Kennedy was deeply immersed in writing a lecture on the chemical compositions of various bacterial toxins and antitoxins, a thing which was as unfamiliar to me as Kamchatka, but as familiar to Kennedy as Broadway and Forty-second Street.

“Really,” he remarked, laying down his fountain-pen and lighting his cigar for the hundredth time, “the more one thinks of how the modern criminal misses his opportunities the more astonishing it seems. Why do they stick to pistols, chloroform, and prussic acid when there is such a splendid assortment of refined methods they might employ?”

“Give it up, old man,” I replied helplessly, “unless it is because they haven’t any imagination. I hope they don’t use them. What would become of my business if they did? How would you ever get a really dramatic news feature for the Star out of such a thing? ‘Dotted line marks route taken by fatal germ; cross indicates spot where antitoxin attacked it’—Ha! Ha! Not much for the yellow journals in that, Craig.”

“To my mind, Walter, it would be the height of the dramatic—far more dramatic than sending a bullet into a man. Any fool can shoot a pistol or cut a throat, but it takes brains to be up-to-date.”

“It may be so;” I admitted, and went on reading, while Kennedy scratched away diligently on his lecture. I mention this conversation both because it bears on my story, by a rather peculiar coincidence, and because it showed me a new side of Kennedy’s amazing researches. He was as much interested in bacteria as in chemistry, and the story is one of bacteria.

It was perhaps a quarter of an hour later when the buzzer on our hall door sounded. Imagine my surprise on opening the door to discover the slight figure of what appeared to be a most fascinating young lady who was heavily veiled. She was in a state almost bordering on hysteria, as even I, in spite of my usual obtuseness, noticed.

“Is Professor Kennedy in?” she inquired anxiously.

“Yes, ma’am;” I replied, opening the door into our study.

She advanced toward him, repeating her inquiry.

“I am Professor Kennedy. Pray be seated,” he said.

The presence of a lady in our apartment was such a novelty that really I forgot to disappear, but busied myself straightening the furniture and opening a window to allow the odour of stale tobacco to escape.

“My name is Eveline Bisbee,” she began. “I have heard, Professor Kennedy, that you are an adept at getting at the bottom of difficult mysteries.”

“You flatter me;” he said in acknowledgment. “Who was so foolish as to tell you that”

“A friend who has heard of the Kerr Parker case,” she replied.

“I beg your pardon,” I interrupted, “I didn’t mean to intrude. I think I’ll go out. I’ll be back in an hour or two.”

“Please, Mr. Jameson—it is Mr. Jameson, is it not?”

I bowed in surprise.

“If it is possible I wish you would stay and hear my story. I am told that you and Professor Kennedy always work together.”

It was my turn to be embarrassed by the compliment.
“Mrs. Fletcher, of Great Neck,” she explained, “has told me. I believe Professor Kennedy performed a great service for the Fletchers, though I do not know what it was. At any rate, I have come to you with my case, in which I have small hope of obtaining assistance unless you can help me. If Professor Kennedy cannot solve it, well, I’m afraid nobody can.” She paused a moment, then added, “No doubt you have read of the death of my guardian the other day.”

Of course we had. Who did not know that “Jim” Bisbee, the southern California oil-magnate, had died suddenly of typhoid fever at the private hospital of Dr. Bell, where he had been taken from his magnificent apartment on Riverside Drive? Kennedy and I had discussed it at the time. We had commented on the artificiality of the twentieth century. No longer did people have homes; they had apartments, I had said. They didn’t fall ill in the good old-fashioned way any more, either in fact, they even hired special rooms to die in. They hired halls for funeral services. It was a wonder that they didn’t hire graves. It was all part of our twentieth century break-up of tradition. Indeed we did know about the death of Jim Bisbee. But there was nothing mysterious about it. It was just typical in all its surroundings of the first decade of the twentieth century in a great, artificial city—a lonely death of a great man surrounded by all that money could buy.

We had read of his ward, too, the beautiful Miss Eveline Bisbee, a distant relation. As under the heat of the room and her excitement, she raised her veil, we were very much interested in her. At least, I am sure that even Kennedy had by this time completely forgotten the lecture on toxins.

