"Very well," rejoined the coroner, and he proceeded to call the witnesses, of whom the first was the labourer who had discovered the bones in the watercress-bed.

"Do you happen to know how long it was since the beds had been cleaned out previously?" the coroner asked, when the witness had told the story of the discovery.

"They was cleaned out by Mr. Tapper's orders just before he gave them up. That will be a little better than two years ago. In May it were. I helped to clean 'em. I worked on this very same place and there wasn't no bones there then."

The coroner glanced at the jury. "Any questions, gentlemen," he asked.

The cobbler directed an intimidating scowl at the witness and demanded:

"Were you searching for bones when you came on these remains?"

"Me!" exclaimed the witness. "What should I be searching for bones for?"

"Don't prevaricate," said the cobbler sternly; "answer the question: Yes or no."

"No; of course I wasn't."

The juryman shook his enormous head dubiously as though implying that he would let it pass this time but it mustn't happen again; and the examination of the witnesses continued, without eliciting anything that was new to me or giving rise to any incident, until the sergeant had described the finding of the right arm in the Cuckoo Pits.

"Was this an accidental discovery?" the coroner asked.

"No. We had instructions from Scotland Yard to search any likely ponds in this neighbourhood."

The coroner discreetly forbore to press this matter any farther, but my friend the cobbler was evidently on the qui vive, and I anticipated a brisk cross-examination for Mr. Badger when his turn came. The inspector was apparently of the same opinion, for I saw

him cast a glance of the deepest malevolence at the too inquiring disciple of St. Crispin. In fact, his turn came next, and the cobbler's hair stood up with unholy joy.

The finding of the lower half of the trunk in Staple's Pond at Loughton was the inspector's own achievement, but he was not boastful about it. The discovery, he remarked, followed naturally on the previous one in the Cuckoo Pits.

"Had you any private information that led you to search this particular neighbourhood?" the cobbler asked.

"We had no private information whatever," replied Badger.

"Now I put it to you," pursued the juryman, shaking a forensic, and very dirty, forefinger at the inspector; "here are certain remains found at Sidcup; here are certain other remains found at St. Mary Cray, and certain others at Lee. All those places are in Kent. Now isn't it very remarkable that you should come straight down to Epping Forest, which is in Essex, and search for those bones and find 'em?"

"We were making a systematic search of all likely places," replied Badger.

"Exactly," said the cobbler, with a ferocious grin, "that's just my point. I say, isn't it very funny that, after finding remains in Kent some twenty miles from here with the River Thames between, you should come here to look for the bones and go straight to Staple's Pond, where they happen to be—and find 'em?"

"It would have been more funny," Badger replied sourly, "if we'd gone straight to a place where they happened *not* to be—and found them."

A gratified snigger arose from the other eleven good men and true, and the cobbler grinned savagely; but before he could think of a suitable rejoinder the coroner interposed.

"The question is not very material," he said, "and we mustn't embarrass the police by unnecessary inquiries."

"It's my belief," said the cobbler, "that he knew they were there all the time."

"The witness has stated that he had no private information," said the coroner; and he proceeded to take the rest of the inspector's evidence, watched closely by the critical juror.

The account of the finding of the remains having been given in full, the police-surgeon was called and sworn; the jurymen straightened their backs with an air of expectancy, and I turned over a page of my notebook.

"You have examined the bones at present lying in the mortuary and forming the subject of this inquiry?" the coroner asked.

"I have."

"Will you kindly tell us what you have observed?"

"I find that the bones are human bones, and are, in my opinion, all parts of the same person. They form a skeleton which is complete with the exception of the skull, the third finger of the left hand, the knee-caps, and the leg-bones—I mean the bones between the knees and the ankles."

"Is there anything to account for the absence of the missing finger?"

"No. There is no deformity and no sign of its having been amputated during life. In my opinion it was removed after death."

"Can you give us any description of the deceased?"

"I should say that these are the bones of an elderly man, probably over sixty years of age, about five feet eight and a half inches in height, of rather stout build, fairly muscular, and well preserved. There are no signs of disease excepting some old-standing rheumatic gout of the right hip-joint."

"Can you form any opinion as to the cause of death?"

"No. There are no marks of violence or signs of injury. But it will be impossible to form any opinion as to the cause of death until we have seen the skull."

"Did you note anything else of importance?"

"Yes. I was struck by the appearance of anatomical

knowledge and skill on the part of the person who dismembered the body. The knowledge of anatomy is proved by the fact that the corpse has been divided into definite anatomical regions. For instance, the bones of the neck are complete and include the top joint of the backbone known as the atlas; whereas a person without anatomical knowledge would probably take off the head by cutting through the neck. Then the arms have been separated with the scapula (or shoulder-blade) and clavicle or (collar-bone) attached, just as an arm would be removed for dissection.

"The skill is shown by the neat way in which the dismemberment has been carried out. The parts have not been rudely hacked asunder, but have been separated at the joints so skilfully that I have not discovered a single scratch or mark of the knife on any of the bones."

"Can you suggest any class of person who would be likely to possess the knowledge and skill to which you refer?"

"It would, of course, be possessed by a surgeon or medical student, and possibly by a butcher."

"You think that the person who dismembered this body may have been a surgeon or a medical student?"

"Yes; or a butcher. Someone accustomed to the dismemberment of bodies and skilful with the knife."

Here the cobbler suddenly rose to his feet.

"I rise, Mr. Chairman," said he, "to protest against the statement that has just been made."

"What statement?" demanded the coroner.

"Against the aspersion," continued the cobbler, with an oratorical flourish, "that has been cast upon a honourable calling."

"I don't understand you," said the coroner.

"Doctor Summers has insinuated that this murder was committed by a butcher. Now a member of that honourable calling is sitting on this jury——"

"You let me alone," growled the butcher.

"I will not let you alone," persisted the cobbler. "I desire——"

"Oh, shut up, Pope!" This was from the foreman, who, at the same moment, reached out an enormous hairy hand with which he grabbed the cobbler's coat-tails and brought him into a sitting posture with a thump that shook the room.

But Mr. Pope, though seated, was not silenced. "I desire," said he, "to have my protest put on record."

"I can't do that," said the coroner, "and I can't allow you to interrupt the witnesses."

"I am acting," said Mr. Pope, "in the interests of my friend here and the members of a honourable——"

But here the butcher turned on him savagely, and, in a hoarse stage-whisper, exclaimed:

"Look here, Pope; you've got too much of what the cat licks——"

"Gentlemen! gentlemen!" the coroner protested, sternly; "I cannot permit this unseemly conduct. You are forgetting the solemnity of the occasion and your own responsible positions. I must insist on more decent and decorous behaviour."

There was profound silence, in the midst of which the butcher concluded in the same hoarse whisper:

"—licks 'er paws with."

The coroner cast a withering glance at him, and turning to the witness, resumed the examination.

"Can you tell us, Doctor, how long a time has elapsed since the death of the deceased?"

"I should say not less than eighteen months, but probably more. How much more it is impossible from inspection alone to say. The bones are perfectly clean—that is, clean of all soft structures—and will remain substantially in their present condition for many years."

"The evidence of the man who found the remains in the watercress-bed suggests that they could not have been there more than two years. Do the appearances, in your opinion, agree with that view?"

"Yes; perfectly."

"There is one more point, Doctor; a very important one. Do you find anything in any of the bones, or all

of them together, which would enable you to identify them as the bones of any particular individual ? "

" No," replied Dr. Summers ; " I found no peculiarity that could furnish the means of personal identification."

" The description of a missing individual has been given to us," said the coroner ; " a man, fifty-nine years of age, five feet eight inches in height, healthy, well preserved, rather broad in build, and having an old Pott's fracture of the left ankle. Do the remains that you have examined agree with that description ? "

" Yes, in so far as agreement is possible. There is no disagreement ? "

" The remains might be those of that individual ? "

" They might ; but there is no positive evidence that they are. The description would apply to a large proportion of elderly men, except as to the fracture."

" You found no signs of such a fracture ? "

" No. Pott's fracture affects the bone called the fibula. That is one of the bones that has not yet been found, so there is no evidence on that point. The left foot was quite normal, but then it would be in any case, unless the fracture had resulted in great deformity."

" You estimated the height of the deceased as half an inch greater than that of the missing person. Does that constitute a disagreement ? "

" No ; my estimate is only approximate. As the arms are complete and the legs are not, I have based my calculations on the width across the two arms. But measurement of the thigh-bones gives the same result. The length of the thigh-bones is one foot seven inches and five-eighths."

" So the deceased might not have been taller than five feet eight ? "

" That is so : from five feet eight to five feet nine."

" Thank you. I think that is all we want to ask you, Doctor ; unless the jury wish to put any questions."

He glanced uneasily at that august body, and instantly the irrepressible Pope rose to the occasion.

"About that finger that is missing," said the cobbler. "You say that it was cut off after death."

"That is my opinion."

"Now, can you tell us why it was cut off?"

"No, I cannot."

"Oh, come now, Doctor Summers, you must have formed some opinion on the subject."

Here the coroner interposed. "The Doctor is only concerned with evidence arising out of the actual examination of the remains. Any personal opinions or conjectures that he may have formed are not evidence, and he must not be asked about them."

"But, sir," objected Pope, "we want to know why that finger was cut off. It couldn't have been took off for no reason. May I ask, sir, if the person who is missing had anything peculiar about that finger?"

"Nothing is stated to that effect in the written description," replied the coroner.

"Perhaps," suggested Pope, "Inspector Badger can tell us."

"I think," said the coroner, "we had better not ask the police too many questions. They will tell us anything that they wish to be made public."

"Oh, very well," snapped the cobbler. "If it's a matter of hushing it up I've got no more to say; only I don't see how we are to arrive at a verdict if we don't have the facts put before us."

All the witnesses having now been examined, the coroner proceeded to sum up and address the jury.

"You have heard the evidence, gentlemen, of the various witnesses, and you will have perceived that it does not enable us to answer either of the questions that form the subject of this inquiry. We now know that the deceased was an elderly man, about sixty years of age, and about five feet eight or nine in height; and that his death took place from eighteen months to two years ago. That is all we know. From the treatment

to which the body has been subjected we may form certain conjectures as to the circumstances of his death. But we have no actual knowledge. We do not know who the deceased was or how he came by his death. Consequently, it will be necessary to adjourn this inquiry until fresh facts are available, and as soon as that is the case, you will receive due notice that your attendance is required."

The silence of the Court gave place to the confused noise of moving chairs and a general outbreak of eager talk, amidst which I rose and made my way out into the street. At the door I encountered Dr. Summers, whose dog-cart was waiting close by.

"Are you going back to town now?" he asked.

"Yes," I answered; "as soon as I can catch a train."

"If you jump into my cart I'll run you down in time for the five-one. You'll miss it if you walk."

I accepted his offer thankfully, and a minute later was spinning briskly down the road to the station.

"Queer little devil, that man Pope," Dr. Summers remarked. "Quite a character; socialist, labourite, agitator, general crank; anything for a row."

"Yes," I answered, "that was what his appearance suggested. It must be trying for the coroner to get a truculent rascal like that on a jury."

Summers laughed. "I don't know. He supplies the comic relief. And then, you know, those fellows have their uses. Some of his questions were pretty pertinent."

"So Badger seemed to think."

"Yes, by Jove," chuckled Summers, "Badger didn't like him a bit; and I suspect the worthy inspector was sailing pretty close to the wind in his answers."

"You think he really has some private information?"

"Depends upon what you mean by 'information.' The police are not a speculative body. They wouldn't be taking all this trouble unless they had a pretty

straight tip from somebody. How are Mr. and Miss Bellingham ? I used to know them slightly when they lived here."

I was considering a discreet answer to this question when we swept into the station yard. At the same moment the train drew up at the platform, and, with a hurried hand-shake and hastily spoken thanks, I sprang from the dog-cart and darted into the station.

During the rather slow journey homewards I read over my notes and endeavoured to extract from the facts they set forth some significance other than that which lay on the surface, but without much success. Then I fell to speculating on what Thorndyke would think of the evidence at the inquest and whether he would be satisfied with the information that I had collected. These speculations lasted me, with occasional digressions, until I arrived at the Temple and ran up the stairs rather eagerly to my friend's chambers.

But here a disappointment awaited me. The nest was empty with the exception of Polton, who appeared at the laboratory door in his white apron, with a pair of flat-nosed pliers in his hand.

" The Doctor has had to go down to Bristol to consult over an urgent case," he explained, " and Doctor Jervis has gone with him. They'll be away a day or two, I expect, but the Doctor left this note for you."

He took a letter from a shelf, where it had been stood conspicuously on edge, and handed it to me. It was a short note from Thorndyke apologizing for his sudden departure and asking me to give Polton my notes with any comments that I had to make.

" You will be interested to learn," he added, " that the application will be heard in the Probate Court the day after to-morrow. I shall not be present, of course, nor will Jervis, so I should like you to attend and keep your eyes open for anything that may happen during the hearing and that may not appear in the notes that Marchmont's clerk will be instructed to take. I have retained Dr. Payne to stand by and help you with the

practice, so that you can attend the Court with a clear conscience."

This was highly flattering and quite atoned for the small disappointment; with deep gratification at the trust that Thorndyke had reposed in me, I pocketed the letter, handed my notes to Polton, wished him "Good evening," and betook myself to Fetter Lane.

CHAPTER XIV

WHICH CARRIES THE READER INTO THE PROBATE COURT

THE Probate Court wore an air of studious repose when I entered with Miss Bellingham and her father. Apparently the great and inquisitive public had not become aware of the proceedings that were about to take place, or had not realized their connection with the sensational "Mutilation Case"; but barristers and Pressmen, better informed, had gathered in some strength, and the hum of their conversation filled the air like the droning of the voluntary that ushers in a cathedral service.

As we entered, a pleasant-faced, elderly gentleman rose and came forward to meet us, shaking Mr. Bellingham's hand cordially and saluting Miss Bellingham with a courtly bow.

"This is Mr. Marchmont, Doctor," said the former, introducing me; and the solicitor, having thanked me for the trouble I had taken in attending at the inquest, led us to a bench, at the farther end of which was seated a gentleman whom I recognized as Mr. Hurst.

Mr. Bellingham recognized him at the same moment and glared at him wrathfully.

"I see that scoundrel is here!" he exclaimed in a distinctly audible voice, "pretending that he doesn't see me, because he is ashamed to look me in the face, but——"

"Hush! hush! my dear sir," exclaimed the horrified solicitor; "we mustn't talk like that, especially in this place. Let me beg you—let me entreat you to control your feelings, to make no indiscreet remarks;

in fact, to make no remarks at all," he added, with the evident conviction that any remarks that Mr. Bellingham might make would be certain to be indiscreet.

"Forgive me, Marchmont," Mr. Bellingham replied contritely. "I will control myself; I will really be quite discreet. I won't even look at him again—because, if I do, I shall probably go over and pull his nose."

This particular form of discretion did not appear to be quite to Mr. Marchmont's liking, for he took the precaution of insisting that Miss Bellingham and I should sit on the farther side of his client, and thus effectually separate him from his enemy.

"Who's the long-nosed fellow talking to Jellicoe?" Mr. Bellingham asked.

"That is Mr. Loram, K.C., Mr. Hurst's counsel; and the convivial-looking gentleman next to him is our counsel, Mr. Heath, a most able man and"—here Mr. Marchmont whispered behind his hand—"fully instructed by Doctor Thorndyke."

At this juncture the judge entered and took his seat; the usher proceeded with great rapidity to swear in the jury, and the Court gradually settled down into that state of academic quiet which it maintained throughout the proceedings, excepting when the noisy swing-doors were set oscillating by some bustling clerk or reporter.

The judge was a somewhat singular-looking old gentleman, very short as to his face and very long as to his mouth; which peculiarities, together with a pair of large and bulging eyes (which he usually kept closed), suggested a certain resemblance to a frog. And he had a curious frog-like trick of flattening his eyelids—as if in the act of swallowing a large beetle—which was the only outward and visible sign of emotion that he ever displayed.

As soon as the swearing-in of the jury was completed Mr. Loram rose to introduce the case; whereupon his lordship leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes, as if bracing himself for a painful operation.

"The present proceedings," Mr. Loram explained, "are occasioned by the unaccountable disappearance of Mr. John Bellingham, of 141 Queen Square, Bloomsbury, which occurred about two years ago, or, to be more precise, on the twenty-third of November, nineteen hundred and two. Since that date nothing has been heard of Mr. Bellingham, and, as there are certain substantial reasons for believing him to be dead, the principal beneficiary under his will, Mr. George Hurst, is now applying to the Court for permission to presume the death of the testator and prove the will. As the time which has elapsed since the testator was last seen alive is only two years, the application is based upon the circumstances of the disappearance, which were, in many respects, very singular, the most remarkable feature of that disappearance being, perhaps, its suddenness and completeness."

Here the judge remarked in a still, small voice that "It would, perhaps, have been even more remarkable if the testator had disappeared gradually and incompletely."

"No doubt, my lord," agreed Mr. Loram; "but the point is that the testator, whose habits had always been regular and orderly, disappeared on the date mentioned without having made any of the usual provisions for the conduct of his affairs, and has not since then been seen or heard of."

With this preamble Mr. Loram proceeded to give a narrative of the events connected with the disappearance of John Bellingham, which was substantially identical with that which I had read in the newspapers; and having laid the actual facts before the jury, he went on to discuss their probable import.

"Now, what conclusion," he asked, "will this strange, this most mysterious train of events suggest to an intelligent person who shall consider it impartially? Here is a man who steps forth from the house of his cousin or his brother, as the case may be, and forthwith, in the twinkling of an eye, vanishes from

human ken. What is the explanation ? Did he steal forth and, without notice or hint of his intention, take train to some seaport, thence to embark for some distant land, leaving his affairs to take care of themselves and his friends to speculate vainly as to his whereabouts ? Is he now in hiding abroad, or even at home, indifferent alike to the safety of his own considerable property and the peace of mind of his friends ? Or is it that death has come upon him unawares by sickness, by accident, or, more probably, by the hand of some unknown criminal ? Let us consider the probabilities.

