Master Mind Solves Auto Murder Mystery By Telepathic Suggestion

By

FRANK LOVELL NELSON

Man with Greatest Deductive Powers Known to Criminal Detectives

Insignificant Personal Trait Overlooked by Police Leads to Unraveling of Duplicity and a Woman's Unwavering Devotion.

IT certainly looked black for Arthur Edgerton. Even Clarke, who usually, I find, is inclined to let his sympathies rest with the accused until all shadow of doubt is dispelled, was hard put to find, excuses for him.

We discussed the case, recorded in glaring headlines, over our morning meal.

"It's incomprehensible," he said, as he read the third time the damning details. "His whole life, his success, his approaching marriage, everything cries out against this crime."

"So they did in the case of Eugene Aram," I replied, "and yet Aram protested his innocence. If Edgerton is not guilty, it should be a simple matter for him to account for his whereabouts from 7:30 to 10 last night, but this he refuses to do. I am of the opinion that for once the police have shown commendable energy and nabbed the right man. Can you imagine a more convincing chain of circumstantial evidence?"

"I don't have to imagine. The history of circumstantial evidence contains many a more perfect chain which was only broken after an innocent man had been hanged."

"Then, again," he continued, "what do you make of the robbery? If through jealousy Edgerton killed Garner, why should he rifle his pockets, tear out a diamond-stud, and wrench the ring off his finger like a common freebooter?"

"That might have been the work of someone else who arrived on the scene after the murderer had fled," I suggested.

"A stronger argument on your side would be that it was done to throw the police off the track. But we argue to no purpose, and I, for one, propose to await the sequel."

It was the old, old story, the fatal triangle, in the demonstration of which tragedy has been the corollary since the world began—two men and one woman.

Arthur Edgerton possessed the three almost priceless talismen to the gates of modern society: youth, good looks, and wealth, and these had won for him the master-key: social position, despite the handicap of antecedents unknown, some said, even doubtful.

Harrison Garner put into the balance against these: wealth, a family name honored for generations, and an unblemished character. Edgerton's brilliancy he offset by unfailing good humor and wholesomeness.

Mazie Morrison, secure in her own little social realm and with no lack of suitors for the hand of its queen, had played one against the other. She had finally silenced the gossips by accepting Edgerton, and then set their tongues wagging faster than ever by receiving both on equal terms, despite the cards and the ring and all the delightful, bothersome preliminaries to matrimony.

And then the sequel: Garner found shot through the heart in Edgerton's automobile on a lonely spot on the Lake Shore drive; Edgerton, blood bespattered, behind prison bars, and Mazie Morrison, weeping, inconsolable, distraught, in her pretty boudoir, stunned at the havoc her little hands had wrought in three lives. This was the picture I painted that summer morning at the breakfast table. Later I found the canvas wanted retouching sadly.

Ignoring the futility of the argument, Clarke and I prolonged our discussion of the case in the library over our cigars where we were interrupted by the sound of carriage wheels. Clarke's dark features lighted with expectancy. I wondered if his remarkable prescience told him that the vehicle stopping at our entrance held any connection for us with the tragedy of the night before. Or was I absorbing a portion of his sensitive intelligence?

Yes, the call was for us. The bell rang and we heard our servant, who at this period chanced to be a Jap boy, blandly answering a feminine voice which inquired for Mr. Carlton Clarke.

Our visitor was heavily veiled, and as Clarke stepped forward to offer her a chair, I was able to judge nothing of her personality beyond that she was young and owned a figure, svelte, but suggesting through her dark costume, animal-like lines and curves. Or was it the art of the dressmaker exemplified in a perfectly gowned woman?

"I am Miss Mazie Morrison, Mr. Clarke," she said sadly, lifting her veil from a face, the beauty of which even the evident traces of tears could not mar, and brushing back her dark, rebellious hair with a dainty little hand on which sparkled an engagement ring.

"Yes, Miss Morrison, I am glad you have called on me. It is about the Edgerton case, I suppose," replied Clarke, while I discreetly retired behind the portiere of my bedroom door.

