

# THE FATAL REQUEST OR FOUND OUT

By A. L. Harris Author of "Mine Own Familiar Friend," etc.  
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## CHAPTER XIV.—Continued.

All, though still legible, were more or less injured by the fiery ordeal to which they had been in some degree subjected. The fire, which had stopped before reaching the upper part of the body, had been sufficient for this.

He ran his eye over them again. What was that? Something which crackled as he laid his hand upon one of the papers nearest to him. It was a sheet of foreign note paper, much singed, and written only upon one side.

He pushed all the other papers together in a heap. Then, with the burnt letter before him, with an elbow planted on each side, and his head supported between his hands, he bent himself to the task of deciphering what still remained.

At last, after at least an hour spent in this way, he made a gesture of despair.

"I suppose I must give it up. The task is beyond me—at least, this portion of it."

He cast his eye again over the words. "They tell me nothing as they are. They even serve to cast some implication upon my father's honor, and—"

He broke off abruptly, and the color feroaked his face. What was it the doctor had hinted at? Something discreditable in the past?

He glanced at the paper again. "But this speaks of something worse—"

He gave a hasty look round, as though he half-feared the possibility of the presence of a listener, as he whispered the words—"Something criminal!"

He took up his pen again, and once more concentrated his whole attention upon the burnt letter.

The paper before him contained a number of broken phrases—the beginnings and fragments of sentences. The upper part of the letter had been

vealing another compartment behind the first.

This at first seemed to contain nothing but a packet of old letters, tied round with a faded blue ribbon. They were his mother's letters, written before her marriage, and treasured ever since.

A bundle of old love letters. Was that all?

No, there was something else. A photograph, faded and yellow, like the letters. A photograph of a young man, in the dress, that now seemed old-fashioned and ridiculous, of twenty or thirty years ago. The features were hardly distinguishable, but on the back was written a name and a date—"James Ferrers, taken June, 1853."

## CHAPTER XV.

### The New Client.

Mr. John Sharp's offices were situated off the Strand. And at 11 o'clock one morning Mr. John Sharp was seated in his private room, expecting a visitor, or, as Mr. Sharp would have expressed it himself, a client. While waiting for the latter to put in an appearance, he whiled away the time with the morning paper.

At the particular moment to which we refer, his attention was engaged by something in the top right hand corner of the outside sheet, which seemed to afford him a considerable amount of satisfaction.

"It certainly does read well," he remarked to himself complacently. "I can't deny that, though I did draw it up myself. 'I wonder,' he continued, rasping his chin with his forefinger, 'whether the gent who's made the appointment for 11 o'clock came from the advertisement, or whether he was recommended?'"

The advertisement referred to was as follows:

"Sharp's Detective Agency. Swift,

mind that he committed the deed. What I want you to do is to trace him for me—or, rather, put me on his track and let me run him down."

"Phew!" whistled Mr. Sharp, softly, under his breath. "This is something quite out of the common, this is. Suppose," he said, addressing the young man, "that we examine the evidence. This is the bullet, you say; and this a photograph you found among the deceased gentleman's papers. Might I inquire what this is?" laying his hand upon the other article.

"That is the letter I spoke of, which made the appointment which my father kept, and was thus, indirectly, the cause of his death. It is partly destroyed; but enough remains to show that there was—here he hesitated for the first time—"something of the nature of a secret between them."

Mr. Sharp ran his eye down the page. "Humph!" he remarked; "something vague and unsatisfactory. It certainly seems to hint at something of a suspicious nature between the two."

"Don't make any mistake," put in Ted Burritt at this point; "whatever there may be of that nature does not—cannot apply to my father."

"Probably not! Probably not! But you must allow a certain amount of ambiguity—of cutting both ways. If we could prove the knowledge of some nefarious—some—here he referred to a sentence in the copy of the letter—"some criminal proceedings concerning the writer on the part of the—er—the unfortunate gentleman who was shot—something which lay between those two alone. Why, then, we should be able to see our way. Suppose there was a strong provocation. Suppose those two to be alone in a first-class carriage. Suppose that a sudden quarrel arises between them; that the deceased, as I have just said, is provoked to utter threats as to what he may or may not do. Suppose the one threatened, who carries a revolver, makes up his mind to silence him once for all by the means of a bullet through his brain."

His client nodded. "Now," continued Mr. Sharp, "before proceeding further, just let us come to an understanding as to what you want me to do?"

"I want you," was the answer, "to trace this other from the time that he was last seen."

"Very good," from Mr. Sharp. "And to trace his history backwards from that time."

"And the party's name?"

Ted handed him the photograph and showed him what was written on the back.

"Very good, sir. I think we understand each other. And you would wish me to begin my investigations—?"

"At once!"

