

Arrested on Suspicion
by Andrew Forrester, Jr.

I MAY as well say, at once, that this statement never could have been made had I not been, as I remain, an admirer of Edgar Allan Poe; and if ever I have time, I hope to show that his acts were the result, not so much of a bad, as a diseased mind. For one thing, I believe his eyes were affected with an inequality of sight, which, in itself was enough to overbalance a very exciteable brain.

But Poe has nothing to do with my statement, except as its prompter. My name is John Pendrath (Cornish man, as I dare say you see in a moment), my age is twenty-eight, and I live with my sister Annie. We are all that are left of our family, which you must see by the name was equally good and old. I need not say what I am; because, though I feel no shame for my work, I do not care about it, and hope, some day, when the Lord Chancellor wakes up, to be able to go back to Cornwall.

However, it seems I am writing about myself, and that is not my intention; which, indeed, is to show how much individual good much a writer as even the condemned Edgar Poe can do, and even on this side of the Atlantic.

As I and my sister cannot afford a house of our own, we live in apartments—two bedrooms and a sitting-room, generally second floor; Annie having the room behind our parlour, and I camping in a garret. I do not say we are very happy, because of our chancery affair; but we are generally cheerful—always so, except when we hear about costs, which is all we do hear of our famous suit.

When we had been in Aylesbury Terrace, Bayswater, about six weeks—on the second floor—I was coming home as usual, when, in the ordinary way, I found Annie at the usual meeting-place.

“Annie,” said I, “what’s the matter? Have you heard any good news?”

“No, Jack; but when I don’t come to meet you, and I run down to open the door, you look twice before you give me my Cornwall kiss.”

“Why, Annie,” said I, “what do you mean? for I hate a mystery without a statement. This arises, I suppose, through my liking for mathematics.”

“Jack, dear,” said she, “I have a double.”

“No, Annie,” I replied, “that can’t be, or I shall go courting.”

“Upon my word, Jack,” said sister Annie, “I felt inclined to ask myself whether I had gone out and come home with a stout lady, aged forty, in black silk, when I saw them come to the door: and now I’ve left them behind, under our rooms, I ask myself—in fun, you know—whether I have come out to meet you.”

Of course, then, I understood. Annie had made a statement.

“Oh,” said I, “a mother, with her daughter, apparently, has taken the first floor of No. 10, Aylesbury Terrace, and the supposed daughter is certainly something like you.”

“That is the history itself, John,” said sister Annie, “if you take out *apparently*; for I heard the younger call the elder, ‘ma, dear;’ and I am sure they have taken the first floor, because the door was open as I came down, and I could not help seeing that they were eating slices of bread and marmalade.”

“Oh!” replied I; for I could say nothing else.

And when I saw the young person come up the house steps next morning (Sunday), it seemed to me that she resembled Annie in some degree; but my sister—like most women I think, had exaggerated the likeness. She would have passed for Annie with a stranger, but not with me.

Annie was also wrong in saying they had taken the first floor. The mother (apparent), alone lived in our house, and the daughter, said to be married, lived elsewhere.

Well, I hope my sister Annie has no more curiosity than most women; but, as I am away all day, and she is lonely, I can’t blame her for looking out of the window, though I have, perhaps, sometimes told her it was a pity she could not find something better to do. So, she could not help noticing four daily facts:—

1. That the younger woman came every morning.
2. That the mother and daughter (apparent) went out together.
3. That they seldom left the house two days running in the same clothes, and frequently exchanged their cloaks and shawls on the same day.
4. That the occupant of the first floor always came home alone.

I put these premises before myself—though, perhaps, it would be, as a rule, below a man to interfere in such matters as these—and I came to this conclusion:— That the husband of the daughter had quarreled with the mother; that, therefore, the mother and daughter went about together, while the husband was away at his business; and that they were rather vulgar, well-off women, who liked to go about and show their finery.

I had no need to tell Annie to avoid Mrs. Mountjoy and her daughter, Mrs. Lemmins. She felt neither was a companion for her. I mention this because Mrs. Mountjoy made advances to Annie, which, however, ended on her side; for in spite of the assurances of Mrs. Mountjoy’s respectability by our landlady, Mrs. Blazhamey, Annie and I kept our own opinions.

I suppose Mrs. Mountjoy had been in the house about a month, when I noticed a little blue-stoned ring on Annie’s left hand. Of course I said nothing about it, since she did not, though I

saw it was new. I am not one of those men who pry into women's actions. You know we do not like them to pry into ours.

Well, the thunderclap came as suddenly as I am about stating its particulars to you. I was at work, when a cab drove up to the door, and out came Mrs. Blazhamley. I shoved her into the waiting-room for the public, and then listened for her to speak. The poor woman seemed quite overwhelmed for some moments, and though I did not move or utter a word, I dare say I was white enough.

“Oh, sir,” at last, she said, “Miss Annie's took up for shopliftin'!”

