

THE MYSTERY

—OF—

A HANSOM CAB.

BY FERGUS W. HUME.

CHAPTER II.—CONTINUED.

At the conclusion of Royston's evidence, during which Gorby had been continually taking notes, Robert Chinston was called. He deposed:

I am a duly qualified medical practitioner, residing in Collins street East. I made a post mortem examination of the body of the deceased on Friday.

Q. That was within a few hours after his death?

A. Yes; seeing from the position of the handkerchief and the presence of chloroform that he had died through chloroform, and knowing how quickly that poison evaporates, I made the examination at once.

Coroner: Go on, sir.

Dr. Chinston: Externally, the body was healthy looking and well nourished. There were no marks of violence. The staining apparent at the back of the legs and trunk was due to post mortem congestion. Internally, the brain was hyperemic, and there was a considerable amount of congestion, especially apparent in the superficial vessels. There was no brain disease. The lungs were healthy, but slightly congested. On opening the thorax there was a faint spirituous odor discernible. The stomach contained about a pint of completely digested food. The heart was flaccid. The right heart contained a considerable quantity of dark, fluid blood. There was a tendency to fatty degeneration of that organ. I am of the opinion that the deceased died from the inhalation of some such vapor as chloroform or methylene.

Q. You say there was a tendency to fatty degeneration of the heart. Would that have anything to do with the death of deceased?

A. Not of itself. But chloroform administered while the heart was in such a state would have a tendency to accelerate the fatal result. At the same time, I may mention that the post mortem signs of poisoning by chloroform are mostly negative.

Dr. Chinston was then permitted to retire, and Clement Rankin, another hansom cabman, was called. He deposed: I am a cabman, living in Collingwood, and usually drive a hansom cab. I remember Thursday last, I had driven a party down to St. Kilda, and was returning about half-past 1 o'clock. A short distance past the grammar school I was hailed by a gentleman in a light coat; he was smoking a cigarette, and told me to drive him to Powlett street, East Melbourne. I did so, and he got out at the corner of Wellington parade and Powlett street. He paid me half a sovereign for my fare, and then walked up Powlett street, while I drove back to town.

Q. What time was it when you stopped at Powlett street?

A. Two o'clock, exactly.

Q. How do you know?

A. Because it was a still night, and I heard the postoffice clock strike 2 o'clock.

Q. Did you notice any thing peculiar about the man in the light coat?

A. No; he looked just the same as any one else. I thought he was some swell of the town out for a lark. His hat was pulled down over his eyes and I could not see his face.

Q. Did you notice if he wore a ring?

A. Yes, I did. When he was handing me the half sovereign I saw he had a diamond ring on the forefinger of his right hand.

Q. He did not say why he was on the St. Kilda road at such an hour?

A. No, he did not.

Clement Rankin was then ordered to stand down, and the coroner then summed up an address of half an hour's duration. There was, he pointed out, no doubt that the death of the deceased had resulted not from natural cause, but from the effects of poisoning. Only slight evidence had been obtained up to the present time regarding the circumstances of the case, but the only person who could be accused of committing the crime was the unknown man who entered the cab with the deceased on Friday morning at the corner of the Scotch church, near the Burke and Wills monument. It had been proved that the deceased, when he entered the cab, was, to all appearances, in good health, though in a state of intoxication, and the fact that he was found by the cabman Royston, after the man in the light coat had left the cab, with a handkerchief saturated with chloroform tied over his mouth, would seem to show that he had died through the inhalation of chloroform, which had been deliberately administered. All the obtainable evidence in the case was circumstantial, but, nevertheless, showed conclusively that a crime had been committed. Therefore, as the circumstances of the case pointed to one conclusion, the jury could not do otherwise than frame a verdict in accordance with that conclusion.

The jury retired at 4 o'clock, and, after an absence of a quarter of an hour, returned with the following verdict: "That the deceased, whose name there was no evidence to show, died on the 27th day of July, from the effects of poison, namely, chloroform, feloniously administered by some person unknown; and the jury, on their oaths, say that the said unknown person feloniously, willfully and maliciously did murder the said deceased."

CHAPTER III.

ONE HUNDRED POUNDS REWARD.

V. R.

MURDER.

£100 REWARD.

"Whereas, on Friday, the 27th day of July, the body of a man, name unknown, was found in a hansom cab. And whereas, at an inquest held at St. Kilda, on the 30th day of July, a verdict of wilful murder against some person unknown, was brought in by the jury. The deceased is of medium height, with a dark complexion, dark hair, clean shaved, has a mole on the left temple, and was dressed in evening dress. Notice is hereby given that a reward of £100 will be paid by the government for such information as will lead to the conviction of the murderer, who is presumed to be a man who entered the hansom cab with the deceased at the corner of Collins and Russell streets, on the morning of the 27th day of July."

CHAPTER IV.

MR. GORBY MAKES A START.

