THE QUICKEST KILLING ON RECORD.

By Thomas J. Vivian and Grena J. Bennett, Authors of "The Dream Bottle," "Picking Up the Thread," "Singing Poppy," etc., etc.

(Copyright, 1907, by W. R. Hearst.)

"I SUPPOSE you think you are an exceedingly clever lawyer?"

Considering the fact that James Hobson, junior member of the law firm of Hobson, Jones & Hobson, had just heard the jury bring in a verdict of acquittal as the final word in an intensely desperate case, and that the person now twitting him was his client for whom he had won the verdict, it was but natural that the young lawyer turned a rather surprised face on his questioner.

"It doesn't seem to me," said young Hobson, "that it matters much what I think of my legal abilities. The great object has been attained. There was an ugly circumstantial case of murder against you and you have been freed."

"Yes; freed because you convinced the jury that I was innocent."

"Yes, because I was convinced that you were."

"Exactly. And I end as I begin," by saying, 'I suppose you think you are an exceedingly clever lawyer?'"

James Hobson looked at his client again with surprise. It was not the first time that his client had surprised him. On casual acquaintance Alice Greer seemed to take only the most phlegmatic interest in anything that went on beyond her pretty nose and to entertain only the most languid ideas back of her still prettier eyes. But if one watched closely and persistently one might see the light leap into and out of those same serene eyes that was startling—it was like a sudden flash of an electric light in a room that one had thought empty and that was revealed as being full of strange and unsuspected things. Ordinarily her mouth was upcurved and placid; then suddenly it would line out straight and narrow as the closed lid of a box.

Miss Greer had been charged with a murder and in his first interview with her as his client, James Hobson had despaired of receiving any assistance from her as to the conduct of her case, but it was she who had really outlined the defense which he had brilliantly carried out and which had resulted in the triumphant phrase, "Not guilty." He had received his fee; he had received the fervid compliments of the court and the prosecuting attorney on his clever fight and had felt as beaming and buoyant as a schoolboy over his victory. And now his client was marring the whole thing with this ugly, whip-lash, sneering riddle of hers. He began to entertain a nasty, depressing feeling concerning his ability; to doubt his legal insight, to question his intuition, to think little of his worldly wisdom.

He thought still less of himself when in later years he learned the strange, true story, which is this:

When Mrs. Arthur Parsons told her sister, Alice Greer, that Sterling Jenner would arrive with the rest of the townsfolk for the week-end, Miss Greer turned a page in the book she was reading and remarked that it meant at least one decent bridge player.

"You take the news that he is coming very lackadaisically," said Mrs. Parsons. "There was a time when you would have jumped two feet in the air if you knew you were going to meet Sterling Jenner."

"Yes, but that was a year ago. Time changes our feelings as well as our looks, you know, Isabel. And by-the-by, there are certain times of which one does not care to be reminded."

"I beg your pardon, my dear," said Mrs. Parsons, with a fine assumption of contrition. "If Jenner's coming is going to be disagreeable to you I will telegraph Hubby to shelve him until you are gone."

"Not for the world," my dear," replied Alice. "To the contrary, I look forward to seeing Sterling Jenner again with unaffected interest. And anyway, I wouldn't think for a moment of dislocating your plans."

Mrs. Parsons glanced sharply at her sister, but the girl's face was as bland and vacant as that of a sheep.

Mrs. Parsons was absolutely correct when she said that the time had been when Alice would have leaped with heart and body, too, at the sound of Sterling Jenner's coming, because at that time Jenner not only told her that Galileo, Copernicus and all the rest of the astronomers were wrong and that she, Alice, was the true center of the universal system, but she knew that at the time, at least, he thought something of the sort. She was the center, the great attracting power around which he revolved. She not only took certain stock in his protestations—but she trusted him to the extent of her womanhood. There had been months of agony and hiding on her part and of deferment and excuses on his—and then when under the mantle of her lies she had ventured home again it was to find that the man she had suffered to loosen the girdle of her honor had found someone else as the subject for his love experiments and the new center to his universal, but shifting system of attraction. In her retirement Alice Greer had learned many bitter things, but none so bitter as was her discovery that Jenner's new lodestone was her own sister.

