

## THE MYSTERY

—OF—

## A HANSOM CAB

BY FERGUS W. HUME.

## CHAPTER XV—Continued.

"She's 'looked it," she wailed, drumming on the ground with her feet. "Gou' an' left 'er pore old gran' an' joined the army, cuss 'em, a-comin' round an' a spillin' business."

Meanwhile the detective was talking rapidly to Mr. Calton.

"The only person who can prove Mr. Fitzgerald was here between 1 and 2 o'clock," he said quickly, "is Sal Rawlings, as every one else seems to have been drunk or asleep. As she has joined the Salvation Army, I'll go to the barracks the first thing in the morning and look for her."

"I hope you'll find her," answered Calton, drawing a long breath. "A man's life hangs on her evidence."

They turned to go, Calton having first given Mother Guttersnipe some loose silver, which she seized on with an avaricious clutch.

The sight of money had a genial effect on her nature for she held the candle at the head of the stairs as they went down, so that they should not break their heads.

The street door was open, and, after groping their way along the dark passage, with its pitfalls, they found themselves in the open street.

"Thank heaven," said Calton, taking off his hat and drawing a long breath. "Thank heaven we are safely out of that den!"

"At all events our journey has not been wasted," said the detective, as they walked along. "We've found out where Mr. Fitzgerald was the night of the murder, so he will be safe."

"That depends upon Sal Rawlings," answered Calton, gravely; "but come, let us have a glass of brandy, for I feel quite ill after my experience of low life."

## CHAPTER XVI.

MISSING.

The next day Kilsip called at Calton's office late in the afternoon and found the lawyer eagerly expecting him. The detective's face, however, looked rather dismal, and Calton was not reassured by its expression.

"Well!" he said, impatiently, when Kilsip had closed the door and taken his seat.

"Where is she?"

"That's just what I want to know," answered the detective, coolly; "I went to the Salvation Army headquarters and made inquiries about her. It appears that she had been in the army as a hallelujah lass, but got tired of it in a week, and went off with a friend to Sydney. She carried on her old life of dissipation, but, ultimately, her friend got sick of her, and the last thing they heard about her was that she had taken up with a Chinaman in one of the Sydney slums. I telegraphed at once to Sydney, and got a reply that there was no person of the name of Sal

Rawlings known to the Sydney police, but they said they would make inquiries, and let me know the result."

"Ah! she has, no doubt, changed her name," said Calton, thoughtfully, stroking his chin. "I wonder what for?"

"Wanted to get rid of the army, I expect," answered Kilsip, dryly. "The straying lamb did not care about being hunted back to the fold."

"And when did she join the army?"

"The very day after the murder."

"Rather sudden conversion?"

"Yes, but she said the death of the woman on Thursday night had so startled her that she went straight off to the army to get her religion properly fixed up."

"The effects of fright, no doubt," said Calton, dryly. "I've met a good many examples of these sudden conversions, but they never last long as a rule—it's a case of the devil was sick, the devil a monk would be, more than anything else. Good looking?"

"So so, I believe," replied Kilsip, shrugging his shoulders. "Very ignorant—could neither read nor write."

"That accounts for her not asking for Fitzgerald when she called at the club—she probably did not know whom she had been sent for. It will resolve itself into a question of identification, I expect. However, if the police can't find her, we will put an advertisement in the paper offering a reward, and send out handbills to the same effect. She must be found. Brian Fitzgerald's life hangs on a thread, and that thread is Sal Rawlings."

"Yes!" assented Kilsip, rubbing his hands together. "Even if Mr. Fitzgerald acknowledges that he was at Mother Guttersnipe's on the night in question, she will have to prove that he was there, as no one else saw him."

"Are you sure of that?"

"As sure as any can be in such a case. It was a late hour when he came and every one seems to have been asleep except the dying woman and Sal; and as one is dead, the other is the only person that can prove that he was there at the time when the murder was committed in the hansom."

"And Mother Guttersnipe?"

"Was drunk, as she acknowledged last night. She thought if a gentleman did call it must have been the other one."