" Can he have disappeared by his own deliberate act ? Why not ? it may be asked. Men undoubtedly do disappear from time to time, to be discovered by chance or to reappear voluntarily after intervals of years and find their names almost forgotten and their places filled by new-comers. Yes ; but there is always some reason for a disappearance of this kind, even though it be a bad one. Family discords that make life a weariness ; pecuniary difficulties that make life a succession of anxieties ; distaste for particular circumstances and surroundings from which there seems no escape ; inherent restlessness and vagabond tendencies, and so on.

" Do any of these explanations apply to the present case ? No, they do not. Family discords—at least those capable of producing chronic misery—appertain exclusively to the married state. But the testator was a bachelor with no encumbrances whatever. Pecuniary anxieties can be equally excluded. The testator was in easy, in fact, in affluent circumstances. His mode of life was apparently agreeable and full of interest and activity, and he had full liberty to change it if he wished. He had been accustomed to travel, and could do so again without absconding. He had reached an age when radical changes do not seem desirable. He was a man of fixed and regular habits, and his regularity was of his own choice and not due to compulsion or necessity. When last seen by his friends, as I shall

prove, he was proceeding to a definite destination with the expressed intention of returning for purposes of his own appointing. He did return and then vanished, leaving those purposes unachieved.

"If we conclude that he has voluntarily disappeared and is at present in hiding, we adopt an opinion that is entirely at variance with all these weighty facts. If, on the other hand, we conclude that he has died suddenly, or has been killed by an accident or otherwise, we are adopting a view that involves no inherent improbabilities and that is entirely congruous with the known facts; facts that will be proved by the testimony of the witnesses whom I shall call. The supposition that the testator is dead is not only more probable than that he is alive; I submit that it is the only reasonable explanation of the circumstances of his disappearance.

"But this is not all. The presumption of death which arises so inevitably out of the mysterious and abrupt manner in which the testator disappeared has recently received most conclusive and dreadful confirmation. On the fifteenth of July last there were discovered at Sidcup the remains of a human arm—a left arm, gentlemen, from the hand of which the third, or ring, finger was missing. The doctor who has examined that arm will tell you that that finger was cut off either after death or immediately before; and his evidence will prove conclusively that that arm must have been deposited in the place where it was found just about the time when the testator disappeared. Since that first discovery, other portions of the same mutilated body have come to light; and it is a strange and significant fact that they have all been found in the immediate neighbourhood of Eltham or Woodford. You will remember, gentlemen, that it was either at Eltham or Woodford that the testator was last seen alive.

"And now observe the completeness of the coincidence. These human remains, as you will be told

presently by the experienced and learned medical gentleman who has examined them most exhaustively, are those of a man of about sixty years of age, about five feet eight inches in height, fairly muscular and well preserved, apparently healthy, and rather stoutly built. Another witness will tell you that the missing man was about sixty years of age, about five feet eight inches in height, fairly muscular and well preserved, apparently healthy, and rather stoutly built. And—another most significant and striking fact—the testator was accustomed to wear upon the third finger of his left hand—the very finger that is missing from the remains that were found—a most peculiar ring, which fitted so tightly that he was unable to get it off after once putting it on; a ring, gentlemen, of so peculiar a pattern that had it been found on the body must have instantly established the identity of the remains. In a word, gentlemen, the remains which have been found are those of a man exactly like the testator; they differ from him in no respect whatever; they display a mutilation which suggests an attempt to conceal an identifying peculiarity which he undoubtedly presented; and they were deposited in their various hiding-places about the time of the testator's disappearance. Accordingly, when you have heard these facts proved by the sworn testimony of competent witnesses, together with the facts relating to the disappearance, I shall ask you for a verdict in accordance with that evidence."

Mr. Loram sat down, and adjusting a pair of pince-nez, rapidly glanced over his brief while the usher was administering the oath to the first witness.

This was Mr. Jellicoe, who stepped into the box and directed a stony gaze at the (apparently) unconscious judge. The usual preliminaries having been gone through, Mr. Loram proceeded to examine him.

"You were the testator's solicitor and confidential agent, I believe?"

"I was—and am."

"How long have you known him?"

"Twenty-seven years."

"Judging from your experience of him, should you say that he was a person likely to disappear voluntarily and suddenly to cease to communicate with his friends?"

"No."

"Kindly give your reasons for that opinion."

"Such conduct on the part of the testator would be entirely opposed to his habits and character as they are known to me. He was exceedingly regular and business-like in his dealings with me. When travelling abroad he always kept me informed as to his whereabouts, or, if he was likely to be beyond reach of communications, he always advised me beforehand. One of my duties was to collect a pension which he drew from the Foreign Office, and on no occasion, previous to his disappearance, has he ever failed to furnish me punctually with the necessary documents."

"Had he, so far as you know, any reasons for wishing to disappear?"

"No."

"When and where did you last see him alive?"

"At six o'clock in the evening, on the fourteenth of October, nineteen hundred and two, at 141 Queen Square, Bloomsbury."

"Kindly tell us what happened on that occasion."

"The testator had called for me at my office at a quarter past three, and asked me to come with him to his house to meet Doctor Norbury. I accompanied him to 141 Queen Square, and shortly after we arrived Doctor Norbury came to look at some antiquities that the testator proposed to give to the British Museum. The gift consisted of a mummy with the four Canopic jars and other tomb-furniture, which the testator stipulated should be exhibited together in a single case and in the state in which they were then presented. Of these objects, the mummy only was ready for inspection. The tomb-furniture had not yet arrived in England, but was expected within a week. Doctor

Norbury accepted the gift on behalf of the Museum, but could not take possession of the objects until he had communicated with the Director and obtained his formal authority. The testator accordingly gave me certain instructions concerning the delivery of the gift, as he was leaving England that evening."

"Are those instructions relevant to the subject of this inquiry?"

"I think they are. The testator was going to Paris, and perhaps from thence to Vienna. He instructed me to receive and unpack the tomb-furniture on its arrival, and to store it, with the mummy, in a particular room, where it was to remain for three weeks. If he returned within that time he was to hand it over in person to the Museum authorities; if he had not returned within that time, he desired me to notify the Museum authorities that they were at liberty to take possession of and remove the collection at their convenience. From these instructions I gathered that the testator was uncertain as to the length of his absence from England and the extent of his journey."

"Did he state precisely where he was going?"

"No. He said that he was going to Paris and perhaps to Vienna, but he gave no particulars and I asked for none."

"Do you, in fact, know where he went?"

"No. He left the house at six o'clock wearing a long, heavy overcoat and carrying a suit-case and an umbrella. I wished him 'Good-bye' at the door and watched him walk away as if going towards Southampton Row. I have no idea where he went, and I never saw him again."

"Had he no other luggage than the suit-case?"

"I do not know, but I believe not. He was accustomed to travel with the bare necessaries, and to buy anything further that he wanted *en route*."

"Did he say nothing to the servants as to the probable date of his return?"

"There were no servants excepting the caretaker.

The house was not used for residential purposes. The testator slept and took his meals at his club, though he kept his clothes at the house."

"Did you receive any communication from him after he left?"

"No. I never heard from him again in any way. I waited for three weeks as he had instructed me, and then notified the Museum authorities that the collection was ready for removal. Five days later Doctor Norbury came and took formal possession of it, and it was transferred to the Museum forthwith."

"When did you next hear of the testator?"

"On the twenty-third of November following at a quarter past seven in the evening. Mr. George Hurst came to my rooms, which are over my office, and informed me that the testator had called at his house during his absence and had been shown into the study to wait for him. That on his—Mr. Hurst's—arrival it was found that the testator had disappeared without acquainting the servants with his intended departure, and without being seen by anyone to leave the house. Mr. Hurst thought this so remarkable that he had hastened up to town to inform me. I also thought it a remarkable circumstance, especially as I had received no communication from the testator, and we both decided that it was advisable to inform the testator's brother, Godfrey, of what had happened.

"Accordingly Mr. Hurst and I proceeded as quickly as possible to Liverpool Street and took the first train available to Woodford, where Mr. Godfrey Bellingham then resided. We arrived at his house at five minutes to nine, and were informed by the servant that he was not at home, but that his daughter was in the library, which was a detached building situated in the grounds. The servant lighted a lantern and conducted us through the grounds to the library, where we found Mr. Godfrey Bellingham and Miss Bellingham. Mr. Godfrey had only just come in and had entered by the back gate, which had a bell that rang in the library. Mr. Hurst

informed Mr. Godfrey of what had occurred, and then we all left the library to walk up to the house. A few paces from the library I noticed by the light of the lantern, which Mr. Godfrey was carrying, a small object lying on the lawn. I pointed it out to him and he picked it up, and then we all recognized it as a scarab that the testator was accustomed to wear on his watch-chain. It was fitted with a gold wire passed through the suspension hole and a gold ring. Both the wire and the ring were in position, but the ring was broken. We went to the house and questioned the servants as to visitors; but none of them had seen the testator, and they all agreed that no visitor whatsoever had come to the house during the afternoon or evening. Mr. Godfrey and Miss Bellingham both declared that they had neither seen nor heard anything of the testator, and were both unaware that he had returned to England. As the circumstances were somewhat disquieting, I communicated, on the following morning, with the police and requested them to make inquiries; which they did, with the result that a suit-case, bearing the initials 'J. B.', was found to be lying unclaimed in the cloak-room at Charing Cross Station. I was able to identify the suit-case as that which I had seen the testator carry away from Queen Square. I was also able to identify some of the contents. I interviewed the cloak-room attendant, who informed me that the suit-case had been deposited on the twenty-third at about 4.15 p.m. He had no recollection of the person who deposited it. It remained unclaimed in the possession of the railway company for three months, and was then surrendered to me."

"Were there any marks or labels on it showing the route by which it had travelled?"

"There were no labels on it and no marks other than the initials 'J. B.'"

"Do you happen to know the testator's age?"

"Yes. He was fifty-nine on the eleventh of October, nineteen hundred and two."

"Can you tell us what his height was?"

"Yes. He was exactly five feet eight inches."

"What sort of health had he?"

"So far as I know his health was good. I am not aware that he suffered from any disease. I am only judging by his appearance, which was that of a healthy man."

"Should you describe him as well preserved or otherwise?"

"I should describe him as a well-preserved man for his age."

"How should you describe his figure?"

"I should describe him as rather broad and stout in build, and fairly muscular, though not exceptionally so."

Mr. Loram made a rapid note of these answers, and then said:

"You have told us, Mr. Jellicoe, that you have known the testator intimately for twenty-seven years. Now, did you ever notice whether he was accustomed to wear any rings upon his fingers?"

"He wore upon the third finger of his left hand a copy of an antique ring which bore the device of the Eye of Osiris. That was the only ring he ever wore as far as I know."

"Did he wear it constantly?"

"Yes, necessarily; because it was too small for him, and having once squeezed it on he was never able to get it off again."

This was the sum of Mr. Jellicoe's evidence, and at its conclusion the witness glanced inquiringly at Mr. Bellingham's counsel. But Mr. Heath remained seated, attentively considering the notes that he had just made, and finding that there was to be no cross-examination, Mr. Jellicoe stepped down from the box. I leaned back on my bench, and, turning my head, observed Miss Bellingham deep in thought.

"What do you think of it?" I asked.

"It seems very complete and conclusive," she re-

plied. And then, with a sigh, she murmured: "Poor old Uncle John! How horrid it sounds to talk of him in this cold-blooded, business-like way, as 'the testator,' as if he were nothing but a sort of algebraical sign."

"There isn't much room for sentiment, I suppose, in the proceedings of the Probate Court," I replied. To which she assented, and then asked: "Who is this lady?"

"This lady" was a fashionably dressed young woman who had just bounced into the witness-box and was now being sworn. The preliminaries being finished, she answered Miss Bellingham's question and Mr. Loram's by stating that her name was Augustina Gwendoline Dobbs, and that she was housemaid to Mr. George Hurst, of "The Poplars," Eltham.

"Mr. Hurst lives alone, I believe?" said Mr. Loram.

"I don't know what you mean by that," Miss Dobbs began; but the barrister explained:

"I mean that I believe he is unmarried?"

"Well, and what about it?" the witness demanded tartly.

"I am asking you a question."

"I know that," said the witness viciously; "and I say that you've no business to make any such insinuations to a respectable young lady when there's a cook-housekeeper and a kitchenmaid living in the house, and him old enough to be my father——"

Here his lordship flattened his eyelids with startling effect, and Mr. Loram interrupted: "I make no insinuations. I merely ask, Is your employer, Mr. Hurst, an unmarried man, or is he not?"

"I never asked him," said the witness sulkily.

"Please answer my question—yes or no?"

"How can I answer your question? He may be unmarried or he may not. How do I know? I'm not a private detective."

Mr. Loram directed a stupefied gaze at the witness, and in the ensuing silence a plaintive voice came from the bench:

"Is the point material?"

"Certainly, my lord," replied Mr. Loram.

"Then, as I see that you are calling Mr. Hurst, perhaps you had better put the question to him. He will probably know."

Mr. Loram bowed, and as the judge subsided into his normal state of coma he turned to the triumphant witness.

"Do you remember anything remarkable occurring on the twenty-third of November the year before last?"

"Yes. Mr. John Bellingham called at our house."

"How did you know he was Mr. John Bellingham?"

"I didn't; but he said he was, and I supposed he knew."

"At what time did he arrive?"

"At twenty minutes past five in the evening."

"What happened then?"

"I told him that Mr. Hurst had not come home yet, and he said he would wait for him in the study and write some letters; so I showed him into the study and shut the door."

"What happened next?"

"Nothing. Then Mr. Hurst came home at his usual time—a quarter to six—and let himself in with his key. He went straight through into the study, where I supposed Mr. Bellingham still was, so I took no notice, but laid the table for two. At six o'clock Mr. Hurst came into the dining-room—he has tea in the City and dines at six—and when he saw the table laid for two he asked the reason. I said I thought Mr. Bellingham was staying to dinner.

"'Mr. Bellingham!' says he. 'I didn't know he was here. Why didn't you tell me?' he says. 'I thought he was with you, sir,' I said. 'I showed him into the study,' I said. 'Well, he wasn't there when I came in,' he said, 'and he isn't there now,' he said. 'Perhaps he has gone to wait in the drawing-room,' he said. So we went and looked in the drawing-room,

but he wasn't there. Then Mr. Hurst said he thought Mr. Bellingham must have got tired of waiting and gone away ; but I told him I was quite sure he hadn't, because I had been watching all the time. Then he asked me if Mr. Bellingham was alone or whether his daughter was with him, and I said that it wasn't that Mr. Bellingham at all, but Mr. John Bellingham, and then he was more surprised than ever. I said we had better search the house to make sure whether he was there or not, and Mr. Hurst said he would come with me ; so we went all over the house and looked in all the rooms, but there was not a sign of Mr. Bellingham in any of them. Then Mr. Hurst got very nervous and upset, and when he had just snatched a little dinner he ran off to catch the six-thirty-one train up to town."

"You say that Mr. Bellingham could not have left the house because you were watching all the time. Where were you while you were watching ? "

"I was in the kitchen. I could see the front gate from the kitchen window."

"You say that you laid the table for two. Where did you lay it ? "

"In the dining-room, of course."

"Could you see the front gate from the dining-room ? "

"No, but I could see the study door. The study is opposite the dining-room."

"Do you have to come upstairs to get from the kitchen to the dining-room ? "

"Yes, of course you do ! "

"Then might not Mr. Bellingham have left the house while you were coming up the stairs ? "

"No, he couldn't have done."

"Why not ? "

"Because it would have been impossible."

"But why would it have been impossible ? "

"Because he couldn't have done it."

"I suggest that Mr. Bellingham left the house quietly while you were on the stairs ? "

"No, he didn't."

"How do you know he did not?"

"I am quite sure he didn't."

"What makes you feel sure he did not?"

"I am quite certain he didn't."

"But how can you be certain?"

"Because I should have seen him if he had."

"But I mean when you were on the stairs."

"He was in the study when I was on the stairs."

"How do you know he was in the study?"

"Because I showed him in there and he hadn't come out."

Mr. Loram paused and took a deep breath, and his lordship flattened his eyelids.

"Is there a side gate to the premises?" the barrister resumed wearily.

"Yes. It opens into a narrow lane at the side of the house."

"And there is a French window in the study, is there not?"

"Yes; it opens on to the small grass plot opposite the side gate."

"Were the window and the gate locked, or would it have been possible for Mr. Bellingham to let himself out into the lane?"

"The window and the gate both have catches on the inside. He could have got out that way, but, of course, he didn't."

"Why not?"

"Well, no gentleman would go creeping out by the back way like a thief."

"Did you look to see if the French window was shut and fastened after you missed Mr. Bellingham?"

"I looked at it when we shut the house up for the night. It was then shut and fastened on the inside."

"And the side gate?"

"That was shut and latched. You have to slam the gate to make the latch fasten, so no one could have gone out of that gate without being heard."

Here the examination-in-chief ended, and Mr. Loram sat down with an audible sigh of relief. Miss Dobbs was about to step down from the witness-box when Mr. Heath rose to cross-examine.

"Did you see Mr. Bellingham in a good light?" he asked.

"Pretty good. It was dark outside, but the hall-lamp was alight."

"Kindly look at this"—here a small object was passed across to the witness. "It is a trinket that Mr. Bellingham is stated to have carried suspended from his watch-guard. Can you remember if he was wearing it in that manner when he came to the house?"

"No, he was not."

"You are sure of that?"

"Quite sure."

"Thank you. And now I want to ask you about the search that you have mentioned. You say that you went all over the house. Did you go into the study?"

"No—at least, not until Mr. Hurst had gone to London."

"When you did go in, was the window fastened?"

"Yes."

"Could it have been fastened from the outside?"

"No; there is no handle outside."

"What furniture is there in the study?"

"There is a writing-table, a revolving-chair, two easy chairs, two large bookcases, and a wardrobe that Mr. Hurst keeps his overcoats and hats in."

"Does the wardrobe lock?"

"Yes."

"Was it locked when you went in?"

"I'm sure I don't know. I don't go about trying the cupboards and drawers."

"What furniture is there in the drawing-room?"

"A cabinet, six or seven chairs, a Chesterfield sofa, a piano, a silver-table, and one or two occasional tables."

"Is the piano a grand or an upright."

"It is an upright grand."

