

Leaf the Sixth

The Bowie Knife Sheath

by John Williams

My wife possessed a very dear friend named Ellen Braddock. They were school-fellows together, although my wife was considerably the elder of the two. There is quite a romantic episode connected with the life of this young girl, in which I played quite a conspicuous part and which I am about to relate to the reader.

Ellen Braddock's father resided at Athens, just opposite the city of Hudson. He was a very wealthy gentleman, but very proud and aristocratic. It is but right that I should inform the reader that I married considerably above my station, and it was owing to this fact that I could claim acquaintance with Ellen; as for her father I had never seen him, nor do I suppose he would have noticed me even if I had ever been introduced to him; with his daughter, however, it was different, whenever she came to New York, she called to visit us, and spent many hours in our company. One day she called on us, and informed us that she was to embark for South America, where she was going for the benefit of her health.

She sailed in the Irene. A twelve-month passed away, and nothing was heard of the vessel. It was supposed that it was lost and that all hands had perished. I need not tell you how deeply affected my wife was to hear the news.

It was about two weeks after all hope of the Irene had been given up, that I was down town riding in a buggy, near the Battery, when the wheel of my vehicle came in contact with a hackney coach. There was a considerable shock, and both vehicles stopped. I got out of my buggy, and advanced to the door of the hack for the purpose of apologizing for the accident. I found it occupied by a young lady and gentleman.

"Madam," said I, "I beg to apologize,"—I suddenly stopped and gazed at the young lady very earnestly—"why surely I know that face," I continued; "yes, it is—it must be Ellen Braddock!"

"Why, as I live, it is Mr. Brampton," returned Ellen, holding out her hand. "Allow me to introduce you to Mr. Leonard Bartlett."

I shook the young man cordially by the hand.

"Why, what does this mean?" I asked; "This is indeed a joyful surprise."

"It is a very long story to tell, Mr. Brampton," replied Ellen; "the first opportunity that occurs you shall know all."

"Where are you going now?" I asked.

“We propose going for the present to the St. Nicholas. To-morrow I shall start for Athens,” returned Ellen; “I shall telegraph at once to my father to let him know of my safe arrival.”

“How overjoyed he will be. Do you know we all gave you up for lost—but I won’t detain you any longer now. I shall take the liberty of calling on you at the hotel in an hour or so, and will bring my wife to see you.”

“O, do! I shall be delighted to see my dear, dear old school-fellow.”

There was another shaking of hands all round and we separated. I hurried home, and in a few words related to my wife the joyful surprise I had met with. Mrs. Brampton was rejoiced at the idea of meeting her old companion, and acting upon my suggestion, at once put on her bonnet and shawl and we started for the hotel.

We found the young couple seated in one of the drawing rooms. The meeting between the old school-fellows was affectionate in the extreme. Ellen told us a fearful story of shipwreck, privation and danger. It appeared that Leonard Bartlett was first mate of the Irene—that the vessel had been lost, and all had perished on board of her excepting the young sailor and the fair passenger. They had at last been driven on a desert island in the Pacific, and had been picked up by an American ship.

“And this gentleman,” said Ellen, in conclusion, “is my preserver—to him I owe my life over and over again.” While she spoke, I thought she cast on Bartlett a look revealing devoted love.

“I assure you, Mr. Brampton,” returned the young man, “Miss Braddock overrates my poor exertions. I consider myself as much indebted to her for my preservation; for, had it not been for her courage, her noble heart and hopeful disposition, I should have thrown myself into the sea in despair.”

“I can believe all you say of her; she is the same noble-hearted girl she was at school,” returned my wife. “Everyone was in love with her, from the servants in the kitchen to the professors themselves.”

“Hush, you flatterer,” replied Ellen, putting her hand before her friend’s mouth, “you will make me vain.”

And the conversation continued for some hours. I was very favorably impressed with Leonard Bartlett. I found him extremely intelligent, and the discourse became animated in the extreme. Several subjects were started, in which young Bartlett felt himself quite at home, and shone to great advantage. The clock struck eleven without our having any idea how rapidly the time had passed. My wife and myself at last rose from our seats, we bade our friends a cordial adieu, and we returned to our own home.

