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Come with me, if you will, to a tiny, quiet New England village, nestling among the picturesquely rugged hills of New Hampshire. This little hamlet has for over a century been known as Gilmanton Academy. So called in honor of an institution of learning of that name, founded there by a few sturdy, self denying and God-fearing men, over a hundred years ago, who, could they now leave their silent resting places in the church-and near by, and again wander for an hour through these quiet streets, would, with the exception of new faces, see little change.

Here, in the year 1861, I, Herman W. Mudgett, the author of these pages, was born. That the first years of my life were different from those of any other ordinary country bred boy, I have no reason to think. That I was well trained by loving and religious parents, I know, and any deviations in my after life from the straight and narrow way of rectitude are not attributable to the want of a tender mother's prayers or a father's control, emphasized, when necessary, by the liberal use of the rod wielded by no sparing hand.

On my fifth birthday I was given my first suit of boy's clothing, and soon after was sent to the village school-house where the school was "kept." I had daily to pass the office of one village doctor, the door of which was seldom if ever barred. Partly from it being associated in my mind as the source of all the nauseous mixtures that had been my childish terror (for this was before the day of children's medicines), and partly because of vague rumors I had heard regarding its contents, this place was one of peculiar abhorrence to me, and this becoming known to two of my older schoolmates, they one day bore me struggling and shrieking beyond its awful portals; nor did they desist until I had been brought face to face with one of its grinning skeletons, which, with arms outstretched, seemed ready in its turn to seize me. It was a wicked and dangerous thing to do to a child of tender years and health, but it proved an heroic method of treatment, destined ultimately to cure me of my fears, and to inculcate in me, first, a strong feeling of curiosity, and later, a desire to learn, which resulted years afterwards in my adopting medicine as a profession.

When I was about eight years old, an unusual occurrence took place in our village – the arrival of an itinerant photographer. He was a man apparently suffering from some slight lameness, and gladly accepted my offer to act as his errand boy, and in payment for my services he was to execute for me a likeness of myself. One morning upon going to his office I found the door still locked. It was immediately opened, however, by the

PREFACE

It is not possible to find in the annals of criminal jurisprudence, a more deliberate and cold blooded villain than the central figure in this story, nor would the most careful research among the records of the prominent murder trials that have absorbed public attention during the past century, disclose the careful planning that made possible the apprehension of Holmes, the prosecution to an almost miraculous ending of the search for the missing children, or the equal of the forensic skill and cunning that wove the close web in which this man of many names and many murders was entangled.

That Holmes committed four murders has been proven beyond the shadow of a doubt, and that his timely arrest prevented three more murders is equally sure. If the Chicago "Castle" could give up its guilty secrets, there is more than a strong suspicion that the list of Holmes' crimes would be materially lengthened. We do know that fraud, deliberately planned and coolly executed, the blackest treachery toward his associates, a long term of brutal cruelty toward the helpless women and her children who were in his clutches, and the marvelous duplicity and falsehood practiced upon the three women who each believed herself to be his lawful wife, are to be added to the list.

A remarkable thing about a murderer who has achieved the notoriety of Holmes, is the fact that no flowers nor gifts were sent to him by morbid sympathizers. The story of the search for the missing children reads like a romance, and its almost miraculous conclusion is another proof that detective acumen and tireless patience will find the unguarded spot which always exists in the armor of the most wily criminal. The reader will echo the remarks of the learned judge, who, in charging the jury that convicted Holmes, said: "**Truth is Stranger than Fiction, and if Mrs. Pitezel's Story is true - (and it was proven to be true) - it is the Most Wonderful Exhibition of the Power of Mind Over Mind I Have Ever Seen, and Stranger than any Novel I Have Ever Read.**"

It is fitting that this true story that outrivals fiction should be published. The tone of the narrative is wholesome. Even youth may profit by it.

THE HOLMES - PITEZEL CASE

CHAPTER I.

WHO WAS PERRY?

Meeting of Eugene Smith and B. F. Perry - Smith sees Holmes - Perry disappears - Discovery of a Corpse - Condition of the Corpse - Coroner's Inquest - Identification as Perry.

In the latter part of August, 1894, Eugene Smith, a house carpenter, was passing along Callowhill Street, between Thirteenth and Broad Streets, in the city of Philadelphia, when his attention was attracted by a somewhat conspicuous sign in the bulk window of the house numbered 1316. The house was one of a row of red brick, two and a half stories high, and immediately opposite the old abandoned station of the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad. The sign was made out of a sheet of muslin stretched across the window, and on it was printed in black and red letters, "B.F. Perry, Patents Bought and Sold."