"In what position is it placed?"

"It stands across a corner near the window."

"Is there sufficient room behind it for a man to conceal himself?"

Miss Dobbs was amused and did not dissemble. "Oh, yes," she sniggered, "there's plenty of room for a man to hide behind it."

"When you searched the drawing-room, did you look behind the piano?"

"No, I didn't," Miss Dobbs replied scornfully.

"Did you look under the sofa?"

"Certainly not!"

"What did you do, then?"

"We opened the door and looked into the room. We were not looking for a cat or a monkey; we were looking for a middle-aged gentleman."

"And am I to take it that your search over the rest of the house was conducted in a similar manner?"

"Certainly. We looked into the rooms, but we did not search under the beds or in the cupboards."

"Are all the rooms in the house in use as living or sleeping rooms?"

"No; there is one room on the second floor that is used as a store and lumber room, and one on the first floor that Mr. Hurst uses to store trunks and things that he is not using."

"Did you look in those rooms when you searched the house?"

"No."

"Have you looked in them since?"

"I have been in the lumber-room since, but not in the other. It is always kept locked."

At this point an ominous flattening became apparent in his lordship's eyelids, but these symptoms passed off when Mr. Heath sat down and indicated that he had no further questions to ask.

Miss Dobbs once more prepared to step down from

the witness-box, when Mr. Loram shot up like a jack-in-the-box.

"You have made certain statements," said he, "concerning the scarab which Mr. Bellingham was accustomed to wear suspended from his watch-guard. You say that he was not wearing it when he came to Mr. Hurst's house on the twenty-third of November, nineteen hundred and two. Are you quite sure of that?"

"Quite sure."

"I must ask you to be very careful in your statement on this point. The question is a highly important one. Do you swear that the scarab was not hanging from his watch-guard?"

"Yes, I do."

"Did you notice the watch-guard particularly?"

"No, not particularly."

"Then what makes you so sure that the scarab was not attached to it?"

"It couldn't have been."

"Why could it not?"

"Because if it had been there I should have seen it."

"What kind of watch-guard was Mr. Bellingham wearing?"

"Oh, an ordinary sort of watch-guard."

"I mean, was it a chain or a ribbon or a strap?"

"A chain, I think—or perhaps a ribbon—or it might have been a strap."

His lordship flattened his eyelids, but made no further sign, and Mr. Loram continued:

"Did you or did you not notice what kind of watch-guard Mr. Bellingham was wearing?"

"I did not. Why should I? It was no business of mine."

"But yet you are sure about the scarab?"

"Yes, quite sure."

"You noticed that, then?"

"No, I didn't. How could I when it wasn't there?"

Mr. Loram paused and looked helplessly at the wit-

ness; a suppressed titter arose from the body of the Court, and a faint voice from the bench inquired:

"Are you *quite* incapable of giving a straightforward answer?"

Miss Dobbs' only reply was to burst into tears; whereupon Mr. Loram abruptly sat down and abandoned his re-examination.

The witness-box vacated by Miss Dobbs was occupied successively by Dr. Norbury, Mr. Hurst, and the cloak-room attendant, none of whom contributed any new facts, but merely corroborated the statements made by Mr. Jellicoe and the housemaid. Then came the labourer who discovered the bones at Sidcup, and who repeated the evidence that he had given at the inquest, showing that the remains could not have been lying in the watercress-bed more than two years. Finally Dr. Summers was called, and, after he had given a brief description of the bones that he had examined, was asked by Mr. Loram:

"You have heard the description that Mr. Jellicoe has given of the testator?"

"I have."

"Does that description apply to the person whose remains you examined?"

"In a general way, it does."

"I must ask you for a direct answer—yes or no. Does it apply?"

"Yes. But I ought to say that my estimate of the height of the deceased is only approximate."

"Quite so. Judging from your examination of those remains and from Mr. Jellicoe's description, might those remains be the remains of the testator, John Bellingham?"

"Yes, they might."

On receiving this admission Mr. Loram sat down, and Mr. Heath immediately rose to cross-examine.

"When you examined these remains, Doctor Summers, did you discover any personal peculiarities which would enable you to identify them as the remains of

any one individual rather than any other individual of similar size, age, and proportions ? "

" No. I found nothing that would identify the remains as those of any particular individual."

As Mr. Heath asked no further questions, the witness received his dismissal, and Mr. Loram informed the Court that that was his case. The judge bowed somnolently, and then Mr. Heath rose to address the Court on behalf of the respondent. It was not a long speech, nor was it enriched by any displays of florid rhetoric ; it concerned itself exclusively with a rebutment of the arguments of the counsel for the petitioner.

Having briefly pointed out that the period of absence was too short to give rise of itself to the presumption of death, Mr. Heath continued :

" The claim therefore rests upon evidence of a positive character. My learned friend asserts that the testator is presumably dead, and it is for him to prove what he has affirmed. Now, has he done this ? I submit that he has not. He has argued with great force and ingenuity that the testator, being a bachelor, a solitary man without wife or child, dependent or master, public or private office or duty, or any bond, responsibility, or any other condition limiting his freedom of action, had no reason or inducement for absconding. This is my learned friend's argument, and he has conducted it with so much skill and ingenuity that he has not only succeeded in proving his case ; he has proved a great deal too much. For if it is true, as my learned friend so justly argues, that a man thus unfettered by obligations of any kind has no reason for disappearing, is it not even more true that he has no reason for *not* disappearing ? My friend has urged that the testator was at liberty to go where he pleased, when he pleased, and how he pleased ; and that therefore there was no need for him to abscond. I reply, if he was at liberty to go away, whither, when, and how he pleased, why do we express surprise that he has made use of his liberty ? My learned friend points out that the

testator notified to nobody his intention of going away and has acquainted no one with his whereabouts; but, I ask, whom should he have notified? He was responsible to nobody; there was no one dependent upon him; his presence or absence was the concern of nobody but himself. If circumstances suddenly arising made it desirable that he should go abroad, why should he not go? I say there was no reason whatever.

"My learned friend has said that the testator went away leaving his affairs to take care of themselves. Now, gentlemen, I ask you if this can fairly be said of a man whose affairs are, as they have been for many years, in the hands of a highly capable, completely trustworthy agent who is better acquainted with them than the testator himself? Clearly it cannot.

"To conclude this part of the argument: I submit that the circumstances of the so-called disappearance of the testator present nothing out of the ordinary. The testator is a man of ample means, without any responsibilities to fetter his movements and has been in the constant habit of travelling, often into remote and distant regions. The mere fact that he has been absent somewhat longer than usual affords no ground whatever for the drastic proceeding of presuming his death and taking possession of his property.

"With reference to the human remains which have been mentioned in connection with the case I need say but little. The attempt to connect them with the testator has failed completely. You yourselves have heard Doctor Summers state on oath that they cannot be identified as the remains of any particular person. That would seem to dispose of them effectually. I must remark upon a very singular point that has been raised by the learned counsel for the petitioner, which is this:

"My learned friend points out that these remains were discovered near Eltham and near Woodford and that the testator was last seen alive at one of these two places. This he considers for some reason to be a highly significant fact. But I cannot agree with him.

If the testator had been last seen alive at Woodford and the remains had been found at Woodford, or if he had disappeared from Eltham and the remains had been found at Eltham, that would have had some significance. But he can only have been last seen at one of the places, whereas the remains have been found at both places. Here again my learned friend seems to have proved too much.

"But I need not occupy your time further. I repeat that, in order to justify us in presuming the death of the testator, clear and positive evidence would be necessary. That no such evidence has been brought forward. Accordingly, seeing that the testator may return at any time and is entitled to find his property intact, I shall ask you for a verdict that will secure to him this measure of ordinary justice."

At the conclusion of Mr. Heath's speech the judge, as if awakening from a refreshing nap, opened his eyes; and uncommonly shrewd, intelligent eyes they were, when the expressive eyelids were duly tucked up out of the way. He commenced by reading over a part of the will and certain notes—which he appeared to have made in some miraculous fashion with his eyes shut—and then proceeded to review the evidence and the counsels' arguments for the instruction of the jury.

"Before considering the evidence which you have heard, gentlemen," he said, "it will be well for me to say a few words to you on the general legal aspects of the case which is occupying our attention.

"If a person goes abroad or disappears from his home and his ordinary places of resort and is absent for a long period of time, the presumption of death arises at the expiration of seven years from the date on which he was last heard of. That is to say, that the total disappearance of an individual for seven years constitutes presumptive evidence that the said individual is dead; and the presumption can be set aside only by the production of evidence that he was alive at some time within that period of seven years. But

if, on the other hand, it is sought to presume the death of a person who has been absent for a shorter period than seven years, it is necessary to produce such evidence as shall make it highly probable that the said person is dead. Of course, presumption implies supposition as opposed to actual demonstration; but, nevertheless, the evidence in such a case must be of a kind that tends to create a very strong belief that death has occurred; and I need hardly say that the shorter the period of absence, the more convincing must be the evidence.

"In the present case, the testator, John Bellingham, has been absent somewhat under two years. This is a relatively short period, and in itself gives rise to no presumption of death. Nevertheless, death has been presumed in a case where the period of absence was even shorter and the insurance recovered; but here the evidence supporting the belief in the occurrence of death was exceedingly weighty.

"The testator in this case was a shipmaster, and his disappearance was accompanied by the disappearance of the ship and the entire ship's company in the course of a voyage from London to Marseilles. The loss of the ship and her crew was the only reasonable explanation of the disappearance, and, short of actual demonstration, the facts offered convincing evidence of the death of all persons on board. I mention this case as an illustration. You are not dealing with speculative probabilities. You are contemplating a very momentous proceeding, and you must be very sure of your ground. Consider what it is that you are asked to do.

"The petitioner asks permission to presume the death of the testator in order that the testator's property may be distributed among the beneficiaries under the will. The granting of such permission involves us in the gravest responsibility. An ill-considered decision might be productive of a serious injustice to the testator, an injustice that could never be remedied. Hence it is incumbent upon you to weigh the evidence

with the greatest care, to come to no decision without the profoundest consideration of all the facts.

"The evidence that you have heard divides itself into two parts—that relating to the circumstances of the testator's disappearance, and that relating to certain human remains. In connection with the latter I can only express my surprise and regret that the application was not postponed until the completion of the coroner's inquest, and leave you to consider the evidence. You will bear in mind that Doctor Summers has stated explicitly that the remains cannot be identified as those of any particular individual, but that the testator and the unknown deceased had so many points of resemblance that they might possibly be one and the same person.

"With reference to the circumstances of the disappearance, you have heard the evidence of Mr. Jellicoe to the effect that the testator has on no previous occasion gone abroad without informing him as to his proposed destination. But in considering what weight you are to give to this statement you will bear in mind that when the testator set out for Paris after his interview with Doctor Norbury he left Mr. Jellicoe without any information as to his specific destination, his address in Paris, or the precise date when he should return, and that Mr. Jellicoe was unable to tell us where the testator went or what was his business. Mr. Jellicoe was, in fact, for a time without any means of tracing the testator or ascertaining his whereabouts.

"The evidence of the housemaid, Dobbs, and of Mr. Hurst is rather confusing. It appears that the testator came to the house, was shown into a certain room, and when looked for later was not to be found. A search of the premises showed that he was not in the house, whence it seems to follow that he must have left it; but since no one was informed of his intention to leave, and he had expressed the intention of staying to see Mr. Hurst, his conduct in thus going away surreptitiously must appear somewhat eccentric. The point

that you have to consider, therefore, is whether a person who is capable of thus departing in a surreptitious and eccentric manner from a house, without giving notice to the servants, is capable also of departing in a surseptitious and eccentric manner from his usual places of resort without giving notice to his friends or thereafter informing them of his whereabouts.

"The questions, then, gentlemen, that you have to ask yourselves before deciding on your verdict are two: first, Are the circumstances of the testator's disappearance and his continued absence incongruous with his habits and personal peculiarities as they are known to you? and second, Are there any facts which indicate in a positive manner that the testator is dead? Ask yourselves these questions, gentlemen, and the answers to them, furnished by the evidence that you have heard, will guide you to your decision."

Having delivered himself of the above instructions, the judge applied himself to the perusal of the will with professional gusto, in which occupation he was presently disturbed by the announcement of the foreman of the jury that a verdict had been agreed upon.

The judge sat up and glanced at the jury-box, and when the foreman proceeded to state that "We find no sufficient reason for presuming the testator, John Bellingham, to be dead," he nodded approvingly. Evidently that was his opinion, too, as he was careful to explain when he conveyed to Mr. Loram the refusal of the Court to grant the permission applied for.

The decision was a great relief to me, and also, I think, to Miss Bellingham; but most of all to her father, who, with instinctive good manners, since he could not suppress a smile of triumph, rose hastily and stumped out of the Court, so that the discomfited Hurst should not see him. His daughter and I followed, and as we left the Court she remarked, with a smile:

"So our pauperism is not, after all, made absolute. There is still a chance for us in the Chapter of Accidents —and perhaps even for poor old Uncle John."

CHAPTER XV

CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE

THE morning after the hearing saw me setting forth on my round in more than usually good spirits. The round itself was but a short one, for my list contained only a couple of "chronics," and this, perhaps, contributed to my cheerful outlook on life. But there were other reasons. The decision of the Court had come as an unexpected reprieve and the ruin of my friends' prospects was at least postponed. Then, I had learned that Thorndyke was back from Bristol and wished me to look in on him; and, finally, Miss Bellingham had agreed to spend this very afternoon with me, browsing round the galleries at the British Museum.

I had disposed of my two patients by a quarter to eleven, and three minutes later was striding down Mitre Court, all agog to hear what Thorndyke had to say with reference to my notes on the inquest. The "oak" was open when I arrived at his chambers, and a modest flourish on the little brass knocker of the inner door was answered by my quondam teacher himself.

"How good of you, Berkeley," he said, shaking hands genially, "to look me up so early. I am all alone, just looking through the report of the evidence in yesterday's proceedings."

He placed an easy chair for me, and, gathering up a bundle of type-written papers, laid them aside on the table.

"Were you surprised at the decision?" I asked.

"No," he answered. "Two years is a short period of absence; but still, it might easily have gone the other

way. I am greatly relieved. The respite gives us time to carry out our investigations without undue hurry."

"Did you find my notes of any use?" I asked.

"Heath did. Polton handed them to him, and they were invaluable to him for his cross-examination. I haven't seen them yet; in fact, I have only just got them back from him. Let us go through them together now."

He opened a drawer, and taking from it my notebook, seated himself, and began to read through my notes with grave attention, while I stood and looked shyly over his shoulder. On the page that contained my sketches of the Sidcup arm, showing the distribution of the snails' eggs on the bones, he lingered with a faint smile that made me turn hot and red.

"Those sketches look rather footy," I said; "but I had to put something in my notebook."

"You didn't attach any importance, then, to the facts that they illustrated?"

"No. The egg-patches were there, so I noted the fact. That's all."

"I congratulate you, Berkeley. There is not one man in twenty who would have the sense to make a careful note of what he considers an unimportant or irrelevant fact; and the investigator who notes only those things that appear significant is perfectly useless. He gives himself no material for reconsideration. But you don't mean that these egg-patches and worm-tubes appeared to you to have no significance at all?"

"Oh, of course, they show the position in which the bones were lying."

"Exactly. The arm was lying, fully extended, with the dorsal side uppermost. There is nothing remarkable in that. But we also learn from these egg-patches that the hand had been separated from the arm before it was thrown into the pond; and there is something very remarkable in that."

I leaned over his shoulder and gazed at my sketches, amazed at the rapidity with which he had reconstructed

the limb from my rough drawings of the individual bones.

"I don't quite see how you arrived at it, though," I said.

"Well, look at your drawings. The egg-patches are on the dorsal surface of the scapula, the humerus, and the bones of the fore-arm. But here you have shown six of the bones of the hand: two metacarpals, the os magnum, and three phalanges; and they all have egg-patches on the *palmar* surface. Therefore the hand was lying palm upwards."

"But the hand may have been pronated."

"If you mean pronated in relation to the arm, that is impossible, for the position of the egg-patches shows clearly that the bones of the arm were lying in the position of supination. Thus the dorsal surface of the arm and the palmar surface of the hand respectively were uppermost, which is an anatomical impossibility so long as the hand is attached to the arm."

"But might not the hand have become detached after lying in the pond some time?"

"No. It could not have been detached until the ligaments had decayed, and if it had been separated after the decay of the soft parts, the bones would have been thrown into disorder. But the egg-patches are all on the palmar surface, showing that the bones were still in their normal relative positions. No, Berkeley, that hand was thrown into the pond separately from the arm."

"But why should it have been?" I asked.

"Ah, there is a very pretty little problem for you to consider. And, meantime, let me tell you that your expedition has been a brilliant success. You are an excellent observer. Your only fault is that when you have noted certain facts you don't seem fully to appreciate their significance—which is merely a matter of inexperience. As to the facts that you have collected, several of them are of prime importance."

"I am glad you are satisfied," said I, "though I don't

see that I have discovered much excepting those snails' eggs; and they don't seem to have advanced matters very much."

"A definite fact, Berkeley, is a definite asset. Perhaps we may presently find a little space in our Chinese puzzle which this fact of the detached hand will just drop into. But, tell me, did you find nothing unexpected or suggestive about those bones—as to their number and condition, for instance?"

"Well, I thought it a little queer that the scapula and clavicle should be there. I should have expected him to cut the arm off at the shoulder-joint."

"Yes," said Thorndyke; "so should I; and so it has been done in every case of dismemberment that I am acquainted with. To an ordinary person, the arm seems to join on to the trunk at the shoulder-joint, and that is where he would naturally sever it. What explanation do you suggest of this unusual mode of severing the arm?"

"Do you think the fellow could have been a butcher?" I asked, remembering Dr. Summers' remark. "This is the way a shoulder of mutton is taken off."

"No," replied Thorndyke. "A butcher includes the scapula in a shoulder of mutton for a specific purpose, namely, to take off a given quantity of meat. And also, as a sheep has no clavicle, it is the easiest way to detach the limb. But I imagine a butcher would find himself in difficulties if he attempted to take off a man's arm in that way. The clavicle would be a new and perplexing feature. Then, too, a butcher does not deal very delicately with his subject; if he has to divide a joint, he just cuts through it and does not trouble himself to avoid marking the bones. But you note here that there is not a single scratch or score on any one of the bones, not even where the finger was removed. Now, if you have ever prepared bones for a museum, as I have, you will remember the extreme care that is necessary in disarticulating joints to avoid

disfiguring the articular ends of the bones with cuts and scratches."