“There is something about my guardian’s death,” she began in a low and tremulous voice, “that I am sure will bear investigating. It may be only a woman’s foolish fears, but—I haven’t told this to a soul till now, except Mrs. Fletcher. My guardian had, as you perhaps know, spent his summer at his country place at Bisbee Hall, New Jersey, from which he returned rather suddenly about a week ago. Our friends thought it merely a strange whim that he should return to the city before the summer was fairly over, but it was not. The day before he returned, his gardener fell sick of typhoid. That decided Mr. Bisbee to return to the city on the following day. Imagine his consternation to find his valet stricken the very next morning. Of course they motored to New York immediately, then he wired to me at Newport, and together we opened his apartment at the Louis Quinze.”

“But that was not to be the end of it. One after another, the servants at Bisbee Hall were taken with the disease until five of them were down. Then came the last blow—Mr. Bisbee fell a victim in New York. So far I have been spared. But who knows how much longer it will last? I have been so frightened that I haven’t eaten a meal in the apartment since I came back. When I am hungry I simply steal out to a hotel—a different one every time. I never drink any water except that which I have surreptitiously boiled in my own room over a gas-stove. Disinfectants and germicides have been used by the gallon, and still I don’t feel safe. Even the health authorities don’t remove my fears. With my guardian’s death I had begun to feel that possibly it was over. But no. This morning another servant who came up from the hall last week was taken sick, and the doctor pronounces that typhoid, too. Will I be the next? Is it just a foolish fear? Why does it pursue us to New York? Why didn’t it stop at Bisbee Hall?”

I don’t think I ever saw a living creature more overcome by horror, by an invisible, deadly fear. That was why it was doubly horrible in a girl so attractive as Eveline Bisbee. As I listened I felt how terrible it must be to be pursued by such a fear. What must it be to be dogged by a disease as relentlessly as the typhoid had dogged her? If it had been some great, but visible, tangible peril how gladly I could have faced it merely for the smile of a woman like this. But it was a peril that only knowledge and patience could meet. Instinctively I turned toward Kennedy, my own mind being an absolute blank.

“Is there anyone you suspect of being the cause of such an epidemic?” he asked. “I may as well tell you right now that I have already formed two theories—one perfectly natural, the other diabolical. Tell me everything.”

“Well, I had expected to receive a fortune of one million dollars, free and clear, by his will and this morning I am informed by his lawyer, James Denny, that a new will had been made. It is still one million. But the remainder, instead of going to a number of charities in which he was known to be interested, goes to form a trust fund for the Bisbee School of Mechanical Arts, of which Mr. Denny is the sole trustee. Of course, I do not know much about my guardian’s interests while he was alive, but it strikes me as strange that he should have changed so radically, and, besides, the new will is so worded that if I die without children my million also goes to this school—location unnamed. I can’t help wondering about it all.”
“Why should you wonder—at least what other reasons have you for wondering?”

“Oh, I can’t express them. Maybe after all it’s only a woman’s silly intuition. But often I have thought in the past few days about this illness of my guardian. It was so queer. He was always so careful. And you know the rich don’t often have typhoid.”

“You have no reason to suppose that it was not typhoid fever of which he died”

She hesitated. “No,” she replied, “but if you had known Mr. Bisbee you would think it strange, too. He had a horror of infectious and contagious diseases. His apartment and his country home were models. No sanitarium could have been more punctilious. He lived what one of his friends called an antiseptic life. Maybe I am foolish, but it keeps getting closer and closer to me now, and—well, I wish you’d look into the case. Please set my mind at rest and assure me that nothing is wrong, that it is all natural.”

“I will help you, Miss Bisbee. To-morrow night I want to take a trip quietly to Bisbee Hall. You will see that it is all right, that I have the proper letters so I can investigate thoroughly”

I shall never forget the mute and eloquent thanks with which she said good night after Kennedy’s promise.

Kennedy sat with his eyes shaded under his hand for fully an hour after she had left. Then he suddenly jumped up. “Walter,” he said, “let us go over to Dr. Bell’s. We may possibly learn something.”

As we sat in the waiting-room with its thick Oriental rugs and handsome mahogany furniture, I found myself going back to our conversation of the early evening. “By Jove, Kennedy, you were right,” I exclaimed. “If there is anything in this germ-plot idea of hers it is indeed the height of the dramatic—it is diabolical. No ordinary mortal would ever be capable of it.”

