# **Andrew Forrester**

# The Female Detective

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# Introduction

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Who am I?

It can matter little who I am.

It may be that I took to the trade, sufficiently comprehended in the title of this work without a word of it being read, because I had no other means of making a living; or it may be that for the work of detection I had a longing which I could not overcome.

It may be that I am a widow working for my children—or I may be an unmarried woman, whose only care is herself.

But whether I work willingly or unwillingly, for myself or for others—whether I am married or single, old or young, I would have my readers at once accept my declaration that whatever may be the results of the practice of my profession in others, in me that profession has not led me towards hardheartedness.

For what reason do I write this book?

I have a chief reason, and as I can have no desire to hide it from the reader, for if I were secretively inclined I should not be compiling these memoirs, I may as well at once say I write in order to show, in a small way, that the profession to which I belong is so useful that it should not be despised.

I know well that my trade is despised. I have all along known this fact so well that I have hidden my trade from those about me. Whether these are relations or friends, or merely acquaintances, I have no need here to tell.

My friends suppose I am a dressmaker, who goes out by the day or week—my enemies, what I have, are in a great measure convinced that my life is a very questionable one.

In my heart of hearts I am at a loss to decide at which side I laugh most—at my friends, who suppose me so very innocent, or at my enemies, who believe me to be not far removed from guilty.

My trade is a necessary one, but the world holds aloof my order. Nor do I blame the world over much for its determination. I am quite aware that there is something peculiarly objectionable in the spy, but nevertheless it will be admitted that the spy is as peculiarly necessary as he or she is peculiarly objectionable.

The world would very soon discover the loss of the detective system, and yet if such a loss were to take place, if the certain bad results which would be sure to follow its abolition were made most evident, the world would still avoid the detective as a social companion, from the next moment he or she resumed office.

I have said I do not complain of this treatment, for as I have remarked, I am quite aware that society looks upon the companionship of a spy as repulsive; but, nevertheless, we detectives are necessary, as scavengers are called for, and I therefore write this book to help to show, by my experience, that the detective has some demand upon the gratitude of society.

I am aware that the female detective may be regarded with even more aversion than her brother in profession. But still it cannot be disproved that if there is a demand for men detectives there must also be one for female detective police spies. Criminals are both masculine and feminine—indeed, my experience tells me that when a woman

becomes a criminal she is far worse than the average of her male companions, and therefore it follows that the necessary detectives should be of both sexes.

Let it suffice, once for all, that I know my trade is a despised one, but that being a necessary calling I am not ashamed of it. I know I have done good during my career, I have yet to learn that I have achieved much harm, and I therefore think that the balance of the work of my life is in my favour.

In putting the following narratives on paper, I shall take great care to avoid mentioning myself as much as possible. I determine upon this rule, not from any personal modesty, though I would remark in passing that your detective can be a modest man or woman, but simply to avoid the use of the great I, which, to my thinking, disfigures so many books. To gain this end, the avoidance of the use of this letter, I shall, as much as possible, tell the tales in what I believe is called the third person, and in what I will call the plainest fashion.

I may also point out, while engaged upon these opening lines, that in a very great many cases women detectives are those who can only be used to arrive at certain discoveries. The nature of these discoveries I need here only hint at, many of them being of too marked a character to admit of their being referred to in detail in a work of this character, and in a book published in the present age. But without going into particulars, the reader will comprehend that the woman detective has far greater opportunities than a man of intimate watching, and of keeping her eyes upon matters near which a man could not conveniently play the eavesdropper.

I am aware that the idea of family spies must be an unpleasant subject for contemplation; that to reflect that a female detective may be in one's own family is a disagreeable operation. But, on the other hand, it may be urged that only the man who has secrets to hide need fear a watcher, the inference standing that he who fears may justifiably be watched.

Be all this as it may, it is certain that man and woman detectives are necessities of daily English life, that I am a female detective, and that I think fit to make some of my experiences known to the world.

What will their value be?