If you ask me how I felt, I cannot tell you. But I am sure of this—that within ten seconds I was thinking wholly of my sister. I know Mrs. Blazhamey believes me to this day a brute; but I hope I am not cynical when I say, that most of the people who give way to a deal of emotion generally seem to have a quantity of big I's mixed up with their grief. I dare say, though, I am a cold sort of man.

What was to be done? See Annie, if possible. It was then ten minutes to four, the hour at which we closed. I obtained an easy permit to leave, and jumped into Mrs. Blazhamey's cab. I did not speak, after learning whither we had to go, till we met a hansom cab, into which I and the poor woman with me exchanged.

Of course, I am not going to give the particulars of the meeting. I have only to state facts, so I will only say that Annie, after a little while, was almost as cool as myself. She had been arrested at three, and now it was half-past four. That she would not be taken before the magistrate till about half-past eleven the next morning was the first news I gained. Then I asked the inspector on duty, and the policeman who had brought Annie to that place, for the particulars of the case.

They were these: The prisoner, Annie—do not suppose I am going to conceal any fact, so I say prisoner—had been shoplifting the district for some time, in company with a companion about forty years of age. The prisoner had been identified by a jeweller who had been robbed; and one of the rings stolen from his shop was found on her left hand— it being sworn to by a private mark.

I may tell you that this statement was given to me with mock gravity by the inspector, on my calm representation that it was a case of mistaken identity. I need not add that I knew my sister ran no chance of condemnation; but scandal has always got some weight, and therefore I had two ends to meet—her immediate liberation, and the arrest of the true depredators.

I need not state that both Annie and I saw how the ground lay—she had been arrested for Mrs. Lemmins (so called); and in a moment I comprehended the daily change of dress, and the return of the woman Mountjoy alone, in order to avoid the greater chance of detection after a robbery by remaining with her companion.

Annie comprehended my warning glance as our eyes met, when the inspector, in the charging-office, stated the case; and I have no doubt he thought we knew the suspicion was strong. But I think I staggered him when I said— “Do thieves usually wear the jewelry they steal?”

“Good bye, Annie,” I said; and I could not trust myself to kiss her—nor did she offer to touch my cheek.

Now, what was to be done? Here were the facts? Annie could not be released till the next day, and I had about eighteen hours in which to work for her, and procure the arrest of the women going by the names respectively of Mountjoy and Lemmins. Had they taken the alarm? If so, how long? If not, what extent of time would they require in which to learn how matters stood—when might they infer my sister and I would suspect them? So far, there had passed but two hours and a-half since the arrest. Had they heard of it in that time?

“Can I have a detective in my employ, if you please?” I said to the inspector.

“Two,” the official said; who, in spite of the calmness of apparent fact against Annie Pendrath, was, I saw, interested by my action.

“One,” I said; and a soft-looking, quiet, almost womanly man, with fair hair and weak, soft blue eyes, a man about thirty-five, was placed at my disposal.

We three—myself, the constable (named Birkley), and Mrs. Blazhamey—left the station in a cab called, and then I said—

“Mrs. Blazhamey, the real thieves are your precious drawing-room lodger and her friend.”

“What, Mrs. Mountjoy!” screamed our landlady; “why, she’s a lady.”

“So she may be, but she’s a thief.”

“Then out o’ my house she goes the moment I gets home.”

Of course, this was just the kind of answer I expected. I had balanced it this way: if I do not tell Blazhamey, she will carry the whole history up to Mountjoy the moment we reach home; while if I inform her, she will put the woman on the alert.

“Mrs. Blazhamey,” said, I, “will you make five pounds? Yes, I see you will. Go to your daughter’s at Kensington-park—don’t come home till half-past ten, and I’ll pay the note down tomorrow at twelve.”

Of course, she made a thousand objections; but she was packed off; at last, in another cab, and I and the policeman drove to Aylesbury-terrace.

“Policeman,” said I, “if this woman is still in the house, she must only leave it in your company. I’ll take the responsibility of charging her; but I don’t want you to take her (if she’s there) till I give you the word. I want to catch her friend.”

“Lor’, sir! do yer think her friend’ll turn up, and do yer think she’s there? Lor’ bless yer, sir! they takes an ’int in a nurry. They’ve hooked!”

“If she is still there,” I said, “will you watch opposite till I’ve put a canary cage in the second-floor front right-hand window, looking *into*, and not from the street?”

The blue-eyed detective, the most innocent-looking man I ever saw, opened his azure eyes; and the end of it was, that he agreed to my proposal, which was but natural.

“It may be hours you’ll have to wait,” I said.

“Days,” replied the man, with the best laconicism I ever witnessed.

We left the cab before reaching the house, and then separated to opposite sides of the street. It struck seven as I went up the garden path.

There she was, at the window, reading a yellow-covered book.

She could not have taken the alarm, I thought, or she would not be reading. I had up the servant directly. Did she know why her mistress had left the house in the afternoon?