Alice doubted at first if Isabel was traitorous both to her sister and to her husband, but as time went on with opportunities for watching, the double bitterness was borne in on her that there was not only faithlessness, but that with it absolute cruelty went hand in hand.

Mrs. Parsons drove over with her sister to meet the guests at the railroad depot and with affectionate emphasis kept Alice by her side when greeting the arrivals. So it was that she was Jenner flush as he took Alice's hand.

"Believe me," said the man, "I should not have come had I known you were here—unless I had secured your permission."

Jenner spoke very quietly, but Mrs. Parsons overheard him and she determined to watch closely to see if any effort were made to put new life into dead ashes. But she might as well have watched the Sphinx, kodak in hand in an attempt to snap-shot a smile, as to surprise any tell-tale act or word on her sister's part. In her quest for signs Mrs. Parsons even went so far as to risk comment by her pronounced attentions to Jenner, but there came no sign from Alice. So one night, it being then just half past eleven, she went into Alice's room—for a sisterly goodnight chat—and in the course of it said casually but desperately:

"Why are you so markedly cold to Mr. Jenner? People will notice the difference between your attitude now and that of last year. Don't you really care for him any more?"

Alice Greer turned from the dressing-table where she was brushing her hair—and half turning so that she looked at her sister through the veil of it, said: "One has to be careful about attitudes, you know, in these days of the Pharisee abroad and sisterly watchfulness at home."

Mrs. Parsons pricked up her ears.

"Do you mean that Mr. Jenner shares in your caution?" she asked.

"Oh, Isabel," replied Alice, throwing back her hair, "really I could not betray Mr. Jenner's confidence—even if I had it."

Two bright red spots glowed in Mrs. Parsons' cheeks.

"That will do, Isabel," said Alice. "Don't use the muck-rake and don't try to tangle me up in confessions. Just take it for granted that my brain may be shallow, but my heart is as deep as the old well outside. And even if you got to the bottom of the heart, you would only find just what there is at the bottom of the well."

"Why, that's water," said Mrs. Parsons.

"That's what there is at the bottom of my heart," said Alice, "water—tears, and the past is drowned in them."

"Then there is nothing more between you?" asked Mrs. Parsons insidiously.

"Oh, yes, Isabel," said Alice looking intently at her sister, "there is much between us. Don't be alarmed, sister—it is dead and there is one poor dead thing between us, one poor little dead thing that lies an impassable barrier."

"Why, my dear," said Mrs. Parsons, "you talk like a dime novel. You will be saying next that you hate Mr. Jenner."

"I do."

"Heavens!" gasped Mrs. Parsons, "you'll be terrifying me soon by saying you could kill him."

"I could," replied Alice. Then added with that incomprehensible smile of hers, "that is with a fair opportunity—and no risk of discovery."

"Heaven preserve us," cried Mrs. Parsons, "I shall have to warn him."

It would not have taken very much action on Mrs. Parsons' part to have warned Jenner, for the room allotted him in the queer old Dutch farmhouse on the Hudson which Gilbert Parsons had bought for a country home was but a little way down the corridor on which Alice Greer's room opened and was next to that suite occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Parsons. The new owners had changed the name of the place from Ruyter's farm to Quiet Corner, but they had had the good sense not to change any of the physical characteristics of the old place. So they left the open healths with their hobs, the trellised stoops, the bottle-bottom glass in the windows, the open cupboards, the heavy door-latches which took the place of modern locks and keys, and the sweep well in the yard.

This well lay just below Alice's window, and in the white light of the moon, which was then at her full, every detail of the antique contrivance—bucket, chain, rope and retaining notch—could be seen as plainly as though it were day. The water brought up in "the old oaken bucket" was the coolest, sweetest water in the whole countryside.

Imperturbable though Alice had appeared, their sisterly yet unsisterly talk had much upset her and there was just as much reality as acting in the little stagger which she made and the feeling of faintness which overcame her.

"I must get a drink of water," she said, with a hesitating step toward the door. "I don't—feel—very well."

The sisterly came to the fore in Mrs. Parsons. "I'll get you a glass," she said.

"Not that faucet water," pleaded Alice; "it seems to me that nothing but that ice-cold well water would satisfy me."

"All right," said Mrs. Parsons; "I'll get Hubby to fetch you a glass of it."

