

Serial Story.

MURDER WILL OUT.

By EDGAR PICKERING,

Author of "A Stout English Bowman," "King for a Summer," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF INSTALLMENTS I. to VII. Dr. Mortimer and his friend Sylvester Courtney are interrupted in a confidential talk by the advent of a patient hurt in the street. Before he leaves the house, his host learns that his patient has lost a pocket book to which he attaches a high value, and the reader perceives that Dr. Mortimer is much angered on learning the stranger's name. The Doctor is about to take up a lucrative foreign appointment, for he is engaged to be married whilst his practice is worth but little, and his expectations from a rich uncle seem likely to be disappointed by the advent of an Australian cousin, Messrs Scripp and Morder, the eminent lawyers, are in difficulties, and their client, eccentric Squire Gifford, Dr. Mortimer's uncle, is the unconscious means of bringing about a crisis in the firm's affairs. Dr. Mortimer, called to Marlborough by a letter from his uncle, meets Mudge Selby, his fiancée, in company with Dorman (the Squire's Australian nephew), whom, later, he warns not to continue his intimacy with the Squire. Squire Gifford tells Mortimer that he is not satisfied with Dorman, and makes a generous proposal. Mudge Selby loses her fortune in the Great Central Bank crash, and in the illness that follows he is carefully attended by Dr. Mortimer. Jarvis Dorman conceals a mysterious murder, in which their clerk, Jean Kedar, plays a prominent part. Squire Gifford makes his will, and Dorman makes that of Mudge Selby. Mortimer, Mrs. Courtney, and Mudge, and the two men come to blows. Dick proving the stronger, The Squire again presses Mortimer to marry an heiress, Judith Gutchy, and Dorman has a secret interview with Jean Kedar, who is the bearer of the Squire's will. The Squire tells Mortimer that he shall be his heir if he will marry Miss Gutchy; they discuss this point; Mortimer goes to see his fiancée; a report comes that the Squire is murdered; The inquest reveals nothing. By the will, which is produced by Mr. Scripp, the estate is left to Jarvis Dorman. Mortimer visits Mudge for the first time since the murder, and, with strange manner and hesitating speech, she tells she does not desire to see him again. The secret of Squire Gifford's death did not transpire, and whilst Dorman, his heir, goes on to the Continent, Mortimer takes a foreign appointment. Mudge Selby advertises for a post as companion and agrees to go to a Madame Duval. Out in Russia Dr. Mortimer meets with a serious adventure which threatens to prematurely end his life. He is, however, rescued by a native girl, Teresa Brasco.

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CHAPTER XIV.

When that industrious and painstaking clerk, Jean Kedar, had ended the labours of a day, some months after the reading of Squire Gifford's will, and Mr Scripp's return to London, he stood for a moment at the doorstep of the office in Southampton Street and gave a sharp glance to the right and left, as though somebody whom he expected to see would presently come. In this he was disappointed, and with his accustomed trot, he turned, going down into Holborn and the never ceasing current of wayfarers East and West. He was always timid in crossing the street, the traffic and noise seemed to confuse him, and so he went cautiously, waiting for an opportunity to get to the other side of the broad road, choosing the wrong moment after all. There was a hansom flying westward, and an omnibus had just pulled up, opposite to Jean, who stepped into the roadway behind the stationary vehicle and went at a run across the busy thoroughfare. There was a warning shout, and the sound of a horse being pulled up sharply, for Jean was under his feet, and stumbling awkwardly he rolled to the ground. Somebody from the pavement had run to his rescue and was bringing him flapping to safety. It was Sylvester Courtney who had done this, and Jean, scared well nigh out of his wits, recognised him.

"You are hurt?" said Sylvester, supporting him by the arm.

"M's'r has saved my life," was the answer, given tremblingly. There were no words by which to thank M's'r sufficiently, and Jean slowly recovered himself.

"You'll never get used to London streets, I'm afraid," laughed Sylvester. "This is the second time that I've come to your rescue."

"Assuredly!"

"You'd better take a cab home," went on Sylvester. "I don't think you're fit to walk. A man doesn't get knocked down without feeling it."

M's'r was perfectly right. It would be wise to take a cab. So Sylvester hailed one, and Jean got into it, not giving the driver his address, however, until his preserver had walked away with the little clerk's expressions of gratitude in his ears.

