Anna Katharine Green

THAT AFFAIR NEXT DOOR

&

LOST MAN'S LANE

INTRODUCTION BY CATHERINE ROSS NICKERSON

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INTRODUCTION

Catherine Ross Nickerson

These two detective novels by Anna Katherine Green represent significant developments in the history of women's popular writing, making clear a fact that has become somewhat obscure to us in the present moment: women were central to the history of popular literature and to the development of mass culture at the beginning of the twentieth century. Readers who believe that the American detective novel originated with the hard-boiled school of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler will be surprised to learn that American women in the 1860s took the detective story apparatus famously introduced by Edgar Allan Poe and developed it into a full-blown novelistic form. This female tradition of detective fiction was highly popular in its own day and enjoyed a devoted readership of men and women from the middle and upper classes. It is quite different from either of the styles well known to readers of detective fiction today, the American hard-boiled style and its several offshoots or the British golden-age style and its current variations. Green's novels are a hybrid of the detective story and the domestic novel, an earlier popular genre of women's writing in which both the narrative emphasis and the kinds of crimes that occur are centered around questions of home, family, and women's experience. So close is the connection between these two narrative forms that we can call the tradition domestic detective fiction.

Anna Katharine Green was one of the most successful and acclaimed of these early writers of detective fiction, producing thirty-four novels and four collections of short stories. She was the daughter of a New York City criminal attorney, and it is entirely plausible to speculate that she absorbed some of her knowledge about both crime and the law from living in such a household. Green was educated at a female seminary in Vermont, as befit a daughter of the professional class, and she began to write fiction and poetry in her teenage years. She was thirty-two years old when she published her first novel, *The Leavenworth Case* in 1878, which became the best-selling novel of that year. It is sometimes named as the first detective novel written by a woman, but that honor actually belongs to Metta Fuller Victor's *The Dead Letter* of 1867 (reprinted in a companion volume). Green most likely read Victor's fiction before writing her own, be-

cause several plot details in *The Leavenworth Case* seem to have been inspired by Victor's *The Dead Letter* and *The Figure Eight* (for example, a patriarch shot while writing his will, a neophyte lawyer as amateur detective, an Irish seamstress who knows too much, and heroines with the same name). Green often cited Emile Gaboriau, Poe, and Wilkie Collins as major influences on her writing. She was a highly productive, well-reviewed, and commercially successful author of detective novels, publishing into the 1920s.

Critics and journalists who met and interviewed Green often commented on the paradox of the demure author and her violent subject matter. They also sounded a note of surprise that a woman could craft the technically demanding, intersecting plots of a detective novel, logic and reason being, according to the common sense of the time, the strength of men's minds, not women's. She married unusually late for a woman of her era, at the age of thirty-eight, well after she had established her career. Her husband, Charles Rohlfs, was an actor and a designer of fine furniture, and they raised three children together, eventually moving from Brooklyn to Buffalo. But while Green flouted certain expectations of her Victorian times, she was politically conservative, writing editorials against suffrage for women on the eve of World War I. She thus positioned herself with the "antis," women (generally older women of the moneyed classes) who refused to believe that extending the vote to women was necessary or desirable. Green wrote a letter to the editor of the *New York Times* scolding the young women picketing the White House at a time of national emergency: "A true woman waives her rights in times of stress, whether that stress be domestic or public. If there is one virtue hitherto considered as characteristic of the sex it is that of self-forgetfulness." Green was by no means an extremist, however; she apparently belonged to that strain of conservatism that remained critical of the social and legal inequality of women but unenthusiastic about universal suffrage as a political goal. Many of Green's novels highlight the limited choices offered to women, even women of privilege; one of her favorite types of villain is the man in a position of power over women (wives, daughters, sisters, wards, servants) who abuses that power.

Both *That Affair Next Door* (1897) and *Lost Man's Lane* (1898) are narrated by an amateur detective named Amelia Butterworth. Green is known among connoisseurs of detective fiction as an innovator, apparently the first to use the icicle as a murder weapon that later melts away and a mechanical device that kills from a distance. However, her most significant and influential contribution to the genre is the creation, in Amelia Butterworth, of the spinster detective. Women writers from Agatha Christie and Mary Roberts Rinehart down to present-day authors like Sara Paretsky,

Sue Grafton, and Julie Smith (among dozens of others) have been fascinated by the possibilities of the unmarried woman as crime investigator. The resolutely single woman has appeared as a detective across the whole gamut of murder-mystery styles, from police procedural to feminist hard-boiled, from lesbian private eye to country house and academic. At the time Green introduced Butterworth, the spinster was a highly significant figure in the cultural imagination. In the Victorian era, the old maid was a more or less pitiable character, having failed to marry and find her natural fulfillment in caring for a husband and children. In life and in literature, she was usually economically dependent on her parents and siblings, and her main social currency was her virginal rectitude. She was characterized by her embittered outlook and her nosiness about other people's business. Beginning in the 1920s, a second type of spinster emerged in reality and popular culture: the happily unmarried woman who earned her own salary and made her own choices. Although Amelia Butterworth belongs historically to the category of Victorian old maid, her personal wealth makes all the difference in her social position and worldview, so she thus forecasts the possibility of the happy spinster of the next generation.

Spinsters seem to work well as detectives for several reasons. They are freed from the many chores and responsibilities that would keep full-time wives and mothers busy indoors, so on a practical level they have the time to devote to detective work. Furthermore, while propriety dictated against women moving about in public unescorted by men, spinsters of Butterworth's age and social class had more leeway, since they did not have the reputation of a husband to consider and they were understood to be chaperones rather than those needing to be chaperoned. We see in Butterworth's repertoire of techniques a willingness to trade on the stereotype that makes her out to be foolish and inconsequential, thus allowing her to ease information from unsuspecting suspects. At a more symbolic level, we trust the spinster-detective to look below facades of gentility since she herself is something of an outsider and potential skeptic, especially about the institution of marriage that is such a vexed issue in early detective fiction by women (as see elaborated in *That Affair Next Door*).

Amelia Butterworth is a nosy, opinionated, self-satisfied, and very funny character. The humor she brings to these novels is of two types. One level of amusement is created by her sharp tongue and rather ferocious command of the English language, exemplified in comments such as "I realized it would never do for me to lose my wits in the presence of a man who had none too many of his own." At the same time, Green creates a narrator with such an inflated sense of her own significance that she can refer to one of her less composed moments as "un-Butterworthian," and we smile at the self-delusion and self-approbation throughout her narra-

tive. Yet she is a character we warm to, partly because she does have moments of more humble self-consciousness and mostly because we admire her brains, her tenacity, and her genuine insight into human nature. While she takes quite conservative stances on issues of manners and society, she also voices a pointed critique of male presumptions that we tend to associate with a later period of feminism. From the beginning, it is clear that she is inspired to begin her investigative activities not simply for the noble reason she offers ("my sense of justice") but also because of a desire to prove that women can be detectives if they choose and a specific wish to cut the patronizing police detective, Ebenezer Gryce, down to size. The rivalry between the two detectives manifests itself in energetic verbal sparring, and those sometimes bruising exchanges create the clearest picture of Green's limited but heartfelt challenges to contemporary ideas of "woman's nature."

That Affair Next Door provides a prime example of Green's intricate and ingenious plots. Of course, all detective fiction is structurally complex, since, according to the narrative theorist Tzvetan Todorov, it involves two interlocking plots. One plot, which we follow from the beginning to the end, is the story of the investigation: how and where the body is found, what physical evidence crops up, how the detective questions witnesses and suspects, how accusations and confessions unfold, and what leads to the identification of the murderer. The other plot is the story of the murder (or murders): how it was committed, what motivated it, how the murderer attempted to hide the body, and what other evidence of the crime was left behind. The story of the murder is unknown at the beginning of the novel; it appears in fragmentary form until the detective begins realigning the pieces into a coherent narrative. Only when she or he has a full account of the story can the investigation come to a conclusion. Thus, the goal of one plot is the reconstruction of the other.

This doubled pattern is highly visible in *That Affair Next Door*. When the body of a young woman, her face crushed beyond recognition, is found in the empty mansion of a prominent New York merchant family, this discovery sets in motion a series of linked mistaken identities connected with the question of who killed her and the mystery of who she really was. There are several obstacles to the investigation, and thus the reconstruction of the truth, that involve questions of "women's place." First, the male chauvinism of the police detective, Ebenezer Gryce, infantilizes both Butterworth and a key witness. In recompense, both women withhold crucial information from him, which they eventually put together to solve the crime in concert. Second, various men tell lies to protect the honor of the women in their families (and by extension their own good

reputations). Since being alone in a house with a man not related to her brings shame on a woman and her marriage, one husband refuses to identify the body of his wife lest she appear to have been having an affair when she was murdered, then later claims that he himselfwas at the scene. The third challenge to solving the problem of mistaken identity is the difficulty of reading fine differences between kinds of women, such as those between a lady's maid and a lady's companion and between an adventuress and a young woman eager to please her socially ambitious husband.