"The other one?" repeated Calton in a puzzled voice. "What one?"

"Oliver Whyte."

Calton arose from his seat with a blank air of astonishment. "Oliver Whyte?" he said, as soon as he could find his voice. "Was he in the habit of going there?"

Kilsip curled himself up in his seat like a sleek cat, and, pushing forward his head till his nose looked like the beak of a bird of prey, looked keenly at Calton.

"Look here, sir," he said, in a low, purring voice, "there's a good deal in this case which don't seem plain—in fact, the further we go into it the more mixed up it seems to get. I went to see Mother Guttersnipe this morning, and she told me that Whyte had visited the 'Queen' several times while she lay ill, and seemed to be pretty well acquainted with her."

"But who the devil is this woman they call the 'Queen'?" said Calton, irritably. "She seems to be at the bottom of the whole affair—every path we take leads to her."

"I know hardly anything about her," replied Kilsip, "except that she was a good looking woman of about 49. She came out from England to Sydney a few months ago, then on to here. How she got to Mother Guttersnipe's I can't find out, though I've tried to pump that old woman, but she's as close as wax, it's my belief she knows more about this dead woman than she chooses to tell."

"But what could she have told Fitzgerald to make him act in this silly manner? A stranger who comes from England and dies in a Melbourne slum can't possibly know anything about Miss Frettlby."

Kilsip looked puzzled.

"I must confess that it is a riddle," he said at length; "but Mr. Fitzgerald would only speak, it would clear everything up."

"What, about who murdered Whyte?"

"Well, it might not go so far as that, but it might supply the motive for the crime."

"I dare say you are right," answered Calton, thoughtfully, as the detective rose and put on his hat.

"But it's no use," Fitzgerald, for some reason or another, has evidently made up his mind not to speak, so our only hope in saving him lies in finding this girl."

"If she's anywhere in Australia you may be sure she'll be found," answered Kilsip, confidently, as he took his departure. "Australia isn't so overcrowded as all that."

## CHAPTER XVII.

THE TRIAL.

In spite of the utmost vigilance on the part of the police, and the offer of a large reward both by Calton, on behalf of the accused, and by Frettlby, the much desired Sal Rawlings still remained hidden. The millionaire had maintained a most friendly attitude towards Brian throughout the whole affair. He refused to believe him guilty, and when Calton told him of the defense of proving an alibi by means of Sal Rawlings, he immediately offered a large reward, which was enough in itself to set every person with any time on their hands hunting for the missing witness. All Australia and New Zealand rang with the extremely plebeian name of Sal Rawlings, the papers being full of notices offering rewards, and handbills of staring red letters were posted up in all railway stations. Notwithstanding all this, Sal Rawling was still undiscovered, and Calton, in despair, began to think that she must be dead. But Madge, though at times her courage gave way, was still hopeful.

"God will not permit such a judicial crime to be committed as the murder of innocent man," she declared.

Mr. Calton, to whom she said this, shook his head doubtfully. "God has permitted it to take place before," he answered softly, "and we can only judge the future by the past."

At last, the day of the long expected trial came and as Calton sat in his office looking over his brief, a clerk entered and told him Mr. Frettlby and his daughter wished to

see him. When they came in the barrister saw the millionaire looked haggard and ill, and there was a look of worry on his face.

"There is my daughter, Calton," he said, after hurried greetings had been exchanged. "She wants to be present in court during Fitzgerald's trial, and nothing I can say will dissuade her."

Calton turned, and looked at the girl in some surprise.

"Yes!" she answered, meeting his look steadily, though her face was very pale; "I must be there. I shall go mad with anxiety unless I know how the trial goes on."

"But think of the disagreeable amount of attention you will attract," urged the lawyer.

"No one will recognize me," she said calmly; "I am very plainly dressed, and I will wear this veil;" and, drawing one from her pocket, she went over to a small looking glass which was hanging on the wall and tried it on her face.

Calton looked in a perplexed manner at Mr. Frettlby.

"I'm afraid you must consent," he said.

