

THE MYSTERY —OF— A HANSOM CAB.

BY FERGUS W. HUME.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT THE "ARGUS" SAID.

THE following report appeared in the Argus news paper of Saturday, the 28th of July, 18—:

"Truth is said to be stranger than fiction, and certainly the extraordinary murder which took place in Melbourne on Thursday night, or rather Friday morning goes a long way toward verifying this saying. A crime has been committed by an unknown assassin, within a short distance of the principle streets of this great city, and is surrounded by an impenetrable mystery. Indeed, from the nature of the crime itself, the place where it was committed, and the fact that the assassin has escaped without leaving a trace behind him, it would seem as though the case itself had been taken bodily out of one of Gaboriau's novels, and that his famous detective Lecoq only would be able to unravel it. The facts of the case are simply these:

"On the 27th day of July, at the hour of twenty minutes to 2 o'clock in the morning, a hansom cab drove up to the police station, in Grey street, St. Kilda, and the driver made the startling statement that his cab contained the body of a man whom he had reason to believe had been murdered.

"Being taken into the presence of the inspector, the cabman, who gave his name as Malcolm Royston, related the following strange story:

"At the hour of 1 o'clock in the morning, he was driving down Collins street East, and while monument he was hailed by a gentleman standing at the corner by the Scotch church. He immediately drove up and saw that the gentleman who hailed him was supporting the deceased, who appeared to be very intoxicated. Both were in evening dress, but the deceased had no overcoat on, while the other wore a short covert coat of a light lawn color, which was open. As Royston drove up, the gentleman in the light coat said, 'Look here, cabby, here's some fellow awfully tight, you'd better take him home!'

"Royston then asked him if the drunken man was his friend, but this the other denied, saying that he had just picked him up from the foot path, and did not know him from Adam. At this moment the deceased turned his face up to the light of the lamp under which both were standing, and the other seemed to recognize him, for he recoiled a pace, letting the drunken man fall in a heap on the pavement, and gasping out 'You!' he turned on his heel, and walked rapidly away down Russell street in the direction of Bourke street.

"Royston was staring after him, and wondering at his strange conduct, when he was recalled to himself by the thick voice of the deceased, who had struggled to his feet, and was holding on to the lamp post, swaying to and fro. 'I want to go home,' he said in a thick voice, 'St. Kilda.' He then tried to get into the cab, but was too drunk to do so, and finally sat down again on the pavement. Seeing this, Royston got down, and lifting him up, helped him into the cab with some considerable difficulty. The deceased fell back into the cab, and seemed to drop off to sleep; so, after closing the door, Royston refused to remount his driving seat, when he found the gentleman in the light coat whom he had

seen holding up the deceased, close to his elbow. Royston said, 'Oh, you've come back,' and the other answered, 'Yes, I've changed my mind, and will see him home.' As he said this he opened the door of the cab, stepped in beside the deceased, and told Royston to drive down to St. Kilda. Royston, who was glad that the friend of the deceased had come to look after him, drove as he had been directed, but near the Church of England Grammar school, on the St. Kilda road, the gentleman in the light coat called out to him to stop. He did so, and the gentleman got out of the cab, closing the door after him.

"He won't let me take him home," he said, "so I'll just walk back to the city, and you can drive him to St. Kilda."

"What street, sir?" asked Royston.

"Grey street, I fancy," said the other, "but my friend will direct you when you get to the Junction."

"Ain't he too much on, sir?" said Royston, dubious.

"Oh, no; I think he'll be able to tell you where he lives. It's Grey street or Ackland street, I fancy. I don't know which."

"He then opened the door of the cab and looked in. 'Good night, old man,' he said. The other apparently did not answer, for the gentleman in the light coat, shrugging his shoulders and muttering 'sulky brute,' closed the door again. He then gave Royston half a sovereign, lit a cigarette, and after making a few remarks about the beauty of the night walked off quickly in the direction of Melbourne. Royston drove down to the Junction, and having stopped there, according to his instructions, he asked his fare several times where he was to drive him to. Receiving no answer, and thinking that the deceased was too drunk to answer, he got down from his seat, and opened the door of the cab, and found the deceased lying back in the corner

