CONTINUED FROM FIRST PAGE.

making some notes, sat a police officer.

'Watson,' said his conductor, shutting the door firmly behind them, do you take him!' and fell back into a corner of the room where he seemed to busy himself with an old Joe Miller so very facetious that it rendered him oblivious to all going on around him.

While Crisp stood looking from one to the other the Superintendent rose abruptly and stepped to him. 'Mine is a painful business, Sir; you are Mr. Earnest Crisp, I think?'

It darted into Crisp's mind that the chief had put the police in motion in the matter of that little decrepancy in his accounts; but a single glance in Mr. Parkman's pale, sympathizing face sufficed to disposed of that. 'Yes,' he said, 'I am. That is my name.'

'You may or may not know, then, that a great crime was committed here on Saturday afternoon. The cashier, Mr. Critchlow, has been found dead in his office, stabbed to the heart from behind.'

'Mr. Critchlow?' the head clerk whispered, with white, shaking lips.

'And you have been identified as the person last seen to leave the house. I'm sorry to say I must take you into custody on suspicion; I must warn you, too, Mr. Crisp, that anything you say will be given in evidence against you.

'On Saturday afternoon!' Crisp muttered in awed accents, looking around him with eyes that did not see. 'But what—why am I suspected?'

'All that you will hear at the Mansion House. I am axious to take you there at once, and with as little unpleasantness to yourself as possible.

'It is a mere formality, Crisp,' Mr. Parkman volunteered, speaking for the first time with earnest kindness. 'I will attend myself and say how perfectly ridiculous your conduct for years makes this charge appear.' The color came back to the clerk's face. 'Thank you, Sir,' he said.

'Perhaps you will let yourself be searched here?' asked the policeman. Crisp nodded acquiescence, and did not flinch when the operation began. But the first articles to appear were two keys. The policeman looked carelessly at the first; but his face lit up wonderfully as he held up the second.

'This is the missing key!' he exclaimed, and a thrill of intelligence seemed to pass round the room.

'That key,' said Crisp, still bewildered and grappling with the memory of things which seemed to have happened so long ago, 'that is the key of Mr. Critch—,' he stopped with trembling lips. He had gone so far unthinking, and then his position in all its bearings flashed across his mind. He remembered all that the presence of that key upon him, all that the words he had uttered, might mean for him. The room began to go round; visions of Ethel and Mr. Critchlow swam before his eyes. Amid an appalling silence, which had greeted his words, he fell to the floor in a dead faint.

Five minutes later the room was cleared of all save its owner and the short, stout man. 'I cannot believe it now,' Mr. Parkman was saying, 'and yet the key!—the key! How can he explain that? How can he explain that?'

'You remember, sir, I told you it was a pretty clear case?' answered the detective—for such he was and a well known one.

'You did, and I did not believe you,' the merchant answered with a groan. He was very greatly distressed, and no wonder.

'Well, Sir, I'm inclined to think that you were right and I was wrong,' the other answered dryly.

'Eh! Less clear now, inspector? But the key?'

'It is the key and another matter or two that puzzle me,' the man answered thoughtfully. 'You've read of murderers doing stupid things, Sir? There was that nurse who strangled her patient and then could not refrain from laying her out? Yes, quite so. But I never heard of a murderer carrying proof against himself in his pocket, and that proof a thing he had no motive for keeping and every chance to get rid of!'

It almost seemed as if the merchant in his interest in the puzzle thus presented to him forgot his anxiety on behalf of his poor clerk. 'But,' he suggested, 'it was very likely sheer carelessness. Its discovery you can see was a terrible shock to him.

'Quite true, Sir,' the detective said. 'And the female who, if the policeman is to be believed, was with him—if you could get a clue to her she might clear it all up.'

'I hope she may,' the man answered coolly, 'for I have not only got the clue to her; I shall see her to-day. I don't think there can be any imprudence in showing you this.' He took from a large pocket-book which he produced a tiny newspaper cutting. Mr. Parkman looked at it with a face of great amazement. It read thus:

'Gl vgsyo nzrmgivv slfhv srtstzgv
nvvg nv wvzivhg zg 17 xszmtv zoomtv
zoovb zg ulti glnliild yb gszg grnv
rdroo szev irw nbhvou lu lfi dlihg
vmvnb blfi olermt vimvhg.'

'But this is gibberish!' the merchant said after turning it over.

