## June Graduating Class of South High School



The Three Dead Men

one gal in Georgetown now, an' she hab no friends but Solly, an' she terrible fond ob him." "He treated her well?" "Berry kind an' good to her. She tell yo' de

same if yo' ask her." Farther inquiries respecting the character and history of John Diggle and Solly Lawson confirmed these reports of wife and mother. Independent witnesses agreed with them and with Amos Slanning, who had already told me the me story. It was indeed, a curious coincidence that the three dead men had all been without any sinister or dangerously unsocial qualities. Of the young half-caste, though it was clear he had been lawless and more or less disreputable. it seemed unlikely that he could have wakened sufficient enmity to lose his life for his sins.

To explain why Henry Slanning had gone out in the night challenged me as the pregnant point; and given the reason for that most unusual step, everything else might have followed from it; but no reason offered; at every turn in this exasperating inquiry I was headed off by a blank wall, as it seemed, for purpose and motive, though they must have existed absolutely beyond my power to discover.

Henry Slanning had clearly gone where he knew John Diggle was to be found on his rounds; but whether he had actually sought Diggle, or another, could never be known, unless a living man furnished the information. None, however, came forward; there was a extraordinary lack of all evidence; for in such cases, nine times out of ten, chance offers a foothold for a first step, and this or that man or women, from outside the case, will appear with some incident or observation that may open the way to inquiry or suggest a train of research. But no such thing happened for me. Not a soul bore any testimony of any sort whatever, and not a soul actually came within the radius of the case. Here, apparently, one stood confronted with three barefaced and deliberate murders, committed in a night on a small island, yet not a shadow of any motive explained them and not a living being could fairly be pointed at as suspect in any degree.

I made very copious notes and, of course, pursued inquiry through many minor channels, which all ended in failure and contributed no light. I stood in the disagreeable position of being unable to make a case, and after a month's very hard and conscientious work was forced to own it to myself. A loss of self-esteem resulted. I began all over again, only to comwiete another circle of failure. Nor could it be called comparative unsuccess. The futility of my investigation was complete. I arrived at no theory of any sort or kind, and though once I glimpsed the truth darkly, as afterwards appeared. I wandered from the right road the moment it began to appear impossible.

My last week at Barbados, the last of six spent upca the subject, was devoted largely to Ames Slanning. He had been extraordinarily kind to me personally, and insisted upon my spending a few days at the Pelican estate as his guest before I left the West Indies. He was frankly disappointed at my failure, but not more than I confessed myself to being. It is true that, though trained to this work by instinct and native bent, with already some fair share of success in various cases, I failed signally here.

I could only admit and hope my chief might, prove more fortunate. We talked much of Henry Slanning; indeed, I kept the conversation to him as far as one decently might, and only with his twin brother; for I now saw the truth of what men had told me-that Amos entertained an opinion of his brother's character that differed from the truth. He did not undervalue his rectitude, or the regard and respect universally extended to the dead man; but he had never fathomed a character very different from his own, and probably never felt, even if had seen, the intellectual and inquisitive side Henry Slanning's character.

For example, when I returned to the possibility of suicide, a thought that haunted me in connection with the case, though the facts were there to prove murder, Amos Slanning assured me that nothing was more unlikely, and even when the revolver was proved to have been bought in England by his brother, he stoutly protested that it could not have been purchased with any thought of such a purpose. Others, however, saw no improbability in the idea of Henry Slanning's suicide under certain circumstances; but, since obvious murder and not suicide confronted us, they saw no object in raising the question.

I begged for a photograph of the dead man to take home with the rest of my elaborate doscian. The picture he lent me resembled

Amos closely in feature, but the expression was different-subtler and more melancholy. Indeed, it was a face where unrest had made a home, and one had judged the man who looked so was defeated of his ambitions. Yet no cynicism clouded his features and his mouth was as kindly as his brother's and no firmer. The photograph had been taken before Slanning's

What proved more interesting to me came into my hands by accident two days before I left the island on my homeward way. Amos, searching among his brother's things, had found a diary, which contained nothing that threw illumination upon the past and apparently abstained of set purpose from any mention of Henry's remance; but, in addition to this, he discovered a pile of manuscript-the musings of an intellectual man on a variety of subjects,

all of direct human interest. Study of Henry Slanning's personal library had already convinced me of his activity in the domain of thought, while Lady Warrender had confirmed the fact. His books were for the most part philosophical, and I found a translation of Gomperz that had evidently occupied much of his time, and translations of other German writers, including the English version in 29 volumes of Nietzsche. He had Gilbert Murray's Greek tragedians, also, with Plato and Aristotle deeply read. His interest evidently ran on the great pagans. As to his own writings, they reminded one of the "Anatomy of Melancholy." They abounded in curious quotations and tended to the morbid; but they were full of illumination as to the character of the man revealed in his interests.