“Have you much to do today?” said my wife, as we sat at breakfast a week after the above interview took place.

“Not a great deal, I shall get through about mid-day. Give me another cup of coffee, my dear. By-the-by, where’s the Herald? I have not seen it this morning.”

“How stupid it is of Mary,” returned my wife; “I cannot get her to leave it on the breakfast table.”

She rung the bell and the paper was soon forthcoming. I opened it carefully, and glanced first at the leading articles. I then read the congressional intelligence, which, however, did not interest me much. I was still less interested with the proceedings of the State legislature. At last I came to the telegraphic intelligence. I ran my eye half down the column, when the following paragraph met my eyes:

“HORRIBLE MURDER.—A terrible murder was committed in Athens last night. Mr. Braddock, a wealthy gentleman was the victim. The murderer is a young man, named Leonard Bartlett. He is in custody, and the evidence against him is most conclusive.”

“How shocking!” exclaimed my wife, after I had read it aloud to her.

“Bartlett, Bartlett?” said I, trying to recollect where I had heard the name; “why that must be the young man we saw with Ellen. Certainly, it was, I remember his name distinctly now. Is it possible that he could have murdered the old man? Well, I will give up my belief in physiognomy, for if ever there was a countenance more opposed to any act of violence, it was his.”

“Poor Ellen!” exclaimed my wife, “what a fearful trial for her! Do you know, James, it struck me that she was very fond of young Bartlett.”

“I fancied the same thing myself. It is very strange about the murder. I wish they had given some particulars. I have—”

The door here opened, and who should appear but Ellen herself. She had just arrived by the cars. In the midst of sobs and tears she entered into full particulars of the fearful catastrophe. Her information amounted as follows.

She had returned home the day following her arrival in New York. She had related to her father all the obligations she was under to Robert Bartlett. He immediately insisted that the young man should be sent for, that he might thank him personally for saving his daughter’s life. Leonard went, and was received with the utmost cordiality by the old gentleman. Leonard Bartlett and Ellen Braddock had not been thrown so long together without the usual result—they were both deeply in love with each other.

Two days before Ellen’s visit to me, the young man had ventured to ask Mr. Braddock to give his consent to his marriage with his daughter. To his great surprise he was received with contempt, opprobrium and insult, and although it was night, turned at once out of the house. He left, utterly overwhelmed with despair, he could not leave the premises without having a last interview with Ellen. He took refuge in a barn for the night, hoping to be able to see the young

girl the next morning. Mr. Braddock retired to rest, and never rose from his bed alive. That night he was assassinated. The next morning, a servant went up to call his employer as usual, and found there was blood on the handle of the door. She entered the room and a fearful spectacle met her eyes. Hanging from the bed, the long white hair dragging in a pool of blood, was the dead body of Mr. Braddock. By the position in which he was placed, a hideous gaping wound in his throat plainly showed how he had met his end. He had evidently not struggled much. The bed clothes were very little discomposed, and the furniture in the room was scarcely displaced at all. The murderer, whoever he might be, had undoubtedly taken the old man unawares, and had done his work quickly. It was immediately suggested by someone, that the young man who had had a quarrel with Mr. Braddock the evening before, must have committed the murder. An immediate search of the premises was made, and young Bartlett was discovered in the barn covered with blood, and the knife with which the deed had been committed, was found concealed in a truss of hay. The young sailor was immediately arrested, although strongly protesting his innocence.

“Mr. Brampton,” said Ellen, in conclusion, “I have come to you as the only friend I have in the world. I am as firmly satisfied that Leonard is innocent, as I am that I am now living. I have heard it said that you have extraordinary talent in tracing a matter out. You see exactly how Leonard is situated. Appearances are frightfully against him, but I have a conviction that if you will take the trouble to investigate the matter, you will prove his innocence.”