There was a little discussion here about terms, expenses, etc., which, being satisfactorily arranged, the client rose and prepared to take his departure.

"You will leave me this"—the detective indicated the photograph—"and your copy of the letter?"

Ted Burritt assented and replaced the other articles.

"I shall make a point," said Mr. Sharp, "of going through the report of the inquest again to refresh my memory, and in case there should be any little fact that may have escaped yours. You have to prove"—checking the items off on his fingers—"first, that the man we want wrote that letter; secondly, that he was the other passenger, and, thirdly, that he fired that shot."

The answer was firm and concise: "I don't require you to prove the murder so much as to trace the man, and, when you have done so—leave him to me!"

(To be continued.)

### A Yankee Trade.

The old Yankee skill at driving a bargain is not being lost. A woman visitor at a fashionable resort on the Maine coast last summer went to the Universalist church in the place the first Sunday morning of her stay, and was politely shown to a seat. There was no hymn book, however, but the occupant of the pew behind her reached over and placed one in her hands. At the close of the service the visitor turned and thanked the person, saying as she was to attend that church all summer she would like to buy a hymn book. "Well," said the other woman, "I guess you can have that book if you'll give me a pair of black gloves, No. 7." Very well," said the visitor. The next day she went to Portsmouth, purchased the No. 7 black gloves for \$1.50 and duly received the use of the hymnal in exchange for them on the following Sunday.—Boston Herald.

### One Thing to Avoid.

"Yes," said the great man, "I am going to write a book of personal recollections. I think I am prominent enough to do that, don't you?"

"Oh, yes, you're prominent enough, but I'd like to caution you about one thing."

"What's that?"

"For the purposes of publication, don't recollect anything about prominent men now living."

"But they're just the people I want to write about. Those are the kind of reminiscences that will make the book sell."

"Oh, well, suit yourself, but remember that I warned you."

"What's the danger?"

"Why, just as soon as you begin to recollect things about them they will begin to recollect things about you."

"I hadn't thought of that," remarked the great man.—Cincinnati Post.

### Women Inventors.

The United States has granted 3,500 patents to women.

## AMERICAN SINGER WHO HAS WON FAVOR OF BERLINERS



Miss Geraldine Farrar, a native of Melrose, Mass., according to a statement in the *Frenssische Correspondenz*, was slandered in an article in a recent issue of *Die Welt*, which insinuated that relations existed between Miss Farrar and the German crown prince. Miss Farrar's father visited the house of the writer of the article and compelled him to sign a statement declaring the article pure invention. Miss Farrar has been singing at the Royal opera house in Berlin. The Kaiser has closed the house until more exits can be built and fire-proof stairs substituted for the present wooden stairs.

Miss Farrar sang in Boston a few seasons ago under Melba's training. She has won great fame in the German capital by her singing of the role of Marguerite in "Faust."

### ARE NOT REAL DIAMONDS.

#### Society Hears Rumor About One of Its Members' Beautiful Ornaments.

The shocking rumor has gone abroad in the New York "400" that the wonderful diamond tiara worn by a famous matron is bogus—in fact, that the jewels are really beveled glass. The imitation, if imitation it be, is a marvel of beauty, the tiara being six inches high and fashioned after the manner of an antique crown. The possessor is a handsome woman who moves in the most exclusive little group of society. It is true her husband is not rich according to the qualification of these days. He is a lawyer and his wife inherited no great fortune. The tiara was made in Paris some two years ago, and until quite recently no one had dared hint that it was not made of real diamonds.

### FIDELITY TO BE REWARDED.

#### Appropriate Recognition of Forty-Year Term of Service.

The Parish Society for the Encouragement of Well-Doing has awarded a gold medal to Mme. Metteller, who has been a box opener at the Comedie Francaise for forty years. Edouard Thiery was the manager when she first went to the theater. She was at her post all through the war of 1870 and aided the actors in installing ambulances in the "House of Moliere." During the commune she never quitted her place. She has seen many "stars" rise and pass at the Comedie Francaise—Coquelin, Berubard, Madeline Brohan, who were very fond of her, and the admirable actor Got, whom she saw die and whom she applauded as a young man in "Duke Job."

#### Ex-President Cleveland's Experience.

Grover Cleveland has lived in the time of more administrations than any other citizen who has ever been president, beginning with that of Martin Van Buren and coming down to that of Theodore Roosevelt—in all eighteen, exclusive of his own two. He has also lived to see six vice presidents succeed to the presidency, three of them, Johnson, Arthur and Roosevelt, coming to the white house through the assassination of their predecessors. The others were Van Buren, Tyler and Fillmore.