“No,” the girl replied. “She was very much flustered, and only said, ‘It can’t be—it can’t be.’”

She (witness) did not know the beginning of the affair, because she had been out on an errand, and when she came back, missus had her every-day bonnet on. She went out with a policeman. I may here add, that Annie had sent the policeman to our lodgings to Mrs. Blazhamey; having forethought enough not to send to me at the establishment. I then asked the girl whether Mrs. Mountjoy was in at the time.

“No,” the girl said; “she com’d in at five.”

Had any letter arrived for her?

“No—not even a note, mister,” the girl replied.

Now, I could have had Mountjoy arrested at once, but I had learnt that the criminal classes are, as a rule of business, very faithful to each other, and therefore I felt that the apprehension of Mountjoy might prevent that of Lemmins. If the latter heard of Annie’s arrest first, I felt sure that Mountjoy would be in some way informed of the matter; while if our fellow-lodger was the first to acquire the knowledge, the accomplice would be in some way warned. The priority of information would chiefly depend upon this condition—to the residence of which woman was my sister nearest when she was arrested?

I went to the window, after dismissing the servant, and there was that blue-eyed man, whom no one could take for a police-officer, eating nuts, and with a couple of newspapers under his right arm. I saw Mrs. Mountjoy was safe, but it was her accomplice I wanted to encompass.

Nothing occurred up to ten minutes to eight, except Mrs. Mountjoy calling for some warm water; but at that time a woman limped up the garden, and carrying a basket of clothes, which, it seemed to me, was just home from the laundress. She did not come in, but she left the basket, and quietly went her way.

Almost immediately after she had closed the gate, the detective opened it, and before he reached the door I had my hand on the lock.

“Quick!” he said, pushing past me; “that’s a ’complice—the letter’s in the wash.”

The girl was coming out of the drawing-room, having taken in the basket, as I ran down to the door; and as the policeman pushed past me and up the stairs without the waste of a moment, I am quite sure the basket had not been carried into the room more than a quarter of a minute, when the officer followed it.

Half a glance satisfied the man. The linen on the top of the basket had been roughly turned over. There was no letter in Mrs. Mountjoy’s hand, but I saw it was trembling. She was seated in the chair near the window, exactly as I had seen her when I came home, but the book she had been reading was on the table.

The officer looked from me to the basket, flinging an expression into his blue eyes I never should have thought could characterize them; and then turning to the woman, he said—

“Come—the game’s up.”

“I don’t understand you,” said the woman.

“I does,” added the officer; and continued to me—”will you go and fetch a cab, sir? I dare say the lady ’ud rather not walk.”

Upon the removal and charging of the woman I need not dilate, as those circumstances have nothing to do with my statement.

What I wanted was the letter, which I felt sure, without the help of the policeman, had been brought amongst the linen.

She had not had time to read it, and, therefore, it would not be destroyed, unless she had recognized the policeman’s step at the bottom of the staircase, and had managed to annihilate it while he and I were ascending the staircase. The officer appeared to have been aware of the value of the letter equally with myself; for when I returned to the house, he had manacled her hands, as he told me afterwards, to prevent her from touching the letter if she had it about her.

Under the policeman's directions, I kept my eyes on the ground from the drawing-room to the cab— (I seem to be writing the word "cab" very frequently; but the fact stands, that I was in one cab or another by far the better part of the score of hours between Annie's arrest and the end of my statement)—and I was quite sure the letter was not dropped during the passage. Again, when we reached the station-house, the vehicle was closely examined, and even the ground over which we passed to the charging-office.

Then the woman was closely searched. I was told that even her hair was examined minutely, and the basque of her stays taken out. But all to no purpose—the letter was not found. That some kind of communication had been made, or rather attempted, I was certain, for the policeman had recognized the apparent laundress as a hanger-on, and general thieves' go-between.

The conclusion both I and the officer came to before we left the station was, that the letter, or note, was in the drawing-room, and still in the basket.

It was clear she could not have found and read the warning, however short, in the few moments that elapsed while I ran down stairs and up again with the constable. It would take some seconds to reach the chair in which she was seated, and further time in which to hide the communication.

The constable said, "p'raps she swallowed it," as a kind of preparation for the worst. But I was not inclined to accept this theory, notwithstanding he urged that it might have been a mere scrap of paper; because it seemed impossible that it could have been found, masticated, and swallowed in the time.

When the officer and I returned to the house, it wanted a quarter to nine. You see, time was progressing.

And now began the search for the letter. And here it was that I think my experience beat that of the police constable; for, after we had ransacked the basket, and were quite sure the letter was not within it, *he* began the ordinary routine search, while I sat down and began to *think*. The constable supposed I was broken down, and so he said—

"Chirrup, sir."

Whereupon I answered him—

"Go on, officer; I'm searching, too."

I suppose he was inclined to laugh, for he turned away to the stove. It was summer time (August), and so there was no fire in the grate. The officer, being at the stove, began examining it.

