

# THE DANBURY REPORTER.

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## THE REPORTER.

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## THE HERONVILLE MURDER.

That was what it was called in the newspapers, the "Heronville Murder," for Heronville was a sleepy, quiet little village, and there was seldom any such excitement in the place as was caused by this event. Being a detective, murder was rather an everyday matter in my life, but there was much that was mysterious and baffling in this affair from the first.

N—being the nearest large town to the scene of the murder, and I being the only member of the secret detective force at N—, it was quite regular for me to be sent down to see what I could make of the case, more especially as my mother owned a cottage at Heronville, where I was in the habit of visiting; so my appearance would excite no comment.

To be sure, there was a man in the county jail charged with the murder, with everything against him but popular sympathy, and let me tell you that is a pretty big exception in a man's favor.

He was a peddler, and his name was John Watson. The first time he appeared in Heronville with a well-assorted pack of notions, was in July, and I declare solemnly before the day was over half the women in the place were in love with him.

He was a tall, straight, well-made young fellow, handsome as a picture, with merry brown eyes, a clear, joyous voice, and the ringing laugh of a light-hearted schoolboy. He had a jest for everybody, was "hail fellow well met" with the men, saucily familiar with the girls, and respectfully deferential to the aged. It was and is my belief that when John Watson could not sell a pack of goods, no man living could sell them.

Why, even my old mother bought me a dozen handkerchiefs with borders of skull and cross-bones, because the fellow told her that they were the very latest New York fashion for young swells.

He stayed a week in July, came back twice in August, again in September, and again in October, when he was committed to jail for the murder of old Josiah Wylie.

He had laughingly declared that on his travels West, he could get no further than Heronville, as he invariably emptied his pack there, and was obliged to return to New York for fresh supplies.

But it was pretty well understood in the village that the black eyes and rosy cheeks of Fanny Coles, the belle of all the country parties, had more to do with his frequent visits than his customers.

So I went to Heronville in an everyday dress, with no trace of my uniform about me, to make a visit to my old mother. Greatly to my satisfaction I found Fanny Coles was her guest, a heart-broken girl, sobbing alternately for her murdered uncle and her suspected lover, but refusing utterly to believe that John's hand was ever raised to strike down a gray-haired, feeble old man, however much he was angered against him.

In a quiet way, as a visitor to the place, interested in the latest piece of news, I obtained all the information mother and Fanny could give me, and my conclusion was that things looked very black for John Watson, very black indeed.

There was the quarrel, and the fact of John's rushing out of the house apparently directly after the murder.— There was the fact that murder alone was the crime, as not one article in the house, or upon the old man's person was disturbed, even his watch and purse were untouched, so robbery was not the temptation. Above all, there was the motive, glaring as daylight—the removal of the only obstacle in the way of John's love for Fanny, before her uncle could carry out his threat of disinheriting her. Very black for John Watson.

I went over to the jail, still with no hint of my true errand, and had a long talk with the prisoner, coming away firmly convinced of his innocence, but almost as firmly convinced of the impossibility of clearing him. Like many bright, buoyant natures he was utterly cast down by his misfortune, and gloomily dependent.

Still, as a curious visitor, I persuaded Fanny to go with me to the house, to point out to me the scene of the murder. She shrank from the task, but allowed herself to be persuaded by a cautious hint that we might discover some clue to lead to the detection of the real murderer. There had been the usual police

## And John Watson, seeing the girl's pitying tenderness for the lad, found room in his pack for gaudily-colored prints, or rolls of city candy to give to

Everybody at Heronville knew exactly the state of affairs at Josiah Wylie's, John's persistent wooing, Fanny's constancy, and the old man's opposition. But in October, when the last of the visits I have mentioned had just begun, when John had openly declared his intention of marrying Fanny before he left Heronville again, there came the awful murder that appalled the quiet village. The facts put into my hands, upon which to work, were these, in the chief's own language:

"John Watson went over to see Fanny Coles on Wednesday evening; Fanny was out, but old Mrs. Potter was in the kitchen. She says that Josiah Wylie ordered John Watson out of the house, and threatened to turn Fanny out, too, if ever she spoke to him again. John accused him of wanting to keep Fanny unmarried to be his slave. They quarreled loudly, and the old woman got frightened, and ran over to Smith's to get some of the men to separate Josiah Wylie and John. Coming back, she met John, hurrying up the road, evidently in a fearful rage, and in the house she found Josiah lying dead upon the floor, his head split open with an axe, that lay beside him. John Watson was arrested as a matter of course, and I was the man who did that piece of duty. Now, Hoyt," and here the chief emphasized each word by tapping his right forefinger upon the open palm of his left hand, "I put my hand on John Watson's shoulder myself, and if there ever was an innocent man's face turned to a police officer, that face was John Watson's.— Many a one I've clapped my hand on, but never one that started with a cherry 'halloo!' and a boy's laugh to ask what I wanted. Just that first touch will betray a man if he is guilty, even if his nerves are of iron, but there was not a shadow upon John Watson's face, or a quiver in his voice. You might have thought he was guilty two minutes later, when I told him what I did want. He turned as white as death, and shook as if he had the palsy, but it was the shock of surprise and horror, not of guilt.— Now, Hoyt, your business is to find out, John Watson being innocent, who did murder Josiah Wylie. I needn't tell you that we must hold the peddler till you find us a man to put in his place."

