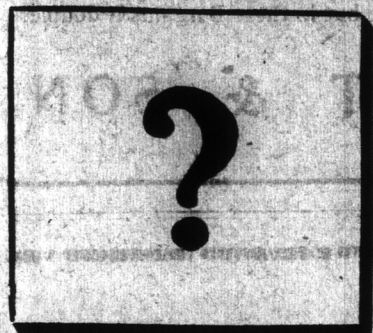


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The Secret of Lonesome Cove



By SAMUEL HOPKINS ADAMS

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PROLOGUE.

Mystery-detective-love story, all in one, and each of the three good—that's "The Secret of Lonesome Cove." There's more in this book; there's a very interesting example of the effect of the study of heredity on a man's mind.

If you are romantic, read it for the pretty love story; if you're fond of mystery-detective stories, find out how Chester Kent, clever, learned scientist and investigator, searched out the "secret." If psychology's in your line, here's a case of the influence of the past on the present that is worth looking into.

From the time of the finding of the handcuffed body of the dead woman on the beach until Chester Kent clears up the mystery and the patient artist-lover has his reward this tale is worth reading. It is one of the cleverest books of its well known author, Samuel Hopkins Adams.

CHAPTER I.

LONESOME COVE is one of the best frequented stretches on the New England seaboard. From the land side the sheer hundred foot drop of Hawtill cliffs shuts it off. There is no settlement near the cove. The somber reputation suggested by its name has served to keep cottagers from building on the wildly beautiful uplands that overbrow the beach. The straggling pathways along the edge afford the only suggestion of human traffic within half a mile of the spot. A sharp cut ravine leads down to the sea by a rather treacherous descent.

Near the mouth of this opening a considerable gathering of folk speckled the equally deserted beach at noon of July 8. They centered on a dark object a few yards within the sand dune. Some stood about, peering at the sea, then to the cliffs.

From some distance away a lone man of a markedly different type from the others observed them with an expression of displeasure. One of the group presently detached himself and ambled over to the newcomer.

"Swanny," he ejaculated, "if it ain't Professor Kent! Didn't know you at first, under them whiskers. You remember me, don't you? I used to drive you around when you were here before."

"I've just come out of the woods, Jarvis. And as you have some very interesting sea currents just here, I thought I'd have a look at them. No body really knows anything about coast currents, you know. Now my opportunity is spoiled."

"Spelt? I guess not. You couldn't have come at a better time," said the local man eagerly.

"Ah, but you see, I had planned to swim out to the eddy and make some personal observations."

"You was going to swim into Dead Man's eddy?" asked the other, aghast.

"Why, professor, you must have turned foolish. They ain't a man on this coast would take a chance like that."

"Superstition," retorted the other curtly. "On a still day such as this there would be no danger to an experienced swimmer. The conditions are ideal except for this crowd. What is it? Has the village gone picnic-ing?"

"Not so early! Ain't you heard? Another one's come in through the eddy. Lies over yonder."

Professor Kent's eyebrows went up as he glanced toward the indicated spot. They gathered in a group.

"Not washed up there, surely?" he said.

"Some time early this morning."

"Fanny!" said the other, turning to look at the curving bulwark of rocks over which the soft slow swell was barely breaking. "If it were the other end of the cove, now, I could understand it."

"Yes," agreed Jarvis. "They mostly come in at the other end on this tide."

"Mostly? Always?" The professor's tone was positive. "Unless my charts are wrong. But this—well, it spoils at least one phase of my theory."

"Theory?" exclaimed the liverman, his pale eyes alight. "You got a theory? But I thought you didn't know anything about the body till I told you just now."

"Oh, my ruined theory has reference to the currents," sighed the other. "It has nothing to do with dead men as such."

"This is a dead woman. Come and see for yourself."

thinkin' he was the thousand dollar reward thief last year."

Professor Kent advanced and bent over the manacled corpse.

"Have to ask you to stand back, professor," said Jarvis. "Len's appointed me special deputy till he comes back."

"Wonder if Len knows the corpse?" suggested somebody in the crowd.

"Tell you who did it he didn't," said another man.

"Who, then?"

"Elder try Denbert. Didn't none of you hear about his meetin' up with a strange woman yesterday evenin'?"

"Shucks! This couldn't be that woman," said Jarvis. "How'd she come to be washed ashore from a wreck between last night and this morning?"

"How'd she come to be washed ashore from a wreck anyway?" countered Sailer Smith. "The ain't been no storm for a week, an' this body ain't been dead twenty-four hours."

