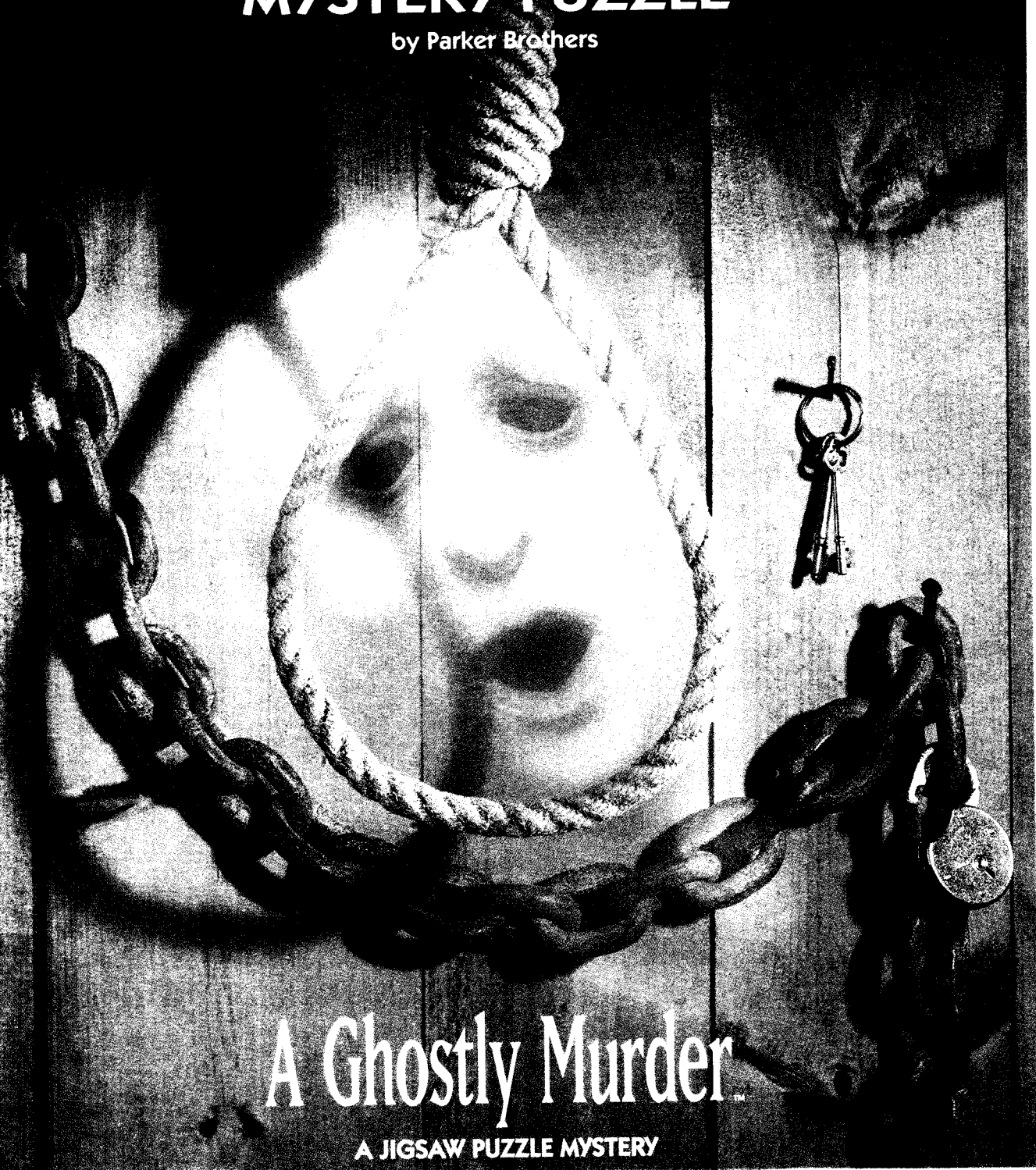




Clue[®]

MYSTERY PUZZLE

by Parker Brothers



A Ghostly Murder.

