

Story of a Thumb-Mark
Remarkable Detection of a Murder

I.

“You’ll be very sorry for this, uncle.”

The speaker was a young man—little more than a lad, indeed, to judge by his smooth face, though in figure he was stalwart and well set up. He spoke passionately as he closed the door and came out. He did not go back to his desk in the counting house, but passed straight from his uncle’s private office to the street, snatching his hat from the wall in the passage as he left.

“Another row with the governor. Mark my words,” said one of the clerks to his neighbor, “that young fellow will come to no good.”

The “governor” thus referred to was sole representative of the firm of Anthony Greig & Co., situated in one of the large seaport towns in the west of England. Nearly a hundred men and women were employed in the factory, and the firm’s trade mark, a ship in full sail, was known all the world over on their packages of flour, meal, and biscuits. Greig’s biscuits were sucked by babies everywhere—from England to the antipodes, from Shanghai to San Francisco; ladies crumbled Greig’s biscuits and dipped them daintily into their wine; sailors smashed Greig’s hard bake with their fists; even dogs, horses and cattle were supplied with specially prepared confections guaranteed to possess the qualities both of food and medicine.

Young Anthony Greig occupied a desk in his uncle’s office amongst the other clerks. He was advancing through all grades of the business till he should be judged fit to hold a share in the firm. But young Anthony was by no means so patient as his uncle desired him to be, nor so steady. Twice he had been forced to appeal to his uncle to extricate him from his debts—gambling debts. And old Anthony was not disposed to be a lenient judge of his nephew’s faults.

That day there had been a third and most serious encounter. Young Greig was involved to the extent of about ninety pounds. He had tried in vain to “do a bill” on his own account; but he was not sufficiently demoralized as yet to take less legitimate means of solving his difficulties. His uncle, however, did not appreciate at its true value the lad’s straightforwardness. Flexibility was not one of the old man’s characteristics, and he had already warned the young one that he would not help him a third time. The nephew pleaded his case with the utmost importunity, but in vain.

“I gave you fair and serious warning,” said the uncle. “You have seen fit to disregard it. Do you think I am as great a fool as you are yourself? If you don’t respect my word, at least I will. Go! Go, I say!” he thundered as the young man hesitated; so that all the clerks, from the manager down to the old man who carried messages, heard the row, as they called it, between the governor and young Anthony.

As for the old man, he hardened his heart and persuaded himself that he had acted for the best. The boy would ruin himself if allowed to persevere in such courses. Better strike once and for all. But as the day wore on things presented themselves rather differently to his mind. There was

little tenderness in his nature, but his sense of justice told him that, after all, the young fellow had acted in a straightforward way; he might have done infinitely worse. He wished the lad had not taken so absolutely his command to go, and half persuaded himself that he had not meant it, that he had only intended to order him back to this desk. Meanwhile he busied himself with work, and on his return from the market remained poring over his ledger—his private ledger—until it was time to close the office.

“I shall stay an hour or two to-night, Mr. Sinnott. You can dismiss when ready. Send James for something for dinner, as usual.”

It was no extraordinary circumstance for Mr. Greig to remain late at the office, as this order would indicate. He was a hard worker, like many successful men; and it is hard to say whether such are successful because they work hard or work hard because they are successful.

At ten o’clock that night young Anthony entered the sitting-room of his friend Beesley, living in apartments in Harrington street. He was pale and discomposed.

“I’ve had a row with the governor, Dick. I can’t pay up, and he wouldn’t help me. I want you to give me a night’s lodging; I can’t go home.”

* * * * *

At eight o’clock the next morning the woman who came to sweep out the office found old Anthony Greig face forward upon his open desk—dead.

II.

“Miss Grace is in the drawing-room, and says you are to go up, if you please, sir,” said the servant to a black-bearded, rather sprucely-attired man who entered the hall with the air of a frequent visitor.

“Mr. Greig in?” he asked, taking off his gloves and arranging the blue-silk handkerchief in his breast-pocket.