"No, don't 'trouble him," objected Alice. "He's gone to bed. I certainly do feel foolishly overcome. I guess I'm not thoroughly strong yet."

"Why, of course, I'll get you a glass of the well water," said Mrs. Parsons, who was now all sisterly.

"And I will sit here in the window seat, where I can see you and where you can see me all the time, so that you need not be afraid."

So Alice sat in the window seat beside the open window while Mrs. Parsons ran down stairs and into the well-yard. There was no need of a lantern because of the bright moonlight, the white radiance being so clear and strong that Alice saw every feature of her sister's face, and Isabel also could distinglish, though not so clearly, the figure of Alice at the window.

"You're sure you're not afraid?" asked Alice, speaking from the window seat.

"Why, how can I be?" replied Mrs. Parsons, unhitching the sweep from the restraining notch, "when I can see and talk with you like this."

Mrs. Parsons drew the water, filled the pitcher with the sweet Ruyter well water, glanced up and saw that her sister was still there, and then hastily returned to the house.

Alice, in her room, heard Mrs. Parsons come quickly but quietly up the creaky staircase; heard her hesitate in her progress along the passage and then tiptoe on, so that she might not disturb her sleeping husband or Jenner.

When Mrs. Parsons entered her sister's room the hand that held the heavy pitcher of water was shaking with the nervousness that came from her quick little night excursion and the strained walk upstairs; while Alice had evidently not assumed a sudden faintness in order to close an embarrassing conversation, because her face was white and there was quite a drop to her chin, ordinarily rather too firm a feature of her strong oval face. She begged Isabel to remain with her for a time and Mrs. Parsons lay down beside Alice on the bed. There she dozed until she heard the cuckoo clock strike 4 and then, seeing that Alice was sleeping, crept to her own room.

Next morning at 7 o'clock Sterling Jenner was found dead in his bed. He had been murdered; stabbed in the heart as he lay asleep. Death had evidently come instantaneously. Jenner lay partly on his right side, partly on his back, and the knife with which he had been stabbed and which still stood in the wound had done its work so swiftly that the sleeper's left hand lay open just below the knife up toward which it had spasmodically moved in that shock of the fatal blow. The doctor called post haste, declared that Jenner had been dead about eight hours.

The weapon was a pruning knife, which at the inquest the gardener said he had left in the conservatory two days before the tragedy. Such other facts were brought out at the investigation that the verdict of the jury was that Sterling Jenner had been murdered, and that the evidence tended to implicate Alice Greer.

Alice Greer was arrested, and at first her lawyer, James Hobson, junior member of the law firm of Hobson, Jones & Hobson, was inclined to use the plea of emotional insanity. The most damaging testimony against her adduced at the inquest was that furnished by her sister, who—under compulsion—admitted that there was grave cause for Miss Greer's hating the dead man, and that Alice had actually threatened to kill the murdered man. Yet when Mr. Hobson asked his client if there was any way in which her sister's testimony could be nullified at the trial, Miss Greer only smiled mysteriously and said, "Let her tell her story. My only prayer is that she shall be my accuser; my only satisfaction will be that she shall be my accuser."

So Mrs. Parsons on the witness stand, the strong witness for the prosecution furnished the state with that essential—the motive for the crime. Her direct testimony lasted up to the noon recess, counsel for the accused announcing that he would begin his cross-examination when the court reassembled.

It was during the recess that Miss Greer gave her attorney his second shock. "Isabel has done her best to convict me. Now, Mr. Hobson, she shall set me free."

Then she told him certain facts concerning which she had kept studiously quiet, though they were vital to her exculpation. So when court reassambled and Mrs. Parsons was again on the stand she had to tell of the visit to the well, of leaving her sick sister in the room, of her hurried trip to and from the room, of her hurried trip to and from the yard, of the bright moonlight, of seeing her sister at the window, of finding her in the same position and in the same place on her return to the room, and of remaining with her until 4 o'clock in the morning. Mrs. Parsons was made to prove that the duration of time when she did not see her sister was covered by her trip to and from the yard, and that the duration of that interval would not allow even the most agile of executioners to have done the deed, to say nothing of an agitated and undoubtedly sick girl.

