THE MAN WITH THE MASTER MIND

Being the Chronicles of Carlton Clarke, Telepatho-Deductive Solver of Criminal Mysteries.

BY FRANK LOVELL NELSON.

The Soul of the Blue Bokhara

"THEN you hold that every crime admits of solution by purely psychological processes?"

The speaker was Collins, friend of my youth and well entitled, I believe, to his reputation as the best police reporter in New York.

"No," continued Carlton Clarke to the little company of newspaper men who had foregathered with us at the old Martin's after the theater; "not every crime, but the immense majority. My argument is that every act of man when he transcends the normal leaves its own distinctive psychological impress that distinguishes one crime from all other crimes. When these theories, now in infancy, are better understood and applied, the detection of crime will link with the study of material clews the tracing of the psychological processes of the subjective mind that have led up to the felonious act."

"That already is done in the analysis of motives," returned Collins.

"Doubtless, but what does your police department detective know of the science of the mind?"

"Not much, I'll admit; anyway, I should like to see some of your theories put to the test. I imagine we should fall back on the police in the end," replied Collins as the party broke up.

Why Clarke and I had made a sudden trip from Chicago to New York I could not fathom. It was Clarke's doing. Business, he said, but beyond the dispatch of several mysterious telegrams I had failed to note anything but pleasure. However, we were installed in one of Washington square's best boarding-houses, where Clarke was among old friends and the quiet and freedom of which we both preferred to a hotel room.

"I rather think you stumped them with your theories, Clarke," I remarked as we walked up Fifth avenue. "I wish we might have drawn you out further."

"I thought the psychological was all they would assimilate without positive violence. It wasn't worth while to hint to their materialistic newspaper minds the limitless possibilities of the psychic. Your friend Collins was particularly combative."

"I wish mightily something would turn up while we are here to convince him," I replied.

As if in answer to my wish the clang of a patrol wagon rang out on the crisp night air. We were just under Washington arch when the galloping horses turned into the square of Fourth street. As we crossed the street they drew up to the curb in front of a brown-stone mansion. Out leaped a police officer followed by six of his men.

"Come on, Sexton and Mr. Clarke," cried Collins. "Big case. Murder. Colonel James Watson Drexlau, retired. Beastly rich, belongs to all the tip-top clubs. Double-column head on the first page. Call came just as I hit Mulberry street. Beat the rest of the gang full 20 minutes. All right, Inspector Clancy; friends of mine."

"The inspector and I have worked together before," quickly remarked Clarke.

"Well, if it isn't Dr. Clarke! Yes, I'll never forget that tip you gave me on the Ranthan case ten years ago. I was a captain then, and it won my promotion."

By this time we were up the winding stoop and at the carved walnut door where we were admitted by an aged, white-faced butler. The inspector left his men at the door and we entered a magnificent drawing-room. At its rear, just in front of a white pilastered archway leading to a library, lay a tall man with white hair and whiskers. He was in evening dress and across the broad, white expanse of shirt bosom swept a crimson stain like the ribbon of the Legion of Honor.

Over the prostrate figure, his ear to the stethoscope, bent a physician. At his head, her hand smoothing the white locks upon the fast chilling brow, crouched a woman clad in a house gown of pale blue. She was young, black-haired and beautiful, but seemed crushed by the knowledge of the blow that must fall with the doctor's reluctant decision.

Terror-stricken maids and men servants were running aimlessly about. The butler, who followed us in, stood silent and helpless. In the dark recess of the library a bowed figure sat with his head in his hands.

"I can do nothing. He has been dead for some minutes," said the physician, rising. The girl gave a wild shriek and fell limply to the floor.

"Miss Drexlau must be carried to her room," he commanded. "She has only fainted, but she must be guarded against the shock of awakening."

"I'll carry her," said a firm, resonant voice. The bowed figure emerged from the darkness of the library; a cleanly built, tall young man in evening dress, who picked up the girl as gently and easily as if she were a child. Calling to a sobbing maid and followed by the doctor, he bore his burden out and up the broad stairway. We stood respectfully aside and let the little procession pass.

Then Clancy made a great show of energy.

"Knife wound. He couldn't have lived many minutes. No weapon visible. Here, butler, where's the 'phone?"

