

THE MARATHON MYSTERY

A STORY OF MANHATTAN.

BY BURTON E. STEVENSON

Author of "The Holiday Case," "Cadets of Gascony," Etc.

"Not a thing except some loose smoking tobacco. There's one thing about the clothing, though—have you noticed? It's all summer clothing; see these linen trousers, now."

Godfrey nodded, with drawn brows. "What's this?" he asked suddenly, holding up a swart object, shaped like a ham-shell and having in the same way along the sharp edge.

"I don't know. A curio picked up at sea somewhere, perhaps. I have a theory that Thompson was a sailor."

"Why?"

"Well, the bag in the first place—only a sailor would carry his clothes that way. Then, put your head down in it and, under the tobacco, you'll smell the salt."

Godfrey sniffed and nodded again. Then he got out his knife. "Let's take a look at the inside of Mr. Thompson's curio," he said, and inserted the blade.

A twist and the sides unclosed. Simmonds sprang back with a sharp cry of surprise as he saw what lay within, and even Godfrey's heart gave a sudden leap.

For there, coiled thrice upon itself, lay a little viper, with venomous, triangular head.

"Then, in an instant, Godfrey smiled. "It's not alive," he said. "Don't you see, it's some marvelous kind of nut."

Simmonds approached cautiously and took another look.

"A nut?" he repeated. "A nut? Well? That beats me!"

"And well it might, for in every detail the form was perfect. Godfrey looked at it musingly.

"This may give us a clue," he said. "I shouldn't imagine a nut like this grows in many parts of the world. Though, of course, a sailor might pick up anywhere another sailor, in a sloop-shop, even here in New York, perhaps."

He closed the shell together again and placed it in the bag, stuffing the rest of the clothing in after it.

"Thompson had a very excited idea of cleanliness," he remarked. "His clothing needs a visit to the laundry. And this is all?"

"Yes—he'd rented his furniture from a store down the street. He had to pay rent in advance because he had so little baggage. That receipt's the only thing that's got his name on it—oh, yes; there's a letter tattooed on his left arm, but it's not a T—it's a J."

"Which goes to show that his name was Thompson. I think you're right, Simmonds. In putting him down as a sailor, I thought so last night—in fact, I've already got two men making a tour of the docks trying to find somebody who knew him."

"Have you," said Simmonds, smiling. "That's like you. There's another curious thing, though, about the clothing he had on."

"What is that?"

"Some of it's marked with one initial, some with another. Not one piece is marked with his."

"That is queer," commented Godfrey; "but it isn't half so queer as another thing. Why should a sailor, a drunkard, without a decent suit of clothes, rent an apartment that costs him forty dollars a month, when he could get a room for a dollar a week down on the Bowery, his natural stamping ground?"

Simmonds nodded helplessly.

"That's so," he said.

"Unless," added Godfrey, "he thought he had to have some such place to work from. He could hardly have asked Miss Croydon to meet him in a Bowers lodging house."

"No," agreed Simmonds; "but he needn't have blown in forty dollars, either. He could've got a nice room anywhere uptown for five a week."

A lap at the door interrupted him.

"Come in," he called.

The door opened and the coroner's clerk entered.

"Mr. Goldberg sent the exhibits back to you," he said, holding out a parcel to Simmonds.

Simmonds opened it and took out a pocket-book, a pipe, a knife, and some silver money.

"All right," he said, and signed a receipt.

Godfrey waited until the door closed, then he rose and came over to Simmonds's side.

"There's something here that might help us," he said, picking up the pocket-book. "Those clippings—why, they're not here!"

Simmonds smiled drily.

"That's another thing I wanted to tell you. The clippings have been removed."

"Removed? By whom?"

"That's a question. They were removed some time between the moment we looked at them and the moment the coroner took charge."

Godfrey stared at him with startled eyes.

"You remember," Simmonds continued, "that after we looked at the pocket-book, I put it back in Thompson's pocket."

"I saw you do that."

"We then went into the bedroom, and had a look around, leaving the body alone."

"With Miss Croydon," said Godfrey, completing the sentence.