"Any ashes on the ground?" I asked.

"Why, you don't suppose she burnt it? It's hid," the man replied.

“Any soot on the hobs or hearth?”

“No,” he replied.

“Then the top moveable flap of the stove has not been moved. Could a letter—take this card—be thrust between the damper and its frame?”

“No,” said the man; “there’s a hedge to it.”

“Then, what are you staying about the stove for?” I asked.

The man turned, looked at me, his foolish-looking jaw dropped low, and then he said—

“You knows a thing or two, mister—you do.”

Of course I do not wish to hide from the reader that I was trying to copy Edgar Poe’s style of reasoning in this matter; for confessedly I am making this statement to show how a writer of fiction can aid the officers of the law.

“I shall do the regular round, “ said the officer, beginning to the right of the fire-place.

Now, as I sat, I was exerting all my reason to deduce the probabilities of the place of concealment from the facts known. I remembered that in the case of a search for a letter by the French police, recounted by Poe, that while the officers were hunting for the missive, even in the very legs and backs of the chairs, that it was stuck in a card rack, openly, with a dozen others; and though this knowledge was the basis upon which I built up my argument, yet, of itself, it was valueless, for I felt it would require a mind far beyond the common-place—a condition which did not distinguish Mountjoy—to imagine and rapidly complete a mode of concealment which should be successful by its very candour.

I felt that this woman had concealed the communication—if, indeed, it were not destroyed, a supposition I refused to entertain—in such a manner as a child would conceive, with the superaddition of some dexterity, the result of the shifting and elusive nature of her life.

I was still pondering, when the officer came to the bookcase, which was locked.

“Yere’ll be a job, to hunt all through them books,” said the blue-eyed, amiable officer, in a confidential tone.

Now, had the bookcase been opened? I got up, and looked at the projecting ledge of the *escritoire* portion, below the bookcase. The dust had been blowing that day, and the upper part of one of the windows was still open. A glance showed me the case had not been unclosed, for the particles of dust lay equally over the ledge; and I noticed that the opening, or key-door, was furnished with an inner green silk curtain, which was shut in, and protruded below the bottom of the panel. Had it been opened, this curtain must have broken the regularity of the dust, which

was *not* disturbed. So, again, the fine, white, pulverous particles lay on the upper part of the two knobs of the *escritoire* slide—a fact which proved to me that the *escritoire* had not been opened, as in that case both handles must have been touched.

My argument was so clear, that the officer did not even hesitate to admit I was right.

“And what about the cupboard under the askertor?” he asked.

“Search it,” I said, “though I doubt if it’s there. She was a stout woman, and would avoid stooping.”

“Ha!” answered the officer approvingly; but he examined the cupboard, and found little else than china in it.

Still I sat; for I felt I could thus more easily concentrate my thoughts than by standing. And do not suppose that all this time I did not think of Annie. The fact is, I knew I could best serve her by acting exactly as though I was doing an ordinary duty, rather than one of love. Indeed, if people would but think of themselves a little less than they do, they would oftentimes get through more work than most men manage.

“Officer,” I said, after a pause, in which he had looked over the chairs, under the table-cloth, and in all parts of the ebony inkstand—even fishing in the ink with a pen, and catching nothing worth the taking, “Officer, will you examine the joins of the wall-paper from the ground, to about six feet high?”

“Very well, mister; but will you help me move the heavy things?”

“Only note the joins you can see,” I said, adding, with the first smile I had indulged in since the morning, “I don’t think she had them out and back again in the time it took us to come upstairs—see if the joins fit and are flat.”

This was a long piece of work for the officer, and dusk was coming on as he made half-way round the apartment.

“Look at the cracks in the mantelpiece, where the flat and the top of each pillar come together? Nothing! Well, and now the edge of the carpet all round the room, where the edge can easily be raised.”

I dare say you will wonder that I did not help actively to search. I was hunting with my brains. Was it possible, I thought, that, always anticipating a visit from the police, she had some easy place of concealment for pieces of jewellery and small articles of value, and into which she had conveyed the letter?—of the existence of which there could be no doubt, for we found that the tumbled linen belonged, some of it to children, and some of it to grown-up men, while a pair of stockings were unfolded, “and,” said the constable, “somehow, a stockin’ allers is the post-bag among ’em.”

Could such a place of immediate concealment be a slit in the carpet? This might be the case, and I suggested the idea to the officer.

“Then hadn’t we better have the carpet up!” he asked.

“It will cause a great waste of time,” answered I, “and we will not do so till we have done searching elsewhere.”

But I found this idea so clung to my mind, that it impeded the progress of my thought. So, deciding that I must settle this point before I proceeded to another, I sat devising a means of ascertaining if there were a slit in the carpet without hauling it up. Soon I found one. If I took up one end of the carpet, and flapped the air under it, the dust you will always find under a lodging-house carpet would rise, and fly in a little cloud through any cutting.

The officer saw the force of this argument, and it was put into operation.