A JIGSAW PUZZLE MYSTERY

A Ghostly Murder™

"I can't believe he would kill himself," Miss Scarlett sobbed. "He had so much to live for."

It was late July, two weeks after Dr. David Black's death, and the elite of Darbyshire still hadn't come to grips with their old friend's suicide.

"I know." Colonel Mustard placed a sympathetic hand on the young woman's shapely knee. "But the facts seem irrefutable. We were all at that party two weeks ago. We all saw how moody and quiet he was. And then, after we left..."

After they'd left Tudor Close that evening, Dr. Black went up to his third floor bedroom. In the summer, the millionaire was in the habit of sitting out on the balcony with a book. His butler Hogarth would often find him there the next morning asleep in his favorite chair. On the morning after that particular dinner party, however, Dr. Black wasn't in his bedroom or on the balcony. He was dangling between the second and first floors, one end of a rope around his neck, the other end tied to the low balcony railing. The local constable came to the only logical conclusion. "The doctor had no enemies," he wrote in his report. "And there was no one in the house but his trusted servants. Dr. Black must have slipped the rope around his own neck, stepped over the balustrade and jumped."

Five of his six heirs sat in the doctor's library, sipping his best scotch and comforting each other. Across the room, Mr. Taupe, the family solicitor, shuffled papers. They were awaiting the arrival of the sixth heir. Then the lawyer would open Black's will and they would discover just how much the dead man really liked them.

"This must be especially hard on you," Reverend Green murmured to Mrs. White.

The domestic servant seemed confused. "Hard on me?"

"Yes. Having been once married to the good doctor, you must be especially affected by his shocking death."

"Married to Dr. Black?" Mrs. White's surprise gave way to a tinkle of girlish laughter. "David Black and I were never married. What in the world gave you that idea?"

The four others all looked astonished. "We thought it was common knowledge," Mrs. Peacock exclaimed. "We never mentioned it to you out of respect. But..." She laughed, embarrassed. "Good Lord. Many's the time the five of us sat around speculating on your marriage and divorce. Are you sure you two never tied the knot?"

Hogarth interrupted the serving of drinks. "Quite sure, if I may be so bold," he said with perfect aplomb. "I have been with Dr. Black for decades, long before Mrs. White moved into the county. And although they instantly developed quite a platonic friendship, there was never any wedding, secret or otherwise."

"Never." Mrs. White smiled at Mrs. Peacock, her employer. "But I suppose that's why you've always treated me so well, more like a friend than a servant."

Her employer laughed again. "I guess the joke's on me. Dr. Black. Mrs. White. It just seemed a natural combination."

A minute later, the last of the guests walked in. Professor Plum apologized for his lateness and settled into a chair just as Mr. Taupe opened the envelope and removed the will. "A week before he died, Dr. Black revised this document." The lawyer paused as a sudden moan arose from the small gathering. "Don't worry," he assured them. "The bequests are the same as before. The things he promised you, you'll still get."

"Thank the Lord," Reverend Green muttered, mopping a bead of sweat from his brow.

"Yes," the solicitor continued. "But there's a new string attached." And here he opened a second envelope and removed a videocassette. "Perhaps we should let Dr. Black explain in his own words."

In a few neat movements, the solicitor popped in the cassette and switched on the telly. "Hello, my dear friends," the image said. Dr. Black stood in front of the fireplace in the very same library where

they all now sat so attentively. "If you are watching this, then obviously I'm dead. What was it? An accident? Some freak disease? Surely not a suicide. You know I would never do that." His jocular tone couldn't hide the macabre nature of his words. The three women shivered openly while the men glanced away from the set.

"My own suspicion is that I was murdered. By one of you."

A gasp echoed through the lofty room.

