

The Melancholy Frenchman

By HOWARD FIELDING

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AN incident in the life of William Conroy, detective, gave me the theme of a story not long ago, and now I am going to tell another about the same man. It is to Mr. Conroy's modesty that I owe this second tale. He is a man who makes no pretense of infallibility—he recognizes failure as the common lot of all, accepts it with patience and strives to learn from his errors. As to the case now under consideration, he cheerfully admits that his successes were due to the favor of fortune, but his preposterous blunder was truly his own.

He was summoned by telephone one morning to the office of Holman Campbell, a gentleman of wealth and position, whom the detective had never before had the pleasure of meeting. It was early, so early, indeed, that Mr. Conroy gained at once a favorable impression of his client as one who had old-fashioned business habits and got up with a clear head in the morning. This opinion was strengthened by the gentleman's brief, precise and intelligent statement of the facts in the case.

It appeared that Mrs. Campbell had been the victim of a robbery of some magnitude. Jewelry valued at about \$30,000 had been stolen from her apartments in the Campbell residence about 5 o'clock of the previous afternoon. The circumstances were such that almost anybody who was in the house at the time might have committed the theft if equipped with a dishonest heart and a reckless disposition.

Because fate was so kind to Mr. Conroy in this instance and disclosed to him the facts so promptly, it will not be necessary to state the various theories which were suggested to his mind. Suffice it to say that he thought it worth while to "look up" a certain individual who had been present in the house as a guest at afternoon tea. I grieve to say that Mr. Conroy's chief reason for suspecting this person arose from a prejudice against the French. Mr. Campbell said nothing that gave ground for such suspicion. He merely mentioned the man in response to Mr. Conroy's request for the names of all who had been in the house, with a word or two of description.

George Lesterel was a young man whom Mr. Campbell had met in a club and to whom he had taken a liking. The acquaintance had developed until Mr. Campbell had invited Mr. Lesterel to his house, where he had made himself exceedingly agreeable. He purported to be visiting this country in the interests of a French publishing house and to be engaged upon a book descriptive of social conditions in America.

On leaving his client's office Conroy went directly to the house where the Frenchman had taken lodgings. As he approached the house he passed a young man who had just come out. There could be no doubt as to his

pawn a ring with three stones—a ring described in the list which the detective had received from Mr. Campbell.

One hundred dollars was the sum which Lesterel received for the ring, and as he turned to go out he saw Conroy standing with his coat drawn back to show his shield. Lesterel did not start nor greatly change countenance. A deeper sadness came into his brown eyes, and that was all.

"The gentleman has decided not to put the ring in," said Conroy to the pawnbroker, and without a word the man passed it under the wire screen, his fat hand visibly appealing for the money as Conroy took the ring. Lesterel laid down the \$100 within reach of that hand and did not look at the man nor at the money nor at Conroy.

"We might walk around to your rooms," said the detective, "if you've no objection."

"I have not breakfasted," said Lesterel. "Shall we not go first to some restaurant?"

"Sorry," answered Conroy, "but we are going to your rooms right away. You can have something sent in."

"As you will," was the response, and then, when they were upon the street, "the ring, by the way, is mine. But it doesn't matter."

"You admit that you're the man?" Lesterel seemed scarcely to comprehend the purport of this question, being too deeply absorbed in his own thoughts.

"You got away with Mrs. Campbell's jewels?"

"Got away?" echoed Lesterel softly. "No; I would not say that. I stole them, however, and if you will take me now to Mr. Campbell's office I will tell him how they may be recovered."

"I'll attend to that part of it," said Conroy. "The things are in your apartments. That's why you're so anxious to keep me away from there."

"I swear to you," cried Lesterel, "that the jewels are not there and that I will put no obstacle in the way of your recovering them."

"Where are they?"

"Pardon me if I ask you a question first. Who put suspicion upon me? Was it Miss Campbell?"

Conroy shook his head and at the same time tapped upon his breast with a solemn finger.

"I never had the pleasure of meeting the young lady," said he. "It was me that worked down to you, more by good luck than good judgment, as I'm bound to confess, but if no credit's mine none belongs to anybody else. So set your mind at rest on that point."