But nothing came of it; and I think it was at this point that my official friend began to break down, saying—

“Derpend upon it, she swallered it.”

Then he began to hunt again—this time behind the pictures, but I soon called his attention from them by saying—

“The moderator-lamp.”

“Ha! I didn’t think o’ the lamp,” said the officer.

But we found nothing in the lamp beyond disappointment.

Time, however, had not been lost; for the field of observation was nearly gone over. The letter, or scrap of paper, was not below the wall-hangings, for not one of the seams was loose, or wet with paste or gum. It was not up the chimney, not even concealed in the paper ornament in the stove, nor about the bookcase, lamp, chairs, or table; nor, in all probability, was it under the carpet.

“The tea-caddy,” I said, after a pause.

The caddy was easily opened, for Birkley had brought the woman’s keys with him; but it was searched to no purpose. And when the night had well closed in, and Mrs. Blazhamey had come home (before her time, though), and hindered us, we were no nearer a satisfactory result than we had been at the commencement of the search. By this time, the carpet had been taken up, the pictures down and out of their frames, every loose book about nearly pulled to pieces with examination, and even the bell-pulls unripped. The sacking of the chairs, the bottom of the fender, the cornice of the bookcase—a hundred spots, nine-tenths of which must have been

totally inaccessible to the woman in the time at her disposal, had been examined, and with equal want of success.

“Derpend upon it, sir, she swallered it,” said the officer; and I think it was this persistency on his part which intensified my obstinacy in believing that the warning was in the room. I wanted to be by myself, to think without interruption, to follow the action of the woman; and, with this end in view, I said to the officer—

“Go to the station, and see if they have heard anything.”

“Holl right!” said he; “but, derpend upon it, she swallered of it *down*.”

The officer gone, and Mrs. Blazhamey almost forced out of the room, which by this time looked like a wreck, I sat down in the midst of the furniture, and asked what next was to be done. And then, with that repetitory process which, I am told, is common during intense thought, I began conceiving once more the idea of what the woman must have been about when she first supposed a police-officer in the house.

How many seconds had she been in doubt before the officer and I entered the room? I had accepted Birkley’s theory that she had recognised the policeman’s tramp when he was at the bottom of the stairs; but was I justified in accepting that theory? How if she had no suspicion till the door handle was turning? If such were the case, the scrap of paper would be within a foot of the right side of the chair in which we found her seated. You see, being left to myself, I was adding to the repetition of my thought.

Suppose I went through *her* actions from the opening of the linen basket to the entry of myself and the officer?

You may declare this action childish, but you are wrong.

I went to the basket, supposed that I opened a stocking, and then went to the chair, thinking to myself that she, a stout woman, and naturally agitated by the arrival of the warning, would take a seat; and what more natural, since she was going to read by the coming twilight, than to go to the window?

I took the chair, exactly as we had found her, my right side to the window, and then supposed myself startled by the opening of the door. This fright would be followed by the involuntary attempt to hide the letter *by the right hand*. I flung my hand behind me, and it lodged in the folds of the cord-knotted curtain.

The discovery was far easier than putting on a worn glove—which is sometimes a difficult operation. My fingers positively rested on the paper, a mere scrap, torn from a wide-margined newspaper, and which had been easily thrust into the folds where the damask was gathered.

We had been at fault by crediting the woman with too much cleverness. We had supposed that she had anticipated and prepared for our coming when we were at the bottom of the stairs; and

acting upon that belief, we had been wandering all round the room when our investigation should have been confined to a square yard.

Nor was I blameless on another score. I had presupposed the woman to be not intellectual enough to avoid a distinct concealment; whereas, the rapidity of our coming had caused her to do by accident that which a clever and prepared criminal would do by premeditation—placing the letter where nobody would think it worth while to look, as being under one's very eyes.

Will you believe the statement that now I had found the scrap of paper I saw that it was *visible* as it lay in the folds of the curtain, which had positively been unhooked by the constable that he might examine the shutter-cases with facility?

But do not suppose my labours were over. Not that I refer to the perusal of the *cipher* as a labour; I defy an ignorant cipher to puzzle me. Exactly as you would never dream of looking for a hidden letter in a blotting-case, so a merely confused Roman-letter cipher (if the word in such an instance as this is applicable) is infinitely more difficult to analyse than a system of actual, arbitrary signs. I had always been able to read an arbitrary cipher after a study of twenty minutes. I was only twelve, when I found a little packet in my cousin's room containing a lock of hair and some words in arbitrary cipher, which I analysed in half a minute; for seeing two words flourished all about, I supposed they formed the lady's name, found that the fourth and sixth letters of the first, and the second and fifth of the second, were similar, so successfully guessed, in far less time than it takes to write about, that the MS. and lock referred to our neighbour Phoebe Reade.