"Then you think that the person who dismembered this body must have had some anatomical knowledge and skill?"

"That is what has been suggested. The suggestion is not mine."

"Then I infer that you don't agree?"

Thorndyke smiled. "I am sorry to be so cryptic, Berkeley, but you understand that I can't make statements. Still, I am trying to lead you to make certain inferences from the facts that are in your possession."

"If I make the right inference, will you tell me?" I asked.

"It won't be necessary," he answered, with the same quiet smile. "When you have fitted a puzzle together you don't need to be told that you have done it."

It was most infernally tantalizing. I pondered on the problem with a scowl of such intense cogitation that Thorndyke laughed outright.

"It seems to me," I said, at length, "that the identity of the remains is the primary question and that is a question of fact. It doesn't seem any use to speculate about it."

"Exactly. Either these bones are the remains of John Bellingham or they are not. There will be no doubt on the subject when all the bones are assembled—if ever they are. And the settlement of that question will probably throw light on the further question: Who deposited them in the places in which they were found? But to return to your observations: did you gather nothing from the other bones? From the complete state of the neck vertebrae, for instance?"

"Well, it did strike me as rather odd that the fellow should have gone to the trouble of separating the atlas from the skull. He must have been pretty handy with the scalpel to have done it as cleanly as he seems to have done; but I don't see why he should have gone about the business in the most inconvenient way."

"You notice the uniformity of method. He has separated the head from the spine, instead of cutting through the spine lower down, as most persons would have done: he removed the arms with the entire shoulder-girdle, instead of simply cutting them off at the shoulder-joints. Even in the thighs the same peculiarity appears; for in neither case was the knee-cap found with the thigh-bone, although it seems to have been searched for. Now the obvious way to divide the leg is to cut through the patellar ligament, leaving the knee-cap attached to the thigh. But in this case, the knee-cap appears to have been left attached to the shank. Can you explain why this person should have adopted this unusual and rather inconvenient method? Can you suggest a motive for this procedure, or can you think of any circumstances which might lead a person to adopt this method by preference?"

"It seems as if he wished, for some reason, to divide the body into definite anatomical regions."

Thorndyke chuckled. "You are not offering that suggestion as an explanation, are you? Because it would require more explaining than the original problem. And it is not even true. Anatomically speaking, the knee-cap appertains to the thigh rather than to the shank. It is a sesamoid bone belonging to the thigh muscles; yet in this case it has been left attached, apparently, to the shank. No, Berkeley, that cat won't jump. Our unknown operator was not preparing a skeleton as a museum specimen; he was dividing a body up into convenient-sized portions for the purpose of conveying them to various ponds. Now what circumstances might have led him to divide it in this peculiar manner?"

"I am afraid I have no suggestion to offer. Have you?"

Thorndyke suddenly lapsed into ambiguity. "I think," he said, "it is possible to conceive such circumstances, and so, probably, will you if you think it over."

"Did you gather anything of importance from the evidence at the inquest?" I asked.

"It is difficult to say," he replied. "The whole of my conclusions in this case are based on what is virtually circumstantial evidence. I have not one single fact of which I can say that it admits only of a single interpretation. Still, it must be remembered that even the most inconclusive facts, if sufficiently multiplied, yield a highly conclusive total. And my little pile of evidence is growing, particle by particle; but we mustn't sit here gossiping at this hour of the day; I have to consult with Marchmont and you say that you have an early afternoon engagement. We can walk together as far as Fleet Street."

A minute or two later we went our respective ways, Thorndyke towards Lombard Street and I to Fetter Lane, not unmindful of those coming events that were casting so agreeable a shadow before them.

There was only one message awaiting me, and when Adolphus had delivered it (amidst mephitic fumes that rose from the basement, premonitory of fried plaice), I pocketed my stethoscope and betook myself to Gunpowder Alley, the aristocratic abode of my patient, joyfully threading the now familiar passages of Gough Square and Wine Office Court, and meditating pleasantly on the curious literary flavour that pervades these little-known regions. For the shade of the author of *Rasselas* still seems to haunt the scenes of his Titanic labours and his ponderous but homely and temperate rejoicings. Every court and alley whispers of books and of the making of books: formes of type, trundled noisily on trollies by ink-smeared boys, salute the wayfarer at odd corners; piles of strawboard, rolls or bales of paper, drums of printing-ink or roller-composition stand on the pavement outside dark entries; basement windows give glimpses into Hadean caverns tenanted by legions of printer's devils; and the very air is charged with the hum of press and with odours of glue and paste and oil. The entire neighbourhood is

given up to the printer and binder; and even my patient turned out to be a guillotine-knife grinder—a ferocious and revolutionary calling strangely at variance with his harmless appearance and meek bearing.

I was in good time at my tryst, despite the hindrances of fried plaice and invalid guillotinists; but, early as I was, Miss Bellingham was already waiting in the garden—she had been filling a bowl with flowers—ready to sally forth.

"It is quite like old times," she said, as we turned into Fetter Lane, "to be going to the Museum together. It brings back the Tell el Amarna tablets and all your kindness and unselfish labour. I suppose we shall walk there to-day?"

"Certainly," I replied; "I am not going to share your society with the common mortals who ride in omnibuses. That would be sheer, sinful waste. Besides, it is more companionable to walk."

"Yes, it is; and the bustle of the streets makes one more appreciative of the quiet of the Museum. What are we going to look at when we get there?"

"You must decide that," I replied. "You know the collection much better than I do."

"Well, now," she mused, "I wonder what you would like to see; or, in other words, what I should like you to see. The old English pottery is rather fascinating, especially the Fulham ware. I rather think I shall take you to see that."

She reflected awhile, and then, just as we reached the gate of Staple Inn, she stopped and looked thoughtfully down the Gray's Inn Road.

"You have taken a great interest in our 'case,' as Doctor Thorndyke calls it. Would you like to see the churchyard where Uncle John wished to be buried? It is a little out of our way, but we are not in a hurry, are we?"

I, certainly, was not. Any deviation that might prolong our walk was welcome, and, as to the place—why, all places were alike to me if only she were by my

side. Besides, the churchyard was really of some interest, since it was undoubtedly the "exciting cause" of the obnoxious paragraph two of the disputed will. I accordingly expressed a desire to make its acquaintance, and we crossed to the entrance to Gray's Inn Road.

"Do you ever try," she asked, as we turned down the dingy thoroughfare, "to picture to yourself familiar places as they looked a couple of hundred years ago?"

"Yes," I answered, "and very difficult I find it. One has to manufacture the materials for reconstruction, and then the present aspect of the place will keep obtruding itself. But some places are easier to reconstitute than others."

"That is what I find," said she. "Now Holborn, for example, is quite easy to reconstruct, though I daresay the imaginary form isn't a bit like the original. But there are fragments left, like Staple Inn and the front of Gray's Inn; and then one has seen prints of the old Middle Row and some of the taverns, so that one has some material with which to help out one's imagination. But this road that we are walking in always baffles me. It looks so old and yet is, for the most part, so new that I find it impossible to make a satisfactory picture of its appearance, say, when Sir Roger de Coverley might have strolled in Gray's Inn Walks, or farther back, when Francis Bacon had chambers in the Inn."

"I imagine," said I, "that part of the difficulty is in the mixed character of the neighbourhood. Here, on the one side, is old Gray's Inn, not much changed since Bacon's time—his chambers are still to be seen, I think, over the gateway; and there, on the Clerkenwell side, is a dense and rather squalid neighbourhood which has grown up over a region partly rural and wholly fugitive in character. Places like Bagnigge Wells and Hockley in the Hole would not have had many buildings that were likely to survive; and in the absence of surviving specimens the imagination hasn't much to work from."

"I daresay you are right," said she. "Certainly, the purlieus of old Clerkenwell present a very confused picture to me; whereas, in the case of an old street like, say, Great Ormond Street, one has only to sweep away the modern buildings and replace them with glorious old houses like the few that remain, dig up the roadway and pavements and lay down cobble-stones, plant a few wooden posts, hang up one or two oil-lamps, and the transformation is complete. And a very delightful transformation it is."

"Very delightful; which, by the way, is a melancholy thought. For we ought to be doing better work than our forefathers; whereas what we actually do is to pull down the old buildings, clap the doorways, porticoes, panelling, and mantels in our museums, and then run up something inexpensive and useful and deadly uninteresting in their place."

My companion looked at me and laughed softly. "For a naturally cheerful, and even gay young man," said she, "you are most amazingly pessimistic. The mantle of Jeremiah—if he ever wore one—seems to have fallen on you, but without in the least impairing your good spirits excepting in regard to matters architectural."

"I have much to be thankful for," said I. "Am I not taken to the Museum by a fair lady? And does she not stay me with mummy cases and comfort me with crockery?"

"Pottery," she corrected; and then, as we met a party of grave-looking women emerging from a side-street, she said: "I suppose those are lady medical students."

"Yes, on their way to the Royal Free Hospital. Note the gravity of their demeanour and contrast it with the levity of the male student."

"I was doing so," she answered, "and wondering why professional women are usually so much more serious than men."

"Perhaps," I suggested, "it is a matter of selection.

A peculiar type of woman is attracted to the professions, whereas every man has to earn his living as a matter of course."

"Yes, I daresay that is the explanation. This is our turning."

We passed into Heathcote Street, at the end of which was an open gate giving entrance to one of those disused and metamorphosed burial-grounds that are to be met with in the older districts of London; in which the dispossessed dead are jostled into corners to make room for the living. Many of the headstones were still standing, and others, displaced to make room for asphalted walks and seats, were ranged around by the walls, exhibiting inscriptions made meaningless by their removal. It was a pleasant enough place on this summer afternoon, contrasted with the dingy street whence we had come, though its grass was faded and yellow and the twitter of the birds in the trees mingled with the hideous Board-school drawl of the children who played around the seats and the few remaining tombs.

"So this is the last resting-place of the illustrious house of Bellingham," said I.

"Yes; and we are not the only distinguished people who repose in this place. The daughter of no less a person than Richard Cromwell is buried here; the tomb is still standing—but perhaps you have been here before, and know it."

"I don't think I have ever been here before; and yet there is something about the place that seems familiar." I looked around, cudgelling my brains for the key to the dimly reminiscent sensations that the place evoked; until, suddenly, I caught sight of a group of buildings away to the west, enclosed within a wall heightened by a wooden trellis.

"Yes, of course!" I exclaimed. "I remember the place now. I have never been in this part before, but in that enclosure beyond which opens at the end of Henrietta Street, there used to be and may be still, for

all I know, a school of anatomy, at which I attended in my first year; in fact, I did my first dissection there."

"There was a certain gruesome appropriateness in the position of the school," remarked Miss Bellingham. "It would have been really convenient in the days of the resurrection men. Your material would have been delivered at your very door. Was it a large school?"

"The attendance varied according to the time of the year. Sometimes I worked there quite alone. I used to let myself in with a key and hoist my subject out of a sort of sepulchral tank by means of a chain tackle. It was a ghoulish business. You have no idea how awful the body used to look, to my unaccustomed eyes, as it rose slowly out of the tank. It was like the resurrection scenes that you see on some old tombstones, where the deceased is shown rising out of his coffin while the skeleton, Death, falls vanquished with his dart shattered and his crown toppling off.

"I remember, too, that the demonstrator used to wear a blue apron, which created a sort of impression of a cannibal butcher's shop. But I am afraid I am shocking you."

"No, you are not. Every profession has its unpresentable aspects, which ought not to be seen by outsiders. Think of a sculptor's studio and of the sculptor himself when he is modelling a large figure or group in the clay. He might be a bricklayer or a road-sweeper if you judge by his appearance. This is the tomb I was telling you about."

We halted before the plain coffer of stone, weathered and wasted by age, but yet kept in decent repair by some pious hands, and read the inscription, setting forth with modest pride, that here reposed Anna, sixth daughter of Richard Cromwell, "The Protector." It was a simple monument and commonplace enough, with the crude severity of the ascetic age to which it belonged. But still, it carried the mind back to those stirring times when the leafy shades of Gray's Inn Lane

must have resounded with the clank of weapons and the tramp of armed men; when this bald recreation-ground was a rustic churchyard, standing amidst green fields and hedgerows, and countrymen leading their pack-horses into London through the Lane would stop to look in over the wooden gate.

Miss Bellingham looked at me critically as I stood thus reflecting, and presently remarked: "I think you and I have a good many mental habits in common."

I looked up inquiringly, and she continued: "I notice that an old tombstone seems to set you meditating. So it does me. When I look at an ancient monument, and especially an old headstone, I find myself almost unconsciously retracing the years to the date that is written on the stone. Why do you think that is? Why should a monument be so stimulating to the imagination? And why should a common headstone be more so than any other?"

"I suppose it is," I answered reflectively, "that a churchyard monument is a peculiarly personal thing and appertains in a peculiar way to a particular time. And the circumstance that it has stood untouched by the passing years while everything around has changed, helps the imagination to span the interval. And the common headstone, the memorial of some dead and gone farmer or labourer who lived and died in the village hard by, is still more intimate and suggestive. The rustic, childish sculpture of the village mason and the artless doggerel of the village schoolmaster, bring back the time and place and the conditions of life much more vividly than the more scholarly inscriptions and the more artistic enrichments of monuments of greater pretensions. But where are your own family tombstones?"

"They are over in that farther corner. There is an intelligent, but inopportune, person apparently copying the epitaphs. I wish he would go away. I want to show them to you."

I now noticed, for the first time, an individual engaged,

notebook in hand, in making a careful survey of a group of old headstones. Evidently he was making a copy of the inscriptions, for not only was he poring attentively over the writing on the face of the stone, but now and again he helped out his vision by running his fingers over the worn lettering.

"That is my grandfather's tombstone that he is copying now," said Miss Bellingham; and even as she spoke, the man turned and directed a searching glance at us with a pair of keen, spectacled eyes.

Simultaneously we uttered an exclamation of surprise; for the investigator was Mr. Jellicoe.

CHAPTER XVI

O! ARTEMIDORUS, FAREWELL!

WHETHER or not Mr. Jellicoe was surprised to see us, it is impossible to say. His countenance (which served the ordinary purposes of a face, inasmuch as it contained the principal organs of special sense, with the inlets to the alimentary and respiratory tracts) was, as an apparatus for the expression of the emotions, a total failure. To a thought-reader it would have been about as helpful as the face carved upon the handle of an umbrella; a comparison suggested, perhaps, by a certain resemblance to such an object. He advanced, holding his open notebook and pencil, and having saluted us with a stiff bow and an old-fashioned flourish of his hat, shook hands rheumatically and waited for us to speak.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Mr. Jellicoe," said Miss Bellingham.

"It is very good of you to say so," he replied.

"And quite a coincidence—that we should all happen to come here on the same day."

"A coincidence, certainly," he admitted; "and if we had all happened not to come—which must have occurred frequently—that also would have been a coincidence."

"I suppose it would," said she, "but I hope we are not interrupting you."

"Thank you, no. I had just finished when I had the pleasure of perceiving you."

"You were making some notes in reference to the

case, I imagine," said I. It was an impertinent question, put with malice aforethought for the mere pleasure of hearing him evade it.

"The case?" he repeated. "You are referring, perhaps, to Stevens versus the Parish Council?"

"I think Doctor Berkeley was referring to the case of my uncle's will," Miss Bellingham said quite gravely, though with a suspicious dimpling about the corners of her mouth.

"Indeed," said Mr. Jellicoe. "There is a case, is there; a suit?"

"I mean the proceedings instituted by Mr. Hurst."

"Oh, but that was merely an application to the Court, and is, moreover, finished and done with. At least, so I understand. I speak, of course, subject to correction; I am not acting for Mr. Hurst, you will be pleased to remember. As a matter of fact," he continued, after a brief pause, "I was just refreshing my memory as to the wording of the inscriptions on these stones, especially that of your grandfather, Francis Bellingham. It has occurred to me that if it should appear by the finding of the coroner's jury that your uncle is deceased, it would be proper and decorous that some memorial should be placed here. But, as the burial-ground is closed, there might be some difficulty about erecting a new monument, whereas there would probably be none in adding an inscription to one already existing. Hence these investigations. For if the inscription on your grandfather's stone had set forth that 'here rests the body of Francis Bellingham,' it would have been manifestly improper to add 'also that of John Bellingham, son of the above.' Fortunately the inscription was more discreetly drafted, merely recording the fact that this monument is 'sacred to the memory of the said Francis,' and not committing itself as to the whereabouts of the remains. But perhaps I am interrupting you?"

"No, not at all," replied Miss Bellingham (which was grossly untrue; he was interrupting *me* most

intolerably); "we were going to the British Museum and just looked in here on our way."

"Ha," said Mr. Jellicoe, "now, I happen to be going to the Museum too, to see Doctor Norbury. I suppose that is another coincidence?"

"Certainly it is," Miss Bellingham replied; and then she asked: "Shall we walk there together?" and the old curmudgeon actually said "yes"—confound him!

We returned to the Gray's Inn Road, where, as there was now room for us to walk abreast, I proceeded to indemnify myself for the lawyer's unwelcome company by leading the conversation back to the subject of the missing man.

"Was there anything, Mr. Jellicoe, in Mr. John Bellingham's state of health that would make it probable that he might die suddenly?"

The lawyer looked at me suspiciously for a few moments and then remarked:

"You seem to be greatly interested in John Bellingham and his affairs."

"I am. My friends are deeply concerned in them, and the case itself is of more than common interest from a professional point of view."

"And what is the bearing of this particular question?"

"Surely it is obvious," said I. "If a missing man is known to have suffered from some affection, such as heart disease, aneurism, or arterial degeneration, likely to produce sudden death, that fact will surely be highly material to the question as to whether he is probably dead or alive."