“No, sir; neither Mr. Greig *nor* Mr. Anthony hev come in to dinner. Miss Grace doesn’t know what *can* have kept them.”

The prim little domestic had a way of italicizing her speech in a most arbitrary mode.

“Papa must be staying at the office again to-night, Robert, and Tony has not been home, and I’m very glad you have come.”

“So am I,” said the young gentleman thus warmly welcomed. “And so you have been nursing the cat all afternoon, eh?”

“Well, it isn’t a miracle of observation to find that out. Suds certainly does leave a part of her fur wherever she goes.”

The gentleman thus addressed plumed himself somewhat upon his detective-like powers of observation, and the young lady seems to have known this, for she went on to say—

“But I have been reading, perhaps you can guess what?” And Miss Greig put her hands behind her, inclined her head to one side, and assumed generally a saucy and critical air whilst her companion peered about. “Oh, you are quite cold in your search!” she continued. “It isn’t at that side of the room at all.”

“Well, you barely gave a fellow a chance, everything is so neatly put away on the shelves. However, I think I have got it. *Sybelle*—isn’t that the book in question?”

“How could you guess?”

“Oh, easily enough. It does not need much cleverness to infer that you had been reading a certain book with a binding very much warped by that intolerable habit of yours of taking a book to the fire and toasting its poor back until it writhes like a martyr at the stake.”

“Books are made to be used. But is this faculty of observation really useful? It makes one feel almost uncomfortable, as if you were an officer of a private inquisition, holding judgment upon everybody around you.”

“If it’s useful to any one, it ought to be to me. Permit me to inform you that I am a lawyer—Robert Slater, of the firm of Farrell, Altman & Farrell. My head is my only capital—in the economic sense as well as literally—ahem! Now I think clever guessing comes by practice as much as by gift. If you waste your time over acrostics or chess problems you will get very smart in solving them. Well, then, clever guessing may prove very useful to one in my position. I could give you dozens of cases successfully defended or supported which turned on a happy inference. Here is my Aunt Margaret.”

Miss Steel had been busy with some household matters, she being the housekeeper in her brother-in-law’s house. “What can have kept Anthony till this hour?” she ejaculated, and then perceiving Mr. Slater she shook hands and sat down.

“Shall you sit up for Mr. Greig?” he inquired as Grace, an hour or so later, shut the piano and extinguished the candles.

“I think not. He prefers that we should not do so.”

In that case I must say good night. It is nearly eleven.”

To be a partner in a firm of solicitors of the standing of Farrell & Co. was a great thing for a young man like Slater. He was only four and twenty but looked half a dozen years older. Naturally smart and self-confident, his rapid career had in some ways spoiled him. He had been

the clever boy of his family, and had been petted and spoiled, as is not unusual in such cases, and yet he was a loveable man.

The Slaters and the Greigs had been neighbors for years, though at present they resided some distance apart. It was through Anthony Greig's influence that young Slater was introduced to the firm of solicitors of which he had become a member and between Robert Slater and Grace Greig there was a kind of half understood engagement.

III.

Mr. Slater had business in a neighboring town the next day. It was past midday when he returned, but his intention of going direct to his favorite restaurant—he was the happy possessor of a robust appetite which renewed itself thrice a day with the regularity of clockwork—was frustrated by an item of news on a broad sheet. The evening papers had bloomed quite prematurely into existence a full hour before the sun had reached the meridian in their anxiety to tell the story of what was called, in the manner dear to reporters—

A TERRIBLE TRAGEDY—A shocking occurrence had happened in our midst. A gentleman known and respected by multitudes of his fellow townsmen, Mr. Anthony Greig, of the firm of Greig & Co. was found this morning dead in his office. The body was discovered early this morning by the women servants. The dead man was lying forward on the desk in the private office. In the absence of medical testimony which will be forthcoming at the inquest, conjecture is at fault, but the majority incline to the belief that his death was not due to natural causes.

