

SHERLOCK HOLMES

IN REAL LIFE

By a Barrister and ex-Official of New Scotland Yard.

SHERLOCK HOLMES is, beyond doubt, as M. Poincaré has described him, "a very wonderful fellow"; but it is questionable whether he could give many points away to the detective of flesh and blood, who has little, if any, of his glamour and fame.

Where in fiction can you find crimes unravelled from more unpromising clues than serve their purpose so effectually in real life? The scratch of a nail on a country road; minute particles of bran found in the seam of a boot-sole; the dirt collected under a man's nails; the mark left by a gloved hand; the dust beaten from a coat; a ring of candle-grease; a partly-eaten apple; a fragment of a button—these and hundreds of clues equally microscopic have been sufficient to bring criminals to justice.

When, some years ago, M. Martin, Receiver of Taxes at Bilguy, was shot through the heart, part of the paper wadding with which the charge had been rammed down was found in the wound, and on it were a few scarcely legible words, used only in glass manufacture. This little bit of blackened and blood-stained paper was quite sufficient for the French police, who, with infinite labour and skill, tracked down the murderer—the son-in-law of the proprietor of a glass-factory who had supplied the glass of which the fragment of wadding was part of the invoice.

In another case a reveller in the garden of a Paris restaurant had a quarrel with a dragoon, who split his skull with a stroke of his sabre. The sabres of all the dragoons who had been out of barracks that day were collected and sent to the Sûreté for microscopic examination. None of them bore a trace of blood; but in the cutting edge of one an almost invisible particle of a blade of grass was observed in an almost invisible notch.

This was sufficient. The soldier to whom the sabre belonged was arrested and questioned, and finally admitted his guilt. He had cleaned the blade in the moist grass in the garden, and wiped it with a cloth; the cloth had left in the notch that minute fragment of grass which sufficed to bring the guilty man to his punishment.

In a recent big jewel robbery in a Casino hotel there appeared to be no smallest clue to the thief until the keen eyes of a detective observed, on the green-plush-covered seat of a chair in the room from which the jewels had been stolen, faint white marks which, after long examination and speculation, suggested to him the figures 39 revealed the solution. How could they have come there? The solution came to his clever brain in a flash. The chair had been used by the thief to reach the top of the wardrobe on which the jewel-case had been placed; and the number had been chalked on the soles of his boots, as is the custom at most hotels where visitors leave out their boots at night and are cleaned. He thus had little doubt that the wanted man had occupied room No. 39 in the hotel. And so it proved; for, though the bird had flown, he was caught and the missing jewels were found on him.

But such cases of the solution of mysteries from the slenderest of clues can be multiplied almost indefinitely. A detective following them up exhibits a skill and pertinacity no more wonderful than his prototype of fiction.

ONE day a gruesome discovery was made in the courtyard of a cheap restaurant and lodging-house in the Rue de la Harpe, Paris. In a deep well were found two parcels—one, a human leg wrapped in a cloth; the other, of black glazed paper, containing another leg encased in

stocking, on which was a mark consisting of a capital B with a cross on each side of it, thus—+ B +.

It was clear that a crime of a peculiarly horrible character had been committed; and its elucidation was entrusted to M. Gustave Macé, a young Commissary of Police, who threw himself heart and soul into the unravelling of this terrible mystery.

He quickly satisfied himself that the glazed calico cover, the peculiarly knotted ends, and the black cotton stitching were the handiwork of a man-tailor; and that the parcels must have been thrown down the well by someone who had occupied or visited the house to which the courtyard was attached. And he set to work to discover a man who satisfied both these conditions.

From the concierge he learnt that among the lodgers who had left the house was a pretty seamstress, Mlle. Dard. She was occasionally visited by a young man called Pierre, who brought white waistcoats for her to make up, and made himself useful by carrying water from the well for Mademoiselle's use. M. Macé's next step was to interview Mlle. Dard, whose address the concierge gave him; and from her he learned that the water-carrier was a Monsieur Voirbo, who "never worked much, yet seemed to have plenty of money, played cards, drank, and frequented *cafés*." He had one particular friend, whom he called Père Desiré, and whose aunt, a Mme. Bodasse, lived in the Rue des Nesles.