with a handkerchief with the intention of rousing him, thinking that he had gone to sleep, when on touching him the deceased fell forward, and on examination, to his horror, he found that he was quite dead. Alarmed at what had taken place, and suspecting the gentleman in the light coat, he drove to the police station at St. Kilda, and there made the above report. The body of the deceased was taken out of the cab and brought into the station, a doctor being sent for at once. On his arrival, however, he found that life was quite extinct, and also discovered that the handkerchief which was tied lightly over the mouth was saturated with chloroform. He had no hesitation in stating that from the way in which the handkerchief was placed, and the presence of chloroform, a murder had been committed, and from all appearances the deceased died easily and without a struggle. The deceased is a slender man, of medium height, with a dark complexion, and is dressed in evening dress, which will render identification difficult, as it is a costume which not any distinctive mark to render it noticeable. There were no papers nor cards found on the deceased from which his name could be discovered, and the clothing was not marked in any way. The handkerchief, however, which was tied across his mouth, was of white silk, and marked in one of the corners with the letters 'O. W.' in red silk. The assassin, of course, may have used his own handkerchief to commit the crime, so that if the initials are those of his own name they may ultimately lead to his detection. There will be an inquest held on the body of the deceased this morning, when, no doubt, some evidence may be elicited which may solve the mystery."

In Monday morning's issue of The Argus the following article appeared with reference to the matter:

The following additional evidence

has been obtained which may throw some light on the mysterious murder in a hansom cab, of which we gave a full description in Saturday's issue: 'Another hansom cabman called at the police office and gave a clew which will, no doubt, prove of value to the detectives in their search after the murderer. He states that he was driving up the St. Kilda road on Friday morning about half-past 1 o'clock, when he was hailed by a gentleman in a light coat, who stepped into the cab and told him to drive to Powlett street, in East Melbourne. He did so, and, after paying him, the gentleman got out at corner of Wellington parade and Powlett street and walked slowly up Powlett street, while the cab drove back to town. Here all clew ends, but there can be no doubt in the minds of our readers as to the identity of the man in the light coat who got out of Royston's cab on the St. Kilda road, with the one who entered the other cab and alighted therefrom at Powlett street. There could have been no struggle, as the cabman Royston would surely have heard the noise had any taken place. The supposition is, therefore, that the deceased was too drunk to make any resistance, and the other, watching his opportunity, placed the handkerchief saturated with chloroform over the mouth of his victim, and after a few ineffectual struggles the latter would relapse into a state of stupor from such inhalation. The man in the light coat, judging from his conduct before getting into the cab, appears to have known the deceased, though from the circumstances of his walking away on recognition, and returning again, shows that his attitude toward the deceased was not altogether a friendly one.

"Here is a chance for some of our detectives to render themselves famous, and we feel sure that they will do their utmost to trace the author of this cowardly and daring murder."

CHAPTER II.

THE EVIDENCE AT THE INQUEST.

At the inquest held on the body found in the hansom cab the following articles taken from the deceased were placed on the table:

1. Two pounds ten shillings in gold and silver.

2. The white silk handkerchief which was saturated with chloroform and was found tied across the mouth of the deceased, marked with the letters O. W. in red silk.

3. A cigarette case of Russian leather, half filled with cigarettes.

4. A left hand white glove of kid—rather soiled—with black seams down the back.

Samuel Gorby, of the detective office, was present in order to see if anything might be said by the witnesses likely to point to the cause or to the author of the crime.

The first witness called was Malcolm Royston, in whose cab the crime had been committed. He told the same story as had already appeared in The Argus, and the following facts were elicited by the coroner:

Q. Can you give a description of the gentleman in the light coat who was holding the deceased when you drove up?

A. I did not observe him very closely, as my attention was taken up by the deceased; and, besides, the gentleman in the light coat was in the shadow.

Q. Describe him from what you saw of him.

A. He was fair, I think, because I could see his moustache, rather tall, and in evening dress, with a light coat over it. I could not see his face very plainly, as he wore a soft felt hat, which was pulled down over his eyes.

Q. What kind of a hat was it he wore—a wide awake?

A. Yes. The brim was turned down, and I could only see his mouth and moustache.

Q. What did he say when you asked him if he knew the deceased?

A. He said he didn't; that he had just picked him up.

Q. And afterwards he seemed to recognize him?

A. Yes. When the deceased looked up he said "You!" and let him fall on to the ground; then he walked away toward Bourke street.

Q. Did he look back?

A. Not that I saw.

Q. How long were you looking after him?

A. About a minute.

Q. And when did you see him again?

A. After I had put deceased into the cab I turned around and found him at my elbow.

Q. And what did he say?

A. I said, "Oh! you've come back," and he said, "Yes, I've changed my mind, and will see him home," and then he got into the cab told me to drive to St. Kilda.

Q. He spoke then as if he knew the deceased?

A. Yes; I thought that he only recognized him when he looked up, and perhaps, having had a row with him, walked away, but thought he'd come back.

