

STORIES BY A DETECTIVE

The Colby Murder

DID you ever hear of the Colby murder? Perhaps not, although the facts in regard to it were published far and wide, and the large reward offered for the detection of the murderer, as well as other circumstances connected with the case, gave it notoriety throughout the whole West.

A handsomer girl than handsome Nellie Colby was never seen in Georgetown. I say Georgetown, because I intend to conceal the real name of the place, acting upon the request of at least two individuals who were chief actors in the sad drama.

A tall, red-cheeked, black-eyed girl, with tresses which a romancer would call raven, with pearly teeth and little white hands, a form lithe and graceful, a voice soft and sweet as the song of a bird—was it any wonder that the old, the young and the middle-aged of Georgetown said, “God bless Nellie Colby!” whenever she appeared? And she was not praised entirely for her beauty. She was as good as she was lovely, the wealth of her father, Richard Colby, allowing her to give rein to her desire to aid and assist the worthy unfortunate, and to bring sunshine to dozens of homes in her own and neighboring towns which were far more used to the black shadows of poverty and degradation. Richard Colby was a retired merchant, living in a fine mansion just outside of Georgetown. His wife had long been dead and all his love was given to Nellie, his only child. Her request was law to him, and her presence was his only enjoyment. No father’s love could be stronger, and no daughter ever proved herself more worthy of a parent’s affection and indulgence.

So much for the family. It would have been strange if handsome Nellie Colby had no suitors. She had them almost without number. The leading lawyer of Georgetown, the banker over at K——, the minister who had arrived shortly before from Middleville, and I can’t tell you how many more, were only too anxious to hear the word which should give them Nellie Colby for a wife. So much adulation might have worked to alter a nature less generous, pure, confiding and upright, but Nellie’s noble qualities shone out the better for her many social trials. Firmly, but in a manner which did not wound again the wounded heart, she told the clergyman, and the banker, that she had no desire to leave her father, or to break in upon the routine which was his happiness, and they went away feeling more than ever before that a girl had a heart found only once in years.

But was there ever a woman who could turn every one away? whose heart could not be made to tremble at some one’s tender expressions? Pshaw? Think of me, almost an old man, three or four children playing and whooping about me as I write, and a quiet wife sitting over in the corner with her needle—think of me writing a love story! The more especially, as I long ago learned that success in my profession was greatly enhanced by one’s quickly learning to steel one’s heart against the power of money and the wiles of a handsome woman.

But in this case I am the historian as well as one of the actors, and I must not interrupt myself.

Well, there came a day when Nellie Colby's heart could not find words to dismiss a suitor—could not or did not wish to. It was not a clergyman, banker or lawyer, this time—it was handsome Earl Temple. Coming to Georgetown a year before, he had put out a modest little sign over the door of his office, bearing the words, “E. Temple, Physician and Surgeon,” and thus proceeded to make the acquaintance of every man, woman and child in Georgetown who would take a kind “good-morning,” or desired to feel the grip of a hand which had never yet wronged a human being. No one knew much about the new-comer, except that he had but little money, was exceedingly generous with what he had, and that Georgetown was altogether too healthy a location to make the sign over the door return more than enough to foot the weekly bill of the buxom landlady around the corner. True there was a legend that Earl Temple came of a good family, that he had wealthy parents somewhere in the East, that he was a young man of talent and education, and had established himself at Georgetown from an ambitious desire to win a name and a place among people by his own unaided efforts. But village legends seldom have any foundation to build on, and in time the people of the town forgot all about what Earl Temple had been, and loved and respected him for what he was.

There was no sickness at the Colby mansion, and people at last began to wonder what drew the handsome doctor up the shady avenue so often. If any one really doubted at first, there was no longer any cause to doubt after a time. When Nellie passed through the village leaning upon the doctor's arm, or he drove her and her father long rides into the beautiful country, the gossips put this and that together, and Dame Rumor said that Nellie Colby would one day be Mrs. Earl Temple. No one was prepared to say that the “match” was not a good one, that Earl would not prove a devoted husband and a filial son-in-law, and when the question was settled, it was satisfactorily settled.

It is not for me to say how handsome Temple won the girl's heart—how Mr. Colby one day joined their hands and blessed them, how happy every one felt around the big mansion—for this formed no part of the task which I undertook several weeks after the gossips knew that the marriage day had been set.

There came another stranger to Georgetown one day, one who did not receive the generous welcome extended to Earl Temple. He was a tall dark-haired man, perhaps a little flashily dressed, with a proud aristocratic bearing, which looked more like despotism to the simple people of the village, and he took great pains that the information should speedily go abroad that he was extremely wealthy. He gave his name as Arthur Kingston, but subsequent events proved that he could have given a dozen others without seriously impairing his ready stock of *aliases*. One of the first acquaintances which Kingston made was Earl Temple. He dropped into the office, hoped that Earl would assist him in cultivating the friendship of other citizens, as he intended to make the place his future home, and the two were soon quite good friends. If Earl had stopped to ask himself if he prized the acquaintance of the stranger, he would have immediately answered “no.” There can be nothing more than seeming friendship between an

open generous nature and one which tries to shield itself behind a mantle of icy dignity, throwing off the reserve once in a while to let the presence of a villain be seen. Earl was not one to refuse an extended hand, or to withhold a kind word and a smile in reply, and so it came about that Kingston was seen much in his company.