“You say he was discovered covered with blood; how does he account for that?”

“He says his nose bled during the night. I am certain you can prove he is innocent of this foul crime.”

“My dear Ellen,” I returned, “I am afraid you rather overrate my power; but rest assured I will do my best to find out the truth, and however strong the circumstantial evidence may be against him, if he is really innocent—”

“O, Mr. Brampton, I know it. I feel that he is innocent,” interrupted Ellen.

“I have no doubt in the world you do, my dear; but unfortunately the jury will require some stronger evidence of his innocence than feeling. I repeat, if he is really innocent, I have but little doubt we shall be able to prove it.”

“How you reassure me! What course do you intend to pursue?”

“That will require a little consideration; the first thing to be done is to visit the scene of the sad catastrophe. I think you told me the room where the murder was committed had not been disturbed?”

“With the exception of the removal of my poor father into another apartment, the room has not been touched.”

“Well, my child, leave all to me, and with God’s blessing, I will yet bring your preserver off scathless, that is, if he be really innocent. Now, my dear, you had better return home at once. I

will visit Athens this evening. Above all things, don't let the servants touch a single article in that fatal chamber."

"I will see that everything shall be observed as you wish," returned Ellen. "O, Mr. Brampton, how can I ever repay you for your great kindness?"

"Nonsense, my dear. Goodbye! I must be off, and get my business finished so that I can be free by night."

I shook hands with the young girl, and we separated. I transacted my business, partook of an early tea, and by five o'clock in the evening, I was at the Hudson River depot. In due time I reached my journey's end, and proceeded to the residence of the late Mr. Braddock. I was received by Ellen, and no remark was made on account of my visit, as it was supposed that I had come to attend the funeral.

I proceeded at once to the chamber where the deed had been committed, the first thing that struck me was, that it was evident that the old man had been taken unawares, for the room showed no evidences of any struggle having taken place. I searched the room very minutely, and found on the floor a small piece of thin paper, apparently very old, on which was inscribed, in a mercantile hand, "*S. V. Barnard, Pres.*" This I carefully deposited in my pocket.

I next proceeded to view the body, and noticed the moment I saw it, that the skin round the mouth of the deceased was abraded. A few hours afterwards the funeral took place, which I attended. I found myself alone with Ellen when the ceremony was over for the first time since my arrival. The noble-hearted girl looked inquiringly into my face, as if she would read there the result of my investigations.

"You would ask me," said I, "what my opinion is?"

"You have guessed right."

"Well, be of good cheer, the young sailor is not guilty of this murder."

"O, thank you, thank you—but what made you adopt this opinion?"

"I will explain it to you. On the night this murder was committed, no sound was heard to emanate from your father's apartment!"

"None."

"It follows, then, whoever committed the deed must have done it instantaneously to prevent the victim from crying out. He must, at the same time, have placed one hand over the old gentleman's mouth, while with the other he gave the fatal blow. Had he not done this, however deep the wound might have been, it must have elicited a cry. But then in this case we meet a great difficulty; from the position of the wound, no one man could possibly have done this. And yet it is evident that a hand was placed over the mouth, for the marks of the fingers were still to

be traced on the face of the deceased when I saw it. My theory is, that two persons were concerned in this murder.”

“Two! can it be possible?”

“Had but one person committed the deed, the wound must have taken a different direction, and the bed would have been saturated with blood. Such, however, was not the case; the blood was on the floor, and the sheets were unstained. I can tell exactly how the deed was committed, but I am afraid to shock you by repeating it.”

“O, Mr. Brampton,” replied Ellen; “I have undergone enough to bear anything now. Do tell me if it will exonerate Leonard in any way.”

“Well, my dear Ellen, the manner was simply this: Two persons entered your father’s chamber while he was fast asleep. One of them immediately placed his hand over the victim’s mouth and dragged him half out of the bed. The other inflicted the fatal wound.”

“But Mr. Brampton, what motive could they have? The house was not robbed.”

“Has your father no enemies?”