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investigation, the coroner's inquest, but the result had only been to fix the suspicion of guilt more firmly upon John Watson.

Fanny was very silent as we walked across the long path through the meadows, leading to her home. She looked like a ghost of her pretty bright self, with her white cheeks and lips, and her heavy black dress and veil.

The house had been closed since the funeral, and had a still-like chill about it as we opened the doors and unbarred the heavy shutters. Upon the cheap carpet in the sitting-room was still visible, though scoured, the ghastly stain where the head of the murdered man had rested. The axe stood in one corner of the room, blood-clotted, a heavy weapon.

"Where did you keep this?" I asked. "Behind the woodpile in the cellar," said Fanny, shivering with cold and horror.

"And who used it?" "Uncle Josiah himself. We never could persuade Barton to go into the cellar. He was terribly afraid of the dark, and would have a kind of fit if left alone after nightfall. Poor Bart! I ought to go over there. I suppose he and his mother must miss the food and wages, poor as they were."

"Will you show me where the axe was kept?" I asked. "Yes. We will need a candle."

We found the candle, lighted it, and went to the cellar. While I was peering into the woodpile, the candle being upon the cellar stairs, Fanny touched my arm with a trembling hand.

"Mr. Hoyt," she said, in a whisper, "what can they do to a half-witted man if he commits a crime?"

"Put him in a lunatic asylum." "The day before the murder," she said, still in a whisper, her lips pallid and shaking, "we had a heavy rain."

"Yes," I said. "And there is no house upon the yellow clay lot but the one where old Mrs. Potter and Bart live."

"Well?" "My heart was beating with unprofessional rapidity. Look!—Bart is lame; limps!"

She lowered the candle as she spoke. Distinctly traced upon the black, hard earth of the cellar floor, in bright yellow clay, was a footprint, then the print of half a foot—the limping pressure of a lame man to the woodpile and back again.

"Bart was here," Fanny said. "Bart! He is afraid of the dark. He never came here. Mr. Hoyt, he came for the axe."

"Have you seen him since?" I asked. "Not once. In my selfish grief I forgot him. We—we will go over—You are sure they do not hang idiots?"

"Quite sure," I answered, striving to keep up my character of mere curiosity seeker. "Suppose we do go over?"

We found Bart alone, sitting upon the doorstep of the wretched hut he called home, his hands idly folded. He started to his feet when he saw Fanny, and ran to meet her.

"I'm so glad! I'm so glad!" he kept saying, and the poor girl showed in her quivering lips and tearful eyes the struggle it cost her to try to fasten a crime upon the poor idiot. But controlling herself she said, steadily:

"And you struck the poor old man?" "Just one crack!"

At this moment Mrs. Potter crossed the path of ground around the hut. She understood in a moment that the boy had betrayed his guilt, and burst into loud lamentations. But my duty was plain, and before night Barton Potter was in the Heronville jail.

At the trial Mrs. Potter confessed that she had suspected her son after the inquest, and won a full story of the murder from him, but swore most positively that up to that time she had believed John Watson to be the guilty man.

It had removed a haunting horror from the old woman's mind to know that her son would not be hanged, but placed under proper restraint in an asylum, where she could visit him, and where he would really be more comfortable and better fed than he had ever been.

John Watson was the hero of Heronville for many a long day. The money that Fanny inherited from her uncle she put into her husband's hands to start a store in the village, and he gave up peddling to settle down in the old homestead, made so cheerful and home-like by Fanny's bright devices, that the village people have quite forgotten to associate gloomy thoughts with the spot where the Heronville murder occurred.

A Reminiscence of Washington. A needy sailor with a wheelbarrow of shells accosted the General on the street, and, holding up a number of conch-shells, implored him to buy them.

Washington listened with sympathy to the story of his sufferings and want, and kindly replied that he would buy them if he could in any way make use of them. Necessity perhaps sharpened the sailor's wits, and he promptly suggested that they would make lovely buttons for his velvet coat. The General doubtless smiled at the ingenious proposal, but agreed to try them. Carrying home his ocean treasure of pink shells, he sent for a button maker to know if he could manufacture a useful article out of the playthings with which he found himself encumbered.