When M. Macé next interviewed Mme. Bodasse, she informed him that she had a nephew, Desiré Bodasse, whom she had not seen for two months. He had saved money, and was "eccentric and mean." And on accompanying M. Macé to the Mortuary she identified the stocking with the mysterious marks as his. There seemed now no doubt that the murdered man was Desiré; and with his aunt, M. Macé next paid a visit to his room in the Rue Dauphine, only to find, as he expected, that he was not there. On entering the room, the door of which he forced, the detective found that the

bed had not been slept in; the dust lay thickly on the furniture; and Bodasse's strong-box had been broken open, and a pocket-book containing securities, which he was known to keep in it, abstracted.

M. Macé now proceeded to track Voirbo, the suspected murderer, who, he learnt, had left his rooms in the Rue Mazarin and was now living in the Rue Lamartine; but on his arrival at that address he found that his man had disappeared. He learned, however, from the concierge that Voirbo was a man of extravagant and dissipated habits who had been heard to say that he hated Bodasse for refusing him a loan of ten thousand francs.

A still more important discovery he made—that Voirbo had tendered in payment of his rent a five-hundred-franc share of Italian stock which had formed part of Bodasse's missing securities.

M. Macé now considered the evidence sufficient to justify Voirbo's arrest, and at last he found himself face to face with the man who, he had no doubt, was Bodasse's murderer. An examination of his pockets revealed a passage-ticket which showed that Voirbo was on the point of flight over the seas when arrested; and in

his room were found a hank of cord similar to that with which the parcels containing the remains had been tied; a butcher's cleaver, such as might have been used in the dismemberment; and, concealed in a cask, a tin cylinder containing Bodasse's missing securities.

It now only remained to prove the dismemberment, and Voirbo's actual handiwork in it; and for this purpose the prisoner



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was conducted to his old room in the Rue Mazarin—now occupied by a young married couple—where he was placed on a chair between two policemen. So far from showing any anxiety, he prepared to watch the proceedings with a smile of amused unconcern on his face.

On first entering the room, M. Macé had at once noticed a certain peculiarity. The tiled floor sloped downwards from the window to the bed in the recess. He had also realized, from the quantity and position of the furniture in Voirbo's time, that the only part of the room in which there was space to move freely was around the circular table. He concluded, therefore, that, if the murder had been committed there, it must have been near that table; and, further, that probably the dismemberment had been performed upon it.

Then, taking up a jug full of water, he said aloud:—

"I notice a slope on the floor. Now if a body was cut up on this table, the effusion of blood would have been very great, and the fluid must have followed this slope. Any other fluid thrown down here must follow the same direction. I will empty this jug upon the table, and we will see what happens."

At these words there was an immediate change in Voirbo's demeanour. Terror seized him, his face grew ashy pale, and his staring eyes were fixed upon the water-jug.

The water flowed from the table on to the floor, straight towards the bed, and collected beneath it in two great pools. The exact spot thus indicated was carefully sponged dry, and a mason was fetched to take up the tiles of the floor.

A quantity of dark stuff, presumably dried blood, was found below. The inference was obvious; the blood had flowed from the body and run through the interstices of the tiles, thus evading the washing of the floor, and proving the incompleteness of Voirbo's precautions. Later, the whole of the tiles and the saturated mortar were submitted to analytical test, and were beyond doubt proved to contain human blood.

This terrible discovery, effected in his own presence, so affected Voirbo that there and then he made full confession of the crime.

THAT the provincial detective of England need not fear comparison with his brother of New Scotland Yard has been proved again and again, as in the following case.

A few years ago a man, arrested at Liverpool on a charge of giving a false name and address to a pawnbroker when attempting to pledge a "diamond-set" locket and a gold chain, was suspected of being a systematic

swindler, who was reaping a rich harvest by passing off jargoons (stones which have the brilliance of diamonds) as diamonds of many times their value; and the task of following the case up was given to a local detective who had won some reputation for skill.

