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NEEDHAM'S FAILURE

By JOSEPH HATTON.

Author of "The Queen of Bohemia," "The Three Recruits," Etc.

CHAPTER X.

DESCRIBES THE CORONER'S INQUEST, THE NATURE OF THE EVIDENCE AND THE RESULT.

The inquest was opened on Tuesday morning. The body had been identified by the deceased's brother Henry and by the butler. Several personal friends were present, including two members of parliament. There had not been the smallest doubt, of course, as to the suicide, and the evidence of the servants showed how completely Needham had laid his plans. Some of the jury, while chatting among themselves, had expressed surprise that the deceased should have taken so much trouble about it, and that he should do such an odd thing as to drive up to Hampstead. In answer to this it was suggested that he might have done these curious things for the purpose of leading up to a verdict of insanity.

This was the nature of the conversation that took place while the jury was going to view the body and returning to Jack Straw's Castle, where the inquest was held.

James Rogers was the first witness called. He deposed that he was butler of the deceased, and resided at his master's house, Portland place. He had seen and identified the body as that of Mr. John Needham, whom he had last seen alive at about six o'clock on Saturday evening, at which time he waited upon him at dinner. Mr. Needham had sent the footman and the coachman to Leighton Buzzard an hour or so before. His master took a very light dinner, and afterwards he (Rogers) went with the other servants to the opera. The witness then related the circumstances under which he and the rest had gone to the opera, and afterwards to supper. They did not return home until two in the morning. Found the house very much as it was when he left. In the library there were the remains of some coffee, and the spirit bottles and other things were on the table. Mr. Needham had, he should say, had his cup of coffee and cigar as usual. The cup had since been washed, and so also had the coffee pot. Of course if he had known of the sad business he would have had the things remain as they were. Nobody had been to the house during the day except Mr. Nolan, the solicitor. He came to breakfast, and the master drove him home in the afternoon. The carriage used was the pair horse brougham, and the coachman and footman were on the box. Had not observed anything peculiar in his master's manner during the last few months. Thought it curious at the time his treating everybody to the opera and being so particularly affable, but put it down to a sudden act of generosity and being his birthday, though he must say it astonished him very much. The parlor maid, however, had said she thought the master was mad; but it was a way she had."

"A way she had?" the coroner asked.

"Yes, sir. Any one a-doing anything she don't quite see, she'd say, 'Oh, he's mad—mad as a hatter.'" (Laughter.)

"And she did not quite 'see' the master's invitation to the opera, eh?"

"That was it, sir; and so she bounces, as I understands, into the kitchen and says the master's mad."

"Yes, that will do; we don't want to hear what you understand, but what you know of your own knowledge."

"Yes, sir; that's what I was a-sayin——"

"That will do; the next witness."

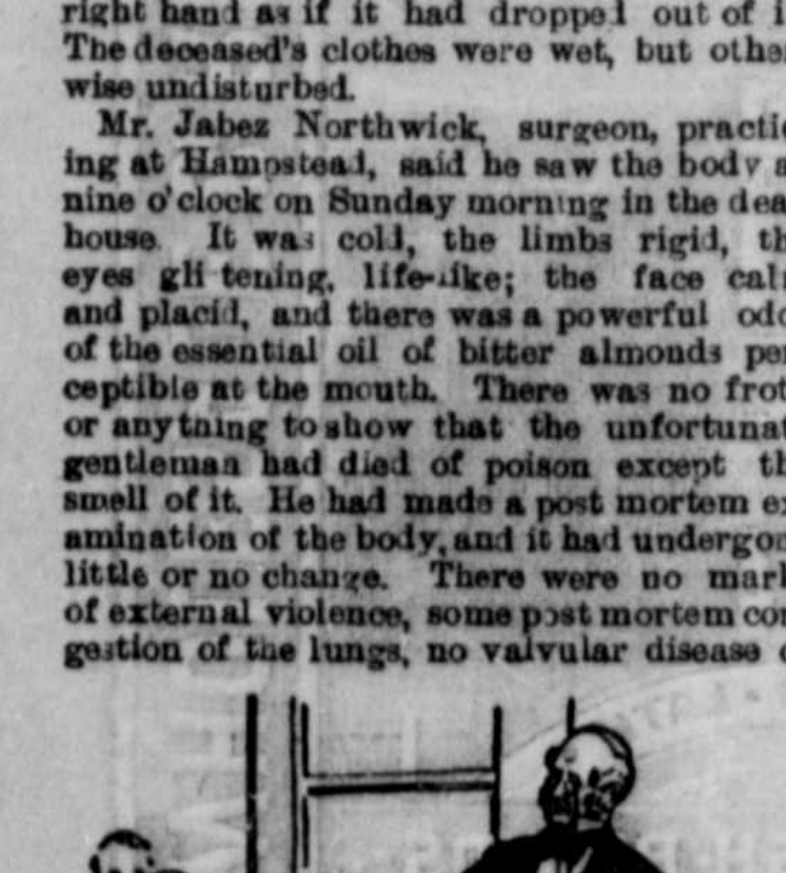
Thomas Bobbins was then called. He said he was a bird catcher—"dealt in 'em"—and lived at Tickheel court, Hampstead. Came across the body at eight o'clock Sunday morning. Saw the horse first; then the body; then the brougham; called to a chap as he see near the castle to come afore he touched it; and then the police, some time afterward. All the clothes was on the body, and the deceased had laid his overcoat down first to lie upon, that was evident; and close by was the opera hat, and the bottle and flask now produced. The clothes were wet, as it had rained heavy the first part of the night. The bottle had "Essential Oil of Almonds" on it, and "Poison" in big letters, and the druggist's name.

Here the coroner explained that he had preferred to let this witness give his evidence exactly in his own words before asking him any special questions, but from this point he asked him a great many, further eliciting that there was no evidence of a struggle and no particular footmarks, seeing that the spot where the body was lying was "furzy," and not calculated to show much in the way of footmarks. But there were plenty of footmarks there now, for the spot had been crowded with people ever since, and a lot of the gorse had been torn away.

The coroner expressed his regret that the footprints had been obliterated; he thought the police should have kept the place clear, and he thought it a matter for serious reprobation the morbid curiosity of the public as exemplified by the removal of gorse as mementos. (Applause.)

Police Constable Jones (221S) gave evidence as to the removal of the body. There were no signs of a struggle. In the deceased's pockets were a razor, six pounds and ten shillings in gold and silver, a case with visiting cards of the deceased in it. The bottle of poison was lying near his right hand as if it had dropped out of it. The deceased's clothes were wet, but otherwise undisturbed.