"It's my own fault in a way." The screen image chuckled and took a sip of wine. "You see, last month — June, I should say — I discovered that one of my best friends was stealing from me, cheating me out of quite a bit of money. The day after I found out, I did a very stupid thing. I confronted this loathsome creature. As we talked I could see it in the eyes. I was frightened. Oh, the apology was there in the voice, the promise to make restitution, the groveling. But in the eyes I could see it. Murder."

"Oh, I know what you're thinking," Black continued. "I should have gone to the police. And I will. But right now I don't have enough proof. And I've always been frightened of lawsuits. So, until the day I can have the blighter arrested, I've done the next best thing. I made this video and changed my will."

"But how did he change it?" the reverend asked, mopping away a new bead of sweat.

"How did I change it, you ask," came the accurate but taped reply. "Well, you must see my dilemma. I cannot name my killer. What if my death turned out to be natural after all? Or what if the law can't find enough evidence to get a conviction? Just think of the lawsuit. Defamation of character. Malicious whatnot. It would bankrupt my estate and deprive my five non-murderous friends of their rightful inheritances. My only option is to have you discover the truth on your own. Find my killer. You are not permitted to leave this house until you do."

"What?" Mrs. Peacock blustered at the telly.

"You heard me. If anyone leaves Tudor Close before the discovery of my killer's identity, you are all disinherited. Simple as pie. That's the string."

"But what if you weren't murdered?" Professor Plum asked.

"Ah. But what if I wasn't murdered?" Dr. Black seemed genuinely perplexed by this new idea. "Good point." The video flickered off, then flickered back on. "Hello again, old friends. Since last speaking to you, I have revised my string." He cleared his throat and proceeded to set down the rules. "Somewhere in this house, I just hid a box. Inside it is a clue to my killer's identity. Hogarth has keys to the box. Find it, interpret the clue correctly and tell the police. If I'm right, this clue will point to my killer. If I'm wrong and I wasn't killed..." He shrugged. "Well, then no harm was done and the estate can't be sued." The video went instantly to black, then static.

"It's a bloody game," Colonel Mustard harrumphed. "Hidden boxes. Secret clues. I don't know about the rest of you, but I want no part of it. I'm leaving."

"I'm afraid not," the solicitor said severely. "If any of you steps foot outside Tudor Close, not one of you will inherit a farthing. Dr. Black's entire fortune will revert to charity, The Society for the Preservation of Abandoned Mansions."

"You mean..." The situation was just now dawning on Miss Scarlett. "You mean we have to stay here for hours, perhaps days, until we find that silly box?"

"Perhaps weeks. Hogarth has laid up a full array of all the necessities. There are enough toothbrushes and bedrooms to accommodate everyone. And now, if you'll excuse me..." The lawyer snapped up his briefcase and headed for the door. "Good luck."

They listened helplessly as the huge front door creaked open and closed, shutting them in. And then, without warning, the video screen flickered. Dr. Black's face was once more staring out at them. "Is this still on? I'm not very good with these contraptions."

All six turned to face their dead friend and benefactor. "One last note. I know my own temperament. It's never been a forgiving one, so please believe me." His voice turned hard. "My spirit will not rest until my killer is caught. So, a cordial warning. If you're in bed and you hear something go bump in the night, don't worry. It's just me." The doctor's toothy smile bordered on the menacing. "Good Hunting."



They started right away and got in several hours' worth of fruitless searching before Hogarth rang the gong. Disgruntled and weary, the six trudged into the dining room and sullenly attacked the evening meal.

"This is all some suicide game he's playing," Mrs. Peacock grumbled. "He wasn't murdered. How can you hang a man against his will?"