He had compiled on love, passion, ambition, patience, duty, suicide, justice, free thought and free will as opposed to destiny. He was clearly a rationalist at this stage of his life, and acknowledged no supernatural inhibition to conduct; but his sense of duty was exquisitely keen; he debated questions of justice with a mind as impartial as distinguished, and one felt in the presence of a man who was alweighed down by his obligations to his most weighed down by his control and fellow creatures. He wrote of mastery and for domination, of craft and the unhappy need for falsehood in the affairs of life, of heredity and environment as rival or twin forces in development of character.

I begged these voluminous documents, since, my opinion, they must prove of great value to Duveen when he came to investigate Henry Slanning's fate; and his brother was content that I should take them with me.

I shall publish the whole thing presently, he assured me. "It wil be a valuable memorial of Henry and help to show the world that he was a remarkable man and a greater thinker than people supposed."

And so I left the West Indies (picking up the steamship Don on its return voyage from Jamaica), and departed grateful for much kindness and consideration, the richer for a good friend or two-men who are still my friendsand disappointed and chagrined to the very roots of my being in this blank failure to advance by a single fruitful speculation the problems I had gone so many miles and worked so exceedingly hard to resolve.

My utter failure had one good result, for it awoke the interest of Michael Duveen and he did not conceal his astonishment at a fiasco

so complete. "A dezen theories, of course, I had," I explained, "but each in turn came up against a blank negation. I could find no sort of explanation that fitted all the facts-worse, I could find no explanation that fitted any of them. So far could discover, as a result of sleepless search, these three men had not between them a real enemy in the world, nor was it possible to meet anybody living, or hear of anybody living, who can gain anything by the death of any of them. You'll say, of course, that Amos Slanning gains; but in reality he does not, for he and Henry had practcally everything in common and were very deeply attached to each

"If one thing is certain, where all is so uncertain, I should say it was the absolute innocence of Amos Slanning. The weirdest thing is, that against the evidence of my own sense and the fact of murder duly proved-murder, of course, by a person unknown-I still find mind coming back and back to the conviction that it simply cannot be. There was nobody on earth to murder Slanning; but there was quite sufficient reason for him to commit suicide. But he didn't."

Duveen patted me on the shoulder. "We shall see whether you are to be for-

given," he said. "You have at least roused my curiosity and I shall better judge when I set to work on your notes, if you have failed as hopelessly as you imagine. Meanwhile there is plenty to do. Come and dine with me a week hence, if nothing happens to prevent you; then you shall hear your sentence, or your acquittal, as

the case may be. The change has done you good-save for your remorseful expression. I never saw you looking so well."

Thur he dismissed me and I felt glad to think of other things until the evening came on which I was to dine with him. He put me off for a farther week, however, but saw me at his office and asked a few questions concerning the West Indian problem. These I answered, and he made no comment on my replies. Then I dined with him and, after the meal,

he read me the following report: "I have solved the problem," he said, "and I am absolutely convinced in my own mind that it is correctly solved. Whether those most vitally interested, however, will accept the solution, is another question.

"Scived it?" I gasped. "To my own satisfaction," he repeated; "and I shall be disappointed if not to yours also. You are not to blame. You did everything that I should, or could, have done myself. You lacked the necessary synthetic inspiration to put the pieces of the puzzle together after col-

lecting them-that is all." "That is everything."

"You were right, but let appearances tempt you away from the truth. Your intuition had only to be followed, but, basely, you deserted

"How could I follow it against an absolute

"My dear friend, no fact is absolute. "But murder can't be suicide."

"Murder may be suicide and suicide may be murder. Don't make rash assertions; but light your eigar and listen. I'm rather pleased with this; though I repeat it is quite likely that nobody but our noble selves will appreciate it at its true value. From your description of Amos Slanning I am quite sure that he will not. Therefore, let us expect no reward."

Then he read me his solution of the mystery. "Only through a close and exhaustive study of character is it possible to reach any explanation of this problem; and in the case of Mr. Henry Sianning, on whose death the destruction of the lesser men, John Diggle and Solly Lawson, will be found to depend, ample material for an estimate of his complex temperament exists. Not only from the facts recorded concerning him, but also from his own dissertations and meditations he may be measured; and it is from my estimate of him, built on elaborate data, that I propound the following theory and reconstruct the incidents which deprived him and the other two victims of their lives.