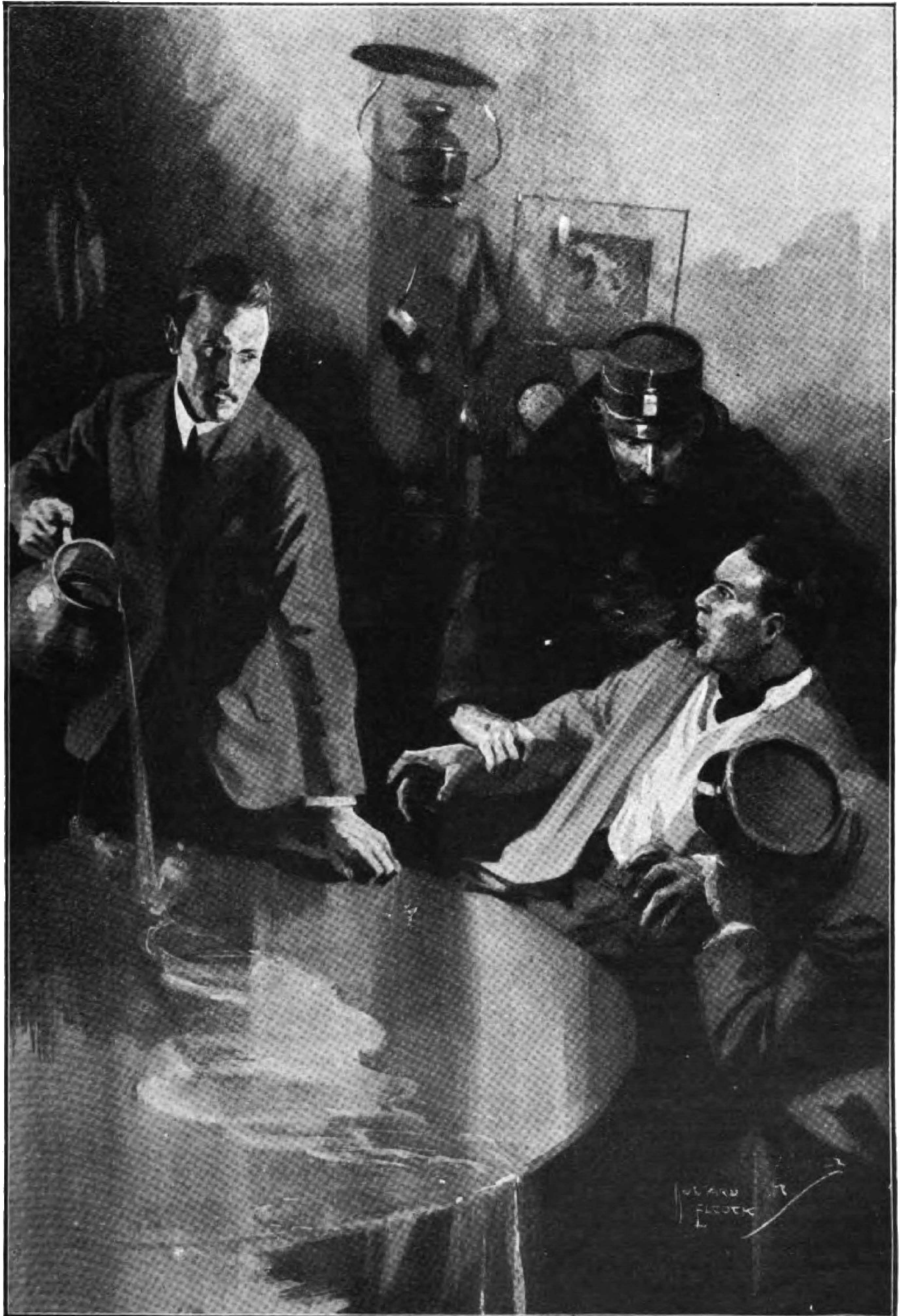
His first step was to interview every pawnbroker in the city, and from at least a dozen of them he learnt that a stranger man had recently pawned with them jewelled locket and an eighteen-carat chain in each case under a different name and address; but in no case had he described the stone as a diamond. At last, however, he discovered a pawnbroker who had advanced twelve pounds on a similar pledge and who held a contract-form signed by the pledger in which the articles were described "a single-stone diamond locket and eighteen-carat gold guard." Here was the evidence the detective was seeking; and on the strength of it the prisoner, after being identified by the pawnbroker, was formally charged with fraud and remanded for further inquiries.