Smith was an inventor and had recently patented an ingenious device for a saw set which he was very desirous of turning into money. So stopping a moment, he decided to seek the advice and assistance of Perry, who was in the business of buying and selling patents.

When Smith walked into the store, he was greeted by a tall, raw-boned man, with a somewhat sharp countenance, who announced himself as the proprietor Perry, and who readily listened to Smith's explanation of the merits of his new set. Perry requested Smith to furnish him with a model of his invention, which the latter promised to do.

The next day Smith called again, taking with him the model, the merits of which he explained more fully and in greater detail. In the course of the conversation, Smith informed Perry that he was a carpenter by trade and was anxious to secure work, whereupon Perry employed him to construct a rough counter required for business purposes, in the first floor storeroom of the house. It was while working at this counter, that Smith saw a man enter, give a sign to Perry, and pass up the stair way in the rear of the front room, into the upper or second story of the house. Perry followed this man upstairs and

The Confession of H.H. Holmes

During the past few months the desire has been repeatedly expressed that I make a detailed confession of all the graver crimes that have with such marvelous skill been traced out and brought home to me. I have been tried for murder, convicted, sentenced, and the first step of my execution upon May seventh, namely, the reading of my death warrant, has been carried out, and it now seems a fitting time, if ever to make known the details of the twenty-seven murders, of which it would be useless to longer say I am not guilty, in the face of the overwhelming amount of proof that has been brought together, not only in one but in each and every case; and because in this concession I speak only of cases that have been thus investigated and of no others, I trust it will not give rise to a supposition that I am still guilty of other murders which I am withholding.

To those inclined to think thus, I will say that the detectives have gone over my entire life, hardly a day or an act has escaped their closest scrutiny, and to judge that I am guilty of more than these cases which they have traced out is to cast discredit upon their work. So marvelous has been the success of these men into whose hands the proving of my guilt was given, that as I look back upon their year's work it seems almost impossible that men gifted with only human intelligence could have been so skillful, and I feel that I can here call attention to what the prosecution at the close of my trial was denied the pleasure of stating, concerning their ability, through no words of mine can fittingly express what the world at large owes to these impartial and untiring representatives, and more especially to Assistant District Attorney Barlow and Detective Frank Geyer and to O. La Forrest Perry, of the Fidelity Mutual Life Association of Philadelphia; for it is principally owing to their unerring judgment, skill and perseverance that in a few days I am to be forever placed beyond the power of committing other, and, perhaps, if possible, more horrid wrongs. Surely justice, if attended by such servants as these could no longer, in the sense of making mistakes, be appropriately portrayed as being blind.

I am moved to make this confession for a variety of reasons, but among them are not those of bravado or a desire to parade my wrongdoings before the public gaze, and he who reads the following lines will, I beg, make a distinction between such motives and a determination upon my part to enter plainly and minutely into the details of each case without favor towards

THE CASTLE.

Not by a mountain side, nor on the bank of a rushing river stands an old and deserted castle; but by the side of four railroad tracks leading south out of the great city of Chicago, where the puffing and roaring and hissing of steam, caused by locomotives which are almost momentarily passing over these tracks is a castle of modern construction. Its high, red brick walls and windows of curving contour whose stained glass of variegated colors make it strikingly attractive.

High, and over all, its charred roof tells of a fire which occurred some time ago, and ever since then the castle has been untenanted save six rooms on the first floor-and as the author tells you, it is a modern castle it will not surprise you to learn that below it all are stores which are still and always been occupied.

The corner store, in particular, is a beautiful piece of work. A semi-hexagon entrance bows in a one corner. In the center of the entrance is a massive pillar topped with an elaborate and elegant composite capital, radiant with harmonious colors, which supports an pen column of curved glass windows towering high aver the buildings and this is surmounted with, what was once a beautiful cupola, but the fire has weakened it so that storms and time have left of it nothing but a shattered dome. The ceiling of the entrance mentioned is graced with a beautiful design to represent a Catherine wheel which is arranged about the supporting capitol in such a manner as to dazzle the eyes of one who might attempt to study its pattern.

The interior, both ceiling and walls, of the store are decorated with frescoed stucco work which is delightfully arranged in mild colors.

The floor is laid with alternating black and white diamond shaped tiling. A huge vault showing a massive iron door is encased in the wall at the end of the store.

Immediately back of the store is a winding staircase which leads from the outside to the top of the castle. This stairway is enclosed in what appears to be a grand oriel-window projecting from the outside wall, and supported from about midway between the ground and first floor by a corbel of honey-comb design, and tiers to the top of the building where it ends in charred and broken pieces like the rest of that uppermost part of the castle. The stairway within the oriel has a landing at each floor, one of which leads through long halls and corridors to a windowless room.