'No, not gibberish,' the detective answered, wondering that such a man should know so little of such a subject, 'only cipher, and the easiest that exists. It's merely a transposition of the alphabet; Z is A, Y is B, and so on. But here is my translation. I may add that the advertisement appeared in the 'Standard' of last Friday, Sir.'

the translation ran as follows:

To Ethel, Maintree House, Highgate:

Meet me dearest, at No. 17 Change-alley, at four tomorrow. By that time I will have rid myself of our worst enemy. Your loving

ERNEST.

'Good heavens!' cried the merchant, pale with excitement. 'He is lost! This is almost conclusive evidence. I don't know—good heavens! I don't know what can be said to this.'

'Umph!' the detective said. 'This advertisement was another thing which I had not when I gave you my opinion this morning.' He said it meaningly, and paused as if expecting to be questioned. But Mr. Parkman had not marked the drift of his last words and let them pass unchallenged.

Shortly afterward the merchant, pale but collected, had to be present at the Lord Mayor's inquiry at the justice room of the Mansion House. We need not attend him thither, for only such evidence was taken as would justify a remand, and the reader can guess what that was. The policeman was examined who had seen Crisp go into the house on the Saturday afternoon, and had likewise seen him leave it a little later, each time with a lady. Then the Superintendent of Police produced the key found upon the prisoner, and proved that it was the key of Mr. Critchlow's office, the door of which was found locked upon the outside. And two of Parkman's clerks reluctantly described the bad terms upon which the prisoner and deceased were, and the quasi threat with which the former had left Critchlow upon the last occasion when the cashier was—so far as could be proved—seen alive by any one except the murderer. This amply sufficed, and Ernest Crisp, clerk, was formally remanded—bail being, of course, refused—until the following Thursday, upon the charge of wilful murder. The inquest opened the same day, was adjourned to await the result of the magisterial inquiry.

CHAPTER IV.

'A clergyman to see Miss Maunder? I will see him first myself,' said Miss Maintree, in her stiffest tone. She was the Principal of the Maintree House seminary, the propriety of which was so rigid that no letters were permitted to be received by pupils or governesses, save such as could be read by that dragon of virtue the Principal.

She was absent from the schoolroom ten minutes. The girls looked curiously at Ethel, and the latter wondered who it could be. She knew of no clergyman likely to visit her, and was surprised by the gracious permission to go to the drawing room which Miss Maintree presently vouchsafed her; an indulgence due not so much to the reverend visitor's subtle politeness as to the fact, casually made known by him, that he had three daughters of an age to be at school.

'You wished to see me?' Ethel said, surprised at confronting a short, portly clergyman, who was a complete stranger to her.

'I do. You look a sensible young lady, and I will tell you right out who I am and what I want. Please don't faint or scream, or all my trouble expended in making things comfortable for you will be thrown away. My name is Peters—I am a detective officer. You know a gentleman called Crisp—I see you do. Are engaged to marry him? Just so. Well, he has been charged—but there, read that, please, and pray be as calm as you can.' And he put into her hand an early 'Globe,' pointing out the report of the proceedings at the Mansion House. 'Pray be as calm as you can!'

She went white to the lips as she read, but, save one faint cry when its meaning broke upon her, gave no sign of the demonstrations so much dreaded by the detective.

'Now, I am quite aware, Miss, that you were the lady who was with the accused. If you are implicated'—he did not think after a glance at her face that she was—'you had best say nothing. But if the young man is innocent you take it very cooly, Miss!'

'And why not?' she cried indignantly. 'Why should I be troubled because a false charge is brought against him. Why—' But then her voice broke, and she cried piteously: 'Oh, tell me, Sir, how I can help him?'

'First, Miss, by telling me all you did on Saturday.' The girl did so, and he took note of it. 'Quite so,' he said when he had heard all, 'but may I ask if you met by appointment?'

She colored. 'I had a message from him on Friday morning.'

'Verbal or written?'

'Neither. I cannot receive letters here, so when Earnest could take me out on Saturday—his and my half holiday—he would put an advertisement in Friday's 'Standard.' It was foolish, perhaps, but Earnest had a fancy to put it in cipher, and I, well —' with a bright blush—'I liked it because it took me longer to read the message.'

'Just so! You'll forgive me saying that now I know you are telling me the truth. So will you please explain what that ugly little bit means?' He handed to her the slip he had shown to Mr. Parkman, and pointed out the words 'I will have rid myself of our worst enemy.'

'Yes. We had a silly quarrel. I told him—oh, how could I?—that his temper was his worst enemy and mine. He meant that as a—I mean he wished to apologize and make it up.'