"I thank you," said Lesterel gravely. "I'll give you another item of consolation," said the detective. "This case is on the quiet, so far. If you act right there's a chance you may go free."

When they came to the building where he lived he begged leave to speak privately to the youth who was in attendance by the door. That favor having been denied him, he slowly ascended the stairs, with Conroy at his heels. In the hall on the second floor they encountered a young woman, tall, slender and quietly elegant in attire. She was veiled, but Conroy would have wagered any reasonable sum of money that there was a pretty face behind the veil. The sight of her gave him a lively uneasiness, but the effect upon Lesterel was far better. Even the polish of his manner—which he might have said he could have preserved upon the rack or the scaffold—fell away from him.

"Good God!" he cried. "Miss Campbell! Why are you here?"

But Conroy was saying to himself: "The fellow expected her. He knew she would be here."

The girl made no reply to Lesterel's question. She made a slight gesture toward a door near where she stood. Lesterel unlocked it, stepped aside, and she passed in. The two men followed.

"Tell me," said Lesterel, speaking with quivering intensity, "did you know that this man suspected me? Did you come here to warn? No, no! It isn't possible! But why?"

The girl turned toward Conroy, steadying herself with an effort, for she was trembling.

"You are an officer, a detective. My father hired you."

"Yes, miss," said Conroy. "You're right. I'm in your father's service, and, being so, I've got to do my duty by him. And the first duty that I've got to do is to tell you that you mustn't stay here, not another minute."

"You will not tell him that I came?" Conroy was silent. It was Lesterel who spoke first.

"After you have heard what I shall disclose," said he, "you will agree that Miss Campbell's presence was to have been desired."

Meanwhile Lesterel had led the girl to a seat. Then, on turning to the detective, he began to speak in a voice that went to Conroy's vitals.

"Time presses," said he. "I will be very brief. I have known Miss Campbell for a little more than a month, but in relative importance all the rest of my life is but an instant, for only through the sight of her have I had any intimation of what life might be. Some days ago, in a moment of utterly overpowering emotion, I told her—oh, but a very little, a thousandth part of my heart's longing. She answered me with a heavenly kindness which I shall remember until the end of my days."

He paused, and Conroy's impatience overcame him.

"In heaven's name, what happened?" he cried. "Tell me the truth."

"This is what happened," answered Lesterel. "I spoke to her as a lover; she answered me as the most gracious and sympathetic of friends. She would have given me hope, except that for me hope is dead. On the next day, after such agony as few men are ever called upon to bear, I told her what I am."

"A thief?" said Conroy.

"A thief may change," answered Lesterel. "I am worse than a thief. I am a madman. Worse even than that—I am a just of all the world. For who that hears the name does not laugh at the very sound of it? I am a kleptomaniac."

"Lesterel," said the detective, looking him keenly in the eyes. "Is this true?"



THE GENTLEMAN HAS DECIDED NOT TO PUT THE RING IN.

nationality, and, though Conroy had not asked for a description of Lesterel, he remembered some words of Mr. Campbell's—"a tall, handsome chap, with a sort of a sad look, as if the world hadn't used him well."

This was as good as a photograph for purposes of identification, and Conroy recognized Lesterel at a glance.

It was probable that Lesterel was going to breakfast, and the restaurant which he frequented might be a good place to "get a line on him," for the managers of such establishments are often shrewd observers and extraordinary gossips. So Conroy followed along in his most unobtrusive way and was led to the portals of a very fashionable eating house, but upon the steps Lesterel paused, and then, with the air of one who has made an important decision, he turned away and walked rapidly toward a very different quarter of the city. He entered a pawn shop which was not in good odor with the police, and as Conroy had been very circumspect in his following he ventured to enter also. There, with surprise at his remarkable luck and with the touch of pity for the handsome rascal, he saw Lesterel

"Do you know anything about kleptomaniacs, my friend? If so, I will give you proof. I stole Mrs. Campbell's jewels. I had gone to the library with Miss Campbell to consult a book, and I remained a few minutes after she had gone. It is on the second floor; the drawing room is below. On my way down alone I passed the open door of Mrs. Campbell's boudoir. The lady herself might have been within for all that I knew, but I had seen the flash of the jewels, and the irresistible impulse was upon me. I went in and took them. And now for the proof. What do you think I did with them? I took them to the library and hid them behind the very book that she and I had been consulting to settle a point of the history of my country. They might have stayed there, for even if I had not have gone

(Continued on page 6)

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Old Lady (to chemist)—I want a box of canine pills.
Chemist—What's the matter with the dog?
Old Lady (indignantly)—I want you to know, sir, that my husband is a gentleman.
(Chemist puts up some quinine pills in profound silence.)—Pick-Me-Up.

