the room, and yet the assassin was not there. But one solution remained; Darrow was labouring under a delusion, and Gwen's voice would restore him. As she was about to speak I stepped back to note the effect of her words upon him. "Do not fear, father," she said in a low voice as she laid her face against his cheek, "there is nothing here to hurt you. You are ill,—I will get you a glass of cordial and you will be yourself again in a moment." She was about to rise when her father seized her frantically by the arm, exclaiming in a hoarse whisper: "Don't leave me! Can't you see? Don't leave me!" and for the first time he removed his hand from his throat, and taking her head between his palms, gazed wistfully into her face. He tried to speak

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again, but could not, and glanced up at us with a helpless expression which I shall never forget. Maitland, his eyes riveted upon the old gentleman, whose thoughts he seemed to divine, hurriedly produced a pencil and note-book and held them toward him, but he did not see them, for he had drawn Gwen's face down to him and was kissing her passionately. The next instant he was on his feet and from the swollen veins that stood out like cords upon his neck and forehead, we could see the terrible effort he was making to speak. At last the words came,—came as if they were torn hissing from his throat, for he took a full breath between each one of them. "Gwen—I—knew—it! Good-bye! Remember—your—promise!"—and he fell a limp mass into his chair, overcome, I felt sure, by the fearful struggle he had made. Maitland seized a glass of water and threw it in his face. I loosened the clothing about his neck and, in doing so, his head fell backward and his face was turned upward toward me. The features were drawn,—the eyes were glazed and set. I felt of his heart; he was dead!

CHAPTER II

Silence is the only tender Death can make to Mystery.

THE look of pain and astonishment upon my face said plainly enough to Gwen: "Your father is dead." I could not speak. In the presence of her great affliction we all stood silent, and with bowed heads. I had thought Darrow's attack the result of an overwrought mental condition which would speedily readjust itself, and had so counted upon his daughter's influence as all but certain to immediately result in a temporary cure. When, therefore, I found him dead without any apparent cause, I was, for the time being, too dazed to think, much less to act, and I think the other gentlemen were quite as much incapacitated as I. My first thought, when I recovered so that I could think, was of Gwen. I felt sure her reason must give way under the strain, and I thought of going nearer to her in case she should fall, but refrained when I noticed that Maitland had noiselessly

glided within easy reach of her. To move seemed impossible to me. Such a sudden transition from warm, vigorous life to cold, impassive death seems to chill the dynamic rivers of being into a horrible winter, static and eternal. Though death puts all things in the past tense, even we physicians cannot but be strangely moved when the soul thus hastily deserts the body without the usual farewell of an illness.

Contrary to my expectations Gwen did not faint. For a long time,—it may not have been more than twenty minutes, but it seemed, under the peculiar circumstances, at least an hour,—she remained perfectly impassive. She neither changed colour nor exhibited any other sign of emotion. She stood gazing quietly, tenderly, at her father's body as if he were asleep and she were watching for some indication of his awakening. Then a puzzled expression came over her countenance. There was no trace of sorrow in it, only the look of perplexity. I decided to break the gruesome silence, but the thought of how my own voice would sound in that awe-inspired stillness frightened me. Gwen herself was the first to speak. She looked up with the same impassive countenance, from which

now the perplexed look had fled, and said simply: "Gentlemen, what is to be done?" Her voice was firm and sane,—that it was pitched lower than usual and had a suggestion of intensity in it, was perfectly natural. I thought she did not realise her loss and said: "He has gone past recall." "Yes," she replied, "I know that, but should we not send for an officer?" "An officer!" I exclaimed. "Is it possible you entertain a doubt that your father's death resulted from natural causes?" She looked at me a moment fixedly, and then said deliberately: "My father was murdered!" I was so surprised and pained that, for a moment, I could not reply, and no one else sought to break the silence.

Maitland, as if Gwen's last remark had given rise to a sudden determination, glided to the body. He examined the throat, raised the right hand and looked at the fingers: then he stepped back a little and wrote something in his note-book. This done, he tried the folding doors and found them locked on the inside; then the two windows on the south side of the room, which he also found fastened. He opened the hall door slightly and the hinges creaked noisily, of all of which he made a note. Then taking a rule from his pocket he went to the east window, and

measured the opening, and then the distance between this window and the chair in which the old gentleman had sat, recording his results as before. His next act astonished me not a little and had the effect of recalling me to my senses. With his pen-knife he cut a circle in the carpet around each leg of the chair on which the body rested. He continued his examinations with quiet thoroughness, but I ceased now to follow him closely, since I had begun to feel the necessity of convincing Gwen of her error, and was casting about for the best way to do so.

“My dear Miss Darrow,” I said at length; “you attach too much importance to the last words of your father, who, it is clear, was not in his right mind. You must know that he has, for some months, had periods of temporary aberration, and that all his delusions have been of a sanguinary nature. Try to think calmly,” I said, perceiving from her expression that I had not shaken her conviction in the least. “Your father said he had been stabbed. You must see that such a thing is physically impossible. Had all the doors and windows been open, no object so large as a man could possibly have entered or left the room without our observing him; but the windows were closed and fastened, with the exception of

the east window, which, as you may see for yourself, is open some six inches or so, in which position it is secured by the spring fastening. The folding doors are locked on the inside and the only possible means of entrance, therefore, would have been by the hall door. Directly in front of that, between it and your father, sat Mr. Maitland and myself. You see by my chair that I was less than two feet from the door. It is inconceivable that, in that half-light, anyone could have used that entrance and escaped observation. Do you not see how untenable your idea is? Had your father been stabbed he would have bled, but I am as certain as though I had made a thorough examination that there is not so much as a scratch anywhere upon his body." Gwen heard me through in silence and then said wearily, in a voice which had now neither intensity nor elasticity, "I understand fully the apparent absurdity of my position, yet I know my father was murdered. The wound which caused his death has escaped your notice, but——"

"My dear Miss Darrow," I interrupted, "there is no wound, you may be sure of that!" For the first time since Darrow's death Maitland spoke. "If you will look at the throat a little more closely, you will see what may be a wound," he said, and

went on quietly with his examinations. He was right; there was a minute abrasion visible. The girl's quick observation had detected what had escaped me, convinced as I was that there was nothing to be found by a scrutiny, however close.

Gwen now transferred her attention to Maitland, and asked: "Had not one of us better go for an officer?" Maitland, whose power of concentration is so remarkable as on some occasions to render him utterly oblivious of his surroundings, did not notice the question and Browne replied to it for him. "I should be only too happy to fetch an officer for you, if you wish," he said. Have you ever noticed how acute the mind is for trifles and slight incongruities when under the severe tension of such a shock as we had experienced? Such attacks, threatening to invade and forever subjugate our happiness, seem to have the effect of so completely manning the ramparts of our intellect that nothing, however trivial, escapes observation. Gwen's father, her only near relative, lay cold before her,—his death, from her standpoint, the most painful of mysteries,—and yet the incongruity of Browne's "only too happy" did not escape her, as was evident by the quick glance and sudden relaxation of the mouth into the faintest

semblance of a smile. All this was momentary and, I doubt not, half unconscious. She replied gravely: "I would indeed be obliged if you would do so."

Maitland, who had now finished his examination, noticed that Browne was about to depart. When the artist would have passed him on his way to the hall door, he placed his hand upon that gentleman's shoulder, saying: "Pardon me, sir, but I would strongly urge that you do not leave the room!"

Browne paused. Both men stood like excited animals at gaze.

CHAPTER III

Nothing is so full of possibilities as the seemingly impossible.

MAITLAND'S request that Browne should not leave the room seemed to us all a veritable thunderbolt. It impressed me at the time as being a thinly veneered command, and I remember fearing lest the artist should be injudicious enough to disregard it. If he could have seen his own face for the next few moments, he would have had a lesson in expression which years of portrait work may fail to teach him. At length the rapidly changing kaleidoscope of his mind seemed to settle, to group its varied imaginings about a definite idea,—the idea that he had been all but openly accused, in the presence of Miss Darrow, of being instrumental in her father's death. For a moment, as he faced Maitland, whom he instinctively felt to be a rival, he looked so dark and sinister that one could easily have believed him capable of almost any crime.