"Well," said Mr. Gorby, addressing his reflection in the looking-glass, "I've been finding out things the last twenty years, but this is a puzzler and no mistake."

Mr. Gorby was shaving, and as was his usual custom, conversed with his reflection.

"Hang it," he said, thoughtfully stropping his razor, "a thing with an end must have a start, and if I don't get the start how am I to get the end?"

As the mirror did not answer this question, Mr. Gorby lathered his face and started shaving in a somewhat mechanical fashion, for his thoughts were with the case, and ran on in this manner:

"There are three things to be discovered—First, who is the dead man? Second, what was he killed for? And third, who did it? Once I get

hold of the first the other two won't be very hard to find out, for one can tell pretty well from a man's life whether it's to any one's interest that he should be got off the books. The man that murdered that chap must have had some strong motive, and I must find out what that motive was. Love? No; it wasn't that—men in love don't go to such lengths in real life—they do in novels and plays, but I've never seen it occurring in my experience. Robbery? No, there was plenty of money in his pocket. Revenge? Now, really, it might be that; it's a kind of thing that carries most people on further than they want to go. There was no violence used, for his clothes weren't torn; so he must have been taken sudden and before he knew what the other chap was up to. By the way, I don't think I examined his clothes sufficiently. There might be something about them to give a clue; at any rate, it's worth looking after, so I'll start with his clothes."

So Mr. Gorby, after he had finished dressing and had his breakfast, walked quickly to the police station, where he asked for the clothes of the deceased. When he received them he went into a corner by himself and started to examine them. There was nothing remarkable about the coat, as it was merely a well cut and well made dress coat, so with a grunt of dissatisfaction Mr. Gorby threw it on one side and picked up the waistcoat.

Here he found something that interested him very much, and that was a pocket made on the left side of the waistcoat and on the inside.

"Now, what the deuce is this for?" said Mr. Gorby, scratching his head, "it ain't usual for a dress waistcoat to have a pocket on its inside, as I'm aware of; and," continued the detective, greatly excited, "this ain't tailors' work; he did it himself, and jolly badly he did it too. Now he must have taken the trouble to make this pocket himself, so that no one else would know anything about it, and it was made to carry something valuable—so valuable that he had to carry it with him even when he wore evening clothes. Ah! here's a tear on the side nearest the outside of the waistcoat; something has been pulled out roughly. I begin to see now. The dead man possessed something which the other man wanted, and which he knew the dead one carried about with him. He sees him drunk, gets into the cab with him and tries to get what he wants. The dead man resists, upon which the other kills him by means of the chloroform which he had with him, and being afraid that the cab will stop, and he will be found out, snatches what he wants out of the pocket so quickly that he tears the waistcoat and then makes off. That's clear enough, but the question is: What was it he wanted? A case with jewels? No! It could not have been anything so bulky, or the dead man would never have carried it about inside his waistcoat. It was something flat, which could easily lie in the pocket—a paper—some valuable paper which the assassin wanted, and for which he killed the other."

"This is all very well," said Mr. Gorby, throwing down the waistcoat and rising, "I have found number two before number one. The first question is: Who is the murdered man? He's a stranger in Melbourne, that's pretty clear, or else some one would be sure to have recognized him before now by the description given in the reward. Now, I wonder if he has any relations here? Private lodgings more like, and a landlady who doesn't read the papers and doesn't gossip, or she'd have known all about it by this time. Now, if he did live, as I think, in private lodgings, and suddenly disappeared, his landlady wouldn't keep quiet. It's a whole week since the murder, and as the lodger has not been seen or heard of, the landlady will naturally make inquiries. If

however, as I surmise, the lodger is a stranger, she will not know where to inquire; therefore, under these circumstances, the most natural thing for her to do would be to advertise for him; so I'll have a look at the newspapers."

Mr. Gorby got a file of the different newspapers, and looked carefully in the columns where missing friends and people who will hear something to their advantage are generally advertised for.

"He was murdered," said Mr. Gorby to himself, "on a Friday morning, between 1 and 2 o'clock, so he might stay away till Monday without suspicion. On Monday, however, the landlady would begin to feel uneasy, and on Tuesday she would advertise for him. Therefore," said Mr. Gorby, running his fat finger down the column, "Wednesday it is."

It did not appear in Wednesday's paper, neither did it in Thursday's, but in Friday's issue, exactly one week after the murder, Mr. Gorby suddenly came on the following advertisement:

"If Mr. Oliver Whyte does not return to Possum Villa, Grey street, St. Kilda, before the end of the week, his rooms will be let again.—Rubina Hableton."

"Oliver Whyte," repeated Mr. Gorby, slowly, "and the initials on the pocket handkerchief which were proved to have belonged to the deceased were, 'O. W.' So his name is Oliver Whyte, is it? Now, I wonder if Rubina Hableton knows anything about this matter. At any rate," said Mr. Gorby, putting on his hat, "as I'm fond of sea breezes, I think I'll go down and call at Possum Villa, Grey street, St. Kilda."