LEGAL NOTICE.

Is hereby given, that the following County Warrants will cancelled by the County Court, unless presented to the County Treasurer, for payment, within 60 days from this date.

List of County Warrants issued by the County Clerk prior to July 1, 1899, delivered to the parties below but not presented by them to the County Treasurer for payment:

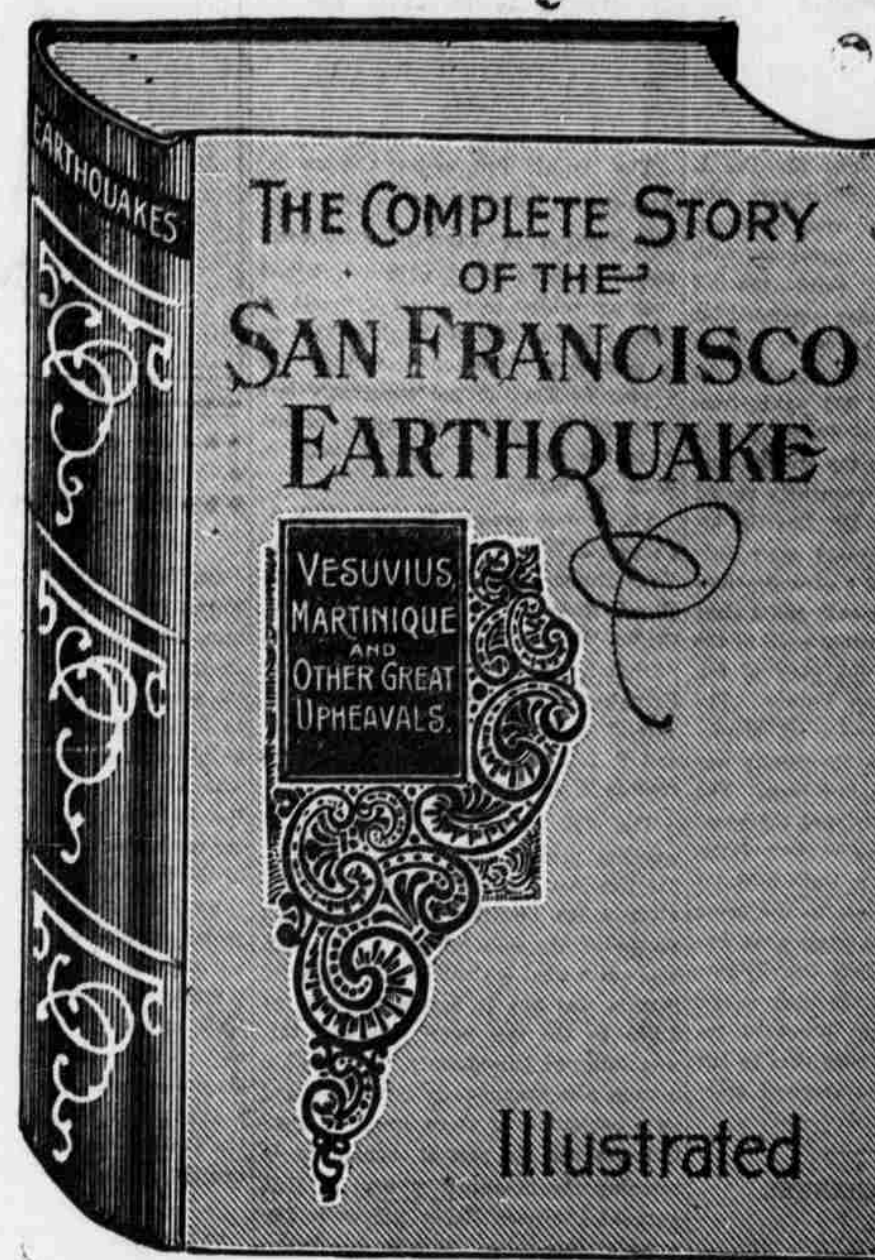
No. 4367. T. H. Lunde.....	\$ 3.00
No. 6182. S. Jackson.....	.75
No. 6429. F. E. Warner.....	2.10
No. 6445. J. G. Ryckman.....	5.00
No. 6453. J. J. Hunt.....	3.00
No. 6457. R. McMath.....	1.50
No. 6670. J. B. Arndt.....	1.00
No. 6815. O. T. & T. Co.....	3.00
No. 7245. Foard & Stokes Co.....	1.00
No. 7248. Henry Peeler.....	3.00
No. 7366. H. Sloop.....	2.00
No. 7367. E. Banks.....	12.50
No. 7368. J. A. Bender.....	6.00
No. 7369. D. P. Ross.....	3.75
No. 7371. J. J. Ryckman.....	6.00
No. 7373. L. Larson.....	5.00
No. 7374. M. McFarlane.....	8.40
No. 7375. Nell Hunt.....	6.00
No. 7381. J. W. Adams.....	7.50
No. 7383. J. J. Packard.....	1.50
No. 7385. Chris Olsen.....	12.00
No. 7481. W. H. Judson.....	5.50
No. 7482. J. W. Detrick.....	5.00
No. 7483. D. K. Warren.....	7.27
No. 7484. A. Vannice.....	5.00
No. 7485. E. M. Houghton.....	8.00
No. 7486. L. Torkelson.....	10.00
No. 7487. N. Bosler.....	10.00
No. 7488. A. H. Church.....	15.00
No. 7490. Robert Gaston.....	8.00
No. 7491. Christ Olsen.....	8.00
No. 8567. C. E. DeForce.....	2.10
No. 8899. A. D. Craig.....	12.50