Gwen was no less surprised than the rest of us at

Maitland's interference, but she did not permit it to show in her voice as she said quietly: "Mr. Browne has consented to go for an officer." As I felt sure she must have thought Maitland already knew this, as anyone else must have heard what had passed, I looked upon her remark as a polite way of saying: "I am mistress here."

Maitland apparently so regarded it, for he replied quickly: "I hope you will not think me officious, or unmindful of your right to dictate in a matter so peculiarly your own affair. My only desire is to help you. Mr. Browne's departure would still further complicate a case already far too difficult of solution. My legal training has given me some little experience in these matters, and I only wish that you may have the benefit thereof. It is now nearly three-quarters of an hour since your father's death, and, I assure you, time at this particular juncture may be of the utmost importance. Not a moment should be wasted in needless discussion. If you will consent to despatch a servant to the police station I will, in due time, explain to you why I have taken the liberty of being so insistent on this point."

He had hardly ceased speaking before Gwen rang for a servant. She hurriedly told him what had

transpired and sent him to the nearest police station. As this was but a few rods away and the messenger was fleet of foot, an officer was soon upon the scene. "We were able," he said to us generally as he entered the room, "to catch Medical Examiner Ferris by 'phone at his home in F—— Street, and he will be here directly. In the meantime I have been sent along merely to see that the body is not moved before his examination and that everything in the room remains exactly as it was at the time of the old gentleman's death. Did I not understand," he said to Maitland in an undertone, "that there is a suspicion of foul play?"

"Yes," replied George, "that is one explanation which certainly will have to be considered."

"I thought I heard the Cap'n say 'murder' when he 'phoned in town for some specials. They're for detective work on this case, I reckon. Hello! That sounds like the Doctor's rig."

A moment later the bell rang and Dr. Ferris entered the room.

"Ah, Doctor," he said extending his hand to me, "what have we here?"

Before I could answer he had noticed Maitland and advanced to shake hands with him.

"Is this indeed so serious as I have been told?" he asked, after his greeting.

"It seems to me likely," replied Maitland slowly, "to develop into the darkest mystery I have ever known."

"Hum!" replied the Examiner. "Has the body been moved or the disposition of its members altered?"

"Not since I arrived," replied Officer Barker.

"And before?" queried Dr. Ferris, turning to Maitland.

"Everything is absolutely intact. I have made a few notes and measurements, but I have disturbed nothing," replied Maitland.

"Good," said the Examiner. "May I see those notes before I go? You were on that Parker case and you have, you know, something of a reputation for thoroughness. Perhaps you may have noted something that would escape me."

"The notes, Doctor, are at your service," George replied.

Dr. Ferris' examination of the body was very thorough, yet, since it was made with the rapid precision which comes from extended practice, it was soon over. Short as it was, however, it was still an

ordeal under which Gwen suffered keenly, to judge from her manner.

The Examiner then took Maitland aside, looked at his notes, and conversed earnestly with him in an undertone for several minutes. I do not know what passed between them. When he left, a few moments later, Officer Barker accompanied him.

As soon as the door closed behind them Gwen turned to Maitland.

"Did he give you his opinion?" she asked with a degree of interest which surprised me.

"He will report death as having resulted from causes at present unknown," rejoined Maitland.

Gwen seemed greatly relieved by this answer, though I confess I was utterly at a loss to see why she should be.

Observing this change in her manner Maitland approached her, saying:

"Will you now permit me to explain my seeming rudeness in interfering with your plan to make Mr. Browne your messenger, and at the same time allow me to justify myself in the making of yet another request?"

Gwen bowed assent and he proceeded to state the

following case as coolly and accurately as if it were a problem in geometry.

“Mr. Darrow,” he began, “has just died under peculiar circumstances. Three possible views of the case at once suggest themselves. First: his death may have been due to natural causes and his last expressions the result of an hallucination under which he was labouring. Second: he may have committed suicide, as the result, perhaps, of a mania which in that case would also serve to explain his last words and acts; or,—you will pardon me, Miss Darrow,—these last appearances may have been intentionally assumed with a view to deceiving us. The officers you have summoned will not be slow in looking for motives for such a deception, and several possible ones cannot fail at once to suggest themselves to them. Third: your father may have been murdered and his last expressions a more or less accurate description of the real facts of the case. It seems to me that these three theories exhaust the possibilities of the case. Can anyone suggest anything further?” And he paused for a reply.

“It is clear,” replied Mr. Herne with portly deliberation, “that all deaths must be either natural or unnatural; and equally clear that when unnatural

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the agent, if human, must be either the victim himself, or some person external to him."

"Precisely so," continued Maitland. "Now our friend, the Doctor, believes that Mr. Darrow's death resulted from natural causes. The official authorities will at first, in all probability, agree with him, but it is impossible to tell what theory they will ultimately adopt. If sufficient motive for the act can be found, some are almost certain to adopt the suicide theory. Miss Darrow has expressed her conviction that we are dealing with a case of murder. Mr. Browne and Mr. Herne have expressed no opinion on the subject, so far as I am aware."

At this point Gwen, with an eagerness she had not before displayed,—or possibly it was nervousness,—exclaimed: "And your own view of the case?" "I believe," Maitland replied deliberately, "that your father's death resulted from poison injected into the blood; but this is a matter so easily settled that I prefer not to theorise upon it. There are several poisons which might have produced the effects we have observed. If, however, I am able to prove this conjecture correct I have still only eliminated one of the three hypotheses and resolved the matter to

a choice between the suicide and murder theories, yet that is something gained. It is because I believe it can be shown death did not result from natural causes that I have so strongly urged Mr. Browne not to leave the room."

"Pardon me, sir!" ejaculated Browne, growing very dark and threatening. "You mean to insinuate——" "Nothing," continued Maitland, finishing his sentence for him, and then quietly ignoring the interruption. "As I have already said, I am somewhat familiar with the usual methods of ferreting out crime. As a lawyer, and also as a chemical expert, I have listened to a great deal of evidence in criminal cases, and in this and other ways, learned the lines upon which detectives may confidently be expected to act, when once they have set up an hypothesis. The means by which they arrive at their hypotheses occasionally surpass all understanding, and we have, therefore, no assurance as to the view they will take of this case. The first thing they will do will be to make what they will call a 'thorough examination' of the premises; but a study of chemistry gives to the word 'thorough' a significance of which they have no conception. It is to shorten this examination as much as possible,—to

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prevent it from being more tiresome to you than is absolutely necessary," he said to Gwen, "that I have taken the liberty of ascertaining and recording most of the data the officers will require."

"Believe me," Gwen said to him in an undertone not intended for the rest of us, though we heard it, "I am duly grateful for your consideration and shall find a fitting time to thank you."

With no other reply than a deprecating gesture, Maitland continued:

"Now let us look at the matter from the standpoint of the officers.

"They must first determine in their own minds how Mr. Darrow met his death. This will constitute the basis of their first hypothesis. I say 'first' because they are liable to change it at any moment it seems to them untenable. If they conclude that death resulted from natural causes, I shall doubtless be able to induce them to waive that view of the case until I have been given time to prove it untenable—if I can—and to act for the present upon one of the other two possible theories. It appears, from our present knowledge of the case, that, whichever one of these they choose, the same difficulty will confront them."

Gwen looked at him inquiringly and he continued, answering the question in her eyes:

"This is what I mean. Your father, whether he committed suicide or was murdered, in all probability met his death through that almost imperceptible wound under his chin. This wound, so far as I have yet been able to examine it without a glass, was made with a somewhat blunt instrument, able, apparently, to little more than puncture the skin and draw a drop or so of blood. Of course, on such a theory, death must have resulted from poisoning. The essential point is: Where is the instrument that inflicted the wound?"

"Might it not be buried in the flesh?" Gwen asked.