Later—It is now certain that not apoplexy, as some supposed, but strangulation was the cause of Anthony Greig's death. He has also been stabbed, but the wound is not of itself sufficient to have caused death. It was the habit of the deceased occasionally to remain late at the office, and this was the case last evening. We understand that the circumstances point to the supposition that the murder was accomplished between six and nine o'clock last night, but whether the motive of the deed was plunder or revenge is not yet evident. So far nothing has been missed from the cash drawers in the safes, the keys of which were found apparently untouched, hanging from the lock of the open desk. The doors and windows show no sign of having been forced. The police are making diligent inquiries, and it is said have discovered a clue, the nature of which has not transpired.

The late Mr. Greig led a retired life, and his name came but seldom before the public. His death will be sadly felt by a large circle of friends. His career has been one of unceasing and unassuming business energy and though he took but a small share in political affairs of his native town, he was amongst the most generous supporters of all local charities. Quite a gloom has been thrown over the town by this tragic occurrence, and this is intensified by certain sinister suspicions which we refrain even from hinting or mentioning except for the sake of hoping that they are groundless.

Thunderstruck by the intelligence, Mr. Slater hurried at once to the factory. Things were to all appearance going on as usual, that is to say the machinery was in full action and the clerks were all present in the office. The managing clerk, Mr. Sinnett, an elderly man, painstaking and

assiduous, kept things going for the sake of one or two large contracts in execution, but only the necessary current work was being done on the office. Many stood at their desks listless and distraught. A few continued to write the absolutely necessary correspondence, and all that was said was spoken in hushed whispers.

“What is this terrible news, Mr. Sinnott?” asked Slater as he entered the office. “I have been out of town, and have just heard it. Does Miss Greig—Have you sent word to the house? Where is young Mr. Anthony?”

Sinnott looked up and methodically laid down his pen. Then in a whisper:

“Come this way, Mr. Slater. Mr. Farrell has been here. I sent for you, and he came. This is shocking, is it not?” He led him aside, out of hearing of the others, and proceeded. “This is a more awful affair than you imagine. Carson, the detective, has it in hand. There is no doubt of its being a murder, and the worst is, it has been done without breaking locks and without robbery. What does it point to, Mr. Robert?”

“Why, that whoever did it must have been on the premises, I suppose.”

“And took nothing? Perhaps, rather it means that whoever did it had the means of entering the premises.” And Sinnott who was fat and comfortable looking, shivered nervously and coughed.

“You don’t mean to say—” began Slater.

“No. I don’t say anything. But I’ll tell you what others will say. Young Mr. Anthony will be accused of this as sure as you and I are here. I don’t believe it of him. Of course I can’t believe it; but things look very black, very black indeed. Yesterday they quarreled on the same old subject. I don’t think the amount of Mr. Anthony’s debts was much, but his uncle seemed to lose temper. We heard very high words when the door opened, and he came out in the most excited manner. The last expression every one in the office heard was, ‘You will be sorry for this uncle,’ and off he went. Now, there is his desk just as he left it yesterday, except for one thing. There was a white-handled pocket-knife there then. To-day it is covered with blood, lying—” Sinnott pointed expressively to the inner room.

“Where is Anthony?”

“That’s the worst of all. Mr. Anthony is missing. Add that to the fact of the quarrel, the threat, the knife, and to the singular fact that nothing has been stolen or violated—and what is the conclusion?”

Mr. Slater shook his head ominously, and his looks belied his words as he answered, “Oh well, let us hope Anthony can refute all this. It looks bad enough, but we can’t say till we have heard his own account of his doings. Here is Carson now.”

The detective was a tall, blue eyed, light-bearded man of about five and thirty. He drew himself up with the air of stretching himself as he held the door and closed it, and then strode leisurely into the office.

“Well, Mr. Carson, this is a bad business.”

“It is indeed, sir; as bad a business as I have seen. I suppose your people will take up the case for the young man. I’ve found him, he’ll be at the Coroner’s court in the morning.”

The three men repaired to the room of the deceased, Carson removing his hat and placing it on a chair. There was a desk in the middle of the room of the kind called cylinder desks. A few pictures were on the walls, a safe stood behind the desk, its massive iron painted in imitation of walnut, and beside the safe there was a door, seldom used, communicating with the factory.