Q. Did you see him coming back?

A. No; the first I saw of him was at my elbow when I turned.

Q. And when did he get out?

A. Just as I was turning down by the grammar school, on the St. Kilda road.

Q. Did you hear any sounds of fighting or struggling in the cab during the drive?

A. No; the road was rather rough, and the noise of the wheels going over the stones would have prevented me hearing anything.

Q. When the gentleman in the light coat got out did he appear disturbed?

A. No; he was perfectly calm.

Q. How could you tell that?

A. Because the moon had risen and I could see plainly.

Q. Did you see his face then?

A. No; his hat was pulled down over it. I only saw as much as I did when he entered the cab in Collins street.

Q. Were his clothes torn or disarranged in any way?

A. No; the only difference I saw in him was that his coat was buttoned.

Q. And was it open when he got in?

A. No; but it was when he was holding up the deceased.

Q. Then he buttoned it before he came back and got into the cab?

A. Yes, I suppose so.

Q. What did he say when he got out of the cab on the St. Kilda road?

A. He said that the deceased would not let him take him home, and that he would walk back to Melbourne.

Q. And you asked him where to drive the deceased to?

A. Yes; he said that the deceased lived either in Grey street or Ackland street, St. Kilda, but that the deceased would direct me at the Junction.

Q. Did you not think that the deceased was too drunk to direct you?

A. Yes, I did; but his friend said that the sleep and the shaking of the cab would sober him a bit by the time I got to the Junction.

Q. The gentleman in the light coat apparently did not know where the deceased lived?

A. No; he said it was either in Ackland street or Grey street.

Q. Did you not think that curious?

A. No; I thought he might be a club friend of the deceased.

Q. How long did the man in the light coat talk to you?

A. About five minutes.

Q. And during that time you heard no noise in the cab?

A. No; I thought the deceased had gone to sleep.

Q. And after the man in the light coat said good night to the deceased what happened?

A. He lit a cigarette, gave me a half sovereign, and walked off towards Melbourne.

Q. Did you observe if the gentleman in the light coat had his handkerchief with him?

A. Oh, yes; because he dusted his boots with it. The road was very dusty.

Q. Did you notice any striking peculiarity about him?

A. Well, no, except that he wore a diamond ring.

Q. What was there peculiar about that?

A. He wore it on the forefinger of the right hand, and I never saw it that way before.

Q. When did you notice this?

A. When he was lighting his cigarette.

Q. How often did you call to the deceased when you got to the Junction?

A. Three or four times. I then got down, and found he was quite dead.

Q. How was he lying?

A. He was doubled up in the far corner of the cab, very much in the same position as I left him when I put him in. His head was banging on one side, and there was a handkerchief across his mouth. When I touched him he fell into the farther corner of the cab, and then I found out he was dead. I immediately drove to the St. Kilda police station and told the police.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

A Sound Legal Opinion.

E. Bainbridge Munday Esq., County Atty., Clay Co., Texas says: "Have used Electric Bitters with most happy results. My brother also was very low with Malarial Fever and jaundice, but was cured by timely use of this medicine. Am satisfied Electric Bitters saved his life."

Mr. D. I. Wilcoxson, of Horse Cave, Ky. adds like a testimony, saying: "He positively believes he would have died, had it not been for Electric Bitters."

This great remedy will ward off as well as cure all Malaria Diseases, and for all Kidney, Liver and Stomach Disorders stands unequalled. Price 50c. and \$1. at Royster's Drug Store.

There were only two happy men in Asheville on the announcement that Harrison was nominated; Hop Wo, and Wop He, the Chinese laundrymen. Mr. Harrison is in favor of allowing Chinese laborers to come in and compete with our laborers. Mr. Cleveland says these cheap laborers who will live on a handful of rice and a few rats should not compete with our white or black people. Who will our laboring people support?—Citizen.

Thought It Would Kill Him.

COFFEYVILLE, MISS. Feb. 20, 1888. Gentlemen: I suffered with exema for nearly two years, and was treated by three physicians, but they could do me no good. I spoke of trying S. S. S. and they told me it would kill me, but I tried it any way, and after taking six or eight bottles, I was completely cured, and have never been bothered since with it, and I feel it a duty to you and suffering humanity to make this statement.

H. S. DAVIS.

MONTEFORT HOUSE, WILLS POINT, TEX. April 5, 1888.

Gentlemen: Our baby when but two weeks old was attacked with a scrofulous affection that for a time destroyed her eyesight entirely, and caused us to despair of her life. She was treated by the best physicians without benefit, we finally gave her Swift's Specific, which soon relieved her completely and she is now as hale and hearty a child of three as can be found anywhere. E. V. DAVIS.

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