The story of the investigation is a story about the way that sexist social constructions obscure the truth and a story of female intelligence and experience triumphant. While at certain points some of the female characters come under suspicion, the story of the murder is at bottom about male treachery and hard-heartedness. Without spoiling too many of the satisfying plot twists of the novel, I can say that the novel sets up parallel cases where men get rid of wives who present social obstacles of one sort or another. In that way, it resembles Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* (1925), a better-remembered account of murder for social advancement that portrays the dark side of masculine dreams of upward mobility. Green offers a lively portrait of New York's neighborhoods as seen through upper-class eyes, with midnight trips to a Chinese laundry and visits to a middle-brow boarding house. But she locates violent crime in Gramercy Park, among the merchant class, and attributes it to male ruthlessness, and that location and attribution of villainy constitute the core of her social critique.

Social climbing, the source of so much trouble in this book, was a source of great anxiety in the decades bridging the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This anxiety was largely a response to an increasing heterogeneity in American society, especially in cities, that was the effect of several events and economic processes: the emancipation of enslaved African Americans; the successive waves of immigration from Europe and Asia that had begun in the 1840s; the internal migration from rural to urban areas as capitalism consolidated and matured after the Gilded Age; and the development of a professional elite that had to be qualified by education, not simply by birth. *That Affair Next Door* documents both the increasing ease with which people could acquire at least a facsimile of the markers of high social class and the growing danger that unscrupulous hoi polloi could exploit the generosity of the genteel. One important identity switch in the novel is facilitated by the availability of well-made but utterly generic clothing in new department stores like Altman's, and one woman's overweaning ambition is revealed by her extravagant hand-stitched undergarments. The novel also reflects the the confusion about the merits of social mobility or progress in the 1890s: on one side, we have an extremely

unpleasant arriviste family in the Van Burnams and a psychopathological social climber in John Randolph. But at the end of the novel, Butterworth decides that the efforts of Olive Randolph (a former suspect) to increase her social status are quite noble; she brings Olive to live in her Gramercy Park mansion as something like an adopted daughter. An important part of Butterworth's role, then, is the performance of a kind of class hygiene; her investigation centers on questions of physical and social identity, and the book's resolution comes when everyone is installed in his or her correct place.

That Affair Next Door is narrated almost entirely in a realistic mode, with one notable exception—the moment when Olive Randolph takes a role from the gothic novel, the ghostly bride. Such gothic moments appear throughout Green's work and are signs of the link in her writing to the powerful female tradition in fiction and poetry. That connection—including coded letters, locked rooms, secret wills, trapdoors, graves in the basement, and muttering crones—may puzzle some readers, but it makes sense when we recall that the origins of all styles of detective fiction lie in the work of Edgar Allan Poe. The gothic, long assigned a second-tier status by literary critics and academics, was reclaimed as a significant tradition by the literary critics Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in their 1979 landmark study *The Madwoman in the Attic*. Their argument that the Anglo-American gothic mode is an expression of two emotional states culturally forbidden to women, anger and desire, has inspired a great deal of feminist scholarship; the most recent and sophisticated examinations of this mode in American literature and culture have come from the historian Karen Halttunen and the literary critic Teresa Goddu, who argue that the gothic imaginary is woven tightly into the public and artistic discourses of the nineteenth century.

Lost Man's Lane, the second novel featuring Butterworth, is one of Green's most thoroughly gothicized works. It is primarily a vehicle for Butterworth and lacks the tight plotting of *That Affair Next Door*; but is nevertheless a very interesting study in the psychology of female detecting. Butterworth is called in on a disturbing case by Detective Gryce, who has developed a sort of bemused admiration for her skills after her work on the murder case in *That Affair Next Door*. To investigate a string of disappearances in a small town in New York state, Butterworth makes an apparently sentimental visit to the adult children of her best friend from school, lately deceased. They live in a huge, run-down old mansion in the lane where the nighttime abductions seem to occur, and the novel quickly takes a turn into the realm of the haunted house tale. Butterworth finds many things amiss in the household, which includes the two rather timid daughters of her late friend and their disagreeable brother, who cares only

for the company of his monstrous dogs. The hospitality is meager and the house is in serious disrepair, with many rooms closed off and the gardens grown into thickets of briars and weeds. Muffled voices and furtive comings and goings each night change Butterworth's annoyance into a deep apprehensiveness. The children quickly emerge as prime suspects in the disappearances, especially when Butterworth sees them bury a body in the basement. Butterworth's loyalties are in conflict throughout her investigation of the goings-on in the town; she is increasingly alarmed by the possibility that these young people are killers, and yet she feels a growing desire to at least protect the girls.

Butterworth's job is to figure out what is happening under the poorly maintained facade of gentility in the Knollys mansion and in the other households in the lane. Her investigation requires equal parts courage and perspicacity. In the end it turns out that the murderer is a very unlikely suspect indeed: "He was one of those maniacs who have perfect control over themselves and pass for very decent sort of men except in the moment of triumph . . . almost his sole reward for the horrible crimes he had perpetrated was in the mystery surrounding his victims and the entire immunity from suspicion." The discovery that a respectable, even exemplary, male has the capacity to cause horrible suffering is one of Green's recurrent themes, and it is one of the ways that she critiques the inequality of men and women in her time. The murderer in this story is someone who relishes controlling both nature and people, and his motive for murder is the sheer "delight in the thought that the victims he saw vanish before his eyes were so many encumbrances wiped off the face of the earth by a sweep of his hand."

While there are many gothic elements in the story, including the undetectable psychopath, the gothicism of the novel centers on issues of female imprisonment. All of the female characters in the story are trapped in one way or another: Butterworth's friend Althea Knollys is banished and blackmailed under threat of incarceration; her daughter Lucetta has to give up a chance to go abroad with the man she loves because of her duty to the family, a duty that also ties Loreen to the gloomy homestead; Mother Jane is afraid to go more than forty rods from her front door; one woman narrowly escapes live burial in a dry well; and even Butterworth gets locked into her room by her hosts. Readers will note how often the injunction against women walking alone in Lost Man's Lane is repeated, and it seems to be about something more than the danger of a maniac on the loose. At one point in her investigation, Butterworth wants to cross the lane to talk to another woman whose house is being searched by the police. She hesitates before doing so, asking the Knollys sisters if she would make herself "conspicuous" by stepping across the road. Butterworth is putting

on a bit of a show of primness here, but the point is that this would be a reasonable concern for a woman of her class to have. The novel thus reminds us how norms of modesty severely limited the mobility of middle-class women. In Green's hands, the fear and dread evoked through the gothic become a commentary on the way women's lives are wasted in a kind of live burial of conformity and enclosure.

Althea Knollys's life is a tragedy of that kind. According to one of their neighbors, the Knollys women have been unhappy for generations, and Althea's story shows the extent to which shame can trap a woman and then her daughters. Lucetta and Loreen are bound to live in penury to make up for their mother's greedy mistake and later are driven to desperate acts to shield her from imprisonment. Althea's desire to be fashionable makes her a bad mother and eventually makes her dependent on her children in an unfair role reversal. In that way her story echoes the story of one of her ancestors, who greedily loved the same man as her daughter and finally committed suicide after banishing the girl. Such an incident of maternal selfishness is powerful enough to inspire a local legend about a phantom coach that appears periodically with her corpse, bringing bad luck to all who see it. The idea that greed and desire deform the maternal relationship, making it frightening and strange, is echoed in a small way in the mutterings of Mother Jane, the weird crone obsessed with money and the belief that her long-dead daughter will return to her.

The Knollys children, then, have been poorly mothered, at least from late childhood on. The effect is seen most clearly in William, whose general crudeness manifests itself in very strange hobbies and a complete unwillingness to contribute to the upkeep of the home. As part of her work as a woman detective, Butterworth steps in as a mother figure, as she did in *That Affair Next Door*. She first works on William's manners and lack of interest in his estate, then supplies all that the Knollys sisters need to have a proper wedding. She models a correct class affect for them and restores their proper relation to property, money, and social ritual, all of which have disintegrated in their mother's absence. Although she and Althea Knollys were girlhood friends, they were always opposites; in adulthood, the spinster proves a better teacher of the values of the landed class than the married mother with a reckless spirit.