I cannot guess—I will not say—I do not care to learn. But I hope these narratives of mine will show that granted much crime passes undetected, much of the most obscure and well-planned evil-doing is brought to the light, and easily, by the operation of the detective. Furthermore, I hope it will be ascertained that there is much of good to be found, even amongst criminals, and that it does not follow because a man breaks the law that he is therefore heartless.

Now—to my work.

# **Tenant For Life**

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It often happens to us detectives—and when I say us detectives, of course, I mean both men and women operatives—that we are the first movers in matters of great ultimate importance to individuals in particular, and the public at large.\*

\*It is perhaps as well here to remark that the MS. of this work has been revised by an ordinary literary editor. It does not appear as actually written by the compiler. This supervision may be injurious to the *vraisemblance* of the work, but by its exercise some clearness of style has been attained.

For instance, a case in point only came under my notice a few weeks since.

A lady of somewhat solitary and reserved life, residing alone, but for a housekeeper, died suddenly. Strangely enough, her son arrived at the house two hours before the lady breathed her last. The house in which the death took place being far from a town, and it being necessary that the son should almost immediately return to London, the house was left for some time in the care, or it were more consistent to say under the control, of the housekeeper already mentioned—a woman who bore a far from spotless character in the neighbourhood of her late mistress's dwelling.

To curtail that portion of this instance of the but poorly comprehended efficacy of the detective police which does not immediately bear upon the argument under consideration, it may be said in a few words that in the time which elapsed between the departure and arrival of the son, the house was very effectively stripped.

The son, of course, was put almost immediately in possession of the suspicions of several neighbours as to the felony which they felt sure had been committed, and this gentleman was very quickly in a position to convince himself that a robbery had been effected.

The housekeeper was spoken to, told of her crime, which insolently she denied, and was at once dismissed. She foolishly threatening law proceedings, on the score of defamation of character.

The son of the deceased lady refused to take any action in the matter of the robbery, urging that he could not have his mother's name and death mixed up with police-court proceedings, and he allowed the affair, as he supposed, to blow over, though it should be here observed that he suffered very considerable inconvenience by the absence of certain papers which were associated with the death of his mother.

Four months pass, and now the police appear upon the scene, and with an efficiency which is an instance of the value of the detective force. The police had, of course, in the ordinary way of business, heard of the robbery referred to, but could not move in it while no prosecutor gave them the word to move. But if the police had not moved in the case, they had not forgotten it.

A robbery takes place in the neighbourhood, and a search-warrant is granted. A search is prosecuted, and in a shed beyond a small house, belonging to a couple whom the housekeeper already mentioned knew, and who had been up at the house while the housekeeper was left in sole charge of it, was found a japanned cash-box.

The detective who made this discovery almost immediately identified the box with the robbery at the house of the late lady, and upon finding, after a close examination, the initial of her surname scratched upon the lid, he became so convinced his conjecture was right, that, upon his own responsibility, he took the tenant of the house in question into custody.

The case went clear against the unhappy man. The police, by a wonderful series of fortunate guesses and industrious inquiries, found out the son, and this latter was enabled to produce a key, one of a household bunch belonging to his late mother, that opened the cash-box in question, which had been forced in such a manner that the cash-box had not been broken.

This gentleman, however, refused to prosecute, and the prisoner got off with the fright of his arrest and an examination.

Which of the two, the gentleman or the detective, did his duty to society, is a question I leave to be answered by my readers. My aim in quoting this instance of the operation of the detective system is to show how valuable it may become, even where should-be prosecutors make the mistake of supposing that leniency and patience form a much better course of conduct than one of justice and fair retribution.

The detective police frequently start cases and discover prosecutors in people who have had no idea of filling any

such position.

Many cases of this character, several of them really important, have come under my own direction. Perhaps the most important is that which I am about to relate, and to which I have given the title of "Tenant for Life."

This case, as it frequently happens, came upon me when I was least expecting business, and when, indeed, I had "put the shutters up for the day," as an old detective companion of mine—a fellow long since dead (he was killed by a most gentlemanly banker who had left town for good, and who, after flooring John Hemmings, left England for good also)—would say.

