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GENERAL DIRECTORY.

County Officials.

Judges of the Circuit Court—James A. Pearce, Chief Judge; Edwin H Brown and William R Martin, Associates Terms—jury, 1st Monday in April and October; non-jury, 2d Monday in January, 4th Monday in June.

Clerk of the Circuit Court—Thomas L. Day.

County Commissioners—Wesley Jarrell, Pres.; James B. Wright, Franklin P. Medford.

Judges of the Orphans' Court—John F. Dawson, Chief Judge; J. Olan Clark, Wm. H. Deen, Associates.

School Commissioners—Thomas W. Jones, President; Henry C. Fisher and Albert W. Sisk.

School Examiner and Secretary—W. S. Crouse.

Register of Wills—Robert J. Jump.

States Attorney—T. Alan Goldsborough.

Sheriff—Wm. T. Hignutt, of E.

Professional and Business Cards.

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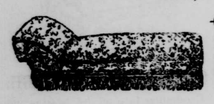


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H. S. GOLDEY, President,
Goldey College, Wilmington, Del.

MYSTERY OF THE BAYOU WOODS

By WALKER KENNEDY.

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On December 2, 18—, a man hurriedly entered the dingy police quarters in Nilus, unbuttoned his overcoat, shook the snow from his large slouch hat, and, warming his thin, trembling fingers before the fire, confronted the chief of police. The latter made a casual but not careless examination of the newcomer, and saw that he was a young man of good appearance whose face wore an expression of bewilderment and horror. As the snow melted from his overcoat, it was seen to be very much the worse for wear, and the clothing under it was threadbare in the extreme. The man's shoes were pitifully thin and insufficient, and the wearing of such makeshifts was little more than a mere observance of custom. Suffering of an acute kind had drawn its tracery over the young man's countenance. Deep lines showed beneath the eyes, which were unnaturally lustrous, and the skin was drawn tightly over the pale, defiant face, creating at once the impression that starvation had perhaps been at work there. Despite the general shabbiness of the man's apparel there was an unmistakable air of gentility about him; and there could be little doubt that a history, possibly a romance, was hidden beneath the tattered clothes and the suffering face.

The manner of the newcomer was nervous, suspicious and eager, and the chief of police was satisfied that developments of importance were about to be made.

"You have a communication to make to me?" he asked, after directing his visitor to a chair.

"Yes."

The response was prompt, and given with an air of relief that the officer had shunned his errand.

Just then the door opened and another young man entered. He saluted the chief affably and was about to retire, when something in the attitude of the officer and the visitor caused him to hesitate. He was the chief reporter on one of the Nilus papers, and he sniffed the aroma of news in the air.

"Am I interrupting you?" he asked in a way intimating the hope that he was not.

"This gentleman is about to make a statement to me. Whether it is of a private nature——"

"By no means," quickly interrupted the person referred to. "I do not imagine that it would do any good to keep it private. Besides, the newspapers will have it to-morrow."

"This gentleman is chief reporter on the Gazette," said the officer.

"I have no objection to his hearing what I have to say."

Irving Warde, the newspaper man, bowed and took his seat. He never missed an opportunity to learn anything that was apt to make its way into the newspapers.

The stranger began his story at once. "My name is Herbert Wright, and I am the son of John T. Wright."

"The Cotton King!" said the chief in evident surprise.

"Of course you are surprised to see a son of his reduced to such straits as I am, but that has nothing to do with my coming here. I may as well say at the start that differences have existed between my father and myself, but they are wiped out now, for he is dead."

"Dead?" said the chief, now thoroughly aroused. "When did he die?"

"That I cannot say exactly. His body was found this morning."

Warde, who had been listening with an air of indifference, now became palpably interested.

"Then your father was killed?" asked the chief.

"There can be no doubt of it."

"Where did this happen?"

"In the Bayou Woods, about three miles below the city."

"What do you know of the case?"

"I judge that he had gone out hunting and that he was waylaid in the woods. I know that he intended going. He liked it in this kind of weather. He was a great hunter; indeed, it was the thing which seemed to afford him the most pleasure. He was killed while hunting, and the wounds on his head indicate that he was killed with a bludgeon. Possibly he may have been shot as well; I did not look for that."