List of County Warrants issued by the County Clerk prior to July 1, 1899, and still remaining in the hands of the County Clerk:

No. 6642. Laura Davis.....	\$ 3.00
No. 6643. Nicholas Davis.....	3.00
No. 6644. Michael Davis.....	3.00
No. 6645. Ed Lyons.....	3.00
No. 6651. John May.....	3.50
No. 6653. Martin Berg.....	3.50
No. 6977. W. H. Bruce.....	2.20
No. 7015. Chris Nelson.....	2.20
No. 7029. Martin Paul.....	2.40
No. 7031. Julius Friends.....	9.00
No. 7034. John Numala.....	10.00
No. 7043. Frederick Miller.....	5.20
No. 7044. K. J. Hill.....	5.20
No. 7045. Martin Mattson.....	5.20
No. 7046. Andrew Loring.....	5.20
No. 7047. Alex Ingraham.....	5.20
No. 7050. Mary Oliver.....	5.20
No. 7051. Sam'l Oliver.....	5.20
No. 7270. O. Shelton.....	5.50
No. 7271. Sam Nelson.....	5.50
No. 7272. J. Kutchnos.....	5.50
No. 7273. Christ Buglear.....	5.50
No. 7306. C. O. Taylor.....	1.50
No. 7468. Albert Thompson.....	1.50
No. 7558. A. Berry.....	1.20
No. 7668. C. H. Withers.....	2.20
No. 7690. E. Franks.....	2.20
No. 7705. A. R. Murray.....	2.20
No. 7821. Nick Petroff.....	1.70
No. 8113. Martin Maher.....	2.50
No. 8114. Philip Lee.....	2.50
No. 8115. Michael Hazzett.....	2.50
No. 8386. C. Johnson.....	2.50
No. 8397. John Matier.....	2.50
No. 8398. Mrs. John Matier.....	2.50
No. 8501. G. R. Mills.....	3.00
No. 8720. J. A. Hill.....	13.50
No. 8761. L. Anderson.....	1.20
No. 8770. J. N. Jennings.....	3.00
No. 8976. F. W. Johnson.....	3.60
No. 9878. Chas. Johnson.....	2.20
No. 9890. O. Anderson.....	2.20
No. 9936. F. R. Rogers.....	1.00
No. 9264. T. L. Moores.....	2.20

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J. C. CLINTON,
County Clerk.
Astoria, Oregon, June 7, 1906.
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