Cunning, ignorant people, I am told, always use an arbitrary cipher, almost as easy to read as A B C. I may tell you that Mrs. Mountjoy's letter gave me little trouble. I found it at nearly a quarter-past nine, and at half-past it was written out for the benefit of the police. It was in a simple character.

And as I can have no secret in this matter, if you are willing to learn the process, which has few regular rules, here it is to study. You may acquire it in five minutes.

<u>XΓH.</u>	<u>I++IL</u>	<u>HZ</u>	
1	2	3	
<u>U_L_.</u>	<u>H-HU/.</u>	<u>XH</u>	
3	4	5	
<u>U\.</u>	<u>XJXΓ.</u>	<u>HXXH.</u>	
5	6	7	
<u>XH.</u>	<u>ZUJJUHU</u>		
8	9		
<u>H.</u>	<u>/HI.</u>	<u>HI.</u>	<u>XΓH</u>
9	10	11	12
<u>/LU.</u>	<u>X\UUN.</u>	<u>XΓH</u>	
13	14	15	
<u>/HU\XI.</u>	<u>XVI\.</u>		
16	17		
<u>JX/HΛ.</u>	<u>XΓH.</u>	<u>++Γ</u>	
18	19	20	
<u>U\.</u>	<u>HI.</u>	<u>HΓLΓX</u>	
20	21	22	
<u>IXJXΓH.</u>	<u>I.</u>	<u>JXΛ</u>	
23	24	25	
<u>U_L+.</u>	<u>ΛUΓI</u>	<u>JU.</u>	
25	26	27	

Now, I dare say all this appears very mysterious to the general reader. There never was a more candid arbitrary alphabet put together. In the first place, the straight-line character of the writing told me it was simple. Alphabets curve as they rise in the thought which they embody. It will be seen that here there is no curved line.

Now, when you are fairly sure you have a simple cipher, and written in the English language,

you hold the key to it with this one piece of knowledge—that the most frequently used letter in our language is e. Very well, then, find that character which is most frequently repeated, and you may be pretty certain it is e. In this case, you will find the leading figure is x. It is repeated sixteen times.

Now, we have a more than merely supposed e. The next question is the frequency, if any, with which a series of characters is repeated. You will find that the first word marked by a stop is repeated four times in twenty-seven words, or better than one in seven. This, then, must be a common expression. Take the next newspaper, and you will find the word “the” is that most frequently repeated. But here comes an important contradiction. The first word agreeing with “the” has certainly three letters, but then it begins, instead of ending, with x. Now, you will find that the character representing e begins many words in this sentence, and ends none; whereas, the rule in English is, that e rather ends than commences words.

Take this fact into connection with the known truth that the thieves talk “back,” or reversed English, and the contradiction is cleared away—each word is begun to be written at the end. We have then three letters, t.h.e. Now, if you go on to the sixth word, you will find we have the characters representing t.h.e, and that they spell (in the right direction) he-e. Now, the only ordinary word with this combination is “here.” Therefore, we have now four letters, t h e r. If we now hunt out a word in which all these characters occur, we shall find it at 23, which runs there-. The sixth character must be an s, because it’s the only natural terminal to the word there’s—short for “there is.”

We have now five letters, t h e r s.

We will now take word 24, following “there’s.” It can’t be I—“There’s I” is an impossible phrase. But there is only one other ordinary English word of one letter besides “I”—it is “a.” “There’s a” is a natural mode of expression. We have now six letters, t h e r s a.

Now, you must settle the short words before you can touch the long. We have got “the” and “a,” and the words in which t, h, and e are commonly combined with one another. Let us now pass to other short words. Take 21. One of the letters of this word we already know to be “a;” what is the second? The two commonest words with which a is combined, and at the same time not preceded by the only letter word “I,” thus as “I am,” which is not the case here— are “as,” and “at.” Now, this letter is already a direction in the shape of a warning. Every known circumstance in the case proves this, and therefore the word “at” is more likely to be used than “as,” which is a word, when used grammatically, very seldom seen in common letter-writing. We will suppose 21 to represent “at,” and then we shall find the same word at 11, which confirms the belief that these characters represent “at.” And this conclusion supports the supposition referring to the “s” and “t” character. To continue. The word 22, which follows 21, we now find to stand e - - ht; and this partial elucidation reciprocally acts with word 21, to form the likely phrase in such a letter—“at eight.”

Then we now have, as discovered letters-t h e r s a i g—eight letters. There are now enough upon which to build up the first skeleton of the revised letter, and thus it stands, the unknown letters being represented by small hyphens, and the words wholly wanting by the figures with which

they have been already allied:—

The ga - - s (3) - - - t - - - e here - eet - e
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 t - - - r r - - a - - at the (13) - - a - e the se - - - -
 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16
 - a - e - - - er the - - i - - at eight theres a - - - - er
 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25
 sh - - (27).
 26 27

Now, 7 and 8 reciprocally suggest “meet me,” and so we add “m” to our list of letters—now nine; and the t - m - rr - - after “meet me” confirms that reading, and which makes this word “tomorrow.” This gives the letters “o” and “w,” making in all eleven letters. Taking 5, “I find” and “o” and “m” are the second and third characters; therefore, I infer the first is “c.” Now we have twelve letters. I also find that the second letter of word 4 is “o,” which gives us “- o - t,” which, taken in connection with the letter being a warning, and the two following words, “come here,” I take to be “don’t.” This rendering yields me two more letters, “d” and “n,” which make in all fourteen.