"Precisely. Goldberg arrived a minute or two later. Then he and I searched the body again. When he opened the pocket-book there was nothing in it except the rent receipt."

Godfrey sat down again in his chair. The inference was obvious, irresistible. The clippings had been removed by Miss Croydon—they were the papers she had risked so much to get possession of. Simmonds and he had the secret under their hands and had missed it! It was not a pleasant reflection.

His thoughts flew back to Miss Croydon, and he found himself again admiring her. To have taken the clippings demanded a degree of bravery, of self-control, amounting almost to callousness. It seemed incredible that she should have dared approach the body, open the coat.

"Then he remembered her half-fainting attitude when he had returned from the inner room. At the time, he had thought the collapse natural enough. Now, it took on a new meaning.

"There's another thing," continued Simmonds, after a moment. "Here's the piece of pipe we found on the floor. Do you know where it came from?"

"No—I was going to look that up."

"It came from the radiator. The connections were defective and a plumber was replacing them. This is a piece of pipe he had removed and left lying behind the radiator. He remembers it distinctly. Do you recall the position of the radiator?"

"Yes; it's against the wall opposite the bedroom door."

"Exactly. Then the person coming from that door must have crossed the

room to get it. More than that, he must have hunted for it or known it was there, because it was in the shadow behind the radiator. It couldn't be seen unless one looked for it—I've tried it."

Godfrey paused to consider.

"Did you give these points to Goldberg?" he asked.

"No, I didn't think it would help matters any; besides, I didn't want to put Miss Croydon on her guard."

"Of course—though all this doesn't actually implicate her."

"No; but it shows she knows more than she's told us," said Simmonds doggedly. "I don't think she's been square with us."

Godfrey did not permit any trace of his inward perturbation to appear on his countenance; nevertheless he was seriously disturbed. He had hoped that no one but himself would suspect Miss Croydon's lack of frankness. He felt certain irritation against her—she should have been more careful; she should have foreseen that the clippings would be traced to her. She was relying too much on his forbearance. He must do his best to control Simmonds.

"Well, perhaps she hasn't," he said slowly, after a moment; but maybe she's not much to blame for that, after all. Anyway, we've got to work at the case from the other end. We've got to identify Thompson first."

"Yes," agreed Simmonds; "that's our best hold. You'll let me know if you find out anything?"

"Of course," said Godfrey, rising, and with a curt nod he went out and down the steps to the street.

At the office he found two reports awaiting him. One was from the men he had sent along the docks—they had found no one who could identify the photograph of Thompson. The other was from Delaney, the head of the Record's intelligence department. At 2 o'clock that morning, just before retiring, Godfrey had phoned a message to the office:

"Delaney—I want all the information obtainable concerning the history of the Croydon family, to which Mrs. Richard Delroy and Grace Croydon belong."

"This was the result."

"Gustave Croydon, notary and money lender, No. 17 Rue d'Antin, Paris, removed with his wife and young daughter about 1878 to Beckenham, just south of London, England. Why he removed from France not known. Rue d'Antin has been completely rebuilt within last thirty years and only person there now who remembers Croydon is an old notary named Fabre, who has an office at the corner of Rue St. Augustin. He has vague memory that Croydon left France to avoid criminal prosecution of some sort."

"Croydon bought small country place near Beckenham and lived there quietly in semi-retirement. Fortune apparently not large. In 1891, mortgaged estate for £2,000; mortgage paid in 1897. Catholic. Excellent reputation at Beckenham."

"Eldest daughter, Edith, born in France, August 26, 1874. Educated at school there, but broke down from over study and returned to Beckenham, where she became interested in social settlements work. There met Richard Delroy, New York, who was making investigation of London charities. Married him June 6, 1900, and went immediately to New York."

"Only other child, younger daughter Grace, born at Beckenham, May 12, 1891. No unusual incidents in life, so far as known."

"Croydon and wife died, typhoid fever, 1901. Delroys came to England, and after selling property and settling estate took Grace home with them. Estate left wholly to younger sister, paid inheritance tax on £7,500."

Godfrey read this through slowly, dwelling upon it point by point.