Yet the novel does not judge Althea too harshly. In an epilogue, fragments from Althea's diary describe her isolation and alienation in that large house during the early years of her marriage. (They also give us a final set of gothic thrills in the foreshadowing of her burial and her journey in the phantom coach.) Here, Green makes a point of letting women tell their own stories, as she does when Olive Randolph explains her version of events in an extended letter in *That Affair Next Door*. In both novels,

women also make an effort to control the pace at which the investigation unfolds. Pointing out that Lucetta is behaving just like Olive when she refuses to tell Gryce whom she suspects and insists on having time to investigate in her own way, Butterworth admires the tenacity of women who want to retain control of their insights and ideas. These parallels between the novels suggest that even as Green shaped American popular culture with her enormously successful string of detective novels, she still felt that writing women's experience had to be a conscious effort, even a struggle.

In Amelia Butterworth, Green created an engaging mix of iconoclasm and rectitude. One of the functions of the detective in any style of detective fiction is the arbitration of morality, and Amelia Butterworth continues the work of moral hygiene that is the central concern of the midcentury domestic novel and the reform culture it expressed. In both *That Affair Next Door* and *Lost Man's Lane*, Butterworth is presented with households in physical, emotional, and moral disarray, and her strength as a detective lies in her ability to notice what is wrong and in her zeal for setting things right. In that sense, her somewhat transgressive yen for criminal investigation is only an extension of the kind of work women of her class and station were expected to do. The genteel woman's habits of close observation of dress, manner, and housekeeping, as well as her skills in fault finding and chastisement, translate readily into the detective's work of surveillance, suspicion, and accusation. In the first decades of the domestic detective tradition, during which Green's previous novels and the novels of Metta Fuller Victor were published, the home was presented as a place in need of investigation by male detectives assigned to root out hypocrisy and the abuse of power, especially as they affected women's lives. Green put a finer point on the gender politics of that construction by introducing a female detective, the logic of which even Gryce acknowledges when he applauds her "women's eyes for women's matters." These two Amelia Butterworth novels should serve as vivid records of the way in which articulation of women's perspectives and definitions of women's business were expanding at the beginning of the twentieth century.

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THAT AFFAIR NEXT DOOR

BY

ANNA KATHARINE GREEN

(MRS. CHARLES ROHLFS)

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Book I

MISS BUTTERWORTH'S WINDOW

I. *A Discovery*

I am not an inquisitive woman, but when, in the middle of a certain warm night in September, I heard a carriage draw up at the adjoining house and stop, I could not resist the temptation of leaving my bed and taking a peep through the curtains of my window.

First: because the house was empty, or supposed to be so, the family still being, as I had every reason to believe, in Europe; and secondly: because, not being inquisitive, I often miss in my lonely and single life much that it would be both interesting and profitable for me to know.

Luckily I made no such mistake this evening. I rose and looked out, and though I was far from realizing it at the time, took, by so doing, my first step in a course of inquiry which has ended——

But it is too soon to speak of the end. Rather let me tell you what I saw when I parted the curtains of my window in Gramercy Park, on the night of September 17, 1895.

Not much at first glance, only a common hack drawn up at the neighboring curb-stone. The lamp which is supposed to light our part of the block is some rods away on the opposite side of the street, so that I obtained but a shadowy glimpse of a young man and woman standing below me on the pavement. I could see, however, that the woman—and not the man—was putting money into the driver's hand. The next moment they were on the stoop of this long-closed house, and the coach rolled off.

It was dark, as I have said, and I did not recognize the young people,—at least their figures were not familiar to me; but when, in another instant, I heard the click of a night-key, and saw them, after a rather tedious fumbling at the lock, disappear from the stoop, I took it for granted that

the gentleman was Mr. Van Burnam's eldest son Franklin, and the lady some relative of the family; though why this, its most punctilious member, should bring a guest at so late an hour into a house devoid of everything necessary to make the least exacting visitor comfortable, was a mystery that I retired to bed to meditate upon.

I did not succeed in solving it, however, and after some ten minutes had elapsed, I was settling myself again to sleep when I was re-aroused by a fresh sound from the quarter mentioned. The door I had so lately heard shut, opened again, and though I had to rush for it, I succeeded in getting to my window in time to catch a glimpse of the departing figure of the young man hurrying away towards Broadway. The young woman was not with him, and as I realized that he had left her behind him in the great, empty house, without apparent light and certainly without any companion, I began to question if this was like Franklin Van Burnam. Was it not more in keeping with the recklessness of his more easy-natured and less reliable brother, Howard, who, some two or three years back, had married a young wife of no very satisfactory antecedents, and who, as I had heard, had been ostracized by the family in consequence?

Whichever of the two it was, he had certainly shown but little consideration for his companion, and thus thinking, I fell off to sleep just as the clock struck the half hour after midnight.

Next morning as soon as modesty would permit me to approach the window, I surveyed the neighboring house minutely. Not a blind was open, nor a shutter displaced. As I am an early riser, this did not disturb me at the time, but when after breakfast I looked again and still failed to detect any evidences of life in the great barren front beside me, I began to feel uneasy. But I did nothing till noon, when going into my rear garden and observing that the back windows of the Van Burnam house were as closely shuttered as the front, I became so anxious that I stopped the next policeman I saw going by, and telling him my suspicions, urged him to ring the bell.

No answer followed the summons.

"There is no one here," said he.

"Ring again!" I begged.

And he rang again but with no better result.

"Don't you see that the house is shut up?" he grumbled. "We have had orders to watch the place, but none to take the watch off."

"There is a young woman inside," I insisted. "The more I think over last night's occurrence, the more I am convinced that the matter should be looked into."

He shrugged his shoulders and was moving away when we both observed a common-looking woman standing in front looking at us. She had

a bundle in her hand, and her face, unnaturally ruddy though it was, had a scared look which was all the more remarkable from the fact that it was one of those wooden-like countenances which under ordinary circumstances are capable of but little expression. She was not a stranger to me; that is, I had seen her before in or about the house in which we were at that moment so interested; and not stopping to put any curb on my excitement, I rushed down to the pavement and accosted her.

"Who are you?" I asked. "Do you work for the Van Burnams, and do you know who the lady was who came here last night?"

The poor woman, either startled by my sudden address or by my manner which may have been a little sharp, gave a quick bound backward, and was only deterred by the near presence of the policeman from attempting flight. As it was, she stood her ground, though the fiery flush, which made her face so noticeable, deepened till her cheeks and brow were scarlet.

"I am the scrub-woman," she protested. "I have come to open the windows and air the house,"—ignoring my last question.

"Is the family coming home?" the policeman asked.

"I don't know; I think so," was her weak reply.

"Have you the keys?" I now demanded, seeing her fumbling in her pocket.

She did not answer; a sly look displaced the anxious one she had hitherto displayed, and she turned away.

"I don't see what business it is of the neighbors," she muttered, throwing me a dissatisfied scowl over her shoulder.

"If you 've got the keys, we will go in and see that things are all right," said the policeman, stopping her with a light touch.

She trembled; I saw that she trembled, and naturally became excited. Something was wrong in the Van Burnam mansion, and I was going to be present at its discovery. But her next words cut my hopes short.

"I have no objection to *your* going in," she said to the policeman, "but I will not give up my keys to *her*. What right has she in our house any way." And I thought I heard her murmur something about a meddlesome old maid.

The look which I received from the policeman convinced me that my ears had not played me false.

"The lady 's right," he declared; and pushing by me quite disrespectfully, he led the way to the basement door, into which he and the so-called cleaner presently disappeared.

I waited in front. I felt it to be my duty to do so. The various passers-by stopped an instant to stare at me before proceeding on their way, but I did not flinch from my post. Not till I had heard that the young woman whom I had seen enter these doors at midnight was well, and that her delay in

opening the windows was entirely due to fashionable laziness, would I feel justified in returning to my own home and its affairs. But it took patience and some courage to remain there. Several minutes elapsed before I perceived the shutters in the third story open, and a still longer time before a window on the second floor flew up and the policeman looked out, only to meet my inquiring gaze and rapidly disappear again.

Meantime three or four persons had stopped on the walk near me, the nucleus of a crowd which would not be long in collecting, and I was beginning to feel I was paying dearly for my virtuous resolution, when the front door burst violently open and we caught sight of the trembling form and shocked face of the scrub-woman.

"She 's dead!" she cried, "she 's dead! Murder!" and would have said more had not the policeman pulled her back, with a growl which sounded very much like a suppressed oath.

He would have shut the door upon me had I not been quicker than lightning. As it was, I got in before it slammed, and happily too; for just at that moment the house-cleaner, who had grown paler every instant, fell in a heap in the entry, and the policeman, who was not the man I would want about me in any trouble, seemed somewhat embarrassed by this new emergency, and let me lift the poor thing up and drag her farther into the hall.