The most careful search had failed to reveal anything except the white-handled knife, now in safe custody at the police office.

“What do you make of it, Carson?”

“Nothing, sir. There’s not a trace to lay hold of except, maybe, it does look a little queer that the knife should have been forgotten. Seems to me, if I’d ha’ done it, I might p’raps have forgot a handkerchief or a jimmy, but the knife itself would be the last thing to be forgotten. Curious thing, too, is those keys sticking in the desk there. If they have been used to open the safe and take anything—”

“Everything is in order,” put in Sinnott.

“Well, I say if the keys have been used, it must have been by a cool hand—to go and stick the right one in the desk again as if nothing had happened. It looks precious like suicide to me.”

“Well, there’s nothing more to be done here, I suppose,” said Mr. Slater. “Leave everything as it is, Mr. Sinnott. These things can go back to the restaurant. Poor man, he had little thought that this would be his last meal! Well, let us go.”

“The inquest is to-morrow morning at ten, sir,” said Carson.

“Very well, I shall be there.” So saying, Mr. Slater disappeared.

IV.

Elijah Carson, the detective, was a somewhat remarkable man. As he sat down you might not have noticed anything particularly striking in his appearance beyond a look of concentration in his face. Nor did his looks belie his character. He was a man of inventive resource, of tenacity of purpose, and in the pursuit of his profession he took an enthusiastic interest. And at present, called to investigate the mysterious murder of Anthony Greig, he had no other purpose than to demonstrate the crime as it really happened. He had been set on the case when the first

intelligence arrived, and his first object was to find young Anthony Greig. In this he anticipated little difficulty, for he was informed by one of the clerks, who had seen Beesley, that Greig was about to proceed to London. Acting on this information, and hoping to overtake the fugitive before he should reach the metropolis, he lost no time in getting to the railway platform. He had a photograph of the young man with him, and with this and the description received from Sinnott he felt fully confident of finding Greig, if not on the journey, in London itself. Conning the picture, Carson paced the platform and mentally had his eyes on scores of people at once. The optical battery of Argus himself could scarcely have more carefully scrutinized the numerous intending passengers than did his one pair of steel gray eyes. Suddenly his face lost its appearance of effort as with a smile he jumped into a compartment occupied by a young fellow carelessly sitting in one corner and smoking.

“Mr. Greig, I believe?” said Carson, scanning curiously the other’s face.

He started, but was not unusually disconcerted as he replied, “That is my name but I—really—I—I really don’t recall your name.”

“Carson, Elijah Carson. You do not know me. I am sent to bring you back. There is no help for it. Take care what you say; you are not bound to criminate yourself.”

“Carson the detective?”

Carson nodded affirmatively.

“What is wrong, then? I am going to London, and I don’t recognize your right to prevent me. I have debts, but they are not legal debts, if that is what you are after.”

“Pooh, that is nothing. This morning Mr. Anthony Greig, of Greig & Co., Limehouse street, was found in his office dead.”

The look of utter dismay that covered the young fellow’s face was no effort of a guilty actor in counterfeit surprise. “My uncle dead?” he exclaimed.

“The lad is no more a murderer than I am,” thought Carson as he scanned the face and discomposed countenance before him. “Come, come,” he said aloud, “men have been murdered before this. The question is, Who did it? I don’t mind telling you that your disappearance led to suspicion, and as soon as I could find your intended route I went off after you.”

“Murdered!” groaned the lad as the pair quitted the train and slowly retired from the platform. “I knew nothing of this.”

“Aye, that is the word, though there’s just a chance it was suicide. Now listen and take my advice. If—mark, I only say if—you did it, keep your own counsel, you will have enough to stand against without my evidence. If you are innocent,—well, you needn’t swear to it now,—give the clearest account of your doings since yesterday. Tell your solicitor everything, and if you like to trust me,”—he offered his long nervous hand as he spoke,—“if you like to trust me,

my lad, I am your friend. First impressions count for a good deal in these cases, and mine are that you are all right.”