The detective's next step was to visit the prisoner's lodgings; and there he found a bunch of keys, all of which, with the exception, fitted one or other of the doors or trunks in the room. If he could only discover the lock for this mysterious key, he felt sure he would make a valuable discovery. It seemed clear that somewhere in Liverpool the prisoner had a hidden store of the fraudulent lockets of which he had already disposed of so many, and this store he now set himself to find.

He visited every left-luggage office at every railway-station in Liverpool and Birkenhead; but nowhere could he find a bag or box left by anyone answering the prisoner's description. He was almost reduced to despair when one day, on his way from Birkenhead, his eyes chanced to fall on the Safe Deposit building in Exchange Street East, and at the sight of it the idea flashed into his mind that there might be the very place he sought.

After procuring a search-warrant he entered the building, and, producing the warrant, asked the manager: "Does this key fit to any of your boxes?" The manager, in view of the warrant, gave him the assistance; and before an hour had passed the required box was found and opened by means of the key, when it revealed a large number of lockets set with jargoons—the facsimiles of those palmed off by a dozen or more of Liverpool pawnbrokers—several second-hand gold chains and a number of jewellers' tools.

Thus after months of patient and almost heart-breaking labour, with untiring skill and pertinacity, the scou-



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guilt was conclusively brought home to him. He had clearly come to Liverpool with a large stock of fraudulent "diamond" lockets, which he systematically set to work to pawn for much more than their value at the rate of five or six a day. It was proved, moreover, that each visit to a pawnbroker was preceded by one to the Safe Deposit building, from which he had taken another locket and chain.

ON July 20th, 1889, the Paris police were informed of the disappearance of M. Gouffé, a well-to-do bailiff, who lived in the Rue Rougemont; and a fortnight later his body was discovered, in an advanced state of decomposition, by a road-mender, in a thicket by the roadside about ten miles from Lyons. Two days later, near the same spot, were found the fragments of a trunk, the key to which had been picked up near the body.

The Lyons police scouted the idea that the remains were those of the missing bailiff, for the dead man's hair was black, while Gouffé's was auburn; but M. Goron, the head of the Paris detective force, who himself took the case in hand, soon proved, by immersing a lock of the hair in water, that the hair was really auburn. Further evidences—an injury to the right ankle, the absence of a particular tooth, and other peculiarities—established beyond doubt that the remains were those of Gouffé.

Four months elapsed from the bailiff's disappearance without yielding the least clue to his murderer, when M. Goron accidentally learned that another man and his mistress had disappeared at the same time—Michel Eyraud and Gabrielle Bompard, persons of questionable character, who, he suspected, might well have had some connection with the tragedy.

This suspicion was confirmed a few weeks later, after the fragments of the trunk had been skilfully put together and exhibited in the Morgue at Paris, and a reward of five hundred francs had been advertised for its identification. M. Goron received a letter from a London boarding-house keeper informing him that in July two of his lodgers, one of whom he only knew as "Gabrielle," had left for France, taking with them a large trunk, identical with that at the Morgue. And, as the result of inquiries in London, an assistant at a trunk-shop in Gower Street recognized the trunk as one purchased on July 12th by a man strongly resembling the description of Eyraud. It now remained to discover the man, Eyraud, who had purchased the trunk.

Several weeks, however, passed in vain search for the fugitives, when one day, to M. Goron's amazement, Gabrielle Bompard

walked into the Préfecture and, calmly seating herself on the Prefect's desk, unfolded the following story. Towards the end of the previous July she had been living in the Rue Tronsor-Ducoudray with M. Eyraud. At his instigation she had lured Gouffé to their rooms with intent to rob him. While she was sitting on his knee she had playfully slipped a noose round his neck; Eyraud, who was concealed behind a curtain, had pulled the cord, which ran over a pulley in the ceiling and was attached to the noose, and had strangled the bailiff. They had put the body in the trunk, bought for the purpose in London, and the following day had hidden it in the thicket where it was found. Then they had gone to America, where Eyraud had deserted her. Her part in the murder, she declared, was taken only under the irresistible compulsion of "that serpent Eyraud," who had alone planned and executed the crime.

In spite of her plausible story Gabrielle was promptly lodged in jail, and it remained only to find the principal part in the crime; and a merry dance he danced before the detectives before he was at last run to earth. Week after week they followed his trail through Canada and the States, the trail marked by acts of thieving and swindling. From New York to San Francisco to Mexico they followed him; and it was not until May 20th, 1890, that he was caught at Havana, on information supplied by one of his old *employés*, who had recognized in the ragged, unkempt wanderer the once prosperous distiller of Séville. After a highly-sensational trial both were found guilty; Eyraud was sentenced to death, and his accomplice to twenty years' penal servitude.