Then Mrs. Parsons was asked if as a matter of fact she had not stopped on her return trip in the corridor near the room of the murdered man, and if—again as a matter of fact—that return trip had not taken her through the conservatory in which the gardener had left the weapon.

"Of course," said Mr. Hobson, "I only ask these questions to emphasize the figmentary character of the alleged testimony against my client. There is no other ulterior purpose in this line of inquiry."

Then Mrs. Parsons was assisted pallid and trembling from the witness stand and in less than two hours afterward the jury brought in a verdict of "Not guilty."

But Alice Greer was guilty. She did kill Sterling Jenner.

She had planned the deed from the moment she heard of the intended visit to her sisters. She had watched the gardener at work in the conservatory pruning the vines and had secreted the knife. She had thought out the little comedy of sickness and her sister's moonlight trip to the well. She had only made a dummy figure of her clothes, had seated that dummy in the window and had inspected the cheat from the yard and had found that the mannikin was sufficiently deceiving in appearance. She had learned the exact hour of the various parties' retiring and she knew, of course, that entrance to any of the rooms was unobstructed.

She had greased the latch to Jenner's door and had the knife ready in the top bureau drawer. When Mrs. Parsons went down stairs Alice whipped the dummy from the concealing closet and laid it on the floor beneath the window seat. Then she sat there and talked with her sister. Then quick as a flash seated the dummy figure in her place, gripped the knife, scudded down the passage-way in her stocking feet, stabbed Jenner with one strong blow; had fled back to her room, whisked the dummy back into the closet and dropped panting into the window-seat.

But in that time she had killed Sterling Jenner and it was the quickest killing on record.

*Vide 97, Johnson (N. Y.) pp. 347 et seq.

APPLES OF GOLD NOT A FIGURE OF SPEECH

Continued From the First Page of This Section.

evaporated apples that America can send her at fancy prices.

All over the United States apple talk is rife. Means of improving the crops are being considered.

Experiments of all sorts are being made, and the success of some of them seems to accentuate the success the future holds in store for the wise apple grower.

There is, for instance, an orchard in western New York where it was decided to try a new variety of apple, the Duchess, instead of the Baldwin, the only apple it had been thought possible to grow there with profit.

In just 10 years the man who undertook this experiment paid off the $12,000 which his farm cost from his apple crops alone. And his orchard took up but a small part of the farm.

This year there is somewhat of an apple scarcity in the middle west, but as a consolation for this loss there has developed in the Ozark mountain country one of the most profitable apple countries in America.

Of course favorable conditions had existed there all along, only no one had seen them and turned them to account. Which shows that the day of opportunity in the United States is far from past.

In New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New England the best apple reports are received this year. The New York state apples are bringing the biggest prices in the east—$3 to $3.50 a barrel.

Even this, however, is insignificant when compared with some of the prices received along the Pacific slope, where fancy apples are bringing $10 a barrel.

Of finer lustre than the New York state apples, those of the Pacific slope are not, however, of such fine flavor. Their appearance was what mainly decided the price.

An abstract of the report of apple crop probabilities compiled by the International Apple Shippers' association, is as follows:

Maine, 40 per cent more than last year; Vermont, 80 per cent more; Massachusetts and New York, 10 per cent more; Arkansas, Virginia, West Virginia, Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Montana, Canada and Nova Scotia, 50 per cent more; Maryland, 100 per cent more.

In a few of the other states lower crops than last year were reported, and in several states the condition is reported as unchanged.

However, it is not in the mere matter of yield that the farmer finds satisfaction. Prices are to be 25 to 50 per cent higher than last year in almost every part of the country.

It is by virtue of the greater prices that can be forced that the farmers will be able thus to swell their bank accounts. For, despite lesser yields in many instances, the net profits will be greater than last year.

As opposed to the estimated 30,000,000 barrels this year, there were last year 36,000,000; yet the estimated total value of the crop this year is $60,000,000 as against $54,000,00 last year.

For this wonderful boost in the apple business in recent years there must be an explanation. It lies largely in the fact that apples as an article of diet have in the last few years become much more appreciated than before.

Due to the romance in the apple business are the tremendous prices asked and secured for farm land in some parts of the country. Even in the once arid valleys of California, where irrigation has made possible the raising of crops, orchards are right merrily paying off mortgages and piling up bank accounts.