She had fainted, and should have had something done for her, but anxious though I always am to be of help where help is needed, I had no sooner got within range of the parlor door with my burden, than I beheld a sight so terrifying that I involuntarily let the poor woman slip from my arms to the floor.

In the darkness of a dim corner (for the room had no light save that which came through the doorway where I stood) lay the form of a woman under a fallen piece of furniture. Her skirts and distended arms alone were visible; but no one who saw the rigid outlines of her limbs could doubt for a moment that she was dead.

At a sight so dreadful, and, in spite of all my apprehensions, so unexpected, I felt a sensation of sickness which in another moment might have ended in my fainting also, if I had not realized that it would never do for me to lose my wits in the presence of a man who had none too many of his own. So I shook off my momentary weakness, and turning to the policeman, who was hesitating between the unconscious figure of the woman outside the door and the dead form of the one within I cried sharply:

"Come, man, to business! The woman inside there is dead, but this one is living. Fetch me a pitcher of water from below if you can, and then go for whatever assistance you need. I 'll wait here and bring this woman to. She is a strong one, and it won't take long."

"You 'll stay here alone with that ——" he began.

But I stopped him with a look of disdain.

"Of course I will stay here; why not? Is there anything in the dead to be afraid of? Save me from the living, and I undertake to save myself from the dead."

But his face had grown very suspicious.

"You go for the water," he cried. "And see here! Just call out for some one to telephone to Police Headquarters for the Coroner and a detective. I don't quit this room till one or the other of them comes."

Smiling at a caution so very ill-timed, but abiding by my invariable rule of never arguing with a man unless I see some way of getting the better of him, I did what he bade me, though I hated dreadfully to leave the spot and its woful mystery, even for so short a time as was required.

"Run up to the second story," he called out, as I passed by the prostrate figure of the cleaner. "Tell them what you want from the window, or we will have the whole street in here."

So I ran upstairs,—I had always wished to visit this house, but had never been encouraged to do so by the Misses Van Burnam,—and making my way into the front room, the door of which stood wide open, I rushed to the window and hailed the crowd, which by this time extended far out beyond the curb-stone.

"An officer!" I called out, "a police officer! An accident has occurred and the man in charge here wants the Coroner and a detective from Police Headquarters."

"Who 's hurt?" "Is it a man?" "Is it a woman?" shouted up one or two; and "Let us in!" shouted others; but the sight of a boy rushing off to meet an advancing policeman satisfied me that help would soon be forthcoming, so I drew in my head and looked about me for the next necessity—water.

I was in a lady's bed-chamber, probably that of the eldest Miss Van Burnam; but it was a bed-chamber which had not been occupied for some months, and naturally it lacked the very articles which would have been of assistance to me in the present emergency. No *eau de Cologne* on the bureau, no camphor on the mantel-shelf. But there was water in the pipes (something I had hardly hoped for), and a mug on the washstand; so I filled the mug and ran with it to the door, stumbling, as I did so, over some small object which I presently perceived to be a little round pin-cushion. Picking it up, for I hate anything like disorder, I placed it on a table near by, and continued on my way.

The woman was still lying at the foot of the stairs. I dashed the water in her face and she immediately came to.

Sitting up, she was about to open her lips when she checked herself; a

fact which struck me as odd, though I did not allow my surprise to become apparent.

Meantime I stole a glance into the parlor. The officer was standing where I had left him, looking down on the prostrate figure before him.

There was no sign of feeling in his heavy countenance, and he had not opened a shutter, nor, so far as I could see, disarranged an object in the room.

The mysterious character of the whole affair fascinated me in spite of myself, and leaving the now fully aroused woman in the hall, I was halfway across the parlor floor when the latter stopped me with a shrill cry:

"Don't leave me! I have never seen anything before so horrible. The poor dear! The poor dear! Why don't he take those dreadful things off her?"

She alluded not only to the piece of furniture which had fallen upon the prostrate woman, and which can best be described as a cabinet with closets below and shelves above, but to the various articles of *bric-a-brac* which had tumbled from the shelves, and which now lay in broken pieces about her.

"He will do so; they will do so very soon," I replied. "He is waiting for some one with more authority than himself; for the Coroner, if you know what that means."

"But what if she 's alive! Those things will crush her. Let us take them off. I 'll help. I 'm not too weak to help."

"Do you know who this person is?" I asked, for her voice had more feeling in it than I thought natural to the occasion, dreadful as it was.

"I?" she repeated, her weak eyelids quivering for a moment as she tried to sustain my scrutiny. "How should I know? I came in with the policeman and have n't been any nearer than I now be. What makes you think I know anything about her? I 'm only the scrub-woman, and don't even know the names of the family."

"I thought you seemed so very anxious," I explained, suspicious of her suspiciousness, which was of so sly and emphatic a character that it changed her whole bearing from one of fear to one of cunning in a moment.

"And who would n't feel the like of that for a poor creature lying crushed under a heap of broken crockery!"

Crockery! those Japanese vases worth hundreds of dollars! that ormulu clock and those Dresden figures which must have been more than a couple of centuries old!

"It 's a poor sense of duty that keeps a man standing dumb and staring like that, when with a lift of his hand he could show us the like of her pretty face, and if it 's dead she be or alive."

As this burst of indignation was natural enough and not altogether uncalled for from the standpoint of humanity, I gave the woman a nod of approval, and wished I were a man myself that I might lift the heavy cabinet or whatever it was that lay upon the poor creature before us. But not being a man, and not judging it wise to irritate the one representative of that sex then present, I made no remark, but only took a few steps farther into the room, followed, as it afterwards appeared, by the scrub-woman.

The Van Burnam parlors are separated by an open arch. It was to the right of this arch and in the corner opposite the doorway that the dead woman lay. Using my eyes, now that I was somewhat accustomed to the semi-darkness enveloping us, I noticed two or three facts which had hitherto escaped me. One was, that she lay on her back with her feet pointing towards the hall door, and another, that nowhere in the room, save in her immediate vicinity, were there to be seen any signs of struggle or disorder. All was as set and proper as in my own parlor when it has been undisturbed for any length of time by guests; and though I could not see far into the rooms beyond, they were to all appearance in an equally orderly condition.

Meanwhile the cleaner was trying to account for the overturned cabinet.

"Poor dear! poor dear! she must have pulled it over on herself! But however did she get into the house? And what was she doing in this great empty place?"

The policeman, to whom these remarks had evidently been addressed, growled out some unintelligible reply, and in her perplexity the woman turned towards me.

But what could I say to her? I had my own private knowledge of the matter, but she was not one to confide in, so I stoically shook my head. Doubly disappointed, the poor thing shrank back, after looking first at the policeman and then at me in an odd, appealing way, difficult to understand. Then her eyes fell again on the dead girl at her feet, and being nearer now than before, she evidently saw something that startled her, for she sank on her knees with a little cry and began examining the girl's skirts.

"What are you looking at there?" growled the policeman. "Get up, can't you! No one but the Coroner has right to lay hand on anything here."

"I 'm doing no harm," the woman protested, in an odd, shaking voice. "I only wanted to see what the poor thing had on. Some blue stuff, is n't it?" she asked me.

"Blue serge," I answered; "store-made, but very good; must have come from Altman's or Stern's."

"I—I 'm not used to sights like this," stammered the scrub-woman, stumbling awkwardly to her feet, and looking as if her few remaining wits

had followed the rest on an endless vacation. "I—I think I shall have to go home." But she did not move.

"The poor dear's young, is n't she?" she presently insinuated, with an odd catch in her voice that gave to the question an air of hesitation and doubt.

"I think she is younger than either you or myself," I deigned to reply. "Her narrow pointed shoes show she has not reached the years of discretion."

"Yes, yes, so they do!" ejaculated the cleaner, eagerly—too eagerly for perfect ingenuousness. "That's why I said 'Poor dear!' and spoke of her pretty face. I am sorry for young folks when they get into trouble, aint you? You and me might lie here and no one be much the worse for it, but a sweet lady like this——"

This was not very flattering to me, but I was prevented from rebuking her by a prolonged shout from the stoop without, as a rush was made against the front door, followed by a shrill peal of the bell.

"Man from Headquarters," stolidly announced the policeman. "Open the door, ma'am; or step back into the further hall if you want me to do it."

Such rudeness was uncalled for; but considering myself too important a witness to show feeling, I swallowed my indignation and proceeded with all my native dignity to the front door.