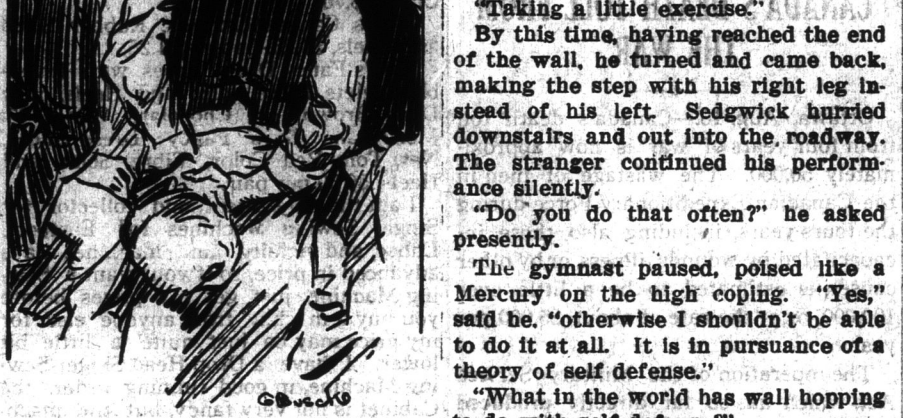
"It plumb beats me," admitted Jarvis.

"Who is this Denbert?" asked Professor Kent.

"Try? He's the town gab of Martindale Center. Does a little plumbin' an' tinkerin' on the side. Just now he's up to Oadystown. Took the 10 o'clock train last night."

"Then it was early when he met this woman?"

"After sundown. He was plain the hill beyond the Nook—that's Sedgwick's place, the painter feller—when she come out of the shrubbery—pop



"How'd she come to be washed ashore?" countered Sailer Smith.

He gulped her. Trust the elder for that. But he didn't get much out of her until he mentioned the Nook. Then she allowed she guessed she'd go there. An' he watched her go.

"You say a man named Sedgwick lives at the Nook. Is that Francis Sedgwick the artist?" asked Kent.

"That's him," said Sailer Smith. "Paints right purty pictures. Lives there all alone with a Chinese cook."

"Well, the lady went down the hill," continued Jarvis. "Just as Sedgwick come out to smoke a pipe on this stone wall. Iry thought he seemed surprised when she bespoke him. They passed a few remarks, an' then they had some words an' the lady laughed loud an' kinder scornful. He seemed to be pointin' at a necklace of queer, lery pink stones that she wore and tryin' to get somethin' out of her. She turned away an' he started to follow, when all of a sudden she grabbed up a rock an' let him have it—blip! Keeled him clean over. Then she ran away up the road toward Hawtill cliffs."

"Well, this corpse ain't got no pink necklace," suggested somebody.

"Bodies sometimes get robbed," said Sailer Smith.

Chester Kent stooped over the writhen face, again peering close. Then he straightened up and began pulling thoughtfully at the lobe of his ear.

"Say," said Sailer Smith, "what's them queer little marks on the neck under the ear?"

Back came Kent's eyes. "Those," he said, smiling. "Why, those are, one might suppose, such indentations as would be made in flesh by forcing a jewel setting violently against it by a blow of strong impact."

"Then you think it was the woman?" began the old seaman when several voices broke in.

"There goes Len now!"

The sheriff's heavy figure appeared on the brow of the cliff, moving toward the village.

"Who is it with him?" inquired Kent.

"Gansett Jim," answered Jarvis.

"An Indian?"

"Gosh! You got good eyes!" said Jarvis. "He's more Indian than anything else. Comes from down Amagasset way and gets his name from it."

"E-m! When did he arrive?"

"While you was trapesin' around yonder."

"Did he see the body?"

"Yes. Just after the sheriff got whatever it was from the pocket Gansett Jim bore in sight, Len went over to him quick, an' said somethin' to him. He come and give a look at the body. But he didn't say nothin'.

Only crunted. The sheriff tells me to watch the body. Then he says, 'An' I'll need somebody to help me. I'll take you, Jim. So he an' the Indian goes away together.'"

Professor Kent nodded. He looked seaward where the reefs were now daring their teeth more plainly through the racing currents, and he sighed. Then he bade the group farewell and set off up the beach.

"Here's sort of a harmless scientific crank," explained Jarvis, "comes from Washington; somethin' to do with the government work."

"Kinda loony, I think," conjectured a little, thin, piping man. "Musses and moves around like it."

"Is that so?" said Sailer Smith, who still had his eyes fixed on the scarified neck. "Well, I ain't any too dum sure that he's as big a fool as some folks I know that thinks likelier of their selves. He seen there was somethin' queer about that rope, an' he ast me about the knots, right on."

