

THE MYSTERY

—OF—

A HANSOM CAB.

BY FERGUS W. HUME.

CHAPTER V.—CONTINUED.

The stranger put his red bandana into his hat, placed it on the table and answered deliberately:

"My name is Gorby. I am a detective. I want Mr. Oliver Whyte."

"E ain't here," said Mrs. Hableton, thinking that Whyte had got into trouble and was going to be arrested.

"I know that," answered Mr. Gorby.

"Then where is he?"

Mr. Gorby answered abruptly and watched the effect of his words:

"He is dead."

Mrs. Hableton got quite pale and pushed back her chair. "No!" she cried. "Where was he killed?"

"He was murdered in a hansom cab on the St. Kilda road."

"In the open street?" she asked, in a startled tone.

"Yes, in the open street."

"Mr. Gorby," she said at length.

"I have had a hard struggle all my life which it came along of a bad husband, who was a brute and a drunkard, so, God knows, I ain't got much inducement to think well of the lot of you, but—murder," she shivered slightly, though the room was quite warm. "I didn't think of that."

"In connection with whom?"

"Mr. Whyte, of course," she answered hurriedly.

"And who else?"

"I don't know."

"Then there is nobody else?"

"Well, I don't know—I'm not sure."

The detective was puzzled.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"I will tell you all I know," said Mrs. Hableton, and if 'e's innocent, God will elp 'im."

"If who is innocent?"

"I'll tell you everything from the start," said Mrs. Hableton, "an' you can judge for yourself."

Mr. Gorby assented, and she began:

"It's only two months ago since I decided to take in lodgers; but chokin's bad work, an' sewin's tryin' for the eyes. So, bein' a lone woman, avin' been badly treated by a brute, who is now dead, which I was allers a good wife to 'im, I thought lodgers 'ud elp me a little, so I put a notice in the paper, an' Mr. Oliver Whyte took the rooms two months ago."

"What was he like?"

"Not very tall, dark face, no whiskers nor mustache, an' quite the gentleman."

"Anything peculiar about him?"

Mrs. Hableton thought for a moment.

"Well," she said at length, "e 'ad a mole on 'is left temple, but it was covered with 'is hair an' few people 'ud 'ave seen it."

"The very man," said Gorby to himself. "I'm on the right path."

"Mr. Whyte said e 'ad just come from England," went on the woman.

"Which," murmured Mr. Gorby, "accounts for the corpse not being recognized by friends."

"He tooks the rooms, said e'd stay with me for six months; an' paid a week's rent in advance, an' e allers paid up reg'lar like a respectable man, tho' I don't believe in 'em myself. He said e 'ad lots of friends, an' used to go out every night."

"Who were his friends?"

"That I can't tell you, for e were very close, an' when e went out of doors I never know'd where e went, which is just like 'em, for they see they're goin' to work, an' you finds 'em in the beer-shop. Mr. Whyte told me e was agoin' to marry a heiress, e was."

"Ah!" interjected Mr. Gorby, sapiently.

"E 'ad only one friend as I ever saw—a Mr. Moreland—who comed 'ere with 'im, and was allers with 'im—brother like."

"What like is this Mr. Moreland?"

"Good lookin' enough," said Mrs. Hableton sourly, "but 'is 'abits weren't as good as 'is face—'andsome is as 'andsome does, is what I ses."

"I wonder if he knows anything about this affair," muttered Gorby to himself. "Where is Mr. Moreland to be found?" he asked aloud.

"Not knowin', can't tell," retorted the landlady; "e used to be 'ere reg'lar, but I ain't seen 'im for over a week."

"Strange! very!" thought Gorby, shaking his head. "I should like to see this Mr. Moreland. I suppose it's probable he'll call again!" he remarked aloud.

"'Abit bein' second nature I s'pose e will," answered the woman; "e might call at any 'ime, mostly 'avin' called at night."

"Ah! then I'll come down this evening on chance of seeing him," replied the detective. "Coincidences happen in real life as well as in novels, and the gentleman in question may turn up in the nick of time. Now, what else about Mr. Whyte?"

"About two weeks ago, or three, I'm not cert'in which, a gentleman called to see Mr. Whyte; e wore a light coat."

"Ah! a morning coat?"

"No, e was in evenin' dress, and wore a light coat over it, an' a soft 'at."

"The very man," said the detective below his breath; "go on."

"E went into Mr. Whyte's room an' shut the door. I don't know how long they were talkin' together, but I was sittin' in this very room an' 'ard their voices git angry, an' they were a swearin' at one another, which is the way of men, the brutes. I got up an' went into the passage in order to ask 'em not to make so much noise, when Mr. Whyte's door opened an' the gentleman in the light coat comes out an' bangs along to the door. Mr. Whyte e comes to the door of 'is room an' e 'ollers out: 'She is mine; you can't do anything; an' the other turns, with 'is 'an' on the door, an' says: 'I can kill you, an' if you marry 'er I'll do it even in the open street.'"

"Ah!" said Mr. Gorby, drawing a long breath, "and then?"