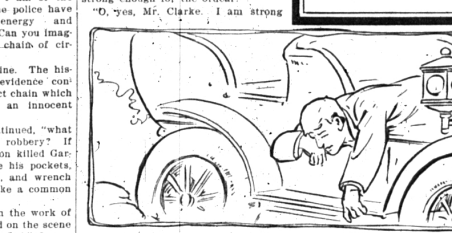
"O, yes, Mr. Clarke. You have seen the papers. You know the terrible trouble I am in. It seems that no one can help me, but I heard papa and brother Joe talking about what you did for Richard King and I have come to you. I had a perfectly dreadful time slipping away from home. I am watched by the police and even by my own family, but I know Arthur did not do that dreadful thing and I simply had to talk with some one who would believe me. You don't think he did it, do you?"

Miss Morrison, I do not know, but, for your sake, I propose to find out if there is any hope."

"Oh, do, Mr. Clarke, and I will pay you anything. I am wealthy in my own right and they cannot prevent me from giving it all to save Arthur."

"The question of payment, Miss Morrison, is of the smallest consequence. Services such as mine cannot be ticketed with a price and sold as commodities. I will serve you just as willingly if nothing is said on the financial side. Now, if we are to fight this battle against circumstances, first let us take an account of our resources. I will repeat to you the evidence contained in the newspaper reports, and you are to tell me wherein it tallies with the facts and to give me any further information you can. Are you strong enough for the ordeal?"

"O, yes, Mr. Clarke. I am strong enough for anything if it will prove Arthur innocent."



TWO MEN WERE LOCKED IN DEADLY EMBRACE

"Then I will call my confrere, Mr. Sexton, to take notes and we will go over the case in detail."

I was easily found, for though pretending to read, I admit I was taking in the conversation from my position behind the portiere.

"Now then," continued Clarke, "the papers say that Mr. Edgerton called at your apartment building, the Patio, at 7:50 o'clock last night. That he found Garner there and stayed only about ten minutes. That he and Garner left together, entered Edgerton's automobile, and started north. Now what occurred during those ten minutes?"

"Oh, Mr. Clarke, it happened just as the papers say, only they have added so many horrible things that are not so. They say Arthur was insanely jealous of Harrison and that he left me in a rage. He wasn't a bit jealous."

"Had Mr. Edgerton any business troubles?"

"None that I know of. Papa said just the other evening that his factory had orders enough ahead to run it a year."

"Now, Miss Morrison, did you notice anything else strange in his actions?"

"Well, there was one thing, but it can't be of any importance. When he was leaving he rolled a cigarette and I noticed that he rolled it inward. When he makes his own cigarettes he always rolls them outward and he told me once that was the proper way. This was why I noticed it, but I suppose it was nervousness that caused him to change."

When she left, Clarke's eyes danced with excitement.

When we reached the scene of the tragedy we found the machine standing apparently just as the murderer had left it, the front wheels in the ditch and the hind wheels elevated by the grade of the roadway. A dark pool of blood in the tonneau told its own story.

"An automatic," he quietly remarked. "Nothing but a steel-jacketed bullet could go clear through the body of a man and then cut so clean a furrow. There are no signs of a struggle. The polish of that woodwork hasn't a scratch on it, which wouldn't be likely if there had been a fight. Officer, are you sure these levers haven't been touched since the body was found?"

"Yes, sir. I came with the wagon last night and they were just that way. The lieutenant left Clancy to guard it and I relieved him at eight. Neither of us have touched them."

"Sexton, it is my solemn judgment that Edgerton was not in that automobile when the killing was done. It's a simple thing, but to me it's conclusive.

"The machine was set on the secondary speed. The gasoline-tank was almost empty and the oil-cups dry as a bone. Whoever ran that car was afraid of the high speed, and he had been burning up the engine and squandering the gasoline to make time. When he stopped he left the throttle on the second speed, threw off the gear-clutch, applied the emergency brake, and skidded into the ditch on his tires. They are cut though. The engine was not burned out from being left running, for the machine is of a type which disconnects the batteries when the gear-clutch is thrown. No expert motorist ever did such a bungling job."

"Perhaps Edgerton was a new hand at the game."

"No. On our way back I have been trying to think where I had heard his name before. I just recalled it. He drove his own car in the races at Washington park last year. I must pay more attention to sports."

