

Flint Jackson

Recollections of a Police-Officer

Farnham hogs are world famous, or at least famous in that huge portion of the world where English ale is drunk, and where on I have a thousand times heard and read, the sun never sets. The name, therefore, of the pleasant Surrey village, in and about which the events I am about to relate occurred, is, I may fairly presume, known to many of my readers. I was ordered to Farnham to investigate a case of burglary, committed in the house of a gentleman named Hursley, during the temporary absence of the family, which had completely nonplussed the unpracticed Dogsberrys of the place, albeit it was not a riddle at all difficult to read. The premises, it was speedily plain to me, had been broken, not into but out of; and a watch being set upon the motions of the very specious and clever person left in charge of the house and property, it was quickly discovered that the robbery had been effected by herself and a confederate of the name of Dawkins, her brother-in-law. Some of the stolen goods were found secreted at his lodgings; but the most valuable portion, consisting of plate and a small quantity of jewelry, had disappeared; it had unquestionably been converted into money, as considerable sums in sovereigns, were found upon both Dawkins and the woman, Sarah Purday. Now, as it had been clearly ascertained that neither of the prisoners had left Farnham since the burglary, it was manifest that there was a receiver near at hand who had purchased the missing articles. Dawkins and Purday were, however, dumb as stones upon the subject; and nothing occurred to point suspicion till early in the evening previous to the second examination of the prisoners before the magistrates, when Sarah Purday asked for pen, ink, and paper, for the purpose of writing to one Mr. Jackson, in whose service she had formerly lived. I happened to be at the prison, and of course took the liberty of carefully unsealing her note and reading it. It revealed nothing; and save by its extremely cautious wording, and abrupt peremptory tone, coming from a servant to her former master, suggested nothing. I had carefully reckoned the number of sheets of paper sent into the cell; and now on recounting them found that three were missing. The turnkey returned immediately, and asked for the two other letters she had written. The woman denied having written any other, and for proof pointed to the torn fragments of the missing sheets lying on the floor. These were gathered up and brought to me, but I could make nothing out of them, every word having been carefully run through with the pen, and converted into an unintelligible blot. The request contained in the actually-written letter was one simple enough in itself, merely "that Mr. Jackson would not on any account fail to provide her in consideration of past services, with legal assistance on the morrow." The first nine words were strongly underlined; and I made out, after a good deal of trouble, that the word "pretense" had been partially effaced, and "account" substituted for it.

"She need not have wasted three sheets of paper upon such a nonsensical request as that," observed the turnkey. "Old Jackson wouldn't shed out sixpence to save her or anybody else from the gallows."

“I am of a different opinion; but tell me, what sort of a person is this former master of hers?”

“All I know about him is that he’s a cross-grained, old curmudgeon, living about a mile out of Farnham, who scrapes money together by lending small sums and notes-of-hand at short dates, and at a thundering interest. Flint Jackson folks about here call him.”

“At all events, forward this letter at once, and tomorrow we shall see—what we shall see. Good evening.”

It turned out as I anticipated. A few minutes after the prisoners were brought into the justice room, a Guilford solicitor of much local celebrity arrived, and announce that he appeared for both the inculpated parties. He was allowed a private conference with them, at the close of which he stated that his clients would reserve their defense. They were at once committed for trial, and I overheard the solicitor assure the woman that the ablest counsel on the circuit would be retained in their behalf.

I had no longer a doubt that it was my duty to know something farther of this suddenly-generous Flint Jackson, though how to set about it was a matter of considerable difficulty. There was no legal pretense for a search-warrant, and I doubted the prudence of proceeding upon my own responsibility with so astute an old fox as Jackson was represented to be; for, supposing him to be a confederate with the burglars, he had by this time, in all probability, sent the stolen property away—to London, in all likelihood; and should I find nothing, the consequences of ransacking his house merely because he had provided a former servant with legal assistance would be serious. Under these circumstances I wrote to headquarters for instructions, and by return post received orders to prosecute the inquiry thoroughly, but cautiously, and to consider time as nothing so long as there appeared a chance of fixing Jackson with the guilt of receiving the plunder. Another suspicious circumstance that I have omitted to notice in its place was that the Guilford solicitor tendered bail for the prisoners to any reasonable amount, and named Enoch Jackson as one of the sureties. Bail was, however, refused.