It was on a Sunday when I got the first inkling of one of the most extraordinary cases which has come under my observation. It is on Sundays that I always put the shutters up. Even when I am engaged hot in a case, I am afraid I relax on a Sunday. I will not work if I can help it on a Sunday. I swim through the week, so to speak, for Sunday, and then I have twenty-four hours' rest before I plunge into my sea of detections once more.

I am what is called a talking companion, and I am bound to admit that women are in the habit of talking scandal, with me for a hearer, within three hours of my making their acquaintance.

Amongst others that I knew some years ago was a Mrs. Flemps. I think I first made her acquaintance because her name struck me as out of the common—it was out of the common, for I had not known her twenty-four hours before I learnt that she was married to a cabman, who on his

father's side was a Dutchman who had been in the eel trade at Billingsgate market.

It was this acquaintance, it was the mere notice of the name of Flemps, which led to the extraordinary chain of events which I shall now place before the reader exactly as I linked them together—premising only that I shall sink my part in the narrative as fully as I shall be able.

As I have said above, I make Sunday a holiday, and coming to know the Flempses, and ascertaining that the cabman—perhaps with some knowledge of that cheerful way of spending the Sunday which I have heard distinguishes foreigners—was in the habit of using his cab as a private vehicle on a Sunday, and driving his wife out, I found my seventh days even more cheerful than I had yet discovered them to be. In plain English, during the summer through which I knew the Flempses, I frequently drove out of London with them a few miles into the country.

Flemps used to drive, of course, and I and his wife were inside, with all the windows down, in order that we might get as much of the country air as possible.

I find, by reference to the diary I have kept since I entered the service, and at which I work equally for pleasure, and to relieve my mind of particulars which would overweight it, for I may add that in this diary, which would be intolerable printed, I fix down every word of a case I hear, as closely as I can remember it, and every particular as near as I can shape it—I say I find, by reference to my diary, that it was the fourth Sunday I rode out with the Flempses, and the sixth week of my acquaintance with those people, whom upon the whole I found very

respectable, that I got the first inkling of one of the best, even if one of the most dissatisfactory, cases in which I was ever engaged.

The conversation which called up my curiosity I am enabled to reproduce almost as it was spoken, for by the time the ride was over I had got so good a thread of the case in my head, that I thought it necessary to book what I had already learnt.

Mrs. Flemps was a worthy woman, who loved to hear herself talk, a failing it is said with her sex. From the hour in which I made her familiar with me, I ceased to talk much to the good woman; I listened only, and rarely opened my mouth except to ask a question.

By the way, I should add here that I in no way spunged upon the Flempses; I always contributed more than onethird to the eatables and drinkables we took with us in the cab, and thereby I think I paid my share of the cab, which would have taken them whether I had been in London or Jericho.

The first words used by the couple in reference to the case attracted my attention.

We had got into the cab, she and I, and he was looking in at the window as he smoothened his old hat round and round.

"Jemmy," he said, her name being Jemima, "where shall us drive to-day?"

"Well, Jan," said she—he had been christened after his Dutch father—"we aint been Little Fourpenny Number Two way this blessed summer."

"That's it," said Jan, with a triumphant, crowing tone. "Little Fourpenny Number Two."

And mounting his box, he drove out of the yard so briskly that for a moment, as we went over the kerbstone, I thought the only road we were about to take was that of destruction.

The extraordinary highway we were about to take naturally led me to make some inquiries; for it can readily be understood by the public that if there is one thing a detective—whether female or male—is less able to endure than another, it is a mystery.

"That's a queer road we're going, Mrs. Flemps," said I; and speaking after the manner of her class—for I may say that half the success of a detective depends upon his or her sympathy with the people from whom either is endeavouring to pick up information.

"Yes," said Mrs. Flemps; and as she sighed I knew that there was more in the remark than would have appeared to an ordinary listener. I do not use the words "ordinary listener" at all in a vain sense, but simply with a business meaning.

"Is it a secret?"

"What, Little Fourpenny?" she called out, as we bumped over the London stones.

"Number Two," I added, with a smile.

She shook her head.

"There was no number two," she replied, "though there ought to have been."