“No one that I know of, except Captain Larkin.”

“Captain Larkin, who is he?”

“He lives two miles from here. He was a captain of a privateer in the war of 1812. My father and he have a very important law-suit pending about some property. They never spoke to each other for months, but lately they have been more friendly, and on the very evening before the murder, the captain paid my father a visit.”

“This may be important, I will just make a note of it,” I returned, entering the information I had just received in my note-book. “With respect to Leonard Bartlett, he was certainly watched. He must have been seen to retire to the barn. After the murder was committed, one of the murderers must have stealthily entered the barn, and hid the knife among the hay in so careless a manner that it might easily be found. What made me first suspect that young Bartlett could not be the murderer, was, that the proofs of his guilt were too glaring. A man must be mad who would commit a crime and then quietly retire to an outhouse on the premises of his victim, and conceal the evidence of his guilt, bloody as it was, in a truss of hay, and in such a manner that it might be detected by the first person who entered.”

“True, true, this never struck me before.”

“I know more—one of the murderers wore a ring on the middle finger of his right hand, and one of them paid a sum of money to the other after the deed was committed.”

“How can you possibly know this?”

“The mark of the ring was distinctly visible near the mouth of the deceased, and while searching the room, I found this little piece of paper,” I replied, taking from my vest pocket the piece before referred to. “You see it has the name ‘*S.V. Barnard, Pres.*’ written on it. Now, it so happens, that I know this Mr. Barnard. He is the president of the Bank of America. This scrap of paper is a portion of a bank bill, which must have been accidentally torn off while being passed from one to the other.”

“But how do you know it was given after the deed was committed?”

“From the simple fact, that there is a slight stain of blood on it, as you see.”

Ellen shuddered, but recovered herself immediately.

“Have you discovered who are the guilty parties?” she asked.

“I have my suspicions as to one of them, but no proof at present. In spite of all I have told you, unless I can bring home the crime to someone else, it will go hard with the young sailor. You must excuse me, Ellen, for the present. I must devote every minute of my spare time before the trial searching for proof. I must see the prisoner, visit someone in the neighborhood, and then return to New York. You may expect to see me again in a few days at farthest.”

So saying, I hurried from the house. I was very quick in my movements, and in a very short space of time I had procured an order for admission to the prisoner, and was alone with him. We conversed together for half an hour, and although in the interview I did not gain any more proofs, it confirmed my previous opinion. I parted with young Bartlett after having infused hopes and comfort in his heart, but without letting him know my suspicions.

When I left the prison in Hudson, I re-crossed the river, and directed my steps to the residence of Captain Larkin. I soon arrived there, and giving my name to a servant, I was shown into the parlor. In a few minutes I was ushered into his bedroom, for he had had an attack of gout the day before, and could not leave his chamber. I found Captain Larkin to be a man about sixty years of age, very hale and hearty looking, but evidently very fond of the good things in life.

“Captain,” said I, as I entered, “I am a detective officer from New York, and have come down here to make inquiries concerning this recent murder. I thought perhaps you could give me some information about it.”

“What information can I give you?” growled the captain.

“Did you not visit the deceased on the evening of the day he was murdered?”

“I did.”

“What passed at that interview?”

“Nothing particular. Mr. Braddock informed me that he had had a row with a young man named Bartlett, and had turned him out of doors.”

“That is very important testimony,” I replied; “for it proves a motive for the deed on the part of the prisoner.”

“They tell me the proof is perfectly overwhelming against him,” said the captain, with something like exultation in his voice.

“Beyond all cavil,” I replied, glancing furtively around the apartment. My eyes rested on the sheath of a bowie-knife which lay on the bureau. There was no weapon in it.

“When is the murderer to be tried?” he asked, carelessly.

“The court opens in about four or five days,” I returned; “I suppose he will be tried then.”

“Shall I be summoned as a witness?”

“I should suppose so,” I returned, “as I before said, your evidence is most important.”