There was o need for over-hurrying the business, as the prisoners were committed to the Surrey Spring Assizes, and it was now the season of the hop harvest—a delightful and hilarious period about Farnham, when the weather is fine and the yield abundant. I, however, lost no time in making diligent and minute inquiry as to the character and habits of Jackson, and the result was a full conviction that nothing but the fear of being denounced as an accomplice could have induced such a miserly, iron-hearted rogue to put himself to charges in defense of the imprisoned burglars.

One afternoon, whilst pondering the matter, and at the same time enjoying the prettiest and cheerfulest of rural sights, that of the hop-picking, the apothecary, at whose house I was lodging, (we will call him Morgan; he was a Welshman,) tapped me suddenly on the shoulder, and looking sharply round, I perceived he had something he deemed of importance to communicate.

“What is it?” I said quickly.

“The oddest thing in the world. There’s Flint Jackson, his deaf old woman, and the young people lodging with him, all drinking and boozing away at yon alehouse.”

“Shew them to me, if you please.”

A few minutes brought us to the place of boisterous entertainment, the lower room of which was suffocatingly full of tipplers and tobacco smoke. We nevertheless contrived to edge ourselves in; and my companion stealthily pointed out the group, who were seated together near the farther window, and then left me to myself.

The appearance of Jackson entirely answered to the popular prefix of Flint attached to his name. He was a wiry, gnarled, heavy-browed, iron jawed fellow of about sixty, with deep-set eyes, aglow with sinister and greedy instincts. His wife, older than he, and so deaf apparently as the door of a dungeon, wore a simpering, imbecilic look of wonderment, it seemed to me, at the presence of such unusual and abundant cheer. The young people, who lodged with Jackson, were really a very frank, good-looking couple, though not then appearing to advantage—the countenance of Henry Rogers being flushed and inflamed with drink, and that of his wife’s clouded with frowns, at the situation in which she found herself, and the riotous conduct of her husband. Their brief history was this:—They had both been servants in a family living not far distant from Farnham—Sir Thomas Lethbridge’s, I understood—when about three or four months previous to the present time Flint Jackson, who had once been in an attorney’s office, discovered that Henry Rogers, in consequence of the death of a distant relative in London, was entitled to property worth something like £1500. There were, however, some law difficulties in the way, which Jackson offered, if the business was placed in his hands, to overcome for a consideration, and in the meantime to supply board and lodging and such necessary sums of money as Henry Rogers might require. With this brilliant prospect in view, service became at once utterly distasteful. The fortunate legatee had for some time courted Mary Elkins, one of the ladies’ maids, a pretty bright-eyed brunette; and they were both united in the bonds of holy matrimony on the very day the “warnings” they had given expired. Since then they had lived at Jackson’s house in daily expectation of their “fortune” with which they proposed to start in the public line.

Finding myself unrecognized, I called boldly for a pot and a pipe, and after some manoeuvring contrived to seat myself within ear-shot of Jackson and his party. They presented a strange study. Henry Rogers was boisterously excited, and not only drinking freely himself, but treating a dozen fellows round him, the cost of which he from time to time called upon “Old Flint,” as he courteously styled his ancient friend, to discharge.

“Come, fork out, Old Flint!” he cried again and again. “It’ll be all right, you know, in a day or two, and a few half pence over. Shell out old fellow! What signifies, so you’re happy!”

Jackson complied with an affectation of acquiescent gaiety ludicrous to behold. It was evident that each successive pull at his purse was like wrenching a tooth out of his head, and yet while the dimmest of smiles wrinkled his wolfish mouth, he kept exclaiming: “A fine lad—a fine lad! Generous as a prince—generous as a prince! Good Lord, another round! He minds money no more than as if gold was as plentiful as gravel! But a fine, generous lad for all that!”

Jackson, I perceived, drank considerably, as if incited thereto by compressed savageness.—The pretty young wife would not taste a drop, but tears frequently filled her eyes, and bitterness pointed her words as she vainly implored her husband to leave the place and go home with her. To all her remonstrances the maudlin drunkard replied only by foolery, varied occasionally by an attempt at a line or two of the song of “The Thorn.”