Mr. Jabez Northwick, surgeon, practicing at Hampstead, said he saw the body at nine o'clock on Sunday morning in the dead house. It was cold, the limbs rigid, the eyes glistening, life-like; the face calm and placid, and there was a powerful odor of the essential oil of bitter almonds perceptible at the mouth. There was no froth or anything to show that the unfortunate gentleman had died of poison except the smell of it. He had made a post mortem examination of the body, and it had undergone little or no change. There were no marks of external violence, some post mortem congestion of the lungs, no valvular disease of the heart; a thickening was perceptible in the left ventricle; the right auricle of the heart was distended with blood, the left auricle empty; no odor of essential oil of almonds all over the body. The stomach contained undigested food, and imbedded in it numerous black particles perceptible to the naked eye. On examination they proved to be powdered opium, and they were stuck all over the mucous membrane, and so numerous as not to be counted. The liver was healthy, the pupils of the eyes dilated, the brain and membrane congested, but otherwise healthy and without any signs of inflammation. It was quite possible the deceased had taken a strong narcotic as well as the essential oil of almonds, but the latter was the cause of death.



DR. NORTHWICK TESTIFIES.

At this point the butler was recalled and related what the reader already knows in regard to the bottle delivered at the house by the druggist's assistant; and the next witness was Mr. Drewer, the druggist himself, who related the incident of Mr. Needham's call and purchase of the essential oil of almonds.

The coroner remarking that it was a pity such articles should be sold even by authorized persons and in such large quantities, Mr. Drewer said the essential oil of bitter almonds was sold by every confectioner in the kingdom.

"For what purpose?"

"Well," replied Mr. Drewer, "it is used commonly in cooking, for flavoring custards, and other purposes. Indeed confectionery, such as is generally sold, contains poisons of all kinds."

"Indeed! Is that so? A nice reflection for those who eat confectionery. (Laughter.) I shall take care to give my cook some advice upon this point the moment I return home. (Laughter.) At the same time allow me to remark I am not jesting, and that this is not a theatre. I must request gentlemen present to control their emotions."

Witness continued to state that he could not understand at the time for what possible purpose Mr. Needham's groom might require essential oil of almonds in the stables. Arsenic, quite as deadly a poison, would of course have been an entirely different matter. It is a common thing to give arsenic to horses among their corn to improve their coats and condition. On the continent it is a very common practice, and it is a fact known to science that with regard to the administration of arsenic to horses and the taking of it by human beings that if it is discontinued the constitution breaks up with just the same symptoms as those which are produced by arsenical poisoning. The sufferers die from the want of it, but with every appearance of being the victims of poison.

Mary Atkinson, the parlor maid, was then called. If you have been present at serious trials for murder, or at equally painful inquests, you must have noticed on the part of the spectators a tendency to be amused. It is as if the mind, weighted with the tragic story, sought relief in the merest suggestion of comedy. The clever dramatist, dealing with a pathetic situation, understands this well, and seeks to give his audience the quick relief of an excuse for laughter. Mary Atkinson came upon the scene at Hampstead with the reputation of a humorist. She had, according to the butler, a habit of describing people whom she did not quite understand as being "mad as a hatter." Mary was an intelligent, bright-looking young woman, with a snub nose and a showy bonnet; and she was received with a general smile of approval. She related with minute detail a particular interview she had had with her late master on the afternoon of his death.

"And you said he was mad?"

"Yes, sir, I beg his pardon." (Laughter).

"Why did you think he was mad?"

"It was such a odd thing for him to ask me."

"To ask you what?"

"If I'd ever been to the opera."

"And so you thought he was mad because he asked you if you had ever been to the opera?"

"Well, sir, I did—I beg his pardon." (Laughter.)

"Don't beg his pardon, poor gentleman; he is beyond that. And I must request the officer to clear the court if there is any more laughter."

"Yes, sir. I'm very sorry. I wasn't laughing, and its no laughing matter for me, losing a good place and a good master."

And here she began to cry.

"There, there, that will do," said the coroner. "Pray control your feelings. Was there anything peculiar in Mr. Needham's manner that should lead you to think he was not in his right mind?"

"No more than what I have said, as it seemed so curious he should ask me if I'd ever been to the opera."

"Oh, yes, yes; we've heard that before. (Laughter.) I mean in his appearance or in his manner?"

"No, sir; I can't say as there was. But to say as he would give me and the others tickets, and he should see us there, was something so odd—I beg his pardon." (Laughter.)

"Very well. That will do."

"Yes, sir; thank you, sir," said Mary, retiring into a corner to be upbraided by the cook for making a fool of herself, "and making all of us look as silly as you are."

Then came the evidence of Mr. Nolan. He described his visit to Mr. Needham on Saturday morning. He had received a telegraphic message from Dublin relating to some financial business, which he thought it desirable Mr. Needham should see. Mr. Needham was in financial difficulties far more serious than he, his solicitor, had contemplated, although serious enough to give him great anxiety. He found Mr. Needham not in his usual state of health, but depressed; looking very weary and tired, yet full of intellectual and mental resource. He shouldn't say that he exhibited the slightest tokens of insanity. It was not his intention to stay and breakfast with Mr. Needham, but he remained, and they talked over a great many business matters in relation both to the London and the Dublin banks, and to some questions of mortgages and other securities. He left Mr. Needham about half-past three in the afternoon, and that was the last time he saw him alive.

Henry Needham, brother of the deceased, next gave evidence of an unimportant character, with the exception of the reproduction of the letter with which the reader is already acquainted. The witness was very much affected during the reading of the letter, and once or twice was so much overcome that he paused and turned away his head to wipe the tears from his eyes. The dead silence in the court was ample evidence of the deep sympathy that was felt for the witness and other members of his family.

Horace Byles, of the firm of Byles, Grant & Byles, solicitors, Lombard street, deposed that on the morning of Friday preceding his death, the deceased, John Needham, called upon him and asked for financial assistance in the interests of the Needham Joint Stock bank, showing him some telegraphic messages he had received from Dublin on the subject of their wants, proposed several schemes for witness' consideration in regard to raising money, and after he (Horace Byles) told him they were not such schemes as he could recommend or adopt, Needham grew very excited and exclaimed, "Great God! if the bank fails it will be my fault and the ruin of thousands." He walked about the office with his hand to his head, and urged witness to help him. He had not been on very friendly terms with Needham for some time previously to this interview, on account chiefly of a disappointment in money matters. About a month before his death he remembered that a security Needham had given him, upon which he had found money for the Irish bank, had not been registered, and after Needham left on Friday he determined to have it registered. There was something so despairing in Needham's manner that he felt the bank was on the eve of collapse. During the conversation he (witness) mentioned this security to Needham, and there was something so strange in his manner he (witness) had a sudden suspicion that there was something wrong about it. He therefore sent his partner with the deed to Dublin. On arriving there he was not long in discovering that it was a forgery. The security purported to be a deed given on the purchase of an estate in the encumbered estates court. It was signed by two of the commissioners and two attesting witnesses, and not a single signature was genuine. (Sensation in court.) It had a real seal of the encumbered estates court attached to it, but there was no doubt it had been transferred from some other genuine deed. He (witness) attributed Needham's death to his excitement about the Needham bank and to his knowledge that he (witness) was about to send this deed over to Dublin for registration. There were rumors of other forgeries, but he knew of no other forged deed than his own. Several of Mr. Needham's deeds had from time to time passed through his hands to persons who had advanced money upon them, but he (witness) had no reason to believe that any one of them was not genuine. He did not think anybody enjoyed the deceased's confidence. Mr. Needham was a very reticent man; it was difficult to get any information from him beyond what he chose to impart. He should think Mr. Sadler had written the letters produced under great excitement, and he believed that some of the statements in them were not correct.