CHAPTER V.

MRS. HABLETON UNBOSOMS HERSELF.

Possum Villa was an unpretentious looking place with one bow window and a narrow veranda in front. It was surrounded with a small garden and a few sparse flowers in it which were Mrs. Hableton's delight. When not otherwise engaged she tied an old handkerchief round her head and went out into the garden, where she dug and watered her flowers until they all gave up attempting to grow from sheer desparation at not being left alone. She was engaged in her favorite occupation about a week after her lodger had disappeared when a shadow fell across the garden, and on looking up she saw a man leaning over the fence, looking at her.

He was a burly looking man, with a jovial red face, clean shaved, and sharp, shrewd looking gray eyes which kept twinkling like two stars. He was dressed in a suit of light clothes, and wore a stiffly starched white waistcoat, with a massive gold chain stretched across it. Altogether he gave Mrs. Hableton the impression of being a well to do tradesman, and she mentally wondered what he wanted.

"What d'y want?" she asked abruptly.

"Does Mr. Oliver White live here?" asked the stranger.

"He do, an' he don't," answered Mrs. Hableton, epigrammatically. "I ain't seem 'im for over a week, so I s'pose 'e's gone on the drink, like the rest of 'em, but I've put sumthin' in the paper as 'll pull 'im up pretty sure, and let 'im know I ain't a carpet to be trod on, an' if you're a friend of 'im, you can tell 'im from me 'e's a brute, an' it's no more but what I expected of 'im, 'e bein' a male."

The stranger waited patiently during the outburst, and Mrs. Hableton, having stopped for want of breath, he interposed quietly:

"Can I speak to you for a few moments?"

"And who's a stoppin' of you?" said Mrs. Hableton, defiantly.

"Well, really," said the other, looking up at the cloudless blue sky, and wiping his face with a gaudy red

bandana, "it is rather hot, you know, and—"

Mrs. Hableton did not give him time to finish, but walking to the gate, opened it with a jerk.

"Use your legs and walk in," she said, and, the stranger having done so, she led the way into the house, which seemed to overflow with antimacassars, wool mats and wax flowers. There was also a row of emu eggs on the mantel-piece, a cutlass on the wall, and a grimy line of hard looking little books, set in a stiff row on a shelf, presumably for ornament, as they looked too unpleasant to tempt any one to read them. The furniture was of horse-hair, and everything was hard and shiny, so when the stranger sat down in the slippery looking armchair that Mrs. Hableton pushed toward him, he could not help thinking it had been stuffed with stones, it felt so cold and hard. The lady herself sat opposite to him in another hard chair, and, having taken the handkerchief off her head, folded it carefully, laid it on her lap, and then looked straight at her unexpected visitor.

"Now then," she said, letting her mouth fly open so rapidly that it gave one the impression that it was moved by strings like a marionette, "who are you? what are you? what do you want?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

What Salt Is Good For.

Salt dissolved in alcohol will remove grease spots from cloth.

Salt in the whitewash will make it stick better.

Brass work can be kept beautifully bright by occasionally rubbing with salt and vinegar.

To clean willow furniture, use salt and water. Apply it with a nail-brush, scrub well and dry thoroughly.

When you give your cellar its spring cleaning add a little copperas water and salt to the whitewash.

Sprinkling salt on the tops and at the bottoms of garden walls is said to keep snails from climbing up and down.

For relief from heartburn or dyspepsia drink a little cold water in which has been dissolved a teaspoonful of salt.

Ink stains on linen can be taken out if the stain is first washed in strong salt and water and then sponged with lemon juice.

For stains on the hands nothing is better than a little salt, with enough lemon juice to moisten it, rubbed on the spots and then washed off in clear water.

In a basin of water, salt of course, falls to the bottom; so never soak salt fish with the skin down, as the salt will fall to the skin and remain there.

For weeds in pavements or gravel walks, make a strong brine of coarse salt and boiling water; put the brine in a sprinkling can and water the weeds thoroughly, being careful not to let any of the brine get on the grass, or it will kill it too.

Strong brine may be used to advantage in washing bedsteads. Hot alum water is also good for this purpose.

Wonderful Cures.

W. D. Hoyt & Co., Wholesale and Retail Druggists of Rome, Ga., say: We have been selling Dr. King's New Discovery, Electric Bitters and Bucklen's Arnica Salve for four years. Have never handled remedies that sell as well, or give such universal satisfaction. There have been some wonderful cures effected by these medicines in this city. Several cases of pronounced Consumption have been entirely cured by use of a few bottles of Dr. King's New Discovery, taken in connection with Electric Bitters. We guarantee them always. Sole by O. M. Royster.

Disraeli's maxim: Ignorance never settles a question.