Just then the head nurse came in, a large woman breathing of germlessness and cheerfulness in her spotless uniform. We were shown every courtesy. There was, in fact, nothing to conceal. The visit set at rest my last suspicion that perhaps Jim Bisbee had been poisoned by a drug. The charts of his temperature and the sincerity of the nurse were absolutely convincing. It had really been typhoid, and there was nothing to be gained by pursuing that inquiry further.

Back at the apartment, Craig began packing his suitcase with the few things he would need for a journey. “I’m going out to Bisbee Hall tomorrow for a few days, Walter, and if you could find it convenient to come along I should like to have your assistance.”

“To tell you the truth, Craig, I am afraid to go,” I said.

“You needn’t be. I’m going down to the army post on Governor’s Island first to be vaccinated against typhoid. Then I am going to wait a few hours till it takes effect before going. It’s the only place in the city where one can be inoculated against it, so far as I know. While three inoculations are really best, I understand that one is sufficient for ordinary protection, and that is all we shall need, if any.”

“You’re sure of it?”

“Almost positive.”

“Very well, Craig. I’ll go.”

Down at the army post the next morning we had no difficulty in being inoculated against the disease. The work of immunising our army was going on at that time, and several thousands of soldiers in various parts of the country had already been vaccinated, with the best of results. “Do many civilians come over to be vaccinated?” asked Craig of Major Carroll, the surgeon in charge.

“Not many, for very few have heard of it,” he replied.

“I suppose you keep a record of them.”
“Only their names—we can’t follow them up outside the army, to see how it works. Still, when they come to us as you and Mr. Jameson have done we are perfectly willing to vaccinate them. The Army Medical Corps takes the position that if it is good for the army it is good for civil life, and as long as only a few civilians apply we are perfectly willing to do it for a fee covering the cost.”

“And would you let me see the list?”

“Certainly. You may look it over in a moment.”

Kennedy glanced hurriedly through the short list of names, pulled out his notebook, made an entry, and handed the list back. “Thank you, Major.”

Bisbee Hall was a splendid place set in the heart of a great park whose area was measured by square miles rather than by acres. But Craig did not propose to stay there, for he arranged for accommodations in a near-by town, where we were to take our meals also. It was late when we arrived, and we spent a restless night, for the inoculation “took.” It wasn’t any worse than a light attack of the grippe, and in the morning we were both all right again, after the passing of what is called the “negative phase.” I, for one, felt much safer.

The town was very much excited over the epidemic at the hall, and if I had been wondering why Craig wanted me along my wonder was soon set at rest. He had me scouring the town and country looking up every case or rumour of typhoid for miles around. I made the local weekly paper my headquarters, and the editor was very obliging. He let me read all his news letters from his local correspondent at every crossroads. I waded through accounts of new calves and colts, new fences and barns, who “Sundayed” with his brother, etc., and soon had a list of all the cases in that part of the country. It was not a long one, but it was scattered. After I had traced them out, following Kennedy’s instructions, they showed nothing, except that they were unrelated to the epidemic at the hall.

Meanwhile, Kennedy was very busy there. He had a microscope and slides and test-tubes and chemicals for testing things, and I don’t know what all, for there was not time to initiate me into all the mysteries. He tested the water from the various driven wells and in the water-tank, and the milk from the cows; he tried to find out what food had come in from outside, though there was practically none, for the hall was self-supporting. There was no stone he left unturned.

When I rejoined him that night he was clearly perplexed. I don’t think my report decreased his perplexity, either.

“There is only one thing left as far as I have been able to discover after one day’s work,” he said, after we had gone over our activities for the day. “Jim Bisbee never drank the water from his own wells. He always drank a bottled water shipped down from a camp of his in New York State, where he had a remarkable mountain spring. I tested a number of the full bottles at the hall, but they were perfectly pure. There wasn’t a trace of the bacillus typhosus in any of them. Then it occurred to me that, after all, that was not the thing to do. I should test the empty ones. But there weren’t any empty ones. They told me they had all been taken down to the freight station yesterday to be shipped back to the camp. I hope they haven’t gone yet. Let’s drive around and see if they are there.”

The freight-master was just leaving, but when he learned we were from the hall he consented to let us examine the bottles. They were corked and in wooden cases, which protected them perfectly. By the light of the station lamps and the aid of a pocket-lens, Kennedy examined them on the outside and satisfied himself that after being replaced in the wooden cases the bottles themselves had not been handled.

