

A Medical Mystery.

I had reached my office one morning in November, a year or two ago, when, to my surprise, I found a young fellow waiting for me outside the door.

"Mr. Somers," he began, impetuously, "can you give me your services for the day?"

"Is the matter very pressing?" I replied. "Tell me what it is."

"My name is Kincaid," he said quickly. "You did some family business for us a few years ago. I want you to come with me at once. We can just catch a train from Waterloo to Basingstoke at 9:10. It runs down in an hour. I'll explain it all in the train. Ten guineas for the day and expenses. Make your own terms if successful. Will that do?"

"Very well," I said, "go and get a cab—I'll join you directly."

I unlocked my office, picked up a portmanteau which I kept ready packed for emergencies, scribbled a note to my clerk, and in less than ten minutes was by his side in a hansom, on the way to the station. We secured a carriage to ourselves, and as soon as the train had fairly started he unfolded his tale.

"My uncle, Clavell Kincaid, died very suddenly last night, under curious circumstances, and I suspect foul play," he began.

"Tell me exactly what happened."

"We had a kind of family dinner party to make a fresh arrangement about the property in which my uncle had a life interest."

"Nobody present but relations?"

"No."

"What is the property worth?"

About £10,000 or £12,000 a year."

"Go on."

"As things stand now, my cousin Harry takes everything under the entail. The object of the meeting was to buy out his interest, so that it could be more evenly divided among the family. Everybody directly interested was present."

"You couldn't buy up your cousin's interest without his consent," I interrupted.

"Certainly not," answered the young fellow. "But Harry is a black sheep. In fact, he's a thoroughly bad lot. He has been knocking about South America, and I don't know where else, for some years, and his record is about as black a one as a man can have."

"Very well," I said. "Now tell me about your uncle's death."

"We had finished dinner, and sat chatting and smoking. Uncle Clavell was talking to my father; suddenly he said: 'Dear me, I feel so sleepy, I really think I'— Then he stopped suddenly. His head fell forward and somebody rushed for brandy, thinking he was ill. As a matter of fact he was dead. It all happened in a minute."

"And you suspect your cousin of having killed him?"

"Yes."

"On what grounds?"

The young fellow looked blank.

"I hardly know," he stammered, "except that Harry's bad enough to do anything, and my uncle was in perfectly good health."

"Was Mr. Clavell Kincaid drinking anything at the time?"

"No, he was just smoking a cigar and chatting."

"Was your cousin near him?"

"No, he was talking to me several yards away."

"How do you think, then, he killed your uncle?"

"I—I—don't know. That's why I've come for you."

"You must excuse me, Mr. Kincaid, but I'm afraid this is a wild goose chase. It was to your cousin's interest that your uncle should die. Your cousin is an outsider. Your uncle dies suddenly, and you jump to the conclusion he has been murdered, but it doesn't fol-

low by any means."

"Of course not, but I believe he was," he persisted.

"Has a doctor seen Mr. Kincaid? What does he say?"

"The doctor won't say anything definitely until he has made a proper examination. He thinks it is total paralysis of the brain, and he can't account for it in any way."

"What kind of a man was your uncle?"

"Very healthy and very temperate. I have never known him to eat too much or drink too much in my life. Never had a day's illness."

"Well, it's a very strange case," I said, "and a very sad one. But, frankly, I believe your uncle died from natural causes. You are prejudiced in the matter; I am not."

We reached Basingstoke at a few minutes past 10, and then separated. Young Edward Kincaid was to go straight home and explain to his father what he had done, and get him to help. When I arrived I was received by father and son, and taken privately to the dining room, where the death occurred.

"You must quite understand, Mr. Somers," said the older man, "that I am not prepared to indorse my son's opinion that my brother was murdered. His death was shockingly sudden, and my nephew, Harry, is, I am sorry to say, a thorough rogue; but I should be sorry to think he was guilty of this."

"I can't see any reason to suspect him of it," I said dryly.

Then they explained to me exactly where everybody was standing when the death took place, and I asked a good many questions, as to what the dinner consisted of, but nothing transpired which threw any light on the matter.

"This is the cigar which he was smoking," said the young fellow suddenly. "I took it out of his hand, and placed it on the mantelpiece. Do you think," he went on quickly, "a man could be poisoned by a cigar, because, now I come to think of it, this one came out of my cousin's case."

"I don't think a cigar could be made so as to kill a man on the spot," I replied. "It might make him very sick, or send him to sleep, but not kill him."

"Besides," said Edward Kincaid, senior, "several of us smoked cigars out of Harry's case. I think you did, for one. You see," he continued, turning to me, "when we were lighting up, my brother had cigars handed around, but my nephew produced his own case and offered it to those nearest. My brother was a connoisseur of cigars, and, knowing that Harry always had something especially good, and wishing, perhaps, to please him, he said, from the other end of the room, 'Harry, I think I'll have one of yours.'"

"Yes, if you remember," said the young man, "Harry walked up to him and picked a cigar out of his case, and said, 'Try this one, uncle.'"

I felt rather perplexed; but to be on the safe side, put the half smoked cigar in my pocket for further examination.

"I'm afraid this doesn't prove anything," I said. "It isn't even suspicious. You see, Mr. Clavell asked for it."

"Yes, but perhaps Harry calculated he would do so, because Uncle Clavell often said that his cigars were the best part of him, and he always liked to smoke them."

"Could you manage for me to see your cousin?" I asked.

As luck would have it, the person in question sauntered into the room. He was a worn-out, dandified-looking man of about five-and-thirty, very sallow and bony, with a rather unpleasantly easy bearing.

I was introduced as representing the solicitors, and we began to discuss the death. I watched him narrowly. He talked about it with horrible composure, and didn't pretend to be sorrow stricken.

"Well, I suppose you three are talk-

ing business," he said at last, lazily, "so I'll clear out. I hate that sort of thing. I shall run up to town tomorrow, and call on your people," he added, turning to me. "Good morning."

"What do you propose to do, Mr. Somers?" said Edward Kincaid.

"It's impossible to form an opinion

We have purchased (because it is just the thing we have needed) the Columbian Cyclopaedia Library, consisting of the Columbian encyclopedia, which is also an unabridged dictionary thirty-two volumes of convenient size neatly bound, four volumes of the annual cyclopaedia review, four volumes of current history for 1896, one Columbian atlas and the neat convenient revolving oak case with glass doors. From the evidence obtained we find that some part of this work is placed in the best private and public library in this country abroad, for the reason that they cover a field relative to the past, present and future progress and achievements of the human race not attempted by others: The plan is original, and the work throughout is carefully and ably written.

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MARY L. JONES, Acting Librarian.

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