“The man has no business among us,” growled a citizen and a firm friend of Earl’s one day when the two were canvassing the stranger’s characteristics. “If he has any money, why don’t he exhibit it? And if he intends to erect a large manufactory in Georgetown and settle among us, why don’t he commence operations? He gets strange letters, goes to the city frequently, and once or twice I have seen him in the company of men whose faces would convict them of murder in any court.”

“Some judge Kingston too harshly, my friend,” replied Earl. “I admit that there is something about him which repels me, even when I try to be sociable, and that his looks and his actions are against him. Still, one is not to blame that nature gave him a pair of wicked eyes and the appearance of a prowling tiger. I do not wish his friendship, neither would I offend him until convinced that our suspicions have some foundation.”

You may easily guess that Kingston was not long in ascertaining how matters stood at the Colby mansion, and that soon he became a visitor there himself. He called without invitation, solely on business, he said. Mr. Colby was the owner of a water-power which Kingston was anxious to purchase, in pursuance of his intention to erect a large manufactory which would add greatly to the business and wealth of the village. He had, he stated, many thousands of dollars lying idle, and would cheerfully pay Mr. Colby a high price for the power in question.

Mr. Colby received the stranger in his usual urbane manner, and promised him the water-power at his own figures. Kingston wished to delay a few days, until he could advise with his friends; and when he left he received an invitation to call again and talk the matter over further. He did not, on his first visit, secure even a sight of handsome Nellie, but at the second call, it so happened that Mr. Colby was out, and Nellie was obliged to receive and entertain the stranger.

When Kingston left the house, it was with the determination to make Nellie his wife. He cared little for what the father might say, or the girl think. In his heart he resolved that if she would not accept him she should never marry Earl Temple.

Earl heard of the visit, of course, and from that hour he was no longer seen in the company of the stranger. In fact, it seemed as if both purposely shunned each other. But Earl was not jealous. He had no cause to be. A handsomer face and a better address than that of the stranger would have been needed to even start the tongue of a single gossip. Nellie’s feeling was that of dislike and fear, and she hoped that the call would not be repeated.

Yet Kingston came again and again. Regularly each afternoon he strolled up to the mansion, consulted Mr. Colby about the water-power, and finally grew so bold as to drop all talk of that

subject and ask for Nellie, who never appeared in sight during his stay. Earl often encountered him at the house, but nothing occurred to create an open breach for two or three weeks, and then the difficulty grew to be a serious one. Earl had been called into the country to see a patient, and Kingston made his usual afternoon call upon the Colbys. The father, who was not feeling well, was enjoying a nap, and Nellie sat in the shade of a tree growing at the margin of a miniature lake a few rods back of the mansion. Kingston found her there, and coolly took a seat beside her.

“Sit still, pretty one—don’t fly away in such a hurry!” he exclaimed, as Nellie rose to her feet with something like resentment visible in her eyes.

“Your conduct is very strange, as well as insulting,” she replied. And the red roses came to her cheeks to make her look more beautiful in his eyes.

“Old friends needn’t be so precise and particular that they can’t sit together and talk love in the shade,” retorted the man, laughing in an impudent way. “Come, sit down here, my dear, and let us arrange for the wedding!”

Nellie was yards away before he finished the sentence, but as he rose up, she returned in company with Earl Temple. Hot words passed between the two men, a blow was struck, and Kingston went reeling to the ground.

“I will have a life for this!” he hissed, as he recovered his feet and stood for a moment; but he turned and left the grounds without further demonstrations.

That he was a villain there could be no longer any doubt; and while Earl accepted Nellie’s warning to beware of his personal safety, she agreed that her father should know of the transaction, and Kingston should be forbidden the house in future.

That evening the stranger departed for the city, saying that he would return on the third day. On the third day, soon after noon, Mr. Colby received a telegram from a neighboring town, saying that a relative of his was seriously ill, and wished to see him and his daughter. Both were ready to go, when some business affair detained the father, and Nellie went on alone, he promising to follow on the next morning.

That night a fearful tragedy was enacted at Colby House. At eight o’clock, as sworn to by several of the servants, Earl Temple came to ask after Nellie, and finding her gone, remained until a quarter to nine, chatting with Mr. Colby in the library. At the subsequent trial the head-servant, William, testified that a few moments before Earl left he heard the master use the expressions, “Begone, sir!” “Go away this moment!” accompanied by a stamp of the foot, as if the speaker were angry. He further testified that Earl displayed considerable confusion in his manner when leaving, but was free to confess that he might not have recalled the actions had it not been for the discovery made soon after, and the trial of the man for murder. At exactly a quarter to nine Earl left. William knew the exact moment, for he was just then winding the great-hall clock.