Greig warmly grasped the offered hand. “Thanks,” said he. “I have nothing to conceal. I quarreled yesterday with my uncle about my debts, betting, you know” (Carson nodded). “I suppose that is why, when I disappeared, I was suspected. Oh, my poor uncle! I was his heir—my Cousin Grace and I. He told me so. Why should I have been such a fool as to vex him as I did?”

Carson frowned. “You know you are an heir, you say? Nothing, no money or valuables was stolen; your knife was found on the desk, you have a key of the office, no violence had been done to the premises. All this looks very bad against you. Now collect yourself. Where were you yesterday and last night? Who saw you? Account clearly to me for the time spent since you left your uncle. And don’t tell me, I warn you for your own sake, anything but the facts.”

“I’ll tell you just what I did. After the scene I had with him in the morning I walked out of the office—I don’t know where; but I know I got to the Allenton Hotel and got some dinner there. I could not go home; and I went back to Limehouse street at six o’clock and waited for him to come out; but he stayed late. I waited, I should think, more than an hour, yes, two hours, for I remember eight o’clock striking. I was walking up and down, and at last, when I came in view of the window again, it was dark, and as no one came out I thought I had missed my uncle. Then I walked fast homewards to overtake him—”

“Did you see anybody? Or rather did anybody see you whilst waiting outside?”

“O yes; several of the work-people passed. Tim, the man with one arm, who was hurt by the machinery, passed me, and so did Morris the cooper.”

“Notice you?”

“O yes. ‘Good evening, Mr. Anthony,’ or something of that kind they said.”

“Well, you were saying you walked home.”

“Yes, very fast, to overtake him—my uncle. I wondered at still missing him, and was much annoyed. I would not go in. I saw Robert—Mr. Slater, I mean, the solicitor—leave the house, but I avoided him; and then I went to a friend’s place, James Beesley, in Harrington street; he has apartments there. I stayed with him all night and told him my difficulties.”

“Of your own accord, or did he ask you?”

“Oh, he asked me. He asked me what was the matter with me. And then I told him of the scene I had had, and that I was going to clear off to London and stop that atrocious betting.”

“Does your friend Mr. Beesley bet?”

“Oh yes. I told him to let our friends know I had decamped. It is shabby, I know, but what else was there for it? After all, it’s only a rough and ready way of bankruptcy.”

They were by this time on their way back to where the unfortunate young fellow was to be lodged for the night, pending the Coroner’s inquest next morning. Little more passed between the two, except that occasionally Carson asked a question as he ruminated on the various bearings of the case. He was convinced that the young man was not trying to deceive him, but he could not help wishing that the jury who would try the case had seen the lad’s face on the first hearing of his uncle’s death. The world at large judges by facts and not impressions.

V.

On the morning after the body of Anthony Greig had been found the inquest was held, and his nephew was arraigned as the suspected murderer of the old man. After the usual preliminaries of inspecting the body and the like, evidence was taken as to the circumstances under which the deceased might have met his death, and notwithstanding the keen cross examination of witnesses by Mr. Slater on behalf of the young man placed at the bar, the evidence all pointed in one direction, namely, the implication of young Anthony Greig as the murderer of his uncle. The quarrel on the previous day between the uncle and nephew was spoken of, and the threat repeated with which the young man was heard to take leave of his relative. Tim, the one-armed man, and Morris, the cooper, bore witness to the fact that they had seen the accused loitering about the works on the evening of the murder and that shortly after he disappeared the light in his uncle’s room was seen to have been put out. They had naturally thought that young Anthony was simply waiting to accompany his uncle home, and it was not till they had heard that the young man’s knife had been found beside the body of the deceased that they remembered that the accused was seen by them as stated. The two men gave their testimony with evident reluctance, as young Anthony was rather a favorite among the work people, but the evidence was too clear to be set aside, and the jury had no hesitation in committing the young man for trial on the capital charge of murder.