“Will you let me borrow some of these bottles to-night” he asked the agent. “I’ll give you my word that they will be returned safely to-morrow. If necessary, I’ll get an order for them.”

The station-agent reluctantly yielded; especially as a small green banknote figured in the transaction. Craig and I tenderly lifted the big bottles in their cases into our trap and drove back to our rooms in the hotel. It quite excited the hangers-on to see us drive up with a lot of empty five-gallon bottles and carry them up-stairs, but I had long ago given up having any fear of public opinion in carrying out anything Craig wanted.

In our room we worked far into the night. Craig carefully swabbed out the bottom and sides of each bottle by inserting a little piece of cotton on the end of a long wire. Then he squeezed the water out of the cotton swab on small glass slides coated with agar-agar, or Japanese seaweed, a medium in which germ-cultures multiply rapidly.
He put the slides away in a little oven with an alcohol-lamp which he had brought along, leaving them to remain overnight at blood heat.

I had noticed all this time that he was very particular not to touch any of the bottles on the outside. As for me, I wouldn’t have touched them for the world. In fact, I was getting so I hesitated to touch anything. I was almost afraid to breathe, though I knew there was no harm in that. However, it was not danger of infection in touching the bottles that made Craig so careful. He had noted, in the dim light of the station lamps, what seemed to be finger-marks on the bottles, and they had interested him, in fact, had decided him on a further investigation of the bottles.

“I am now going to bring out these very faint finger-prints on the bottles,” remarked Craig, proceeding with his examination in the better light of our room. “Here is some powder known to chemists as ‘grey powder’—mercury and chalk. I sprinkle it over the faint markings, so, and then I brush it off with a camel’s-hair brush lightly. That brings out the imprint much more clearly, as you can see. For instance, if you place your dry thumb on a piece of white paper you leave no visible impression. If grey powder is sprinkled over the spot and then brushed off a distinct impression is seen. If the impression of the fingers is left on something soft, like wax, it is often best to use printers’ ink to bring out the ridges and patterns of the finger-marks. And so on for various materials. Quite a science has been built up around finger-prints."

“I wish I had that enlarging camera which I have in my laboratory. However, my ordinary camera will do, for all I want is to preserve a record of these marks, and I can enlarge the photographs later. In the morning I will photograph these marks and you can do the developing of the films. To-night we’ll improvise the bathroom as a dark-room and get everything ready so that we can start in bright and early.”

We were, indeed, up early. One never has difficulty in getting up early in the country: it is so noisy, at least to a city-bred man. City noise at five AM is sepulchral silence compared with bucolic activity at that hour.

There were a dozen negatives which I set about developing after Craig had used up all our films. Meanwhile, he busied himself adjusting his microscope and test-tubes and getting the agar slides ready for examination.

Shirt-sleeves rolled up, I was deeply immersed in my work when I heard a shout in the next room, and the bathroom door flew open.

“Confound you, Kennedy, do you want to ruin these films!” I cried.

He shut the door with a bang. “Hurrah, Walter!” he exclaimed. “I think I have it, at last. I have just found some most promising colonies of the bacilli on one of my slides.”

I almost dropped the pan of acid I was holding, in my excitement. “Well,” I said, concealing my own surprise, “I’ve found out something, too. Every one of these finger-prints so far is from the same pair of hands.”

We scarcely ate any breakfast, and were soon on our way up to the hall. Craig had provided himself at the local stationer’s with an inking-pad, such as is used for rubber stamps. At the hall he proceeded to get the impressions of the fingers and thumbs of all the servants.

It was quite a long and difficult piece of work to compare the finger-prints we had taken with those photographed, in spite of the fact that writers descant on the ease with which criminals are traced by this system devised by the famous Galton. However, we at last finished the job between us; or rather Craig finished it, with an occasional remark from me. His dexterity amazed me; it was more than mere book knowledge.

For a moment we sat regarding each other hopelessly. None of the finger-prints taken at the hall tallied with the photographed prints. Then Craig rang for the housekeeper, a faithful old soul whom even the typhoid scare could not budge from her post.

“Are you sure I have seen all the servants who were at the hall while Mr. Bisbee was here” asked Craig.

“Why, no, sir—you didn’t ask that. You asked to see all who are here now. There is only one who has left, the cook, Bridget Fallon. She left a couple of days ago—said she was going back to New York to get another job. Glad enough I was to get rid of her, too, for she was drunk most of the time after the typhoid appeared.”
“Well, Walter, I guess we shall have to go back to New York again, then,” exclaimed Kennedy. “Oh, I beg pardon, Mrs. Rawson, for interrupting. Thank you ever so much. Where did Bridget come from?”