"Possibly, but as I have not been able to find it I cannot believe it very likely, though closer search may reveal it," replied Maitland. "Your father's right forefinger," he continued, "is slightly stained with blood, but the wound is of a nature which could not have been caused by a finger nail previously poisoned. Since we know he pressed his hand to his throat this blood-stain makes no more strongly toward the truth of the suicide theory than it does toward that of the murder hypothesis. Suppose

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now, for we must look at all sides of the question, the officers begin to act upon the assumption that murder has been committed. What will they then do? They will satisfy themselves that the east window was opened six and three-quarters inches and securely fastened in that position; that the two south windows were closed and fastened and that the blinds thereof were also closed. They will ascertain the time when death occurred,—we can easily tell them,—and this will show them that neither of the blinds on the south side could have been opened without so increasing the light in the room as to be sure to attract our attention. They will learn also that the folding doors were locked, as they are now, on this side and that these two gentlemen [indicating Browne and Herne] sat against them. They will then turn to the hall door as the only possible means of entrance and I shall tell them that the Doctor and I sat directly in front of this door and between it and Mr. Darrow. I have taken the liberty to cut the carpet to mark the positions of our chairs. In view of all these facts what must they conclude? Simply this: no one entered the room, did the deed, and then left it, at least not without being observed.” “But surely,” I ventured to suggest, “you do not think

they will presume to question the testimony of all of us that no one *was* observed."

"That is all negative evidence," he replied, "and does not conclusively prove that another might not have observed what we failed to detect. However, it is all so self-evident that they will not question it. I know so well their methods of reasoning that I am already prepared to refute their conclusions at every point, without, I regret to say, being myself able to solve the mystery, though I may say in passing that I purposely am refraining from formulating any theory whatever until I have ascertained everything which it is possible to learn in the matter. In this way I hope to avoid the error into which the detective is so prone to fall. Once you set up an hypothesis you unconsciously, and in spite of yourself, accentuate unduly the importance of all data making toward that hypothesis, while, on the other hand, you either utterly neglect, misconstrue, or fail to fully appreciate, the evidence oppugnant to your theory. In chemical research I gather the material for an entire series of experiments before performing any, so that the first few shall not, either by satisfying or discouraging me, cause me to leave the bush half beaten.

“Let us see how, from the officers’ standpoint, the murder hypothesis now stands. No assassin, it will be clear to them, could have entered or left this room unobserved. If, therefore, a man did enter the room and kill our friend, we, all of us, must be his accomplices.” This remark drew some sort of exclamatory protest from every other person in the room save Browne.

“Ah, that is probably the true solution,” said the artist with ill-concealed disgust.

This remark and the tone in which it was uttered would have been discourteous under any circumstances; at this particular time and in the painful situation in which we all found ourselves it was boorish almost beyond endurance.

There was nothing in Maitland’s manner to indicate that he had heard Browne’s remark, as he quietly continued:

“You see this cold-blooded view, the mere statement of which causes you all to shudder,—the more so because one of our number is the daughter of the dead man,—is not to be entertained a moment and is only mentioned to show the logical chain which will force the officers into the certain conviction that no assassin *did* enter or leave this room. What, then,

remains of their theory? Two possibilities. First, the murderer may have done the deed without entering. If so, it is clear that he must have made use of the partly-opened window. This seems so likely that they will seize upon it with avidity. At first they will suggest that the assassin reached in at the window and struck his victim as he sat by it. This, they will urge, accounts for our not finding the weapon, and they will be so sure that this is the correct solution of the problem that I shall probably have to point out to them its patent absurdity. This illustrates the danger of forming an hypothesis from imperfect data. Remind them that Mr. Darrow did not sit by the window, but eight feet three and one-half inches from it, in almost the exact centre of the room, and their theory falls to the ground, only to be hastily replaced, as a drowning man catches at a straw, by a slightly varied theory. If the victim sat that distance from the window, they will inform us, it is clear the murderous implement must have been thrown or shot at him by the assassin."

"Indeed," said Mr. Herne, "though I had not thought of that theory it seems to me so plausible, now that you mention it, that I think the officers will show rare acumen if they adopt it. Very properly

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may they hold that some projectile might have been shot through the partly opened window and none of us have detected the act."

"Ah, yes," rejoined Maitland; "but when I ask them where this implement is under this assumption, and remind them of what I shall already have told them, viz., that Mr. Darrow sat back to the window as well as over eight feet from it, and sat in a chair, the solid back of which extended, like a protecting shield, fully six inches above the top of his head, they will find it difficult to show how, unless projectiles travel in sharp curves or angles, a man in this position could thus receive a wound directly beneath his chin, a wound so slight as not to penetrate the thyroid cartilage immediately under it.

"The abandonment of this hypothesis will force them to relinquish the idea that the murder was committed from without. What then remains? Only the second alternative. They must either give up altogether the idea of murder, or have recourse to what is known as the theory of exclusive opportunity."

"Theory of exclusive opportunity," repeated Gwen, as a puzzled look overspread her countenance. "I—I fear I do not quite understand what you mean."

"Pardon me, Miss Darrow, for not making my meaning clearer to you," said Maitland with a deferential inclination of the head. "The theory of exclusive opportunity, to state it plainly in this case, means simply this: if Mr. Darrow were murdered, some one of us five, we being the only ones having an opportunity to do the deed, must be the assassin. Whether this view be taken, or that of suicide, it becomes of paramount importance to find the weapon. Do you not now see why I objected to having anyone leave the room? If, as appears likely from my search, the weapon is not to be found, and if, as I feel reasonably certain, either the suicide or the murder theory be substantiated, then, anyone who left the room before official search was made would be held to have taken the weapon with him and disposed of it, because his would have been the exclusive opportunity of so doing. Someone must have disposed of it, and no one else had a chance to do so; that would be the way it would be stated. But, since no one of us has left the room, a thorough search both of it and of our persons, must convince the officers that we, at least, are not responsible for the fact that the weapon is not forthcoming."

Maitland paused and looked at Browne as if he

expected him to speak, but that gentleman only shut his square jaws the more firmly together and held his peace,—at least in so far as words were concerned. If looks, like actions, “speak louder than words,” this black visage with its two points of fire made eloquent discourse. I charged all this display of malice to jealousy. It is not altogether pleasant to be placed at a disadvantage before the one being whose good opinion one prizes above all things else,—that is to say, I have read that such is the case. I do not consider my own views upon such matters expert testimony. In all affairs of the heart my opinions cease to have weight at exactly the point where that organ ceases to be a pump.

Even Gwen, I think, noticed Browne’s determined silence, for she said to Maitland:

“I am very grateful that your forethought prevented me from causing Mr. Browne even temporary annoyance by making him my messenger.”

She paused a moment and then continued:

“You were speaking of the officers’ theories. When they have convinced themselves that no one of us has removed the weapon, what then?”

“In my opinion,” said Maitland, “they will ultimately fall back upon the suicide theory, but they

must find the weapon here before they can substantiate it ; for if it be not here someone must have taken it away and that someone could have only been the one who used it—the assassin, in short—but here are the officers. Let each one of us insist upon being searched. They can send to the station for a woman to search you,” he said in an undertone to Gwen and then added: “ I trust you will pardon my suggesting a course which, in your case, seems so utterly unnecessary, but, believe me, there are urgent reasons for it which I can explain later. If we would hope to solve this mystery, everything depends upon absolute thoroughness at this juncture.”

“ I should evince but poor appreciation,” Gwen replied, “ of the ability you have already shown should I fail to follow your slightest suggestion. It is all I can offer you by way of thanks for the kind interest you have taken.”

The return of Officer Barker, accompanied by three other men, now changed the tide of conversation. Maitland advanced and shook hands with one whom he introduced as Mr. Osborne, and this gentleman in turn introduced his brother officer, a Mr. Allen, and M. Godin, a special detective.

Osborne impressed me as a man of only mediocre

ability, thoroughly imbued with the idea that he is exceptionally clever. He spoke loudly and, I thought, a bit ostentatiously, yet withal in a manner so frank and hearty that I could not help liking the fellow.