"Very well," replied the other, almost sternly, while a look of annoyance passed over his face. "I will leave her in your charge."

"And you?"

"I don't care about seeing a man whom I have had at my dinner table in the prisoner's dock, much as I sympathize with him. Good day;" and with a curt nod he took his leave.

When the door closed on her father, Madge placed her hand on Calton's arm.

"Any hope?" she whispered, looking at him through the black veil.

"The merest chance," answered Calton, putting his brief into his bag. "We have done everything in our power to discover this girl, but without effect. If she does not come at the eleventh hour I'm afraid Brian Fitzgerald is a doomed man."

Madge fell on her knees with a stifled cry.

"Oh, God of mercy," she cried, raising her hands as if in prayer, "save him. Save my darling, and let him not die for the crime of another. God!"

She dropped her face in her hands and wept convulsively, as the lawyer touched her lightly on the shoulder.

"Come!" he said, kindly. "Be the brave girl you were, and we may save him yet. The hour is darkest before the dawn, you know."

Madge dried her tears and followed the lawyer to the cab, which was waiting for them at the door. They drove quickly up to the court, and Calton put her in a quiet place where she could see the dock and yet be unobserved by the people in the body of the court. Just as he was leaving her she touched his arm.

"Tell him," she whispered, in a trembling voice, "tell my darling I am here."

Calton nodded and hurried away to put on his wig and gown, while Madge looked hurriedly round the court from her point of vantage. It was crowded with fashionable Melbourne of both sexes, and they were all talking together in subdued whispers. The popular character of the prisoner, his good looks and engagement to Madge Frettlby, together with the extraordinary cir-

cumstances of the case, had raised public curiosity to the highest pitch and, consequently, everybody who could possibly manage to gain admission was there.

When the prisoner was brought in there was a great flutter among the ladies, and some of them even had the bad taste to produce opera glasses. Brian noticed this, and he flushed up to the roots of his fair hair, for he felt his degradation acutely. He was an intensely proud man, and to be placed in the criminal dock, with a lot of frivolous people, who had called themselves his friends, looking at him as though he were a new actor or a wild animal, was galling in the extreme. He was dressed in black, and looked pale and wan, but all the ladies declared that he was as good looking as ever, and they were sure he was innocent.

The jury was sworn in, and the crown prosecutor arose to deliver his opening address.

He gave a rapid sketch of the crime, which was merely a repetition of what had been published in the newspapers, and then proceeded to enumerate the witnesses who could prove the prisoner guilty. He would call the landlady of the deceased to show that ill blood existed between the prisoner and the murdered man, and that the accused had called on the deceased a week prior to the commission of the crime and threatened his life. (There was great excitement at this, and several ladies decided, on the spur of the moment, that the horrid man was guilty, but the majority of the female spectators still refused to believe in the guilt of such a good looking young fellow.) He would call a witness who could prove that Whyte was drunk on the night of the murder, and went along Russell Street, in the direction of Collins street; the cabman Royston could swear to the fact that the prisoner had hailed the cab, and after going away for a short time returned and entered the cab with the deceased. He would also prove that the prisoner left the cab at the grammar school in the St. Kilda road, and on the arrival of the cab at the junction he discovered the deceased had been murdered. The cabman Rankin would prove that he drove the prisoner from the St. Kilda road to Powlett street in East Melbourne, where he got out, and he would call the prisoner's landlady to prove that the prisoner resided in Powlett street, and that on the night of the murder he had not reached home till shortly after 2 o'clock. He would also call the detective who had charge of the case, to prove the finding of a glove belonging to the deceased in the pocket of the coat which the prisoner wore on the night of the murder; and the doctor who had examined the body of the deceased would give evidence that the death was caused by inhalation of chloroform. As he had now fully shown the chain of evidence which he proposed to prove he would call the first witness, Malcolm Royston.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## INCREASE IN BUSINESS?

The Raleigh Spirit of the Age says: "There were 141 arrests by the police in this city last month, a tremendous increase over the same month of last year, when we had prohibition."