"Who discovered the body?" asked the chief incidentally.

"I did," said Wright.

"Under what circumstances?"

"Well, you see," said the young man, who was slightly embarrassed by the question, "I live just beyond the Bayou Woods, and I usually pass through them on my way to the city."

"You have employment in Nilus, I presume?" said the chief.

"No; I am sorry to say that at present I am entirely without employment."

"Well, as you were saying, you were coming in town for the purpose of——"

"No, you are mistaken; I didn't say what my purpose was, or that I had a purpose at all, and as that has no possible bearing on the case I do not care to go into it."

"Just as you please," answered the chief; "but sometimes a frank statement saves a man a great deal of trouble. Resume your story, if you please."

"This morning as I was passing through the woods my attention was attracted to a heap of snow in the pathway through the forest. I at first thought a dead animal lay beneath the drift, but an examination at once removed this idea, and I recognized there before me the body of my father. I saw at once that he had been murdered, and I hastened to the city to notify the police. I ought to say right here that while the relations between my father and myself recently have not been of a friendly nature, I have every desire to see his murderer punished. I therefore came to you at once, thinking that the body ought not to be disturbed until the detectives have made their examination."

"Allow me to commend your discretion," said the officer.

"I think that is all the information I can give you," said Wright, speaking as though a weight were off his mind.

"I would like to ask you a few more questions, which you can answer or not, as you see fit," said the chief, kindly.

"Very well," said Wright, resuming his seat.

"Before we get at that, however, you had better give me a clearer idea as to how we can find the body."

"Are you familiar with the paths leading through the woods?"

"Yes, there are two. One goes straight through them and terminates in a thoroughfare which leads into the heart of the city, while the other makes a detour and runs toward the river. A person coming toward Nilus and having the choice of paths would naturally take the straight cut, as the other would cause him considerable delay. I suppose, of course, that the body will be found along the direct path."

"That would be the path taken by an ordinary traveler," replied Wright; "but my father, you must remember, was out hunting, and he would have no object in taking the short and frequented way. His body was found on the other path."

"True," said the chief, reflectively, "a hunter rambles around considerably. Were you out hunting, too, Mr. Wright?"

The question caused Wright to change countenance. Evidently he began to see that a suspicion was creeping into the mind of the officer, for there could be no doubt that he was quick of apprehension. He rallied and answered with a sort of honest defiance: "It was merely a whim, and I don't suppose that I am accountable to the police for my whims."

"No one has intimated that you were accountable to the police for anything," said the chief, coolly. "You come to me with certain information, and I am trying to get out of you all of the facts that I can. I find that you are withholding something from me. I don't say that you haven't a good reason for doing so. You come to Nilus for a purpose you will not reveal, and you take an out-of-the-way route for a reason you will not give. You are, moreover, the only man so far as is known, who has seen the body of John T. Wright. Now, it is just possible that you may know who the murderer is; or——" He paused and then said bluntly: "You may yourself have killed your father——"

"Stop!" cried Wright starting up, his eyes flashing. "You have no right to make any such inference. I am here at the dictates of duty to give you information that may lead to the punishment of the man who committed this murder. The man who was killed had treated me like a dog instead of a son; but I want to see his murderer brought to justice. Your small detective tactics will not avail you in my case. Your suspicions of my motives are absurd, and they do no credit to your sagacity. I am an unfortunate man, but if you were a good judge of human nature, you would know that I could never have done such a fiendish thing as this."

The chief listened to this impassioned outburst with rather a bored air. When it was finished, an amused expression flitted across his face. He had evidently made a test and was satisfied with the result. Without paying the slightest attention to the young man's criticisms he resumed quietly: "Well, since you have refused to answer my last question, I will come to another. With whom do you live?"

"I live with my wife and child in a small cottage beyond the Bayou Woods."

"Ah! You are married? Have you any objection to stating the condition of your family?"

Wright's countenance fell, his eyes became wistful and he faltered as he answered: "It is terrible. My wife—we—have—have nearly starved."