II. *Questions*

As I did so, I could catch the murmur of the crowd outside as it seethed forward at the first intimation of the door being opened; but my attention was not so distracted by it, loud as it sounded after the quiet of the shut-up house, that I failed to notice that the door had not been locked by the gentleman leaving the night before, and that, consequently, only the night latch was on. With a turn of the knob it opened, showing me the mob of shouting boys and the forms of two gentlemen awaiting admittance on the door-step. I frowned at the mob and smiled on the gentlemen, one of whom was portly and easy-going in appearance, and the other spare, with a touch of severity in his aspect. But for some reason these gentlemen did not seem to appreciate the honor I had done them, for they both gave me a displeased glance; which was so odd and unsympathetic in its character that I bridled a little, though I soon returned to my natural manner. Did they realize at the first glance that I was destined to prove a thorn in the sides of every one connected with this matter, for days to come?

"Are you the woman who called from the window?" asked the larger of the two, whose business here I found it difficult at first to determine.

"I am," was my perfectly self-possessed reply. "I live next door and my presence here is due to the anxious interest I always take in my neighbors. I had reason to think that all was not as it should be in this house, and I was right. Look in the parlor, sirs."

They were already as far as the threshold of that room and needed no further encouragement to enter. The heavier man went first and the other followed, and you may be sure I was not far behind. The sight meeting our eyes was ghastly enough, as you know; but these men were evidently accustomed to ghastly sights, for they showed but little emotion.

"I thought this house was empty," observed the second gentleman, who was evidently a doctor.

"So it was till last night," I put in; and was about to tell my story, when I felt my skirts jerked.

Turning, I found that this warning had come from the cleaner who stood close beside me.

"What do you want?" I asked, not understanding her and having nothing to conceal.

"I?" she faltered, with a frightened air. "Nothing, ma'am, nothing."

"Then don't interrupt me," I harshly admonished her, annoyed at an interference that tended to throw suspicion upon my candor. "This woman came here to scrub and clean," I now explained; "it was by means of the key she carried that we were enabled to get into the house. I never spoke to her till a half hour ago."

At which, with a display of subtlety I was far from expecting in one of her appearance, she let her emotions take a fresh direction, and pointing towards the dead woman, she impetuously cried:

"But the poor child there! Aint you going to take those things off of her? It 's wicked to leave her under all that stuff. Suppose there was life in her!"

"Oh! there 's no hope of that," muttered the doctor, lifting one of the hands, and letting it fall again.

"Still—" he cast a side look at his companion, who gave him a meaning nod—"it might be well enough to lift this cabinet sufficiently for me to lay my hand on her heart."

They accordingly did this; and the doctor, leaning down, placed his hand over the poor bruised breast.

"No life," he murmured. "She has been dead some hours. Do you think we had better release the head?" he went on, glancing up at the portly man at his side.

But the latter, who was rapidly growing serious, made a slight protest with his finger, and turning to me, inquired, with sudden authority:

"What did you mean when you said that the house had been empty till last night?"

"Just what I said, sir. It was empty till about midnight, when two persons——" Again I felt my dress twitched, this time very cautiously. What did the woman want? Not daring to give her a look, for these men were only too ready to detect harm in everything I did, I gently drew my skirt away and took a step aside, going on as if no interruption had occurred. "Did I say persons? I should have said a man and a woman drove up to the house and entered. I saw them from my window."

"You did?" murmured my interlocutor, whom I had by this time decided to be a detective. "And this is the woman, I suppose?" he proceeded, pointing to the poor creature lying before us.

"Why, yes, of course. Who else can she be? I did not see the lady's face last night, but she was young and light on her feet, and ran up the stoop gaily."

"And the man? Where is the man? I don't see him here."

"I am not surprised at that. He went very soon after he came, not ten minutes after, I should say. That is what alarmed me and caused me to have the house investigated. It did not seem natural or like any of the Van Burnams to leave a woman to spend the night in so large a house alone."

"You know the Van Burnams?"

"Not well. But that don't signify. I know what report says of them; they are gentlemen."

"But Mr. Van Burnam is in Europe."

"He has two sons."

"Living here?"

"No; the unmarried one spends his nights at Long Branch, and the other is with his wife somewhere in Connecticut."

"How did the young couple you saw get in last night? Was there any one here to admit them?"

"No; the gentleman had a key."

"Ah, he had a key."

The tone in which this was said recurred to me afterwards, but at the moment I was much more impressed by a peculiar sound I heard behind me, something between a gasp and a click in the throat, which came I knew from the scrub-woman, and which, odd and contradictory as it may appear, struck me as an expression of satisfaction, though what there was in my admission to give satisfaction to this poor creature I could not conjecture. Moving so as to get a glimpse of her face, I went on with the grim self-possession natural to my character:

"And when he came out he walked briskly away. The carriage had not waited for him."

"Ah!" again muttered the gentleman, picking up one of the broken pieces of china which lay haphazard about the floor, while I studied the cleaner's face, which, to my amazement, gave evidences of a confusion of emotions most unaccountable to me.

Mr. Gryce may have noticed this too, for he immediately addressed her, though he continued to look at the broken piece of china in his hand.

"And how come you to be cleaning the house?" he asked. "Is the family coming home?"

"They are, sir," she answered, hiding her emotion with great skill the moment she perceived attention directed to herself, and speaking with a sudden volubility that made us all stare. "They are expected any day. I did n't know it till yesterday—was it yesterday? No, the day before—when young Mr. Franklin—he is the oldest son, sir, and a very nice man, a *very* nice man—sent me word by letter that I was to get the house ready. It is n't the first time I have done it for them, sir, and as soon as I could get the basement key from the agent, I came here, and worked all day yesterday, washing up the floors and dusting. I should have been at them again this morning if my husband had n't been sick. But I had to go to the infirmary for medicine, and it was noon when I got here, and then I found this lady standing outside with a policeman, a very nice lady, a very *nice* lady indeed, sir, I pay my respects to her"—and she actually dropped me a curtsey like a peasant woman in a play—"and they took my key from me, and the policeman opens the door, and he and me go upstairs and into all the rooms, and when we come to this one——"

She was getting so excited as to be hardly intelligible. Stopping herself with a jerk, she fumbled nervously with her apron, while I asked myself how she could have been at work in this house the day before without my knowing it. Suddenly I remembered that I was ill in the morning and busy in the afternoon at the Orphan Asylum, and somewhat relieved at finding so excellent an excuse for my ignorance, I looked up to see if the detective had noticed anything odd in this woman's behavior. Presumably he had, but having more experience than myself with the susceptibility of ignorant persons in the presence of danger and distress, he attached less importance to it than I did, for which I was secretly glad, without exactly knowing my reasons for being so.

"You will be wanted as a witness by the Coroner's jury," he now remarked to her, looking as if he were addressing the piece of china he was turning over in his hand. "Now, no nonsense!" he protested, as she commenced to tremble and plead. "You were the first one to see this dead woman, and you must be on hand to say so. As I cannot tell you when the

inquest will be held, you had better stay around till the Coroner comes. He 'll be here soon. You, and this other woman too."

By other woman he meant *me*, Miss Butterworth, of Colonial ancestry and no inconsiderable importance in the social world. But though I did not relish this careless association of myself with this poor scrub-woman, I was careful to show no displeasure, for I reasoned that as witnesses we were equal before the law, and that it was solely in this light he regarded us.

There was something in the manner of both these gentlemen which convinced me that while my presence was considered desirable in the house, it was not especially wanted in the room. I was therefore moving reluctantly away, when I felt a slight but peremptory touch on the arm, and turning, saw the detective at my side, still studying his piece of china.

He was, as I have said, of portly build and benevolent aspect; a fatherly-looking man, and not at all the person one would be likely to associate with the police. Yet he could take the lead very naturally, and when he spoke, I felt bound to answer him.

"Will you be so good, madam, as to relate over again, what you saw from your window last night? I am likely to have charge of this matter, and would be pleased to hear all you may have to say concerning it."

"My name is Butterworth," I politely intimated.

"And my name is Gryce."

"A detective?"

"The same."

"You must think this matter very serious," I ventured.

"Death by violence is always serious."

"You must regard this death as something more than an accident, I mean."

His smile seemed to say: "You will not know to-day how I regard it."

"And you will not know to-day what I think of it either," was my inward rejoinder, but I said nothing aloud, for the man was seventy-five if he was a day, and I have been taught respect for age, and have practised the same for fifty years and more.

I must have shown what was passing in my mind, and he must have seen it reflected on the polished surface of the porcelain he was contemplating, for his lips showed the shadow of a smile sufficiently sarcastic for me to see that he was far from being as easy-natured as his countenance indicated.

"Come, come," said he, "there is the Coroner now. Say what you have to say, like the straightforward, honest woman you appear."

"I don't like compliments," I snapped out. Indeed, they have always been obnoxious to me. As if there was any merit in being honest and straightforward, or any distinction in being told so!

