

THE IVORY QUEEN.

By NORMAN HURST.

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CHAPTER II.

DARRENT FINDS A CLEW.

To say that Herbert Darrent passed a good night would have been to have stretched veracity to breaking point.

It was cold in that small bedroom in the village hotel, and the discordant clanging of the cracked bell of the church clock from quarter to quarter and from hour to hour irritated him in his restlessness. His mind was far too active to allow his eyes to be wooed by slumber, and through the long watches of the bitter winter's night the few threads of information that he had gathered tangled themselves into twists and knots in his brain, and the very fact that prima facie the solution of the mystery seemed to be so simple only served to worry and irritate him more.

Detectives, after all, are only human beings, not mechanical contrivances, and their intellects, trained though they be to keener and clearer intuition than those possessed by ordinary men, do not render them free from the worries inseparable from complicated problems of which the solution is obscure.

Darrent lay awake for hours wondering and speculating. Those clues which seemed to point at once to the culprit often, he knew, failed utterly upon closer investigation, broke off sudden and short, and, once the thread snapped, one was left absolutely without the possibility of following the trail for another inch and had to hark back to the very commencement again, only perhaps to have the same experience and the same result. One never hears of a detective's failures. It is only his victories that are noised abroad. One does not learn of all the byways and crossroads, all the narrow lanes and blind alleys, that his search leads him into. It is only when success has crowned his patient task that one hears of him at all.

Once when he had dozed off for a little while the dreary, monotonous recital of the untimely death of the wretched 30 cows disturbed his brain, and he awoke with a shiver to realize that, whatever the winter of 1881 in North Carolina was like to have killed the score of cows in one night, the winter of 1896 was quite as severe a one as he ever desired to experience. Thinking of the cows recalled the brief conversation he had with the driver of the dogcart. Evidently that individual did not think very much of Josiah Marsden and, moreover, had admitted to having a grudge against the murdered man because his rent had been raised. Was it possible that that man who told so glibly the story of a ghost was implicated in the murder? Perhaps. One never knew. But against that supposition there was the paper that had been written by the dying man, the half finished accusation that he had been murdered by Astray. What a colossal idiot Dobson was to have shown that paper to Astray! And directly Astray had seen it he fled. That certainly looked like guilt and yet might only be a sudden spasm of fear—fear that a train of circumstantial evidence might be gathered together that would inevitably put the rope around his neck, be he innocent or be he guilty.

There were indeed many black factors in the case that pointed to Astray. Let him recapitulate them:

- (1) Astray was not Marsden's own son, but had been adopted by him, and who could tell what Astray's antecedents were or why Marsden had kept him?
 - (2) Astray and old Marsden had quarreled and separated some two years back. Why?
 - (3) Astray had returned, after an absence of two years, on the very night of the murder. Why?
 - (4) The unfinished note written by a dying man seemed to accuse Astray of the murder.
 - (5) Astray had fled.
- Yes, all these facts certainly did point to Astray Marsden as the murderer. All through the long winter's night the disjointed fragments of the puzzle jumbled themselves about in the perplexed mind of Herbert Darrent until the dawn broke gray and cheerless.

He gazed out of the window across a waste of snow to where in the distance the white that fronted the Grange at his feet should be, he wondered, then the discovery of the midnight murder, the that dwelling, whose make-up always shined out black against the gray sky?

its crisp toast, savory bacon and new laid eggs, over, and Darrent felt another man, ready to commence his investigations, to piece together every tiny scrap, every minute fragment, until the whole puzzle was complete, the mystery solved, Josiah Marsden avenged and justice satisfied.

Mine host, who waited upon the stranger from Chicago himself, was of a communicative turn of mind. Oh, yes, he knew the Marsdens, father and son—at least they called him son—well enough. Josiah Marsden was a strange sort of fellow; seemed to have no friends and no enemies. Visitors to The Grange were very rare indeed. Marsden kept himself to himself and never associated with the inhabitants of North Carolina; went over to Barnstable once or twice a year. He rarely had any letters. Now and again one with a foreign postmark, so the village postman told him, would come, or maybe he would have a French newspaper or a chess magazine. Young Marsden—ah, he was always a nice, affable young gent, he was! Many's the bottle he'd had in the room where they were now, and many more bottles he hoped to open for him. Yes, Astray Marsden staid there at the Palace on the night of the murder, and in the morning, after Dobson had called and seen him, he left for Barnstable.