The elucidation now stands:—

The ga - - s - - own. Don't come here. Meet
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 to-morrow, and at the o - d - - ace, the second
 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16
 ca - e - nder the c - l - - at eight there's a - - ower
 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25
 show on.
 26 27

Now, putting aside the first sentence, the first words we have to clear up are 13 and 14. Let us suppose it is “something place,” and we are right, for the “l” drops into the centre of word 13, and we have “old place.” This yields letter “p” and “l,” and now we can add a letter to word 3, which from “- - own” becomes “-lown.”

We now arrive at word 17, where there is one letter wanting, and this we must for the present pass, and come to (18) - nder. This must be “under,” and so we add “u” to the list; but it is useless, for it occurs only this once in the entire paragraph.

We now reach word 20, to which we can only add “l,” which makes it cli - -. And it will be remarked that the two most important words in the letter are still defective. However, the word 20 is soon elucidated, by going on to 25, to which we can now add the letter “f”— thus we get - lower, which, taken with words 26 and 27, gives “flower show on.” We therefore find that word 20 is “cliff.” The double “f” in word 2, makes it “gaff.” We have now only *two* characters to decipher; the composition standing thus:

[“]The gaffs -lown. Don’t come here. Meet me tomorrow at the old place, the second ca-e under the cliff at eight. There’s a flower show on.”

Now it is clear the missing letters are two, neither of which is used more than once. Then we have only to find the missing letters, and see which will fit in, to solve the problem. These letters are b, j, k, v, x, y, z.

The only letter which will agree with -lown is b, by which we get the sentence “The gaff’s blown”— pure thieves’ English, perhaps even something like good Anglo-Saxon. It means, the meeting-place is discovered and overthrown. “Gaff” is doubtless the talking-place, from *gabian*, to talk; while, probably, the word “blown” is based upon the idea of giving a blow—to blow, when the past participle in Saxon English would be blown—“beaten down.”

Coming to the word ca - e, we find that v only will fit, and so we get “the second cave under the cliff at eight tomorrow” as the gist of the missive slipped among the folds of the curtain.

One word before I proceed with my story. Give me little credit for reading that cipher. I did it in less than twenty minutes; though it strikes me I may as well give the alphabet of this cipher, and also the appearance of the missive when reduced to ordinary letters. Here, first, is the alphabet—very simple and elementary:

I	—	\	/	X	+	L	7	Γ	J	T	L
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
┆	┆	U	Π	□	□	I	H	Λ			
M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U			
V	Z	M	N	W							
V	W	X	Y	Z							

The back reading stood thus: —

eht sffag nwoib tnod emoc ereh teem em worromot dna ta eht dlo ecalp eht dnooces evac rednu eht ffile ta thgie sereht a rewolf wohs no.

You would hardly suppose this was merely reversed English—would you?

As I have said, the reading of the letter was nothing, but its application was another matter—another business to continue the thread of the clue in the nip of my mind till it was wound off the reel by the re-introduction, under the auspices of the police, of Mrs. Mountjoy to young Mrs. Lemmins.

What were the coming facts before me?

These—that Lemmins expected (since the go-between false laundress had got clear from the house)—Mountjoy to meet her at eight, in the second cave under the cliff, and that a flower show would take place.

Now, it was summer time, and, therefore, I might take the words “flower show” as literally meant; for, in connection with the correspondents, it meant theft at the *fête* in question. Now, where was this *fête* to be held? I was at a loss to tell whether it was next day or the following. If next day, the meeting for eight referred to the morning. If the following, it might mean eight in the evening.

But first for the spot. It must be populous, because the flower show was talked of in London, and because thieves thought it worth while to canvass the place. Secondly, it must be at the sea-side, because only at the sea or water-side is the cliff called by that name— at all events by Londoners.

Then I got at these suppositions, or rather facts. That a flower show was to take place either the next day or the following at a sea-side place distinguished not only for cliffs, but with caverns, or caves, in them, and that Lemmins would be in the second either at eight in the morning of the following day, or at that hour in the evening.

Was the place far away? It seemed to me not, because the context of the letter so plainly inferred that the recipient could easily reach the spot, since the exact hour was named. Now, if I could only find out, by an advertisement, where a flower show was to take place within a couple of days, the locality being a cliffy, sea-side locality, in all probability full of visitors—for I had heard of thieves going to the sea-side with honest men—why, the chances were that I should trap the woman.

Where was the place, and how could I find it out?