M. Godin, on the contrary, seemed retiring almost to the point of self-abnegation. He said but little, apparently preferring to keep in the background, where he could record his own observations in his note-book without too frequent interruption. His manner was polished in the extreme, and so frank withal that he seemed to me like a man of glass through whom every thought shone unhindered. I wondered how one who seemed powerless to conceal his own emotions should possess a detective's ability to thread his way through the dark and hidden duplicity of crime. When he spoke it was in a low, velvety, and soothing voice, that fell upon the ear with an irresistible charm. When Osborne would make some thoughtless remark fraught with bitterness for Gwen, such an expression of pain would flit across M. Godin's fine face as one occasionally sees in those highly organised and sympathetic natures, —usually found among women if a doctor's experience may be trusted,—which catch the throb of an-

other's hurt, even as adjacent strings strive to sing each other's songs.

M. Godin seemed to me more priest than detective. His clean-shaven face, its beautifully chiselled features suffused with that peculiar pallor which borrows the transparency of marble; the large, limpid brown eyes and the delicate, kindly mouth—all these, combined with a faultless manner and a carriage suggestive of power in reserve, so fascinated me that I found myself watching him continually. I remember saying to myself: "What a rival he would make in a woman's affections!"

At just that time he was looking at Gwen with tender, solicitous sympathy written in every feature, and that doubtless suggested my thought.

Mr. Allen was even more ordinary than Mr. Osborne in manner and appearance. I do not presume to judge his real merits, for I did not notice him sufficiently to properly portray him to you, even if I had the gift of description, which I think you will admit I have not. He lives in my memory only as a something tall, spare, coarse of texture, red, hairy, and redolent of poor tobacco.

How different men are! (Of course women are all alike!) While Osborne, like a good-natured bumble-

bee, was buzzing noisily about, as though all the world were his clover-blossom; and Allen, so far as I know, was doing nothing; M. Godin, alert and keen despite his gentleness and a modesty which kept him for the most part unobtrusively in the shadow of his chosen corner, was writing rapidly in a note-book and speaking no word. It seemed as if nothing escaped him. Clearly he was there to enlighten himself rather than others. At length, pausing to make a measurement, he noticed my gaze and said to me in an undertone, as he glanced solicitously at Gwen lest she should hear:

“Pardon me, but did any of you observe anything, at or about the time of Mr. Darrow’s death, which impressed you as singular,—any noise, any shadow, any draught or change of temperature, say a rushing or I might say swishing sound,—anything, in fact, that would seem to you as at all unusual?”

“Nothing whatever,” I replied. “Everything seemed perfectly normal and commonplace.”

“Hum! Strange!” he said, and returned to his notes.

I felt sure M. Godin had had a theory and that my testimony had not strengthened it, but he did not volunteer any information, neither did he take part

in the conversation of his companions, and so my curiosity remained ungratified. It was clear that M. Godin's methods were very different from those of Osborne and Allen.

I need not weary you by further narrating what occurred at this official examination. Suffice it to say that, with one or two minor exceptions, Osborne and Allen followed the precise course of reasoning prophesied by Maitland, and, as for M. Godin, he courteously, but firmly, held his peace. The two officers did not, however, lean as strongly to the theory that death resulted from natural causes as Maitland had anticipated, and, I think, this surprised him. He had already told them that he expected to be able to show death to have resulted from poison hypodermically applied, and, as I overheard a remark made by Osborne to Allen, I readily understood their speedy abandonment of their natural-death theory. They were engaged in verifying Maitland's measurement of the east side of the room when Osborne said softly to his companion: "He has figured in several of my cases as a chemical expert, and when he expresses an opinion on a matter it's about the same as proved. He's not the kind that jumps in the dark. He's a lawyer as well as

chemist and knows what's evidence, so I reckon we'd better see if we can make anything out of the suicide and murder theories."

Maitland had asked them to send to the station for a woman to search Gwen and she had just arrived. We all requested that a most thorough examination should now be made to assure the officers that no one of us possessed the missing weapon. This done, the officers and M. Godin departed for the night, assuring Gwen that there was nothing further to be done till morning, and Osborne, doubtless with a view to consoling her, said: "It may be a relief to you, miss, to know that there is scarcely a doubt that your father took his own life." This had an effect upon Gwen very different from that which had been intended. Her face contracted, and it was plain to see she was beginning to think everyone was determined to force a falsehood upon her. Herne and Browne also prepared to take their leave. A glance from Maitland told me he wished me to remain with him a moment after the others had departed, and I accordingly did so.

When we were alone with Gwen he said to her: "I think I understand your feeling with regard to Mr. Osborne's remark, as well as your conviction that it

does not represent the truth. I foresaw they would come to this conclusion, and know very well the pains they will take to prove their hypothesis." "Can nothing be done?" she asked beseechingly. "It is that of which I wish to speak," he replied. "If you have sufficient confidence in me to place the case in my hands, I will do everything in my power to establish the truth,—on one condition," and he glanced at her face, now pale and rigid from her long-continued effort of self-control. "And that condition is?" she said quickly. "That you follow my directions and permit me to order your movements in all things, so long as the case remains in my hands; if at any time I seek to abuse your faith, you are as free to discharge me as if I were a paid detective." Gwen looked searchingly at him; then, extending her hand to him, she said impulsively: "You are very kind; I accept the condition. What shall I do?"

I tried to catch Maitland's eye to tell him what he should counsel her, but a man with his ability to observe conditions and grasp situations can very well do without prompting. "First," he said, "you must return home with the Doctor and spend the rest of the night with his sister; I shall stay here until morning; and second, I desire that you use your ut-

most endeavour to keep the incidents of this evening out of your mind. You cannot, of course, forget your loss, unless you sleep,"—and he gave me a look which said: "I depend on you to see to that,"—"but you must not continually re-enact the scene in imagination. In the morning the Doctor will come here to bring me my camera, microscope, and a few things I shall require"—and he passed me a list he had written. "If you have slept well you can be of considerable service, and may accompany him—if not, you must remain quietly at his house." With this he turned to me, and said: "She is making a condenser of herself, Doctor, and will soon break through the insulation. Sparks will be dangerous—you must secure the brush effect." He spoke quickly, and used electrical terms, that she might not understand him, but either he failed of his purpose, or the observation she immediately made was a strange coincidence. I believe she understood, for, while young women educated by their mothers are usually ignorant upon all the more masculine subjects, those who have long been their father's companions are ever prone to startle one with the most unexpected flashes of intelligence. "I am in rather a high state of tension now," she said, turning calmly to Maitland;

“but when alone the expression which has been denied me here will afford relief.” Maitland glanced at her quickly, and then at me, and I knew he was wondering if she had understood. Then he said: “It is getting late. I shall expect you to sleep well and to come in the morning. Please say to the servants as you go that I shall stay here all night, and that no one must enter without permission. Good-night.” She held out her hand to him, but made no reply; then she fervently kissed her father’s lips, and together we left the chamber of death.

CHAPTER IV

Death speaks with the tongue of Memory, and his ashen hand
reaches out of the great unknown to seize and
hold fast our plighted souls.

WHAT Maitland's reason was for spending the night with the dead body of Darrow, or how he busied himself until morning, I do not know. Perhaps he desired to make sure that everything remained untouched, or, it may be, that he chose this method of preventing Gwen from performing a vigil by the body. I thought this latter view very probable at the time, as I had been singularly impressed with the remarkable foresight my friend had displayed in so quickly and adroitly getting Gwen away from everything connected with her father's sad and mysterious death.

Arriving at my house my sister took an early opportunity to urge upon Gwen a glass of wine, in which I had placed a generous sedative. The terrible tension soon began to relax, and in less than half an hour she was sleeping quietly. I dreaded the moment

when she should awake and the memory of all that had happened should descend like an avalanche upon her. I told my sister that this would be a critical moment, cautioning her to stay by Gwen and to give her, immediately upon her arising, a draught I had prepared for the purpose of somewhat deadening her sensibilities. I arose early, and went to Maitland's laboratory to collect the things he desired. When I returned Gwen was awake, and to my intense gratification in even a better condition than I had dared to hope.