There was then a long discussion between the coroner and the witness as to what it was proper to disclose in regard to the deceased's affairs, what might be known and what might not; and the witness mentioned several circumstances indicating the serious financial difficulties in which Mr. Needham was involved.

The inquest was then adjourned until Thursday, when fresh evidence of a long and voluminous character was given, and other private letters were produced, and the correspondence in The Times was mentioned in terms anything but complimentary to Mr. Green. The coroner also deprecated the fact that several public journals had discussed Mr. Green's remarkable statement that he had seen the deceased and had spoken to him at Liverpool on the Sunday, when it was a fact beyond all manner of doubt that the unfortunate gentleman was lying dead at Hampstead workhouse. It was not his business to reply to these things, but he thought it a pity that a member of parliament should give his countenance to the new so-called spiritualistic craze, which was the revival of an old delusion much more worthy of the dark ages than the present. As for the journal which threw out the suggestion that the unfortunate deceased had procured the corpse of some other person to represent his own, and thus complete his villanies by carrying off a large sum of money and getting away to some other country, he thought it a mistake for the writer of that article to waste his imaginative powers upon a mere newspaper, instead of writing stories for The London Journal, or compiling dramas for the transpontine stage. No man, he believed, more than himself appreciated and valued the freedom of the press, but in this matter he confessed he thought both editors and correspondents had outstripped the line which divides liberty from license.

Passing from this feature of the case to the closing of the painful business before the jury, he summed up the evidence with great care, dwelling at some length upon the rights of the crown in reference to any property the deceased might have left, and in anticipation of the jury finding a verdict of felo-de-se. In ordinary cases, he said, so far as he could see, there was not, unfortunately—and he regretted to say it—any evidence to show that the deceased was not perfectly sane when he arranged to take his own life and did take it. The only suggestion to his mind, even of eccentricity in the matter, was that he should drive himself up to the spot where he was discovered. This was no doubt a strange thing to do. Nevertheless, it was clearly by forethought and design. On the day when he felt that Byles, Grant & Byles would, within twenty-four hours, have discovered the secret of his forgeries, he had resolved to commit suicide, purchasing the drugs for the purpose, sending his two men servants into the country, writing his last letters, and making other careful and intelligent arrangements to close his earthly career. It had been suggested that Hampstead heath was a favorite resort of the deceased, and that he had frequently been seen walking and driving there, walking, more particularly during the last two weeks, about the heath behind Jack Straw's Castle, and near the spot where his body was found. He must repeat, it was a curious thing that he should get his servants out of the way, for that was evidently the intention of the opera and the supper, himself putting his horse into his carriage, sitting upon the box and driving it, evidently late at night and possibly through a storm of rain and thunder, to Hampstead heath. That was the only indication in the entire story that could warrant even a thought of insanity; but this was overbalanced tremendously, in his estimation, by the other facts of the case. With these suggestions and instructions he left the verdict in the hands of the jury, and thanked them on behalf of himself and all concerned for their patient attention to the painful details of one of the saddest cases that had come under his attention for many years.

The jury, after a short deliberation, gave a verdict of felo-de-se, which it was generally understood meant a midnight burial with something worse than maimed rights; but in this case the body had been previously removed to the deceased's residence in Portland place, and on the fifth day after death it was interred at Kensal Green, in the presence of a few private friends and relatives. And in due course there was written on a black and silver plate over the remains of Joseph Norbury the dishonored name of John Needham. Meanwhile a strange instinct of fear and mistrust in regard to her brother's welfare took possession of the mind of Kate Norbury.

CHAPTER XI.

A BUNDLE OF LETTERS AND TELEGRAMS, WHICH BRINGS THIS TRAGIC STORY TO AN END.

From Joseph Norbury, Liverpool, to Miss Kate Norbury, Wyedale.

"Arrived here safe and well—much better than when left home. Go on board Ocean Queen first thing in the morning. God bless you. Hope Aunt Dorothy is quite well. Best love."

From Kate Norbury to Joseph Norbury.

"Love and congratulations on your improved health. Fair weather, a pleasant voyage, and a quick and safe return. Aunt Dorothy joins with me and Dick in best wishes and Godspeed."

From Joseph Norbury to Kate Norbury.

"Good-by, my dear sister; just off on the tug to Ocean Queen; will write from New York; write to me at New York hotel; best love to all."

These three telegrams demonstrate the completeness of John Needham's escape, and the safe beginning of his new career in the assumed character of Joseph Norbury. Monday's newspapers, however, had a great shock for Kate Norbury, in the report of John Needham's suicide. This was the one acquaintance Joe had made in London, and they were so much alike in appearance that he had written and described the odd circumstances of their meeting. The affair disturbed Kate a good deal; but Aunt Dorothy calmed her with affectionate advice and wise comments upon the proverb that truth is stranger than fiction. On Tuesday night, however, when Kate read that Mr. Green, M. P., had seen John Needham on the platform of the Liverpool railway station, a strange sense of fear and alarm took possession of her, and the following telegrams passed between her and Dick:

From Miss Norbury to Richard Woodville, Manchester.

"Please come to Wyedale at once; Aunt Dorothy and myself are anxious to confer with you on an important matter."

From Richard Woodville to Miss Norbury.

"I shall catch the mail and be with you before 11."

From Richard Woodville to Horace Wood, of Wyedale, at The Cottage, Richmond Bridge.

"At what hour did you see Mr. Joseph Norbury on Saturday, and when did you leave him? Please reply at once."

Wood to Woodville.

"Dined with him at 6, New Hummum's hotel; left him at 9; why do you ask?"

Woodville to Wood.

"Did he mention Needham to you in your conversation, and do you know where he went after dinner? And if you do not, please go to the hotel and telegraph at once the hour he went out, when he returned, and what he did. Kate is disturbed, for some reason, about him."

Wood, New Hummum's hotel, London, to Woodville, Wyedale.

"Am staying here to-night; return tomorrow. Joseph did not mention Needham to me. The porter says he went out about 9 o'clock, smoking a cigar, that he returned about 1:30, said he had been in the country, and had lost the local train, seemed in good spirits, was called in the morning at 7, had breakfast, paid his bill, and left by 10 train for Liverpool."

Woodville to Wood.

"Don't come down; I will come up—wait for me."