Considering that an apple orchard in this section frequently yields 1,440 boxes of luscious, lustrous fruit to the acre, one need not be surprised to hear that as high as $2,000 an acre is often paid for such land. For those 1,400 boxes sell for an average of $1.50 a box, or $2,100 an acre.

Even the native Indians of the Ozark mountains and other parts of the west—men who a quarter of a century ago were busy with the musket on the plains and in the hills—even they have become infected by the apple fever; have become enthralled by the romance of the apple tree, and are now winning big bank accounts from their orchards.

In Missouri there is a single apple orchard of 2,306 acres, said to be the largest in the world. Its value is estimated at over $1,000,000.

This orchard is in the Ozark mountains, near Lebanon, Mo. There are 60 trees to each acre, making the total number of trees 138,000.

It is a beautiful sight to visit this farm in harvest season and see hundreds of pretty maidens, their cheeks looking for all the world like the rosy apples that they are packing into boxes, getting them ready for the trip to the depot.

Nothing is left to chance. An expert horticulturist is hired to look after the trees. He examines them continually, diagnoses their ailments and prescribes for them just as a doctor does for his human patients.

Spraying for scale must be done systematically and constantly. Thus is the orchard kept in a good bearing condition, and results are reasonably certain.

One season the Frisco railway alone received at its several stations in the Ozark mountains apples and apple products representing 4,799 carloads, or 959,800 barrels. Taking $2.50 a barrel as an average price for these excellent apples, there was a net return for this section of $2,399,500.

Other lines of railroad in the same section that season transported at least 2,000 carloads, and hundreds of carloads were consumed at home or disposed of by wagonload.

So apple growing is no experiment, but is clearly destined to become one of the most lucrative occupations.

And isn't it strange to think of such a glorification for the fruit which the serpent used in tempting our Mother Eve?

AN AGED BRITISH TREE.

Cowthorpe Oak, Reputed 500 Years Old, Flourishing in Yorkshire.

One of the oldest of British trees is the Cowthorpe oak, which has been standing near Wetherby in Yorkshire for 500 years, according to veracious chronicle. It is a tree that has been described often and has figured in works of fiction.

It is related of this tree that on occasion as many as 40 persons have been gathered within the hollow of its trunk, although it must be confessed that some of these were children. The most recent measurement showed that its girth of trunk at the ground was 54 feet 3 inches and the cavity was 11 feet by 9 feet.

The tree is not now so very tall, reaching only 37 feet into the air. There are 25 props about the tree to support the falling branches.

The cavity has been noticeable only since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Many of the earlier measurements show that the tree once was much greater in girth than now.

Aged as it is the tree bore acorns in 1901 and 1905 and always produces a fair amount of foliage. In 1893 an acorn borne by the Cowthorpe oak was planted near by and a tree is growing up slowly as a memorial to the parent.

Prospective Housewife.

From Cassell's Saturday Journal.

A charming young lady went into the principal stationer's shop in a country town and asked to see some thin note paper. After selecting what she desired she hesitated for a moment.

"Do you make any reduction to clergymen?" she asked, softly.

"Certainly, madam," said the stationer, with great promptness. "Are you a clergyman's wife?"

"N-no," said the young lady.

"Ah, a clergyman's daughter, then?" said the shopman, as he began to tie up the paper in a neat parcel.

"N-no," was the lady's hesitating reply. Then she leaned across the counter and spoke in a confidential whisper: "But if nothing happens I shall be engaged to a theological student as soon as he comes home from college this term."

Congressman Charles E. Townsend of the second Michigan district has announced himself as a candidate for United States senator, and it is intimated that he will oppose Senator Julius C. Burrows if Mr. Burrows becomes a candidate to succeed himself.

JAPAN HAS RACE PROBLEM--Protests Against Hiring of Chinese Coolies; Labor Agitators Make Trouble

IT seems that Japan has been having a little race problem of her own. The details are sparingly given by a native press that courts consistency. From the sparse news accounts and the editorial comments of some of the Tokio papers, it appears that the importation of Chinese laborers to work on a new railroad line in Kagoshima province has helped to show the Japanese where the shoe pinches in San Francisco.