Fifteen minutes after, on going to the library, William saw a terrible sight. Mr. Colby was lying at full length on the floor, blood pouring out from a broken skull and two knife wounds in the body; and the master's heart had long before ceased to beat. A murder had been committed, and half an hour afterwards every inhabitant of Georgetown was aware of the tragical event. A crowd surged up the avenue, surrounded the house, forced its way in to view the body and its surroundings, and for half an hour no one thought of the one who had committed the atrocious act. Then the constables made a show of searching, which amounted to nothing, and it was decided to send to the city for a detective to work the case out. The coroner empanelled a jury, the body was deposited in a coffin, Nellie was telegraphed to, and then a dispatch called me to Georgetown.

Seated in the office of the chief of police at C—— at ten o'clock that evening, a boy came in with a dispatch which the chief handed to me, remarking:

“Here is a job for you. Colby, out at Georgetown, was murdered an hour ago. Go out on the half past ten train and see what you can do. The murderer has probably made his escape, but perhaps you can hit his trail.”

Half an hour after I was whirling away towards the village, and arrived there at eleven, o'clock to find that the excitement had scarcely abated. It may not be so with other detectives, but in my case, the moment I hear of a murder or robbery I form in my mind an idea of the looks of the criminal. I am sometimes mistaken, I admit that, but have been correct so often as to surprise my friends, and lead them to believe that I dabble in spiritualism and receive unseen aid.

Well, I formed an idea of how this murderer would look. Resting my head on the seat as I rode along, and closing my eyes, I called up a pretty perfect picture of Kingston. I had never seen the Colby mansion, but I pictured it out, even to counting the doors in the library, for the [dispatch] had stated the room in which the murder took place. Library rooms in private mansions differ, of course, as to size, arrangement of cases, and so forth, but still there is a general similarity which would strike the eye of any detective. I made up my mind that money was the incentive; that the murderer entered and departed through a door opening upon a veranda; that he was tall and dark, and that I should have an easy task to hunt him down.

I had not yet found the officials of Georgetown, not having been ten minutes in the place, when I heard it shouted that the murderer had been caught, and pressed my way forward with the crowd to the jail to catch a view of Earl Temple.

After introducing myself, the crowd was cleared out, and the two constables sat down and related to me the most of what I have already told you. They gave me an account of Earl's coming among them, narrated the appearance of Kingston, told me about the murder, the arrest of Temple and then left the case in my hands. Temple had been arrested only a few minutes before, as stated. He was not in the crowd at the mansion, was not to be seen when the constables

searched, and might never have been suspected but for Kingston. The stranger had boldly charged the crime upon Earl, stating that he had seen him running along a back street at a fast gait, enter his office, lock the door, and then open it and rush out a few minutes after. No one credited the story at first, but finally, headed by Kingston, a crowd rushed to the little office. Earl was just coming out, pale, nervous, laboring under much excitement, and the constables took charge of him, while some of the men searched the office. In a small closet they found a suit of clothing stained with blood, fresh blood—the blood of Richard Colby—and under the clothing was a blood-covered knife, which some one recollected to have seen in Earl's possession. This was enough. Paying no heed to his protestations, they led Temple away to jail, where I found him. I looked in at the prisoner, and saw him sobbing like a child. Aware of my presence, he raised his face, and the moment I caught sight of it I would have wagered my life against a shilling that he was not the guilty party. More than this, I dared to tell him so, much to the amazement of the rural officers, who had no doubt of his great guilt. Asking the prisoner to post me as to his movements since dark, he gave me a full account of every moment of time.

He had called at the mansion, had a pleasant interview with Mr. Colby, and had departed at the time indicated without having his feelings disturbed in the least. On reaching the avenue he had encountered a person who wished him to visit a patient six miles in the country, and had just returned from the call and learned of the murder when arrested. He accounted for his confusion by saying that he was greatly shocked at the sad news, which looked reasonable enough.

“Who is this Kingston?” I asked of Earl, when he had concluded his statement. “Is he a tall, dark-skinned man, black hair, black eyes, and a long black goatee, who moves about like a prowling cat?”

“Yes, that's his photograph exactly!” replied Ned, rising up in his excitement. “Do you know him?” Continued.

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I REPLIED by telling him that I believed in his innocence—rather strange for a detective, I admit—and that I should at once set about searching for the guilty party. The clothing and knife looked bad against Earl, but he stoutly declared that he had never seen the knife before, and that the suit was an old one which he no longer wore, and had hung up in the closet two months before.

Taking one of the officers along, I made a midnight visit to the Colby mansion, greatly surprising William the servant at the readiness with which I found my way to the library. Everything was as found when the murder was first known, except that the body had been removed to another room. There were the great blood stains on the carpet, two chairs lying on the floor, blood on the writing-desk, and other evidences to show the thorough work of the murderer. Sending every one away, I took a more careful survey. There were just the number of doors which I had counted in my imagination, and there was a door leading out on a veranda. Taking the lamp, I closely

scanned the carpet, and from the spot where the body was found to the end of the veranda I found drops of blood here and there, to show that the murderer had escaped that way carrying the knife in his hand.