“She came well-recommended, sir. Here is the letter in my writing-desk. She had been employed by the Caswell-Joneses at Shelter Island before she came here.”

“I may keep this letter” asked Craig, scanning it quickly.

“Yes.”

“By the way, where were the bottles of spring water kept”

“In the kitchen.”

“Did Bridget take charge of them”

“Yes.”

“Did Mr. Bisbee have any guests during the last week that he was here?”

“Only Mr. Denny one night.”

“H’m!” exclaimed Craig. “Well, it will not be so hard for us to unravel this matter, after all, when we get back to the city. We must make that noon train, Walter. There is nothing more for us to do here.”

Emerging from the “Tube” at Ninth Street, Craig hustled me into a taxicab, and in almost no time we were at police headquarters.

Fortunately, Inspector Barney O’Connor was in and in an amiable mood, too, for Kennedy had been careful that the Central Office received a large share of credit for the Kerr Parker case. Craig sketched hastily the details of this new case. O’Connor’s face was a study. His honest blue Irish eyes fairly bulged in wonder, and when Craig concluded with a request for help I think O’Connor would have given him anything in the office, just to figure in the case.

“First, I want one of your men to go to the surrogate’s office and get the original of the will. I shall return it within a couple of hours—all I want to do is to make a photographic copy. Then another man must find this lawyer, James Denny, and in some way get his fingerprints—you must arrange that yourself. And send another fellow up to the employment offices on Fourth Avenue and have him locate this cook, Bridget Fallon. I want her fingerprints, too. Perhaps she had better be detained, for I don’t want her to get away. Oh, and say, O’Connor, do you want to finish this case up like the crack of a whip tonight?”

“I’m game, sir. What of it?”

“Let me see. It is now four o’clock. If you can get hold of all these people in time I think I shall be ready for the final scene to-night—say, at nine. You know how to arrange it. Have them all present at my laboratory at nine, and I promise we shall have a story that will get into the morning papers with leaded type on the front page.”

“Now, Walter,” he added, as we hurried down to the taxicab again, “I want you to drop off at the Department of Health with this card to the commissioner. I believe you know Dr. Leslie. Well, ask him if he knows anything about this Bridget Fallon. I will go on up-town to the laboratory and get my apparatus ready. You needn’t come up till nine, old fellow, for I shall be busy till then, but be sure when you come that you bring the record of this Fallon woman if you have to beg, borrow, or steal it.”

I didn’t understand it, but I took the card and obeyed implicitly. It is needless to say that I was keyed up to the greatest pitch of excitement during my interview with the health commissioner, when I finally got in to see him. I hadn’t talked to him long before a great light struck me, and I began to see what Craig was driving at. The commissioner saw it first.

“If you don’t mind, Mr. Jameson,” he said, after I had told him as much of my story as I could, “will you call up Professor Kennedy and tell him I’d like very much to be present to-night myself?”
“Certainly I will,” I replied, glad to get my errand done in first-class fashion in that way.

Things must have been running smoothly, for while I was sitting in our apartment after dinner, impatiently waiting for half-past eight, when the commissioner had promised to call for me and go up to the laboratory, the telephone rang. It was Craig.

“Walter, might I ask a favour of you?” he said. “When the commissioner comes ask him to stop at the Louis Quinze and bring Miss Bisbee up, too. Tell her it is important. No more now. Things are going ahead fine.”

Promptly at nine we were assembled, a curious crowd. The health commissioner and the inspector, being members of the same political party, greeted each other by their first names. Miss Bisbee was nervous, Bridget was abusive, Denny was sullen. As for Kennedy, he was, as usual, as cool as a lump of ice. And I—well, I just sat on my feelings to keep myself quiet.

At one end of the room Craig had placed a large white sheet such as he used in his stereopticon lectures, while at the top of the tier of seats that made a sort of little amphitheatre out of his lecture-room his stereopticon sputtered.

“Moving pictures to-night, eh?” said Inspector O’Connor.

“Not exactly,” said Craig, “though—yes, they will be moving in another sense. Now, if we are all ready, I’ll switch off the electric lights.”

The calcium sputtered some more, and a square of light was thrown on the sheet.