I had now got all the information I required, and rose to go. My hat was placed on the bureau near the empty sheath. I picked up my hat, and while addressing some remarks to Captain Larkin, put it down again, taking care, however, to bring the sheath next to me, my hat being between it and the man I suspected. By this means I managed to pick up the sheath and convey it to my pocket without being seen.

I then took my leave, shaking hands with Larkin. I noticed particularly at this moment, that the latter wore a plain gold ring on the middle finger of his right hand.

I again crossed over to Hudson, and easily obtained permission to examine the knife with which the deed had been committed. As I suspected, I found it fitted exactly into the empty sheath which I had abstracted from Captain Larkin’s residence. I immediately bent my steps to the railway depot. I congratulated myself on my good fortune, for I felt certain I had discovered one of the murderers; at the same time I was fully aware that unless I could discover the other, the case would not be complete.

The next day, as soon as I had breakfasted, I proceeded immediately to the Bank of America, situated in Wall Street. The bank had just opened.

“Is the president in?” I asked of the cashier, whom I knew quite well.

“You will find him in his private room,” replied the officer; “you know the way.”

“Yes, thank you,” I returned, and walked straight up to the door and knocked, and was told to “come in.”

“How are you, Mr. Barnard?” said I, shaking hands with a fine gray-headed old man.

“How are you, Brampton?” returned the president. “I suppose you want to make another investment?”

“Not exactly,” I returned, laughing; “I don’t make my money quite so fast; my business is of a very different description. I wish to know, in the first place, if within the last day or two, you have had a note presented at your bank for payment, with the name torn off?”

“I will inquire; but why do you ask?” asked the banker, looking very much surprised.

“Give me the information first, and then I will explain everything.”

The bank president left the room, and returned again in a minute or two.

“There has been no such bill paid,” said he, as he entered the room.

“I am rejoiced to hear it,” I returned, taking from my vest pocket the scrap of paper I had picked up in the bed-chamber of the murdered man.

“Do you recognize that writing?” I asked, giving it to Mr. Barnard.

“Certainly, it is my signature, and by two dots at the end, I know it was originally attached to a hundred dollar bill.”

“Well, then, the man who possesses the other portion of this bill is the murderer of Mr. Braddock, the account of which you must have read in the papers; he will present the bill for payment soon. I want you to detain him when he does so, and send for me.”

“I will do so willingly—but explain?”

I entered into full explanation of all matters connected with the murder, and my own suspicions, cautioning him, however, to be secret. When I had finished, I left the bank and returned home.

Three days elapsed, and I received no communication from the banker. But I was not idle during this time. In the first place, I obtained the very best counsel I could procure in New York. The fourth day dawned and I began to grow nervous. I could find no trace of the party I was seeking, and young Bartlett’s trial was to begin next day. About eleven o’clock, however, I received the following note:

“Bank of America, Wall Street, December 18 —

“DEAR SIR.—The note had just been presented. We have the man in custody. Come at once.
Yours truly,

S.V. BARNARD.”

I jumped into a carriage, and was whirled at a rapid pace down Broadway to Wall Street. I entered the bank, and was at once shown into the private room, where I found the man seated who had presented the note, and two policemen in plain clothes on each side of him. He was a rough-looking man, who had evidently been a sailor. He said his name was Martin. The man looked dogged and determined. His features were contracted into a scowl, and he seemed angry at being detained.

“What am I here for, I should like to know?” he exclaimed, in a gruff voice. “I’ll make you smart for this, I can tell you—you’ll just see if I won’t bring an action against you for false imprisonment, that’s all.”

The policemen made no reply, but handed me the note which the man had presented for payment. I examined it closely and found a small portion at the bottom of it had been torn off. The portion I had found in the murdered man’s chamber exactly supplied the deficiency. Martin watched me scrutinizing the note.

“Is the bill a bad one?” said the ruffian. “Perhaps that’s what you are keeping me for, if so, I can tell you who gave it to me.”

“We know that already,” said I carelessly.

“Come now, that’s a whopper! I dare bet you what you like, you can’t tell me who gave me that note.”