"I am Miss Butterworth, and not in the habit of being spoken to as if

I were a simple countrywoman," I objected. "But I will repeat what I saw last night, as it is no secret, and the telling of it won't hurt me and may help you."

Accordingly I went over the whole story, and was much more loquacious than I had intended to be, his manner was so insinuating and his inquiries so pertinent. But one topic we both failed to broach, and that was the peculiar manner of the scrub-woman. Perhaps it had not struck him as peculiar and perhaps it should not have struck me so, but in the silence which was preserved on the subject I felt I had acquired an advantage over him, which might lead to consequences of no small importance. Would I have felt thus or congratulated myself quite so much upon my fancied superiority, if I had known he was the man who managed the Leavenworth case, and who in his early years had experienced that very wonderful adventure on the staircase of the Heart's Delight? Perhaps I would; for though I have had no adventures, I feel capable of them, and as for any peculiar acumen he may have shown in his long and eventful career, why that is a quality which others may share with him, as I hope to be able to prove before finishing these pages.

III. *Amelia Discovers Herself*

There is a small room at the extremity of the Van Burnam mansion. In this I took refuge after my interview with Mr. Gryce. As I picked out the chair which best suited me and settled myself for a comfortable communion with my own thoughts, I was astonished to find how much I was enjoying myself, notwithstanding the thousand and one duties awaiting me on the other side of the party-wall.

Even this very solitude was welcome, for it gave me an opportunity to consider matters. I had not known up to this very hour that I had any special gifts. My father, who was a shrewd man of the old New England type, said more times than I am years old (which was not saying it as often as some may think) that Araminta (the name I was christened by, and the name you will find in the Bible record, though I sign myself Amelia, and insist upon being addressed as Amelia, being, as I hope, a sensible woman and not the piece of antiquated sentimentality suggested by the former cognomen)—that Araminta would live to make her mark; though in what capacity he never informed me, being, as I have observed, a shrewd man, and thus not likely to thoughtlessly commit himself.

I now know he was right; my pretensions dating from the moment I found that this affair, at first glance so simple, and at the next so com-

plicated, had aroused in me a fever of investigation which no reasoning could allay. Though I had other and more personal matters on my mind, my thoughts would rest nowhere but on the details of this tragedy; and having, as I thought, noticed some few facts in connection with it, from which conclusions might be drawn, I amused myself with jotting them down on the back of a disputed grocer's bill I happened to find in my pocket.

Valueless as explaining this tragedy, being founded upon insufficient evidence, they may be interesting as showing the workings of my mind even at this early stage of the matter. They were drawn up under three heads.

First, was the death of this young woman an accident?

Second, was it a suicide?

Third, was it a murder?

Under the first head I wrote:

My reasons for not thinking it an accident.

1. If it had been an accident and she had pulled the cabinet over upon herself, she would have been found with her feet pointing towards the wall where the cabinet had stood.

(But her feet were towards the door and her head under the cabinet.)

2. The decent, even precise, arrangement of the clothing about her feet, which precludes any theory involving accident.

Under the second:

Reason for not thinking it suicide.

She could not have been found in the position observed without having lain down on the floor while living and then pulled the shelves down upon herself.

(A theory obviously too improbable to be considered.)

Under the third:

Reason for not thinking it murder.

She would need to have been held down on the floor while the cabinet was being pulled over on her; something which the quiet aspect of the hands and feet made appear impossible.

To this I added:

Reasons for accepting the theory of murder.

1. The fact that she did not go into the house alone; that a man entered with her, remained ten minutes, and then came out again and disappeared up the street with every appearance of haste and an anxious desire to leave the spot.

2. The front door, which he had unlocked on entering, was not locked by him on his departure, the catch doing the locking. Yet, though he could have reentered so easily, he had shown no disposition to return.

3. The arrangement of the skirts, which show the touch of a careful hand after death.

Nothing clear, you see. I was doubtful of all; and yet my suspicions tended most toward murder.

I had eaten my luncheon before interfering in this matter, which was fortunate for me, as it was three o'clock before I was summoned to meet the Coroner, of whose arrival I had been conscious some time before.

He was in the front parlor where the dead girl lay, and as I took my way thither I felt the same sensations of faintness which had so nearly overcome me on the previous occasion. But I mastered them, and was quite myself before I crossed the threshold.

There were several gentlemen present, but of them all I only noticed two, one of whom I took to be the Coroner, while the other was my late interlocutor, Mr. Gryce. From the animation observable in the latter, I gathered that the case was growing in interest from the detective standpoint.

"Ah, and is this the witness?" asked the Coroner, as I stepped into the room.

"I am Miss Butterworth," was my calm reply. "*Amelia* Butterworth. Living next door and present at the discovery of this poor murdered body."

"Murdered," he repeated. "Why do you say murdered?"

For reply I drew from my pocket the bill on which I had scribbled my conclusions in regard to this matter.

"Read this," said I.

Evidently astonished, he took the paper from my hand, and, after some curious glances in my direction, condescended to do as I requested. The result was an odd but grudging look of admiration directed towards myself and a quick passing over of the paper to the detective.

The latter, who had exchanged his bit of broken china for a very much used and tooth-marked lead-pencil, frowned with a whimsical air at the latter before he put it in his pocket. Then he read my hurried scrawl.

"Two Richmonds in the field!" commented the Coroner, with a sly chuckle. "I am afraid I shall have to yield to their allied forces. Miss Butterworth, the cabinet is about to be raised; do you feel as if you could endure the sight?"

"I can stand anything where the cause of justice is involved," I replied.

"Very well, then, sit down, if you please. When the whole body is visible I will call you."

And stepping forward he gave orders to have the clock and broken china removed from about the body.

As the former was laid away on one end of the mantel some one observed:

"What a valuable witness that clock might have been had it been running when the shelves fell!"

But the fact was so patent that it had not been in motion for months that no one even answered; and Mr. Gryce did not so much as look towards it. But then we had all seen that the hands stood at three minutes to five.

I had been asked to sit down, but I found this impossible. Side by side with the detective, I viewed the replacing of that heavy piece of furniture against the wall, and the slow disclosure of the upper part of the body which had so long lain hidden.

That I did not give way is a proof that my father's prophecy was not without some reasonable foundation; for the sight was one to try the stoutest nerves, as well as to awaken the compassion of the hardest heart.

The Coroner, meeting my eye, pointed at the poor creature inquiringly.

"Is this the woman you saw enter here last night?"

I glanced down at her dress, noted the short summer cape tied to the neck with an elaborate bow of ribbon, and nodded my head.

"I remember the cape," said I. "But where is her hat? She wore one. Let me see if I can describe it." Closing my eyes I endeavored to recall the dim silhouette of her figure as she stood passing up the change to the driver; and was so far successful that I was ready to announce at the next moment that her hat presented the effect of a soft felt with one feather or one bow of ribbon standing upright from the side of the crown.

"Then the identity of this woman with the one you saw enter here last night is established," remarked the detective, stooping down and drawing from under the poor girl's body a hat, sufficiently like the one I had just described, to satisfy everybody that it was the same.

"As if there could be any doubt," I began.

But the Coroner, explaining that it was a mere formality, motioned me to stand aside in favor of the doctor, who seemed anxious to approach nearer the spot where the dead woman lay. This I was about to do when a sudden thought struck me, and I reached out my hand for the hat.

"Let me look at it for a moment," said I.

Mr. Gryce at once handed it over, and I took a good look at it inside and out.

"It is pretty badly crushed," I observed, "and does not present a very fresh appearance, but for all that it has been worn but once."

"How do you know?" questioned the Coroner.

"Let the other Richmond inform you," was my grimly uttered reply, as I gave it again into the detective's hand.

There was a murmur about me, whether of amusement or displeasure, I made no effort to decide. I was finding out something for myself, and I did not care what they thought of me.

"Neither has she worn this dress long," I continued; "but that is not true of the shoes. They are not old, but they have been acquainted with the pavement, and that is more than can be said of the hem of this gown. There are no gloves on her hands; a few minutes elapsed then before the assault; long enough for her to take them off."

"Smart woman!" whispered a voice in my ear; a half-admiring, half-sarcastic voice that I had no difficulty in ascribing to Mr. Gryce. "But are you sure she wore any? Did you notice that her hand was gloved when she came into the house?"

"No," I answered, frankly; "but so well-dressed a woman would not enter a house like this, without gloves."

"It was a warm night," some one suggested.

"I don't care. You will find her gloves as you have her hat; and you will find them with the fingers turned inside out, just as she drew them from her hand. So much I will concede to the warmth of the weather."

"Like these, for instance," broke in a quiet voice.

Startled, for a hand had appeared over my shoulder dangling a pair of gloves before my eyes, I cried out, somewhat too triumphantly I own:

"Yes, yes, just like those! Did you pick them up here? Are they hers?"

