

The Adventure of the Empty House.

(Continued.)

"It was the best shot in the world," I said, "and I expect that there are few better in the world. Have you heard the name?"

"No, I have not."

"Well, well, such is fame! But, then, if I remember right, you had not heard the name of Professor Moriarty, who had one of the great brains of the century. Just give me down my index of biographies from the shelf."

He turned over the pages luxuriously, leaning back in his chair and blowing great clouds from his cigar.

"My collection of M's is a fine one," said he. "Moriarty himself is enough to make any letter illustrious, and here is Morgan, the poisoner, and Merridew of abominable memory, and Mathews, who knocked out my left canine in the waiting room at Charing Cross, and finally here is our friend of tonight."

He handed over the book, and I read: "Moran, Sebastian, colonel, unemployed. Formerly First Beaufort's Pioneer. Born London, 1840. Son of Sir Augustus Moran, C. B., once British minister to Persia. Educated Eton and Oxford. Served in Jowaki campaign, Afghan campaign, Cheraslab (Afghanistan), Sherpur and Cabul. Author of 'Heavy Game of the Western Himalayas' (1881); 'Three Months in the Jungle' (1884). Address: Conduit street, Chiswick. The Anglo-Indian, the Tankerville, the Bagatelle Card club."

On the margin was written in Holmes' precise hand, "The second most dangerous man in London."

nothing. But I watched the criminal news, knowing that sooner or later I should get him. Then came the death of this Ronald Adair. My chance had come at last. Knowing what I did, was it not certain that Colonel Moran had done it? He had played cards with the lad; he had followed him home from the club; he had shot him through the open window. There was not a doubt of it. The bullets alone are enough to put his head in a noose.

"I came over at once, I was seen by the sentinel, who would, I knew, direct the colonel's attention to my presence. He could not fail to connect my sudden return with his crime and to be terribly alarmed. I was sure he would make an attempt to get me out of the way at once and would bring round his murderous weapon for that purpose. I left him an excellent mark in the window, and, having warned the police that they might be needed—by the way, Watson, you spotted their presence in that doorway with unerring accuracy—I took up what seemed to me to be a judicious post for observation, never dreaming that he would choose the same spot for his attack. Now, my dear Watson, does anything remain for me to explain?"

"Yes," said I. "You have not made it quite clear what was Colonel Moran's motive in murdering the Hon. Ronald Adair?"

"Ah, my dear Watson, there we come into those realms of conjecture where the most logical mind may be at fault. Each may form his own hypothesis upon the present evidence, and yours is as likely to be correct as mine."

"You have formed one, then?"

"I think that it is not difficult to ex-

plain the facts. It came out in evidence that Colonel Moran and young Adair had between them won a considerable amount of money. Now, Moran undoubtedly played foul. Of that I have long been aware. I believe that on the day of the murder Adair had discovered that Moran was cheating. Very likely he had spoken to him privately and had threatened to expose him unless he voluntarily resigned his membership of the club and promised not to play cards again. It is unlikely that a youngster like Adair would at once make a hideous scandal by exposing a well known man so much older than himself. The exclusion from his clubs would mean ruin to Moran, who lived by his ill gotten card gains. He therefore murdered Adair, who at the time was endeavoring to work out how much money he should himself return, since he could not profit by his partner's foul play. He locked the door lest the ladies should surprise him and insist upon knowing what he was doing with these names and cash. Will it pass?"

"I have no doubt that you have hit upon the truth."

"It will be verified or disproved at the trial. Meanwhile, come what may, Colonel Moran will trouble us no more. The famous air gun of Von Herder will embellish the Scotland Yard museum, and once again Mr. Sherlock Holmes is free to devote his life to examining those interesting little problems which the complex life of London so plentifully presents."

The Next Installment

The next story of the Sherlock Holmes series by Sir A. Conan Doyle, will commence in The Examiner next week. These stories are short and complete, some of the same detectives appear in different stories, but each story is of an entirely different case.

The second story is entitled "The Adventure of the Norwood Builder." This story deals with a young man suspected of murder, and as the case is revealed to the police and detective here the rope tightens around the young man's neck. Everything points to his guilt, and some of the best detective work ever given to the public, is disclosed. Sherlock Holmes accomplishes some surprises and clears up the case.

These stories are clean. They are not of the "dime novel" sort that offer encouragement to the young reader to follow crime, but teach that the "way of the transgressor is hard.

"This is astonishing," said I as I undid back the volume. "The man's name is that of an honorable soldier."

"It is true," Holmes answered. "Up to a certain point he did well. He was always a man of iron nerve, and the story is still told in India how he crawled down a drain after a wounded man-eating tiger. There are some trees, Watson, which grow to a certain height and then suddenly develop some unsightly eccentricity. You will see it often in humans. I have a theory that the individual represents in his development the whole procession of his ancestors, and that such a sudden turn to good or evil stands for some strong influence which came into the line of his progress. The person becomes, as it were, the epitome of the history of his own family."

"It is surely rather far-fetched."

"Well, I don't insist upon it. What ever the cause, Colonel Moran began to go wrong. Without any open scandal he still made India too hot to hold him. He retired, came to London and again acquired an evil name. It was at this time that he was sought out by Professor Moriarty, to whom for a time he was chief of the staff. Moriarty supplied him liberally with money and used him only in one or two very high class jobs which no ordinary criminal could have undertaken. You may have some recollection of the death of Mrs. Stewart of Lauder in 1887. Not? Well, I am sure Moran was at the bottom of it, but nothing could be proved. So cleverly was the colonel concealed that even when the Moriarty gang was broken up we could not incriminate him. You remember at that date, when I called upon you in your rooms, how I put up the shutters for fear of air coming? No doubt you thought me fanciful. I knew exactly what I was doing, for I knew of the existence of this remarkable man, and I knew also that one of the best shots in the world would be behind it. When we were in the neighborhood he followed us with Moriarty, and it was undoubtedly he who gave me that evil five minutes on the Richmond coach ledge.

"You may think that I read the papers with some attention during my sojourn in France, on the lookout for any chance of laying him by the heels. So long as he was free in London my life would really not have been worth living. Night and day the shadow would have been over me and sooner or later the chance must have come. What would I do? I could not shoot him at night or I should myself be in the dock. There was no use appealing to a magistrate. They cannot interfere on the strength of what would appear to them to be a wild suspicion. So I could do

nothing. But I watched the criminal news, knowing that sooner or later I should get him. Then came the death of this Ronald Adair. My chance had come at last. Knowing what I did, was it not certain that Colonel Moran had done it? He had played cards with the lad; he had followed him home from the club; he had shot him through the open window. There was not a doubt of it. The bullets alone are enough to put his head in a noose.

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