Getting the coroner's office on the wire he asked for a deputy at once, and then proceeded to extract what information he could from the frightened butler, the only member of the household who seemed to have retained a semblance of composure.

"Your name?" he demanded, when we had retired to the library away from the grim, prostrate figure in the drawing-room.

"Thomas Fogarty, sir."

"Now, Fogarty, tell us what you know of this business."

"Well, that's not much, sir; but about midnight I let in Miss Katherine and Mr. Harcamp."

"Full name?"

"Mr. Ranleigh Harcamp. They went into the drawing-room, and presently Dr. Drexlau came out of the library. 'You go on to bed, Fogarty,' says Mr. Drexlau to me. I stopped a bit in the hall to wind the clock, and then went to my room, which is at the top of the house, back. I didn't go to bed right away, having a good book to read. Quite a bit afterwards I thought I heard the ffont door, and I wondered if it was Mr. Harcamp leaving. But I might have been mistaken, as it's a long way to my room.

"Then along after another spell I hears a noise like somebody falling. I rushes right down, and there was Mr. Drexlau laying right where he is now, and Mr. Harcamp bending over him.

"'Get a doctor, quick,' says Mr. Harcamp, 'and don't wake Miss Drexlau. Mr. Drexlau has been stabbed.'

"As quick as I could get my senses back I went to the telephone. Then I thought it looked more like a case for the police than the doctor, and seeing I couldn't do nothing for Mr. Drexlau, I called up the station. Mr. Harcamp gave me particular fits when I told him what I'd done.

"The doctor came first and Mr Drexlau was still alive. He roused up once and spoke to me while I was holding his head. Then Miss Katherine found out something was wrong and came down. Then you came."

"You say Mr. Drexlau spoke. What did he say?" eagerly queried the inspector.

"He just says 'the Blue Bokhara'; that was all."

"But what on earth is the 'Blue Bokhara?'"

"It's a rug, sir. Mr. Drexlau was a regular crank on Oriental rugs. That's a Feraghan you're standing on. That big one in the drawing-room's a Kermanshah; that long one's a Tabriz, and the little ones around the walls are Persian silks. There's a lot more I don't know the names of. I thought Mr. Drexlau was flighty talking about the 'Blue Bokhara' till I looked about and saw it gone. I guess one of the maids must have taken it out to dust and forgot to put it back."

"Well, never mind all that. You're probably right. It's not robbery, anyway, or they'd have taken more than just a rug. Now look here, Fogarty, who's this man Harcamp?"

"Why he's the one that carried Miss Katharine out. He's one of her friends and lives somewhere up on the avenue. Lots of money, I hear.

"And he and Mr. Drexlau were not on very good terms, I guess?"

"Well, Inspector, I don't like to say anything to make trouble, but just as I left the hall after winding the clock I thought Mr. Drexlau and Mr. Harcamp were having some words, and Miss Katherine was crying."

"That will do, Fogarty. I've no doubt you've said too much already," said a voice from the hallway, and Ranleigh Harcamp stood before us. Even Clancy, the hero of many a third degree, was taken aback.

"So you were discussing myself and Miss Drexlau," continued Harcamp, coldly. "I suppose you are only doing your duty, but you will kindly keep her name out of this case. It will do no possible good."

The door bell rang. It was the Coroner's deputy, accompanied by a horde of reporters. These latter overran the drawing-room and library seeking to make up in energy the time they had lost. Collins had already scored a clean scoop by telephone in his regular city edition, leaving nothing to his rivals but the "morning glories," so he suggested that we escape to the conservatory.

"Why doesn't your friend Clarke do something?" he said to me when we were out of the confusion. "He hasn't said a word and I'm beginning to think all this talk of his wonderful power of solving mysteries is a Chicago brand of hot air."

"Just wait," I returned. "He will give you a good story yet. I have no doubt he has already found out more than your inspector of police. Here he comes now.

"What do you make of it, Clarke?" I asked, as he joined us. "Mr. Collins is disappointed that you haven't already pointed out the murderer and turned him over to Clancy."

"Well, the case is as plain as day up to a certain point, and then one little thing comes in and upsets it altogether. Let's see what the inspector makes of it first. Ah, here he is now. Bad business, Inspector, but I suppose you begin to see through it by this time. Our Chicago police could learn a few lessons here."