"Begging Madam's pardon." Hogarth looked up from the mutton joint he was carving. "My late employer had been in the habit of taking sleeping tablets before sitting out on his balcony. The bottle was kept in a ground floor bathroom where anyone could find it. On the morning after your last dinner here, right after his death, I happened to notice that the level of tablets was suspiciously low. Begging everyone's pardon, but it's quite possible that one of you slipped some extra sleeping tablets into Dr. Black's dessert wine. Knowing of his habits, the murderer could quite easily have crept back into the house and placed the noose around the sleeping doctor's neck. All that would remain would be to tie the other end to the balcony and push the poor man over. It's quite a low balustrade. Begging three more pardons, but a woman could have done it just as easily as a man."

"Oh." Mrs. Peacock paused thoughtfully. "I suppose it's possible. But to kill our best friend? Why, for heaven's sake? Oh, I know what he said. One of us was stealing from him, but..." Another thoughtful pause. "Oh." And her gaze fell on Colonel Mustard.

" 'Oh' what?" The Colonel's face turned an instant magenta. "Why are you staring at me? I never stole from David Black."

"Perhaps not," Mrs. Peacock replied. "But you did sell him several lovely paintings from your family collection."

"So what if I did? He practically begged me for them and wound up getting them at a bloody good price."

"A very good price — unless they were forgeries. I remember a few months ago. Dr. Black was in the conservatory gazing at that Picasso you sold him last year and wondering why this particular portrait had four eyes instead of the usual three."

Colonel Mustard could have kicked himself. He knew when he painted that fourth eye it was a mistake.

Mrs. Peacock continued. "The doctor was troubled enough to think about calling in an art expert. I don't know if he did or not, but it looks to me that at least one of us had a chance to cheat our dear David, just as he said."

"I didn't cheat him." Mustard growled. "Besides, I'm not the only one." Desperately he perused the crowd. "Ah. What about Professor Plum? He was in business with the doctor. You know. That diet plan they advertise on the telly all the time. Roulette-A-Meal. That roulette wheel with foods written in all the slots. You spin the wheel and roll the ball and whatever it lands on you eat. David Black told me the profits were never as great as he expected."

The professor rose indignantly. "You people just don't understand business. I kept telling the doctor. You have start-up costs! Manufacturing! And those television spots aren't cheap! Plus there was that lawsuit from the woman who kept spinning desserts and gained 80 pounds." ... *Not to mention the extra twenty percent I skim off the top.* This last part the professor thought but wisely didn't say.

The colonel sighed. "The lack of profit may be legitimate. But suppose it isn't. And suppose David was concerned enough to call in an auditor. I'm not saying he did, but..." He let this implication dangle in the air.

"Pure nonsense," the professor countered. "The whole accounting system is computerized. There's no question of any..." He stopped, his attention suddenly distracted by Miss Scarlett. "Speaking of computers," he said in a slightly accusatory tone. "If I'm not mistaken, our own Vivienne Scarlett was helping the doctor automate his finances. He was quite excited about doing things like computerized banking and options trading."

"That's right," Mrs. Peacock chimed in. "But as I recall, they ran into some problems. One of David's best investments just seemed to disappear off the system. No matter what they did, they couldn't find it again. To top it off, the brokerage house said the account didn't exist."

"Of course it exists," Miss Scarlett lied. "In the bank's system. It's just a matter of time before we find it. If you knew anything about computers..."

Miss Scarlett knew enough about computers to be dangerous — to Dr. Black's money. To her credit, she didn't start off planning to steal half a million pounds. But when a sizable chunk of his savings temporarily vanished off the screen, it gave her the idea. Why not keep it vanished for a while? After all, she knew his security codes. No one would be the wiser if she just borrowed the money and used it for her own investments. In a few months' time, she would be rich and could return it. She would push the right buttons, miraculously rediscover the account and all would be well. That's the way it might have worked out, too, if she hadn't dumped all the stolen money into Roulette-A-Meal.

"David understood the mix-up," she argued back. "He wasn't worried. But speaking about worried, what about... Uh, what about..." Now it was Scarlett's turn to name a scapegoat. "Yes. What about Mrs. Peacock? We all know the problems she and the doctor were having with their property lines."