When we entered the gloomy corridors of Central station, Clarke at once sought out Inspector Ship, who happened to be in charge, and begged for an interview with Edgerton.

Here we met a stumbling-block of formidable proportions. Inspector Ship returned with the word that the prisoner absolutely refused to see anyone.

"Then, Inspector, I wish you would lock me up in the cage next to Edgerton, and preferably on the side his bunk is on, if that one is empty. You can do that, can't you, and leave me there for an hour? I may be able to interest him through the grating."

"Better go out and have your luncheon in the meantime, Sexton," said Clarke, as he and the inspector disappeared down the iron stairway.

At the restaurant to which I went for luncheon I met some friends, jovial good fellows, and we tarried long over the coffee and cigars. When I finally broke away, I realized in dismay that fully two hours had elapsed since I parted from Clarke. I hurried at once to the station, and there found a laconic note from him.

"Can't wait any longer. Come at once to 435 Fourth avenue."

"They've only been gone about ten minutes," said the captain who handed me Clarke's note. "The inspector is with him. Don't know what they're up to."

I lost no time getting to the address named, which proved to be a low resort I knew well as the harboring place of thieves, and a breeding spot for the worst forms of vice and crime. The gaudy front opened into a rather innocent-looking bar, and that on smaller rooms beyond.

I went in boldly, and at a venture, said authoritatively to the barkeeper, who was serving a solitary customer:

"The inspector just came in with a plain-clothes man. Where are they now?"

He, taking me as I expected him to, for a "fly cop," said nothing but jerked his thumb expressively in the direction of the depths beyond.

Just as I was about to enter the swinging doors an awful hubbub arose from within, the sound of chairs hurled violently to the floor, the crash of breaking glass and overturning tables, curses, and the deep breathing of men in deadly battle. The one customer, who had pricked up his ears at the mention of the inspector, fled incontinently. The barkeeper, schooled by long experience to no interference with the law other than to break it where safe, wiped glasses as if nothing was happening. I pushed the doors aside and rushed in.

The scene that met my eyes was over in less than the time necessary to describe it, but it was thrilling while it lasted. Two men were locked in deadly embrace, reeling about the room, overturning tables and chairs, while a third circled around them watching for a chance to administer the quietus with the butt of a pistol. The man in the embrace of the stranger was Clarke. The one with the pistol the inspector. The stranger had a long knife in his right hand which he was trying to bring to bear on Clarke's anatomy, but I was pleased to note that the wrist of the hand that held the blade was encircled with four fingers and a thumb that I knew possessed a grip like a pipe-wrench.

The affair could have but one ending, and I did not see that I could be of any use. With one powerful effort Clarke brought his opponent's head within range of the butt of the inspector's revolver, there was a quick thud, and a limp form slipped out of his arms to the floor.

Despite the blood which ran down his face from the cut in his forehead, the grime, and the torn clothing and disheveled hair, I knew him from the pictures that filled the day's papers. It was Arthur Edgerton.

"What devil's trick is this you're playing on me, Mr. Clarke?" roared the inspector. "We left this man at the station not half an hour ago. How comes it that you lead me here on a false scent and then drag my own prisoner out of that room and force me to slug him?"

"I didn't lead you on a false scent, inspector," returned Clarke, with a grim smile. "I gave you my word of honor that if you would come with me I would give you the privilege of arresting the real murderer of Harrison Garner. There he is, and all you have to do is to handcuff him. He'll be coming around in a minute, though I don't think there's much fight left in him." The police certainly deserve great credit for this. Imagine the morning papers will have a good deal to say about the wonderful piece of work accomplished by Inspector Ship. It isn't too late for an extra, even."

"That's all very well, Mr. Clarke, but what does it mean?"

"I'll tell you—ah, he's coming back to earth. That was a scientific crack you gave him, just hard enough but not likely to interfere with the later duties of the hangman. Inspector and Mr. Sexton, I have the pleasure of introducing to you Mr. Arnold Edgerton, the twin brother of a most estimable man, who has risked his own neck to save one that is absolutely worthless. Now, inspector, you may take the case and Mr. Sexton and I will retire again to private life."