"You say that this is the way hers should look."

"And I repeat it."

"Then allow me to pay you my compliments. These *were* picked up here."

"But where?" I cried. "I thought I had looked this carpet well over."

He smiled, not at me but at the gloves, and the thought crossed me that he felt as if something more than the gloves was being turned inside out. I therefore pursed my mouth, and determined to stand more on my guard.

"It is of no consequence," I assured him; "all such matters will come out at the inquest."

Mr. Gryce nodded, and put the gloves back in his pocket. With them he seemed to pocket some of his geniality and patience.

"All these facts have been gone over before you came in," said he, which statement I beg to consider as open to doubt.

The doctor, who had hardly moved a muscle during all this colloquy, now rose from his kneeling position beside the girl's head.

"I shall have to ask the presence of another physician," said he. "Will you send for one from your office, Coroner Dahl?"

At which I stepped back and the Coroner stepped forward, saying, however, as he passed me:

"The inquest will be held day after to-morrow in my office. Hold yourself in readiness to be present. I regard you as one of my chief witnesses."

I assured him I would be on hand, and, obeying a gesture of his fin-

ger, retreated from the room; but I did not yet leave the house. A straight, slim man, with a very small head but a very bright eye, was leaning on the newel-post in the front hall, and when he saw me, started up so alertly I perceived that he had business with me, and so waited for him to speak.

"You are Miss Butterworth?" he inquired.

"I am, sir."

"And I am a reporter from the New York *World*. Will you allow me——"

Why did he stop? I had merely looked at him. But he did stop, and that is saying considerable for a reporter from the New York *World*.

"I certainly am willing to tell you what I have told every one else," I interposed, considering it better not to make an enemy of so judicious a young man; and seeing him brighten up at this, I thereupon related all I considered desirable for the general public to know.

I was about passing on, when, reflecting that one good turn deserves another, I paused and asked him if he thought they would leave the dead girl in that house all night.

He answered that he did not think they would. That a telegram had been sent some time before to young Mr. Van Burnam, and that they were only awaiting his arrival to remove her.

"Do you mean Howard?" I asked.

"Is he the elder one?"

"No."

"It is the elder one they have summoned; the one who has been staying at Long Branch."

"How can they expect him then so soon?"

"Because he is in the city. It seems the old gentleman is going to return on the *New York*, and as she is due here to-day, Franklin Van Burnam has come to New York to meet him."

"Humph!" thought I, "lively times are in prospect," and for the first time I remembered my dinner and the orders which had not been given about some curtains which were to have been hung that day, and all the other reasons I had for being at home.

I must have shown my feelings, much as I pride myself upon my impassibility upon all occasions, for he immediately held out his arm, with an offer to pilot me through the crowd to my own house; and I was about to accept it when the door-bell rang so sharply that we involuntarily stopped.

"A fresh witness or a telegram for the Coroner," whispered the reporter in my ear.

"I tried to look indifferent, and doubtless made out pretty well, for he added, after a sly look in my face:

"You do not care to stay any longer?"

I made no reply, but I think he was impressed by my dignity. Could he not see that it would be the height of ill-manners for me to rush out in the face of any one coming in?

An officer opened the door, and when we saw who stood there, I am sure that the reporter, as well as myself, was grateful that we listened to the dictates of politeness. It was young Mr. Van Burnam—Franklin; I mean the older and more respectable of the two sons.

He was flushed and agitated, and looked as if he would like to annihilate the crowd pushing him about on his own stoop. He gave an angry glance backward as he stepped in, and then I saw that a carriage covered with baggage stood on the other side of the street, and gathered that he had not returned to his father's house alone.

"What has happened? What does all this mean?" were the words he hurled at us as the door closed behind him and he found himself face to face with a half dozen strangers, among whom the reporter and myself stood conspicuous.

Mr. Gryce, coming suddenly from somewhere, was the one to answer him.

"A painful occurrence, sir. A young girl has been found here, dead, crushed under one of your parlor cabinets."

"A young girl!" he repeated. (Oh, how glad I was that I had been brought up never to transgress the principles of politeness.) "Here! in this shut-up house? What young girl? You mean old woman, do you not? the house-cleaner or some one——"

"No, Mr. Van Burnam, we mean what we say, though possibly I should call her a young lady. She is dressed quite fashionably."

"The ——" Really I cannot repeat in this public manner the word which Mr. Van Burnam used. I excused him at the time, but I will not perpetuate his forgetfulness in these pages.

"She is still lying as we found her," Mr. Gryce now proceeded in his quiet, almost fatherly way. "Will you not take a look at her? Perhaps you can tell us who she is?"

"I?" Mr. Van Burnam seemed quite shocked. "How should I know her! Some thief probably, killed while meddling with other people's property."

"Perhaps," quoth Mr. Gryce, laconically; at which I felt so angry, as tending to mislead my handsome young neighbor, that I irresistibly did what I had fully made up my mind not to do, that is, stepped into view and took a part in this conversation.

"How can you say that," I cried, "when her admittance here was due to a young man who let her in at midnight with a key, and then left her to eat out her heart in this great house all alone."

I have made sensations in my life, but never quite so marked a one as

this. In an instant every eye was on me, with the exception of the detective's. His was on the figure crowning the newel-post, and bitterly severe his gaze was too, though it immediately grew wary as the young man started towards me and impetuously demanded:

"Who talks like that? Why, it 's Miss Butterworth. Madam, I fear I did not fully understand what you said."

Whereupon I repeated my words, this time very quietly but clearly, while Mr. Gryce continued to frown at the bronze figure he had taken into his confidence. When I had finished, Mr. Van Burnam's countenance had changed, so had his manner. He held himself as erect as before, but not with as much bravado. He showed haste and impatience also, but not the same kind of haste and not quite the same kind of impatience. The corners of Mr. Gryce's mouth betrayed that he noted this change, but he did not turn away from the newel-post.

"This is a remarkable circumstance which you have just told me," observed Mr. Van Burnam, with the first bow I had ever received from him. "I don't know what to think of it. But I still hold that it 's some thief. Killed, did you say? Really dead? Well, I 'd have given five hundred dollars not to have had it happen in this house."

He had been moving towards the parlor door, and he now entered it. Instantly Mr. Gryce was by his side.

"Are they going to close the door?" I whispered to the reporter, who was taking this all in equally with myself.

"I 'm afraid so," he muttered.

And they did. Mr. Gryce had evidently had enough of my interference, and was resolved to shut me out, but I heard one word and caught one glimpse of Mr. Van Burnam's face before the heavy door fell to. The word was: "Oh, so bad as that! How can any one recognize her——" And the glimpse—well, the glimpse proved to me that he was much more profoundly agitated than he wished to appear, and any extraordinary agitation on his part was certainly in direct contradiction to the very sentence he was at that moment uttering.

IV. *Silas Van Burnam*

"However much I may be needed at home, I cannot reconcile it with my sense of duty to leave just yet," I confided to the reporter, with what I meant to be a proper show of reason and self-restraint; "Mr. Van Burnam may wish to ask me some questions."

"Of course, of course," acquiesced the other. "You are very right; always are very right, I should judge."

As I did not know what he meant by this, I frowned, always a wise thing to do in an uncertainty; that is,—if one wishes to maintain an air of independence and aversion to flattery.

"Will you not sit down?" he suggested. "There is a chair at the end of the hall."

But I had no need to sit. The front door-bell again rang, and simultaneously with its opening, the parlor door unclosed and Mr. Franklin Van Burnam appeared in the hall, just as Mr. Silas Van Burnam, his father, stepped into the vestibule.

"Father!" he remonstrated, with a troubled air; "could you not wait?"

The elder gentleman, who had evidently just been driven up from the steamer, wiped his forehead with an irascible air, that I will say I had noticed in him before and on much less provocation.

"Wait, with a yelling crowd screaming murder in my ear, and Isabella on one side of me calling for salts, and Caroline on the opposite seat getting that blue look about the mouth we have learned to dread so in a hot day like this? No, sir, when there is anything wrong going on I want to know it, and evidently there is something wrong going on here. What is it? Some of Howard's——"

But the son, seizing me by the hand and drawing me forward, put a quick stop to the old gentleman's sentence. "Miss Butterworth, father! Our next-door neighbor, you know."

"Ah! hum! ha! Miss Butterworth. How do you do, ma'am? What the —— is she doing here?" he grumbled, not so low but that I heard both the profanity and the none too complimentary allusion to myself.

"If you will come into the parlor, I will tell you," urged the son. "But what have you done with Isabella and Caroline? Left them in the carriage with that hooting mob about them?"