"Then he bangs the door to, which it never shut easy since, an' I ain't got no money to get it put right, an' Mr. Whyte walks back to 'is room laughin'."

"Did he make any remark to you?"

"No, except he'd been worried by a loonatic."

"And what was the stranger's name?"

"That I can't tell you, as Mr. Whyte never told me. He was very tall, with a fair mustache, an' dressed as I told you."

Mr. Gorby was satisfied.

"That is the man," he said to himself, "who got into the cab and murdered Whyte; there's no doubt of it. Whyte and he were rivals for the heiress."

"What d'ye think of it?" said Mrs. Hableton, curiously.

"I think," said Mr. Gorby slowly, with his eyes fixed on her, "I think that there is a woman at the bottom of this crime."

CHAPTER VI.

MR. GORBY MAKES FURTHER DISCOVERIES.

When Mr. Gorby left Possum Villa no doubt remained in his mind as to who had committed the murder. The gentleman in the light coat had threatened to murder Whyte, even in the open street—these last words being especially significant—and there was no doubt but that he had carried out his threat. What the detective had now to do was to find who the gentleman in the light coat was, where he lived and, having found out these facts, to ascertain

his doings on the night of the murder. Mrs. Hableton had described him, but was ignorant of his name, and her very vague description might apply to dozens of young men in Melbourne. There was only one person who, in Mr. Gorby's opinion, could tell the name of the gentleman in the light coat, and that was Moreland, the intimate friend of the dead man. What puzzled the detective was that Moreland should be ignorant of his friend's tragic death, seeing that the papers were full of the murder, and that the reward gave an excellent description of the personal appearance of the deceased. The only way in which Gorby could account for Moreland's extraordinary silence was that he was out of town, and had neither seen the papers nor heard any one talking about the murder. If this was the case, he might either stay away for an indefinite time or might come back after a few days. At all events it was worth while going down to St. Kilda in the evening on the chance that Moreland might call and see his friend. So after his t a, Mr. Gorby put on his hat and went down to Possum Villa on what he could not help acknowledging to himself was a very slender possibility.

Mrs. Hableton opened the door for him, and in silence led the way into her own sitting room.

They were barely seated when a knock came at the front door, loud and decisive, on hearing which Mrs. Hableton sprang hastily to her feet. "That may be Mr. Moreland," she said. "I never 'ave visitors in the evenin', bein' a lone widdler, an' if it is 'im I'll bring 'im in 'ere.'"

She went out, and presently Gorby, who was listening intently, heard a man's voice ask if Mr. Whyte was at home. "No, s'r, he ain't," answered the landlady, "but there's a gentleman in 'is room askin' after 'im. Won't you come in, s'r?"

"For a rest, yes," returned the visitor, and immediately afterwards Mrs. Hableton appeared, ushering in the late Oliver Whyte's most intimate friend. He was a tall slender man, with a pink and white complexion, curly fair hair, and a drooping straw-colored mustache—together a strikingly aristocratic individual. He was well dressed in a fashionable suit of check, and had a cool nonchalant air about him.

"And where is Mr. Whyte tonight?" he asked, sinking into a chair, and taking no more notice of the detective than if he had been an article of furniture.

"Haven't you seen him lately?" asked the detective quickly. Mr. Moreland stared in an insolent manner at his questioner for a few moments, as if he were debating the advisability of answering or not. At last he apparently decided that he would, for slowly pulling off one glove he leaned back in his chair.

"No, I have not," he said, with a yawn. "I have been up the country for a few days, and only arrived back this evening, so I have not seen him for over a week. Why do you ask?"

The detective did not answer, but stood looking at the young man before him in a thoughtful manner.

"I hope," said Moreland, nonchalantly, "I hope you will know me again, my friend; but I didn't know Whyte had started a lunatic asylum during my absence. 'Who are you?'"

Mr. Gorby came forward and stood under the gaslight. "My name is Gorby, s'r, and I am a detective," he said quietly.

"Ah! indeed," said Moreland coolly, looking him up and down. "What has Whyte been doing, running away with some one's wife, eh? I know he has little weaknesses of that sort."

Gorby shook his head.

"Do you know where Mr. Whyte is to be found?" he asked cautiously.

Moreland laughed. "Not I, my friend," said he lightly. "I presume he is some where about here, as these are his headquarters.

What's he been doing? Nothing that can surprise me, I assure you—he always was an erratic individual, and —"

"He paid reg'lar," interrupted Mrs. Hableton, pursing up her lips.

"A most enviable reputation to possess," answered the other with a sneer, "and one I'm afraid I'll never enjoy. But why all this questioning about Whyte? What's the matter with him?"

"He's dead!" said Gorby, abruptly.

All Moreland's nonchalance vanished on hearing this, and he started up out of his chair.

"Dead," he repeated mechanically. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that Mr. Oliver Whyte was murdered in a hansom cab."

Moreland stared at the detective in a puzzled sort of way, and passed his hand across his forehead.

"Excuse me, my head is in a whirl," he said, as he sat down again.

"Whyte murdered! He was all right when I left him nearly two weeks ago."