It was many months after these events that I first heard the connected story from Arthur Edgerton's own lips. Nothing came out at the trial, as Arnold was induced to plead guilty and accept a term of life imprisonment, there being little doubt that he was insane. Edgerton, the virtuous, lived in retirement until he could wind up his business affairs, when he and Miss Morrison were quietly married and departed to make their residence in Europe. The evening before they left they called at our apartments to express again their gratitude to Clarke for making their great happiness possible.

"I was born in Rio Janeiro," began Edgerton after, with some reluctance, he had consented to tell his story. "My brother—followed me into the world a few hours later and our mother died at his birth. My father was the younger son of a titled English line and had settled in Brazil to make his fortune, which he did most successfully, acquiring, in the course of time, an extensive ranch and large holdings of city property.

"I have performed this duty to the best of my ability. I closed up my father's affairs, sold off everything, and came here, thinking it might save Arnold to get him away from his evil associations, but wherever he is he consorts only with the lowest.

"One of his choice methods of worrying me has been to impersonate me and call upon my friends, usually doing some act to disgrace me. You have seen the resemblance between us, and as I never mentioned to my friends that I had a twin brother, it was easy for him to impose on them.

"Before I asked Mazie to be my wife," Edgerton continued, "I called my brother into my office and made a compact with him in consideration of a material increase in his allowance he was to leave Chicago and not return for five years. I almost hoped that before this time was up he would either drink himself to death or be killed in some brawl.

"He has always shown himself incapable of keeping his word, and I was scarcely surprised, when, on the day of the tragedy, he walked into my office. I was angry and lost my temper. I told him he never would get another cent out of me. At first he whined and begged, but when he saw I was firm he became furious and opened upon me a torrent of abuse. I ordered him to leave or I would kick him out.

"He went, vowing the most terrible vengeance against me. When I called down I was filled with remorse and felt that I had been untrue to my father's trust. But I reasoned that his desire for money would bring him back.

"When I got to my apartments that evening the janitor looked at me in surprise. 'Why, Edgerton,' he said, 'you're back early. I saw you leaving in the automobile not 15 minutes ago. Did you find your keys inside?'

"I knew at once what had happened. My brother had gone to the garage and taken out my car and made the excuse of losing his keys to get the janitor to let him into my rooms. I went upstairs and found my worst fears realized. His own clothes were there and a black suit, the mate to the one I was wearing, was missing. He was out to make trouble for me.

"It was a hopeless task to attempt to track him, so I went to the resort in Fourth avenue, where you found him, and where I knew he would turn up some time during the night.

"Sure enough he came about ten o'clock. He tried to pass it all off as a joke, and said the machine had broken down and he had left it at a garage near Lincoln park. He said he was sorry for the scene he had made in my office and that if I would give him money he would leave town that night and never bother me again.

"At his request I changed coats with him as he showed me that he had grease from the auto all over the one of mine he had on. I did not guess that it was blood.

"I had scarcely returned to my apartments before I was arrested and charged with the murder. Then the whole, horrible truth flashed upon me. I thought of my brother speeding away from the city and I registered an instant resolve to take his place.

"It occurred to me later that his first impulse, on finding himself in possession of his ill-gotten booty and the money I had given him, would be a debauch, and then, hearing of my arrest and that I was disposed to shield him, he would lie low in his thieves' retreat until a safe opportunity presented to get away. So I felt pretty safe in telling Mr. Clarke where to find him."

"And just think, dear, you might have been convicted in his place if I hadn't come to Mr. Clarke," said Mrs. Edgerton, while her husband stopped to roll a cigarette in preference to those Clarke offered him. I noticed that he rolled it outward.

"I shouldn't have been convicted, dearest, as I could have established a good alibi, but the mystery would have been unsolved, I would have been ruined, and I doubt if you would have been willing to take my name. Mr. Clarke's way was by far the best. By the way, Clarke, I didn't want to tell you all at first, but when I looked into your eyes I knew I had to. Still you seemed to know it all, anyway. May I ask how you found out I had a brother?"

"You may thank Mrs. Edgerton's keenness of observation in noting your method of rolling a cigarette for the first tip. Then your brother's bungling work with the auto seemed to make it as clear as a printed page. It only remained to persuade you to verify my theory."

"I think you could have done that anyway. You have a remarkable power over men."