LATE one December night a police-constable named Cole was found lying dead in Ashwin Street, Dalston, presumably shot by a burglar who had attempted to enter a Baptist chapel in that street. His murderer the only traces discovered were a black wide-awake hat, a couple of chisels, and a bullet extracted from the dead man's brain. The only evidence of identity was that of two policemen who had seen a man in a similar hat in the neighborhood of Dalston Lane; and of a young woman who had witnessed the affray and had rushed off to summon help. The only clue, in fact, to the assassin of any value was the word "rock," which a microscopic examination revealed, scratched on the blade of one of the chisels. And with this slender clue Inspector Glasse set to work to solve one of the most puzzling problems of crime.

The letters "rock" had most prof

been scratched on the chisel as a mark of identification by some man who had sharpened it; and the Inspector proceeded to make inquiries of every tool-manufacturer and setter and every employer of cabinet-makers in and around Dalston. For a whole year he vainly prosecuted his search far and wide, until at last his patience was rewarded. An old woman in the East of London remembered that the chisel had been brought to her late husband to be sharpened; and she herself had scratched the letters on it. Its owner was a man named Orrock, a young carpenter.

An organized search for Orrock, who was known in Dalston, was now set on foot, and he was at last run to earth in Coldbath Fields prison, where he was serving a twelve months' sentence for burglary.

Once caught, there was little difficulty in placing the noose round his neck. He was identified by the policemen who had seen him near Dalston Lane on the evening of the crime; two of his "pals" who had been in his company the same evening gave evidence against him; the man from whom he had bought the revolver recognized the bullets; and his sister declared that on the night of the murder he came home hatless and with his trousers badly torn. And, finally, a further examination of the chisel under a more powerful microscope revealed a very faint capital O and another "r," thus completing the name "Orrock."

IN 1885 an old man, in the Department of Savoy, was found lying dead on his back in his bed, his head pierced by a bullet; his pillow was covered with blood, the bed-clothes pulled up to his chin; and on the outside of the coverlet, half-way down, lay a small crucifix. On pulling down the bed-clothes it was found that an old blood-stained blue blouse covered the man's chest; his arms were stretched out along each side of the body, and in the right hand was clasped a revolver, held so tightly that it required no little force to release it. The bed was perfectly tidy; there was no evidence of any struggle.

The matter was investigated and the conclusion arrived at was that the man had committed suicide—that he had fired the fatal shot when sitting up in bed and had then fallen back on the pillow—dead.

Several years later, however, suspicion was drawn to a ne'er-do-weel son of the dead man, and the affair was re-opened, under the direction of a Dr. Lacassagne, an amateur detective of considerable skill, who set to work to prove that it was a case, not of suicide, but of murder. As the result

of experiments in various hospitals and at the Morgue he was able to prove that, if a pistol is placed in the hand of a recently-dead man, when rigidity comes on the weapon is held so firmly that it can only be removed by force, precisely as in the case of a suicide.

From the fact that there was no trace of singeing on the hair, or scorching of the face, it was obvious that the shot could not have been fired close to the head, as would be the case with a suicide. The fact, too, that the man's eyes were found closed negated the theory of suicide; for Dr. Lacassagne was able to prove from abundant evidence that, in cases of sudden and violent death, the eyes are either wide open or only partly closed. Thus the closing must have been done after death.

Moreover, as he pointed out, it would have been impossible for a man who died instantaneously, as in this case, to slip his arms under the blankets when quite dead, pull up the clothes to his chin, and place the crucifix outside the coverlet. It was thus clear that the man must have been murdered, his eyes closed, and his body and the bed arranged after death by someone else, probably his murderer. So conclusive was this evidence that, supplemented by other evidence which pointed to the son's guilt, a verdict of murder was given against him, which led to the full confession of his crime.

THAT civilized man has no monopoly of detective skill is proved by many a feat, bordering on the miraculous, with which the Australian aborigines are credited. The Australian native indeed is a born detective, with a keener scent than that of a bloodhound, a microscopic sight that can detect clues invisible to any other human eyes, and a sense of smell positively uncanny in its sensitiveness. So amazing are his feats that they seem almost incredible, as the following story—one among many equally astonishing—proves.