#### Kentucky Poet Recovering.

Col. Will S. Hays, the Kentucky song writer, who recently sustained a slight stroke of paralysis, which affected his left side and his organs of speech, is greatly improved, and the doctors now entertain hopes of his recovery. He has partially recovered the use of his left side, and is able to express himself as feeling much better. Col. Hays is 68 years of age and has been suffering from kidney disease for more than a year.

#### Valued His Wife at \$1.

Rev. J. B. Toomay married a negro couple in a shoe store at Carthage, Mo., the other day. After the ceremony the groom asked the minister how much he owed him. "Tell me what your wife is worth to you and that will be my price," answered the minister. The black man grinningly handed him \$1. The minister seemed to approve of the groom's estimate, for he pocketed the money without returning any change.

### REMARKABLE FACTS IN LIFE.

#### Earl of Leicester Holds Unique Position in British Peerage.

The octogenarian earl of Leicester, who is on his deathbed, it is said, holds a position unique in several respects in the British peerage. He has been the father of eighteen children, of whom fourteen survive, and he numbers among his sons-in-law four earls, a viscount and a baron. There is a difference of age close on half a century between his oldest daughter and his youngest son, and he is at once a great-grandfather several times over and also the proud father of a boy of 10. The most astonishing fact, however, in Lord Leicester's family history is that his marriage to Miss Georgiana Cavendish took place exactly 100 years after his father's, the respective dates being 1775 and 1875. The dowager duchess of Abercorn and the earl of Leicester are the two remarkable living progenitors in the English nobility.

#### ELKINS AND THE REPORTER.

##### How Railway Magnate Squelched Persistent Questioner.

The late William L. Elkins, the Philadelphia street railway magnate, was not easily interviewed by newspaper men and the fresh young journalist found him especially difficult. One of these self-confident persons once opened fire with "How did you make your first \$1,000?" "By hard work," was the laconic answer, but the reporter, nothing daunted, continued: "What has been the happiest moment of your life?" "It hasn't come yet." "When will it come, then?" asked the young man eagerly, for he scented something. "When people cease to ask such damphool questions," said Mr. Elkins. Even the budding genius was not proof against such a shot, and he took his leave.

#### Andre Has Made Many Enemies.

The French minister of war, Gen. Andre, is one of the best abused men in France because of his recently announced purpose to promote equality in the ranks of the army. To further this object he has recently abolished the custom of "presenting arms" as a mark of respect. He is accused of fostering socialism in the French ranks and of deliberately following out a policy of religious and political persecution. He condemned to two years' hard service in the ranks sixty Polytechnic students who rebelled against the severity of an examination. Gen. Andre is a great favorite with the common soldier. He began life in the army as a lieutenant in the Imperial guard.

#### Not Much Impressed.

Congressman Williams, the new Democratic leader, tells of a party of English noblemen who were traveling in Texas. They visited one small town where the local magnate took them to the best saloon in the place and introduced them to the bartender, saying: "Jim, these gentlemen are marquises and earls and lords. What do you think of that?" "Well, Bill," answered the bartender, "they ain't but two classes in this here place. One is them that takes sugar in their and the other is them that ain't so dam particular. Wattleyshe, gents?"

## HUMOR OF THE DAY

### Prolonged Sitting Needed.

"You want me to tell the whole truth?" asked the witness.

"Certainly," replied the judge.

"The whole truth about the plaintiff?"

"Of course."

"How long does the court expect to sit?"

"What difference does that make?"

"It makes a lot of difference. I couldn't tell the whole truth about that scoundrel inside of thirty days, talking all the time."

### The Secret Out.

"I think," said the kittenish maid of some thirty-odd summers, "I'll go in for portrait painting. Is it difficult to learn?"

"No, it's comparatively easy," replied the great artist. "All one has to do is select the right colors and put them on in the right place."

### His Objection.

Fred—Why is it I never see you with Miss Buddington any more?

Joe—Because of my dislike for her father. He is a regular old pirate.

Fred—A pirate! Why, how's that?

Joe—Well, I know from personal experience that he's a freebooter.

### Working on Time.



Stork—Say, Monk, what's become of the cuckoo bird that used to live in the third bough back?

Monk—Oh, he's moved to the city. He's got a job as model in a clock factory.

### An Isthmus.

Barnes—Howes and I have been arguing about the meaning of the word "isthmus." He says it means a neck of land separating two bodies of water, and I hold that it is a strip of land connecting two continents. Now, what do you say?

Shedd—I say that neither of you is right. An isthmus is a thing that connects conspiracies and revolutions and separates governments.

### Switching Off the Old Man.

Mr. Elder—There is something I want to say to you, Bessie—er—that is, Miss Kutely.

Miss Kutely—Call me Bessie if you wish.

Mr. Elder—Oh, may I?

Miss Kutely—Of course; all old gentlemen call me Bessie.