“But you *will* plant thorns, Henry,” rejoined the provoked wife in a louder and angrier tone than she ought perhaps to have used—“not only in my bosom, but your own, if you go on this sottish, disgraceful way.”

“Always quarreling, always quarreling!” remarked Jackson pointedly, towards the bystanders—“*always* quarreling!”

“Who is always quarreling?” demanded the young wife sharply. “Do you mean me and Henry?”

“I was only saying, my dear, that you don’t like your husband to be so generous and free-hearted—that’s all,” replied Jackson, with a confidential wink at the person near him.

“Free-hearted and generous! Fool-hearted and crazy, you mean!” rejoined the wife, who was much excited. “And you ought to be ashamed of yourself to give him money for such brutish purposes.”

“Always quarrelling, always quarrelling!” reiterated Jackson, but this time unheard by Mrs. Rogers—“*always*, perpetually quarreling!”

I could not quite comprehend all this. If so large a sum as £1,500 was really coming to the young man, why should Jackson wince as he did at disbursing small amounts which he could repay himself with abundant interest?—If otherwise—and it was probably he should not be repaid—what meant his eternal “fine generous lad!” “spirited young man!” and so on? What, above all, meant that look of diabolical hate which shot out from his cavernous eyes towards Henry Rogers, when he thought himself unobserved, just after satisfying a fresh claim on his purse! Much practice in reading the faces and deportment of such men, made it pretty clear to me that Jackson’s course of action respecting the young man and his money was not yet decided upon in his own mind; that he was still perplexed and irresolute; and hence the apparent contradiction in his words and acts.

Henry Rogers at length dropped asleep, with his head upon the settle tables; Jackson sank into sullen silence; the noisy room grew quiet; and I came away.

I was impressed with a belief that Jackson entertained some sinister design against his youthful and inexperienced lodgers, and I determined to acquaint them with my suspicions. For this purpose, Mr. Morgan, who had a patient living near Jackson's house, undertook to invite them to tea on some early evening, on the pretense that he had heard of a tavern that might suit him when they should receive their fortune. Let me confess, too, that I had another design besides putting the young people on their guard against Jackson. I thought it very probable that it would not be difficult to glean from them some interesting and suggestive particulars concerning the ways, means, practices, outgoings and incomings, of their worthy landlord's household.

Four more days passed unprofitably away, and I was becoming weary of the business, when about five o'clock in the afternoon the apothecary galloped up to his door on a borrowed horse, jumped off with surprising celerity, and with a face as white as his own magnesia, burst out, as he hurried into the room where I was sitting: "Here's a pretty kettle of fish!—Rogers has been poisoned, and by his wife!"

"Poisoned!"

"Yes, poisoned; although, thanks to my being on the spot, I think he will recover. But I must instantly to Dr. Edwards; I will tell you all when I return."

The promised "all" was this: Morgan was passing slowly by Jackson's house, in the hope of seeing either Mr. or Mrs. Rogers, when the servant-woman, Jane Riddet, ran out and begged him to come in, as their lodger had been taken suddenly ill. Ill, indeed! The surface of his body was cold as death, and the apothecary quickly discovered that he had been poisoned with sulphuric acid (oil of vitriol,) a quantity of which he, Morgan, had sold a few days previously to Mrs. Rogers, who, when purchasing it, said Mr. Jackson wanted it to apply to some warts that annoyed him. Morgan fortunately knew the proper remedy, and desired Jackson who was in the room and seemingly very anxious and flurried, to bring some soap instantly a solution of which he proposed to give immediately to the seemingly dying man. The woman-servant was gone to find Mrs. Rogers, who had left about ten minutes before, having first made the tea in which the poison had been taken. Jackson hurried out of the apartment, but was gone so long that Morgan, becoming impatient, scraped a quantity of plaster off the wall, and administered it with the best effect.—At last Jackson came back, and said there was unfortunately not a particle of soap in the house. A few minutes afterwards the young wife, alarmed at the woman-servant's tidings flew into the room, in an agony of grief. Stimulated alarm, crocodile grief, Mr. Morgan said; for there could, in his opinion, be no doubt that she had attempted to destroy her husband. Mr. Jackson, on being questioned, peremptorily denied that he had ever desired Mrs. Rogers to procure sulphuric acid for him, or had received any from her—a statement which so confounded the young woman that she instantly fainted.—The upshot was that Mrs. Rogers was taken into custody and lodged in prison.