“To show you that we know more than you suspect,” I returned, “I will tell you that Captain Larkin of Athens gave you that \$100 bill.”

Martin turned pale, and seemed uneasy for a minute or two—but he recovered himself.

“Come, that’s a good guess,” he replied with bravado. “Perhaps you would like to know what he gave it me for?”

“We do know,” I replied, quietly.

“How—what?” stammered Martin.

“I repeat, we know he gave you it for assisting him to murder Mr. Braddock. Ah, you start! To show you how much we know, I will detail to you how you did the deed. In the first place he provided the knife—you both managed to get into the house without being heard. You entered Mr. Braddock’s bedroom; Larkin seized the unfortunate old man, and placed his hand over the mouth of your victim, while you committed the deed. Captain Larkin, then and there, with the bloody corpse of your victim looking you full in the face, paid you a portion of the wages of your crime, in shape of this hundred dollar bill which I hold in my hand. You then proceeded with cautious steps into the barn where you had previously seen Leonard Bartlett enter. You entered without awakening him, and thrust the bloody instrument with which you had committed the

crime into a truss of hay in such a manner that it might easily be discovered; and now, John Martin, I arrest you for the murder of Mr. Braddock.”

As I proceeded to describe the manner in which the deed was committed, a fearful change came over the ruffian’s face. He turned as pale as death, and when I had concluded he fell back in his seat apparently deprived of consciousness. In a few minutes he recovered a little.

“I will deny nothing—I will confess all,” replied Martin, completely cowed. “I acknowledge I did the deed, but it was at the instigation of Captain Larkin. Answer me one question, has he confessed?”

I paused for a moment before replying, at the same time scrutinizing Martin very closely, as if I would read his very soul. I saw that the villain’s eyes were gleaming with unconquerable hate, and I immediately made up my mind what course to pursue.

“He has not,” I replied; “nor does he even know that his crime is discovered.”

A gleam of satisfaction shot through Martin’s eyes.

“Then how did you find out all the particulars?” he asked.

“Never mind how we found them out, suffice it to say that we know all.”

“I see you do. Then Captain Larkin has no suspicion that all is discovered?”

“None in the world.”

“Then lead me to a magistrate that I may make a full confession—and if I can only hang that wretch, I will die willingly myself.”

This was exactly what I wanted, and I lost no time in acting on the suggestion. We all adjourned to the nearest magistrate’s office, where Martin made a full confession which was duly signed and witnessed.

From it, it appeared that Larkin had Martin in his power, from the fact that years before the latter had forged his name to a note. The law-suit, the loss of which would be yielding up of nearly all of Captain Larkin’s estate, would undoubtedly have been decided against him, if Mr. Braddock were not disposed of before the day of trial. Larkin, who scrupled at no crime, made the desperate resolve to kill him, and sent for Martin to do the deed for him. He determined, however, before proceeding to the last extremity, to pay a visit to his intended victim, and see if he could by any means effect a compromise with his opponent. He found, however, that Mr. Braddock was too much excited to enter into any business matter, having just turned young Bartlett out of his house. When Larkin returned home he found Martin waiting for him; he proposed at once that the latter should murder the old gentleman, and throw the guilt on the young sailor. He promised to give Martin \$500 in five monthly payments of \$100 each. The sailor would not consent unless Larkin would himself assist in the murder. This, after some

hesitation, the captain consented to do, and they both of them went to Mr. Braddock's house. It was yet too early for the accomplishment of their purpose, and they waited and watched. While lying in ambush, they saw the young sailor enter the barn, and immediately surmised that he had taken refuge there for the night. They then waited until all the house had retired, and then committed the deed exactly in the method I had traced out.

After Martin had made this confession he was conveyed to the Tombs. Armed with this confession, I immediately left for Hudson. I had it in my power to stay the trial, but I determined to allow it to proceed to a certain point. That same night I was closeted until a late hour with the young sailor's counsel.