"Emphatically Solly Lawson's end forms a part of the larger problem, for I find in him a very vital component of the whole. Accident involved him in the heart of the catastrophe, and, without him, we should have had one dead man instead of three and a tragedy of an interesting psychological nature, but no mystery whatever. For the mystery now to be explained, is not the premeditated work of man,

but the blind operation of chance. "Let us then glance first at character, and take the dead in rotation. As I shall show, we are concerned alone with them. No undiscovered villains in hiding; no living man, unless it be myself, yet understands the secret. These three alone are responsible for their own undoing; or it would be more correct to say that an egregious action of Henry Slanning precipitated the death of the two humbler personages.

"Heary Slanning we find to be a man of cultured and refined tastes, averse from even the incidental violence of sport. Mrs. Jane Diggle said of him that 'he could not kill a scorpion.' He was shrewd, sagacious, and a good man of business. The power of wealth he inherited and did not abuse. He worked hard and with an exemplary humanity and consideration for all he employed. He was generous. thoughtful and kind hearted; nor did he lack for ambition beyond his own prosperity and the well-being of his many employes, for we find him accepting civil offices in Barbados and devoting no small measure of his time to unpaid labor for the general weal.

"This is the other man and the personality familiar to his brother, his friends and acquaintances; but there is another Henry Slanning, an 'intellectual' of inquiring spirit, a ceaseless searcher after curious knowledge, a voluminous reader, and a keen thinker along certain He is interested in many things, but certain subjects possess for him a peculiar fascination, and one above all others would seem persistently to intrigue his mind.

"It is a morbid subject hardly to be associated with a prosperous, hale, and popular young man of 35; but there can be no doubt of the fact, since not only was it reported to my colleague from more than one quarter in the course of his independent inquiry, but we also find It an ever present theme of Henry Slanning's careful memoranda. He commits himself to a definite opinion upon it; he ra cks profane literature for his support and ands justi-

fication for his conclusion in Christian history. "To this we will return. For the moment it is necessary to show how what possessed, in the first place, no more than an abstract and academic interest for Henry Slanning, rose to be-

come a personal problem and a personal temptation. He had tasted what life could offer and had, apparently, reached to the summit of his own ambitions, when there came into his life a new and tremendous experience. He fell in woman, and though we have no absolute proof

of it until after his death-though, therefore, we cannot say with conviction that Henry never loved before, it is reasonable to assume that no master-passion overwhelmed him until he found himself in love with Miss May Warrender. "It is certain that he was deeply attached

to her, though his reserved and sensitive nature concealed the fact from all but the young lady herself. He paid his devotions with such delicacy, such humility, and such refinement as might be expected from such a man; and we may assume he was sanguine, for his life had moved easily and successfully. He had much to offer and the object of his affections, as we know, was inexperienced and declares that for

a long time she did not appreciate the significance of his friendship. Few girls, who did not yet know the meaning of love, would have refused him; and she had in all innocence welcomed his advances, so that we may assume he felt little doubt of acceptance.

"I labor thus in order to dwell on the extent of Mr. Slanning's disappointment when he heard that his hope was vain; and I believe that so violent and complete was the shock of the news, that a man who never appears to have furnace of disillusionment and for the time being, at least, found existence a tyranny no longer to be endured. With his rare mental endowments it is reasonable to suppose that, given time, he would have survived his terrible experience and recovered from his disappointment in the maner of a normal man; but he permitted himself no time. He turned to the subject of his philosophic meditations and research, and under this hard blow of fate-a fate that hau always used him kindly until the present-he found in that theme no longer a preoccupation for thought, but an invitation to ac-

"That theme, the ever recurring obession of his mental activity, was suicide. And the fact appears in his own handwriting a thousand times. Again and again he opens on some other subject, yet, like a phantom in the noonday of intelligent considerations upon love, hope, faith. honor, duty and other subjects worthy of a high-minded and altruistic spirit, there creeps into the argument self-destruuction. He cannot evade it; there is for him a fascination in the topic that brings him back again and again. It vitiates his thinking; it is a blood-red thread woven through the fabric of his thoughts. He exhausts literature in his search for every high example and significant reference to self-de-