Dick arrived in London on Wednesday night, read the evidence given at the opening of the inquest, conferred with Lawyer Wood, talked with the porter, and on the next day asked permission to see the body of the suicide. The shell had been screwed down, but through the influence of Mr. Wood the coroner gave the necessary order to remove the lid. Decomposition had set in, but the face had not much changed, and Woodville was shocked at the resemblance to his friend. Later in the day he had an interview with Mr. Wilfred Green, the member for Harwood, who stated that the gentleman he met at Liverpool said he was Joseph Norbury.

From Richard Woodville, New Hummum's, London, to Miss Norbury, Wyedale.

"MY DEAR KATE: I have done as you desired in all things, and come to the conclusion that our dear Joe is all right. The coincidences which have made such an impression upon you would have only amused you had not this miserable man committed suicide. It was the shock of his death coming upon Joe's mention of him that set you thinking of the tragic possibilities you have imagined. Then that old fool Green (his constituents were *Green* when they elected him) not taking the trouble in his letter to the Times to say that the stranger gave his name and that it was Norbury; he did not do this because he wanted to make out that he had really seen a ghost—the idiot; but now that he has been chaffed, and people say the whole thing was an invention, he is very glad to have it shown that he really did see somebody, and that the stranger was very much like Needham. A pompous old ass, this Green, with a great wide straggling forehead, goggle eyes, and a very self-assertive manner. I can quite understand Joe snubbing him—it was just like Joe to do so.

"The adjourned inquest takes place tomorrow, but there are no new facts. The body was fully identified, and there does not seem to me a single suggestion, my dear Kate, to bear out your alarming fancy that Needham had killed our dear Joe and escaped in his clothes, etc. My dear child, it is only a bad dream. I saw the body this morning. It startled me for a moment; it was like him, but stouter and taller; and—well, thank God it was not our dear, great-hearted Joe. Furthermore, I found at the hotel that Joe had left some money in charge of the landlady; that part of his luggage was in the baggage-room, and that when he paid his bill he forgot none of these things. I tried for the time to think myself a detective acting upon 'information he had received,' and following up your theory; but it would not work, thank goodness, and Wood, who leaves to-night, will tell you so and give you the comfort of our united opinions to this effect. Besides, as I said before, Joe's telegram from Liverpool, mentioning Aunt Dorothy, shows that he was not Needham or Needham's ghost in masquerade. No, no, my darling Kate; you are not well. Joe's going has troubled you; the shock of this man's death following, as I have said before, on Joe's genial mention of him; and the sensational novels you have been reading lately—these are the causes of your morbid thoughts. Forgive me for saying morbid. The truth is, you are lonely and fanciful; so, also, am I; and the best thing for both of us is to get married. What do you say now to this proposal—a honeymoon trip to New York! Won't that benefit you! Then you can tell Joe yourself what a dear, silly goose you are, and what a wild-goose chase you sent me on to this great, busy, God-forsaken city, when I would have much preferred a day's fishing in the Wye, a ramble with you, and an evening's whist with Aunt Dorothy at double dummy. Well, shall it be as I suggest, and to New York for our honeymoon?

"Your devoted and ever affectionate,
"DICK."

Thereupon followed in quick succession the following telegrams:

From Miss Norbury to Richard Woodville.

"Yes."

From Richard Woodville to Miss Norbury.

"Do you really mean it?"

From Miss Norbury to Richard Woodville.

"I never was more in earnest. Wait for letter which I am now writing, and then come to Wyedale with all speed."

From Richard Woodville to Miss Norbury.

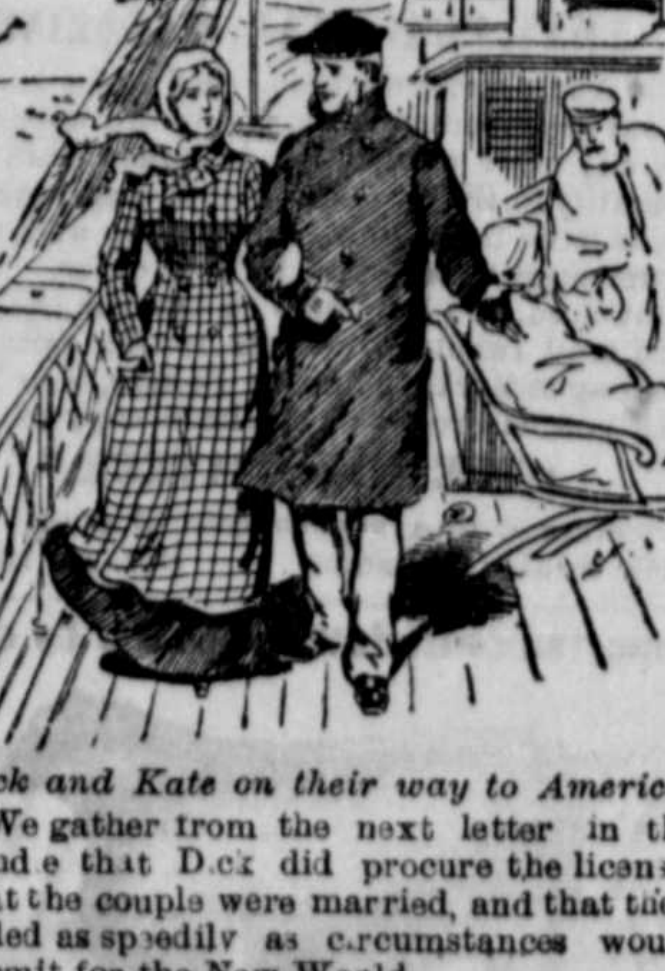
"I wait impatiently, and write meanwhile, so that our letters will cross."

These are the letters that crossed:

"MY DEAREST KATE: Your telegram fills me with alarm and with joy, and I should not be the honest Dick I hope I am if I did not say that joy is in the ascendant. We shall be two happy people, because we can make sacrifices for each other. Our love has nothing of selfishness in it, and while we have postponed our marriage for the sake of others, we are now, it seems, to hurry it on because we both love our dear Joe, and you are miserable in his absence. Well, so am I, so far as it is possible for a man to be miserable under the circumstances. You have got some strange fancy into your dear little head about Joe, and will not be satisfied without following him to New York. I take you at your word, and shall write to Manchester by this post to fix my vacation, and I am glad to say my partners can well afford to let me go. Business has prospered with us, and the future is even more hopeful than our most sanguine expectations. So, sweet Kate, my dear love and friend, we will become Mr. and Mrs. Richard Woodville as quick as the law and the church will let us, and then 'Hail Columbia.' The hours are weeks until I get your letter in the morning, my dear, dear Kate.

"Love to Aunt Dorothy, and a heap of kisses for you—one of which you can transfer to A. D., but only one. Your own,
"DICK."