Now this answer was puzzling. Both husband and wife felt mutual sympathy in the affair of "Little Fourpenny Number Two;" and yet it appeared no Little Fourpenny Number Two had ever existed.

"Tell me all about it, Mrs. Flemps," said I, "if it's no secret."

She answered in these words—"Which I will, my dear, when we reach the gardings, but can't a jolting over the stones."

We drove six miles out of London, and got on the level country road. There is no need to say whither we went, because *places* are of no value in this narrative.

It is enough to say it was six miles out of London, and on a level country.

As we made a turn in the road Mrs. Flemps became somewhat excited; and almost immediately afterwards the cabman turned round, and looking at his wife, he said—

"We're a coming to the werry spot."

The cab was drawn about two hundred yards further on, and then Jan Flemps pulled rein, and got off his box.

"There's the werry milestone," he said, pointing to one at the side of the road; "and the werry identical where I lost Little Fourpenny Number Two."

And it was at this point that Mrs. F. remarked—"Cuss the thutty pound."

"Never mind, old woman, we wanted it bad enough then, Lord knows; and but for it this cab might never ha' been druv by me, so put an han'some mug on it, old woman."

The reader will concede that this conversation was sufficiently appetizing to attract any one—to a detective it spoke volumes.

I said nothing till the cab was once more in motion, and I could tell how heartily the cabman appreciated the spot by the slow pace at which we left it behind us, and by the several times he looked back lingeringly at the milestone.

Meanwhile Mrs. Flemps, within the cab, was shaking her head dolefully; and I could see, by the wistful, far-away appearance of her eyes, that in thought she was a long way beyond me and the cab.

When she woke up, which she did in a short time with an exclamation, and such a rough, cutting sentence as I have noticed the rougher sort of folk are in the habit of making the termination of any show of sentiment, I reminded her that she had promised to tell me the history of Little Fourpenny.

"Wait, my dear, till we get to the gardings, and Jan himself will oblige. He tells the tale better nor I do."

Therefore I said no more till we had ended our plain dinner at the tea-gardens, which were our destination. The meal done, and Jan at his pipe, I reminded Mrs. F. once more of her promise; and she mentioning the matter to the cabman, it appeared to me that he was not at all disinclined to refresh himself with a recital of the history.

It is necessary that I should give it, in order that the reader may appreciate how a detective can work out a case.

"I were a going home in my cab one night, more nor a little time ago—"

"It were in 'forty-eight, when the French were a fighting Louy Philippe," said the cabman's wife.

"I was a goin' home, not in the best o' humours, when a comin' across 'amstead 'eath I overtook a woman a

staggerin' under what I thought were a bundle."

"It were a child," said Mrs. Flemps.

"Yes, it were," the cabman continued; "and it had on'y been in this precious world a fortnight. I pulled up, seein' her staggerin'; and to cut it short hereabouts, I told her she might come up on the box along o' me, for it were not likely I could let a tramp in on the cushions. She were werry weak, and the infant were the poorest lookin' kid I ever seed—yet purty to look at as I sor by the gass."

"As he sord by the gass!" responded Jemima.

"Well, arter some conversation with that young woman, I pulled up at a public, and treated her and your obedient; and which whether it were the rum put me up to it, or it were in me before and I knowed it not, no sooner had I swallowed that rum than the idea was plain and wisible afore me. 'What are you a goin' to do with it?' I said, pointing to the young un. 'I don't know,' says she, a lookin' out towards London. 'Father?' says I. 'No,' says she. I then looks out, and points towards London, which she thereupon shook her head; but she didn't turn on the water, being, I think, too far gone for that. 'Which,' said I, 'if you can do nothin' for her (knowin' as she'd told me it was a girl) somebody else may—my old woman and me, you see, never havin' had no family.'"

"Never having had no family—more's the pity," responded Mrs. Flemps.