'One more question, young lady. What should you say if I told you that Mr. Crisp denied on his way to the Mansion House, this morning, being the author of that?'

'Say?' she cried, fiercely. 'I should say I believed him! But still it surprises me. This message begins and ends as his always did. Yet I remember that I thought it odd that he made no reference to this passage on Saturday. And it was strange that though he was half an hour after the appointed time he did not seem aware of it—or say he was sorry.'

Peters sat thinking deeply. 'It's a cipher a child could read,' he murmured to himself. 'Any one reading previous advertisements could have identified the Earnest very likely. Is it possible that some one having learned, no matter how, his habit of corresponding with this girl, has done this to divert suspicion from himself? Unlikely; but still possible. Do you know, Miss,' he continued aloud—'of any one being acquainted with these cipher messages?'

'Not through me,' she answered quickly. 'But I remember Earnest saying that young Mr. Parkham knew all about me, and had been very kind. But he cannot have anything to do with it.'

'No,' the detective answered briskly, 'but he may have told some one else. I must go to Richmond to-morrow, or as soon as I can, and ask him. We will lose no time,' he added cheerily. 'Your young gentleman shall be free in a day or two. And I hope that then he will teach you a better cipher, Miss—or get rid of any necessity for using one.'

On the tram car Peters said to himself: 'Wanted, some one with two things. Firstly, a motive for murdering Critchlow, and secondly, a knowledge, however gained, of the relations between Crisp and this very nice girl. Good, that is a new idea! Could it be that Critchlow fancied the girl and cried to decoy her there with this bogus message, and was found out and killed by the jealous lover before the girl came! I must consider that. That is a new idea!'

CHAPTER V.

'Are you engaged to marry the accused?'

This was not the first question put to the witness, but it was the first that promised to afford the spectators, who occupied every inch of floor in the justice room, the slightest return for the trouble they had taken. The city was talking of nothing but the Critchlow tragedy: and even in Cheapside the excitement was plainly visible. Every one who could win an entrance, and was not engaged elsewhere, was there. It was rumored that the matter was now as clear as the murder was diabolical, and that the young man would certainly be committed for trial to-day. Among the persons pointed at and scanned and sketched by the crowd in that close green-painted court with the one window and the skylight, was Mr. Parkman; and close observers noted that his eyes would now and again turn from wandering over the court to cast a look of anxiety, of expectation, almost of dread, toward the door.

But listen. The witness has answered the question bravely. 'I am.'

'And he was in the habit of communicating with you by cipher advertisements similar to the one I produce?'

'He was.'

'Did he communicate with you by an advertisement appearing in the 'Standard' on the Friday before the murder?'

'He did not.'

'Were you,' said the counsel smiling, 'under the impression, last Saturday, that the advertisement emanated from him?'

'I was. But you must let me explain.' And with great steadiness she stated her reasons for so thinking, and what she had understood the message to mean, and why she did not now think Earnest the author of it. This caused a great sensation. The strange cipher advertisement was a fact quite new to the general public.

'Do I understand you to think, then, Miss Maunder, that the person, whoever he was, who inserted this advertisement was also the murderer?'

'I don't know,' she faltered. Then with courage, 'Yes, I do thnik so.'

He smiled calmly as he looked round. It was evident he thought nothing of the girl's theory, but believed Crisp to be both author and murderer. Others in court also smiled and shook their heads. Her idea was too complex and far fetched for them. They could not swallow it, in vulgar phrase.

She was taken through the events of Saturday afternoon, and examined particularly as to the prisoner's statements about the deceased. Afterward the solicitor for the defense, well known to be employed by Mr. Parkman, drew from her all that might tell in the prisoner's favor, and then, casting one long, loving look of comfort at her lover, Ethel sat down. She had told the truth; she had perfect trust now in the wisdom of the law.

Two or three unimportant witnesses followed, the medical evidence succeeded these, and then Mr. Parkman was called. As he took off his glove many sympathizing glances were cast at his handsome figure and grave face. What a trouble and annoyance it must have been to him! What a loss to be deprived of his two chief employes at once! And then how rich he was said to be, and almost fashionable, too, for was he not going to be married to the Hon. Sylvestra Hautban! Even the Lord Mayor could hardly refrain leaning forward in his great oak chair to look his sympathy.

'The prisoner has been a clerk in the employment of your firm for nearly fourteen years, Mr. Parkman?' That was the first question of any interest.

'He has. He has been a most faithful, steady, and upright man in all his dealing with us.'