"The skeleton," he said to himself, "is pretty plain—it lies concealed somewhere behind Croydon's departure from France. There must have been some unusual reason for that—a reason more serious, perhaps, than this threatened prosecution—the clippings would tell the story."

"But it is worth while trying to dig it up to do if the newspapers handled it at the time; but I don't know," and he stared out through his window with drawn brows. "If it's buried again, I believe I'll let it rest—for the present, anyway," and he whirled back to his desk.

He wrote the story of the day's developments and turned it in.

"We've been lucky," said the city editor, with a gleeful smile, as he took the copy. "We've got photographs of all the principals."

"Have we?"

"Yes—they cost \$500, but they're worth it. No other paper in town will have 'em."

"That's good," said Godfrey, but it was a half-hearted commendation, and he left the office in a frame of mind not wholly amiable. The methods of a popular newspaper are not always above reproach.

"Thank heaven," he added to himself, his face clearing a little, "there's nothing in my story to implicate either Miss Croydon or Mrs. Delroy—there's no hint of the skeleton! I took care of that—which," he concluded, with a

grim smile, "is mighty forbearing in a yellow journalist!"

What further guests there were to be of his fair-earance not even he suspected!

CHAPTER I.

A CHANGE OF LODGINGS.

As a matter of course, the affair at the Marathon created a great public sensation. The papers overflowed with details, theories, suggestions to the police, letters from interested readers. Many of the latter were quite certain that they could quickly solve the mystery, but unfortunately private business demanded their whole attention; meanwhile, the stupidity of the detective force was a disgrace to the city, let the guilty parties be arrested without further delay, whatever their position. It was remarkable how few accepted the simple theory which Simmonds had propounded; all of them chose to discern something deeper, more intricate, more mysterious, more elusive. Croydon incurred much oblique reference. This, for the most part, took the form of scathing, even hysterical, polemics against the degeneration of American society, the greatest peril threatening the health and prosperity of the Republic. It was with Rome, so would it be with America; luxury, sensuality, a moral code growing ever more lax, could have only one result.

No doubt these vigorous correspondents enjoyed themselves and imagined that society quivered in consternation under the castigation. Certainly they formed a source of exquisite amusement to the readers of the papers.

It has long been a habit of mine, when any particularly abstruse criminal mystery is before the public, to pin my faith to the Record. Its other features I do not admire, but I know that Jim Godfrey was its expert in crime, and ever since my encounter with the Holliday case, I have entertained the liveliest admiration of his acumen and audacity. If a mystery was possible of solution, I believed that he would solve it, so it was to the Record I turned now, and read carefully every word he wrote about the tragedy.

It is difficult for me to explain, even to myself, the interest with which I followed the case. I suppose most have a fondness, more or less unrealistic, for the Holliday case. I had found all of us revolt some times against the commonplaces of every day existence. We had been having a protracted siege of unusually hard work at the office, and I was a little tired, and in consequence, I had needed a tonic, a distraction, and I found it in "The Tragedy in Suits 14," as Godfrey had christened it.

I was sitting in my room on the evening of the second day after the trial, smoking a pipe, and reading the Record's stenographic report of the coroner's inquest when there came a knock at my door and my landlady entered. She held in her hand a paper which had a formidable legal appearance.

"Have you found another apartment, Mr. Lester?" she asked.

"No, I haven't, Mrs. Fitch," I said. "I'm afraid I've not been as diligent in looking for one as I should have been."

"Well, I've just got another notice," she sighed wearily. "They're going to begin tearing down the house day after tomorrow. I can't find another house, so I'm going to put my furniture in storage. I've told the men to come for it tomorrow."

"All right," I said. "If I can't find an apartment to suit I will put my stuff in storage, too, and stay at a hotel for a while. I'll know by tomorrow noon."

"Yes, well, it does seem hard, though," she added, pausing on the threshold, "that we should be the ones to suffer, when there's so many other blocks they might have taken."

"I don't know," I said. "I've got other blocks, but probably have said the same thing," I pointed out. "After all, I suppose this block was better than the others, or it wouldn't have been chosen."

She sniffed skeptically, and went on her way to notify her other lodgers of the imminent eviction.