The town of Hudson was in a state of great excitement, on the morning of the trial of Leonard Bartlett, for the willful murder of Mr. Braddock. Not that anyone had any doubt about the matter, for the whole community looked on Leonard's guilt as certain. But the wealth of the victim, the youth of the offender, and the supposed motives which had caused him to commit the act, had all made a deep public impression, and at an early hour the courtroom was crowded to excess.

As for Leonard himself, he saw the time for his trial approach with something like apathy. He was entirely ignorant as to the defense to be adopted, but he felt strong in his own innocence, and calmly waited until that innocence should be made manifest. For public opinion he did not care one groat. He knew that Ellen believed him guiltless, and that was sufficient for him.

Ellen Braddock was more nervous and anxious than anyone else. I had not told her my discovery, but in order to assuage her fears, I had hinted very strongly that the young man would be acquitted. Still there appeared to be some doubt about the matter, and until that was satisfied, she felt considerable anxiety. At last, the court was opened, and the prisoner's counsel declared he was quite ready for trial. The prosecution was conducted by two lawyers of eminence, and one of them immediately opened the case.

He spoke in a calm, dispassionate manner; disclaiming all oratory, he gave a plain statement of what he expected to be able to prove. He traced the prisoner from his first entrance into the house. He dwelt particularly on the quarrel, and the words which the young man had been heard to utter. He then gave a vivid description of the finding of the body, and the tracing to the place where the prisoner had secreted himself. He managed the speech in such a manner, that he left the motive to be implied rather than distinctly stated.

When he had concluded, a murmur ran through the court. The jury looked convinced already, and everybody wondered what possible defense could be made against so plain a case. Leonard himself was astonished at the fearful array of circumstantial evidence against him, and glanced at his counsel as if he would read from the expression of their faces whether there was any hope for him. But he could learn nothing from them; they looked grave, but perfectly impassible. As for Ellen, when she heard the counsel's opening address, her heart sunk within her, and she gazed in mute despair on her lover.

The first witness called was Bridget Murphy. She deposed that she was a domestic, in the employment of the late Mr. Braddock; that on the evening of the day of the murder she carried

candles into Mr. Braddock's study, and at the moment she opened the door, she heard the prisoner at the bar exclaim in a loud and excited voice, "Mark my words, sir, as sure as you now live, you will repent your conduct." She also deposed that as he left the room, he repeated, "You will bitterly repent this infamous proceeding."

When the counsel for the prosecution had obtained the foregoing evidence, he sat down, expecting that his witness would have to undergo a severe cross-examination; but, to his great surprise, the counsel for the defense declined to cross examine.

Several witnesses were now called one after another, who deposed to the finding of the body, and the knife with which the deed had been committed, and the tracing of the blood to the barn where the prisoner was discovered asleep. To the supreme astonishment of all present, the prisoner's counsel did not put a single question to any of these witnesses.

The curiosity of the counsel for the prosecution became very great, to know what line of defense they would adopt; they almost imagined they had given up all idea of defense at all.

When the constable who had made the arrest deposed to a speech made by the prisoner, in which he asked, before anything about a murder having been committed was mentioned, "if they meant to accuse him of having committed murder?" the judge threw down his pen as if it were useless to go on farther.

"Have you any more witnesses for the prosecution?" asked the judge, of the prosecuting attorney.

"One more, your honor," replied the lawyer.

"Is it necessary to call him?" returned the judge. "I do not see how you can make your case any stronger."

"We propose to show by him, the motive the prisoner had in committing the murder."

"Well, as you like."

"Call Captain Larkin," said the attorney, to the clerk of the court.

The name was called, and there was a profound silence in the court. The name, position and wealth of the witness had raised everybody's curiosity. The name was called a second time; a slight movement became perceptible in the body of the court, and Captain Larkin slipped into the witness box. He looked rather pale, but appeared perfectly self-possessed.

"Your name, I believe, is Robert Larkin?" said the prosecuting attorney.

"It is."

"Where do you live?"

“Near Athens, about two miles from the residence of the deceased.”