This was gallant testimony, but what could it avail against facts. It only evoked a look of warm gratitude from the prisoner. Mr. Parkman then went on to tell what he knew of the differences between Critchlow and the prisoner, and the unfriendly mention of the cashier which Crisp had made in their last conversation. But he told this so reluctantly that the examining barrister was struck by his bias in the prisoner's favor, and asked him with a smile, 'And do you, too, think that the same person inserted the advertisement and committed the murder?'

The witness paused, it was clear that he had no doubt that his portege was guilty of the one and the other, for he faltered and passed his hand over his brow. Then he said, 'I do.'

'And so do I,' said the counsel dryly, and was about to sit down with that quip in his mouth when there was a bustle at the door. Some glanced that way impatiently, and some expectantly; what was the expression of Mr. Parkman's face it was hard to say. It was almost a baffled, hunted look that came into his light blue eyes, and the hand which he raised to stroke his mustache scarcely hid an odd contraction of the mouth. The noise ceased as a burly man pushed his way through the crowd to the table. He seemed to be some one of importance, for the council paused in the act of sitting down, and lent a willing ear to his whisper. Then a hurried and seemingly excited conference went on between these two and the solicitor for the defence and one or two others—so exciting that expectation was raised to a very high pitch, and at length the Lord Mayor, unable to bear it longer, said, 'Have you any more questions for this witness, Mr. Bankworth?'

Thus recalled to himself, Mr. Bankworth rose from his stooping position and seemed to hesitate. Finally he said, with an air of reluctance, 'Yes, my Lord, I fear I have. Mr. Parkman, did I understand you to give it as your opinion that whoever inserted that advertisement committed this murder?'

A strange pause, then, in an equally strange, hoarse tone, 'Yes.'

'Is that,' holding up a Russia leather blotting case filled with green blotting paper, 'the blotting case you use in your library at Richmond?'

It sounded, apart from the sudden production of the case, a harmless question enough. And yet how was it that through all that crowded court every one felt the terrible nature of the silence which followed. Was that ordinary-lookidg case a gorgon's head, that at sight of it the perspiration should spring in great beads to the witness's forehead, and his mouth should writhe in vain attempt to speak. He couldn't. He couldn't. In the end he only nodded.

'Then can you explain,' the lawyer asked solemnly, 'how it happens that upon a page of this blotting paper their appears in printed characters a reverse impression of the latter part of this advertisement?'

The crisis had come, the worst had happened; and yet even now some cool, plausible reason might avail him. Now was the time for ready brain and steady pulse. Now—but now all these were wanting! He glared round him for a moment on the sea of faces, grasped wildly at his throat, and fell to the floor of the box in a fit.

Amid a thrill of such sensation as few in that court had ever experienced they bore him out to an adjoining room. But he was dead before they could bring a doctor to him. That moment—and heaven knows what of bitter anticipation—had been his punishment in this world.

Peters, it appeared, had gone down to see him at Richmond, and while waiting in the library had, in the instinctive pursuit of his profession, turned over the leaves of the blotting book. The cipher caught his eye, but the merchant entered at that moment, it was not until he left for town that Peters could get into the house again, confirm his impression, and with his strange piece of evidence follow to London by a later train.

For a few hours after the merchant's death it seemed one of those motiveless murders that upset all calculations. But among his papers was found the key. He had lost great sums by deep play at a West-end club. His father was then ill, his needs were most pressing. He had already far exceeded his right to draw upon the firm; to get more he deposited forged acceptances. At his father's death the cashier discovered this, and though the junior partner was now able to refund the money, Critchlow held the forgeries in terrorem over him. Parkman, secretive yet fierce, took his life.

Of him enough. For Ernest Crisp, he married Ethel three weeks later, and there are already three small Crisps in the nursery, with whom this strange story of the Mansion House justice room will some day be a household word, and be in their mouths, as it is in those of the justice room officials, 'often remembered.'

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The election in Cumberland on Monday week is said to have been the most spirited in that place in any off year in its history. The result gives the Republicans control of the Council by the same majority as heretofore.

The successful candidates are:

First Ward—George A. Reinhard, Democrat.

Second Ward—Harry S. Carberry, Republican.

Third Ward—Ward S. Eichelberger, Republican.

Fourth Ward—Philip F. Smith, Democrat.

Fifth Ward—Charles R. Eyler, Republican.

Sixth Ward—Solomon George, Republican.

The vote cast was exceptionally heavy. In the First ward it was 619, Matthew H. Sloan, Republican, president of the City Council and candidate for re-election receiving 281, and Reinhard, 317.

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