"MY DEAR, KIND DICK: Our dear Joe is dead. I am sure of it—dead and buried in that grave in Kensal Green. Don't think me mad. Aunt Dorothy says I am; she is very good to me. Dr. Ware says the news of Mr. Needham's death, coming upon Joe's letter describing their meeting, has upset my nerves. Lawyer Wood has put the affair in what he calls its legal and logical shape, and laughs at me. But, oh! Dick, there is an instinct that is above logic, a pain that is beyond medicine. My heart knows its own sorrow, and my heart mourns for our dear Joe. He is dead and that man Needham has gone to New York in his place. Mr. Green may have a name that suggests ridicule and a belief in supernatural things that seems foolish. But I have seen Joe since he left us, and he was standing by the white column in the churchyard. I said nothing of this until I read Mr. Green's letter in The Times, and then my heart and soul and mind, all my being, were filled with the revelation of Joe's death. It was on Saturday night. You had just arrived by the mail from Manchester. The clock was striking ten. It was a lovely night. There was a beautiful moon. I looked out of the window to blow a kiss in my fancy far away to Joe, when the moonbeams seemed to strike a halo about that white column in the churchyard, and though it is a quarter of a mile away, I distinctly saw Joe standing there. He was in evening dress, and he looked towards me and then turned sadly away. While I gazed transfixed, a cloud passed over the moon; and churchyard, column, the sad vision, and all vanished away. Don't you remember that I was sad all the night? Don't you remember that Aunt Dorothy gave me her smelling salts, and that she was very angry because I revoked at whist? Don't you remember that you said I looked pale and ill the next day at church, and that you put it down to poor Mr. Luke's sermon? Your cheering words, Aunt Dorothy's kindness, helped me to begin to forget what I had seen or fancied, and Joe's telegrams on Monday quite cured me until night, when the death of Needham shocked me, and the letter of that member of parliament in The Times on Tuesday drove me crazy. I recalled the vision of Saturday night, and my heart seemed to cry out 'he is dead, your brother is murdered, the wretched man who was like him has poisoned him!' I could not shake it off, I cannot now, even after your letter and assurances, and the evidence at the inquest, the identity, the letters, everything. I am a woman, and not logical; I am a woman, and don't ask me to reason. I love him; I ask my heart, 'Does he live?' The answer is, 'No.' I go into his room, I touch his coat, I look at his picture—'Does he live?' I ask. No! His dogs go whining about the place, the summer wind moans in the trees, my pigeons come and nestle upon me as if they knew and were sorry. Two of the roses on the grave where Joe's heart was buried with hers he loved so (and I loved her dearly as I could love and did love everything he loved)—two of his favorite rose trees are dying, and I never saw so red and angry a sunset as that of last night. Now, dearest Dick, come back to Wyedale and take me to New York. That is, if you care to have so forlorn a companion. I have told you all I feel and fear and dread; but I am still the business-like little woman you say you admire, and mean to be very shrewd and business-like, and either to find Joe alive on the other side of the sea or to track his murderer down. So if this is the sort of woman you care to marry, go to Doctors' Commons, get the license, bring it, and my things are packed for our journey. And, oh! if God should be so good as to spare us this awful calamity, if He should reverse it as He can, if that vision and all the rest should be nothing but 'a little disorder and an overwrought fancy,' as Aunt Dorothy says, then, dear Dick, my best friend, what a happy, happy world it will be! Come to your wretched, loving
"KATE."



Dick and Kate on their way to America.

We gather from the next letter in the bundle that Dick did procure the license, that the couple were married, and that they sailed as speedily as circumstances would permit for the New World.

From Richard Woodville to Mrs. Dorothy Norbury.

"NEW YORK HOTEL,
NEW YORK CITY, U. S.

"MY DEAR FRIEND: We have just arrived after a stormy passage, and I write to advise you of this, according to promise, but I can do little more at present than give you this information. Kate did not suffer from mal de mer; it turned out that I was the worse sailor of the two. If we should only find that all is well we shall have a very happy time. I need not tell you that Kate is the dearest, sweetest girl in the world. You know that; Wyedale knows it; everybody knows it. The sea air and the change have done her good. Sometimes during the voyage she seemed to forget all her gloomy forebodings. She made friends with a most agreeable American family living in the Fifth avenue—father, mother, two daughters and a son, very nice young people all of them, father and mother as young as the rest, and they have invited us to dinner. The weather is exceedingly hot, and New York is almost like a continental city. I think we shall like the Americans, which will be quite in keeping with my business experience of them gained in Manchester, though I know you are prejudiced on account of the slave business; but every nation has its peculiar institutions, and after all we English endowed the states with this one, to which you and all of us now so much object. It is like me, you will say, to leave what may seem the bad news of my letter to the last. Joe is not here, and now I am sorry Kate did not let me write a mail ahead of us to say we were coming. He left a week ago, for the west they think, or for one of the summer resorts, the hotel people don't know which. They believe he went west, as he made some inquiries as to the route to Chicago, and talked of going back to England by way of San Francisco and Japan, which means a tremendous journey, and a dangerous one, across the plains. Kate bears up well under this news, which, unless it is explained to-morrow by the lawyers in re the Norbury property business, is rather extraordinary. I wish we had written to him; 'but sufficient for the day.' The best news is that we have arrived safe and well—Kate far better than when we sailed; that this hotel seems very comfortable, the people civil; and let us hope that Kate's strange and curious fancies will be dissipated to-morrow. If there is time to put a postscript to this letter before the mail goes in the morning I shall add it with the latest news of Joe that can be got. With our united loves, I am your true and affectionate
DICK.

"P. S. Just time to say have seen the lawyers; they had written to Kate a week ago, and I inclose a copy of their letter."

BROADWAY, New York.

"DEAR MADAME: Your brother, Mr. Joseph Norbury, requests us to inform you of his safe arrival, and of the good prospects there are of his succession to a share of the Norbury property in this state. When alighting from a carriage at the hotel he met with a slight accident, which incapacitates him from writing at the moment—a sprain of the thumb, a slight matter, but rather painful. On this account he asks us to be his correspondents to you. He wishes us to add that it is his desire that you should no longer consider him in regard to your marriage. On reflection he feels that he has been selfish in this matter, and he hopes on his return to find a brother as well as a dear sister at Wyedale. You may expect a letter from him by the next mail, and in the meantime should he leave New York, as he expects to do in two days, any letters addressed to him to our care will be mailed to him. He will post us up in his address from time to time. We are to say that with the exception of the slight sprain before mentioned he is quite well, and you will please give his kind remembrance to Dr. Ware and Lawyer Wood, and to inform Dr. Ware that his opinion was quite correct: it was change that he needed. Also give his love to Aunt Dorothy and to Dick, and accept the same with his sincere affection and solicitude for yourself. We remain, yours,
"HALL, BOND & FISKE."