"What? Oh, balderdash," the matron replied dismissively. "There was no problem. Dr. Black's pool and tennis court were both accidentally built on my property. It's as simple as that. We were in the

process of working out an arrangement at the time of his death. True, he at first balked at the money I wanted. But when you consider that the land has such a nice pool and tennis court on it, I think it's priced quite reasonably."

Mrs. White wrinkled her nose, as if smelling a rotten egg. "Oh, come off it, dearie. Everyone knows how mad the doctor was when you had that land survey done. His family has been living here for generations. Then all of a sudden you come along. You buy the estate next door, then tell him this part of his property isn't his anymore. Doesn't seem right, you know?"

Technically speaking, it wasn't right and Mrs. Peacock knew it. After all, it was she who had forged the 200-year-old map on which the new survey was based. She had seen this on an old *Dallas* episode and, although she usually dismissed American television, this show had been absolutely inspiring. A perfectly foolproof way to earn herself a little nest egg.

"Maybe that's what he meant by someone stealing from him," Mrs. White added, pressing her point.

Mrs. Peacock bristled. "Or maybe he meant just what he said. Plain, old-fashioned stealing." She glared at Mrs. White. "Stealing money from his pockets, bits of jewelry from his bedroom, a valuable knickknack. I seem to recall that after almost every party, David complained of something going missing from the mansion."

"So?" Mrs. White replied innocently. "What does that have to do with me? If some guest was pilfering, it could have been anyone. It could have been one of you."

"Possibly," Mrs. Peacock considered. "Except that you once worked at Tudor Close, before you came to work for me. You know the mansion and its contents better than anyone. Plus," she added before Mrs. White could interrupt. "Plus, the police recovered one of David's porcelain vases. It was found in a secondhand shop in York. I didn't say anything to David. But isn't York where your sister Madge lives?"

Isn't that where you take your free weekends? I don't think there's anyone else here who spends time in York." The other four shook their heads vigorously.

"What a load of rubbish." The maid was genuinely angry — with her sister. Mrs. White had stolen that expensive vase for Madge and given it to her as a wedding present. And now to find out her sister had sold it to a secondhand shop. Unforgivable. "Did the police find out the name of the ungrateful... I mean," she added more calmly. "Did they discover who sold it to the shopkeeper?"

"Unfortunately not," said Mrs. Peacock. "The owner is a rather nearsighted and forgetful old man." Mrs. White visibly relaxed. "But when David heard the news, he said he was determined to catch the culprit." The rich widow smiled. "Maybe he did."

"Poppycock." Mrs. White remained livid. "Suspecting me. Why, you might as well suspect..." Her eyes darted around the room. Who hadn't been accused? It took her several seconds to narrow down the field.

"You might as well suspect Reverend Green." She pointed her finger and paused dramatically, all the while trying to think up some crime to pin on the meek-looking minister. "He, too, could have stolen." Although she had no idea how.

"Why, you're right!" It was Professor Plum who jumped in, saving the day. "I didn't think about it until this very second, but he could have. There may be some funny business about *Sermons from a Country Parson*."

At the mention of that title, the room grew silent. *Sermons from a Country Parson* was the book Reverend Green had published six months ago and which had become the surprise best-seller of the year. The paperback rights alone had been enough to free him from financial worries for the rest of his life and turn the mousy cleric into Darbyshire's most envied resident.

"What do you mean by funny business?" Miss Scarlett demanded eagerly.

"We were in church a few months back," the professor recalled. "You know. That Sunday when the reverend read one of the sermons from his book. David Black was right beside me. About halfway through, he commented on how familiar it all sounded.