"'Why,' says she, continued the cabman, 'who'd be troubled with another woman's child?—women have enough trouble with their own.' 'I would,' says I, 'my old woman never having had any, and not likely to mend matters.' 'Will

you?' says she, and such a hawful light came upon that young woman's face as I never wish to see on another. 'Yes,' says I, 'and it shall be all fair and above board, and I'll give you my old woman's address, and what money I've got for her'—which it came about she got called Little Fourpenny, being that sum I had in my pocket after payin' for the rum, after a whole day out and only a shillin' fare. Well, the longs and the shorts of it are that that there wretched young woman gave me up the baby, and I gived her the fourpence, and she got down off the cab and went down a turning, and blest if ever she looked back once, and blest if ever she called at our place once—p'r'aps she lost the address though, and if she did, why she were not so bad after all, and p'r'aps she died—anyhow, that's how we came by Little Fourpenny."

"That's how we came by Little Fourpenny," responded Mrs. F., adding, as a kind of Amen, "blesser little 'art."

"Yes," said I, "but what of Little Fourpenny Number Two?"

"Ha, that's on'y five year ago. My Jemmy—meanin' Jemima, wasn't best pleased when I brought that poor Little Fourpenny home, and I think she thought I knew'd more of it than I did till she growed so uncommon unlike me—but let my wife have thought as she might, I'm sure no mother was ever sorrier than her were when Little Fourpenny was took and changed for the better."

"Much for the better!" said Mrs. F., with two or three tears in her eyes, as I detected.

"Lord, I see her now a comin' with my dinner, bein' not so much nor ten year old, and *all* the rank with a word for Little Fourpenny. All the fellers o' the rank wanted to stand when Little Fourpenny went off the road, which it was but nat'ral. Yes, we missed her when she died at nine."

"At nine," responded Mrs. F., adding, "five years ago."

"And it was but nat'ral we should think as our Fourpennurth was a good one, and as we was alone and might find another, which was the reason, as p'r'aps I began lookin' after Little Fourpenny Number Two, and bless you, my dear, cabmen, and I dersay policemen, don't have to look far any night o' the week without finding a wand'rin' woman as 'as got a little un she don't know what on earth to do with."

"Little Fourpenny hadn't been off the rank three months afore, sittin' on that very milestone as I pointed out, and one evenin' in this very month o' July, there I saw her. My 'art was in my mouth, for it was as though all them years had never been, and jest as though Little Fourpenny's mother was jest afore my hoss's head agin. It was another on 'em. She was a woman with a little un as she didn't know what on earth to do with. Which I spoke to her, and havin' that experience of our gal, I soon made 'er understand me, though I do assure yer my 'art was in my mouth as I thought o' the other. She didn't understand me a' fust, but she did at last, and I thought she were orf 'er 'ed abit by the way she went on, sayin' as Providence 'ad interfered, when it were on'y me. And she took the address greedy-like, but when I offered her the five shillin's, doin' it pleasant like and callin' her mate, she shrinks back she does, and calls out to Heaven if she can sell her child. Which then promisin' to call and see my old woman, and kissin' the child till it got into my throat agin', she run orf with her arms wide out, and goin' from side to side like a jibber—which *she* never come to see the old woman!"

"Which she never come!" responded Mrs. F.; adding, "which if she had what could I 'a said, and which if she'd tore my eyes out I could not ha' complained."

"For you see," continued the cabman, "that there child and that there old woman o' mine never met."

"Never met!" responded Mrs. Flemps.

"For you must know," continued the cabman, "I sold that there child o' that there woman afore I'd left that there milestone a mile behind."

"A mile behind!" adds Mrs. Flemps, shaking her head.

"Lord lead us *not* into temptation, but I could not rersist that there thutty poun', bein' at that identkle time werry hard up, owin' to havin' to pay damages for runnin' down a hold man which was more frightened nor hurt, but the obstinest old party ever a man druv, and had to pay 'im that identkle sum o' thutty poun's, which it seemed to me a kind o' providence when the woman offered that identkle sum, since it seemed to me as I was taken pity on acos of runnin' down that obstnit hold gent while hard a thinkin' o' lost Little Fourpenny."

Now by this time my curiosity had been thoroughly roused. It was impossible to avoid comprehending that the child that the wretched mother had given up to the cabman had been literally sold by him within twenty minutes of the time when he came into the possession of her.