While the final formalities of the inquest were being proceeded with Mr. Slater sat at the table with an anxious and thoughtful look up on his face. No doubts his thoughts were away with the daughter of the dead man, whose natural anguish over her father’s lamentable end would be heightened and embittered by the thought that *their* own cousin, who had lived under the same roof with them, had evidently been the guilty instrument of the old man’s death. Mr. Slater had seen Miss Grace that morning, and had assured her that nothing would be left undone on his part to clear the name of her cousin from the awful charge that stood against it, as both of them were convinced that, whatever differences may have existed between the old man and his nephew, the latter was utterly incapable of the crime of which he was suspected. But now, after hearing the evidence that had been taken, the young lawyer was somewhat staggered and shaken in his belief in the innocence of young Anthony, and as he recalled to mind the succession of blackening circumstances which linked the accused with the crime charged against him he felt that any attempts to save him would be all but hopeless.

As he sat thus his eyes fell upon the various articles produced at the inquest and now ranged upon the table, having to do with the condition in which the body of the deceased was found; and

among these was the white handled pocket knife, stained with blood, which had belonged to the young man accused of the crime. It was one of the fatal links in the chain of evidence against him. But there were other articles likewise blood stained, and among these was a sheet of paper on which the old man had written the date, preliminary to commencing a letter to some correspondent or other. The letter was never written, for the hand of the murderer had clutched him then, and the sheet was now dabbled with the life blood of the unfortunate old man. With a kind of morbid curiosity Robert Slater put out his hand and took up the paper. As he looked at it his eyes assumed their wonted clear and eager expression, and for a moment it seemed as if he was about to rise and request the Coroner to stay proceedings. But his second thoughts were apparently against this, and he kept his seat. In a few minutes the court rose, and the young man at the bar was led away in the custody of the police, to await his trial at the next assizes.

As the people were leaving the court room Mr. Slater leaned over to Carson, the detective, whispered something, and pointed with his finger to the sheet which he had just been examining. Carson, so incited, took up the paper, and placing it among the other articles, carried the whole with him out of court.

The young lawyer followed closely at his heels. When they reached the detective's private room, the latter laid down the articles he carried thither, and singled out the paper to which Mr. Slater had directed his attention. He looked at it scrutinizingly for a few minutes, and then turning to the lawyer, said, "I see nothing here of any consequence. There are several bloodstains on the sheet, but nothing which seems to point to anything particular."

Mr. Slater took the paper in his hand. "Do you see that blotch, as if made with half-dried blood?" he asked, pointing to a large oval stain near the inner edge of the sheet of paper. "Well, don't you observe it is the impression of a man's thumb? It is that of the left hand, if I mistake not. See, there are the grooves or furrows of the skin distinctly marked; and if you open up the double sheet you will find a similar finger-mark on the reverse side. But the latter is not so well defined as the print of the thumb; and I think this will be of use to us."

"I see what you point out," said Carson, "but what purpose can these markings serve?"

"I will tell you," said the lawyer. "Just the other week I was reading in a scientific journal that the arrangement of the grooves or furrows on the skin of the finger, shown in such an impression as this, is not the same in all men, but that every individual may be distinguished by the characteristic markings thus obtained. In China, for instance, all holders of public office, and especially soldiers, are known by their finger-marks, and several cases of crime and desertion have been detected by reference to these marks. Besides, when any one possesses the finger-mark of any individual not otherwise known to him, it is found to be impossible for another man to personate that individual, because a comparison of their finger marks would at once detect the deception."

"But how will this serve you in this case?" asked the detective, naturally cautious as to admitting the force of evidence of such a novel kind.

“In this way,” said Mr. Slater. “We must take means to get the finger mark of every man in the establishment of Greig & Co., as also of the deceased man, and of his nephew. This can easily be done; and thereafter, by an idea which had occurred to me, namely by photographing each impression, we will arrive at the fact whether or not any one of these marks agrees with the mark on this sheet of paper. Meantime, the utmost secrecy will be necessary as to our intentions, so that none of the workmen take alarm, and escape us.”

“But why,” said the detective, “should the workmen be especially singled out, and not the clerks also?”