"On our stroll home after the service, David brought up the sermon again. 'Very familiar,' he emphasized. 'You know, my father was a religious fellow. The old man composed sermons in his daily journal. That sermon sounded very much like dear Pater.' It turned out that David Black had once shown his father's journals to Reverend Green. 'Someday I'll have to unearth those old volumes,' he told me. 'Just for curiosity's sake.' "

Jonathan Green pulled at his collar. "What are you saying? Are you accusing me of plagiarizing from Dr. Black's father?" That, of course, was exactly what he'd done. On glancing at the journals that day at Tudor Close, the reverend immediately saw their publishing potential. It would have been a shame just to let them molder in the attic when he could make so much better use of them.

"This is preposterous," Green continued. "I don't for a second believe any of us cheated our dear friend." The others all murmured their agreement. "Or killed him." More agreement. "Tomorrow morning, we'll find his little box, deliver it to the police and that will be the end of it." Everyone tried to look relieved.

An hour later, they had all been given bedrooms and had settled in for the night. It was midnight now. Hogarth was sitting up with a book when he heard the first ghostly creaks. Half an hour passed before he saw the lights. The butler's room was in the east wing, overlooking the courtyard and the deserted west wing. Through the windows, he could see lights flickering on and off. Who could be over there? The master hadn't used the west wing in years. Hogarth turned back to his book. It was five minutes later when he heard the scream.

The entire household was roused and soon found the screamer.

Miss Scarlett stood in the kitchen, still hysterical. "I saw him," she blubbered. "Dr. Black's ghost." They tried to calm her and finally got a

coherent story. The young woman had come down for a midnight snack. On entering the large, shadowy kitchen, she saw a figure in a far corner of the room. She was just about to say hello when the silhouette moved back into the darkness. "I switched on the light, then turned around. He was gone. It was Dr. Black's ghost, I tell you. There's no door in that corner. There's no way a real person could have disappeared like that."

The other guests were equally spooked. "I saw moving shadows," Mrs. Peacock added. "Floorboards were creaking in parts of the house where no one is supposed to be." Professor Plum even claimed to have seen a candlestick floating in midair down an empty hallway.

"He's come back to haunt us," Mrs. White moaned. "Just like he said."



The search continued into the next day with everyone working frantically to complete their mission and leave. Four different locked boxes were brought to Hogarth. But his keys fit none of them and the search went on.

Another evening came as did another dinner filled with dark stares and darker accusations. The six grumbling suspects retreated to their rooms. Then the noises started again. More creaking doors and floorboards. More lights in empty rooms. The sound of pounding echoed through the mansion and the rattling of chains seemed to come from everywhere and nowhere.

On the morning of the third day, they finally achieved their goal. Hogarth himself found the box in a corner of the east wing attic. It was a wooden box locked with a chain and placed inside a trunk. The butler used one key on the chain's padlock and the other on the box itself.

The suspects had all gathered in the dusty attic, crowding around as Hogarth turned the second key and lifted the lid. Seven pairs of eyes strained to get a look inside.

"Wow," Miss Scarlett said in a breathy whisper. "What does it mean?" Hogarth inspected the contents thoughtfully. "It means Dr. Black was murdered. It wasn't just his imagination. And I think I know who did it."

Who was it? It's your turn now. Assemble the jigsaw puzzle to see the box that Dr. Black left for his friends and the mysterious clue that lay inside.

THE SOLUTION

A surprising way to solve a murder. This notorious murder is not unique. But something else is. This case involves a man who had been accused of the crime and had been acquitted.

For when it was found that the man had been acquitted, it was not because he had been acquitted with a guilty conscience. It was because he had been acquitted with a guilty conscience. It was because he had been acquitted with a guilty conscience.

One thing is certain. The man had been acquitted. It was not because he had been acquitted with a guilty conscience. It was because he had been acquitted with a guilty conscience.

It is a fact that the man had been acquitted. It was not because he had been acquitted with a guilty conscience. It was because he had been acquitted with a guilty conscience. It was because he had been acquitted with a guilty conscience.