“Did you pay a visit to the deceased, on the day that he was murdered?”

“I did.”

“Relate what passed at that interview.”

“He told me that the prisoner had the audacity to ask him for his daughter’s hand, and that they had a violent quarrel, and that he had dismissed him from the house.”

“That will do, sir, you may stand down,” said the counsel for the prosecution.

“Stop, sir!” said the counsel for the defense, rising for the first time. “I have a few questions to ask you.”

An expression of surprise ran through the whole court, in which even the judge participated. It seemed so strange, that the counsel for the defense should fix upon such an unimportant witness to cross-examine, when they had not put a single question to any of the others.

“Captain Larkin,” said young Bartlett’s lawyer, “will you please tell the court and jury the motive of your visit to Mr. Braddock on that day?”

“I went to see him about a lawsuit in which we were concerned.”

“You were opposed to each other in this lawsuit were you not?”

“Yes.”

“The case was to come up for trial immediately, was it not?”

“Yes.”

“Mr. Braddock’s death will put an end to the suit, will it not?”

“I refuse to answer impertinent questions, and appeal to the court to support me,” replied the witness.

“This examination appears to me to be quite foreign to the issue,” said the judge; “and the witness is at liberty to answer the question or not as he thinks fit.”

“Well, it is not material. I have another question to ask, however, which I insist on being answered. Do you know a man of the name of Martin?”

Captain Larkin grew pale and livid.

“I decline to answer the question,” he stammered at last.

“I insist on an answer, it is material to the defense.”

“What do you expect to prove by it?” asked the judge.

“I expect to be able to prove,” said the lawyer, in a loud voice, “that the prisoner is the victim of a base conspiracy, and finally, I expect to be able to fix this crime on the guilty parties.”

The most intense excitement ran through the court. No one had the least idea what was to come.

“You had better answer the question,” said the judge.

“I do know a man named Martin,” replied Larkin.

“Did not this man, Martin, visit you at your house on the day of the murder? And did you not there and then make a pecuniary offer, to do a certain piece of business for you?”

“I decline answering any of these questions,” said Captain Larkin, who was now pale and gasping.

“The court must support the witness in this case,” said the judge; “the witness is not bound to criminate himself, and the court further observes that he cannot see what all this has to do with the matter in question. Even supposing all this to be true, it does not exonerate the prisoner at the bar from having committed the murder.”

“Of course, I submit with deference to the opinion of the court, and will leave that part of the subject. I will now ask the witness one or two more questions, and then I have done. Does this sheath belong to you?” continued the lawyer, holding up the sheath he had abstracted.

The wily villain gazed on the evidence of his guilt with a fixed glare. His face assumed a greenish hue; he saw himself hemmed in and vainly tried to extricate himself. He gasped, but no sounds issued from his lips.

“I will not detain the court longer by an examination of this witness,” said the attorney for the defense. “I beg to hand in a confession made by one John Martin, and duly attested, in which the said John Martin confesses that he is the murderer of Mr. Braddock, aided and abetted by Captain Larkin!”

The witness no sooner heard this, than he uttered a loud groan, and fell into the witness box, insensible. A scene of indescribable confusion followed, in the midst of which the judge directed the jury to return a verdict of ‘not guilty,’ which was at once done.

The same moment that Leonard Bartlett left the felon’s dock, Captain Larkin was conveyed to a felon’s cell.

I shall not attempt to describe Ellen's joy at the release of her lover. Leonard at that same moment was the happiest man in the world—all his troubles had melted into the air, for he was the accepted lover of the noblest, the best and most courageous girl in the United States—at least, that was his opinion.

Captain Larkin was in due time brought to trial, condemned and executed. Martin was imprisoned in the State Prison for life. A year afterwards, my wife and myself received an invitation to attend the marriage ceremony of Leonard Bartlett and Ellen Braddock.

Leaves from the Note-Book of a New York Detective: The Private Record of J. B. Ed. John B. Williams, M.D. New York: Dick and Fitzgerald, 1865.