It was quite late when we reached her house, and Maitland had evidently been at work several hours. He looked sharply at Gwen when she entered, and seemed much pleased at her condition. "You have obeyed my instructions, I see, and slept," he said, as he gave her his hand. "Yes," she replied, "I was very tired, and the doctor's cordial quite overcame me;" and she cast an inquiring glance at the network of white string which Maitland had stretched across the carpet, dividing it into squares like an immense checker-board. In reply to her questioning look, he said: "French detectives are the most thorough in the world, and I am about to make use of their method of instituting an exhaustive

search. Each one of the squares formed by these intersecting strings is numbered, and represents one square foot of carpet, the numbers running from one to two hundred and eighty-eight. Every inch of every one of these squares I shall examine under a microscope, and anything found which can be of any possible interest will be carefully preserved, and its exact location accurately marked upon this chart I have prepared, which, as you will see, has the same number of squares as the room, the area of each square being reduced from one square foot to one square inch. You will note that I have already marked the location of all doors, windows, and furniture. The weapon, if there be one, may be very minute, but if it be on the floor we may be assured the microscope will find it. The walls of the room, especially any shelving projections, and the furniture, I shall examine with equal thoroughness, though I have now some additional reasons for believing the weapon is not here."

"Have you discovered anything new?" Gwen exclaimed, unable to control the excitement caused by this last remark. "You must pardon me," Maitland rejoined, "if I ask you and the Doctor a question before replying." She nodded assent, and he con-

tinued: "I wish to know if you agree with me that we shall be more likely to arrive at a solution of the problem before us if we keep our own counsel than if we take the officers of the law, or, for that matter, anyone else, into our confidence. You undoubtedly noticed how carefully M. Godin kept his own counsel. Official methods, and the hasty generalisations which form a part thereof—to say nothing of the petty rivalries and the passion for notoriety—can do much to hinder our own work, and, I believe, nothing to help it. What say you?" "That we keep our work to ourselves," Gwen quickly rejoined, and I signified that I was of the same opinion. "Then," Maitland continued, "I may say this in answer to your question. I have ascertained something which may bear upon the case in hand. You will remember that part of the gravel for redressing the croquet ground was dumped under the east window there. The painters, I learn, finished painting that side of the house yesterday forenoon before the gravel was removed and placed upon the ground, so that any footprints they may have made in it while about their work were obliterated. As you see, there was loose gravel left under the window to the depth of about two inches. I carefully examined

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this gravel this morning—there were no foot-prints.”

I glanced at Gwen; her face had a set expression, and she was deathly pale. “There were, however,” he continued, “places where the gravel had been tamped down as if by the pressure of a rectangular board. I examined these minutely and, by careful measurement and close scrutiny of some peculiar markings suggestive of the grain of wood, satisfied myself that the depressions in the gravel were made by two, and not, as I had at first thought, by one small piece of wood. I found further that these two boards had always borne certain relative relations to each other, and that when one had been turned around the other had undergone a similar rotation. This last is, in my mind, a most important point, for, when coupled with the fact that between any two impressions of the same board the distance was sensibly constant, and was that of a short stride, there could be no reasonable doubt but these boards had been worn upon some person’s feet. They could not have been thrown down merely to be stepped upon, for, in that case, they would not have borne fixed relations to each other—probably would not have been turned end for end at all—and certainly,

both would not always have happened to get turned at the same time. I procured a board of the combined area of the two supposed to have made the impressions in the gravel, and weighted it down until, as nearly as I could measure, it impacted the soil to the same extent the others had. The weight was one hundred and thirty-five pounds, which is about right for a man five feet five inches tall. The position of the depressions in the gravel indicated a stride just about right for a man of that height.

“There was one other most important discovery which I made after I had divided the impressions into two classes—according as they were produced by the right or left board—which was that when the right foot was thrown forward the stride was from three to four inches longer than when the left foot led. Directly under the window there was a deep impression in the sand. I took a plaster cast of it, and here it is,” he said, producing an excellent facsimile of a closed hand. “There can be little doubt,” he continued, “from the position occupied by the depression, of which this is a reverse copy, that it was either accidentally made by someone who, stooping before the east window to avoid obstructing its light, suddenly lost his balance and regained his equi-

librium by thus thrusting out his hand, or—and this seems far more likely to me—that the hand was deliberately placed in the gravel in order to steady its possessor while he performed some peculiar operation.”

At this point I ventured to ask why he regarded the latter view as so much more tenable than the former. “There are several reasons,” he replied, “which render the view I prefer to take all but certain. First, the impression was made by the left hand. Second, it is the impression of a closed hand, with the upper joints of the fingers undermost. Did you ever know one to save himself from falling by thrusting out a closed hand? Certainly not. There is a certain amount of fear, however slight, invariably associated with losing one’s balance. This sentiment, so far as the hand is concerned, is expressed by opening it and spreading the fingers. This he would instinctively have done, if falling. Then there is the position of the impression relative to the window and some slight testimony upon the sill and glass, for the thorough investigation of which I have been obliged to await my microscope. I have worked diligently, but that is all I have been able to accomplish.”

"All!" exclaimed Gwen, regarding him with ill-concealed admiration. "It seems to me a very great deal. The thoroughness, the minuteness of it all, overwhelms me; but, tell me, have your discoveries led you to any conclusion?" "No," he replied, "nothing definite yet; I must not allow myself to become wedded to any theory, so long as there is anything further to be learned. If I were to hazard a few idle guesses, I should say your father was murdered in some mysterious way—by a person about five feet five inches tall, weighing, say, one hundred and thirty-five pounds, and having a lame leg, or, perhaps, one limb shorter than the other,—at all events having some deformity or ailment causing a variation in the length of the strides. I should guess also that this person's feet had some marked peculiarity, since such pains had been taken to conceal the footprints. Then the cast of the hand here encourages speculation. Fingers long, slim, and delicate, save at the nails, where, with the exception of the little finger, are to be found unmistakable signs of the habit of biting the nails,—see, here are the hang-nails,—but, strange to say, the nail of the little finger has been spared, and suffered to grow to an unusual length. I ask myself why this par-

ticular nail has been so favoured, and can only answer, 'because it has some peculiar use.' It is clear this is not the hand of a manual labourer; the joints are too small, the fingers too delicate, the texture of the skin, which is clearly visible, much too fine—in short, wouldn't it pass anywhere for a woman's hand? Say a woman who bit her nails. If it were really such there would be a pair of feminine feet also to be concealed, and boards would do it very nicely—but this is all guesswork, and must not be allowed to affect any subsequent conclusions. If you will excuse me a few minutes I will use the microscope a little on the sill of the east window before we are interrupted by our friends the officers, who will be sure to be here soon."

While Maitland was thus engaged I did all in my power to distract Gwen's attention, as much as possible, from her father's body. Whenever she regarded it, the same intense and set expression overspread her countenance as that which at first had alarmed me. I was glad when Maitland returned from the window and began mixing some of the chemicals I had brought him, for Gwen invariably followed all his movements, as if her very existence depended upon her letting nothing escape her.

Maitland, who had asked me for a prescription blank, now dipped it in the chemicals he had mixed and, this accomplished, put the paper in his microscope box to dry.

"I have something here," he said, "which I desire to photograph quite as much as this room and some of its larger objects," and he pinned a tiny, crumpled mass against the wall, and made an exposure of it in that condition. "Do you know what this is?" he said, as he carefully smoothed it out for another picture. "I haven't the slightest idea," I said. "It is plain enough under the microscope," he continued, placing it upon the slide, and adjusting the focus. "Would you like to examine it, Miss Darrow?" Gwen had scarcely put her eye to the instrument before she exclaimed: "Why, it's a piece of thin outside bark from a twig of alder." Maitland's face was a study. "Would you mind telling me," he said deliberately, "how you found that out so quickly?" She hesitated a moment, and then said methodically, pointing toward the water, "I know the alder well—our boat is moored near a clump of them." "You are a keen observer," he replied, as he took the prepared paper from his box and spread the film of bark upon it to take a blue

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print of it. "There is one other object upon the sill which, unfortunately, I cannot take away with me," he continued, "but shall have to content myself with photographing. I refer to a sinuous line made in the paint, while green, and looking as if a short piece of rope, or, more properly, rubber tubing, since there is no rope-like texture visible, had been dropped upon it, and hastily removed—but see, here are Osborne and Allen looking for all the world as if they were prepared to demonstrate a fourth dimension of space. Now we shall see the suicide theory proved—to their own satisfaction, at least. But, whatever they say, don't forget we are to keep our own work to ourselves."