"No doubt you are right," said Mr. Jellicoe. "I have little knowledge of medical affairs, but doubtless you are right. As to the question itself, I am Mr. Bellingham's lawyer, not his doctor. His health is a matter that lies outside my jurisdiction. But you heard my evidence in Court, to the effect that the testator appeared, to my untutored observation, to be a healthy man. I can say no more now."

"If the question is of any importance," said Miss Bellingham, "I wonder they did not call his doctor and settle it definitely. My own impression is that he was—or is—rather a strong and sound man. He certainly recovered very quickly and completely after his accident."

"What accident was that?" I asked.

"Oh, hasn't my father told you? It occurred while he was staying with us. He slipped from a high kerb and broke one of the bones of the left ankle—somebody's fracture——"

"Pott's?"

"Yes, that was the name—Pott's fracture; and he broke both his knee-caps as well. Sir Morgan Bennet had to perform an operation, or he would have been a cripple for life. As it was, he was about again in a few weeks, apparently none the worse excepting for a slight weakness of the left ankle."

"Could he walk upstairs?" I asked.

"Oh, yes; and play golf and ride a bicycle."

"You are sure he broke both knee-caps?"

"Quite sure. I remember that it was mentioned as an uncommon injury, and that Sir Morgan seemed quite pleased with him for doing it."

"That sounds rather libellous; but I expect he was pleased with the result of the operation. He might well be."

Here there was a brief lull in the conversation, and, even as I was trying to think of a poser for Mr. Jellicoe, that gentleman took the opportunity to change the subject.

"Are you going to the Egyptian Rooms?" he asked.

"No," replied Miss Bellingham; "we are going to look at the pottery."

"Ancient or modern?"

"The old Fulham ware is what chiefly interests us at present; that of the seventeenth century. I don't know whether you would call that ancient or modern."

"Neither do I," said Mr. Jellicoe. "Antiquity and

modernity are terms that have no fixed connotation. They are purely relative and their application in a particular instance has to be determined by a sort of sliding scale. To a furniture collector, a Tudor chair or a Jacobean chest is ancient; to an architect, their period is modern, whereas an eleventh-century church is ancient; but to an Egyptologist, accustomed to remains of a vast antiquity, both are products of modern periods separated by an insignificant interval. And, I suppose," he added, reflectively, "that to a geologist, the traces of the very earliest dawn of human history appertain only to the recent period. Conceptions of time, like all other conceptions, are relative."

"You appear to be a disciple of Herbert Spencer," I remarked.

"I am a disciple of Arthur Jellicoe, sir," he retorted. And I believed him.

By the time we had reached the Museum he had become almost genial; and, if less amusing in this frame, he was so much more instructive and entertaining that I refrained from baiting him, and permitted him to discuss his favourite topic unhindered, especially since my companion listened with lively interest. Nor, when we entered the great hall, did he relinquish possession of us, and we followed submissively, as he led the way past the winged bulls of Nineveh and the great seated statues, until we found ourselves, almost without the exercise of our volition, in the upper room amidst the glaring mummy cases that had witnessed the birth of my friendship with Ruth Bellingham.

"Before I leave you," said Mr. Jellicoe, "I should like to show you that mummy that we were discussing the other evening; the one, you remember, that my friend, John Bellingham, presented to the Museum a little time before his disappearance. The point that I mentioned is only a trivial one, but it may become of interest hereafter if any plausible explanation should be forthcoming." He led us along the room until we arrived at the case containing John Bellingham's gift,

where he halted and gazed in at the mummy with the affectionate reflectiveness of the connoisseur.

"The bitumen coating was what we were discussing, Miss Bellingham," said he. "You have seen it, of course."

"Yes," she answered. "It is a dreadful disfigurement, isn't it?"

"Æsthetically it is to be deplored, but it adds a certain speculative interest to the specimen. You notice that the black coating leaves the principal decoration and the whole of the inscription untouched, which is precisely the part that one would expect to find covered up; whereas the feet and the back, which probably bore no writing, are quite thickly encrusted. If you stoop down, you can see that the bitumen was daubed freely into the lacings of the back, where it served no purpose, so that even the strings are embedded." He stooped, as he spoke, and peered up inquisitively at the back of the mummy, where it was visible between the supports.

"Has Doctor Norbury any explanation to offer?" asked Miss Bellingham.

"None whatever," replied Mr. Jellicoe. "He finds it as great a mystery as I do. But he thinks that we may get some suggestion from the Director when he comes back. He is a very great authority, as you know, and a practical excavator of great experience too. But I mustn't stay here talking of these things, and keeping you from your pottery. Perhaps I have stayed too long already. If I have I ask your pardon, and I will now wish you a very good afternoon." With a sudden return to his customary wooden impassivity, he shook hands with us, bowed stiffly, and took himself off towards the curator's office.

"What a strange man that is," said Miss Bellingham, as Mr. Jellicoe disappeared through the doorway at the end of the room, "or perhaps I should say, a strange being, for I can hardly think of him as a man. I have never met any other human creature at all like him."

"He is certainly a queer old fogey," I agreed.

"Yes, but there is something more than that. He is so emotionless, so remote and aloof from all mundane concerns. He moves among ordinary men and women, but as a mere presence, an unmoved spectator of their actions, quite dispassionate and impersonal."

"Yes, he is astonishingly self-contained; in fact, he seems, as you say, to go to and fro among men, enveloped in a sort of infernal atmosphere of his own, like Marley's ghost. But he is lively and human enough as soon as the subject of Egyptian antiquities is broached."

"Lively, but not human. He is always, to me, quite unhuman. Even when he is most interested, and even enthusiastic, he is a mere personification of knowledge. Nature ought to have furnished him with an ibis' head like Tahuti; then he would have looked his part."

"He would have made a rare sensation in Lincoln's Inn if she had," said I; and we both laughed heartily at the imaginary picture of Tahuti Jellicoe, slender-beaked and top-hatted, going about his business in Lincoln's Inn and the Law Courts.

Insensibly, as we talked, we had drawn near to the mummy of Artemidorus, and now my companion halted before the case with her thoughtful grey eyes bent dreamily on the face that looked out at us. I watched her with reverent admiration. How charming she looked as she stood with her sweet, grave face turned so earnestly to the object of her mystical affection! How dainty and full of womanly dignity and grace! And then, suddenly, it was borne in upon me that a great change had come over her since the day of our first meeting. She had grown younger, more girlish, and more gentle. At first she had seemed much older than I; a sad-faced woman, weary, solemn, enigmatic, almost gloomy, with a bitter, ironic humour and a bearing distant and cold. Now she was only maidenly and sweet; tinged, it is true, with a certain seriousness, but frank and gracious and wholly lovable.

Could the change be due to our growing friendship? As I asked myself the question, my heart leaped with a new-born hope. I yearned to tell her all that she was to me—all that I hoped we might be to one another in the years to come.

At length I ventured to break in upon her reverie.

"What are you thinking about so earnestly, fair lady?"

She turned quickly with a bright smile and sparkling eyes that looked frankly into mine. "I was wondering," said she, "if he was jealous of my new friend. But what a baby I am to talk such nonsense!"

She laughed softly and happily with just an adorable hint of shyness.

"Why should he be jealous?" I asked.

"Well, you see, before—we were friends, he had me all to himself. I have never had a man-friend before—except my father—and no really intimate friend at all. And I was very lonely in those days, after our troubles had befallen. I am naturally solitary, but still, I am only a girl; I am not a philosopher. So when I felt very lonely, I used to come here and look at Artemidorus and make believe that he knew all the sadness of my life and sympathized with me. It was very silly, I know, but yet, somehow it was a real comfort to me."

"It was not silly of you at all. He must have been a good man, a gentle, sweet-faced man who had won the love of those who knew him, as this beautiful memorial tells us; and it was wise and good of you to sweeten the bitterness of your life with the fragrance of this human love that blossoms in the dust after the lapse of centuries. No, you were not silly, and Artemidorus is not jealous of your new friend."

"Are you sure?" She still smiled as she asked the question, but her glance was soft—almost tender—and there was a note of whimsical anxiety in her voice.

"Quite sure. I give you my confident assurance."

She laughed gaily. "Then," said she, "I am satisfied, for I am sure you know. But here is a mighty

telepathist who can read the thoughts even of a mummy. A most formidable companion. But tell me how you know."

"I know, because it is he who gave you to me to be my friend. Don't you remember?"

"Yes, I remember," she answered, softly. "It was when you were so sympathetic with my foolish whim that I felt we were really friends."

"And I, when you confided your pretty fancy to me, thanked you for the gift of your friendship, and treasured it, and do still treasure it, above everything on earth."

She looked at me quickly with a sort of nervousness in her manner, and cast down her eyes. Then, after a few moments' almost embarrassed silence, as if to bring our talk back to a less emotional plane, she said:

"Do you notice the curious way in which this memorial divides itself up into two distinct parts?"

"How do you mean?" I asked, a little disconcerted by the sudden descent.

"I mean that there is a part of it that is purely decorative and a part that is expressive or emotional. You notice that the general design and scheme of decoration, although really Greek in feeling, follows rigidly the Egyptian conventions. But the portrait is entirely in the Greek manner, and when they came to that pathetic farewell, it had to be spoken in their own tongue, written in their own familiar characters."

"Yes. I have noticed that and admired the taste with which they have kept the inscription so inconspicuous as not to clash with the decoration. An obtrusive inscription in Greek characters would have spoiled the consistency of the whole scheme."

"Yes, it would." She assented absently as if she were thinking of something else, and once more gazed thoughtfully at the mummy. I watched her with deep content: noted the lovely contour of her cheek, the soft masses of hair that strayed away so gracefully from her brow, and thought her the most wonderful

creature that had ever trod the earth. Suddenly she looked at me reflectively.

"I wonder," she said, "what made me tell you about Artemidorus. It was a rather silly, childish sort of make-believe, and I wouldn't have told anyone else for the world; not even my father. How did I know that you would sympathize and understand?"

She asked the question in all simplicity with her serious, grey eyes looking inquiringly into mine. And the answer came to me in a flash, with the beating of my own heart.

"I will tell you how you knew, Ruth," I whispered passionately. "It was because I loved you more than anyone in the world has ever loved you, and you felt my love in your heart and called it sympathy."

I stopped short, for she had blushed scarlet and then turned deathly pale. And now she looked at me wildly, almost with terror.

"Have I shocked you, Ruth, dearest?" I exclaimed penitently, "have I spoken too soon? If I have, forgive me. But I had to tell you. I have been eating my heart out for love of you for I don't know how long. I think I have loved you from the first day we met. Perhaps I shouldn't have spoken yet, but, Ruth, dear, if you only knew what a sweet girl you are, you wouldn't blame me."

"I don't blame you," she said, almost in a whisper; "I blame myself. I have been a bad friend to you, who have been so loyal and loving to me. I ought not to have let this happen. For it can't be, Paul; I can't say what you want me to say. We can never be anything more to one another than friends."

A cold hand seemed to grasp my heart—a horrible fear that I had lost all that I cared for—all that made life desirable.

"Why can't we?" I asked. "Do you mean that—that the gods have been gracious to some other man?"

"No, no," she answered, hastily—almost indignantly, "of course I don't mean that."

"Then it is only that you don't love me yet. Of course you don't. Why should you? But you will, dear, some day. And I will wait patiently until that day comes and not trouble you with entreaties. I will wait for you as Jacob waited for Rachel; and as the long years seemed to him but as a few days because of the love he bore her, so it shall be with me, if only you will not send me away quite without hope."

She was looking down, white-faced, with a hardening of the lips as if she were in bodily pain. "You don't understand," she whispered. "It can't be—it can never be. There is something that makes it impossible, now and always. I can't tell you more than that."

"But, Ruth, dearest," I pleaded despairingly, "may it not become possible some day? Can it not be made possible? I can wait, but I can't give you up. Is there no chance whatever that this obstacle may be removed?"

"Very little, I fear. Hardly any. No, Paul; it is hopeless, and I can't bear to talk about it. Let me go now. Let us say good-bye here and see one another no more for a while. Perhaps we may be friends again some day—when you have forgiven me."

"Forgiven you, dearest!" I exclaimed. "There is nothing to forgive. And we are friends, Ruth. Whatever happens, you are the dearest friend I have on earth, or can ever have."

"Thank you, Paul," she said faintly. "You are very good to me. But let me go, please. I must go. I must be alone."

She held out a trembling hand, and, as I took it, I was shocked to see how terribly agitated and ill she looked.

"May I not come with you, dear?" I pleaded.

"No, no!" she exclaimed breathlessly; "I must go away by myself. I want to be alone. Good-bye!"

"Before I let you go, Ruth—if you must go—I must have a solemn promise from you."

Her sad grey eyes met mine and her lips quivered with an unspoken question.

"You must promise me," I went on, "that if ever this barrier that parts us should be removed, you will let me know instantly. Remember that I love you always, and that I am waiting for you always on this side of the grave."

She caught her breath in a little quick sob, and pressed my hand.

"Yes," she whispered: "I promise. Good-bye." She pressed my hand again and was gone; and, as I gazed at the empty doorway through which she had passed, I caught a glimpse of her reflection in a glass case on the landing, where she had paused for a moment to wipe her eyes. I felt it, in a manner, indelicate to have seen her, and turned away my head quickly; and yet I was conscious of a certain selfish satisfaction in the sweet sympathy that her grief bespoke.

But now that she was gone a horrible sense of desolation descended on me. Only now, by the consciousness of irreparable loss, did I begin to realize the meaning of this passion of love that had stolen unawares into my life. How it had glorified the present and spread a glamour of delight over the dimly considered future: how all pleasures and desires, all hopes and ambitions, had converged upon it as a focus; how it had stood out as the one great reality behind which the other circumstances of life were as a background, shimmering, half seen, immaterial, and unreal. And now it was gone—lost, as it seemed, beyond hope; and that which was left to me was but the empty frame from which the picture had vanished.

I have no idea how long I stood rooted to the spot where she had left me, wrapped in a dull consciousness of pain, immersed in a half-numb reverie. Recent events flitted, dream-like, through my mind; our happy labours in the reading-room; our first visit to the Museum; and this present day that had opened so brightly and with such joyous promise. One by

one these phantoms of a vanished happiness came and went. Occasional visitors sauntered into the room —but the galleries were mostly empty that day— gazed inquisitively at my motionless figure, and went their way. And still the dull, intolerable ache in my breast went on, the only vivid consciousness that was left to me.

Presently I raised my eyes and met those of the portrait. The sweet, pensive face of the old Greek settler looked out at me wistfully as though he would offer comfort; as though he would tell me that he, too, had known sorrow when he lived his life in the sunny Fayyum. And a subtle consolation, like the faint scent of old rose leaves, seemed to exhale from that friendly face that had looked on the birth of my happiness and had seen it wither and fade. I turned away, at last, with a silent farewell; and when I looked back, he seemed to speed me on my way with gentle valediction.

CHAPTER XVII

THE ACCUSING FINGER

Of my wanderings after I left the Museum on that black and dismal *dies iræ*, I have but a dim recollection. But I must have travelled a quite considerable distance, since it wanted an hour or two to the time for returning to the surgery, and I spent the interval walking swiftly through streets and squares, unmindful of the happenings around, intent only on my present misfortune, and driven by a natural impulse to seek relief in bodily exertion. For mental distress sets up, as it were, a sort of induced current of physical unrest; a beneficent arrangement, by which a dangerous excess of emotional excitement may be transformed into motor energy, and so safely got rid of. The motor apparatus acts as a safety-valve to the psychical; and if the engine races for a while, with the onset of bodily fatigue the emotional pressure-gauge returns to a normal reading.

And so it was with me. At first I was conscious of nothing but a sense of utter bereavement, of the shipwreck of all my hopes. But, by degrees, as I threaded my way among the moving crowds, I came to a better and more worthy frame of mind. After all, I had lost nothing that I had ever had. Ruth was still all that she had ever been to me—perhaps even more; and if that had been a rich endowment yesterday, why not to-day also? And how unfair it would be to her if I should mope and grieve over a disappointment that was no fault of hers and for which there was no remedy! Thus I reasoned with myself, and to such purpose that, by the time I reached Fetter Lane, my dejection had come to quite manageable proportions and I had formed

the resolution to get back to the *status quo ante bellum* as soon as possible.

About eight o'clock, as I was sitting alone in the consulting-room, gloomily persuading myself that I was now quite resigned to the inevitable, Adolphus brought me a registered packet, at the handwriting on which my heart gave such a bound that I had much ado to sign the receipt. As soon as Adolphus had retired (with undissembled contempt of the shaky signature) I tore open the packet, and as I drew out a letter a tiny box dropped on the table.

The letter was all too short, and I devoured it over and over again with the eagerness of a condemned man reading a reprieve :—

"My dear Paul,

"Forgive me for leaving you so abruptly this afternoon, and leaving you so unhappy, too. I am more sane and reasonable now, and so send you greeting and beg you not to grieve for that which can never be. It is quite impossible, dear friend, and I entreat you, as you care for me, never to speak of it again ; never again to make me feel that I can give so little when you have given so much. And do not try to see me for a little while. I shall miss your visits, and so will my father, who is very fond of you ; but it is better that we should not meet, until we can take up the old relations—if that can ever be.

"I am sending you a little keepsake in case we should drift apart on the eddies of life. It is the ring that I told you about—the one that my uncle gave me. Perhaps you may be able to wear it as you have a small hand, but in any case keep it in remembrance of our friendship. The device on it is the Eye of Osiris, a mystic symbol for which I have a sentimentally superstitious affection, as also had my poor uncle, who actually bore it tattooed in scarlet on his breast. It signifies that the great judge of the dead looks down on men to see that justice is done and that truth prevails. So commend you to the good Osiris ; may his eye be

upon you, ever watchful over your welfare in the absence of

"Your affectionate friend

"RUTH."

It was a sweet letter, I thought, even if it carried little comfort; quiet and reticent like its writer, but with an undertone of sincere affection. I laid it down at length, and, taking the ring from its box, examined it fondly. Though but a copy, it had all the quaintness and feeling of the antique original, and, above all, it was fragrant with the spirit of the giver. Dainty and delicate, wrought of silver and gold, with an inlay of copper, I would not have exchanged it for the Koh-i-noor; and when I had slipped it on my finger its tiny eye of blue enamel looked up at me so friendly and companionable that I felt the glamour of the old-world superstition stealing over me, too.