"O, there's nothing to it," returned Clancy, pompously. "It's as plain as the nose on your face. This chap Harcamp can clear it all up if he wants to. He either did it himself or knows who did, and is shielding somebody. There's hardly evidence to arrest him, but he'll not get out of the sight of my men. I don't like dealing with these howling swells. You can't just throw them in and put them through in a workmanlike manner like you ought to. But I expect to corner him and run his head in a trap, and maybe a noose."

"Oh, you do," said Harcamp, icily, looming up suddenly in the avenue of palms. "You see through it all. Your perception is wonderful. Here is my card, Inspector. You know where to find me when you want me."

"I've a good mind to lock you up now, sir," roared Clancy, reddening. "But I guess you're right. I'll find you."

It was now far into the morning, and dawn would soon be streaming in through the windows. The deputy coroner had departed, having ordered Mr. Drexlau's body removed to his bedchamber. The doctor had left some time before, saying Miss Drexlau was sleeping peacefully, oblivious to her loss under the influence of an opiate. The reporters had hurried off to catch recurring extras, leaving only a few "dog watch" and bureau men. The frightened servants had been dismissed, and Fogarty was watching beside his stricken master.

We had adjourned to the great drawing-room away from the sickening sweetness of the conservatory. I studied the quiet magnificence of the room and tried to picture the scene that had been enacted there but a few short hours before. The rug which Mr. Drexlau had stained with his life's blood had been removed and the room set in order. Nothing remained to tell of the great, grim, dark thing that was busying the mind of each.

If only they could tell what they had seen, these works of the nimble, tireless fingers of the East, that perhaps a hundred years before had woven the settings of the tragedy; that Washington over the huge, deep fireplace; that Corot; those superb marines!

"If only they could speak," I phrased, mentally.

"Who knows; perhaps they may," whispered Clarke, reading my unspoken words, as only his marvelous mind could do.

Silence had fallen upon the group. Clancy fidgeted at the enforced inactivity. Finally he arose and stepped to the door to give some instructions to his waiting men. The moment he was gone Clarke leaned across to Harcamp, seated upon the other side of me, and whispered:

"No, I think you are making a mistake, Mr. Harcamp. There is much to this case which you do not suspect."

"Great God, man, what do you know?" said Harcamp, in an agonized whisper, going white to the hair, and the terror of death in his eyes.

"Everything and nothing," returned Clarke, softly.

"O! If I could only see a ray of hope," groaned Harcamp. "Tell me what you know."

"Not now; Clancy is coming back. Come to my rooms at 10 tomorrow. Here is the address. You will be watched. Evade the police, if possible."

Collins had been relieved by two men from his office, and there being nothing else to be done, we left and Harcamp went with us. A crowd of morbid curiosity seekers still lined the sidewalk and as we separated from Harcamp a man edged out of the line and fell into step in his shadow.

"Fly cop," suggested Collins.

It needed no second glance to show that he was right and Clancy was energetic according to his light.

"Well, well, it's Fogarty now," exclaimed Clarke, when after a few hours' sleep we were eagerly scanning the morning extras over a hasty breakfast in our room.

There it was, displayed with all the art of the head writer: "Will Implicates Butler."

The instrument discovered among Drexlau's papers by the energetic Clancy bequeathed $10,000 to Thomas Fogarty, provided that at the date of the testator's death the said Fogarty had served the estator faithfully for the term of 25 years or more. By Fogarty's own admission the limit of time had expired but the week previous.

"Hum," muttered Clarke; "I was sure of it." Then he read: "By close cross-questioning Inspector Clancy wrung from Fogarty the unwilling admission that he had returned to the lower part of the house some time before Mr. Drexlau's body was found. An arrest is hourly expected."

As if in answer to Clarke's voice the raucous cry of a newsboy in the street was heard.

"Wuxtry, Wuxtry. Arrest in big murder case."

Clarke hailed him from the windown. "Yes, it's the butler," he said, as he spread the damp sheet out before us.

"Surely the police have no case against him."

"Stronger than you think. Even Clancy does not realize how strong it is. So strong that I believe if it were not for two things they could hang him."

"Then what two things are to prevent them?"

"First, the opening of the door heard by Fogarty."

"But you can count that as a weak story."

"No, it is borne out by other evidence."