The two officers were alone. M. Godin had apparently decided to work by himself. This did not in the least surprise me, since I could easily see that he had nothing to gain by working with these two officers.

"We've solved the matter," was the first thing Osborne said after passing the time of day. "Indeed?" replied Maitland in a tone which was decidedly ambiguous; "you make it suicide, I suppose?" "That's just what we make it," returned the other. "We hadn't much doubt of it last night,

but there were some things, such as the motive, for example, not quite clear to us; but it is all as plain as daylight now."

"And what says M. Godin?" asked Maitland. Mr. Osborne burst into a loud guffaw.

"Oho, but that's good! What says M. Godin? I say, Allen, Maitland wants to know what 'Frenchy' says," and the pair laughed boisterously. "It's plain enough you don't know M. Godin," he continued, addressing Maitland. "He's tighter 'n any champagne bottle you ever saw. The corkscrew ain't invented that 'll draw a word out of M. Godin. You saw him making notes here last night. Well, the chances are that if this were a murder case, which it isn't, you'd see no more of M. Godin till he bobbed up some day, perhaps on the other side of the earth, with a pair of twisters on the culprit. He's a 'wiz,' is M. Godin. What does he think? He knows what he thinks, and he's the only individual on the planet that enjoys that distinction. I say, Allen, do you pump 'Frenchy' for the gentleman's enlightenment," and again the pair laughed long and heartily.

"Well, then," said Maitland, "since we can't have M. Godin's views we shall have to content ourselves

with those of your more confiding selves. Let's hear all about the suicide theory."

"I think," said Osborne in an undertone, "you had better ask Miss Darrow to withdraw for a few moments, as there are some details likely to pain her." This suggestion was intended only for Maitland, but the officer, used to talking in the open air, spoke so loudly that we all overheard him. "I thank you for your consideration," Gwen said to him, "but I would much prefer to remain. There can be nothing connected with this matter which I cannot bear to hear, or should not know. Pray proceed."

Osborne, anxious to narrate his triumph, needed no further urging. "We felt sure," he began, "that it was a case of suicide, but were perplexed to know why Mr. Darrow should wish to make it appear a murder. Of course, we thought he might wish to spare his daughter the shame such an act would visit upon her, but when this was exchanged for the horrible notoriety of murder, the motive didn't seem quite sufficient, so we looked for a stronger one—and found it." "Ah! you are getting interesting," Maitland observed.

Osborne cast a furtive glance at Gwen, and then continued: "We learned on inquiry that certain re-

cent investments of Mr. Darrow's had turned out badly. In addition to this he had been dealing somewhat extensively in certain electric and sugar stocks, and when the recent financial crash came, he found himself unable to cover his margins, and was so swept clean of everything. Nor is this all; he had lost a considerable sum of money in yet another way—just how my informant would not disclose—and all of these losses combined made his speedy failure inevitable. Under such conditions many another man has committed suicide, unable to face financial ruin. But this man had a daughter to consider, and, as I have already said, he would wish to spare her the disgrace which the taking of his own life would visit upon her, and, more than all, would desire that she should not be left penniless. The creditors would make away with his estate, and his daughter be left a beggar. We could see but one way of his preventing this, and that was to insure his life in his daughter's favour. We instituted inquiries at the insurance offices, and found that less than a month ago he had taken out policies in various companies aggregating nearly fifty thousand dollars, whereas, up to that time, he had been carrying only two thousand dollars insurance. Why this sudden and tremendous

increase? Clearly to provide for his daughter after his act should have deprived her of his own watchful care. And now we can plainly see why he wished his suicide to pass for murder. He had been insured but a month, and immediate ruin stared him in the face. His death must be consummated at once, and yet, by our law, a man who takes his life before the payment of his second annual insurance premium relieves the company issuing his policy of all liability thereunder, and robs his beneficiary of the fund intended for her. Here, then, is a sufficient motive, and nothing more is required to make the whole case perfectly clear. Of course, it would be a little more complete if we could find the weapon, but even without it, there can be no doubt, in the light of our work, that John Darrow took his own life with the intentions, and for the purposes, I have already set forth."

"Upon my soul, gentlemen," exclaimed Maitland, "you have reasoned that out well! Did you carefully read the copies of the various policies when interrogating the companies insuring Mr. Darrow?" "Hardly," Osborne replied. "We learned from the officials all we needed to know, and didn't waste any time in gratifying idle curiosity." A long-drawn

"hm-m" was the only reply Maitland vouchsafed to this. "We regret," said Osborne, addressing Gwen, "that our duty, which has compelled us to establish the truth in this matter, has been the means of depriving you of the insurance money which your father intended for you." Gwen bowed, and a slight enigmatical smile played for a moment about her lips, but she made no other reply, and, as neither Maitland nor I encouraged conversation, the two officers wished us a good-morning, and left the house without further remark.

"I wish to ask you a few questions," Maitland said to Gwen as soon as the door had closed behind Osborne and his companion, "and I beg you will remember that in doing so, however personal my inquiries may seem, they have but one object in view—the solution of this mystery." "I have already had good proof of your singleness of purpose," she replied. "Only too gladly will I give you any information in my possession. Until this assassin is found, and my father's good name freed from the obloquy which has been cast upon it, my existence will be but a blank,—yes, worse, it will be an unceasing torment; for I know my father's spirit—if the dead have power to return to this earth—can

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never rest with this weight of shame upon it." As she spoke these words the depth of grief she had hitherto so well concealed became visible for a moment, and her whole frame shook as the expression of her emotion reacted upon her. The next instant she regained her old composure, and said calmly: "You see I have every reason to shed whatever light I can upon this dark subject."

"Please, then, to answer my questions methodically, and do not permit yourself to reason why I have asked them. What was your father's age?"

"Sixty-two."

"Did he drink?"

"No."

"Did he play cards?"

"Yes."

"Poker?"

"Yes, and several other games."

"Was he as fond of them as of croquet?"

"No; nothing pleased him as croquet did—nothing, unless it were chess."

"Hum! Do you play chess?"

"Yes; I played a good deal with father."

"What kind of a game did he play?"

"I do not understand you. He played a good

game; my father did not enjoy doing anything that he could not do well."

"I mean to ask if his positions were steadily sustained—or if, on the other hand, his manœuvres were swift, and what you might call brilliant."

"I think you would call them brilliant."

"Hum! How old are you?"

"Twenty-two."

"Tell me your relations with your father."

"We were most constant companions. My mother—she and my father—they were not altogether companionable—in short, they were ill-mated, and, being wise enough to find it out, and having no desire to longer embitter each other's lives, they agreed to separate when I was only four. They parted without the slightest ill-feeling, and I remained with father. He was very fond of me, and would permit no one else to teach me. At seven I was drawing and painting under his guidance. At eight the violin was put into my hands and my studies in voice began. In the meantime father was most careful not to neglect my physical training; he taught me the use of Indian clubs, and how to walk easily. At eight I could walk four miles an hour without fatigue. The neighbours used to urge that I be put to school,

but my father would reply—many a time I have heard him say it—‘a child’s brain is like a flower that blossoms in perceptions and goes to seed in abstractions. Correct concepts are the raw material of reason. Every desk in your school is an intellectual loom which is expected to weave a sound fabric out of rotten raw material. While your children are wasting their fibre in memorising the antique errors of classical thought my child is being fitted to perceive new truths for herself.’ It is needless to say his friends considered these views altogether too radical. But for all that I was never sent to school. My father’s library was always at my disposal, and I was taught how to use it. We were constantly together, and grew so into each other’s lives that”—but her voice failed her, and her eyes moistened. Maitland, though he apparently did not notice her emotion, so busy was he in making notes, quickly put a question which diverted her attention.

“Your father seemed last night to have a presentiment of some impending calamity. Was this a common experience?”

“Of late, yes. He has told me some six or seven times of dreaming the same dreams—a dream in

which some assassin struck him out of the darkness."

"Did you at any of these times notice anything which might now lead you to believe this fancied repetition was the result of any mental malady?"

"No."

"Was his description of the dreams always the same?"

"No; never were they twice alike, save in the one particular of the unseen assassin."

"Hum! Did the impression of these dreams remain long with him?"