Sylvester had something in his hand too, it being nothing else than a pocket book with two initials and a crest on the cover, which he had picked up when Jean Kedar had fallen.

"The morality of annexing this may be questioned," he mused, "and under ordinary circumstances it would be wrong. Under existing circumstances I justify myself in retaining the book for a time. The true owner of it is Mr Jarvis Dorman, unless I am very greatly mistaken; possibly I may find a clue to a number of perplexing matters," and upon reaching his chambers he made a strict examination of his prize.

In one compartment of the book were two bank notes for £500 each, and sundry papers which proved that Mr Jean Kedar had been exceptionally lucky or exceptionally clever in those speculations of his, for there were a banker's receipts for several sums of money placed on deposit, and some documents relating to stock and shares held by Jean. In fact the papers represented quite a snug fortune, which would put the little clerk in a position of independence, supposing that Messrs. Scripp and Morder did not require his services in the future.

In the other compartment were papers relating to the sale of a sheep farm in Australia, and a cutting from a Sydney newspaper offering a reward for the discovery of one Aaron Morley, who had absconded from his place of business, after committing various illegal acts. He was described as a fraudulent bankrupt and swindler.

"It seems a good deal of money for a simple clerk to possess, but that's not my affair," reasoned Sylvester. "And he'll be in a fine state of worry, so I'll let him have it back to-morrow. And I'll copy out those interesting references to Mr Aaron Morley. I wonder who he may be? I'll interview Scripp's clerk."

Next morning Jean was surprised by a visit from his preserver, who enquired after his health in a kindly way. Jean answering that he had recovered from the shock, and stating at the same time how he had suffered a great loss. In fact so affected was the little man that he wept copiously.

"I picked up a pocket book," remarked Sylvester in a casual manner. "Just about the spot where you were knocked over."

"M's'r!" and Jean gave a gasp of joy. "The book was mine! Ten thousand thanks. It is more than saving my life, this finding of my pocket book!"

"Yes," replied Sylvester slowly, "perhaps it is. I opened it to find—well to see if the owner's address was in it. There was a lot of money—securities, and a thousand pounds."

"They are mine!" exclaimed Jean. "They must pay remarkably good salaries at Scripp and Morder's," went on Sylvester, drily. "You're a man of wealth."

"I am a frugal man; I have no expenses, and have saved money."

"Then there was something about a Mr Aaron Morley," continued the other. "who is wanted in Sydney. Did you know the gentleman?"

Jean shrugged his shoulders and was blank faced in an instant.

"The case interested me," he answered. "I do not know anything of him. Why should I?"

"Just so," remarked Sylvester. "Perhaps Mr Jarvis Dorman is interested in the case also," and again Jean shrugged his shoulders.

As they were speaking, Mr Morder

came into the clerks' office, and Sylvester glanced at him.

"Mr Morder," whispered Jean behind his hand, and Sylvester introduced himself to the junior partner who looked in his solemnest manner at him.

"So Mr Kedar will be happy again, now," laughed Sylvester, "I have found his pocket book. You don't know what a wealthy clerk you've got."

Mr. Morder expressed no surprise. The intelligence seemed to pain him merely, and he put his hand to his side, as though a pang of agony were there.

"I heard something of Kedar's accident yesterday," he answered. "One cannot be too careful in going about London," and then after a few more words, Sylvester took his departure, Jean resumed his interrupted work, and Mr. Morder went back to his own room, groaning in the gentle way that so often surprised Mrs. Morder and his unmarried family of daughters.

The following day Jean Kedar's place in the office was vacant. Southampton Street saw no more of his young old face nor trotting walk, neither did Messrs. Scripp and Morder. There was a week's salary due, but Jean never returned to claim it, and mysteriously as he had come, so did he disappear. Sylvester Courtney might search high and low for the meek, unassuming clerk, and he would not have found him in England, although in Paris he might have been more successful, for in the fourth floor "suite" of a pension in Passy, a new tenant had taken up his abode, whom the concierge knew as Monsieur Faure, who might have been Jean Kedar's twin brother.