Not a single patient came in this evening, which was well for me (and also for the patient), as I was able forthwith to write in reply a long letter; but this I shall spare the long-suffering reader excepting its concluding paragraph:—

"And now, dearest, I have said my say; once for all, I have said it, and I will not open my mouth on the subject again (I am not actually opening it now) 'until the times do alter.' And if the times do never alter—if it shall come to pass, in due course, that we two shall sit side by side, white-haired, and crinkly-nosed, and lean our poor old chins upon our sticks and mumble and gibber amicably over the things that might have been if the good Osiris had come up to the scratch—I will still be content, because your friendship, Ruth, is better than another woman's love. So you see, I have taken my gruel and come up to time smiling—if you will pardon the pugilistic metaphor—and I promise you loyally to do your bidding and never again to distress you.

"Your faithful and loving friend,

"PAUL."

This letter I addressed and stamped, and then, with a wry grimace which I palmed off on myself (but not on Adolphus) as a cheerful smile, I went out and dropped it into the post-box; after which I further deluded myself by murmuring *Nunc dimittis* and assuring myself that the incident was now absolutely closed.

But, despite this comfortable assurance, I was, in the days that followed, an exceedingly miserable young man. It is all very well to write down troubles of this kind as trivial and sentimental. They are nothing of the kind. When a man of an essentially serious nature has found the one woman of all the world who fulfils his highest ideals of womanhood, who is, in fact, a woman in ten thousand, to whom he has given all that he has to give of love and worship, the sudden wreck of all his hopes is no small calamity. And so I found it. Resign myself as I would to the bitter reality, the ghost of the might-have-been haunted me night and day, so that I spent my leisure wandering abstractedly about the streets, always trying to banish thought and never for an instant succeeding. A great unrest was upon me; and when I received a letter from Dick Barnard announcing his arrival at Madeira, homeward bound, I breathed a sigh of relief. I had no plans for the future, but I longed to be rid of the, now irksome, routine of the practice—to be free to come and go when and how I pleased.

One evening, as I sat consuming with little appetite my solitary supper, there fell on me a sudden sense of loneliness. The desire that I had hitherto felt to be alone with my own miserable reflections gave place to a yearning for human companionship. That, indeed, which I craved for most was forbidden, and I must abide by my lady's wishes; but there were my friends in the Temple. It was more than a week since I had seen them; in fact, we had not met since the morning of that unhappiest day of my life. They would be wondering what had become of me. I rose from the

table, and, having filled my pouch from a tin of tobacco, set forth for King's Bench Walk.

As I approached the entry of No. 5A in the gathering darkness I met Thorndyke himself emerging, encumbered with two deck-chairs, a reading-lantern, and a book.

"Why, Berkeley!" he exclaimed, "is it indeed thou? We have been wondering what had become of you."

"It *is* a long time since I looked you up," I admitted.

He scrutinized me attentively by the light of the entry lamp, and then remarked: "Fetter Lane doesn't seem to be agreeing with you very well, my son. You are looking quite thin and peaky."

"Well, I've nearly done with it. Barnard will be back in about ten days. His ship is putting in at Madeira to coal and take in some cargo, and then he is coming home. Where are you going with those chairs?"

"I am going to sit down at the end of the Walk by the garden railings. It's cooler there than indoors. If you will wait a moment I will fetch another chair for Jervis, though he won't be back for a little while." He ran up the stairs, and presently returned with a third chair, and we carried our impedimenta down to the quiet corner at the bottom of the Walk.

"So your term of servitude is coming to an end," said he when we had placed the chairs and hung the lantern on the railings. "Any other news?"

"No. Have you any?"

"I am afraid I have not. All my inquiries have yielded negative results. There is, of course, a considerable body of evidence, and it all seems to point one way. But I am unwilling to make a decisive move without something more definite. I am really waiting for confirmation or otherwise of my ideas on the subject; for some new item of evidence."

"I didn't know there was any evidence."

"Didn't you?" said Thorndyke. "But you know as much as I know. You have all the essential facts; but apparently you haven't collated them and ex-

tracted their meaning. If you had, you would have found them curiously significant."

"I suppose I mustn't ask what their significance is?"

"No, I think not. When I am conducting a case I mention my surmises to nobody—not even to Jervis. Then I can say confidently that there has been no leakage. Don't think I distrust you. Remember that my thoughts are my client's property, and that the essence of strategy is to keep the enemy in the dark."

"Yes, I see that. Of course, I ought not to have asked."

"You ought not to need to ask," Thorndyke replied, with a smile; "you should put the facts together and reason from them yourself."

While we had been talking I had noticed Thorndyke glance at me inquisitively from time to time. Now, after an interval of silence, he asked suddenly:

"Is anything amiss, Berkeley? Are you worrying about your friends' affairs?"

"No, not particularly; though their prospects don't look very rosy."

"Perhaps they are not quite so bad as they look," said he. "But I am afraid something is troubling you. All your gay spirits seem to have evaporated." He paused for a few moments, and then added: "I don't want to intrude on your private affairs, but if I can help you by advice or otherwise, remember that we are old friends and that you are my academic offspring."

Instinctively, with a man's natural reticence, I began to mumble a half-articulate disclaimer; and then I stopped. After all, why should I not confide in him? He was a good man and a wise man, full of human sympathy, as I knew, though so cryptic and secretive in his professional capacity. And I wanted a friend badly just now.

"I am afraid," I began shyly, "it is not a matter that admits of much help, and it's hardly the sort of thing that I ought to worry you by talking about——"

"If it is enough to make you unhappy, my dear

fellow, it is enough to merit serious consideration by your friend; so, if you don't mind telling me——"

"Of course I don't, sir!" I exclaimed.

"Then fire away; and don't call me 'sir.' We are brother practitioners now."

Thus encouraged, I poured out the story of my little romance; bashfully at first and with halting phrases, but, later, with more freedom and confidence. He listened with grave attention, and once or twice put a question when my narrative became a little disconnected. When I had finished he laid his hand softly on my arm.

"You have had rough luck, Berkeley. I don't wonder that you are miserable. I am more sorry than I can tell you."

"Thank you," I said. "It's exceedingly good of you to listen so patiently, but it's a shame for me to pester you with my sentimental troubles."

"Now, Berkeley, you don't think that, and I hope you don't think that I do. We should be bad biologists and worse physicians if we should under-estimate the importance of that which is Nature's chiefest care. The one salient biological truth is the paramount importance of sex; and we are deaf and blind if we do not hear and see it in everything that lives when we look abroad upon the world; when we listen to the spring song of the birds, or when we consider the lilies of the field. And as is man to the lower organisms, so is human love to their merely reflex manifestations of sex. I will maintain, and you will agree with me, I know, that the love of a serious and honourable man for a woman who is worthy of him is the most momentous of all human affairs. It is the foundation of social life, and its failure is a serious calamity, not only to those whose lives may be thereby spoilt, but to society at large."

"It's a serious enough matter for the parties concerned," I agreed; "but that is no reason why they should bore their friends."

"But they don't. Friends should help one another and think it a privilege."

"Oh, I shouldn't mind coming to you for help, knowing you as I do. But no one can help a poor devil in a case like this—and certainly not a medical jurist."

"Oh, come, Berkeley!" he protested, "don't rate us too low. The humblest of creatures has its uses—'even the little pismire,' you know, as Isaac Walton tells us. Why, I have got substantial help from a stamp-collector. And then reflect upon the motor-scorcher and the earthworm and the blow-fly. All these lowly creatures play their parts in the scheme of Nature; and shall we cast out the medical jurist as nothing worth?"

I laughed dejectedly at my teacher's genial irony.

"What I meant," said I, "was that there is nothing to be done but wait—perhaps for ever. I don't know why she isn't able to marry me, and I mustn't ask her. She can't be married already."

"Certainly not. She told you explicitly that there was no man in the case."

"Exactly. And I can think of no other valid reason, excepting that she doesn't care enough for me. That would be a perfectly sound reason, but then it would only be a temporary one, not the insuperable obstacle that she assumes to exist, especially as we really got on excellently together. I hope it isn't some confounded perverse feminine scruple. I don't see how it could be; but women are most frightfully tortuous and wrong-headed at times."

"I don't see," said Thorndyke, "why we should cast about for perversely abnormal motives when there is a perfectly reasonable explanation staring us in the face."

"Is there?" I exclaimed. "I see none."

"You are, not unnaturally, overlooking some of the circumstances that affect Miss Bellingham; but I don't suppose she has failed to grasp their meaning. Do you realize what her position really is? I mean with regard to her uncle's disappearance?"

"I don't think I quite understand you."

"Well, there is no use in blinking the facts," said Thorndyke. "The position is this: If John Bellingham ever went to his brother's house at Woodford, it is nearly certain that he went there after his visit to Hurst. Mind, I say '*if* he went'; I don't say that I believe he did. But it is stated that he appears to have gone there; and if he did go, he was never seen alive afterwards. Now, he did not go in at the front door. No one saw him enter the house. But there was a back gate, which John Bellingham knew, and which had a bell which rang in the library. And you will remember that, when Hurst and Jellicoe called, Mr. Bellingham had only just come in. Previous to that time Miss Bellingham had been alone in the library; that is to say, she was alone in the library at the very time when John Bellingham is said to have made his visit. That is the position, Berkeley. Nothing pointed has been said up to the present. But, sooner or later, if John Bellingham is not found, dead or alive, the question will be opened. Then it is certain that Hurst, in self-defence, will make the most of any facts that may transfer suspicion from him to someone else. And that someone else will be Miss Bellingham."

I sat for some moments literally paralysed with horror. Then my dismay gave place to indignation. "But, damn it!" I exclaimed, starting up—"I beg your pardon—but could anyone have the infernal audacity to insinuate that that gentle, refined lady murdered her uncle?"

"That is what will be hinted, if not plainly asserted; and she knows it. And that being so, is it difficult to understand why she should refuse to allow you to be publicly associated with her? To run the risk of dragging your honourable name into the sordid transactions of the police-court or the Old Bailey? To invest it, perhaps, with a dreadful notoriety?"

"Oh, don't! for God's sake! It is too horrible! Not that I would care for myself. I would be proud

to share her martyrdom of ignominy, if it had to be; but it is the sacrilege, the blasphemy of even thinking of her in such terms, that enrages me."

"Yes," said Thorndyke; "I understand and sympathize with you. Indeed, I share your righteous indignation at this dastardly affair. So you mustn't think me brutal for putting the case so plainly."

"I don't. You have only shown me the danger that I was fool enough not to see. But you seem to imply that this hideous position has been brought about deliberately."

"Certainly I do! This is no chance affair. Either the appearances indicate the real events—which I am sure they do not—or they have been created of a set purpose to lead to false conclusions. But the circumstances convince me that there has been a deliberate plot; and I am waiting—in no spirit of Christian patience, I can tell you—to lay my hand on the wretch who has done this."

"What are you waiting for?" I asked.

"I am waiting for the inevitable," he replied; "for the false move that the most artful criminal invariably makes. At present he is lying low; but presently he must make a move, and then I shall have him."

"But he may go on lying low. What will you do then?"

"Yes, that is the danger. We may have to deal with the perfect villain who knows when to leave well alone. I have never met him, but he may exist, nevertheless."

"And then we should have to stand by and see our friends go under."

"Perhaps," said Thorndyke; and we both subsided into gloomy and silent reflection.

The place was peaceful and quiet, as only a backwater of London can be. Occasional hoots from faraway tugs and steamers told of the busy life down below in the crowded Pool. A faint hum of traffic was borne in from the streets outside the precincts, and the shrill

voices of newspaper boys came in unceasing chorus from the direction of Carmelite Street. They were too far away to be physically disturbing, but the excited yells, toned down as they were by distance, nevertheless stirred the very marrow in my bones, so dreadfully suggestive were they of those possibilities of the future at which Thorndyke had hinted. They seemed like the sinister shadows of coming misfortunes.

Perhaps they called up the same association of ideas in Thorndyke's mind, for he remarked presently: "The newsvendor is abroad to-night like a bird of ill-omen. Something unusual has happened: some public or private calamity, most likely, and these yelling ghouls are out to feast on the remains. The newspaper men have a good deal in common with the carrion-birds that hover over a battle-field."

Again we subsided into silence and reflection. Then, after an interval, I asked:

"Would it be possible for me to help in any way in this investigation of yours?"

"That is exactly what I have been asking myself," replied Thorndyke. "It would be right and proper that you should, and I think you might."

"How?" I asked eagerly.

"I can't say off-hand; but Jervis will be going away for his holiday almost at once—in fact, he will go off actual duty to-night. There is very little doing; the long vacation is close upon us, and I can do without him. But if you would care to come down here and take his place, you would be very useful to me; and if there should be anything to be done in the Bellinghams' case, I am sure you would make up in enthusiasm for any deficiency in experience."

"I couldn't really take Jervis's place," said I, "but if you would let me help you in any way it would be a great kindness. I would rather clean your boots than be out of it altogether."

"Very well. Let us leave it that you come here as soon as Barnard has done with you. You can have

Jervis's room, which he doesn't often use nowadays, and you will be more happy here than elsewhere, I know. I may as well give you my latchkey now. I have a duplicate upstairs, and you understand that my chambers are yours too from this moment."

He handed me the latchkey and I thanked him warmly from my heart, for I felt sure that the suggestion was made, not for any use that I should be to him, but for my own peace of mind. I had hardly finished speaking when a quick step on the paved walk caught my ear.

"Here is Jervis," said Thorndyke. "We will let him know that there is a locum tenens ready to step into his shoes when he wants to be off." He flashed the lantern across the path, and a few moments later his junior stepped up briskly with a bundle of newspapers tucked under his arm.

It struck me that Jervis looked at me a little queerly when he recognized me in the dim light; also that he was a trifle constrained in his manner, as if my presence were an embarrassment. He listened to Thorndyke's announcement of our newly made arrangement without much enthusiasm and with none of his customary facetious comments. And again I noticed a quick glance at me, half curious, half uneasy, and wholly puzzling to me.

"That's all right," he said when Thorndyke had explained the situation. "I daresay you'll find Berkeley as useful as me, and, in any case, he'll be better here than staying on with Barnard." He spoke with unwonted gravity, and there was in his tone a solicitude for me that attracted my notice and that of Thorndyke as well, for the latter looked at him curiously, though he made no comment. After a short silence, however, he asked: "And what news does my learned brother bring? There is a mighty shouting among the outer barbarians, and I see a bundle of newspapers under my learned friend's arm. Has anything in particular happened?"

Jervis looked more uncomfortable than ever. "Well —yes," he replied hesitatingly, "something has happened—there! It's no use beating about the bush; Berkeley may as well learn it from me as from those yelling devils outside." He took a couple of papers from his bundle and silently handed one to me and the other to Thorndyke.

Jervis's ominous manner, naturally enough, alarmed me not a little. I opened the paper with a nameless dread. But whatever my vague fears, they fell far short of the occasion; and when I saw those yells from without crystallized into scare headlines and flaming capitals I turned for a moment sick and dizzy with fear.

The paragraph was only a short one, and I read it through in less than a minute:

"THE MISSING FINGER

"DRAMATIC DISCOVERY AT WOODFORD.

"The mystery that has surrounded the remains of a mutilated human body, portions of which have been found in various places in Kent and Essex, has received a partial and very sinister solution. The police have, all along, suspected that these remains were those of a Mr. John Bellingham who disappeared under circumstances of some suspicion about two years ago. There is now no doubt upon the subject, for the finger which was missing from the hand that was found at Sidcup has been discovered at the bottom of a disused well *together with a ring*, which has been identified as one habitually worn by Mr. John Bellingham.

"The house in the garden of which the well is situated was the property of the murdered man, and was occupied at the time of the disappearance by his brother, Mr. Godfrey Bellingham. But the latter left it very soon after, and it has been empty ever since. Just lately it has been put in repair, and it was in this way that the well came to be emptied and cleaned out. It seems that Detective-Inspector Badger, who was search-

ing the neighbourhood for further remains, heard of the emptying of the well and went down in the bucket to examine the bottom, where he found the three bones and the ring.

"Thus the identity of the body is established beyond all doubt, and the question that remains is, Who killed John Bellingham? It may be remembered that a trinket, apparently broken from his watch-chain, was found in the grounds of this house on the day that he disappeared, and that he was never again seen alive. What may be the import of these facts time will show."

That was all; but it was enough. I dropped the paper to the ground and glanced round furtively at Jervis, who sat gazing gloomily at the toes of his boots. It was horrible! It was incredible! The blow was so crushing that it left my faculties numb, and for a while I seemed unable even to think intelligibly.

I was aroused by Thorndyke's voice—calm, business-like, composed:

"Time will show, indeed! But meanwhile we must go warily. And don't be unduly alarmed, Berkeley. Go home, take a good dose of bromide with a little stimulant, and turn in. I am afraid this has been rather a shock to you."

I rose from my chair like one in a dream and held out my hand to Thorndyke; and even in the dim light and in my dazed condition I noticed that his face bore a look that I had never seen before: the look of a granite mask of Fate—grim, stern, inexorable.

My two friends walked with me as far as the gateway at the top of Inner Temple Lane, and as we reached the entry a stranger, coming quickly up the Lane, overtook and passed us. In the glare of the lamp outside the porter's lodge he looked at us quickly over his shoulder, and though he passed on without halt or greeting, I recognized him with a certain dull surprise which I did not understand then and do not understand now. It was Mr Jellicoe.

I shook hands once more with my friends and strode out into Fleet Street, but as soon as I was outside the gate I made direct for Nevill's Court. What was in my mind I do not know; only that some instinct of protection led me there, where my lady lay unconscious of the hideous menace that hung over her. At the entrance to the court a tall, powerful man was lounging against the wall, and he seemed to look at me curiously as I passed; but I hardly noticed him and strode forward into the narrow passage. By the shabby gateway of the house I halted and looked up at such of the windows as I could see over the wall. They were all dark. All the inmates, then, were in bed. Vaguely comforted by this, I walked on to the New Street end of the court and looked out. Here, too, a man—a tall, thick-set man—was loitering; and, as he looked inquisitively into my face, I turned and re-entered the court, slowly retracing my steps. As I again reached the gate of the house I stopped to look up once more at the windows, and turning, I found the man whom I had last noticed close behind me. Then, in a flash of dreadful comprehension, I understood. These two men were plain-clothes policemen.