Later there comes among other correspondence, which need not be mentioned, the following history of the adventure of Kate and her husband in a letter to Lawyer Wood, the contents of which are to be discreetly communicated to Mrs. Dorothy Norbury. It seems to the historian that this remarkable letter brings to a sufficiently complete climax the story of John Needham and his most unfortunate double.

From Richard Woodville to Horace Wilkins Wood, Esq., Wyedale, England.

QUEEN'S HOTEL, TORONTO, Canada.

"MY DEAR MR. WOOD: You will be good enough to break this news to Aunt Dorothy. My dear wife, who has behaved with singular heroism, is quite calm under the blow which Fate has dealt us. 'I knew it from the first,' she says, 'and while I shall never be a happy woman again I shall bear my sorrow with Christian resignation, and do my duty to—to—meaning me. I am beginning in a rambling fashion, but you must bear with me. When you have broken the intelligence conveyed in this letter to Mrs. Dorothy Norbury you will please take such legal and proper steps as are necessary for the removal of the remains of Joseph Norbury from the grave at Kensal Green, where his murdered body was interred in the name of Needham. The inclosed depositions and other papers our lawyers here consider, as I do, sufficient for you to obtain the necessary faculty for the removal of the body to Wyedale, where it is to be interred in the family vault by the side of the remains of the late Mrs. Joseph Norbury. All this you will please attend to with dispatch so that everything may be prepared for our return, our dear Kate being anxious that the proper interment of the dear fellow shall be our first melancholy duty on our return home.

"I am so borne down by the events that have occurred during the past few days that I could not proceed to relate them to you without letting you understand at once that my dear wife's views, confided to you at our departure for New York, have been proved to be only too true an interpretation of the dreadful facts. When we arrived in New York we found that Joe had left; Messrs. Hall, Bond & Fiske, the lawyers, had written to Kate informing her that he had hurt his thumb and could not at that moment write himself. Mrs. Dorothy Norbury will have opened this letter and shown it to you, no doubt, as it was understood she would have the benefit of your advice, and had authority to open all letters. Well, it seemed all perfectly natural, for there were messages in it to you and to Ware; but Kate was not satisfied. I tried to distract her thoughts from their all-absorbing fear. We went to the theatre, drove about the city, accepted an invitation to dinner. Thus three days went by, and we then asked the lawyers if Mr. Norbury had communicated with them? Yes, that day by telegraph, his letters to be sent to the Parker House hotel, Boston. I would have telegraphed our arrival to him, but Kate preferred that we should go straight to Boston.

"'Shall you write to him?' she asked Mr. Hall.

"'Yes,' he said, 'we shall inform him that we have had the pleasure of handing to his sister a copy of the letter we had forwarded to England.'

"'Might I ask you, as a favor, not to do so?' said Kate.

"'If you have any special reason for making the request we shall gladly act upon it, apart from the fact that the request is made by a lady,' said the lawyer.

"'I would like to surprise him,' she said. 'You have written to me upon the question of my marriage, and we, my husband and I, would ourselves like to be the bearers of the news of our union. If you will humor us, especially me, to this extent, we shall start by the first train for the Parker house, Boston.'

"'Why, certainly, Mrs. Woodville—I shall consider your request a command; there are no letters for your brother, and we have no information to send him except the news of your arrival. I hope you like New York.'

"'Oh yes, very much,' said Kate.

"'I know the Parker house people, and shall be happy to give you a line to the clerk there to see that you have every attention.'

"'Thank you very much,' I said, 'for your kindness and for obliging my wife.'

"'No thanks required; you are welcome to the best we can do,' he said.

"The next morning we were in Boston. We traveled all night. Mr. Norbury had left Boston for Chicago. His letters were to be held for him until he communicated his next address to the hotel clerk. We called upon the chief of police. This was Kate's wish. Not that we told him anything beyond our desire to overtake Joseph Norbury. Could they assist us? They would do anything to oblige us, but if we had no charge to make against the gentleman they did not see their way. We put it as a matter of family importance and the anxiety of a sister to find her brother; offered to pay any expenses. They detailed a detective to our service. I gave him privately a heavy fee. At night he brought us news. Mr. Norbury had not bought a ticket for Chicago; he had gone to Toronto, Canada. Kate clutched my arm for support. The detective noticed her emotion.

"'Don't you think you had better tell me what the trouble is?' the detective said. 'I guess you can trust me.'

"We told him all. At least I did. He went and had a long talk with the hotel clerk. Kate was tired. She went to bed on the understanding that there was no train leaving for Canada until the morning.

"'Did he always shave, this yere Mr. Norbury?' the detective asked me after his conference.

"'Always,' I said.

"'He is growing a beard now, shaves the upper lip, has gotten about four weeks' on his chin, and a streak of side whiskers. He asked for English newspapers and read them diligently, made a great show of going to Chicago; but I have a friend at the depot who has an eye for faces—English faces in particular. But your wife is right; women are very cute, sir, very.'

"'What is to be done?'

"'Guess; I have done it—I've telegraphed to have him stopped, and his baggage held awaiting our arrival.'

"The next night we arrived at Toronto. There was no such name as Joseph Norbury on the hotel books. The police had not discovered him. No baggage had been found with his name or initials upon it.

"'He felt secure until he got to Boston,' said the detective; 'then I guess something in the newspapers scared him; bring me the latest English papers.'

"A waiter brought a bundle of papers. We read the sensational article alluded to by the coroner at the inquest, and the correspondence of Mr. Green and others.

"'He made up his mind at first to be Joseph Norbury for a long time, but changed it at Boston; he would have kept it up at all events until he had grown a strong beard and got right away anyhow, but the papers have scared him—not that anybody else evidently has doubts except the dear little clever woman, your wife, but we'll get him.'

"On inquiry at the Queen's hotel it was found that six passengers had arrived on the previous day, and that one gentleman's luggage was 'decidedly English.'

"'Show me the baggage room.'

"We went into the baggage room.

"'Look round,' said the detective; 'it is hardly likely that he will have changed his trunks at present; he can have no reason to think that he is followed; he is only yet in the first stages of his preparations to efface himself as Joseph Norbury.'

"'Yes,' I said in a whisper, 'that is one of my friend's portmanteaus—I know it by the brass bindings; if I am right, you will find J. N. under the label that has been pasted there by the handle.'

"I felt a chill run through me as the detective rubbed at the label and called for water and a sponge.

"'Yes; there were the initials.'

"'What is the number of the gentleman?'

"'Twenty-five,' said the attendant.

"'Is he in?'

"'No.'

"'Give me his key.'

"It was found that he had taken his key; but his room was opened with a master key.