This was not the only discovery. Close to where the body had lain I found a bit of a bank note, a corner of a bill with the figure "10" on it.

"Colby sat in that chair, at that desk, counting money, and the murderer tore this corner off when snatching at the pile of notes. Robbery was his incentive in coming to the house, and the resistance of the old man resulted in his death."

Thus I soliloquized, and time showed that I was right. Questioning William once more, I found that he was positive that Earl passed through the hall on going out, and that no one had seen Kingston about the house or grounds during the evening, not even when the village crowd surged that way to view the body. This was all I could do at the house, and I went to the village to work up something further in regard to the stranger. On reaching the hotel, I learned that Kingston was also in jail, having just been caught in the act of robbing a store. This was another excitement for the Georgetown people, and few citizens sought their beds that night. Ascertaining that the proofs against Kingston were strong enough to convict him, I deferred visiting him for a time.

Early in the morning I rode out to see the family which Earl had visited, and was not disappointed to find that, that part of his statement was perfectly true. Taking into account the hour of his departure from Georgetown, the stay at the house, and the time necessary to drive home, I saw that the prisoner had reasonably accounted for all his time.

Returning to the village, I paid a visit to Temple's office. Cases of burglary or theft were not numerous in the village, but yet I had been informed by the doctor that the windows of his office and the doors were fastened whenever he went out to be gone any length of time. I had examined the clothing, and found the garments, as he had stated, old and worn. I tried the front door, the two front windows, and then went around to the back door and the rear window. The door was all right, locked fast, but I made a discovery at the window. I saw in a moment that it had been pried up, and there were marks of boot nails on the sill, to show that some one had effected his entrance to the office in this way. Was it Kingston? I argued that it was. My theory was that he had broken into the office, obtained Earl's clothing, made his way to the Colby mansion expecting to murder Colby if not successful in obtaining booty in any other way, and after committing the deed, had returned and deposited the garments just where they were discovered by the crowd, as he had planned they should be.

Hoping that I might be able to force some sort of confession from the man I paid him a visit. He had thrown off his disguise as a gentleman of wealth and education, and appeared in his true character, that of a villain. I set about my task by informing him who I was, and that I had plenty of proofs to convict him of the murder. He only laughed at me, and I saw by his compressed lips and determined air that he had made up his mind that no word of confession should pass his lips.

“Drive ahead with your proofs, and see if you can make a case against me!” retorted he, when I had finished. “I was caught in the store, and to save breath to the lawyers, shall admit it when placed on trial; but as to the murder, you are wasting your time.”

Threats, coaxing, kind or hard words had no effect to alter his determination, and I went away disappointed. I was sure that he was the murderer, for I know something of what is passing in a man’s mind when I sit and study his face, but I had made a poor beginning to prove it.

The Circuit Court was in session, and on the third day after his arrest Earl Temple was formally arraigned on the charge of murder. The servant William testified as I have stated, and other servants affirmed their belief that the loud angry words used by Mr. Colby just before Earl left were addressed to him. I only do the general public of Georgetown justice when I say that there was not a person in the place but had a hope that the prisoner would get clear; that is, if he was innocent, as all believed he was. The evidence was all circumstantial, but some of it was very strong, as, for instance, the blood-stained suit. And the testimony given as to Temple’s confusion when leaving the house was intended to injure him.

I took the stand as a witness, and my testimony produced something of a sensation. I was positive that the murderer left the library by the veranda door; that his real object was robbery; that anyone could have donned Earl’s old suit and returned it as well as himself; and that the murder did not occur until at least five minutes after he left the house. But my testimony was destined to receive a bad set-off. Kingston was brought in as a witness, he swore hard and strong. The jury were warned that he was a prisoner himself, and probably a villain, but his testimony, nevertheless, carried considerable weight.

He swore that he saw Earl running down a back street in great haste; that he spoke to him and received no answer; that he had often heard him threaten Colby’s life; that the two had once planned to rob the house, and he swore to everything else which was false and calculated to carry the jury against the prisoner. Not to weary the reader, I will state that the jury disagreed, and that the prisoner was remanded to jail for another trial.

I had seen that Earl could not be cleared with all the circumstances showing against him, and no one was more pleased that he was remanded. This would give me a little more time on the case, and I felt sure that I should yet unearth the real murderer. The next day Kingston was tried and convicted of burglary, and the day following was sentenced to state prison for a term of ten years.

On this day I made a visit to Earl’s cell and there met Nellie Colby and a lady friend. I had scarcely approached when she held out her hand, her eyes filled with tears, as she said:

“Earl Temple is to be my future husband. He is as innocent of this murder as you or I. I know it, and I want you to keep working at the case until the assassin is discovered.”

Seated in the little cell, we entered into an agreement. The lawyers who had defended Earl were to cease their efforts for one month, and the case was to be placed directly in my hands. I was staking everything on the belief that Kingston was the guilty party. If it turned out that he was innocent, a month's time would be wasted, my reputation tarnished, and the real murderer would never be found.