“Because,” answered the lawyer, “I am all but certain the two impressions on this sheet of paper have been produced by the finger and thumb of a man who uses tools, and has a hard hand. The furrow markings are broad and flattened, and the great size of the thumb is extremely noticeable, and by these together I am led to think that we have got a clue to the person who committed the murder, and that that person is not young Anthony Greig, however darkly circumstances may appear against him at present.”

VI.

Next morning, a little after ten o'clock, Mr. Slater and Mr. Carson entered with a few assistants the counting house of the manufacturing works of Greig & Co. After a little conversation with Mr. Sinnott, the head clerk, and measures having been taken to ascertain that all the workmen were on the premises, orders were issued by Mr. Carson to his assistants to watch the several doors leading from the works, while Mr. Sinnott sent a message to the men that they were requested to meet him in the warehouse immediately. At once the machinery of the place was brought to a stand, and one by one, as they were free to go, the workmen filed into the warehouse, each with an anxious and curious look on his face, as if all felt instinctively that the meeting had something to do with the mysterious death of their late master.

When all were assembled, Mr. Sinnott ordered the doors of the room to be locked, and briefly stated to them what he did was under the warrant of the authorities, Mr. Carson having been sent, along with Mr. Slater, to carry out certain investigations of a legal kind. He hoped the men would frankly lend their assistance so far as it was asked, as it was of importance to each and all of them that the murderer of their late master should be discovered, so as to free innocent men from a painful suspicion.

One or two of the men at once signified their willingness to serve then ends of justice so far as they could do so, but the bulk of them stood silent and awed, as if they would rather have been free from the scrutiny to which they believed themselves about to be subjected.

Mr. Slater and Mr. Carson proceeded without loss of time to carry out the object of their visit. A smooth tablet had been prepared, with a thin coating of coloring matter on the surface, and it was explained to the men that it was desired to obtain from each of them an impression of the thumb of the left hand. This was done, as Mr. Slater showed, by first coloring the ball of the thumb by pressing it on the tablet, and then transferring the mark to a sheet of paper, by next pressing the thumb thereon. The process was of the simplest kind, and the work was soon begun. Each man

after giving the required mark on a separate sheet of paper, duly numbered, was desired to write on the same his name and address, whereupon the paper was handed to a photographer, who was present with his apparatus, and a photograph was taken on glass of each individual mark.

The work, though carried on as expeditiously as possible, still took a considerable time, there being in all twenty-four such impressions to be taken. When the work was at length so far completed, the photographer stretched a white screen in the room, the shutters were closed to exclude the light, and the apparatus which had been used in photographing was now exchanged for a magic lantern.

While these preliminaries were being adjusted, a painful silence was observed by all. As the stream of white light fell on the faces of the men as they stood huddled together on the floor, giving to each countenance a wan and pallid look, it was evident that each felt himself to be all but face to face with some strange and as yet incomprehensible mystery.

Meantime the photographer was forwarding his work, and all eyes were now directed to the screen. "This is thumb mark No. 1, the original one, Mr. Slater," said the operator, as a maze of lines in course network grew upon the screen after a few fitful jerks and alternate apparitions and effacements.

"That," said Mr. Slater, addressing the men, "is the key to what we are in search of to-day. We will be fair and above board with you, now that we have the work thus far done. The lines which you see cast upon the screen are the magnified impression of a mark in blood on a sheet of paper which was found on the desk at which your master, two mornings ago, was found sitting dead. It is the thumb-mark of a man—of the man, I believe, who committed the murder; and as it has been shown by scientific men that every individual may be known by the peculiar and special arrangement of the furrows on the skin of the fingers, we have come to ascertain if any one of the thumb marks which you have given us today agrees with the lines and markings of that now shown on the screen before you."

None of the men spoke in reply to Mr. Slater, only a curious sound, as if a stifled groan or a muttered threat, issued from a dark corner of the room, but the individual from whom the sound proceeded could not be ascertained, though more than one head was scrutinizingly turned in the direction whence it came.