"I told the coachman to drive on. They are probably half-way around the block by this time."

"Then come in here. But don't allow yourself to be too much affected by what you will see. A sad accident has occurred here, and you must expect the sight of blood."

"Blood! Oh, I can stand that, if Howard——"

The rest was lost in the sound of the closing door.

And now, you will say, I ought to have gone. And you are right, but would you have gone yourself, especially as the hall was full of people who did not belong there?

If you would, then condemn me for lingering just a few minutes longer.

The voices in the parlor were loud, but they presently subsided; and when the owner of the house came out again, he had a subdued look which was as great a contrast to his angry aspect on entering, as was the change I had observed in his son. He was so absorbed indeed that he did not notice me, though I stood directly in his way.

"Don't let Howard come," he was saying in a thick, low voice to his son. "Keep Howard away till we are sure——"

I am confident that his son pressed his arm at this point, for he stopped short and looked about him in a blind and dazed way.

"Oh!" he ejaculated, in a tone of great displeasure. "This is the woman who saw——"

"Miss Butterworth, father," the anxious voice of his son broke in. "Don't try to talk; such a sight is enough to unnerve any man."

"Yes, yes," blustered the old gentleman, evidently taking some hint from the other's tone or manner. "But where are the girls? They will be dead with terror, if we don't relieve their minds. They got the idea it was their brother Howard who was hurt; and so did I, but it 's only some wandering waif—some——"

It seemed as if he was not to be allowed to finish any of his sentences, for Franklin interrupted him at this point to ask him what he was going to do with the girls. Certainly he could not bring them in here.

"No," answered the father, but in the dreamy, inconsequential way of one whose thoughts were elsewhere. "I suppose I shall have to take them to some hotel."

Ah, an idea! I flushed as I realized the opportunity which had come to me and had to wait a moment not to speak with too much eagerness.

"Let me play the part of a neighbor," I prayed, "and accommodate the young ladies for the night. My house is near and quiet."

"But the trouble it will involve," protested Mr. Franklin.

"Is just what I need to allay my excitement," I responded. "I shall be glad to offer them rooms for the night. If they are equally glad to accept them——"

"They must be!" the old gentleman declared. "I can't go running round with them hunting up rooms to-night. Miss Butterworth is very good; go find the girls, Franklin; let me have them off my mind, at least."

The young man bowed. I bowed, and was slipping at last from my place by the stairs when, for the third time, I felt my dress twitched.

"Are you going to keep to that story?" a voice whispered in my ear. "About the young man and woman coming in the night, you know."

"Keep to it!" I whispered back, recognizing the scrub-woman, who had sidled up to me from some unknown quarter in the semi-darkness. "Why, it 's true. Why should n't I keep to it."

A chuckle, difficult to describe but full of meaning, shook the arm of the woman as she pressed close to my side.

"Oh, you are a good one," she said. "I did n't know they made 'em so good!" And with another chuckle full of satisfaction and an odd sort of admiration I had certainly not earned, she slid away again into the darkness.

Certainly there was something in this woman's attitude towards this affair which merited attention.

v. *"This Is No One I Know"*

I welcomed the Misses Van Burnam with just enough good-will to show that I had not been influenced by any unworthy motives in asking them to my house.

I gave them my guest-chamber, but I invited them to sit in my front room as long as there was anything interesting going on in the street. I knew they would like to look out, and as this chamber boasts of a bay with two windows, we could all be accommodated. From where I sat I could now and then hear what they said, and I considered this but just, for if the young woman who had suffered so untimely an end was in any way connected with them, it was certainly best that the fact should not lie concealed; and one of them, that is Isabella, is such a chatterbox.

Mr. Van Burnam and his son had returned next door, and so far as we could observe from our vantage-point, preparations were being made for the body's removal. As the crowd below, driven away by the policemen one minute, only to collect again in another, swayed and grumbled in a continual expectation that was as continually disappointed, I heard Caroline's voice rise in two or three short sentences.

"They can't find Howard, or he would have been here before now. Did you see her that time when we were coming out of Clark's? Fanny Preston did, and said she was pretty."

"No, I did n't get a glimpse——" A shout from the street below.

"I can't believe it," were the next words I heard, "but Franklin is awfully afraid——"

"Hush! or the ogress——" I am sure I heard her say ogress; but what followed was drowned in another loud murmur, and I caught nothing further till these sentences were uttered by the trembling and overexcited Caroline: "If it is she, pa will never be the same man again. To have her die in our house! O, there 's Howard now!"

The interruption came quick and sharp, and it was followed by a double

cry and an anxious rustle, as the two girls sprang to their feet in their anxiety to attract their brother's attention or possibly to convey him some warning.

But I did not give much heed to them. My eyes were on the carriage in which Howard had arrived, and which, owing to the ambulance in front, had stopped on the other side of the way. I was anxious to see him descend that I might judge if his figure recalled that of the man I had seen cross the pavement the night before. But he did not descend. Just as his hand was on the carriage door, a half dozen men appeared on the adjoining stoop carrying a burden which they hastened to deposit in the ambulance. He sank back when he saw it, and when his face became visible again, it was so white it seemed to be the only face in the street, though fifty people stood about staring at the house, at the ambulance, and at him.

Franklin Van Burnam had evidently come to the door with the rest; for Howard no sooner showed his face the second time than we saw the former dash down the steps and try to part the crowd in a vain attempt to reach his brother's side. Mr. Gryce was more successful. He had no difficulty in winning his way across the street, and presently I perceived him standing near the carriage exchanging a few words with its occupant. A moment later he drew back, and addressing the driver, jumped into the carriage with Howard, and was speedily driven off. The ambulance followed and some of the crowd, and as soon as a hack could be obtained, Mr. Van Burnam and his son took the same road, leaving us three women in a state of suspense, which as far as one of us was concerned, ended in a nervous attack that was not unlike heart failure. I allude, of course, to Caroline, and it took Isabella and myself a good half hour to bring her back to a normal condition, and when this was done, Isabella thought it incumbent upon her to go off into hysterics, which, being but a weak simulation of the other's state, I met with severity and cured with a frown. When both were in trim again I allowed myself one remark.

"One would think," said I, "that you knew the young woman who has fallen victim to her folly next door."

At which Isabella violently shook her head and Caroline observed:

"It is the excitement which has been too much for me. I am never strong, and this is such a dreadful home-welcoming. When will father and Franklin come back? It was very unkind of them to go off without one word of encouragement."

"They probably did not consider the fate of this unknown woman a matter of any importance to you."

The Van Burnam girls were unlike in appearance and character, but they showed an equal embarrassment at this, casting down their eyes and behaving so strangely that I was driven to wonder, without any show of

hysterics I am happy to say, what would be the upshot of this matter, and how far I would become involved in it before the truth came to light.

At dinner they displayed what I should call their best society manner. Seeing this, I assumed my society manner also. It is formed on a different pattern from theirs, but is fully as impressive, I judge.

A most formal meal was the result. My best china was in use, but I had added nothing to my usual course of viands. Indeed, I had abstracted something. An *entrée*, upon which my cook prides herself, was omitted. Was I going to allow these proud young misses to think I had exerted myself to please them? No; rather would I have them consider me niggardly and an enemy to good living; so the *entrée* was, as the French say, suppressed.

In the evening their father came in. He was looking very dejected, and half his bluster was gone. He held a telegram crushed in his hand, and he talked very rapidly. But he confided none of his secrets to me, and I was obliged to say good-night to these young ladies without knowing much more about the matter engrossing us than when I left their house in the afternoon.

But others were not as ignorant as myself. A dramatic and highly exciting scene had taken place that evening at the undertaker's to which the unknown's body had been removed, and as I have more than once heard it minutely described, I will endeavor to transcribe it here with all the impartiality of an outsider.

When Mr. Gryce entered the carriage in which Howard sat, he noted first, that the young man was frightened; and secondly, that he made no effort to hide it. He had heard almost nothing from the detective. He knew that there had been a hue and cry for him ever since noon, and that he was wanted to identify a young woman who had been found dead in his father's house, but beyond these facts he had been told little, and yet he seemed to have no curiosity nor did he venture to express any surprise. He merely accepted the situation and was troubled by it, showing no inclination to talk till very near the end of his destination, when he suddenly pulled himself together and ventured this question:

"How did she—the young woman as you call her—kill herself?"

The detective, who in his long career among criminals and suspected persons, had seen many men and encountered many conditions, roused at this query with much of his old spirit. Turning from the man rather than toward him, he allowed himself a slight shrug of the shoulders as he calmly replied:

"She was found under a heavy piece of furniture; the cabinet with the vases on it, which you must remember stood at the left of the mantelpiece. It had crushed her head and breast. Quite a remarkable means of