Possibly the one supporter of the absent would have wavered in his loyalty had he seen the prove that Professor Chester Kent had carried on occasionally from the beach, in his pocket, after picking it from the grating. It was the fuzzy cocoon of a small and quite unimportant insect. The Washington scientist, seated on a bowlder opened up the cocoon with absorbed interest, pricked it until the impotent immitte wriggled in protest, and then cast it aside to perish.

Between the roadway and the broad front lawn of the Nook a four-foot, rough stone wall interposed. Looking up from his painting, Francis Sedgwick beheld in the glare of the afternoon sun an spare figure rise alertly upon the wall, descend to the road and rise again. He stepped to the open window and watched a curious progress. A scrubby bearded man clad in serviceable khaki was performing a stunt, with the wall as a basis. He was walking from east to west quite fast and every third pace stepping upon the wall, stepping, Sedgwick duly noted, not jumping, the change of level being made without visible effort.

Leaning out of the window he called: "Hello, there!"

"Good afternoon," said the stranger, in a quiet, cultivated voice.

"Would you mind telling me what you are doing on my wall?"

"Not in the least," replied the bearded man, rising buoyantly into full view and subsiding again with the rhythm of a wave.

"Well, what are you doing?"

"Taking a little exercise."

By this time, having reached the end of the wall, he turned and came back, making the step with his right leg instead of his left. Sedgwick hurried downstairs and out into the roadway. The stranger continued his performance silently.

"Do you do that often?" he asked presently.

The gymnast paused, poised like a Mercury on the high coping. "Yes," he told Kent. "It was at the Moulin de la Galette—perhaps you know the dance hall on the slope of Montmartre—and she was one of the dancers, the wreck of what had once been beauty and one must suppose, innocence. Probably she thought me too much abstinent soaked to hear or understand as I sat half asleep at my table. At all events she answered, full voiced, her companion's question. 'Who is the drunken foreigner?' by saying: 'He was an artist. The studios talked of him five years ago. Look at him now! That is what life does to us, mon ami. I'm the woman of it. That's the man of it.' I staggered up, made her a bow and a promise and left her laughing. Last month I redeemed the promise; sent her the first thousand dollars I made by my own work and declared my debt discharged. How about yourself?"

"I shall expound," said the stranger in professional tones, taking a seat by the unusual method of letting himself down on one leg while holding the other at right angles to his body. "Do you know anything of jujitsu?"

"Very little."

"In common with most Americans. For that reason alone the Japanese system is highly effective here, not so effective in Japan. You perceive there the basis of my theory."

"No; I don't perceive it at all."

"A system of defense is effective in proportion to its unfamiliarity. That is all."

"Then your system consists in stepping up on a wall and diving into obscurity on the farther side perhaps," suggested Sedgwick ironically.

"Defense, I said, not escape. Escape is perhaps preferable to defense, but not always so practicable. No, the wall merely served as a temporary gymnasium while I was waiting for you."

"You have distinctly the advantage of me," said Sedgwick, with a frown, for he was in no mood to welcome strange visitors.

"To return to my theory of self defense," said the other imperturbably. "My wall exercise serves to keep limber and active certain muscles that in the average man are half atrophied."

He rose on one foot with an ease that made the artist stare, descended, selected from the roadway a stone of ordinary cobble size and handed it to Sedgwick.

"Let that lie on the palm of your hand," said he, "and hold it out, waist high."

As he spoke he was standing two feet from the other to his right. Sedgwick did as he was requested. As his hand took position there was a twist of the bearded man's little body, a sharp click, and the stone, flying in a rising curve, whished through the leafage of a lilac fifty feet away.

"How do you do that?" cried the artist.

The other showed a slight indentation on the inside of his right boot heel and then swung his right foot slowly and steadily up behind his left knee and let it up into position again. "At shoulder height," he explained. "I could have done the same, but it would have broken your mind."

"I see," said the other, adding with ill-haste, "but to kick an opponent? Why, even as a boy I was taught."

"We were not speaking of child's play," said the visitor coolly. "nor am I concerned with the rules of the prize-fight as applied to my theory. When one is in danger one uses knife or gun, if at hand; I prefer a less deadly and more effective weapon. Kicking aside, either to the front or to the rear, I can disarm a man, break his leg or any limb senseless. It is the special development of such muscles as the scapular and humeral. I owe you the explanation. I hope you won't abscond with my spass, Mr. Long-Legs Sedgwick."

"You remember I got into trouble my senior year with the college authorities by proving the typhoid epidemic direct against a forgotten defect in the sewer system. It nearly cost me my diploma, but it helped me too, later, for a scientist in the department of agriculture at Washington learned of it and sent for me after graduation. He snipped out for me a three years postgraduate course, which I had just about enough money to take. While I specialized on botany, entomology and bacteriology, I picked up a working knowledge of other branches—chemistry, toxicology, apologetics, mineralogy, physiology and most of the natural sciences."