I did not lead Earl or the handsome girl to expect too much, and yet there was something in my parting words which gave them hope that favorable news might be expected before the month was up. Of course I had consulted my chief, arranged all details, and made all preparations at home to carry out the scheme which I had formed. I had made up my mind to follow Kingston to the state prison. There would have to be many sacrifices on my part, but there was a pecuniary inducement not to be overlooked, and my term within the walls of prison, if bringing me the hoped-for result, would not hurt my reputation in the chief's office.

To insure success, I must go in as a convict, work and fare as the rest of the convicts, and do a deal of planning in a very cautious way. The superintendent of the prison had been consulted by the chief, and so when I called at the stone establishment on the tenth day after Kingston had been received, I was cordially greeted and given some very useful hints as to my future conduct. Only two turnkeys were admitted to the secret, and they were warned that they must in no way betray me. It was agreed that I should be known in the prison as "Albany Jack," the name of a notorious counterfeiter, highway robber and murderer.

Every one at all posted in prison matters know that the convicts confined in such establishments divide themselves off into classes, and that there are such things as high class and low class. The murderers, "safe-crackers" and bolder burglars are the aristocrats, and looked up to accordingly, and the greater name one has as a villain, the higher is his standing with the prisoners. So, if it were known among the convicts that the notorious "Albany Jack" had at last been caged, I should at once become an object of admiration, and could probably count on Kingston as one anxious to make my acquaintance.

It may seem strange to some that convicts, closely confined [within] the strong walls of a state prison, know anything about who is to come among them, but it is a fact that they do. The turnkey may "leak" a little, a newspaper may be smuggled in, contractors may talk in the hearing of convicts, and in one way or another, the new arrival has gone the rounds even before he has donned his zebra suit. In my case, one of the turnkeys dropped a hint to one of the cooks, and half an hour after, at least two hundred of the prisoners knew that a rascal with a national reputation was coming among them.

After I had passed through the hands of the barber and donned the stripes, I had little fear that Kingston, or any one else among the prisoners, would know me. In fact I did not know myself. My long locks off, my long whiskers and fine mustache gone, two false front teeth taken out and left with the superintendent—why, one could have almost made me believe that I was John Doe

or some one else.

In former years, I had worked at the blacksmith trade, and this fact now stood me a good turn. Kingston had been placed in the blacksmith shop as a striker, and it was arranged that I should have an anvil, and that he should be turned over to me as my assistant. Prisoners will converse together more or less in spite of all the vigilance which can be exercised by the guards, but of all the departments, the blacksmith shop furnishes the convicts with the greatest facilities for talking without detection. There is always a great noise and the anvil man and his helper can utter their words with their blows and no one five feet away will be the wiser for it. It was also arranged that I should occupy a cell next to Kingston's. This cell was empty, because its late inmate had cut a hole through the plank partition by means of a piece of plate glass, and was caught holding a conversation with his neighbor. The hole had not been fastened up, and as it was intended to aid me, no repairs were made.

Following the established rule of the prison, I spent the afternoon arranging my cell, receiving a visit from the chaplain, "reading up" on the rules and regulations which are printed on a card and hung up in each cell. At supper time, I was marched into the hall with the others, and saw in a moment that my arrival was to create something of a sensation. I caught the men looking at me whichever way I glanced and received more than a hundred sly winks from those who had heard and read of "Albany Jack." I not only had a seat at the same table with Kingston, but directly beside him as we were both to march with one gang thereafter. The man stared very hard at me as he got opportunity, but the change was too much for him. He would have as quickly believed me Dick Turpin as the detective who spent an hour in Georgetown jail trying to "pump" him on the Colby murder. Giving me a touch with his foot, as he raised a spoonful of mush to his mouth, the man said:

"What for? and how long?"

"Second degree, and twenty years," I replied, holding the spoon to my lips as a cover. He referred to my crime and term of imprisonment, and I had answered in a manner calculated to make him think me an "aristocrat." I wanted to tell him cold-blooded murder, and that my sentence was for life; but this would not do. In every prison where life prisoners are received, the convicted murderer inhabits a dark cell for at least a month, sometimes five or six, before being sent to the shops, and he would have detected the deception. We did not attempt any more conversation at the table, and after the meal, were marched off into the halls and locked up for the night.

The officer who locked the doors of the tier on which Kingston and myself were located, had scarcely left us behind when the murderer put his mouth to the hole and began asking me questions. I told him that I was too busy to hold any conversation, and that both of us would be punished if overheard, as the chances were that we would be, and so he bothered me no further. I was busy, for I was studying out a plan to trap him. The reader must have concluded that convicts are lacking in discretion when boasting to each other. To explain more clearly, I had not

the remotest idea that Kingston would ever mention the Colby affair to me. If he had been convicted of the murder, then he would have been free to talk and boast over it, perhaps; but, being sent on another charge and having a fear that his graver crime might in some way be fastened upon him, he would carefully guard his conduct if the affair was ever hinted at.