Early in July the contractor to whom the construction work on the railroad had been awarded imported 30 Chinese laborers. The wages he paid were 10 yen a month—about $5 gold—and that was about 50 per cent cheaper than the hire of Japanese laborers. Still the Chinese were satisfied and they were good workmen.

So pleased was the Japanese contractor with his experiment that he sent to China for 100 more, and before those coolies had landed at Nagasaki a third consignment of 300 was contracted for with Chinese emigration companies in Chefu.

The Mainichi Dempo naively states that the Japanese laborers took great alarm at the importation of the Chinese coolies, who were willing to work for half of what a Japanese laborer demanded. Mass meetings were held by the citizens of Kagoshima-ken "to consider this grave peril to the laborers of Japan," as the Mainichi puts it.

But the sentiment of the outraged laborers of Kagoshima-ken did not stop at mass meetings. One night in the latter part of July they posted a notice written in Chinese on the doors of the Chinese laborers' huts that if they didn't stop working in Japanese men's places they would be driven back to China.

The local police officials took alarm at the indigation of the citizens of Kagoshima-ken and sought advice from the central government at Tokio. Tokio, realizing the possibilities of embarrassment in any overt act against the Chinese, ordered the police at Kagoshima-ken to use their utmost powers to protect the foreigners in case of an outbreak and then summoned the enterprising contractor to a conference in Tokio.

It happens that an imperial ordinance, No. 352, which was promulgated in 1898, forbids the employment of foreign labor in Japan except under limited conditions, which restrict such employment only to the old treaty ports where foreigners congregate. The latest papers from Japan have it that the contractor has either unconsciously disobeyed this law or that he intends to force a test case.

In the early part of August the matter was still under advisement by the Tokio government and the Chinamen were still working, under police protection.

In July the latest outrage against the Japanese in and about San Francisco was scrupulously reported by the Japanese consul there to his home government. This was an instance of boys throwing stones through the glass of a Japanese gardener's greenhouse at Berkeley.

The outrage was duly noted by the Japanese press and dilated upon by that part of it which had been yellowest in exploiting the San Francisco incident. Yet at this very time the Chinese laborers who were working for half pay in Kagoshima-ken were working under police protection because of threats against them by Japanese.

Only two Japanese journals paid any attention to the Kagoshima-ken incident and those were not of the sensational type. The Asahi, one of the steadiest of the Tokio journals, defended the importation of the Chinese editorially, saying that because the capitalists who were building the railroad would profit by the cheap labor general prosperity would be reflected through their individual prosperity all over the province.

General interest should have precedence over the interests of any one class, said the Asahi and then it closed with the sage deduction that if the laborers of California would realize this economic principle there would be no objection to the presence there of Japanese laborers.

The Mainichi Dempo of Osaka took a different view of the delicate situation. "This is a very grave question," said the Mainichi's editorial of August 17. "It is not merely local.

"For Chinese to engage in labor in Japan it is necessary to obtain official permission first, otherwise a legal penalty is incurred. To permit the entry of Chinese cheap labor in Japan will create a tremendous social problem and such permission will be ruinous policy.

"If the governor of Kagoshima-ken permitted the contractor to bring the Chinese coolies the responsibility be assumed was very great and official action should be at once taken."

The Japan Advertiser, the only American paper published in Japan, did not seize the opportunity for making comparisons, but warned the Japanese government of the seriousness of the problem that was presented. It said on August 18:

"The problem that has thus been presented to Governor Chikami of Kagoshima-ken in particular and to Japan in general is of paramount importance for two reasons, not as regards the material effect of the present innovation, but on account of the principles involved. First, because this is the only instance where the provisions of imperial ordinance No. 352 have been either disobeyed or brought to test, and, second, because Japan is brought into the disagreeable alternative of permitting the entry of Chinese labor or of playing the inconsistent part of demanding of America what she herself withholds from China. That Japanese public opinion is chary of tackling the question is obvious from the general silence in regard to it."

Battle With an Otter.

A young man named Tom Barker was boating in the Eden at Kirby recently, when he saw an otter in the water and struck at it with his oar. The otter jumped into the boat and attacked him, but Barker, after a severe tussle, killed it. The otter was a female and its family was nesting in the neighborhood.