Some years ago a Victorian squatter disappeared on his way to Melbourne with a large sum of money, and there seemed to be no clue whatever to his fate. All that was known was that his horse had returned to the station without its rider, saddle, or bridle. All else was profound mystery. The Victorian police vainly wrestled with the problem until, in despair, they enlisted the service of a native employed on the station, with results that soon amazed them.

Starting from the missing man's house, the black walked with eyes downcast, and occasionally stooping to smell the ground,

for several miles until he came to a remote shepherd's hut, where he halted. Pointing to the earth at his feet, he said to the police who accompanied him: "Two white mans walk here." His companions closely examined the hard-baked ground, but could detect no smallest trace of a foot-mark.

Proceeding a few paces, the native exclaimed: "Fight here! Two mans have big fight! And here," he continued, walking a few paces farther, "here kill—kill!"; On examining the spot indicated the police found that the earth had been disturbed; and beneath it they found a quantity of clotted blood.

It certainly looked as if murder might have been committed there. But, if so, what had become of the victim's body and of his slayer? This problem the black man set himself to solve. With bent head he resumed his walk with unfaltering steps towards the almost dried-up bed of a stream a mile or so distant, guided by foot-marks imperceptible to the others. For a few miles he proceeded up the bed of the stream, pausing at intervals at small pools in which the water had collected, until he came to a large pool on which a dark scum was floating. Here he halted, skimmed some of the scum into his hand, smelt it, tasted it, and said with conviction: "White man here!"

Grappling irons were produced, the pond was dragged, and from its dark depths was brought up a sack, weighted with stones, and containing the mutilated remains of the murdered squatter.

Suspicion naturally fell on the two shepherds who occupied the hut, which had in all probability been the scene of the crime, both men of bad character—one a ticket-of-leave convict, the other a deserter from the English Army. A thorough examination of the hut was made; in the out-houses were found a coat, a waistcoat, and two pairs of trousers, bearing dark stains like those of blood. And on the strength of this discovery the two men were placed under arrest and taken to Melbourne.

The police next set to work to discover the missing saddle-bags, which had no doubt held the squatter's money; and again they started the black fellow on the trail. This time he set out in a different direction, following by sight and smell the footsteps of the two men, though again not a trace of them was visible to the eyes of his companions. With unerring steps he proceeded mile after mile until he came to a gully, in which was a mound of stones.

Smell leather," he exclaimed, "here"—pointing to the pile. The stones were

removed; and, sure enough, the saddle-bag was revealed; and in it was found the squatter's gold to the value of over two thousand pounds. The bag had doubtless been buried by the assassins under the heap of stones for removal later, when it was considered safe.

The evidence, thanks to the uncanny cleverness of the native tracker, was now complete. The two shepherds were brought to trial, and received the sentence of death they so well deserved.

WHAT detective of fiction, we wonder, has performed a feat as wonderful as this? A short time ago the body of a woman was found on the top of a mountain near Haverstraw, in New York State. It had been lying there so long that little more than the skeleton remained; and there was not the slightest clue to the identity of the woman.

The cleverest detectives in the States had to confess that they were completely baffled, and the crime was about to be added to the long list of mysteries that defy solution, when Mr. Grant Williams, a retired officer of the New York City Police, who had made a life-long study of anthropology and the allied sciences, offered his assistance, with results little short of miraculous.