"He never recovered from it, and each dream only accentuated his assurance that the experience was prophetic. When once I tried to dissuade him from this view, he said to me: 'Gwen, it is useless; I am making no mistake. When I am gone you will know why I am now so sure—I cannot tell you now, it would only'—here he stopped short, and, turning abruptly to me, said with a fierceness entirely alien to his disposition: 'Hatred is foreign to my nature, but I hate that man with a perfect hell of loathing! Have I been a kind father to you, Gwen? If so, promise me'—and he seized me by the wrist—'promise me if I'm murdered—I may as well say *when* I'm

murdered—you will look upon the man who brings my assassin to justice—the thought that he may escape is damning—as your dearest friend on earth! You will deny him nothing. You will learn later that I have taken care to reward him. My child, you will owe this man a debt you can never repay, for he will have enabled your father's soul to find repose. I dreamed last night that I came back from the dead, and heard my avenger ask you to be his wife. You refused, and at your ingratitude my restless soul returned to torment everlasting. Swear to me, Gwen, that you'll deny him nothing, nothing, nothing!' I promised him, and he seemed much reassured. 'I am satisfied,' he said, 'and now can die in peace, for you are an anomaly, Gwen,—a woman who fully knows the nature of a covenant,' and he put his arm about me, and drew me to him. His fierceness had subsided as quickly as it had appeared, and he was now all tenderness."

Maitland, who appeared somewhat agitated by her recital, said to her: "After the exaction of such a promise you have, of course, no doubt that your father was the victim of a mental malady—at least, at such times as those of which you speak?"

Gwen replied deliberately: "Indeed, I have grave

doubts. My father was possessed by a strange conviction, but I never saw anything which impressed me as indicating an unsound mind. I am, of course, scarcely fitted to judge in such matters."

Maitland's face darkened as he asked: "You would not have me infer that you would consider your promise in any sense binding?"

"And why not?" she ejaculated in astonishment.

"Because," he continued, "the request is so unnatural as to be in itself sufficient evidence that it was not made by a man in his right mind."

"I cannot agree with you as to my father's condition," Gwen replied firmly; "yet you may be right; I only know that I, at least, was in *my* right mind, and that I promised. If it cost me my life to keep that pledge, I shall not hesitate a moment. Have you forgotten that my father's last words were, 'remember your promise'?" She glanced up at Maitland as she said this, and started a little as she saw the expression of pain upon his face. "I seem to you foolishly deluded," she said apologetically; "and you are displeased to see that my purpose is not shaken. Think of all my father was to me, and then ask yourself if I could betray his faith. The contemplation of the subject is painful at best; its

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realisation may, from the standpoint of a sensitive woman, be fraught with unspeakable horror,—I dare not think of it! May we not change the subject?"

For a long time Maitland did not speak, and I forbore to break the silence. At last he said: "Let us hope, if the supposed assassin be taken, the discovery may be made by someone worthy the name of man—someone who will not permit you to sacrifice either yourself or your money." Gwen glanced at him quickly, for his voice was strangely heavy and inelastic, and an unmistakable gloom had settled upon him. I thought she was a little startled, and I was considering if I had not better call her aside and explain that he was subject to these moods, when he continued, apparently unaware of the impression he had made: "Do you realise how strong a case of suicide the authorities have made out? Like all of their work it has weak places. We must search these in order to overthrow their conclusion. The insurance policies they were 'too busy' to read we must peruse. Then, judging from your story, there seems little doubt that your father has left some explanation of affairs hitherto not confided to you—some document which he has reserved for your perusal after his death. No time should be lost in settling

this question. The papers may be here, or in the hands of his attorney. Let us search here first."

"His private papers," Gwen said, rising to lead the way, "are in his desk in the study."

"One moment, please," Maitland interrupted, calling her back, "I have something I have been trying to ask you for the last hour, but have repeatedly put off. I believe your father's death to have resulted from poisoning. You know the result of the post-mortem inquest. It is necessary to make an analysis of the poison, if there be any, and an absolutely thorough microscopic examination of the wound. I—I regret to pain you—but to do this properly it will be necessary to cut away the wounded portion. Have we your permission to do so?"

For a moment Gwen did not answer. She fell upon her knees before her father's body, and kissed the cold face passionately. For the first time since the tragedy she found relief in tears. When she arose a great change had come over her. She was very pale and seized a chair for support as she replied to Maitland's question between the convulsive sobs which she seemed powerless to check: "I—I have bidden him good-bye. We shall but obey his command in sparing no pains to reach the assassin. You—you

have my permission to do anything—*everything*—that may be—necessary to that end. I—I know you will be as gentle——” But she could not finish her sentence. The futility of gentleness—the realisation that her father was forever past all need of tenderness, fell like a shroud about her soul. The awakening I had dreaded had come. Her hand fell from the chair, she staggered, and would have fallen to the floor had not Maitland caught her in his arms.

THE EPISODE OF THE SEALED DOCUMENT

CHAPTER I

Father of all surveyors, Time drags his chain of rust through every life, and only Love—unaging God of the Ages—immeasurable, keeps his untarnished youth.

MAITLAND carried the unconscious girl into the study, and for some time we busied ourselves in bringing her to herself. When this task was accomplished we did not feel like immediately putting any further tax upon her strength. Maitland insisted that she should rest while he and I ransacked the desk, and, ever mindful of her promise to obey his instructions, she yielded without remonstrance. Our search revealed the insurance policies, and a sealed envelope bearing the inscription: "To Miss Gwen Darrow, to be opened after the death of John Darrow," and three newspapers with articles marked in blue pencil. I read the first aloud. It ran as follows:

I have reason to believe an attempt will sooner or later be made upon my life, and that the utmost cunning will be employed to lead the authorities astray.

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The search for the assassin will be long, expensive, and discouraging—just such a task as is never successfully completed without some strong personal incentive. This I propose to supply in advance. My death will place in my daughter's hands a fund of fifty thousand dollars, to be held in trust by her, and delivered, in the event of my being murdered, to such person or persons as shall secure evidence leading to the conviction of the murderer.

(Signed) JOHN HINTON DARROW.

I glanced at the other two papers—the marked article was the same in each. “I wonder what your friend Osborne would say to that,” I said to Maitland.

“How old are the papers?” he replied.

“March 15th,—only a little over a month,” I answered.

“Let me see them, please,” he said. “Hum! All of the same date, and each in the paid part of the paper! It is clear Mr. Darrow inserted these singular notices himself. I will tell you what Osborne will say when he learns of these articles. He will say they strengthen his theory; that no sane man would publish such a thing, except as a weak attempt to deceive the insurance companies. As for the

money all being paid to the discoverer of the assassin, instead of to his daughter, he will simply dispose of that by saying: 'No assassin, no reward, and the fund remains intact.' If now, the other papers permit Miss Darrow to use the interest of this fund while holding the principal in trust, we do not at present know enough of this matter to successfully refute Osborne's reasoning. This mystery seems to grow darker rather than lighter. The one thing upon which we seem continually to get evidence is the question of sanity. If Mr. Darrow's suspicions were directed against no one in particular, then it is clear his dreams, and all the rest of his fears for that matter, had a purely subjective origin, which is to say that upon this one subject, at least, he was of unsound mind."

"I cannot think so," Gwen interrupted. "He was so rational in everything else."

"That is quite possible," I replied. "I have known people to be monomaniacs upon the subject of water, and to go nowhere without a glass of it in their hands. There is also a well-authenticated case of a man who was as sane as you or I until he heard the words 'real estate.' One day while quietly carving the meat at a dinner to which he had invited sev-

eral guests, a gentleman opposite him inadvertently spoke the fatal words, when, without a word of warning, he sprang at him across the table, using the carving-knife with all the fury of the most violent maniac; and yet, under all other conditions, he was perfectly rational."

"If, on the other hand," said Maitland, continuing his remarks as if unaware of our interruption, "Mr. Darrow's suspicions had any foundation in fact, it is almost certain they must have been directed against some specific person or persons. If so, why did he not name them?—but, stay—how do we know that he did not? Let us proceed with our examination of the papers," and he began perusing the insurance policies. Neither Gwen nor I spoke till he had finished and thrown them down, when we both turned expectantly toward him.