And perhaps it is necessary that I should remark that I was not struck with the idea that it was at all unlikely that this cabman should have met a second woman in his life

ready to part with her child. I am, detective as I live, almost as much ashamed as pained to admit that there is not a night passes in this large city of London during which you are unable to find wretched mothers ready to part with their children. Perhaps I should add that my experience leads me to believe that these poor women are mothers for the first time—mothers of but a very short duration, and that therefore, while they have not been with their little ones long enough to be unable to separate from them, they are still under the influence of that horror of their position, and consequent fear or dread of the child, which is the result of their memory of a time when they were free and respected. These young women are mostly seduced servant and work girls. Poor things!—we detectives, especially us women detectives, know quite enough of such matters.

Said I to the cabman—

"Who was the woman who took the child?"

"Why, 'ow should I know? I was a joggin' on, with the little un on the floor o' the cab, atween the two cushions to prevent co-lisons, when she calls 'Cab!' to me. ''Gaged,' says I. 'I'll pay you anythink, says she. 'Well,' thinks I, 'anyhow you're a queer customer.' She were about thirty—a wild looking party as ever I saw by the gas-lamp, under which she was standin', but she were a real lady, and had dark eyes. 'Can't do it,' says I. Then she says, 'Have you come far down the road?' 'About three miles,' says I. 'Ha,' says she, ''ave you seen a woman with a child?' which, continued the cabman, you might ha' knocked me orf my box when she made that there remark—'a poor woman,' says she, 'with a very young child?' And then as luck would

have it—or ill luck—which sometimes I think it were one. and at other times I'm sure it were the other; as some luck would 'ave it, at this identile moment, the child sets up a howlin' fine. 'What's that?-oh, what's that?' she asks, a flyin' at the cab-windy, and I can tell you I was nearly a tumblin' orf my box, I was so took aback. 'Heaven 'ave sent it!' says she, lookin' in the cab, and I s'pose seein' on'y the child there at the bottom o' the cab, 'which,' says I, 'it's that identkle young woman's you was speakin' of!' Then she screals out she does; an' if there'd been a p'leaceman about I should ha' been in Queer Street, savin' your presence, my dear, a talkin' about the p'leace on a Sunday. Then I ups and tells her that me and my missus have lost our Little Fourpenny, and how I've got the kid; and then she calls out again that Heaven is at the bottom of it, and she says—'My good man,' says she, 'here's thutty poun's,' which there was, all in gold, 'and take it, and give me the child;' and then she says how that I can have no love for the child—not havin' ever seen it afore, and 'ow by doin' as she wished, I might do great good, and, to cut it short—after a time—I gived 'er the child, and I took the thutty poun's; and that's how it was my old woman never, never saw the little un, and how it was, as I hoped that there poor mother ud never call at our house. She never did; so p'r'aps them poor mothers are all alike, and don't care to look them in the face as they once deserted, and can't reasonubly ask back again, and that's how it was that my old woman never saw Little Fourpenny Number Two."

"Never saw Little Fourpenny Number Two!" responded Mrs. Flemps.

Now I may say at once that this tale, told in common English, by an ordinary man, smoking his common clay pipe in a plain tea-gardens in the suburbs of London—this tale called forth all the acumen and wits with which nature has endowed me. The detective was all alive as that extraordinary recital, told with no intention for effect, was slowly unfolded to me, with many stops and waves of the pipe, and repetitions with which I have not favoured the reader.

It was a most remarkable history, that of the woman who had obtained the child, from beginning to end.

The series of facts, accepting the cabman's statements as honest, and as he had no purpose to serve in deceiving me, I was at once inclined to suppose he spoke the truth—as he did; the series of facts was wonderful from the beginning of the chapter to the end.

The extraordinary list of unusual facts began with a woman, evidently belonging to a good class, being out late at night and hailing a cab. Then followed her inquiry concerning a woman with a very young child. To this succeeds the discovery of the child in the cab, and the ejaculation that Heaven has been good to her; and finally had to be considered the fact of her having thirty pounds in gold with her, and which she offers at once to the cabman for the child.