The workman replied that he could make the buttons if he could find an instrument sharp enough to pierce them. Washington would have nothing useless about him, and so the shells were delivered to the manufacturer, who in due time returned them to him in the shape of conch buttons, a little larger than a quarter of a dollar, with a silver drop in the center, hiding the spot where the eye is fastened beneath. The President then astonished the Republican court by appearing in a coat with pink conch-shell buttons sparkling on its dark velvet surface. Eighty years ago, it seems, fashion ruled in the hearts, or rather over the costumes, of men and women, just as it does now; for Captain Lewis bears testimony that conch-shell buttons immediately became the rage. The shell vendors and button-makers' fortunes were made by the General's passion for utilizing everything that came into his possession.—Scribner's Monthly.

It was the celebrated Dr. Abernathy who said that "one-half of the diseases in the world were caused by fretting, the other half by fretting." Doubtless the eccentric doctor was somewhat too sweeping in his classification. Still the truth is that we see a great deal of fretting done constantly, and that it is as hurtful as it is useless.

Fretting is first a habit, then a disease; and unfortunately, the chief sufferers from this disease are not the people who do the fretting but the people who have to listen to them. One persistently fretful man or woman can make so many victims miserable that the contemplation becomes appalling.

Therefore, we say: Don't fret, dear sisters, don't fret, even though your careless servant has cracked your best china dish, or scratched your new silver, or let the furnace fire go out—even though the dressmaker has disappointed you, or Johnnie's new suit doesn't fit, or your parlor ceiling has been spoiled by a leak in the pipe; let none of these evils and vexations touch you so nearly as to make you fret, and you will soon find that no one else will fret in your presence.

A final report.—The crack of doom.

## Spontaneous Combustion.

In Keruan's saloon, back of the City Hall today, a man was burned to death by spontaneous combustion. He had not been more than a month in the city, but in that time had been frequently arrested for drunkenness. He wandered about alone, seemingly demented, occupying his whole time in drinking the vile poison of the city front and Barbary Coast dens. He had twice been treated by Dr. Stivers for delirium tremens, and was this morning discharged after a longer time than usual. He continued drinking steadily at the various bars in the vicinity, and the large size of each potation promised to speedily send him back to the hospital.

At length he staggered up to a bar nearly insensible, and feebly asked for a drink. This was refused him, and he staggered toward the gas jet to light a stump of a cigar, while the barkeeper turned away. A moment afterward he heard a low moan and noticed a flash of fire, and turning round saw Hartley falling to the floor, his head enveloped in black, thick smoke, while flames issued from his mouth and ears. Not a moment was lost in attending to the sufferer. He was beyond relief, however.—His face was perfectly black, partly charred and partly covered with a moist soot. His eyes were open. His mouth was completely roasted on the inside, but with the exception of his head and hands no part of his body bore marks of his horrible death. A letter found in his pocket addressed to M. Harly or Hartley, furnishes the only clue to his identity.—San Francisco Post.

Practicing what He Preaches. The New York Evening Post (Republican) says: "The trouble with President Hayes appears to be that he has never learned the important art of saying one thing and meaning another. He is an old-fashioned man with an old-fashioned prejudice in favor of truth.—He actually thinks that a solemn promise made by his party in convention, and by himself in his letter of acceptance, is a thing to be kept. He does not understand these things, and in his simplicity and ignorance he is ruining the business of some very large speculators in political wares, merely for the sake of doing what he and his party promised to do. It is terrible of course, but it comes of taking for a leader an unknown man, untrained in the business of party management, a man who even went so far as to declare that he did not need to be elected once and would not be elected twice."

About Babies. Different countries have different methods of dealing with their young. The Greenland baby is dressed in furs and carried in a sort of pocket in the back of its mother's cloak. When she is very busy and does not want to be bothered with it, she digs a hole in the snow and covers it all up but its face, and leaves it there until she is ready to take care of it again. The Hindoo baby hangs in a basket from the roof, and is taught to smoke long before he learns to walk. Among the Western Indians the poor little tots are tied fast to a board and have their heads flattened by means of another board fastened down over their foreheads. In Lima the little fellow lies all day in a hammock swung from a tree top, like the baby in the nursery song. In Persia he is dressed in the most costly silks and jewels, and his head is never uncovered day or night; while in Yucatan a pair of sandals and a straw hat are thought to be all the clothing he needs.

Money. Wealth is potent in its own sphere, but impotent beyond it. It can span a telegraph under the sea and cover the land with a network of wires as with a spider's web. It can build railroads and bridge oceans. It can have houses and lands and every material advantage; but here its power stops.

It cannot purchase goodness or justice, or gentleness, patience, or love, or true friendship. It cannot do anything to make character stronger or life sweeter. It can say to the minister, I will feed you and clothe you while you are making men wiser; but it can do nothing without the brain of wisdom or the heart of goodness. It can build railroads, but it cannot build men.—Christian Union.