It was clear it could not be on the *east coast*, because it is flat from the mouth of the river to Hull, or nearly so; neither, if very near home, could it be below Brighton, for thence the shore is level, or if not level, more or less unprovided with *cliffs* over a wide range of country.

Then the place in question, in all probability, stood either in Kent or Sussex. By this means I got my facts into a very narrow line, for I had but to examine the papers of both counties to ascertain whether or not a flower show was advertised. But here a new difficulty arose. It was now a quarter to ten, and all places of business, all reading-rooms were closed. Perhaps, however, the *fête* was advertised in the "Times," my second-day's copy of which was in our sitting-room. Ten minutes' search resulted in disappointment; but my eyes had caught an advertisement, all letters to be addressed to some initials, care of Messrs. Mitchell and Co., town and country news-agents, Red Lion Court, Fleet Street. The question I asked myself was, whether I should call at this office, in the faint chance of finding it still open, or go on at once to the London Bridge terminus, and take the night-mail to one of the several sea-side places, one of which I believed was the appointed place of meeting. My decision in favour of trying the office rested on the ground that, with a fast cab, to call on my road to the station, it would not delay me more than a quarter of an hour.

The cab (I find I must continually refer to cabs) took me into Fleet Street in considerably under the half-hour, and, to contract this portion of my narrative, for the simple reason that it is commonplace, I found a woman cleaning out the office. She was much flurried, and, I think, somewhat confused, in consequence of being so late at her work. With that extraordinary and simple belief of the very ignorant in the sacred nature of papers, she would not let me lay a finger upon one of the files of papers hung about the office; but with that other belief in the absolute power of money, I applied the great "progressive how much" argument to her, and which, supported by the assurance that print was not writing, led to my triumph upon another stop of my journey; for at about the sixth hook I found a pile of (I think) *Kentish Observers*, or *Gazettes*, and soon I discovered (the information being in a prominent position) that a flower show was to be displayed on the very next day at the Tivoli Gardens, the context intimating that certain omnibuses would run at regular intervals from Ramsgate and Margate.

The inference stood that "the second cave under the cliff" was either at Ramsgate or Margate, and as I was driven on to the station, I turned over in my mind the various ways in which I could arrive at a just conclusion before I started, or while going down the line.

Absurd as was the question—"Are there any caves in the cliff at Ramsgate or at Margate?"—I put it to several railway porters; but they knew nothing about either place. And I have found generally that railway porters know nothing of their respective lines. In this strait, and after questioning the young woman in the refreshment department, and the policeman on duty, who, I think, felt somewhat inclined to arrest me on general grounds, I bethought me of buying a guide-book to the coast; but the railway book-stall was blank with shutters, and the only acquisition I could make was the London and South-Eastern Railway time-table; and this publication I was turning over, not so much disconsolately as with vexation, when an outline map fell open before me.

It was but natural that I should look at the relative positions of Ramsgate and Margate; and the investigation of the map formed another link in my chain of—may I say?—circumstantial evidence. The map showed me that the coast about Margate was more exposed to the action of the sea than the other marine town. Knowing that the indentation of the shore by sea water is, in

a measure, effected by the formation of channels, or caves, the inference stood, that Margate was more likely to be the goal of my journey than the other town.

To Margate I went, making inquiries, however, when changing trains at Ramsgate, in order to ascertain if there were caves in the cliff of this latter place.

The reader who knows Margate is aware I was right.

But we did not catch our felon till ten a.m., for the tide was up, and the caves, which in the eyes of the children are such enormous caverns of darkness, were unapproachable. And, indeed, when the tide had receded sufficiently to allow of the approach of myself and the policeman I employed, I feared for my success, as I could discover no woman walking towards the "second cave," with her back towards me, and in whom I could trace a resemblance to the person called Lemmins. But the officer was right when he surmised that perhaps she had started from the "other end," referring to the break in the cliff at the point where the Preventive Service Station is built.

She was so surprised at the arrest, that she had not a word to say; for, as I implied from the copy of a telegraphic message we found on her, she had been informed that all was going well.

And as the magistrate of the district police court in which my sister had to appear was more than ordinarily late that morning, we reached the court before Annie was brought forward, and so when her eyes drifted round the court, they met mine. But we had already seen each other at the police cell door, and she knew that the actual thieves were in custody. Seen together, my sister and the younger prisoner were very distinguishable; but had the jeweller's man, upon oath, declared that Annie was Mrs. Mountjoy's companion, I do not think he should have been blamed.

I have now reached the end of my intended narrative. My purpose was to show that action in misfortune is better than grief. I have not referred to any pain, degradation, or consequence, which resulted either to my sister or myself, in consequence of her terrible arrest for shoplifting. I have merely stated, as logically as I could, a series of facts, inferences, and results, with the aim of pointing out that very frequently there is a deal of plain sailing where some people suppose no navigation can be effected.

THE END.

The Revelations of a Private Detective by Andrew Forrester, Jr. London: Ward and Lock, 1863. 289-320.