"And over women, too," said Mrs. Edgerton. "I wonder you have never married. It's lucky for Arthur that I met him first."

Which shows that the best of women are at heart coquettes.

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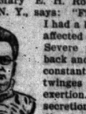
HER GOOD FORTUNE

After Years Spent in Vain Effort.

Mrs. Mary E. H. Rouse, of Cambridge, N. Y., says: "Five years ago I had a bad fall and it affected my kidneys. Severe pains in my back and hips became constant, and sharp twinges followed any exertion. The kidney secretions were badly disordered. I lost flesh and grew too weak to work. Though constantly using medicine I despaired of being cured until I began using Doan's Kidney Pills. Then relief came quickly, and in a short time I was completely cured. I am now in excellent health."



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MUCH UP AGAINST IT.

Old Lady's Description of Ills Somewhat Confusing.

Mrs. Rhoda Holmes Nichols, the artist who spends the summer at Gloucester, Mass., where she teaches a numerous sketch class, tells of an old woman who lives on the outskirts of the town and whom she has known for a number of years. The old lady has often been sketched by the students of Mrs. Nichols' class, and is known to them and to everybody else as Aunt Sally.

When Mrs. Nichols went to Gloucester this year she called at the quaint little cottage and found the old woman rather more bent than last year and looking a good deal older as she tottered along her little garden leaning on a stick.

"Well, Aunt Sally," said the artist, "how have you been since last summer?"

"Oh, not very well," she replied, shaking her head, "not very well."

"Is the rheumatism still bad?"

"Oh, yes, miss, it's that bad nowadays I can't set and I can't scarcely lay."

WHICH?

Visitor—Can I see the editor, my lad?

Office Boy—Are you a contributor or gentleman?

On the Doctors.

Mrs. Mary G. Baker Eddy, who, of course, has no faith in medicine, told a Western Christian Scientist, at one of her latest audiences, an anecdote about a friend of hers.

This friend, a thin and nervous woman, could not sleep. She visited her physician and the man said:

"Do you eat anything just before going to bed?"

"Oh, no, doctor," the patient replied.

"Well," said the physician, "just keep a pitcher of milk and some biscuit beside you, and every night, the last thing you do, make a light meal."

"But doctor," cried the lady, "you told me on no account to eat anything before retiring."

"Pooh, pooh," said the doctor, "that was three months ago. Science has made enormous strides since then."

Cape Cod Fog.

"Yes," remarked the Down Easter, "we do have fog along Cape Cod sometimes. One night the fog came up and in the morning when I went to milk I couldn't find the old cow. Knew where she was in the habit of lying, though, and followed her easy enough. Got to her just in time, too.

"Why, I just went through the hole she made in the fog—sort of a tunnel like—and pretty soon I came up to her. She was almost smothered. You see the fog had packed ahead of her, and she'd jammed her horns into it and got stuck. Had to chop her out. You may believe it or not, but I'll show you the cow any time you come 'round."—Philadelphia Public Ledger.

Ouch!

Col. Charles Cooey, the president of the American Federation of Aero clubs, said the other day of an aeronautical pilot:

"He is really too absent-minded to pilot a balloon. He used, you know, to be a railroad conductor, but he had to give up the work; he was too absent-minded for it, too.

"On his train, one day, as he passed through the cars taking up the tickets, a joking passenger, instead of proffering his pasteboard, solemnly proffered his forefinger.

"Never noticing anything out of the way, the conductor punched a little chunk out of the side of the finger and passed on."

REMAINS THE SAME.

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The flavour of Postum, when boiled according to directions, is always the same—mild, distinctive, and palatable. It contains no harmful substance like caffeine, found in coffee, and hence may be used with benefit at all times.

"Believing that coffee was the cause of my torpid liver, sick headache and misery in many ways," writes an Ind. lady, "I quit and bought a package of Postum about a year ago.

"My husband and I have been so well pleased that we have continued to drink Postum ever since. We like the taste of Postum better than coffee, as it has always the same pleasant flavour, while coffee changes its taste with about every new combination or blend.

"Since using Postum I have had no more attacks of gall colic, the heaviness has left my chest, and the old, common, every-day headache is a thing unknown." "There's a Reason."

Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich. Read "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs.

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.