Accustomed to weigh facts, and trace out clear meanings, something after the manner of lawyers, a habit common to all detectives, before I began in a loose, halfcurious way to question Flemps upon the history he had betrayed to me, I had made out a tolerable case against the lady.

As she knew that the woman had passed that way it appeared evident to me that she had seen her, guessing her to be a beggar, at some earlier period of the evening than that at which she addressed the cabman. And as after the cabman refused her for a fare she expressed great joy at hearing the crying of the infant, the inference stood that her despair at the cabman's refusal was in some way connected with the child itself.

Continuing out this reasoning—and custom was so ready within me that the process was finished before the cabman had—I came to the conclusion, after duly balancing the fact of her having with her thirty pounds in gold, and her bribing the cabman with it, that for some reason unknown she had pressing need for a child. I felt certain that she had seen the woman in an earlier part of the evening, that she had set out to overtake the woman, to purchase the child of her, if possible, and that meeting the cab, the driver of which could have no knowledge of her, she had hailed him in the hope of more speedily overtaking the woman and child.

The questions, as a detective, I wished answered were these:—

Who was she?

Why did she act as she did?

Where was she?

At once I apprehended I should have little difficulty in ascertaining where she was, provided she still lived in the district, and provided the cabman could give me some clue by which to identify her.

For I may tell you at once that I saw crime in the whole of this business. Children are not bought in the dark in the midst of fear and trembling, if all is clear and honest sailing.

So pretending to be really interested in the story, which I was, I began putting questions.

"Did you ever learn anything more?"

"Nothink," said he.

And his wife, of course, responded and repeated.

"You never saw the woman again?"

"Never."

Echoed by Mrs. F. I will leave her repeats out from this time forth.

"How long ago did it happen?—you interest me so much!"

"Five years this blessed July."

"Then it was in the July of 1858." I knew that by the date of Little Fourpenny's death.

"It was."

[I should here point out to the reader that though I put this singular case, "Tenant for Life," as the leading narrative in my book, it is one of the later of my more remarkable cases.]

"You are quite sure about the milestone?" I said.

"Quite," he replied.

"What kind of a woman was she?"

"Which," the cabman continued, "I could no more say nor I could fly—save she was wildish-looking, and had large black eyes, and was an out-and-out lady."

"Did she—pardon my being so curious—did she have any peculiarity which you remarked?"

"Any pecooliarity? No, not as I am aweer on."

"No mark—no way with her which was uncommon?"

"None sumdever," said the cabman. "Ha! I year 'er now. 'Firty poun's,' says she, which I could hardly unnerstand 'er at fust; 'firty poun's for that child,' says she, 'firty poun's.' But what 'ave you started for, my dear?" he asked me.

"Which," here his wife added, "well she may start, pore dear, with you a tellin' about Little Fourpenny in a way to child 'er blood."

Now, the fact is, I had started because I thought I saw the end of a good clew. We detectives have guite a handbook of the science of our trade, and we know every line by heart. One of the chief chapters in that unwritten book is the one devoted to identification. The uninitiated would be surprised to learn how many ways we have of identification by certain marks, certain ways, certain personal peculiarities—but above all, by the unnumbered modes of speaking, the form of speaking, the subjects spoken of, and above all the impediments or peculiarities of speech. For instance, if we are told a party we are after always misplaces the "w" and "v," we are inclined to let a suspected person pass who answers in all other ways to the description, except in this case of the "v" and "w." We know that no cunning, no dexterity would enable the man we are seeking to prevent the exhibition of this imperfection, even if he were on his guard, which he never is. He may change dress, voice, look, appearance, but never his mode of speaking—never his pronunciation.

Now, amongst our list of speech-imperfections is one where there is an impossibility to pronounce the

troublesome "th," and where this difficult sound is replaced by an "f," or a "d," or sometimes by one or the other, according to the construction of the word.

This imperfection I hoped I had discovered to be distinguishable as belonging to the woman who had purchased the child.