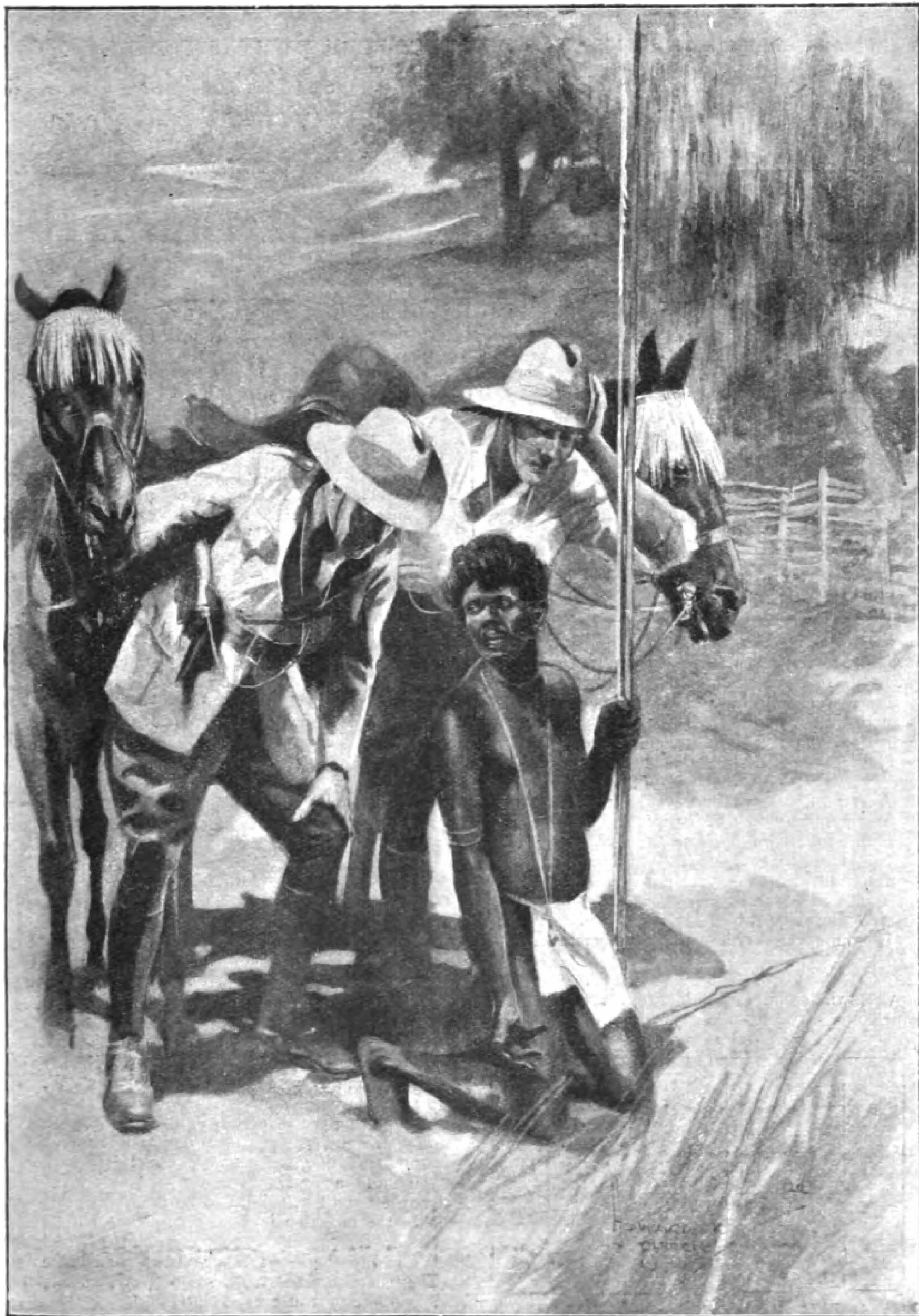
Within half an hour of seeing the remains, we are told, he informed the police that the skeleton was that of a girl of mixed Polish-Irish ancestry. He added that she had a violent temper and was probably mentally defective.

Then Williams took the dead girl's skull; and, with a quantity of plasticene, using the contours of the face as a guide, he proceeded to remodel her features. He constructed dummy shoulders and round them draped a blouse found near the body. On the top of the skull he arranged a quantity of hair of a colour corresponding to that on the portion of the scalp remaining on the head, and arranged it as it appeared to him to have been dressed in life.

The police then sent for officials of a neighbouring institution for mentally defective women, without telling them for what reason their presence was required.

To the amazement of the detectives, who had scoffed at Williams and his methods, they recognized the face at once. It was that of Lilian White, an inmate of the home, who had disappeared into the mountains some months before with a wild creature known as "the cave man."

The relatives of Lilian White were summoned, and the resemblance proved to be so startling that one sister of the dead girl collapsed in hysterics.



The native exclaimed: " Fight here! Two mans have big fight! And here," he continued, walking a few paces farther, "here kill—kill!"