The terrible news flew through Farnham like wild fire. In a few minutes it was upon everybody's tongue, the hints of the quarrelsome life the young couple led, artfully spread by Jackson, were recalled, and no doubt appeared to be entertained of the truth of the dreadful charge. I had no doubt either, but my conviction was not that of the Farnham folk.—This, then, was the solution of the struggle I had seen going on in Jackson's mind; this the realization of the dark thought which I had imperfectly read in the sinister glances of his restless eyes. He had intended to destroy both the husband and wife—the one by poison, and the other by the law! Doubtless, then, the £1500 had been obtained, and this was the wretched man's infernal device for retaining it! I went over with Morgan early the next morning to see the patient, and found that, thanks to Dr. Edwards's subsequent active treatment, he was rapidly recovering. The still-suffering young man, I was glad to find, would not believe for a moment in his wife's guilt, I watched the looks and movements of Jackson attentively—a scrutiny which he, now aware of my vocation, by no means appeared to relish.

“Pray,” said I, suddenly addressing Riddet, the woman servant—“pray, how did it happen that you had no soap in such a house as this yesterday evening?”

“No soap!” echoed the woman with a stare of surprise. “Why?”—

“No—no soap,” hastily broke in her master with loud and menacing emphasis. “There was not a morsel in the house. “I bought some afterwards in Farnham.”

The cowed and bewildered woman slunk away. I was more than satisfied; and judging by Jackson's countenance, which changed beneath my look to the color of the lime-washed wall against which he stood, he surmised that I was.

My conviction, however, was not evidence, and I felt that I should need even more than my wonted good fortune to bring the black crime home to the real perpetrator. For the present, at all events, I must keep silence—a resolve I found hard to persist in at the examination of the accused wife, an hour or two afterwards, before the county magistrates. Jackson had hardened himself to iron, and gave his lying evidence with ruthless self-possession. He had *not* desired Mrs. Rogers to purchase sulphuric acid; had *not* received any from her. In addition also to his testimony that she and her husband was always quarrelling, it was proved by a respectable person that high words had passed between them on the evening previous to the day of the criminal offence was committed, and that foolish, passionate expressions had escaped her about wishing to be rid of such a drunken wretch. This evidence, combined with the medical testimony, appeared so conclusive to the magistrates, that spite of the unfortunate woman's wild protestations of innocence and the rending agony which convulsed her frame, and almost choked her utterance, she was remanded to prison till that day-week, when, the magistrates informed her, she would be again brought up for the merely formal completion of the depositions, and be then full committed on the capital charge.

I was greatly disturbed, and walked for two or three hours about the quiet neighborhood of Farnham, revolving a hundred fragments of schemes for bringing the truth to light,

without arriving at any feasible conclusion. One only mode of procedure seemed to offer, and that but dimly, a hope of success. It was, however, the best I could hit upon, and I directed my steps towards the Farnham prison. Sarah Purday had not yet, I remembered, been removed to the county jail at Guilford.

“Is Sara Purday,” I asked the turnkey, “more reconciled to her position than she was?”

“She’s just the same—bitter as gall, and venomous as a viper.”

This woman, I should state, was a person of fierce will and strong passions, and in early life had been respectably situated.

“Just step into her cell,” I continued, “upon some excuse or other, and carelessly drop a hint that if she could prevail upon Jackson to get her brought by *habeas* before a judge in London, there could be no doubt of her being bailed.”

The man stared, but after a few words of pretended explanation, went off to do as I requested. He was not gone long. “She’s all in a twitteration at the thoughts of it,” he said; “and must have pen, ink and paper, without a moment’s delay, bless her consequence!”

These were supplied; and I was soon in possession of her letter, couched cautiously, but more peremptorily than the former one. I need hardly say it did not reach its destination. She passed the next day in a state of feverish impatience; and no answer returning, she wrote again, her words this time conveying an evident, though indistinct threat. I refrained from visiting her till two days had thus passed, and found her, as I expected, eaten up with fury. She glared at me as I entered the cell like a chained tigress.

“You appear vexed,” I said, “no doubt because Jackson declines to get you bailed. He ought not to refuse you such a trifling service, considering all things.”