"Do you mean, Mr. Flemps," I said,—"do you mean to say that the woman said *firty* instead of *thirty?* How odd."

"'Firty,' says she, and that were the reason why I could not comperend 'er at fust. 'Firty,' says she; an' it was on'y when the gold chinked as I knowed what she meant."

"And you have never seen nor heard from her any more?"

"It wasn't likely as she would, if you'd a seen her go off as she did."

"And which way did she go?"

"Why a co'rse as I *met* her, my dear, and as she was coming from somewhere to foller the young woman with the kid, she backed to'ards London, and I 'ad to pass 'er afore I left her behind, an' she never so much as looked at me."

I did not ask any more questions.

I suppose I grew silent; and especially so when we got in the cab and were driving once more home.

Indeed, Mrs. Flemps said she had no doubt that *he* had quite upset me with their tale of Little Fourpenny.

When we reached the milestone, however, Mrs. F. was as full of the subject as ever; and I need not say that—though perhaps I said little—I was very hard at work putting this and that together.

After we had passed the milestone, every house on each side of the way had a strange fascination for me. I hungered after every house as it was left behind me, fancying each might be the one which sheltered the infant.

That I would work it out I determined.

So far I had these facts:—

1.

The woman must have lived near the road, or she would not have seen the beggar and her child, provided these latter had been on the high road when seen by the former.

2.

The time which had elapsed between seeing the woman and meeting the cabman could not have been very great, or she never would have hoped to find the mother and child.

3.

The occurrence had only taken place five years previously, and therefore the woman might not have moved out of the neighbourhood.

4.

The purchase of the child in such a manner suggested it was to be used for the purpose of deception—in all probability to replace another.

5.

Therefore, deception being practised somebody was injured —in all probability an heir.

6.

The woman was not needy, or she could not have offered thirty pounds in gold to a stranger, and evidently at a very short notice, for it was clear there could have been no demand for the child when she saw it with the mother. 7.

Whoever she was, she had the far from ordinary failure of speech which consists of an inability to utter the sound of "th."

8.

Finally, and most importantly, I had dates.

Poor Flemps and his wife—they little thought what a serpent of detection they had been nourishing in their cab. I believe they thought I was a person living on my small property, and helping my income out by a little light millinery.

With the information I had already obtained, I determined to try and sift the matter to the bottom; and I may as well state that, not having anything on my hands at that time, I set to work on the Monday morning, telling Mrs. Flemps that I had some business to look after, and being wished luck from the very bottom of her heart by that cajoled woman.

I took a lodging in the first place as near that milestone as I could find one—it was a sweet little country room, with honeysuckle round each window.

I may at once say that the first part of my work was very easy.

Within two days of my arrival at my little lodging at the honeysuckle cottage, I had found out enough to justify me in continuing the search.

As I have said, I could have no reason to doubt the cabman, because he could have no object in deceiving me. But evidence is what detectives live upon.

The first thing I did was to find traces, if possible, of the mother.

It will be remembered that the mother showed great sorrow at losing the child, and that yet she never knocked at the cabman's door. The inference I took was this, that as she had shown love for the child, and as she had never sought to see it after parting with it, that she had been prevented by one of two catastrophes—either she had gone mad, or she had died.

Where was I to make inquiries?

Clearly of the first relieving officer who lived past the milestone, at which she had parted with the child, and in the opposite direction to that which the cab had taken—for I know much of these poor mothers—they always flee from their children when they have parted from them, whether this parting be by the road of murder, or by desertion, or by the coming of some good Samaritan (like the cabman) who, having no children of his own, is willing to accept a child who to its maternal mother is a burden.

I went past the milestone, made inquiries, and in time found the relieving officer's house. I was answered in double quick time. I think the man supposed I was a relation, and that perhaps I would gain him some credit by reimbursing the parish, through his activity, its miserable outlay in burying the poor woman.

For she was dead.

Circumstances pointed so absolutely to her as the woman who had parted with her child, that I had no reasonable doubt about my conclusion.

In that month of July, on the night of the 15th, a woman was brought in a cart to the officer's door. The man who drove stated that he found the woman lying in the road, and