"Haven't you seen the papers?" asked Gorby.

"Not for the last two weeks," replied Moreland. "I have been up country, and it was only on arriving back in town to-night that I heard about the murder at all, as my landlady gave me a gabbled account of it, but I never for a moment connected it with Whyte, and came down here to see him, as I had agreed to do when I left. Poor fellow! poor fellow! poor fellow!" and much overcome, he buried his face in his hands.

Mr. Gorby was touched by his evident distress, and even Mrs. Hableton permitted a small tear to roll down one hard cheek as a tribute of sorrow and sympathy. Presently Moreland raised his head, and spoke to Gorby in a husky tone.

"Tell me all about it," he said, leaning his cheek on his hand.

"Everything you know."

He placed his elbows on the table, and buried his face in his hands again, while the detective sat down and related all that he knew about Whyte's murder. When it was done he lifted up his head, and looked sadly at the detective.

"If I had been in town," he said, "this would not have happened, for I was always beside Whyte."

"You knew him very well, s'r?" said the detective, in a sympathetic tone.

"We were like brothers," replied Moreland, mournfully. "I came out from England in the same steamer with him, and used to visit him constantly here."

Mrs. Hableton nodded her head to imply that such was the case.

"In fact," said Mr. Moreland, after a moment's thought, "I believe I was with him the night he was murdered."

Mrs. Hableton gave a slight scream, and threw her apron over her face, but the detective sat unmoved, though Moreland's last remark had considerably startled him.

"What's the matter?" said Moreland, turning to Mrs. Hableton. "Don't be afraid; I didn't kill him; no, but I met him last Thursday week, and I left for the country on Friday morning at half-past 6."

"And what time did you meet Whyte on Thursday night?" asked Gorby.

"Let me see," said Moreland, crossing his legs and looking thoughtfully up to the ceiling. "It was about half-past 9 o'clock. I was in the Orient Hotel, on Bourke street. We had a drink together and then went to the street to a hotel in Russell street, where we had another. In fact," said Moreland, coolly, "we had several other drinks."

"Yes," said Gorby, placidly. "Go on."

"Well of—it's hardly the thing to confess it," said Moreland, looking from one to the other with a pleasant smile, "but in a case like this, I feel it my duty to throw all social scruples aside. We both got very drunk."

"Ah! Whyte was, as we know, drunk when he got into the cab—and you—?"

"Was not quite so bad as Whyte," answered the other. "I had my senses about me. I fancy he left the hotel some minutes before 1 o'clock on Friday morning."

"And what did you do?"

"I remained in the hotel. He left his overcoat behind him, and I picked it up and followed him shortly afterwards to return it. I was too drunk to see what direction he had gone in, and stood leaning against the hotel door in Bourke street with the coat in my hand. Then some one came up, and, snatching the coat out of my hand, made off with it, and the last thing I remembered was shouting out, 'Stop, thief!' Then I must have fallen down, for next morning I was in bed with all my clothes on, and they were very muddy. I got up and left town for the country by the 6:30 train, so I knew nothing about the matter until I came back to Melbourne to-night. That's all I know."

"And had you no impression that Whyte was watched that night?"

"No, I had not," answered Moreland, frankly. "He was in pretty good spirits, though he was put out at first."

"What was the cause of his being put out?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Chimneys.

In the year 1200, chimneys were scarcely known in England; only one was allowed in a religious house, one in a manor house, and one in the great hall of a castle or Lord's house; but in other houses the smoke found its way out as it could. The writers of the 14th century seem to have considered them new invention of luxury. In Henry VIII reign the University of Oxford had no fire allowed; for it is mentioned that after students had supped, having no fire in winter, they were obliged to take a good run for half an hour to get heat in their feet before they retired for the night. Hollinshead, in the reign of Elizabeth, describes the rudeness of the preceding generation in the arts of life. "There were," says he, "very few chimneys; even in the capital towns the fire was laid to the wall, and the smoke issued out at the door, roof or window. The houses were wattled and plastered over with clay, and all the furniture and utensils were of wood." In 1680 a tax of two shillings was laid on chimneys.

A Woman's Discovery.

"Another wonderful discovery has been made and that too by a lady in this county. Disease fastened its clutches upon her and for seven years she withstood its severest tests, but her vital organs were undermined and death seemed imminent. For three months she coughed incessantly and could not sleep. She bought of us a bottle of Dr. King's New Discovery for Consumption and was so much relieved on taking first dose that she slept all night, with one bottle has been miraculously cured." Her name is Mrs. Luther Lutz. Thus write W. C. Hamrick & Co., of Shelby, N. C.—Get a free trial bottle at Roysters Drug Store.

English farmers have turned against the sparrows as a pest to agriculture, and are offering rewards for their destruction. It is asserted that these vicious birds cause a loss to agricultural England of \$40,000,000 to \$50,000,000 per year. Our farmers had better do something in this line.

Never tickle a child. It is dangerous, and reduces vitality. Any unnatural emotion must be avoided. The more quiet and free from excitement a little child is kept the better for the child's health, strength and mental vigor.—The Professor.