“All what things?” replied the woman, eyeing me fiercely.

“That you know best, though I have a shrewd guess.”

“What do you guess? And what are you driving at?”

“I will deal frankly with you, Sara Purday. In the first place, you must plainly perceive that your *friend* Jackson has cast you off—abandoned you to your fate; and that fate will, there can be no doubt, be transportation.”

“Well,” she impatiently snarled, “suppose so; what then?”

“This—that you can help yourself in this difficulty by helping me.”

“As how?”

“In the first place, give me the means of convicting Jackson of having received stolen property.”

“Ha! How do you know that?”

“Oh, I know it very well—as well almost as you do. But this is not my chief object; there is another, far more important one,” and I ran over the incidents relative to the attempt at poisoning. “Now,” I resumed, “tell me, if you will, give your opinion on this matter.”

“That it was Jackson administered the poison, and certainly not the young woman,” she replied with vengeful promptness.

“My own conviction! This, then, is my proposition: you are sharp-witted, and know this fellow’s ways, habits, and propensities thoroughly—I, too, have heard something of them—and it strikes me that you could suggest some plan, some device grounded on knowledge, where the truth may come to light.

The woman looked fixedly at me for some time, without speaking. As I meant fairly and honestly by her I could not bear her gaze without shrinking.

“Suppose I could assist you,” she at last said, “how would that help me?”

“It would help you greatly. You would no doubt still be convicted of the burglary, for the evidence is irresistible; but if, in the meantime, you should have been instrumental in saving the life of an innocent person, and of bringing a great criminal to justice, there cannot be a question that the Queen’s mercy would be extended to you, and the punishment be merely a nominal one.”

“If I were sure of that!” she murmured with a burning scrutiny in her eyes, which were still fixed upon my countenance—“if I were sure of that! But you are misleading me.”

“Believe me, I am not. I speak in perfect sincerity. Take time to consider the matter.—I will look in again in about an hour; and pray do not forget that it is your sole and last chance.”

I left her, and did not return till more than three hours had passed away. Sarah Purday was pacing the cell in a phrenzy of inquietude.

“I thought you had forgotten me. Now,” she continued with rapid vehemence, “tell me, on your word and honor as a man, do you truly believe that if I can effectually assist you it will avail me with her Majesty?”

“I am as positive it will as I am of my own life.”

“Well, then, I *will* assist you. First, then Jackson was a confederate with Dawkins and myself, and received the plate and jewelry, for which he paid us less than one-third of the value.

“Rogers and his wife were not, I hope, cognizant of this?”

“Certainly not; but Jackson’s wife and the servant woman, Riddet, were. I have been turning the other business over in my mind,” she continued, speaking with increased emotion and rapidity; “and oh, believe me, Mr. Waters, if you can, that it is not solely a selfish motive which induces me to aid in saving Mary Rogers from destruction. I was once myself—Ah God!”

Tears welled up to the fierce eyes but they were quickly brushed away, and she continued somewhat more calmly: “You have heard, I dare say, that Jackson has a strange habit of talking in his sleep?”

“I have, and that he once consulted Morgan as to whether there was any cure for it. It was that which partially suggested”—

“It is, I believe, a mere fancy of his,” she interrupted: “or at any rate the habit is not so frequent, nor what he says so intelligible, as he thoroughly believes and fears it, from some former circumstance, to be. His deaf wife cannot deceive him, and he takes care never even to doze except in her presence only.”

“This is not, then, so promising as I hoped.”

“Have patience. It is full of promise, or we will manage. Every evening Jackson frequents a low gambling house, where he almost invariably wins small sums at cards—by craft, no doubt, as he never drinks there. When he returns home at about ten o’clock, his constant habit is to go into the front parlor, where his wife is sure to be sitting at that hour. He carefully locks the door, helps himself to brandy and water—plentifully of late—and falls asleep in his armchair; and there they both doze away, sometimes till one o’clock—always till past twelve.”

“Well; but I do not see how”—

“Hear me out if you please. Jackson never wastes a candle to drink or sleep by, and at this time of year there will be no fire. If he speaks to his wife he does not expect her from her wooden deafness, to answer him. Do you begin to perceive my drift?”

“Upon my word, I do not.”