I thought and planned for hours, and then fell asleep, having arrived at no settled conclusion, except that I would take the case slow, and hope that something favorable would turn up. After breakfast next morning we were marched out, and Kingston was mightily pleased when he found that we were to work together. I could see by his actions that he had taken quite a fancy to me, but I did not mate with him readily. As a banker looks down on a mechanic, or is popularly supposed to so should and so did I appear to regard Kingston. I was desirous of showing him that, while I had been convicted of murder in the second degree, and was consequently a hero, I thought him some barn-robber of no account. In about an hour, while both of us were bending over the anvil working at a horse-shoe, I found opportunity to say:

“Robbed some old woman or stole a horse, I s’pose? How much d’ye get—six months?”

His eye flashed with indignation as he glanced up, and for a moment I almost feared that he would strike me with his hammer. When we got the next shoe on the horn of the anvil, he muttered back:

“You can’t put on any airs over me!”

I could not say whether he meant that I could not be his superior as to work, or whether he gave a hint that his hands were also stained with blood, though convicted of a burglary. I said nothing further, not caring to draw him out too soon, but I made up my mind that I could handle the case successfully if concealing my real intentions to draw him out.

Just before we were to march into supper, one of the prison officials came along with some visitor, and I was pointed out to them as the most notorious convict in the establishment. When they had passed along, and we had another shoe up, Kingston gave me a sign with his hand and whispered:

“Don’t be put out, comrade by what I said. I don’t feel in good spirits today.”

I replied that his gruff words were forgiven, and that I hoped, as we occupied adjoining cells, and were to work together, that we should get along harmoniously.

Four days had passed, and then, one evening after we had been locked up, I determined to sound Kingston a little on the Colby matter. The hole in the plank was not bigger than a penny-piece, and conversation was carried on by one putting his mouth to the hole and whispering the words into the other’s ear. Putting my mouth to the orifice I whispered:

“Did you hear what the tall guardsman was telling the foreman this afternoon—about the new man who’ll be coming along soon?”

“No—what was it?” he whispered back, not remembering the conversation alluded to, simply because nothing of the kind took place.

“Why, about a young man named Temple, who is being tried for the murder of a rich man at Georgetown named Norton. He’ll get it for life, without any doubt.”

“It wasn’t Norton, it was Colby,” he replied, but in a moment more, seeming to think that he had been imprudent, he added that he had heard that it was Norton, and really knew nothing about the case.

I saw that I had caught him, and had paved the way for further conversations, and so refused to say anything further just then. I believed that his crime was haunting his mind, and that I had only to revert to the occurrence once in a while to keep him agitated.

The third night after we were at the orifice again, he asking me if I had heard anything more about the Georgetown affair. I replied that I had learned through the gossip of a turnkey, that Temple had been convicted and would arrive at the state prison in about three days.

“They say that he is not the real criminal, after all,” I added, hoping to draw him out. But he refused to continue the conversation. I knew that I had shot an arrow which would frighten him and keep him thinking, and this was some satisfaction.

As no one aside from the superintendent and two sub-officials knew my position, I was treated just the same as the others, and some of the officers who had heard of my numerous imaginary murders and dare-devil adventures, were inclined to treat me rather severely. I saw that they watched me closely, as if anticipating that I would seize and eat some of them, and the lock on my cell, as well as the iron door, was duly inspected each evening to see if I was not planning an escape.

Towards the end of the second week, Kingston, after beating around the subject for some time, inquired if Temple had arrived. This was the opportunity which I had been hoping for during the last three days, and I replied that the man had obtained a new trial, and that there were strong grounds for believing that he would get clear altogether, as it seemed likely that another one did the murder.

“Who do they think killed Col—Nort—the rich man you mentioned, if Temple didn’t?” inquired Kingston, his voice betraying considerable excitement.

“Well, as near as I can find out, it was a stranger who had been stopping in the village for a few weeks, and who ran away that night and has not since been heard of. But the detectives are on his

track, and he must certainly be overhauled.”

“Are you sure that there is no one else suspected?” inquired Kingston, anxiously.

“There may be,” I replied; “I guess there is another, for I saw a Chicago detective pass through the shop this forenoon, and he looked at the men in a way to show that he was searching for some one.”

This was enough. I knew that the murderer would not sleep an hour that night, but I was also aware that the time had not arrived when he was ready to take me into his confidence. I did not expect to frighten him into making a confession very soon, as he was too old a villain for that, but I hoped that he would trust me after a time, thinking that my advice would be worth something. I heard him tossing about on his narrow bed, or moving about his cell, and realized that my plans were working satisfactorily. I must now endeavor to make him seek my advice. Concluded next week.

CONCLUDED.

THE next day, a visitor, who had the look and action of a detective, did actually pass through the shop, and something about Kingston’s face made the stranger pause and take a long look. The circumstance was not unnoticed by the murderer, and I could see his face grow pale under the grim which covered it. After the visitor had passed along, I found it a chance to whisper:

“That’s the same man who came along yesterday! He is looking after the Colby murderer!”