"And second?"

"Second, the disappearance of the blue Bokhara."

"But the maid may have removed it."

"And do you think that Drexlau, in the face of death, was thinking of a petty household matter? No, his words had a deeper meaning, a meaning we have got to discover. I have learned something, but I haven't the master key yet. While you and Collins were in the conservatory I made a tour of the house. I also had a talk with Fogarty and discovered much that he hasn't told the inspector. He did come down again. He was eavesdropping in the hall. Miss Drexlau had gone to her room and Mr. Harcamp was in the billiard room. I was in there and found his tracks as plain as a printed page. Mr. Drexlau then discovered Fogarty, upbraided him, and doubtless threatened to discharge him. His temper wasn't the sweetest just then. It

"ENOUGH, THAIDA. WAKE."

"And Harcamp is shielding someone. He wouldn't shield Fogarty."

"Don't, Sexton. It's inconceivable. And, besides, it doesn't fit my theories at all."

A knock on the door put an end to our conversation. It was Collins, to whom I had given a quiet tip to stay with us through the case.

Another knock followed almost immediately, and I admitted Ranleigh Harcamp, whose face showed the first smile I had seen him give when he related the ease with which he had eluded Clancy's shadows.

We drew our chairs up to the table from which the maid had removed the breakfast tray and Harcamp's face again saddened as the conversation turned to the one great, topic the tragedy of the night.

"Now, Mr. Harcamp," began Clarke, "I want you to tell us exactly what happened last night."

"I cannot," said Harcamp, between set teeth.

"Then I will have to tell you. Sit down, Mr. Harcamp."

Harcamp had risen with an angry gesture, but he sank into his chair again, fascinated under the battery of Clarke's piercing eyes.

"When you and Miss Drexlau returned from the theater," continued Clarke, "Mr. Drexlau met you and a violent scene occurred. Is that right?"

"Yes; I suppose Fogarty has told you."

"Miss Drexlau, at her father's orders finally went to her room in tears."

"I see by the papers Fogarty was eavesdropping," continued Harcamp.

"Then you and Mr. Drexlau cooled down. He suggested that you go into the billiard room and amuse yourself while he smoked a cigar, and maybe you would both see things in a different light. You became interested in practicing some difficult masse shot and stayed for some time."

"How in the name of heavens do you know all that?"

"Very simple. Balls carefully placed in line along the side rail, tip of cue badly damaged, your fingers covered with chalk. You were just about to attempt the shot after repeated failures when you heard Mr. Drexlau fall. You rushed into the hall and saw fleeing up the stairs—"

Harcamp rose with clenched fists and white face. "Stop; you lie! No man on God's earth knows whom I saw."

"Ha, I thought I was right. You saw Miss Drexlau."

Harcamp groaned and buried his face in his hands. "She didn't do it. She didn't do it. O! why didn't I confess to it and save her?"

Clarke went over and laid a hand on his shoulder. "Now, brace up, Harcamp," he said. "It may not be as bad as you think. There is one thing that may save her."

"The blue Bokhara," answered Clarke.

Just then a messenger arrived with a telegram. It was for Clarke and he tore it open feverishly. As he read his face broke into a smile of triumph.

"At last I can act," he cried. "Quick, Mr. Collins, call a cab. You know the nearest stands. Mr. Harcamp, we will save her."

Collins was soon at the door with a carriage. Clarke gave the driver his directions and we all got in.

"Where are we bound for?" I asked.

"We are in pursuit of the blue Bokhara," was all that Clarke would vouchsafe.

We drew up before a large store in Broadway devoted exclusively to Oriental rugs, and hurried in.

"Did you ever see a blue Bokhara?" asked Clarke of the proprietor.

"Yes," he replied, "but we haven't one. In fact I never saw but one I believed was genuine, and that didn't bring very good luck to the man that bought it, for I hear he's just been murdered."

"Yes, yes, that's the one!" said Clarke, exultantly.

"Did he get it here?"

"No, he didn't. He picked it up from a small dealer, but there was considerable talk about it among rug men, and I went around to see it. I've seen many so-called blue Bokharas, but never one like this. It was the softest shade of blue and of the finest wool mixed with silk. The sheen was perfect."

"Yes, yes," interrupted Clarke, "but can you tell me the name of the shop that sold it?"