Mr. Slater, turning to the photographer, said: "You can now go on. Produce No. 2."

The operator placed another slip of glass in the camera, and over the flat maze appeared a second on the screen. The two were obviously distinct. "Can you make the two coincide?" asked Mr. Slater—"superpose one over the other, I mean." This was done, and the mesh became involved and mixed. "That will do; try No. 3," continued Mr. Slater. "No. 3's name is Donovan. There is a smooth blotch in the middle of the thumb-mark. That's not it. Try the next—No. 4, Roper. Roper has apparently been cutting cake tobacco and his epidermis at the same time. Just look at those gashes running up and down. Roper is acquitted."

And so on they proceeded with the examination of these strange signatures made by the various workmen of the firm. They had examined in vain more than half the specimens procured; yet Mr. Slater was by this time firmly convinced of the validity of the proof, if indeed the proof hoped for should be forthcoming, so various and so markedly characteristic were the different sign manuals thrown upon the screen.

“No. 17, Charles Packs,” called the photographer, putting in another slip.

“Hello,” cried Mr. Slater, “are you sure you have got both in the lantern?”

“Quite sure; but they are superposed. Now I make them separate—it is the same thumb-impression.

“Charles Packs, thou art the man!” said the lawyer solemnly.

Every eye in the room turned in search of Packs, and in another second he was dragged from the dark corner whence the muffled sound had shortly before been heard to proceed, and placed before Mr. Slater. He was a sullen looking man, rather undersized but powerfully built. He stood stolid and dumb, without lifting his eyes.

Mr. Slater, addressing him, said, “Charles Packs, you stand here before your fellow-workmen, under the terrible suspicion of being a murderer. You have seen the experiments we have made and you have witnessed the result, what have you to say?”

The man was silent. At one time his lips moved as if to speak, but he seemed unable to utter a word. Mr. Carson approached him, and in another moment he was handcuffed and led away. Not a man in the room but felt that only a sense of guilt on the part of Packs could account for his shame and silence when the charge of murder was thus made against him.

An hour afterwards a message was brought to Mr. Slater, that Packs wished to speak with him. He went at once to the prison and found the man in his cell, utterly stricken in spirit. “My sin,” he said to the lawyer, “has found me out.” And thereupon he proceeded to make a clear confession of his guilt. He had entered his old master’s room for the purpose of robbing him, and ended by taking his life. He had counted upon the possibility of such a crime being the result of his attempt, and had picked up young Anthony’s knife as he passed his desk on his way to commit the deed. But in the course of the struggle that ensued, the knife dropped out of his hand, after a slight wound had been inflicted on the old man and the unfortunate victim had been cruelly garroted. Being aware of the quarrel between old Anthony and his nephew, Packs left the knife where it had been found, in order to cast suspicion on the young man. Yet after all, as the wretched man admitted, he did not succeed in committing the robbery he had planned, for the sound of a footstep outside had scared him, and he rushed off without waiting to effect his purpose. The unexpected result of that day’s investigation had staggered and unmanned him, and he did not care how soon an end was put to his career of falsehood and crime.

Subsequent inquiries elicited the fact that Packs was only an assumed name, and that the same man, under the name of Sullivan, had long been known to the police, and been more than once

convicted of robberies and assaults. He had worked in the establishment of Greig & Co. for about a year, during which time he had always been an object of suspicion, more or less, to his fellow-workers. At the subsequent assizes he was found guilty of the murder of Anthony Greig, and paid the last penalty of the law.

Meantime, the incrimination and confession of the murderer brought relief to young Anthony Greig and to his cousin Grace. Robert Slater, by his management of the case, worked himself into distinction, and his business increased accordingly. And by way of strengthening the ties which thus united his fortunes to some extent with that of Greig & Co., he before long married Miss Grace, who inwardly admires, though outwardly she occasionally complains of her husband's rather too acute faculties of observation.

The Wellsboro Agitator, February 14, 1882

St. Louis Globe-Democrat, June 10, 1882

Daily Evening Bulletin, July 1, 1882