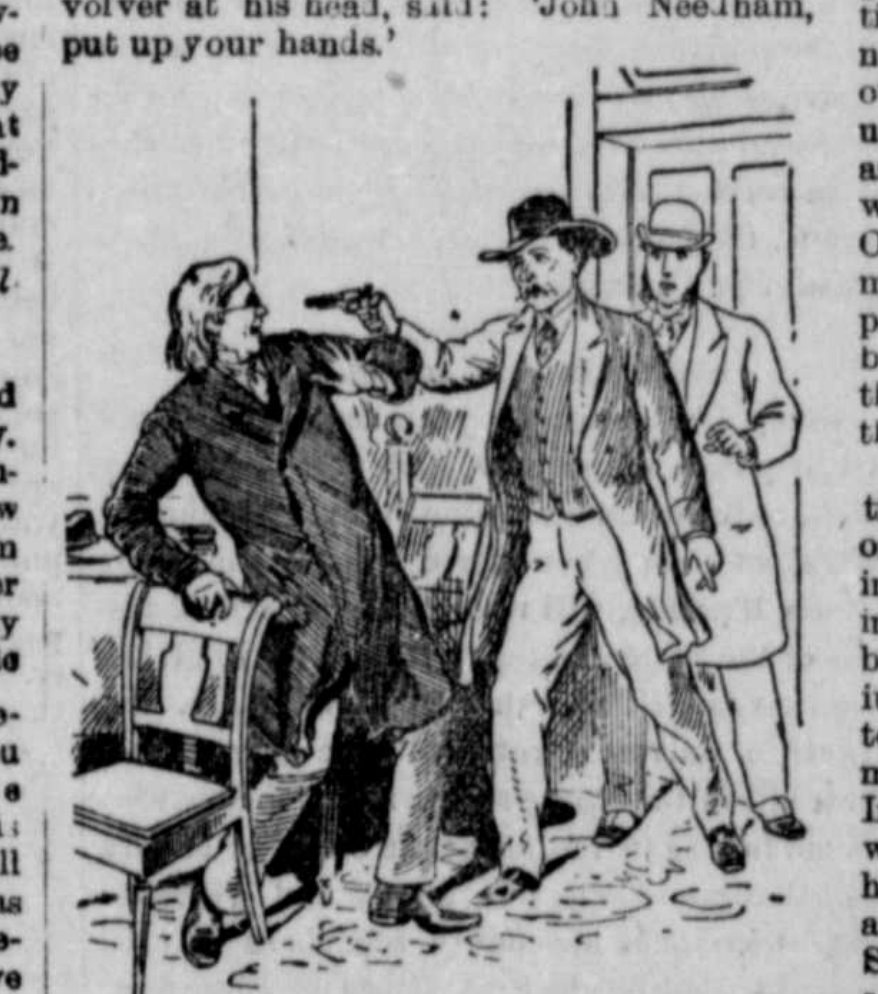
"'That is my friend's dispatch box,' I said, recognizing the property at once.

"It was locked. The officer forced it. Joe's letters, pocketbook, Kate's letters, paper knife, writing pad, portrait. It seemed to me that Joe must be here. I could not realize when looking at these familiar things the possibility of the crime they now represented.

"We left the room; locked the door. The detective posted himself in the room opposite. I loitered in the hall. My wife remained in her room. The hotel clerk was to look straight at me when 25 came in. Presently a gentleman, Joe's height and build, came in. The clerk looked at me. I looked at the stranger. He wore spectacles, and had long gray hair. I followed him. He went into No. 25. I went into the room opposite.

"'It is a wig, then,' said the detective. 'You bet the English papers have scared him. Come—follow me.'

"The detective took a revolver from his pocket, knocked at the door, quietly confronted his man, and, presenting the revolver at his head, said: 'John Needham, put up your hands.'



"John Needham, put up your hands."

"The wretched man was not afraid of death, as was afterwards shown; but he did not put up his hands; he staggered, and clutched a chair for support. In an instant the detective slipped his hand beneath his coat and took away a revolver, which he handed to me, and the next moment he had passed his hands over all the wretched creature's pockets.

"'That's all right; don't want you to hurt yourself; guess we've surprised you. Now, sir, take off your wig so that your friend may recognize you.'

"The officer did not wait for his instructions to be carried out—he removed the wig; and then, oh, my dear Wood, it was my turn to stagger; the man before me was a cruel likeness of our dear Joe. If he had not attempted to disguise himself, if we had met in the ordinary course of events, I can imagine myself being deceived.

"'Is it Joseph Norbury?' the detective asked.

"'It is strangely like and unlike him,' I said.

"As I spoke the wretch seemed to pull himself together, at which the detective moved towards him.

"'Don't be afraid, sir,' he said; 'I am your prisoner, and I will not attempt to run away.'

"The voice of our dear fellow—the voice, and as I have heard it in sorrowful moments.

"'I am John Needham, and I am sorry you did not shoot me. Let me make the last reparation that is in my power—a full confession of my guilt, the last confession of a miserably guilty wretch——'

"'Well, I guess that will keep for the present,' said the detective. 'Come with me.'

"'Give me leave a moment,' he said, rising; 'it is the last favor I ask, and the information I can give you may save you trouble and further sorrow.'

"The voice, the manner, now that he was calm, almost the look of our dear Joe!

"'May I ask who this gentleman is?'

"'I am Richard Woodville,' I said.

"He shuddered.

"'I would like, before I go to prison, to place into your hands this locket,' he said, suddenly thrusting his hand into his breast pocket, and doing so with an air of authority as the detective was about to interpose. But it was not a locket. He had tricked his captor. The next moment he had rushed to the other end of the room, and before the officer could seize him he had gulped down a carefully calculated dose of prussic acid.

"We took his dying deposition, and they buried him with the ignominy that belongs to the old English law. The papers inclosed will give you the details, and I also send you two Canadian journals that deal with the matter in extenso.

"Kate bears up nobly, with womanly fortitude, and I look to you, dear friend, to help me to give her the consolation, such as it is, of the removal of our dear beloved dead to the silent companionship of the woman he loved and mourned. My dear Kate has been watching me with tearful eyes while I have been writing this terrible record, now and then getting up to lay her hand upon my head, and to say, 'Poor Dick, what trouble I have been to you,' as if she blamed herself for being wiser than any of us. If it were not for keeping myself up to help her bear her woe I feel as if I could fling myself upon the floor and cry like a child.

"God bless you, my dear Wood, and believe me to be, your devoted friend,
"RICHARD WOODVILLE."

One soft, dreamy August day there was a fresh smell of newly-turned turf in the little churchyard of Wyedale, and they laid the body of Joseph Norbury by the side of his dead love. The dews of heaven fell there, and the seasons came and went, and the roses grew red and white by the column upon which the two names were inscribed. Time was very gentle with everybody and everything at Wyedale, and is to this day. The gray hairs of Kate and Dick are but the first frosts of a hale and hearty winter, tempered with the sunny laugh of youth and hope, for a cluster of boys and girls gather round about them and call them father and mother. The simple joys of their children send their own thoughts back to the springtime of life before the shadow of death had withered any of its buds and blossoms. All the country side knows of the tragedy in their history. During several years they only gave token of their knowledge by the fresh flowers they laid upon the grave at the foot of the white pillar; but now the old people speak to Kate and Dick of the dear fellow they lost so sadly, and a sort of pious mystery and awe in the general mind of the country-folk attaches to the gentle character of Mrs. Joseph Norbury, who saw visions that were true in the days that are past and gone.