You might think that a man already in prison for a long sentence for burglary would care but little if suspected of a worse crime, but you would be mistaken. The difference between a life sentence for murder and a sentence for burglary for ten years is so great, that I did not feel surprised when I saw Kingston grow so weak that he had to lean against the forge for support. I saw how the shot had wounded him, and realized more strongly than ever that I had him fast.

That evening, I called him to the orifice again to torture him a little more. He declared that he was ill, and said that he felt as if he were going to have some sort of a fever.

“Pshaw, man! you’ll be all right in the morning,” I whispered. “If there’s anything on your mind, spit it out! I have made many a corpse in my time, and if I can give you any advice, I’ll cheerfully do it.”

“Will you?” he whispered back, his voice trembling with excitement. “If any one were looking for me, could you fix it so that I would not be known?”

“I think I could,” I replied. “Why, there was that Chicago detective who was after me for a double murder, while I was at Waupon prison. I got a hint about it, and fixed myself up so that

he passed me half a dozen times and went off without a thought that I was the cove he wanted. Just tell me all about it, and I'll agree that your own father won't know you tomorrow!"

He hesitated a while, and then replied that he was only joking, declaring that he was innocent of any murder, and that he did not care how often the detective came. I had either been too fast, and thus frightened him, or his mulish spirit had got the better of his scare, and he had made up his mind that nothing could be proven against him.

My month was rapidly wasting away, and I made up my mind that I must attack him in a bolder way, gaining my object or defeating my plans at one venture. I went to bed one night, determined that I would push him to the wall within a day or two and arranged all the details of the plan. At midnight, not yet having closed my eyes to sleep, I got up and began kicking the door and making a great noise. In two minutes guards were running about, convicts shouting and cursing, and directly a guard came to the door and wanted to know the cause of the alarm.

"I am sick," I replied, "and I want some help right away. Go and call Dick for me."

Dick was the name of one of the turnkey's who was in my secret, and my real object was to get a word of conversation with him. The guard complied with the request, and in a few minutes the turnkey appeared. Speaking loudly, I told him that I had a severe attack of the colic, and must have some medicine, but in a whisper, I stated my desire to have a private word.

The man went off, and soon returned with a bottle in his hand. He entered my cell, and we conversed about the case in voices loud enough to be heard by the inmates of three or four adjacent cells, but in whispers, we talked to each other of Kingston. I told Dick that I must have a chance for a talk with Kingston better than any which had yet been offered, and in a few minutes we had arranged a plan which gave promise of success. I grew better of my "colic" soon after the turnkey had departed, and slept the balance of the night without requiring another visit.

In the morning, just as we were ready to march out to breakfast, the turnkey came along and informed Kingston and myself that we were to go up into the upholstering room of the furniture department and work that day at assorting some curled hair which had been somewhat damaged. This was the first step in my plan, and I had no doubt that the balance of it would be faithfully carried out according to agreement. After breakfast, we two were conducted to the room, told what our work would be, and then left to pursue it. The room was about seventy feet long, and the turnkey had arranged it so that Kingston and I were at the farthest end, at least fifty feet from any of the other workmen. He went away with a caution, that if we were caught talking we should get the dungeon for ten days, and we commenced our work.

Three feet back of us, and cutting us off from one of the corners, was a canvas which a painter had been fixing up for an oil-cloth. I could not see, but I was certain in my mind that behind that screen was a clerk with pen and paper, near enough to listen, and ready to note every word of our conversation. He had been included in my plan.

Kingston looked really ill. His face was pale, his hands trembled, his eyes had a wild stare, and I could not help but pity him. I knew that his conscience was pricking him hard. I did not wish to open the conversation in a way to frighten him, and we worked away half an hour before a word was spoken. Just as I was going to broach the subject uppermost in my mind, I looked up and saw at the far end of the room the man who had given Kingston such a scare a few days before. I may state here that the man was a sub-contractor for prison labor, but he was a new one, and not then known to any of the convicts.

“Good heavens! Kingston!” I whispered, giving him a push with my foot, “there’s that detective again! He is after you for the Colby murder!”

The murderer sprang to his feet, so great was his excitement; but he recovered himself and sat down again, his face as white as any sheet. He looked at me imploringly, and at length inquired:

“What can I do—what shall I say?”

“Just wait a moment,” I replied. “Keep your face this way, and don’t let him catch sight of your eyes. He is going downstairs now, probably to get the superintendent to help identify you.

“Now, see here, comrade,” I continued, as I saw by his agitation that the crisis was at hand, “I know that you are the man who murdered Richard Colby, and if you want any of my assistance you can have it. Just go on and give me the story, and then I think I have a plan to get you out of this scrape. You look like a fellow with some backbone, and I hope you won’t be a baby about this thing any longer. Come, now, out with the story, and then I’ll take care of you!”

The man hesitated a little, but the desire to get my advice, and his fear of arrest, worked upon him until he was forced to confess. He took a seat close beside me, and in a low tone told me the whole thing from beginning to end. I heard the pen scratching behind the canvas, and he would have heard it only for his agitation.