"Certainly; it was Agnossi's, on lower Washington street; but he hasn't anything like it. Let me show you some particularly fine Bokhara's I have just imported."

But we were gone on our way to Agnossi's before he recovered from his surprise, I suspect.

Agnossi was a dark-eyed Armenian who kept a small stock. He was proud of having sold the most wonderful rug in New York, proud of having known the murdered man and anxious to tell all about both.

"But while it was in your hands did you repair it?" asked Clarke, interrupting his flow of description.

"Oh, no, gentlemen, it was perfect, perfect. I have been dealing in rugs all my life and—"

"But haven't you even a thread of it; even a strand of wool?"

"Why, no. You ask funny questions. More funny than young man who came here every day I got the rug and ask the price and cry when I tell him I sold it to Mr. Drexlau. And to think of Mr. Drexlau so soon killed! I like to have the pick of his rugs. It make me rich."

"From whom did you get the rug?" broke in Clarke.

The Armenian's eyes kindled with suspicion. "What for you want to know that?" he said.

"We've no time to waste," said Clarke angrily, and he held the native with his eyes while he made some quick passes before his face. The Armenian's eyes rolled and his muscles stiffened in the first stages of hypnosis. Clarke snapped his fingers and Agnossi came out of it with a start and a look of terror.

"Now," said Clarke, "tell me where you got the rug or I'll put the spell on you and leave you that way."

"Oh, I'll tell, I'll tell," said the frightened Oriental. "I had it of Israel Fangbone, in Pell street."

"A well-known fence," said Collins.

"If we find you've been lying I'll come back and look into your head and see everything you've ever done," warned Clarke.

"Oh, gentlemen, I tell the truth; and listen, I did repair it. Fangbone, he cut a little piece out of it, such a little piece. I weave it in and Mr. Drexlau try to match the wool and get some fake ones made."

"A scheme that you doubtless suggested," said Clarke. "Now, haven't you that piece?"

"Oh, no; gentelmen. I gif you my word of honor. Fangbone he have it."

"Then to Pell street," commanded Clarke.

"I'm afraid you'll find Fangbone a tougher proposition than the Armenian," said Collins when we were once more in the cab.

"If he is a strong character his weak point is the more vulnerable," replied Clarke. "When I see him I will know where to attack."

Fangbone in truth was a veritable Fagin. He treated us with twisting, truculent hands, which seemed to itch, and his inky-black beard to bristle at the gain that might be derived from such a presentable set of rounders as he took us to be.

"Somedings I can show you, shentlemens? Some moneys you want, maybe? I haf it."

Clarke made a careful survey of his antagonist. "Yes, Fangbone, it's money. Twenty dollars on this," and Clarke took a diamond ring from his finger and laid it in the moist, outstretched palm.

Fangbone examined it critically, but with greedy eyes. "You haf come by it honestly?" he asked.

"Of course. You'll be safe enough anyway. It's easily worth two hundred and I may never redeem it."

"Not redeem id?" said Fangbone in surprise.

"No, I wouldn't wear it again. It's kisheff. I had it of this man Drexlau who was killed last night, and I just heard he had a blue Bokhara rug that was kisheff and it killed him."

"You say the blue Bokhara is a kisheff? Who dell you dat?"

"Thaida told me."

Clarke whispered it impressively. Fangbone's eyes opened in wonder.

"Thaida dell you? You know Thaida, an' she say dere is kisheff on the blue Bokhara?"

"Yes, Thaida says it was the blue Bokhara that killed Drexlau. She says every thread of it is kisheff, cursed by Adonai and haunted by the 72 spirits of the great Solomon. She says the only way to escape a violent death is to part with the object to the first man you meet. If you can't sell it give it away. We've just come from Thaida."

A look of fear stole over Fangbone's forbidding countenance and his eyes wandered involuntarily toward a drawer back of the counter in front of which we were standing.

"Here dake id, dake id, qvick!" he said, thrusting the ring at Clarke. "I will haf nodding to do vid id. Thaida she know. She is wise in de black magic as in de white. Tahk Gott I find id oudt in time."

"I was a fool to tell you," said Clarke, regretfully. "Oh, well, Thaida wasn't right sure about the ring. It was only the rug she was sure of."