THE END.

Sequel to "Needham's Failure."

The story of "Needham's Failure" was founded on the death of Mr. John Sadlier. The New York Sun recently published the following interesting sequel to that suicide: One morning, twenty-nine years ago, the body of Mr. John Sadlier, a celebrated Irish financier and speculator, was found lying stark and cold near Jack Straw's Castle, on the Hampstead heath, and near it the little vial containing prussic acid, with which, in the depths of his despair, he had rid himself of life. An inquest was held, and the medical witness on the occasion was Dr. Edward Staunton. About ten days ago again another body was found, stark and cold, on nearly the same spot, and the fingers still gripped a small bottle which had contained prussic acid. It was taken up and recognized as that of the same Dr. Edward Staunton, whom the weary passage of twenty-nine years had brought to the same end.

Gossip About the Telephone.

[New York Sun.]

The colossal financial success of the Bell Telephone company has made it comparatively easy for any one who talks telephone to get the ears of capitalists, while the number of men who have been devoting their lives to the building of other and better telephones than Bell's is great. Inventors, professional and amateur, are swarming over telephones, like miners in a newly discovered gold country. The patent office in Washington is the depository, and in most cases the sepulchre, of a thousand and one applications, specifications, models, devices, all having for their object the transmission of the voice through electrically charged wires. There are even projects for the transmission of sound through the water at sea from ship to ship, and there are plans for house, field, army and almost countless other telephones, some even dodging the stumbling block that has so long protected the Bell patents, to wit, Judge Lowell's decision that the discovery of the power of an electric current to transmit the human voice is patentable. A good many telephone companies have been formed, some of them backed by plenty of money, like the Drawbaugh, some of them unquestionably for the purpose of compelling the Bell company to buy or compromise, possibly some for the purpose of making a contest with the Bell on which to get an opinion from the supreme court on the soundness of Judge Lowell's opinion, but all of them confident that if they only get the chance to work it their telephone will be as great a gold mine as Bell's has been.

It is not forgotten by capitalists, though it is perhaps by enthusiastic inventors, that the Bell company is a far better financial success than its instrument is a practical one. Bell himself, who is not a financier, would probably have gone the way of all poor inventors had he not happened to marry the daughter of one of the most skillful financiers in the country, and an expert in telegraphic stocks and management, Mr. Gardiner Hubbard. When Mr. Hubbard took hold of the Bell machine, organized the company, and managed it after the manner of men skilled in the development of corporate wealth, its financial success was assured. Nobody knows how much money has been made for the original stockholders, but everybody knows that dazzling fortunes have been acquired in almost no time. But nobody realizes better than Mr. Bell that his telephone is not yet perfected. Far from it. It does not always work satisfactorily, and, as a general thing, for long distances is practically worthless as yet. It sometimes is a nuisance, as when the user is cut off, or in other ways that suggest themselves to all users. So Bell is as diligently at work now as when he was first planning it to see where the improvements can be made. Other companies doubtless have improvements, great ones, but these have been patented, although the patents avail little, because all these telephones make use of the electric current for the transmission of the voice.

There has been of late unquestionably something of a reaction on the part of the public, especially in New England, from the high favor in which the telephone was held. This has been partly due to the charges, partly to inefficiency, and partly because many customers have come to regard these instruments as more of a bother than a benefit. In Lowell, Holyoke, Stamford and Greenwich very serious and organized opposition has been developed, so that a large percentage of instruments have been ordered out. Some shopkeepers say that their telephones are nuisances, because people are continually calling them up on all sorts of foolish, trivial matters, thereby taking their time, and often provoking them to unseemly irritation. But the experience of the telephone people has been that people who have once used the telephone sooner or later order it put up again.

There prevails an impression among capitalists who have given some attention to money possibilities in telephones, that the Bell people do not expect always to defend their bonanza, so as to keep it a monopoly. Such capitalists profess to think that the shrewd financiers of the Bell company are aware that telephoning will be declared some day as free to all as telegraphing, and that all any company can do will be to protect its instrument by patent. Whether this is a correct opinion or not, it prevails, and to it is largely due the willingness of capitalists to look with favor upon any telephone scheme. Inventors now have no difficulty in getting moneyed men to examine and look into their telephone inventions, and there are some very superior ones in the market.

A sergeant in the United States signal corps invented a field telephone, a marvel of simplicity as well as ingenuity, an instrument so simple and yet so perfect that it could be exposed for weeks to the weather in a field or be buried in an ash heap and not be injured. The signal office made use of these instruments daily with perfect satisfaction, but somewhat to the annoyance of the Bell people, who were disposed to make some fuss about it.

A Washington stove dealer invented a house telephone, a simple little contrivance, making use of gas and water pipes instead of wires, attached to which in each room was a transmitter and receiver. But he was informed that his machine was an infringement of the Bell, though he used no electrical current, and he abandoned his intention of making a business of furnishing these instruments in houses.

The simplest telephone in existence, and one that will probably be left undisturbed by the great corporation, is in operation in Fayetteville, N. C. It is an old telegraph wire, each end fastened into a thin sheet of wood, and its total distance about a quarter of a mile, extending from the hotel office to the livery stable. Yet, rude as it is, it serves its purpose admirably, carrying the voice over the wire with perfect clearness, though one has to use some considerable lung power.

There is now on exhibition in the Fifth Avenue hotel a telephone built by Iowa men, and it is certainly a most interesting machine. In a little box no bigger than a half-pint cup is the transmitter, and in another little box is the receiver. They are attached to handles. Put the transmitter to your mouth and the receiver to your ear, and you can, as the owner asserts, talk with perfect ease through what is measured as 200 miles of wire. There is no battery, except the magnetic armature in the little box. There is understood to be plenty of money back of this instrument, and its owners are confident that it is going to prove an ugly little rival of the Bell.

Mrs. Treat, in her "Home Studies in Nature," says of bluebirds: When a pair of bluebirds succeed in rearing three broods in a season, in the autumn these broods unite and stay with the parents, making a little flock of about fourteen. All the autumn through they keep together, feeding from the same bushes—poke, ampelopsis and other wild berries—and upon stray insects. The first cold days of December send them to the cedar swamps, where great numbers congregate. Here, too, large flocks of robins keep them company. But each mild day brings the bluebirds from their retreat back to their unforgotten home, and there is nothing more fascinating in bird life than to see the frolics of the young birds and the grave demeanor of the parents. The young visit the various houses in which they were reared, sometimes two or three entering at the same time, and all the while keeping up their low, sweet twittering, as if conversing.

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