"He held with the great pagans that to live in want, dishonor or suffering was folly. He echoed Cato, Pomponius, Atticus, Epicurus. We find him quoting Seneca: 'Malum est in necessitate vivere: necessitas nulla est:' that it is miserable to live in need, but there is no need so to do. He agrees with Marcus Aurelius, that if the cabin smokes, a wise man takes leave of it. He says with Quintilian: 'Nemo nisi sua culpa diu dolet'-no man endures suffering save through his own fault. But he is not content to justify the practice of spicide from the pagans alone; it is not enough that the Medes and Persians, the Greeks and Romans are with him and that all nations of antiquity furnish admirable and laudable examples of what in Christian eyes is generally regarded as a sin He seeks instances through the sacred Jewish writings and finds in the Apocrypha an authentic instance, when Razis, one of the elders trolled and not malevolent. He was of little of Jerusalem, slavs himself (in II, Maccabees) and is applauded by the historian for so doing. We find him also concerned with lights of the Christian church-Pelagia and Sophronia, canonized for their saintly self-destruction; and of men, especially Jacques du Chastel, that bishop of Soissons who charged an army single-handed and gioriously committed felo-de-se for his

"Then, having concluded with Cicero, that it is agreeable to nature in a wise man to take leave of life at its height of prosperity, he writes a learned essay on a saying from Josephus, that he who dies sooner or lives longer than he ought, is equally a coward. So he goes 'about it and about,' but cannot leave the question for any time, but it draws him forcibly again.

affirm that after his disappointment in love, impulsive. For good or evil, he 'dashes at

life lost its flavor and, led thereto by habit of things,' And there is a still more remarkable mind and a natural melancholy inclination, he statement recorded to the dead man's mother. determined to destroy himself, having long convinced his reason that such an act is justified and agreeable to philosophy. We will leave the unfortunate gentleman in that resolution to the other victims of the tragedy on Pelican estate. "In the case of John Diggle, the night

watchman, no difficulty of character presents itself. He was a direct, single-minded man ing his liberty. In his mind, to repeat his love for the first time. His brother, who was against whom nothing evil can be advanced-a never absent from him, assures that he had not \*good husband and parent and a loyal and honbefore declared or revealed any affection for a est servant. He carried on the tradition handed to him by his grandfather and father before of this, since in the case of his known attach- him, and worked with one sole purpose, the ment, Mr. Amos Slanning was entirely ignorant welfare of his employers. Their relation to him was closer than that of master and man. They valued him for himself and in many ways stroyed all three, would not be feasible; but it revealed their personal regard and esteem.

"This man's duty was to guard the suagr cane plantations by night, and we find in connection with that work an old but general understanding and unwritten law, that thieves stole at their personal peril. It was not uncommon in former days for these pilfering gentlemen to lose their lives, just as a peacher, or other nocturnal robber in England, also has paid the extreme penalty. But human feeling naturally sets against such a strenuous course of action as principles of humanity gain ground. A hundred years ago the man-trap and spring-gun were sanctioned; vet such barbaric engines are now by law swept into oblivion. So with this old pre-slave proscription; and we may take it for granted that John Diggle would not have fired upon a thief under greater provocation than he was ever likely to receive from one.

"In this connection, nevertheless, we find a cloud arise on the life of John Diggle some few days before his end. Too much importance cannot be attached to this incident since upon it hangs the the whole theory about to be elaborated. We must, therefore, dwell on the statement made by Mrs. Diggle to my representative in Barbados and fully reported to him. If necessary, Mrs. Diggle can be further questioned, though in my judgment she has al-

ready said all that need be said. "What does she say?

"That, on a certain occasion, her husband came in sad to breakfast. He denies his trouble at first; but upon his wife insisting that he is not himself, he curses the thieves and says that he has got to worry about them, becauuse Mr. Henry Slanning is worrying. Mr. Henry has told Diggle that he is falling short of his duty and forgetting how to treat the thieves. Then-mark this-Diggle says that henceforth there shall be no doubt about obeying and that he will do what he is told to, 'to the end in future, whatever happens.'

"Immediately before the tragedy, therefore, John Diggle has been reproved for laxity in his work, and he accordingly resolves that, come what may come of it, he will strictly obey his order to the letter. We shall find what those orders were in a moment; and there can, I think, be little doubt that the commands issued to Diggle by Henry Slanning were of a nature that Diggle did not expect. They surprised him, and we can see how. In the first place, it was highly improbable that Slanning would bother his head about the petty pilferings of cane, or care a button concerning such a trifle; and in the second, still more improbable that he should seek to put a stop to them by reversion to obsolete drastic measures that he, of all men, would have been the first to censure. For 30 I read John Digglo's trouble coupled with his resolve. He is going to abey, regardless of consequences; he is going to do exactly as he is told, 'whatever happens.' He therefore apprehended that something might happen; but he was under orders and did not attempt to shirk them, though the orders had astonished and dismayed him.