“What, if upon awakening, Jackson finds that his wife is Mr. Waters, and that Mr. Waters relates to him all that he has disclosed in his sleep; that Mr. Hursley’s plate is buried in the garden near the lilac tree; that he, Jackson, received a thousand pounds six weeks ago of Henry Roger’s fortune, and that the money is now in the recess on the top landing, the

key of which is in his breast pocket; that he was the receiver of plate stolen from a house in the close at Salisbury twelve months ago, and sold in London for four hundred and fifty pounds. All this hurled at him," continued the woman with wild energy and flashing eyes, "what else might not a bold, quick-witted man make him believe he had confessed, revealed in his brief sleep?"

I had been sitting on a bench; but as these rapid disclosures burst from her lips, and I saw the use to which they might be turned, I rose slowly and in some sort involuntarily to my feet, lifted up, as it were, by the energy of her fiery words.

"God reward you!" I exclaimed, shaking both her hands in mine. "You have, unless I blunder, rescued an innocent woman from the scaffold. I see it all. Farewell!"

"Mr. Waters," she exclaimed, in a changed, palpitating voice, as I was passing forth; "when all is done, you will not forget me?"

"That I will not, by my own hopes of mercy in the hereafter. Adieu!"

At quarter past nine that evening I, accompanied by two Farnham constables, knocked at the door of Jackson's house. Henry Rogers, I should state, had been removed to the village. The door was opened by the woman servant, and we went in. "I have a warrant for your arrest, Jane Riddet," I said, "as an accomplice to the plate stealing the other day. There, don't scream, but listen to me." I then intimated the terms upon which alone she could expect favor. She tremblingly promised compliance; and after placing the constable outside in concealment, but within hearing, I proceeded to the parlor, secured the terrified old woman, and confined her safely in a distant out-house.

"Now, Riddet," I said, "quick with one of the old lady's gowns, a shawl, cap, *et cetera*." These were brought, and I returned to the parlor. It was a roomy apartment, with small diamond-paned windows, and just then but very faintly illuminated by starlight. There were two large high-backed easy chairs, and I prepared to take possession of the one recently vacated by Jackson's wife. "You must perfectly understand," were my parting words to the trembling servant, "that we intend standing no nonsense with either you or your master. You cannot escape; but if you let Mr. Jackson in as usual, and he enters this room as usual, no harm will befall you; if otherwise, you will be unquestionably transported. Now, go."

My toilet was not so easily accomplished, as I thought it would be. The gown did meet at the back by about a foot; that, however, was of little consequence, as the high chair concealed the deficiency; neither did the shortness of the sleeves matter much, as the ample shawl could be made to hide my too great length of arm; but the skirt was scarcely lower than a Highlander's, and how the deuce I was to crook my booted legs up out of view, even in that gloomy starlight, I could hardly imagine. The cap also was far too small; still with an ample kerchief in my hand, my whiskers might, I thought, be concealed. I was still fidgeting with these arrangements when Jackson knocked at his

door. The servant admitted him without remark, and he presently entered the room, carefully locked the door, and jolted down, so to speak, in the fellow easy chair to mine.

He was silent for a few moments, and then he bawled out: “She’ll swing for it, they say—swing for it, d’ye hear dame? But no, of course she don’t—deafener and deafener, deafener and deafener every day. It’ll be a precious good job when the parson says his last prayers over her as well as others.”

He then got up and went to the cupboard. I could hear—for I dared not look up—by the jingling of glasses and the outpouring of liquids that he was helping himself to his spirituous sleeping draughts. He reseated himself, and drank in moody silence, except now and then mumbling drowsily to himself, but in so low a tone that I could make nothing of it save an occasional curse or blasphemy. It was nearly eleven o’clock before the muttered self-communing ceased, and his heavy head sank upon the back of the easy chair. He was very restless, and it was evident that even his sleeping brain labored with affrighting and oppressive images; but the mutterings, as before he slept, were confused and indistinct. At length, half an hour had perhaps thus passed—the troubled moanings became for a few moments clearly audible. “Ha—ha—ha!” he burst out, “how are you off for soap? Ho—ho! Done there, my boy; ha—ha! But, no—no. Wall-plaster!—Who could have thought it? But for that I—I— What do you stare at me so for, you infernal blue bottle? You—you—” Again the dream utterance sunk into indistinctness, and I comprehended nothing more.