"Bless your heart, sir," said mine host as Darrent buttoned up his coat and prepared to start for The Grange, "there are some people who suspect Astray of the murder, but they might just as well suspect me, sir—just as well."

The irritating church clock chimed the hour of 9 as Darrent reached the gates of The Grange and found awaiting him, erect as a soldier on parade, the patrolman he had seen the previous night.

"Good morning. I am glad to find you are punctual."

"Good morning, sir."

"Any message from Mr. Dobson?"

"He hoped you would call upon him again this morning."

"Right. Have you the keys?"

"Yes, sir," answered the policeman, unlocking the gate as he spoke.

"I suppose you didn't see the ghost who committed the murder?" Darrent hazarded, with a smile.

"Ghost!" laughed the young officer.

"Not much. There's no ghosts in North Carolina. I've heard the fairy stories about ghosts and The Grange being haunted, but I don't believe any such nonsense, sir."

"Indeed!"

"No, sir, not a bit of it. There was flesh and blood on this job, sir, and it looks like a case of revenge."

"What makes you think that?"

"Well, sir, as far as we can make out, nothing in the house has been disturbed and no robbery committed."

"Well, let's get inside."

The policeman unlocked the heavy door and pushed it open.

"Now, go slowly," said Darrent as they entered, "and tell me all you know about the building."

The door banged after them, and the dull echo of the sound reverberated through the house.

The entrance hall gave access to rooms on either hand, and the policeman, unlocking and opening a door on the right, stood on one side for Darrent to enter.

The room, which was at the back of the house and evidently the library, was a large and lofty apartment paneled in dark oak, and the old fashioned furniture matched the decoration—solid armchairs with deep seats and sunk backs and a massive oblong table. The walls were lined with bookcases, but they were evidently very rarely opened, for Darrent noticed how thickly the dust lay in all the crevices where the glass doors shut. He walked slowly round the room. Two sides were entirely taken up by the bookshelves, while at the two others were the fireplace and a broad window. The chimney piece, with its high mantel in carved oak, had a couple of ivory corner

seats, one on each side. The window, which was opposite the fireplace, commanded a magnificent view of the distant snow covered country for miles and the windings of a river, its frozen surface glistening in the sunlight. Some dozen skaters were gliding over the splendid ice, and Darrent, after watching them for a moment, turned with a sigh from the scene. He could not yet afford time for indulging in an exhalation

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"Now, go slowly," said Darrent.

rating pastime in which he delighted, and, although a clear, unbroken stretch of a mile or so of black ice temptingly invited him, duty called him, and duty must be done.

"Now, then—By the way, what's your name?"

"Thompson."

"Right. I dare say you know mine already—Darrent."

"Yes, sir."

"Is this the room where the murder was committed?"

"Yes; this is where we found him, sir," replied Thompson, indicating a spot on the floor between the table and the fireplace where an ominous dark stain showed.

"Do you know the house at all?" asked Darrent, his eye upon the floor.

"No, sir; never entered it till the day after the murder. We searched the rooms, but, as you know, discovered nothing."

"Ah! Who went over the house?"

"Chief Dobson."

"Ah, we'll go over together presently, Thompson. Now, tell me, is the room exactly as it was when the crime was discovered, eh? Nothing has been disturbed, nothing removed?"

"Exactly the same. Nothing has been taken away except a box of chessmen. I suppose Mr. Dobson has mentioned that to you already, sir?"

"Ah, yes! They were called for yesterday morning, I understand, by a man who said he was a detective from Chicago."

"Yes; that's what he said, sir."

"Did you see him?"

"No, sir. Mr. Dobson saw him. I was on my round."

"I suppose you have never seen the particular set of chessmen?"

"No, sir."

"And have no idea what they were like?"

"Well, sir, I heard Mr. Dobson say that they were Indian work in ivory, very finely carved with figures, elephants, men on horseback, and the like."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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TIME TABLE No. 9.