"Leaving him also, on the threshold of the disaster, I turn to Solly Lawson and find again a character that presents no difficulties and can be very fairly appreciated from the information at our disposal. This young half-caste is seen as a youth of strong animal passions, unconworth, sensual, lazy and quick-tempered; but he had wit and a ready tongue and-what alone matters-his attitude to his master was one of steadfast and deserved devotion. Nor does the fact that Solly would not scruple to steal cane detract from his affection for the gentlemen who had forgiven so many sins and still employed the poor fellow at the time of his death. Solly would steal Henry Slanning's cane today and die for him tomorrow. The doglike trust and affection displayed by many negroes and half-castes is a part of young Lawson's nature. He has expressed to his mother a thousand times his regard for both his masters, and I believe that in this assurance the young man was perfectly honest.

"What does Mrs. Lawson say? 'He dash at "With respect to Henry Slanning, then, I fings so.' Solly is ill-governed, impetuous and and run forward; but he sees no more. Henry

Such is her son's affection for his employers that he would have died for them. Much follows from this admission; but we have to admit also that Solly had no grudge against John Diggle. Even in the event of Diggle getting him locked up, Solly would not have allowed enmity against the night watchman' to inspire him on regainmother's forcible words, 'when a fing done, it

"Here, then, is the third party in this trinity of the dead and his character stands clearly before us. Had he been different; had Diggle been different; had Henry Slanning been differ ent, my reconstruction of those events that de is built upon the only foundation that remain for any superstructure-the foundation of character; and, to my surprise, I find it ample for our purpose. I had suspected that any theory based on character alone, must have needed modification and some special pleading when it came to details; I had anticipated the need to rely upon probability and exercise no little in genuity in rounding the narrative and gathering the tangled thread into a complete skein; I had even feared that character itself might presently confound me and make it impossible honestly to develop a consistent story; but, to my satisfaction, I find this is not the case. Effect, in shape of facts, follows cause, as furnished by character, directly and lucidly; motive is at last revealed, like the sun breaking from behind a cloud, and the series of events follow upon each other logically, inexorably. These things had to be and they could not have fallen out differently.

"Henry Slanning is responsible for the entire concatenation. He designed a certain action and took elaborate means to insure its operation; but, the event he planned duly accomplished, accident willed that it should serve as a prelude to other events beyondchis calculations -events fatal to the second and third actors in the drama.

"Thus we arrive at the threshold of our

mystery. "When the house sleeps, Henry Slanning rises and makes his way to the plantations, choosing that region where John Diggle will be perambulating, gun on shoulder. Slanning goes of set purpose to his death. He is willing to die, but not by his own hand. It is part of his character that, while he seeks death, he cannot inflict it upon himself. He has, however, intended to do so. He has taken first steps toward that end, and the revolver, found by his dead body, was bought by him at Messrs. Forrest, New Bond street. He wrote to England for it a week after his great disappointment, and he duly received it with a box of 100 cartridges. But he could not use it. For a moment he had dreamed of so doing when he labored under the bitterness of his rejection. It was, however, an aberration of character that drove him to send for the weapon, and long before it reached his hand, he had sufficiently

returned to himself to make its use impossible. "Why, however, did he take it to the plantation empty? To make sure of John Diggle. He went out in his pyjamas, a light alpaca jacket, and a big straw hat, similar to those the negroes wear. Thus attired, in such a place, at such a time, he must naturally be mistaken for a common marauder; and having already directed Diggle to do his duty in such an event and fire at sight upon any thief, he expected him to dò so. But the revolver was an inspiration calculated to nerve Digule and banish the least remaining trace of hesitation. Diggle would challenge, and if he received no reply and no surrender would fire. How much more certainly, then, might he be expected to fire and with how much sterner efficiency of aim, if the thief threatened him?

"Two of these three men died in a clearing of cane, where cutting was in progress and the plans of the place show a pathway extending through it to the cliffs beyond. clearing goes Henry Slanning and begins to cut down cane with one of the little familiar hatchets used for the purposp. He knows that in the silence of night, the noise must soon reach Diggle's car; and it does so. The watchman thereupon hastens to the spot, and it happens that Solly Lawson, homeward bound by the short cut through the cane, arrives a few moments afterwards

"We may describe what follows with the

eyes of Solly Lawson. "He sees Diggle challenge and marks a man jump up before him. With head down the robber approaches, and for answer to Diggle's demand to surrender, produces a revolver and points it at the watchman. The steel flashes in the mocalight and Diggle's response is to get in his shot first if he can. He fires and the unknow falls. Solly sees Diggle drop his gun

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