We were martyrs to the march of public improvement. The block had been condemned by the usual legal process, and an army was directed on the site. So there was nothing left for us to do but move. I had hoped that Mrs. Fitch would find another house somewhere in the neighborhood and that I could stay with her, now. It seemed that I should go for other quarters, and at exceedingly short notice. To find comfortable ones, conveniently situated, and at the same time within reach of my modest income, I knew, was a problem not easily solved.

I settled back in my chair and took up my paper again, when a sudden thought brought me bolt upright. Here was an apartment, two rooms and bath, just what I wanted, empty—and moreover, just what I should be admirably placed for close-at-hand study of the tragedy. I glanced at my watch—it was only half past seven—and I hurried into my coat in a sudden fever of impatience lest some one should get there before me.

Twenty minutes walk brought me to the Marathon apartment house, and as I stepped into the vestibule I saw sitting by the elevator a red faced man whom I recognized instantly as Higgins, the janitor. He rose as I approached him.

"You have an apartment here to rent, haven't you?" I asked.

"Not just now, sir," he answered. "There will be next week—if the wretched elevator leaves us alone. You see, the house is being remodeled."

"Oh," I said, more disappointed than I cared to show. "I thought perhaps there was one I could move into at once. Next week won't do me any good."

He moistened his lips and scratched his head, eyeing me undecidedly.

"May I ask your name, sir?" he said, at last.

I handed him a card, which had also the address of my firm, Graham & Royce. He read it slowly.

"We've got one apartment, sir," he said, looking up when he had mastered it; "two rooms and bath—but it needs a little cleaning up. When do you have to have it?"

"I have to move in tomorrow," I answered, and I told him briefly why.

"May I look at this apartment?"

He hesitated yet a moment, then straightened up with sudden resolution.

"You kin see it if you want to, sir," he said; "but first, I must tell you that it's soot fourteen, where they was a—murder two days ago."

"A murder?" I repeated. "Oh, yes; I did see something about it in the papers. Well, that doesn't make any difference; I'm not afraid of ghosts."

(Continued Next Week.)

That Law Again.

From the Success Magazine.

For miles and miles the through passenger train has plied back and forth in the wake of the slow freight. The travelers grow irksome and even petulant.

"Conductor," says one of the boldest of them, "why do you not get that freight to take a siding while we go by it?"

"Under the Hepburn law," explains the conductor, slyly, "we are not allowed to pass anything."

Silence causes a lot less trouble than talk.



"PICKING UP" DAIRY COWS.

While traveling in Benton county last month I chanced to meet a dairyman who was "picking up" cows. I asked him if he was successful in always finding profitable cows. He said it was getting more difficult every year. He said that good cows, for those who had them did not care to sell; and, about the only cows one could buy now, when going through the country, were second-rate ones. He said that they were beginning to raise their own cows, but this matter had been put off too long, and now many had to go out and pick up cows. A few years ago it was not difficult to find good ones, but with so many going into dairying the supply has been inadequate. This dairyman also spoke about calf raising. He said that so long as dairymen made it a side issue, we need not expect much improvement in our herds from that source. Unless dairy calves were raised right one might just as well take his chances on buying his cows, for the poorly fed calf will never amount to much. The dairyman who expects to go ahead will not hazard his business by depending upon these "pick-ups."

SHRED FODDER FOR THE COWS.

Although large stores of hay have been secured for winter feeding, yet we believe it will be good business to put up a lot of nice fodder and shred it. Many argue that they have all the forage they really need, but in many cases this consists of timothy hay, which might well be disposed of and shredded fodder used in its place. We do not advise cutting up a big field of corn and then allow it to stand all winter, hauling in from day to day just what is needed for the day's feeding, but we do advise cutting enough to feed the stock nicely through the winter. Cut when the corn is in the hard dent stage, and then when the shocks have dried out enough "run the crop through a husker and shredder, and get both the grain and fodder under roof before real winter weather comes on. Shredded fodder is handy to feed, and it will make as much clear money as any product produced on the farm. The value in shredded is that the fodder can then be kept until late in the next spring, in good condition. When fodder is put all winter in shock the greater part of its value is lost by spring.

GETTING READY FOR WINTER.