"Failure," said Collins as we returned to the cab which we had left half a block away.

"Success," answered Clarke.

As soon as we were beyond the line of vision from the interior Clarke stopped and accosted a typical Pell-street hobo. "Here, my man," he said, "want to make half a dollar? Well, wander into Fangbone's, take whatever he gives you, bring it to me and you get your money." The hobo hurried off and Clarke's scheme began to dawn upon me. In a few minutes he was back. "Here's wat de sheeny give me. Now, where's the mazuma?"

Clarke handed him the money and in return the man placed in Clarke's hand a square inch of the blue Bokhara.

"Superstition, his ruling passion, and a powerful name in the Ghetto," quietly remarked Clarke. "Now the solution is in our grasp."

We did not inquire whither we were going as we whirled through dark, forbidding streets, but even with my limited knowledge of the metropolis, I knew it was still the Ghetto.

We stopped before one of those old-fashioned New York houses, once the home of fashion and yet to be found in the lower East side. Clarke sent up his card and we were admitted to a drawing-room furnished in a quiet magnificence that contrasted strangely with the squalor and degradation all about.

The silken portieres parted and there stood before us the most beautiful woman it has ever been my lot to see. Her black costume, rather plainly cut, yet fitting like a glove; her raven hair, and her big lustrous black eyes formed a perfect contrast to her marble forehead; her cheeks of olive white, surcharged with the pink of health, and her full red smiling lips, through which showed teeth that seemed to glisten and radiate their whiteness. The nose was pure Grecian, noble, yet delicate. A diamond sunburst, her only jewelry, blazed at the white throat. Lovely women I have seen of many nations, but never loveliness like this.

Clarke started up and took a step toward her. Their eyes met.

"Thaida!"

"Carlton!"

"You had my wires?"

"Not until I got home this morning. I've been away. And you mine?"

"It has brought me and my friends. Let them be your friends, Thaida!"

"They are well recommended," she said as she took the hand of each and heard our names. I believe every man's blood tingled as he touched that queenly hand. I know mine did.

"Thaida, we have need of you," then continued Clarke. "I heard that since me met you have become skilled in psychometry."

"It is true that the 'soul of things' have voices for me unheard by ordinary mortals. The new science of Professor Denton is not unknown to me. Is the affair urgent?"

"It is urgent."

"Then prepare me."

Thaida seated herself and Clarke gazed steadily into her eyes for a few moments. Her muscles became tense, her face pallid and her eyes glassy, and then they closed in what appeared to be the sleep of nature. Clarke took the square of blue Boghara from his pocket and pressed it against her forehead.

"Do you see, Thaida?"

"I see," came the rich, subdued voice.

"What see you?"

"I see a richly appointed drawing-room. Oriental rugs cover the floor. Over the fireplace is a picture of Washington. A white pilastered archway leads into a library and that opens into a conservatory. Three persons are there. One is an old man, one a young man and one a woman, young, slender and black of hair. They seem to be disputing and the old man is greatly excited. At last he points to the door and his daughter—yes, it is his daughter—goes out in tears, with one last supplicating look at the men. There they part, not all in anger, as the father seems to weaken at the sight of his daughter's tears. The young man goes out through the library and the aged man lights a cigar and walks the drawing-room with bowed head, his hands behind his back.

"He halts in his walk and listens. He slips across the room on tiptoe, tears open the portiere at the hall door and drags out a little old man. He is a servant. The master of the house upbraids the cringing menial and then points to the door. The little old man goes out. The tall man resumes his restless walk, blowing rings of smoke and now and then glancing at his watch and from that to the door. He expects some one. At last he stops. He listens. He hears a step. He goes out into the hall to the front door and flings it open. A dark, muffled form enters."

"Mark well this man, Thaida. What is he like?"

"He is dark, very dark. He is emaciated. His face is drawn with suffering. His clothes are in rags, yet his bearing is proud and noble. They pass into the drawing-room. The dark man is pleading with clasped hands. The old man laughs scornfully. The dark figure offers him something. It is money. The old man again repulses him and points toward the door. The dark man still pleads with many passionate gestures toward a blue rug of surpassing beauty on the floor. At last the old man advances and raises his hand as if to strike. There is a quick blow and a flash of steel. The old man reels and falls, clutching at his breast. The dark man seizes the rug and is gone into the night."