"Once in the department I found myself with a sort of roving commission. I worked under such men as Wiley, Howard and Merriam and learned from them something of the habits and scrupulous patience that truly original scientific achievement demands. At first my duties were largely those of minor research. Then, by accident largely, I chanced upon the plot to bull the cotton market by introducing the boll weevil into the infested cotton area and checked that. Soon afterward I was put on the 'de-odorized meat' enterprise and succeeded in discovering the scheme

whereby it was hoped to sell spoiled meat for good."

"What spare time I had I devoted to experimenting along mechanical lines and patented an invention that has been profitable. Sometime ago the department of justice borrowed me on a few cases with a scientific bearing, and more recently offered me the incidental work with them on such favorable terms that I resigned my other position. The terms include liberal vacations, one of which I am now taking. And here I am. Is that sufficient?"

"What about your forty horsepower kick? You don't practice that for drawing-room exhibitions, I take it?"

"Sometimes," confessed the scientist. "I have found myself at close quarters with persons of dubious character. The fact is, that an ingenious plot to get rid of a very old friend, Dr. Lucius Carter, the botanist, drew me into the criminal line, and since then this phase of investigation has tended fairly to outbalance itself on me, officially and unofficially. Even up here where I hoped to enjoy a month's rest—do you know?" he said, breaking off, "that you have a most interesting case of recent currents heretofore?"

"Of course, Lonesome Cove. But kindly finish that 'even up here.' I recollect your saying that you were waiting for me. Haven't traced any scientific crime to my door, have you?"

"Let me forget my work for a little while," pleaded his visitor, "and look at yours."

Sedgwick rose. "Come upstairs," he said and led the way to the big, bare, bright studio.

From the threshold Chester Kent delivered an opinion after one approving survey. "You really work, I see."

"I really do. Where do you see it, though?"

"All over the place. No draperies or fripperies or copperies at all here. The bare room the more work done in it."

He walked over to a curious contrivance resembling a small hand press, examined it, surveyed the empty easel, against which were leaning face in a number of pictures all of a size and turned half a dozen of them over, ranging them and stepping back for examination.

"Good work," pronounced Kent quietly, and in some subtle way the commonplace words conveyed to their hearer the fact that the man who spoke them knew.

"It's the best there is in me at least," said Sedgwick.

Kent went slowly around the walls, keenly examining, silently appraising. There were landscapes, genre bits, studies of the ocean in its various moods, all the varied subjects handled with a deftness of truth and drawing and colored with a clear softness quite individual.

"Have you found or founded a new system of coloring?" asked Kent as he moved among the little masterpieces.

"No; don't tell me. I touched one of the surfaces delicately. It's not paint, and it's not pastel. Oh, I see! They're all of one size, of course." He glanced at the heavy mechanism near the easel. "They're color prints."

Sedgwick nodded. "Monotypes," said he. "I paint on copper, make one print and then I print a hundred more."

"Postgraduate science. Agricultural department job. Lectures. Invention. Judiciary department expert. Signed, Chester Kent. Ten words—count them—ten."

"Interesting, but unsatisfying," retorted his friend. "Can't you expand a bit? I suppose you haven't any dark secret in your life?"

"No secret, dark or light," sighed the other. "The newspapers won't let me have."

"Rh? Won't let you? Am I to infer that you've become a famous person? What are you anyway?"

"What I told you, an expert in the service of the department of justice. I like to flatter myself that my pursuit is scientific."

"Pursuit? What do you pursue?"

"Men and motives."

Sedgwick's intelligent eyes widened. "Wait," he said; "something occurs to me, an article in a French journal about a wonderful new American expert in criminology who knows all there is to know and takes only the most abstruse cases. I recall now that the article called him 'le Professeur Chetre Kennat.' That would be about as near as they would come to your name. The Frenchman made you out a most superior species of highfalutin detective, working along lines peculiarly your own."

"Rot!" interjected Kent. "The only times a detective can work along successfully are the lines laid down for him by the man he is after."

"Sounds more reasonable than romantic," admitted the artist. "Come now, Kent, open up and tell me something about yourself."

"You remember I got into trouble my senior year with the college authorities by proving the typhoid epidemic direct against a forgotten defect in the sewer system. It nearly cost me my diploma, but it helped me too, later, for a scientist in the department of agriculture at Washington learned of it and sent for me after graduation. He snipped out for me a three years postgraduate course, which I had just about enough money to take. While I specialized on botany, entomology and bacteriology, I picked up a working knowledge of other branches—chemistry, toxicology, apologetics, mineralogy, physiology and most of the natural sciences."

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From behind a cloth he drew a square and set it on the easel.

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