Winter dairying will pay, providing sufficient feed has been secured and good accommodations are given the cows. It is a mistake to keep winter cows on poor feed or insufficient feed. There is this about winter dairying; one must equip himself for it; and unless that has been done, don't fool away your time. Because you have a nice stock of alfalfa in the barnyard and will have plenty of stalk pasture after while don't think you are prepared for winter. But if you have plenty of clover or alfalfa hay, some bright corn fodder in stack and a good patch of mangels you are well off and can get along well without a silo. It takes good feed to produce good milk, and while a cow fed on straw and turnips might produce a fair quantity of milk, it would not be much better than water. Cutting the corn and laying in plenty of it, milk producing food, clean up the stables (whitewashing and sweeping down the cobwebs), and laying in a big supply of bedding for the cows.

SHOULD WOMEN MILK?

As a general proposition I should say that milking is not part of the woman's work, but there are times when it will come in very handy if she knows how to milk. On established dairy farms, where dairying is made a business, the milking is done by men, milkers, and all machine work is done by men, and the women are usually given the work of caring for the utensils. Where farm butter making is carried on, the whole work is usually done by the women, as the men are apt to look upon it more as a source of pin money for the women. This question of "pin money" is quite elastic, for it frequently includes dresses and hats and gloves for all the family as well as groceries and other household wants. The nice thing about it is the cows made good and provided all these things. But it is hardly fair to put all this dairying work on one side of the house. Bring the milk to the house and then turn it over to mother and the girls. Then one need not feel any delicacy in having groceries included in the pin money.

DAIRY NOTES.

On many farms "kitchen" dairying is done, that is, the milk and cream are kept in the cupboard and the churning is done near the kitchen stove. Here are difficulties which is hard to overcome. The odors from cooking from the men smoking will get into the cream and your customers are sure to find them in your butter.

The first year milking the heifer is the time a trainer to become a persistent milker. Feed her well, handle her carefully, milk at regular intervals and milk her for ten or eleven months.

If you feed turnips to your cows, feed them after you are through milking. Even then the turnip flavor will sometimes be detected in the butter.

Milk before you clean the cow and horse stables. Then remove the milk to the milk-house and you will miss the dust and odors which arise when cleaning and feeding is done.

If you think you can get pure cream by hand skimming just examine the dirt left in a separator bowl after skimming by machine. The separator will not remove odors but it does catch most everything else.

Without ensilage one should have some other kind of succulent food for winter feeding. Mangels and cabbage are good, and for early feeding pumpkins come in very nicely. It is almost impossible to keep up the milk flow on dry feed.

Don't complain about big eaters in your herd. The most profitable cow is the one that will consume large quantities of food and return a greater part of it to you in milk and butter fat. But a big eater that turns her food to beef ought to be sent to the block.

VALUE OF GOOD SEED.

This is a pretty good time to take stock and sum up what we have learned from our year's work.

This has been a season when the value of good, strong seed shows in the outcome of the crop. I have been talking with oat growers lately. Mr. Samuel Ray, a very painstaking farmer in Ogle county, Illinois, sowed 1½ bushels of clean, well graded seed oats last spring, per acre, and got a yield of sixty-three bushels per acre of grain that will test thirty to thirty-three pounds per bushel. This is a yield of forty-two bushels for every bushel of seed sown. The variety was the "Sixty-Lay." Other growers, seeding with "Silver Mine" and "Big Four," used three to three and one-half bushels per acre and I have not heard of one fifty-bushel yield in northern Illinois. Mr. Ray's seed was vigorous; it stood punishment and did not rust. It made a fine crop in face of all adverse conditions. Of course, this variety is a small berry and would not require so much seed per acre as some of the larger sorts; but to the careful selection of this seed, careful work in drilling in, is due the fine yield.

Another grower, Mr. Wesemann, of Cook county, Illinois, sowed thirty bushels of "Lincoln" oats on twenty acres—a rate of one and one-half bushels per acre. His neighbors laughed at him and simply predicted that he would lose the use of his ground. This seed-bed was put in first rate condition, and the seed was drilled in. They showed up quickly in the drills and stood so that they covered the ground. These oats have not been threshed, but it is good for fifty to sixty bushels per acre, and, barring some bad weeds, these oats are of fine quality.