About half past twelve o’clock he awoke, rose, stretched himself, and said: “Come, dame, let’s to bed; it’s getting chilly here.”

“Dame” did not answer, and he again went towards the cupboard. “Here’s a candle-end will do for us,” he muttered. A lucifer match was drawn across the wall, he lit the candle, and stumbled towards me, for he was scarcely yet awake.

“Come, dame, come! Why thee beest sleeping like a dead un! Wake up, will thee—Ah! Murder! Thieves! Mur—”

My grasp was on the wretch’s throat; but there was no occasion to use force: he recognized me, and nerveless, paralysed, sank on the floor incapable of motion much less of resistance, and could only gaze in my face in dumb affright and horror.

“Give me the key of the recess upstairs, which you carry in your breast pocket. In your sleep, unhappy man, you have revealed everything.”

An inarticulate shriek of terror replied to me. I was silent; and presently he gasped:

“Wha—at, what have I said?”

“That Mr. Hursley’s plate is buried in the garden by the lilac-tree; that you have received a thousand pounds belonging to the man you tried to poison; that you netted four hundred

and fifty pounds by the plate stolen at Salisbury; that you dexterously contrived to slip the sulphuric acid into the tea unseen by Henry Roger's wife."

The shriek or scream was repeated, and he was for several moments speechless with consternation. A ray of hope gleamed suddenly in his flaming eyes.

"It is true—it is true!" he hurriedly ejaculated; "useless—useless—useless to deny it. But you are alone, and poor, poor, no doubt. A thousand pounds!—more, more than that: two thousand pounds in gold—gold, all in gold!—I will give you to spare me, to let me escape!"

"Where did you hide the soap on the day when you confess you tried to poison Henry Rogers?"

"In the recess you spoke of. But think! Two thousand pounds in gold—all in gold—"

As he spoke I suddenly grasped the villain's hands, pressed them together, and in another instant the snapping of a handcuff pronounced my answer. A yell of anguish burst from the miserable man, so loud and piercing, that the constables outside hurried to the outer door, and knocked hastily for admittance. They were let in by the servant woman; and in half an hour afterwards the three prisoners—Jackson, his wife, and Jane Riddet—were safe in Farnham prison.

A few sentences will conclude this narrative. Mary Rogers was brought up on the following day, and, on my evidence, discharged. Her husband, I have heard, has since proved a better and wiser man. Jackson was convicted at the Guilford assize of guiltily receiving the Hursley plate, and sentenced to transportation for life. This being so, the graver charge of attempting to poison was not pressed. There was no moral doubt of his guilt; but the legal proof of it rested solely on his own hurried confession, which counsel would no doubt have contended ought not to be received. His wife and the servant were leniently dealt with.

Sarah Purday was convicted and sentenced to transportation. I did not forget my promise; and a statement of the previously narrated circumstances having been drawn up and forwarded to the Queen and Home Secretary, a pardon, after some delay, was issued. There were painful circumstances in her history which, after strict inquiry, told favorably for her.—Several benevolent persons interested themselves in her behalf, and she was sent out to Canada, where she had some relatives, and has, I believe, prospered there.

This affair caused considerable hubbub at the time, and much admiration was expressed by the country people at the boldness and dexterity of the London "runner"; whereas, in fact, the successful result was entirely attributable to the opportune revelations of Sarah Purday.

Tioga Eagle [Wellsboro, PA], January 8, 1852
The [Richmond, VA] *Daily Dispatch*, February 18, 1852
Cooper's Clarksburg [VA] *Register*, March 10, 1852
The Eclectic Magazine of Foreign Literature, Science, and Art, January 1852
The International Magazine of Literature, Art, and Science, January 1, 1852
Leeds [England] *Times*, February 19, 1887

This story was originally published as “Recollections of a Police-Officer: Flint Jackson,” in *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*, November 15, 1851.

It was later published in the collection *Recollections of a Detective Police-Officer* by William Russell, under the pseudonym Thomas Waters (London: J.& C. Brown & Co., 1856).

Prior to the British publication of this volume, a pirated collection of the stories—titled *Recollections of a Policeman by Thomas Waters, An Inspector in the London Detective Corps*—was published in America (New York: Cornish and Lamport, 1852).