Kennedy snapped a little announcer such as lecturers use. “Let me invite your attention to these enlargements of finger-prints,” he began, as a huge thumb appeared on the screen. “Here we have a series of finger-prints which I will show one after another slowly. They are all of the fingers of the same person, and they were found on some empty bottles of spring water used at Bisbee Hall during the two weeks previous to the departure of Mr. Bisbee for New York.

“Here are, in succession, the finger-prints of the various servants employed about the house—and of a guest,” added Craig, with a slight change of tone. “They differ markedly from the fingerprints on the glass,” he continued, as one after another appeared, “all except this last one. That is identical. It is, Inspector, what we call a composite type of finger-print—in this case a combination of what is called the ‘loop’ and ‘whorl’ types.’

No sound broke the stillness save the sputtering of the oxygen on the calcium of the stereopticon.

“The owner of the fingers from which these prints were made is in this room. It was from typhoid germs on these fingers that the fever was introduced into the drinking water at Bisbee Hall.”

Kennedy paused to emphasize the statement, then continued. “I am now going to ask Dr. Leslie to give us a little talk on a recent discovery in the field of typhoid fever—you understand, Commissioner, what I mean, I believe?”

“Perfectly. Shall I mention names?”

“No, not yet.”

“Well,” began Dr. Leslie, clearing his throat, “within the past year or two we have made a most weird and startling discovery in typhoid fever. We have found what we now call ‘typhoid carriers’—persons who do not have the disease themselves, perhaps never have had it, but who are literally living test-tubes of the typhoid bacillus. It is positively uncanny. Everywhere they go they scatter the disease. Down at the department we have the records of a number of such instances, and our men in the research laboratories have come to the conclusion that, far from being of rare occurrence, these cases are comparatively common. I have in mind one particular case of a servant girl, who, during the past five or six years, has been employed in several families.”

“In every family typhoid fever has later broken out. Experts have traced out at least thirty cases and several deaths due to this one person. In another case we found an epidemic up in Harlem to be due to a typhoid carrier on a remote farm in Connecticut. This carrier, innocently enough, it is true, contaminated the milk-supply coming from that farm. The result was over fifty cases of typhoid here in this city.”
“However, to return to the case of the servant I have mentioned. Last spring we had her under surveillance, but as there was no law by which we could restrain her permanently she is still at large. I think one of the Sunday papers at the time had an account of her—they called her ‘Typhoid Bridget,’ and in red ink she was drawn across the page in gruesome fashion, frying the skulls of her victims in a frying-pan over a roaring fire. That particular typhoid carrier, I understand—”

“Excuse me, Commissioner, if I interrupt, but I think we have carried this part of the programme far enough to be absolutely convincing,” said Craig. “Thank you very much for the clear way in which you have put it.”

Craig snapped the announcer, and a letter appeared on the screen. He said nothing, but let us read it through.

To whom it may concern:
This is to certify that Bridget Fallon has been employed in my family at Shelter Island for the past season and that I have found her a reliable servant and an excellent cook.

A. St. John Caswell-Jones

“Before God, Mr. Kennedy, I’m innocent,” screeched Bridget. “Don’t have me arrested. I’m innocent. I’m innocent.”

Craig gently, but firmly, forced her back into her chair.

Again the announcer snapped. This time the last page of Mr. Bisbee’s will appeared on the sheet, ending with his signature and the witnesses.

“I’m now going to show these two specimens of handwriting very greatly enlarged,” he said, as the stereopticon plates were shifted again.

“An author of many scientific works, Dr. Lindsay Johnson, of London, has recently elaborated a new theory with regard to individuality in handwriting. He maintains that in certain diseases a person’s pulse beats are individual, and that no one suffering from any such disease can control, even for a brief space of time, the frequency or peculiar irregularities of his heart’s action, as shown by a chart recording his pulsation. Such a chart is obtained for medical purposes by means of a sphygmograph, an instrument fitted to the patient’s forearm and supplied with a needle, which can be so arranged as to record automatically on a prepared sheet of paper the peculiar force and frequency of the pulsation. Or the pulsation may be simply observed in the rise and fall of a liquid in a tube. Dr. Johnson holds the opinion that a pen in the hand of a writer serves, in a modified degree, the same end as the needle in the first-named form of the sphygmograph and that in such a person’s handwriting one can see by projecting the letters, greatly magnified, on a screen, the scarcely perceptible turns and quivers made in the lines by the spontaneous action of that person’s peculiar pulsation.”