"Now the rug, Thaida, the rug. Follow it. Trace it back to the making. What see you?"

"I see a little hut in Bokhara beside the Samark and gate. I know the spot well. Within the door a loom is placed and there, day by day, a maiden weaves upon a rug. She is beautiful as the night, and as she weaves a youth watches her and strokes the inky braids of her hair while their eyes speak the tale of love that is old as this old world, yet ever new.

"Day by day the maiden weaves, and as she weaves her fair body wastes by degrees so small that her lover sees not the change. At last the final knot is tied and the weft thrown through the warp for the last time, and with a sign and a look of love the weaver falls into his outstretched arms.

"She has woven her soul into the blue Bokhara.

"The youth wanders, the rug always with him, for it is his bride. He comes to this city. He is in want; he is starving. When near to death he pawns the rug that he may live. Then the change comes. He finds work, he makes money. He tries to redeem the rug, but the man to whom he pawned it is a villian. He has learned the value of the rug and will not give it up for a great price. The youth struggles and saves and denies himself everything until at last he has the sum. At last he is able to buy the rug, only to find that it is sold to—yes, it is the man who was slain. The youth seeks him out and, by the ruse that he has smuggled rugs for sale, gains entrance at midnight."

"Where is he now? Look well, Thaida."

"He is near."

"The street, can you read it?"

"It is Washington street, in the Armenian quarter."

"The number?"

"Two hundred and sixty-eight."

"The name?"

"I cannot tell. Wait, he writes. He signs. 'Kareton Boyajian.' He faints. You must hasten if you see him."

"The floor?"

"It is the garret. I am weary, Carlton; make haste."

"Enough, Thaida. Wake."

The eyes opened and smiled.

"Have I helped?" she asked.

"You have made all clear. But we must act now. Tomorrow I will return and tell you all. And, oh, Thaida, that I may then persuade you to give up this sordid life, this preying upon the ignorance and fear of the Ghetto."

"You see the results—luxury, wealth, all that we longed for in the old days. But come tomorrow."

The first act in the drama was brief. We communicated with the inspector and he met us on the way to the Washington street number in Clarke's possession. This proved to be a rickety tenement. Under the guidance of the inspector, we entered boldly and mounted five dingy flights to the garret. A knock at the one door brought no response and we pushed in as it was unlocked.

There, on a miserable bed of straw, his wasted body wrapped in the blue Bokharra, lay a young Turkoman. By the sickly light of one guttering candle it was plain that we were none too soon, as the finger of death already was upon his forehead.

Clarke stepped to him and gently raising his head poured brandy down his throat. His eyes roved until they lighted upon the uniform and star of the inspector.

"You have come for me," he said weakly. "You are too late. I am going to join my love."

The last words ended in a gurgle and he was dead in Clarke's arms. Starvation and want had done their work.

We laid him gently down on the blue Bokhara. It was dull and lusterless. The glorious sheen was gone. Yet I could have sworn that when I entered I saw it shimmering like satin in the candle light.

"And if any further evidence is needed, Inspector, here it is," said Collins, as he picked from the straw a blood-stained stiletto.

* * *

The blue Bokhara is on our floor now and Clarke thinks that time and use will restore its wonderful luster.

We saw Miss Drexlau once more before leaving New York, when she came with Ranleigh Harcamp to express her thanks to Clarke. She was in deep mourning, but even under her burden of grief radiant with her new found love.

"Had I only been a moment sooner I might have saved him," she told us. "I was ready for bed when I thought of a box of candy I had left in the hall. I threw on a loose house gown and started down after it. On the way down I heard papa fall, but I thought it was a noise in the street. Then I heard Mr. Harcamp coming from the billiard room and I flew back. Do you know, Ranleigh, I thought—but only for a moment—"

She could not summon the courage to say it. I wondered if she would ever know of his terrible, haunting fear.

Clarke went alone that afternoon to make his promised call on Thaida. When he returned he was humming a little tune, a frivolous little tune for Clarke.

"Do you know, old chap," he said "I begin to think this trip to New York will not prove altogether a failure."

"Then it was Thaida that brought us to New York?"

"Yes, Sexton, it was Thaida," and a pang of jealousy, jealousy of them both, shot through me.