For a moment a blind fury possessed me. An insane impulse urged me to give battle to this intruder; to avenge upon his person the insult of his presence. Fortunately the impulse was but momentary, and I recovered myself without making any demonstration. But the appearance of those two policemen brought the peril into the immediate present, imparted to it a horrible actuality. A chilly sweat of terror stood on my forehead, and my ears were ringing when I walked with faltering steps out into Fetter Lane.

CHAPTER XVIII

JOHN BELLINGHAM

THE next few days were a very nightmare of horror and gloom. Of course, I repudiated my acceptance of the decree of banishment that Ruth had passed upon me. I was her friend, at least, and in time of peril my place was at her side. Tacitly—though thankfully enough, poor girl!—she had recognized the fact and made me once more free of the house.

For there was no disguising the situation. Newspaper boys yelled the news up and down Fleet Street from morning to night; soul-shaking posters grinned on gaping crowds; and the newspapers fairly wallowed in the "Shocking details." It is true that no direct accusations were made; but the original reports of the disappearance were reprinted with such comments as made me gnash my teeth with fury.

The wretchedness of those days will live in my memory until my dying day. Never can I forget the dread that weighed me down, the horrible suspense, the fear that clutched at my heart as I furtively scanned the posters in the streets. Even the wretched detectives who prowled about the entrances to Nevill's Court became grateful to my eyes, for, embodying as they did the hideous menace that hung over my dear lady, their presence at least told me that the blow had not yet fallen. Indeed, we came, after a time, to exchange glances of mutual recognition, and I thought that they seemed to be sorry for her and for me, and had no great liking for their task. Of course, I spent most of my leisure at the old house, though my heart ached more

there than elsewhere; and I tried, with but poor success, I fear, to maintain a cheerful, confident manner, cracking my little jokes as of old, and even essaying to skirmish with Miss Oman. But this last experiment was a dead failure; and when she had suddenly broken down in a stream of brilliant repartee to weep hysterically on my breast, I abandoned the attempt and did not repeat it.

A dreadful gloom had settled down upon the old house. Poor Miss Oman crept silently but restlessly up and down the ancient stairs with dim eyes and a tremulous chin, or moped in her room with a parliamentary petition (demanding, if I remember rightly, the appointment of a female judge to deal with divorce and matrimonial causes) which lay on her table languidly awaiting signatures that never came. Mr. Bellingham, whose mental condition at first alternated between furious anger and absolute panic, was fast sinking into a state of nervous prostration that I viewed with no little alarm. In fact, the only really self-possessed person in the entire household was Ruth herself, and even she could not conceal the ravages of sorrow and suspense and overshadowing peril. Her manner was almost unchanged; or rather, I should say, she had gone back to that which I had first known —quiet, reserved, taciturn, with a certain bitter humour showing through her unvarying amiability. When she and I were alone, indeed, her reserve melted away and she was all sweetness and gentleness. But it wrung my heart to look at her, to see how, day by day, she grew ever more thin and haggard; to watch the growing pallor of her cheek; to look into her solemn grey eyes, so sad and tragic and yet so brave and defiant of fate.

It was a terrible time; and through it all the dreadful questions haunted me continually: When will the blow fall? What is it that the police are waiting for? And when they do strike, what will Thorndyke have to say?

So things went on for four dreadful days. But on the fourth day, just as the evening consultations were beginning and the surgery was filled with waiting patients, Polton appeared with a note, which he insisted, to the indignation of Adolphus, on delivering into my own hands. It was from Thorndyke, and was to the following effect :—

"I learn from Dr. Norbury that he has recently heard from Herr Lederbogen, of Berlin—a learned authority on Oriental antiquities—who makes some reference to an English Egyptologist whom he met in Vienna about a year ago. He cannot recall the Englishman's name, but there are certain expressions in the letter which make Dr. Norbury suspect that he is referring to John Bellingham.

"I want you to bring Mr. and Miss Bellingham to my chambers this evening at 8.30, to meet Dr. Norbury and talk over this letter; and in view of the importance of the matter, I look to you not to fail me."

A wave of hope and relief swept over me. It was still possible that this Gordian knot might be cut; that the deliverance might come before it was too late. I wrote a hasty note in reply to Thorndyke and another to Ruth, making the appointment; and having given them both to the trusty Polton, returned somewhat feverishly to my professional duties. To my profound relief, the influx of patients ceased, and the practice sank into its accustomed torpor; whereby I was able, without base and mendacious subterfuge, to escape in good time to my tryst.

It was near upon eight o'clock when I passed through the archway into Nevill's Court. The warm afternoon light had died away, for the summer was running out apace. The last red glow of the setting sun had faded from the ancient roofs and chimney-stacks, and down in the narrow court the shades of evening had begun to gather in nooks and corners. I was due at eight, and, as it still wanted some minutes to the hour, I

sauntered slowly down the court, looking reflectively on the familiar scene and the well-known friendly faces.

The day's work was drawing to a close. The little shops were putting up their shutters; lights were beginning to twinkle in parlour windows; a solemn hymn arose in the old Moravian chapel, and its echoes stole out through the dark entry that opens into the court under the archway.

Here was Mr. Finneymore (a man of versatile gifts, with a leaning towards paint and varnish) sitting, white-aproned and shirt-sleeved, on a chair in his garden, smoking his pipe with a complacent eye on his dahlias. There at an open window a young man, with a brush in his hand and another behind his ear, stood up and stretched himself while an older lady deftly rolled up a large map. The barber was turning out the gas in his little saloon; the greengrocer was emerging with a cigarette in his mouth and an aster in his button-hole, and a group of children were escorting the lamplighter on his rounds.

All these good, homely folk were Nevill's Courtiers of the genuine breed; born in the court, as had been their fathers before them for generations. And of such to a great extent was the population of the place. Miss Oman herself claimed aboriginal descent and so did the sweet-faced Moravian lady next door—a connection of the famous La Trobes of the old Conventicle, whose history went back to the Gordon Riots; and as to the gentleman who lived in the ancient timber-and-plaster house at the bottom of the court, it was reported that his ancestors had dwelt in that very house since the days of James the First.

On these facts I reflected as I sauntered down the court: on the strange phenomenon of an old-world hamlet with its ancient population lingering in the very heart of the noisy city; an island of peace set in an ocean of unrest, an oasis in a desert of change and ferment.

My meditations brought me to the shabby gate in

the high wall, and as I raised the latch and pushed it open, I saw Ruth standing at the door of the house talking to Miss Oman. She was evidently waiting for me, for she wore her sombre black cloak and hat and a black veil, and when she saw me she came out, closing the door after her and holding out her hand.

"You are punctual," said she. "St. Dunstan's clock is striking now."

"Yes," I answered. "But where is your father?"

"He has gone to bed, poor old dear. He didn't feel well enough to come, and I did not urge him. He is really very ill. This dreadful suspense will kill him if it goes on much longer."

"Let us hope it won't," I said, but with little conviction, I fear, in my tone. It was harrowing to see her torn by anxiety for her father, and I yearned to comfort her. But what was there to say? Mr. Bellingham was breaking up visibly under the stress of the terrible menace that hung over his daughter, and no words of mine could make the fact less manifest.

We walked silently up the court. The lady at the window greeted us with a smiling salutation, Mr. Finneymore removed his pipe and raised his cap, receiving a gracious bow from Ruth in return, and then we passed through the covered way into Fetter Lane, where my companion paused and looked about her.

"What are you looking for?" I asked.

"The detective," she answered quietly. "It would be a pity if the poor man should miss me after waiting so long. However, I don't see him"; and she turned away towards Fleet Street. It was an unpleasant surprise to me that her sharp eyes had detected the secret spy upon her movements; and the dry, sardonic tone of her remark pained me, too, recalling, as it did, the frigid self-possession that had so repelled me in the early days of our acquaintance. And yet I could not but admire the cool unconcern with which she faced her horrible peril.

"Tell me a little more about this conference," she

said, as we walked down Fetter Lane. "Your note was rather more concise than lucid; but I suppose you wrote it in a hurry."

"Yes, I did. And I can't give you any details now. All I know is that Doctor Norbury has had a letter from a friend of his in Berlin, an Egyptologist, as I understand, named Lederbogen, who refers to an English acquaintance of his and Norbury's whom he saw in Vienna about a year ago. He cannot remember the Englishman's name, but from some of the circumstances Norbury seems to think that he is referring to your Uncle John. Of course, if this should turn out to be really the case, it would set everything straight; so Thorndyke was anxious that you and your father should meet Norbury and talk it over."

"I see," said Ruth. Her tone was thoughtful but by no means enthusiastic.

"You don't seem to attach much importance to the matter," I remarked.

"No. It doesn't seem to fit the circumstances. What is the use of suggesting that poor Uncle John is alive—and behaving like an imbecile, which he certainly was not—when his dead body has actually been found?"

"But," I suggested lamely, "there may be some mistake. It may not be his body after all."

"And the ring?" she asked, with a bitter smile.

"That may be just a coincidence. It was a copy of a well-known form of antique ring. Other people may have had copies made as well as your uncle. Besides," I added, with more conviction, "we haven't seen the ring. It may not be his at all."

She shook her head. "My dear Paul," she said quietly, "it is useless to delude ourselves. Every known fact points to the certainty that it is his body. John Bellingham is dead: there can be no doubt of that. And to everyone except his unknown murderer and one or two of my own loyal friends, it must seem that his death lies at my door. I realized from the beginning

that the suspicion lay between George Hurst and me; and the finding of the ring fixes it definitely on me. I am only surprised that the police have made no move yet."

The quiet conviction of her tone left me for a while speechless with horror and despair. Then I recalled Thorndyke's calm, even confident, attitude, and I hastened to remind her of it.

"There is one of your friends," I said, "who is still undismayed. Thorndyke seems to anticipate no difficulties."

"And yet," she replied, "he is ready to consider a forlorn hope like this. However, we shall see."

I could think of nothing more to say, and it was in gloomy silence that we pursued our way down Inner Temple Lane and through the dark entries and tunnel-like passages that brought us out, at length, by the Treasury.

"I don't see any light in Thorndyke's chambers," I said, as we crossed King's Bench Walk; and I pointed out the row of windows all dark and blank.

"No: and yet the shutters are not closed. He must be out."

"He can't be after making an appointment with you and your father. It is most mysterious. Thorndyke is so very punctilious about his engagements."

The mystery was solved, when we reached the landing, by a slip of paper fixed by a tack on the iron-bound "oak."

"A note for P. B. is on the table," was the laconic message: on reading which I inserted my key, swung the heavy door outward, and opened the lighter inner door. The note was lying on the table and I brought it out to the landing to read by the light of the staircase lamp.

"Apologize to our friends," it ran, "for the slight change of programme. Norbury is anxious that I should get my experiments over before the Director returns, so as to save discussion. He has asked me to

begin to-night and says he will see Mr. and Miss Bellingham here, at the Museum. Please bring them along at once. The hall porters are instructed to admit you and bring you to us. I think some matters of importance may transpire at the interview.—J. E. T."

"I hope you don't mind," I said apologetically, when I had read the note to Ruth.

"Of course I don't," she replied. "I am rather pleased. We have so many associations with the dear old Museum, haven't we?" She looked at me for a moment with a strange and touching wistfulness and then turned to descend the stone stairs.

At the Temple gate, I hailed a hansom and we were soon speeding westward and north to the soft tinkle of the horse's bell.

"What are these experiments that Doctor Thorndyke refers to?" she asked presently.

"I can only answer you rather vaguely," I replied. "Their object, I believe, is to ascertain whether the penetrability of organic substances by the X-rays becomes altered by age; whether, for instance, an ancient block of wood is more or less transparent to the rays than a new block of the same size."

"And of what use would the knowledge be, if it were obtained?"

"I can't say. Experiments are made to obtain knowledge without regard to its utility. The use appears when the knowledge has been acquired. But in this case, if it should be possible to determine the age of any organic substance by its reaction to X-rays, the discovery might be of some value in legal practice—as in demonstrating a new seal on an old document, for instance. But I don't know whether Thorndyke has anything definite in view; I only know that the preparations have been on a most portentous scale."

"How do you mean?"

"In regard to size. When I went into the workshop yesterday morning, I found Polton erecting a kind of

portable gallows about nine feet high, and he had just finished varnishing a pair of enormous wooden trays, each over six feet long. It looked as if he and Thorndyke were contemplating a few private executions with subsequent post-mortems on the victims."

"What a horrible suggestion!"

"So Polton said, with his quaint, crinkly smile. But he was mighty close about the use of the apparatus all the same. I wonder if we shall see anything of the experiments, when we get there. This is Museum Street, isn't it?"

"Yes." As she spoke, she lifted the flap of one of the little windows in the back of the cab and peered out. Then, closing it with a quiet, ironic smile, she said:

"It is all right; he hasn't missed us. It will be quite a nice little change for him."

The cab swung round into Great Russell Street, and, glancing out as it turned, I saw another hansom following; but before I had time to inspect its solitary passenger, we drew up at the Museum gates.

The gate-porter, who seemed to expect us, ushered us up the drive to the great portico and into the Central Hall, where he handed us over to another official.

"Doctor Norbury is in one of the rooms adjoining the Fourth Egyptian Room," the latter stated in answer to our inquiries: and, providing himself with a wire-guarded lantern, he prepared to escort us thither.

Up the great staircase, now wrapped in mysterious gloom, we passed in silence with bitter-sweet memories of that day of days when we had first trodden its steps together: through the Central Saloon, the Mediæval Room and the Asiatic Saloon, and so into the long range of the Ethnographical Galleries.

It was a weird journey. The swaying lantern shot its beams abroad into the darkness of the great, dim galleries, casting instantaneous flashes on the objects in the cases, so that they leaped into being and vanished in the twinkling of an eye. Hideous idols with round, staring eyes started forth from the darkness, glared

at us for an instant and were gone. Grotesque masks, suddenly revealed by the shimmering light, took on the semblance of demon faces that seemed to mow and gibber at us as we passed. As for the life-sized models —realistic enough by daylight—their aspect was positively alarming; for the moving light and shadow endowed them with life and movement, so that they seemed to watch us furtively, to lie in wait and to hold themselves in readiness to steal out and follow us. The illusion evidently affected Ruth as well as me, for she drew nearer to me and whispered:

"These figures are quite startling. Did you see that Polynesian? I really felt as if he were going to spring out on us."

"They are rather uncanny," I admitted, "but the danger is over now. We are passing out of their sphere of influence."

We came out on a landing as I spoke and then turned sharply to the left along the North Gallery, from the centre of which we entered the Fourth Egyptian Room.

Almost immediately, a door in the opposite wall opened; a peculiar, high-pitched humming sound became audible, and Jervis came out on tiptoe with his hand raised.

"Tread as lightly as you can," he said. "We are just making an exposure."

The attendant turned back with his lantern, and we followed Jervis into the room from whence he had come. It was a large room, and little lighter than the galleries, for the single glow-lamp that burned at the end where we entered left the rest of the apartment in almost complete obscurity. We seated ourselves at once on the chairs that had been placed for us, and, when the mutual salutations had been exchanged, I looked about me. There were three people in the room besides Jervis: Thorndyke, who sat with his watch in his hand, a grey-headed gentleman whom I took to be Dr. Norbury, and a smaller person at the dim farther end—undistinguishable, but probably Polton. At our

end of the room were the two large trays that I had seen in the workshop, now mounted on trestles and each fitted with a rubber drain-tube leading down to a bucket. At the farther end of the room the sinister shape of the gallows reared itself aloft in the gloom; only now I could see that it was not a gallows at all. For affixed to the top cross-bar was a large, bottomless glass basin, inside which was a glass bulb that glowed with a strange green light; and in the heart of the bulb a bright spot of red.

It was all clear enough so far. The peculiar sound that filled the air was the hum of the interrupter; the bulb was, of course, a Crooke's tube, and the red spot inside it, the glowing red-hot disc of the anti-cathode. Clearly an X-ray photograph was being made; but of what? I strained my eyes, peering into the gloom at the foot of the gallows, but though I could make out an elongated object lying on the floor directly under the bulb, I could not resolve the dimly seen shape into anything recognizable. Presently, however, Dr. Norbury supplied the clue.

"I am rather surprised," said he, "that you chose so composite an object as a mummy to begin on. I should have thought that a simpler object, such as a coffin or a wooden figure, would have been more instructive."

"In some ways it would," replied Thorndyke, "but the variety of materials that the mummy gives us has its advantages. I hope your father is not ill, Miss Bellingham."

"He is not at all well," said Ruth, "and we agreed that it was better for me to come alone. I knew Herr Lederbogen quite well. He stayed with us for a time when he was in England."

"I trust," said Dr. Norbury, "that I have not troubled you for nothing. Herr Lederbogen speaks of 'our erratic English friend with the long name that I can never remember,' and it seemed to me that he might be referring to your uncle."

"I should have hardly have called my uncle erratic," said Ruth.

"No, no. Certainly not," Dr. Norbury agreed hastily. "However, you shall see the letter presently and judge for yourself. We mustn't introduce irrelevant topics while the experiment is in progress, must we, Doctor?"

"You had better wait until we have finished," said Thorndyke, "because I am going to turn out the light. Switch off the current, Polton."

The green light vanished from the bulb, the hum of the interrupter swept down an octave or two and died away. Then Thorndyke and Dr. Norbury rose from their chairs and went towards the mummy, which they lifted tenderly while Polton drew from beneath it what presently turned out to be a huge black-paper envelope. The single glow-lamp was switched off, leaving the room in total darkness, until there burst out suddenly a bright orange-red light immediately above one of the trays.

We all gathered round to watch, as Polton—the high-priest of these mysteries—drew from the black envelope a colossal sheet of bromide paper, laid it carefully in the tray and proceeded to wet it with a large brush which he had dipped in a pail of water.

"I thought you always used plates for this kind of work," said Dr. Norbury.

"We do, by preference; but a six-foot plate would be impossible, so I had a special paper made to the size."