“To prove this, the doctor carried out an experiment at Charing Cross Hospital. At his request a number of patients suffering from heart and kidney diseases wrote the Lord’s Prayer in their ordinary handwriting. The different manuscripts were then taken and examined microscopically. By throwing them, highly magnified, on a screen, the jerks or involuntary motions due to the patient’s peculiar pulsations were distinctly visible. The handwriting of persons in normal health, says Dr. Johnson, does not always show their pulse beats. What one can say, however, is that when a document, purporting to be written by a certain person, contains traces of pulse beats and the normal handwriting of that person does not show them, then clearly that document is a forgery.”

“Now, in these two specimens of handwriting which we have enlarged it is plain that the writers of both of them suffered from a certain peculiar disease of the heart. Moreover, I am prepared to show that the pulse beats exhibited in the case of certain pen-strokes in one of these documents are exhibited in similar strokes in the other. Furthermore, I have ascertained from his family physician, whose affidavit I have here, that Mr. Bisbee did not suffer from this or any other form of heart disease. Mr. Caswell-Jones, in addition to wiring me that he refused to write Bridget Fallon a recommendation after the typhoid broke out in his country house, also says he does not suffer from heart disease in any form. From the tremulous character of the letters and figures in both these documents, which when magnified is the more easily detected, I therefore conclude that both are forgeries, and I am ready to go farther and say that they are forgeries from the same hand.”

“It usually takes a couple of weeks after infection for typhoid to develop, a time sufficient in itself to remove suspicion from acts which might otherwise be scrutinised very carefully if happening immediately before the disease
developed. I may add, also, that it is well known that stout people do very poorly when they contract typhoid, especially if they are old. Mr. Bisbee was both stout and old. To contract typhoid was for him a virtual death-warrant. Knowing all these facts, a certain person purposely sought out a crafty means of introducing typhoid fever into Mr. Bisbee’s family. That person, furthermore, was inoculated against typhoid three times during the month before the disease was devilishly and surreptitiously introduced into Bisbee Hall, in order to protect himself or herself should it become necessary for that person to visit Bisbee Hall. That person, I believe, is the one who suffered from an aneurism of the heart, the writer, or rather the forger, of the two documents I have shown, by one of which he or she was to profit greatly by the death of Mr. Bisbee and the founding of an alleged school in a distant part of the country—a subterfuge, if you recall, used in at least one famous case for which the convicted perpetrator is now under a life sentence in Sing Sing.”

“I will ask Dr. Leslie to take this stethoscope and examine the hearts of everyone in the room and tell me whether there is anyone here suffering from an aneurism.”

The calcium light ceased to sputter. One person after another was examined by the health commissioner. Was it merely my imagination, or did I really hear a heart beating with wild leaps as if it would burst the bonds of its prison and make its escape if possible? Perhaps it was only the engine of the commissioner’s machine out on the campus driveway. I don’t know. At any rate, he went silently from one to the other, betraying not even by his actions what he discovered with the stethoscope. The suspense was terrible. I felt Miss Bisbee’s hand involuntarily grasp my arm convulsively. Without disturbing the silence, I reached a glass of water standing near me on Craig’s lecture-table and handed it to her.

The commissioner was bending over the lawyer, trying to adjust the stethoscope better to his ears. The lawyer’s head was resting heavily on his hand, and he was heaped up in an awkward position in the cramped lecture-room seat. It seemed an age as Dr. Leslie tried to adjust the stethoscope. Even Craig felt the excitement. While the commissioner hesitated, Kennedy reached over and impatiently switched on the electric light in full force.

As the light flooded the room, blinding us for the instant, the large form of Dr. Leslie stood between us and the lawyer.

“What does the stethoscope tell you, Doctor?” asked Craig, leaning forward expectantly. He was as unprepared for the answer as any of us.

“It tells me that a higher court than those of New York has passed judgment on this astounding criminal. The aneurism has burst.”

I felt a soft weight fall on my shoulder. The Morning Star did not have the story, after all. I missed the greatest “scoop” of my life seeing Eveline Bisbee safely to her home after she had recovered from the shock of Denny’s exposure and punishment.

Arthur Benjamin Reeve, “The Bacteriological Detective” Cosmopolitan (February 1911).