“I didn’t go up there that night intending to commit murder,” said Kingston, after relating the first part of the story known to the reader, “I went up there intending to rob him. I saw him draw a large sum of money from the bank that day, and I hoped to get possession of it. As he was an old man, I planned to ask him to change some large notes, and then, when he should unlock his safe, I calculated to knock him down, gag him, and be off with his dollars. The game with the girl was all up, and so I did not care how soon the old man knew me in my real character. I took Temple’s suit along, to be prepared for an emergency. I knew that if the old man were to make any fuss about his money I should get mad and hurt him. Of course, I had a bad grudge against young Temple; and if I hadn’t, I would have sworn the thing on to him as soon as any one else.

“In going to the house,” resumed Kingston, after a pause, “I was followed by a strange dog, one which I never saw before nor afterwards. I knew that old Colby would be in the library from

eight to nine, and, to avoid the servants, I determined to go in at a door which leads out upon a veranda. This door stood open, and just as I got near enough to peep in and see that Temple and the old man were talking, the cursed dog trotted along the veranda pushed the door open, and walked into the room. Colby got up, seized a chair, and shouted out to the dog:

“Begone, sir! Go away this moment!”

“The dog backed out, trotted down the veranda, and I never saw him again. Temple passed close to me as he came out, but I was in the dark and escaped discovery. As soon as he was away, I went in by the veranda door. The old gent used me rather stiffly, asking my business, and stating that he had no time to spare. I felt my blood growing hot, but I told my errand. He pulled out a roll of bills from a drawer, gave me the change, and I saw that the safe was locked, and likely to remain so. Giving the old man a blow with one hand, I grabbed for the notes with the other, but he was stronger than I thought for. As I jerked away the notes and crammed them into my pocket, he rose up and seized me. I struck him once or twice, but he held on, and then I got hold of a bar of iron lying on his desk, some bar connected with the safe, and whacked him until he let go. I might have stopped then, but I didn’t. My blood was up, and I jerked out my knife and gave him a few finishing touches. There was nothing to be gained by staying, and so I left, going out by the veranda door. The bar of iron I carried away, and threw it under the little bridge by the woolen mill.”

Kingston continued his account to the last, telling me all that I told you in the first of this narrative. He stated that he only got about a hundred dollars from Colby, and while counting it over in his room at the hotel, saw that one of the bills had a corner torn off. Being suspicious, he had hidden the bill behind a bit of loose wall paper. He had put up this job of burglary several days before, and was going through the store when caught, it being his intention to leave Georgetown that night and let Temple get out of the scrape the best way he could.

It was noon before I had the whole confession. I had heard the pen constantly going, and knew that the clerk would have every word. I could compare my own knowledge of circumstances with the statement of the murderer, and realize that he had told me nothing but the truth. I was somewhat excited myself when the whole story had been told, but there were reasons why I should exult a little.

“And now,” said Kingston, when he had given me the whole, “what would you advise me to do?”

“Nothing, just now,” I replied. “Keep still today, and during the night I’ll fix up matters so that both of us can make our way out of here. I have had my plans working for some time, and I think I can bribe one of the officials to let us out.”

Just then came the order to fall in and march to dinner, and there was no further opportunity for conversation. As I expected, the unseen secretary had informed the superintendent of my

success, and when we were marched out, Kingston went back to the blacksmith shop, and I to the superintendent's room.

The clerk had taken a faithful copy, and the superintendent made a written statement of what he knew concerning the case. Armed with these documents, I left the prison that evening, and before noon the next day had laid the matter before the governor. I looked up two lawyers, they looked up some one else, and in a couple of days Temple was given the freedom of the jail and taken as an inmate of the jailor's family. His detention was now to be a mere matter of form, for I had shown every one that he was an innocent man.

The bar of iron was found under the bridge, and the bill where Kingston had hidden it. Nothing now remained but to bring him from prison and give him a trial. At the proper time he was taken to Georgetown, and given a cell in the jail to wait his examination, which would come off in a day or two. Here, in some way, he learned something concerning the trick which I had played on him, but the details given him were not sufficient to convince him that his fellow-prisoner and the detective were one and the same. I had not seen him since leaving the prison, and one day went into the Circuit Court as a witness against him. I slipped out my false teeth as I mounted to the box, and Kingston recognized me in a moment. His confession was there, the clerk was there, I was in the box, and he saw that the game was up. He rose up in his seat interrupting proceedings, and informed the court that he desired to change his plea to "guilty." This stopped further proceedings, and he was remanded to jail for sentence next morning. Next morning, there was no prisoner to sentence. During the night, he had tied his suspenders together, arranged a noose, and his body was found stiff and cold at daybreak.

As for Earl—well, you can imagine all that happened. He was released, there was a happy marriage, and he is one of the leading men of Georgetown today, living with his handsome wife at the big mansion. As for me, I made some money, more reputation, and had the consolation of knowing that the innocent did not suffer for the guilty.

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