Meantime Sylvester was pursuing another search, and this was to find the garment from which the fragment had been torn and left hanging on the nail in the wall of Whyteless Manor. The mystery connected with Jean Kedar and the pocket book had baffled him so far, but there was a possibility the one had something to do with the other, and the search for the coat went on. Into what unsavoury quarters it led him, and with what unsavoury merchants it brought him in contact, it is needless to describe, but the hope of eventually coming across the missing garment gradually grew less and less. There were a dozen reasons for his never finding it, each good. The coat might have passed into a customer's hands months ago, and been worn to rags by this time. It might have been sent abroad, it might have been converted into shoddy, or be gracing a scarecrow in some distant part of the country, and so the hope of finding it almost failed him. And then one of those events which prove that the "unexpected" does happen, and that it happens at the most unexpected moments, befell.

He had been away from London for some weeks, and upon returning to his solitary chambers, their dullness seemed unusually oppressive. "If I could get a woman to care a jot about me," he mused, "I'd marry. I'd risk it, but the preparatory step is to fall in love, I suppose. Other fellows do it easily enough, but I've never seen a woman whom I could fall in love with. It entails complications, of course. Look at poor Dick! I'm afraid I'm no nearer clearing up the mystery that has ruined his chances, than I was at first." And possibly from habit he

took out the piece of rag and carefully compiled statement of the case of Squire Gifford's murder. "I've read of supernaturally gifted beings who could discover any crime," he murmured, "but clearly I'm not one of them. I've failed as completely as the detectives have failed in clearing up this mystery, and I may as well recognise the fact."

It was habit that made him linger at a stall, whereon was displayed some second hand clothing, in passing through Clare Market, a few days later. It was a near cut to the Strand, where he had an appointment, and the stall had caught his notice.

"Lovely Clo!" exclaimed a hooked-nose Israelite who came after the manner of an exceedingly dusty spider, from a den behind the stall, as Sylvester began turning over the old clothes. "Most loveliest stock in the market, sir. You want some? They sheep, and better as if they was new."

Sylvester made him no answer, being too busy in examining something that was on the stall. Once upon a time this coat that was in his hand had been a fashionable garment, and had belonged to a well-dressed man, for its linings were of silk and its texture was fine. At the corner of the skirt a piece of cloth had been neatly inserted, where a rent had been, and if the Israelite had asked a hundred pounds for the garment, Sylvester would have paid it.

"Ah!" said the dealer, with an unctuous smack of his thick lips. "That a beautiful coat, sir. Made by the Prince of Vales' own tailor. It fit you better as if it was made for you."

"How much?" asked Sylvester, and he was so hasty in the question, that the Israelite immediately added fifty per cent. to the price he had originally set on the coat.

"That coat worth a pound," he answered, as if regretting selling it. "All silk here," and he gave it an artistic flourish. "Yes, worth a pound of anybody's money."

"How much do you want for it?" repeated Sylvester.

"I take eighteen and six, and not you penny less," was the reply, and Sylvester threw down a sovereign. So eager was he that he did not wait for the coat to be made into a parcel, but walked off with his prize over his arm, leaving the dealer staring after him, resisting the temptation to call his customer back for his eighteen pence.

Hugging his capture as though it might be lost otherwise, Sylvester made for his chambers, the purpose of his going into the Strand quite forgotten, and arriving home he spread the coat on the table. Yes, there was no mistake; the piece of frayed cloth fitted the place from which it had been torn, thread for thread. The colour and material were the same as the fragment, the two cloths matching exactly; and satisfied that he had found the coat at last which had been worn by the man who had escaped from the dining-room of Whyteless Manor on the night of Squire Gifford's murder, he made a further examination that if possible he might discover a trace of its former owner.

Inch by inch he went over the coat, finding nothing that was likely to lead to any discovery of importance; turning the satin-lined sleeves inside out, and searching the pockets. Nothing. And then, under the lining at the back where the tails divided, something caught his notice. Something white, a piece of material on which was printed the name of a firm of West End tailors, and beneath this another written in a clerky hand, at sight of which Sylvester started in amazement. For the name was "Samuel Morder, Esq."

CHAPTER XV.

The interview with Madame Duval had for the most part been of such a satisfactory nature, that after a little consideration Mudge decided to accept the situation. Madame was peculiar in trifling matters but Mudge was broad-minded enough to laugh at

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