### Orthography.

Uncle George—I notice you have spelt the word "sore" wrong in speaking of "sore" throat; you have written it "soar."

Willie—I was speaking of a giraffe, Uncle George. Nothing was the matter with his throat, only it soared.

### Business Instinct.

Jinks—Confound that hat! Where's it going next?

Street Vendor—Map of the city, sir?

### Common Phrases.



"A mere slip of a girl."

### Decidedly Stuck Up.

Phamley—Goodart called on us the other day and I never saw a man so stuck up in all my life.

Goodart—Nonsense! That isn't his style at all.

Phamley—I know, his style was simply ruined. He brought our children candy and held them on his lap while they ate it.

### As It Referred to Him.

Wife—How many people gaze at my new dress! I presume they wonder if I've been shopping in Paris.

Husband—More likely they wonder if I've been robbing a bank.—New Yorker.

### Family Diplomacy.

"I turn all my bills over to my wife."

"Does she have the money?"

"No, the nerve."

### Classing Him.

Sharpe—There goes Heeler. He was a big gun in the election.

Wheaton—Yes; I understand he was a repeater.



"Something I can do for you?"

burned away, and the first word which was decipherable was his father's name—"Silas."

Below this might be read, with some difficulty, the following incoherent scraps of sentences, in which, after all, there was a good deal of guess work:

"I've not forgotten . . . of twenty years . . . on receiving this letter . . . at once for Dover . . . expect to reach . . . There is that between us which . . . not allow you to deny . . . I ask . . . and many . . . you alone can . . . If you refuse I shall . . . that you . . . as the criminal . . . of your youth."

Beneath this last sentence he could make out what he took to be the letter J, which apparently stood for the initial letter of the Christian name, but the rest of the signature was burned and obliterated.

At this moment something again recalled to him the mysterious words which he had heard the night before the funeral, and he looked round for a possible interpretation of them.

His eye roamed from one object to another, and his tongue repeated the words—"The spring at the back of the recess!" What recess? Where?

He rose from his chair and took a sharp turn round the room. The recess? What was meant by the recess?

"Father," he said, as though addressing some one present. "Show me what you mean." He drew up his chair and resumed his seat; but there was that in his behavior which suggested one under the control of some mesmeric influence, or who walked in his sleep.

Immediately in front of him, his eye rested upon a small door. To his surprise, he now observed for the first time that the key was in the lock. He turned it and saw papers within, tied up in bundles and endorsed. Some were quite yellow with age, and some were more modern.

He went to work deliberately until he had quite cleared the space. It was not very large, but now that it was empty it formed a sort of—

He did not finish the word even in his own mind, but began to pass his fingers over the panel at the back, slowly backwards and forwards, an inch at a time.

At last, something seemed to catch his nail—something which projected ever so slightly.

He pressed it—the spring at the back of the recess—firmly. There was a little jarring sound, and the back of the partition fell forward, re-

sure and secret. All inquiries conducted with the greatest skill and discretion. Evidence obtained on any subject. All communications regarded as strictly private and confidential. Mr. John Sharp promises to all those who honor him by seeking his aid the experience of twenty years and the secrecy of the confessional."

Mr. John Sharp, as regarded his outward appearance, was somewhat of the weasel order. As he himself often said, "Sharp was his name and sharp was his nature."

"My new client's late," he continued, looking at his watch. He opened a door of communication and put his head through.

"Jennings!"

"Yessir."

"When the gentleman comes, don't forget to tell him that I'm engaged for the moment, but shall be at liberty shortly; and mind you come in when you hear me bang the door, and ask if I am disengaged and can see the gentleman now."

The faithful Jennings performed his duty to the letter. "I think," said Mr. Sharp, rising and referring to a memorandum, as the gentleman was ushered in, "that I have the pleasure of addressing Mr. Burritt? Will you be good enough to be seated."

The visitor admitted that was his name, and took the seat indicated.

"Something I can do for you?" inquired Mr. Sharp, placing the tips of his fingers together interrogatively.

The new client, who had with him a small leather bag, opened it, and produced three articles, which he placed upon the table before him. They consisted of a square, flat package, a photograph and a ball from a revolver.

"Suppose you begin from the beginning and tell me all about it, I shall not interrupt you," said Mr. Sharp, as he opened the note-book and moistened a stump of lead pencil with his tongue.

He kept his word, though he made copious notes, and for some moments there was only the monotonous sound of the one voice, as the new client recapitulated all the circumstances which had led to his seeking Mr. Sharp's assistance, and which have already been fully gone into.

When he had finished, "I thought the name seemed familiar to me," said the other. "To be sure, I remember all the circumstances connected with the sad affair. And so you think you have hit upon the guilty party?"

"I am certain of it," was the determined answer. "I believe I know his name, and have proof in my own