"Would no one help you?"

"No one."

"Not even your father?"

"My father? You do not know him. He was more obdurate than any one else. Whenever I applied to him, as I did sometimes when I saw my wife suffering, I was sent away with curses."

"When was the last time you saw him alive?"

"Tuesday morning."

"Where?"

"At his home in the country."

"That was two days ago. Did you apply for money?"

"Yes."

"And he refused?"

"Yes."

"How have you kept your wife from starving since then, if no one would help you?"

"I have received a little help since then."

"From whom?"

"Oh, I don't care to go into all that," said Wright, impatiently.

"Have you any reason to suppose that your father had a personal enemy who had some cause to wish his death?"

At this question it seemed that an inspiration came to Wright, but he checked an apparent inclination to accept the suggestion as a solution of the mystery. The chief and the newspaper man looked at him inquiringly.

"Your question," said he, "has put an idea into my head, but I do not think I ought to frame it in words, for you might say it was preposterous. After all, it is a mere ghost of a suspicion, but I may be able to give you a clew some time to work upon."

The chief pressed him for an answer, telling him that the suspicion itself might furnish a clew, but Wright would not reveal his thoughts. So, after a diagram of the Bayou Woods for the officer and locating approximately the body of the murdered man thereon, Wright took his departure.

The chief and the newspaper man looked at each other tentatively for a few moments before either spoke.

"I confess I am puzzled," replied the chief. "It is, of course, easy to make up theories. Wright has been playing in very tough luck for some time. He has been disowned by his father; he is out of employment; he sees his wife dying of starvation, and he cannot obtain honest work. What would a man do under such circumstances? It might reasonably be conjectured that he would not hesitate to commit a murder. But in his case, if he really committed the crime, we have to make some very peculiar assumptions. We must assume that he is a very accomplished actor, and that he is a villain of iron nerve. Having committed this crime, would he be the first to report it to the police, and would he not have a ready lie for every question that he refused to answer? But this is no time for speculations. An examination of the body may reveal an entirely different state of facts from those which fit any particular theory we may have, and the sooner we go to the Bayou Woods the better. If you would like to go along I will take you in the buggy with me. I think it best to make an investigation before the coroner is notified to make the inquest."



THE CHIEF PRESSED HIM FOR AN ANSWER.

Warde accepted with alacrity. He was not a bad judge of human nature himself, and his mind was already busy with fascinating theories, to the verification or explosion of which he was prepared to devote some of his time and energy. The chief of police was evidently a close observer, but he lacked one quality which Warde possessed in a remarkable degree, namely, imagination. Perhaps it was a difference in mental traits which made one of them a journalist and the other a policeman. At least some people who labor under the delusion that a newspaper man relies upon his imagination for his facts might be inclined to think so, but far, far be it from me to indorse that popular fallacy.

Leaving instructions with an officer to have Herbert Wright shadowed and to notify the coroner an hour later that a murder had been committed in the Bayou Woods, the chief called for his buggy, and, accompanied by Warde, was soon driving in the direction of the scene of the tragedy.

CHAPTER II.

The Bayou Woods was a locality with many contradictory features. When it was not picturesque it was unutterably dismal. When its mighty trees were not a delight its scrubby undergrowth was a vexation to the spirit. On the bosom of pools whose slime was an offense to the eye were spread in summer time fleets of water lilies whose beauty was an inspiration to the fancy. Flower and fungus were alike characteristic of it in the warmer months, and in the

continued on page eight.

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deal to you. Follow your doctor's advice and take Ayer's Cherry Pectoral. It heals, strengthens, prevents.

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Ayer's Pills increase the activity of the liver, and thus aid recovery.

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Answer a fool according to his folly.—Bible.

Never argue with a child or a fool.—Indian.

Arguing with a fool shows there are two.

Fools, for arguments, use wagers.

A cock-roach is always wrong when arguing with a chicken.

Arguments make three enemies to one friend.



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"Mystery of the Bayou Woods"

BY WALKER KENNEDY.

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Your interest in the story will cause you to continue it after that. Remember the first section is printed in to-day's paper.

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