"All in Osborne's favour so far," he said. "Principal to be held in trust by Miss Darrow under the terms of a will which we have yet to find; the income, until the discharge of the trust, to go to Miss Darrow. Now for this," and he passed Gwen the sealed envelope addressed to her.

She broke the seal with much agitation. "Shall I read it aloud?" she asked.

We signified our desire to hear it, and she read as follows:

MY DEAR GWEN:

My forebodings have seemed to you strange and uncalled for, but when this comes to your hand you will know whether or not they were groundless. Of one episode in my career which shook the structure of my being to its foundation stone, you have been carefully kept in ignorance. It is necessary that you should know it when I am gone, and I have accordingly committed it to this paper, which will then fall into your hands. My early life, until two years after I married your mother, was spent in India, the adult portion thereof being devoted to the service of the East India Company. I had charge of a department in their depot at Bombay. You have seen Naples. Add to the beauties of that city the interesting and motley population of Cairo and you can form some idea of the attractions of Bombay. I was very happy there until the occurrence of the event I am about to narrate.

One morning, my duties calling me to one of the wharves, my attention was attracted by a young girl dancing upon the flags by the water's edge. The ordinary bayadere is so common an object in India as to attract but little notice from anyone of refined tastes, but this girl, judging from the chaste beauty of her movements, was of a very different type. As

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my curiosity drew me nearer to her she turned her face toward me, and in that instant I knew my hour had come.

Though many years her senior she was still my first love,—the one great passion of my life.

I do not attempt to describe her ineffable loveliness, for, like the beauty of a flower, it was incapable of analysis. Nothing that I could write would give you any adequate idea of this girl's seraphic face, for she was like unto no one you have ever seen in this cold Western world. I watched in a wild, nervous transport, I know not how long—time and space had no part in this new ecstasy of mine! I could think of nothing, do nothing—only feel,—feel the hot blood deluge my brain only to fall back in scalding torrents upon my heart with a pain that was exquisite pleasure.

Suddenly she changed her step and executed a quick backward movement toward the water, stopping just as her heels touched the curb at the edge of the wharf; then forward, and again a quick return to the backward movement, but this time she mistook the distance, her heels struck the curb forcibly, and she was precipitated backward into the water. For a moment I stood as one petrified, unable to reason, much less to act; then the excited voices of the crowd recalled me. They had thrown a rope into the water and were waiting for her to come to the surface and grasp it. The wall from which she had fallen must

have been at least fifteen feet above the water, which was littered with broken spars, pieces of timber, and other odd bits of wood. It seemed as if she would never come to the surface, and when at length she did, she did not attempt to seize the rope thrown to her, but sank without a movement. The truth flashed upon me in an instant. She had struck her head against some of the floating drift and was unconscious! Something must be done at once. I seized the rope and sprang in after her, taking good care to avoid obstructions, and although, as you know, I never learned to swim, I succeeded in reaching her, and we were drawn up together. I bore her in my arms into one of the storerooms close by, and, laying her upon a bale of cotton, used such restoratives as could be quickly procured.

I was kneeling by her, my arm under her neck, in the act of raising her head, when she opened her eyes, and fastened them, full of wonderment, upon my face. A moment more, her memory returning to her, she made a little movement, as if to free herself. I was too excited then to heed it, and continued to support her head. She did not repeat the movement, but half closed her eyes and leaned back resignedly against my arm. If, I thought, these few minutes could be expanded into an eternity, it would be my idea of heaven. She was recovering rapidly now and soon raised herself into a sitting posture, saying, in very good English, "I think I can stand now, Sahib."

I gave her my arm and assisted her to her feet. Her hand closed upon my sleeve as if to see how wet it was, and glancing at my dripping garments, she said simply: "You have been in the water, Sahib, and it is to you I owe my life. I shall never forget your kindness." She raised her eyes to my face and met my gaze for a moment, as she spoke. We are told that the eye is incapable of any expression save that lent it by the lids and brow,—that the eyeball itself, apart from its direction, and the changes of the pupil resulting from variations in the intensity of light, can carry no message whatsoever. This may be so, but, without any noticeable movement of the eyes that met mine, I learned with ineffable delight that this young girl's soul and mine were threaded upon the same cord of destiny. My emotion so overpowered me that I could not speak, and when my self-possession returned the young girl had vanished.

From the height of bliss I now plunged into the abyss of despair. I had let her go without a word. I did not even know her name. I had caught her to myself from the ocean only to suffer her to drown herself among the half-million inhabitants of Bombay. What must she think of me? I asked the wharfinger if he knew her, but he had never seen her before. All my other inquiries proved equally fruitless. I wondered if she knew that I loved her, but hardly dared to hope she had been able to correctly

interpret my boorish conduct. I could think of but one thing to do. If I did not know her name, neither did she know mine, and so if she desired a further acquaintance, she, like myself, must rely upon a chance meeting. If she had detected my admiration for her she must know that I too would strive to meet her again. Where would she be most likely to expect me to look for her? Clearly at the same place we had met before, and at the same time of day. She might naturally think my duties called me there daily at that hour. I determined to be there at the same time the next day.

I arrived to find her there before me, anxiously peering at the passers-by. She was certainly looking for me,—there was ecstasy in the thought!

It is not necessary, my dear child, that I should describe the details of our love-making, for my present purpose is not merely to interest you, but rather to acquaint you with certain occurrences which I now deem it wise you should know. Time only intensified our love for each other, and for several months all went well. One serious obstacle to our union presented itself,—that of caste. Her people, Lona said, would never permit her to marry outside her own station in life, besides which there was another ground upon which we might be equally sure of their opposition. They had already chosen for her and she was betrothed to Rama Ragobah. It is of this man that I have chiefly to speak. By

birth he was of the same Vaisya caste as Lona. Early in life his lot had fallen among fakirs and he had acquired all their secrets. This did not satisfy his ambitions, for he wished to be numbered among the rishis or adepts, and subjected himself to the most horrible asceticism to qualify himself for adeptship. His indifference to physical pain was truly marvellous. He had rolled his naked body to the Ganges over hundreds of miles of burning sands! He had held his hands clinched until the nails had worn through the palm and out at the back of the hand. He had at one time maintained for weeks a slow fire upon the top of his head, keeping the skin burned to the skull.

When he came wooing Lona, his rigid asceticism had much relaxed, but he would still seek to amuse her by driving knives into his body until she would sicken at the blood, a condition of affairs which, she said, afforded him great enjoyment. Ragobah was a man of gigantic build and immense physical strength. His features were heavy and forbidding. You are familiar with pictures of Nana Sahib. If I had not known this fiend to have died while beset in a swamp, I should have mistaken Ragobah for him. It was to such a being that Lona was betrothed in spite of the loathing her parents knew she felt for him. She told me all this one night at our accustomed tryst on Malabar Hill. We had chosen to meet here on account of the beauty of the place and

the seclusion it offered. There, on bright moonlit nights, with the sea and the city below me, the "Tower of Silence" in the Parsees' burial plot ablaze with reflected glory, the majestic banyan over me rustling gently in the soft sea breeze, while Lona nestled close beside me,—the exquisite perfume of the luxuriant garden less welcome than the delicious fragrance of her breath,—hours fraught with years of bliss would pass as if but pulse-beats. In the world of love the heart is the only true timepiece. On one or two occasions Lona had thought she had been followed when coming to meet me, and she began to conceive a strange dislike for a little cave-like recess in the rocks just back of the tree by which we sat. I tried on one occasion to reassure her by telling her it was so shallow that, with the moonlight streaming into it, I could see clear to the back wall, and arose to enter it to convince her there was no one there, but she clung to me in terror, saying: "Don't go! Don't leave me! I was foolish to mention it. I cannot account for my fear,—and yet, do you know," she continued in a low, frightened tone, "there is a shaft at the back of the cave that has, they say, no bottom, but goes down,—down,—down,—hundreds of feet to the sea?" It is useless, as you know only too well, to strive to reason down a presentiment, and so, instead, I sought to make use of her fear in the accomplishment of my dearest wish. "Why need we," I urged, "come here; why longer