These are only two instances out of many that could cite to show that yield and quality of the crop does not necessarily depend upon thick seeding, but rather upon seed of high germinating power, put into a good seed-bed.

SELECTING SEED CORN OUT OF THE WAGON.

Along this time of the year we hear much about selecting seed corn in the field. Many urge this practice, contending that by observing the stalk one is enabled to select the most desirable seed ears. But really, what will nine out of ten men do when they select the most perfect looking ears, paying no attention to the conditions under which these ears were grown? Let us see what it has taken to produce these fine ears. The seed of a fine stalk may be the result of the condition of the soil in the particular hill, and altogether likely it is not the result of any unusual quality in the seed grain. In other words, a fine ear found upon a stalk does not necessarily prove that the ear possesses such inherent qualities as will produce uniform, well shaped ears. What we want is seed which will produce good crops under abnormal conditions, for most any seed will give a great crop whenever the conditions are favorable. For getting the results I believe that well matured ears, selected as one unload the wagon, will prove best.

CANADA THISTLE IN OATS.

The prevalence of Canada thistle in oats this year is really alarming. A neighbor of mine had as fine a field of oats as I have ever seen, this year. The variety is the "Lincoln," for which he paid 75 cents a bushel for the seed last year. The grain was stacked without a drop of rain and the whole crop was largely sought after for seed for next season. But Canada thistles have ruined the whole crop, so far as being fit for seed. The thistles seeded with the oats and are now found with the bundles. The whole trouble came from a small patch in one part of the field. Instead of going after them last season and keeping them down, they were allowed to spread until now not only the oats and are now found with the bundles, but other fields of the farm are sure to be infested. Some careful work last year, even losing the crops growing on the spots invaded by the thistles, would have made a difference of \$100 in the value of this one oat crop, to say nothing about the work it will take now to kill out the pest.

FARM FACTS.

Professor Mumford says: "The experience of some stockmen indicates that seasons carried through the grazing season on pasture will yield larger returns during that time if previously maintained through the winter on roughage than if fed a liberal ration of grain for several months before pasturing. The former method is often found more economical in localities where are naturally adapted to the growing of grass and forage crops, largely to the exclusion of grain. But under average conditions it is rarely found good economy to carry stock on a considerable time on a mere maintenance allowance, even though the subsequent gain on grass be thereby increased."

The fall pigs will need good care now to get them well along before winter comes on. Milk or middlings will make good feed, and ground corn and oats, with the run of some pasture, will be much better than continuing them in the yard with the fattening stock.

When fixing up the stables and sheds for the stock, arrange for plenty of fresh air, but it should come in at the windows and not through crevices.

Late sowing of grass seeds is not recommended. Seeding should be done early enough so that the grass can make a good start during the fall, and this cannot be done if seed is sown much after the middle of September.

A correspondent asks whether alsike and timothy would work well together on a piece of bottom land. Yes. Sometimes the land becomes too wet or the clover too rank to make hay. Then a good seed crop of timothy may be taken. This was done this season on much low land.

The advantage in cutting ensilage in short pieces is that it packs better in the silo. When cut from one-half to one inch lengths, it will pack quicker and more solidly than when cut one and one-half inches. Cows like the short cut length the best.

Everything in Proportion.

From Harper's Weekly.

For many weeks the irritable merchant had been riveted to his bed by typhoid fever. Now he was convalescing. He clamored for something to eat, declaring that he was starving.

"Tomorrow you may have something to eat," promised the doctor. The merchant realized that there would be a restraint to his appetite, yet he saw, in vision, a modest steaming meal placed at his bedside.

"Here is your dinner," said the nurse next day, as she gave the glowing patient a spoonful of tapioca pudding, "and the doctor emphasizes that everything else you do must be in the same proportion."

Two hours later the nurse heard a frantic call from the bed chamber.

"Nurse," breathed the man, heavily, "I want to do some reading, bring me a postage stamp."

Ready if Needed.

A Chicago office boy, looking for a job, was asked whether he used profane language. He replied: "I kid it, if necessary."

He got the place.

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