Eastbound.			Westbound.		
Mixed P't & Passenger.	Mixed P't & Passenger.	Passenger.	Mixed P't & Passenger.	Mixed P't & Passenger.	Passenger.
7:10	7:10	8:40	11:05	8:15	8:55
7:43	7:43	4:00	10:45	7:55	8:15
8:16	8:08	4:09	10:38	7:08	1:45
8:59	8:55	4:50	10:32	6:53	1:15
9:14	9:14	4:55	10:25	6:15	10:55
9:35	9:35	4:55	10:18	5:58	11:08
10:15	10:15	4:55	10:12	4:50	11:40
10:40	10:40	5:07	10:05	4:00	10:40
11:15	11:15	5:19	9:50	3:58	10:18
11:51	11:51	5:35	9:42	3:30	10:00
12:00	1:30	5:50	9:37	10:47	9:40
.....	2:15	6:15	9:30	10:10	.....
.....	2:30	6:15	9:25	9:50	.....
.....	2:45	6:30	9:20	9:40	.....
.....	3:15	6:45	9:15	9:30	.....
.....	3:35	6:45	9:10	9:25	.....
.....	3:51	6:54	9:05	9:20	.....
.....	4:01	7:07	9:00	9:15	.....
.....	4:11	7:15	8:55	9:10	.....
.....	P.M.	P.M.	A.M.	A.M.	.....

*Monday, Wednesday and Friday.
†Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.
S. L. DILL, Superintendent.

WILMINGTON AND WELDON RAILROAD

CONDENSED SCHEDULE.

TRAINS GOING SOUTH.

DATED	No. 26, Daily.	No. 26, Daily.	No. 108, Daily ex. Sunday.	No. 51, Daily.	No. 46, Daily.
June 12th, 1899.	A. M.	P. M.	P. M.	A. M.	P. M.
Leave Weldon	11:50	9:45	.....	.....	.....
Ar. Rocky Mt.	12:55	10:50	.....	.....	.....
Leave Tarboro	12:21	.....	6:00	.....	.....
Lv. Rocky Mt.	1:00	10:30	6:45	5:40	12:30
Leave Wilson	1:58	11:14	7:10	6:30	1:40
Leave Selma	2:55	11:57	.....	.....	.....
Lv. Fayetteville	4:30	1:10	.....	.....	.....
Ar. Florence	7:25	5:15	.....	.....	.....
.....	P. M.	A. M.	.....	.....	.....
Ar. Goldsboro	.....	.....	7:50	.....	.....
Lv. Goldsboro	.....	.....	7:01	8:21	.....
Lv. Magnolia	.....	.....	8:06	4:25	.....
Ar. Wilmington	.....	.....	9:45	5:50	.....
.....	P. M.	A. M.	P. M.	P. M.	.....

TRAINS GOING NORTH.

No. 74, Daily.	No. 105, Daily ex. Sunday.	No. 28, Daily.	No. 46, Daily.	No. 46, Daily.
A. M.	P. M.	P. M.	A. M.	P. M.
Lv. Florence	9:40	.....	7:45	.....
Lv. Fayetteville	12:50	.....	9:45	.....
Leave Selma	1:00	.....	10:54	.....
Arrive Wilson	3:55	.....	11:31	.....
.....	A. M.	.....	.....	.....
Lv. Wilmington	.....	.....	7:00	9:45
Lv. Magnolia	.....	.....	8:24	11:19
Lv. Goldsboro	.....	.....	9:45	12:30
.....	P. M.	.....	A. M.	P. M.
Leave Wilson	3:35	5:45	11:21	10:58
Ar. Rocky Mt.	3:30	6:15	12:07	11:55
Arrive Tarboro	.....	.....	7:04	.....
Leave Tarboro	12:21	.....	.....	.....
Lv. Rocky Mt.	3:30	.....	12:09	.....
Ar. Weldon	4:22	.....	1:00	.....
.....	P. M.	.....	A. M.	P. M.

Trains on the Kinston Branch Road leave Weldon 2:35 p. m., Halifax 4:15 p. m., arrive Scotland Neck at 5:30 p. m., Greenville 6:57 p. m., Kinston 7:55 p. m., returning leaves Kinston 7:50 a. m., Greenville 8:55 a. m., arriving Halifax at 11:25 a. m., Weldon 11:50 a. m., 4:30 except Sunday.
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