There is something singularly fascinating in the appearance of a developing photograph; in the gradual, mysterious emergence of the picture from the blank, white surface of plate or paper. But a skiagraph, or X-ray photograph, has a fascination all its own. Unlike an ordinary photograph, which yields a picture of things already seen, it gives a presentment of objects hitherto invisible; and hence, when Polton poured the developer on the already wet paper, we all craned over the tray with the keenest curiosity.

The developer was evidently a very slow one. For fully half a minute no change could be seen in the uniform surface. Then, gradually, almost insensibly, the marginal portion began to darken, leaving the outline of the mummy in pale relief. The change, once started, proceeded apace. Darker and darker grew the margin of the paper until from slaty grey it had turned to black; and still the shape of the mummy, now in strong relief, remained an elongated patch of bald white. But not for long. Presently the white shape began to be tinged with grey, and, as the colour deepened, there grew out of it a paler form that seemed to steal out of the enshrouding grey like an apparition, spectral, awesome, mysterious. The skeleton was coming into view.

"It is rather uncanny," said Dr. Norbury. "I feel as if I were assisting at some unholy rite. Just look at it now!"

The grey shadow of the cartonnage, the wrappings and the flesh was fading away into the black background and the white skeleton stood out in sharp contrast. And it certainly was a rather weird spectacle.

"You'll lose the bones if you develop much farther," said Dr. Norbury.

"I must let the bones darken," Thorndyke replied, "in case there are any metallic objects. I have three more papers in the envelope."

The white shape of the skeleton now began to grey over and, as Dr. Norbury had said, its distinctness became less and yet less. Thorndyke leaned over the tray with his eyes fixed on a point in the middle of the breast and we all watched him in silence. Suddenly he rose. "Now, Polton," he said sharply; "get the hypo on as quickly as you can."

Polton, who had been waiting with his hand on the stop-cock of the drain-tube, rapidly ran off the developer into the bucket and flooded the paper with the fixing solution.

"Now we can look at it at our leisure," said Thorn-

dyke. After waiting a few seconds, he switched on one of the glow-lamps, and as the flood of light fell on the photograph, he added: "You see we haven't quite lost the skeleton."

"No." Dr. Norbury put on a pair of spectacles and bent down over the tray; and at this moment I felt Ruth's hand touch my arm, lightly, at first, and then with a strong, nervous grasp; and I could feel that her hand was trembling. I looked round at her anxiously and saw that she had turned deathly pale.

"Would you rather go out into the gallery?" I asked; for the room with its tightly shut windows was close and hot.

"No," she replied quietly, "I will stay here. I am quite well." But still she kept hold of my arm.

Thorndyke glanced at her keenly and then looked away as Dr. Norbury turned to him to ask a question.

"Why is it, think you, that some of the teeth show so much whiter than others?"

"I think the whiteness of the shadows is due to the presence of metal," Thorndyke replied.

"Do you mean that the teeth have metal fillings?" asked Dr. Norbury.

"Yes."

"Really! This is very interesting. The use of gold stoppings—and artificial teeth, too—by the ancient Egyptians is well known, but we have no examples in the Museum. This mummy ought to be unrolled. Do you think all those teeth are filled with the same metal? They are not equally white."

"No," replied Thorndyke. "Those teeth that are perfectly white are undoubtedly filled with gold, but that greyish one is probably filled with tin."

"Very interesting," said Dr. Norbury. "*Very* interesting! And what do you make of that faint mark across the chest, near the top of the sternum?"

It was Ruth who answered his question.

"It is the Eye of Osiris!" she exclaimed, in a hushed voice.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Dr. Norbury, "so it is. You are quite right. It is the Utchat—the Eye of Horus—or Osiris, if you prefer to call it so. That, I presume, will be a gilded device on some of the wrappings."

"No: I should say it is a tattoo mark. It is too indefinite for a gilded device. And I should say further that the tattooing is done in vermilion, as carbon tattooing would cast no visible shadow."

"I think you must be mistaken about that," said Dr. Norbury. "but we shall see, if the Director allows us to unroll the mummy. By the way, those little objects in front of the knees are metallic, I suppose?"

"Yes, they are metallic. But they are not in front of the knees; they are *in* the knees. They are pieces of silver wire which have been used to repair fractured knee-caps."

"Are you sure of that?" exclaimed Dr. Norbury, peering at the little white marks with ecstasy; "because, if you are, and if these objects are what you say they are, the mummy of Sebek-hotep is an absolutely unique specimen."

"I am quite certain of it," said Thorndyke.

"Then," said Dr. Norbury, "we have made a discovery, thanks to your inquiring spirit. Poor John Bellingham! He little knew what a treasure he was giving us! How I wish he could have known! How I wish he could have been here with us to-night!"

He paused once more to gaze in rapture at the photograph. And then Thorndyke, in his quiet, impassive way, said:

"John Bellingham is here, Doctor Norbury. This is John Bellingham."

Dr. Norbury started back and stared at Thorndyke in speechless amazement.

"You don't mean," he exclaimed, after a long pause, "that this mummy is the body of John Bellingham!"

"I do, indeed. There is no doubt of it."

"But it is impossible! The mummy was here in the gallery a full three weeks before he disappeared."

"Not so," said Thorndyke. "John Bellingham was last seen alive by you and Mr. Jellicoe on the fourteenth of October, more than three weeks before the mummy left Queen Square. After that date he was never seen alive or dead by any person who knew him and could identify him."

Dr. Norbury reflected awhile in silence. Then, in a faint voice, he asked: "How do you suggest that John Bellingham's body came to be inside that cartonnage?"

"I think Mr. Jellicoe is the most likely person to be able to answer that question," Thorndyke replied dryly.

There was another interval of silence, and then Dr. Norbury asked suddenly:

"But what do you suppose has become of Sebek-hotep? The real Sebek-hotep, I mean?"

"I take it," said Thorndyke, "that the remains of Sebek-hotep, or at least a portion of them, are at present lying in the Woodford mortuary awaiting an adjourned inquest."

As Thorndyke made this statement a flash of belated intelligence, mingled with self-contempt, fell on me. Now that the explanation was given, how obvious it was! And yet I, a competent anatomist and physiologist and actually a pupil of Thorndyke's, had mistaken those ancient bones for the remains of a recent body!

Dr. Norbury considered the last statement for some time in evident perplexity. "It is all consistent enough, I must admit," said he, at length, "and yet—are you quite sure there is no mistake? It seems so incredible."

"There is no mistake, I assure you," Thorndyke answered. "To convince you, I will give you the facts in detail. First, as to the teeth. I have seen John Bellingham's dentist and obtained particulars from his case-book. There were in all five teeth that had been filled. The right upper wisdom-tooth, the molar

next to it, and the second lower molar on the left side, had all extensive gold fillings. You can see them all quite plainly in the skiagraph. The left lower lateral incisor had a very small gold filling, which you can see as a nearly circular white dot. In addition to these, a filling of tin amalgam had been inserted while the deceased was abroad, in the second left upper bicuspid, the rather grey spot that we have already noticed. These would, by themselves, furnish ample means of identification. But in addition, there is the tattooed device of the Eye of Osiris——"

"Horus," murmured Dr. Norbury.

"Horus, then—in the exact locality in which it was borne by the deceased and tattooed, apparently, with the same pigment. There are, further, the suture wires in the knee-caps; Sir Morgan Bennet, having looked up the notes of the operation, informs me that he introduced three suture wires into the left patella and two into the right; which is what the skiagraph shows. Lastly, the deceased had an old Pott's fracture on the left side. It is not very apparent now, but I saw it quite distinctly just now when the shadows of the bones were whiter. I think that you may take it that the identification is beyond all doubt or question."

"Yes," agreed Dr. Norbury, with gloomy resignation, "it sounds, as you say, quite conclusive. Well, well, it is a most horrible affair. Poor old John Bellingham! It looks uncommonly as if he had met with foul play. Don't you think so?"

"I do," replied Thorndyke. "There was a mark on the right side of the skull that looked rather like a fracture. It was not very clear, being at the side, but we must develop up the next negative to show it."

Dr. Norbury drew his breath in sharply through his teeth. "This is a gruesome business, Doctor," said he. "A terrible business. Awkward for our people, too. By the way, what is our position in the matter? What steps ought we to take?"

"You should give notice to the coroner—I will

manage the police—and you should communicate with one of the executors of the will."

"Mr. Jellicoe?"

"No, not Mr. Jellicoe, under the peculiar circumstances. You had better write to Mr. Godfrey Bellingham."

"But I rather understood that Mr. Hurst was the co-executor," said Dr. Norbury.

"He is, surely, as matters stand," said Jervis.

"Not at all," replied Thorndyke. "He *was* as matters *stood;* but he is not now. You are forgetting the conditions of clause two. That clause sets forth the conditions under which Godfrey Bellingham shall inherit the bulk of the estate and become the co-executor; and those conditions are: 'that the body of the testator shall be deposited in some authorized place for the reception of the bodies of the dead, situate within the boundaries of, or appertaining to some place of worship within, the parish of St. George, Bloomsbury, and St. Giles in the Fields or St. Andrew above the Bars and St. George the Martyr.' Now Egyptian mummies are the bodies of the dead, and this Museum is an authorized place for their reception; and this building is situate within the boundaries of the parish of St. George, Bloomsbury. Therefore the provisions of clause two have been duly carried out and therefore Godfrey Bellingham is the principal beneficiary under the will, and the co-executor, in accordance with the wishes of the testator. Is that quite clear?"

"Perfectly," said Dr. Norbury; "and a most astonishing coincidence—but, my dear young lady, had you not better sit down? You are looking very ill."

He glanced anxiously at Ruth, who was pale to the lips and was now leaning heavily on my arm.

"I think, Berkeley," said Thorndyke, "you had better take Miss Bellingham out into the gallery, where there is more air. This has been a tremendous climax to all the trials that she has borne so bravely. Go out

with Berkeley," he added gently, laying his hand on her shoulder, "and sit down while we develop the other negatives. You mustn't break down now, you know, when the storm has passed and the sun is beginning to shine," He held the door open, and as we passed out his face softened into a smile of infinite kindness. "You won't mind my locking you out," said he; "this is a photographic dark-room at present."

The key grated in the lock and we turned away into the dim gallery. It was not quite dark, for a beam of moonlight filtered in here and there through the blinds that covered the sky-lights. We walked on slowly, her arm linked in mine, and for a while neither of us spoke. The great rooms were very silent and peaceful and solemn. The hush, the stillness, the mystery of the half-seen forms in the cases around, were all in harmony with the deeply-felt sense of a great deliverance that filled our hearts.

We had passed through into the next room before either of us broke the silence. Insensibly our hands had crept together, and as they met and clasped with mutual pressure, Ruth exclaimed: "How dreadful and tragic it is! Poor, poor Uncle John! It seems as if he had come back from the world of shadows to tell us of this awful thing. But, O God! what a relief it is!" She caught her breath in one or two quick sobs and pressed my hand passionately.

"It is over, dearest," I said. "It is gone for ever. Nothing remains but the memory of your sorrow and your noble courage and patience."

"I can't realize it yet," she murmured. "It has been like a frightful, interminable dream."

"Let us put it away," said I, "and think only of the happy life that is opening."

She made no reply, and only a quick catch in her breath, now and again, told of the long agony that she had endured with such heroic calm.

We walked on slowly, scarcely disturbing the silence with our soft foot-falls, through the wide doorway into

the second room. The vague shapes of the mummy-cases standing erect in the wall-cases, loomed out dim and gigantic, silent watchers keeping their vigil with the memories of untold centuries locked in their shadowy breasts. They were an awesome company. Reverend survivors from a vanished world, they looked out from the gloom of their abiding-place, but with no shade of menace or of malice in their silent presence; rather with a solemn benison on the fleeting creatures of to-day.

Half-way along the room a ghostly figure, somewhat aloof from its companions, showed a dim, pallid blotch where its face would have been. With one accord we halted before it.

"Do you know who it is, Ruth?" I asked.

"Of course I do," she answered. "It is Artemidorus."

We stood, hand in hand, facing the mummy, letting our memories fill in the vague silhouette with its well-remembered details. Presently I drew her nearer to me and whispered:

"Ruth! do you remember when we last stood here?"

"As if I could ever forget!" she answered passionately. "Oh, Paul! The sorrow of it! The misery! How it wrung my heart to tell you! Were you *very* unhappy when I left you?"

"Unhappy! I never knew, until then, what real, heart-breaking sorrow was. It seemed as if the light had gone out of my life for ever. But there was just one little spot of brightness left."

"What was that?"

"You made me a promise, dear—a solemn promise; and I felt—at least I hoped—that the day would come, if I only waited patiently, when you would be able to redeem it."

She crept closer to me and yet closer, until her head nestled on my shoulder and her soft cheek lay against mine.

"Dear heart," I whispered, "is it now? Is the time fulfilled?"

"Yes, dearest," she murmured softly. "It is now —and for ever."

Reverently I folded her in my arms; gathered her to the heart that worshipped her utterly. Henceforth no sorrows could hurt us, no misfortunes vex; for we should walk hand in hand on our earthly pilgrimage and find the way all too short.

Time, whose sands run out with such unequal swiftness for the just and the unjust, the happy and the wretched, lagged, no doubt, with the toilers in the room that we had left. But for us its golden grains trickled out apace and left the glass empty before we had begun to mark their passage. The turning of a key and the opening of a door aroused us from our dream of perfect happiness. Ruth raised her head to listen, and our lips met for one brief moment. Then, with a silent greeting to the friend who had looked on our grief and witnessed our final happiness, we turned and retraced our steps quickly, filling the great, empty rooms with chattering echoes.

"We won't go back into the dark-room—which isn't dark now," said Ruth.

"Why not?" I asked.

"Because—when I came out I was very pale; and I'm—well, I don't think I am very pale now. Besides, poor Uncle John is in there—and—I should be ashamed to look at him with my selfish heart overflowing with happiness."

"You needn't be," said I. "It is the day of our lives and we have a right to be happy. But you shan't go in, if you don't wish to," and I accordingly steered her adroitly past the beam of light that streamed from the open door.

"We have developed four negatives," said Thorndyke, as he emerged with the others, "and I am leaving them in the custody of Doctor Norbury, who will sign each when they are dry, as they may have to be put in evidence. What are you going to do?"

I looked at Ruth to see what she wished.

"If you won't think me ungrateful," said she, "I should rather be alone with my father to-night. He is very weak, and——"

"Yes, I understand," I said hastily. And I did. Mr. Bellingham was a man of strong emotions and would probably be somewhat overcome by the sudden change of fortune and the news of his brother's tragic death.

"In that case," said Thorndyke, "I will bespeak your services. Will you go on and wait for me at my chambers, when you have seen Miss Bellingham home?"

I agreed to this, and we set forth under the guidance of Dr. Norbury (who carried an electric lamp) to return by the way we had come; two of us, at least, in a vastly different frame of mind. The party broke up at the entrance gates, and as Thorndyke wished my companion "Good night," she held his hand and looked up in his face with swimming eyes.

"I haven't thanked you, Doctor Thorndyke," she said, "and I don't feel that I ever can. What you have done for me and my father is beyond all thanks. You have saved his life and you have rescued me from the most horrible ignominy. Good-bye! and God bless you!"

The hansom that bowled along eastward—at most unnecessary speed—bore two of the happiest human beings within the wide boundaries of the town. I looked at my companion as the lights of the street shone into the cab, and was astonished at the transformation. The pallor of her cheek had given place to a rosy pink; the hardness, the tension, the haggard self-repression that had aged her face, were all gone, and the girlish sweetness that had so bewitched me in the early days of our love had stolen back. Even the dimple was there when the sweeping lashes lifted and her eyes met mine in a smile of infinite tenderness. Little was said on that brief journey. It was happiness enough to sit, hand clasped in hand, and know

that our time of trial was past; that no cross of Fate could ever part us now.

The astonished cabman set us down, according to instructions, at the entrance to Nevill's Court, and watched us with open mouth as we vanished into the narrow passage. The court had settled down for the night, and no one marked our return; no curious eye looked down on us from the dark house-front as we said "Good-bye" just inside the gate.

"You will come and see us to-morrow, dear, won't you?" she asked.

"Do you think it possible that I could stay away, then?"

"I hope not. But come as early as you can. My father will be positively frantic to see you; because I shall have told him, you know. And, remember, that it is you who have brought us this great deliverance. Good night, Paul."

"Good night, sweetheart."

She put up her face frankly to be kissed and then ran up to the ancient door; whence she waved me a last good-bye. The shabby gate in the wall closed behind me and hid her from my sight; but the light of her love went with me and turned the dull street into a path of glory.

CHAPTER XIX

A STRANGE SYMPOSIUM

It came upon me with something of a shock of surprise to find the scrap of paper still tacked to the oak of Thorndyke's chambers. So much had happened since I had last looked on it that it seemed to belong to another epoch of my life. I removed it thoughtfully and picked out the tack before entering, and then, closing the inner door, but leaving the oak open, I lit the gas and fell to pacing the room.

What a wonderful episode it had been! How the whole aspect of the world had been changed in a moment by Thorndyke's revelation! At another time, curiosity would have led me to endeavour to trace back the train of reasoning by which the subtle brain of my teacher had attained this astonishing conclusion. But now my own happiness held exclusive possession of my thoughts. The image of Ruth filled the field of my mental vision. I saw her again as I had seen her in the cab with her sweet, pensive face and downcast eyes; I felt again the touch of her soft cheek and the parting kiss by the gate, so frank and simple, so intimate and final.

I must have waited quite a long time, though the golden minutes sped unreckoned, for when my two colleagues arrived they tendered needless apologies.

"And I suppose," said Thorndyke, "you have been wondering what I wanted you for."

I had not, as a matter of fact, given the matter a moment's consideration.

"We are going to call on Mr. Jellicoe," Thorndyke explained. "There is something behind this affair,

and until I have ascertained what it is, the case is not complete from my point of view."

"Wouldn't it have done as well to-morrow?" I asked.

"It might; and then it might not. There is an old saying as to catching a weasel asleep. Mr. Jellicoe is a somewhat wide-awake person, and I think it best to introduce him to Inspector Badger at the earliest possible moment."

"The meeting of a weasel and a badger suggests a sporting interview," remarked Jervis. "But you don't expect Jellicoe to give himself away, do you?"

"He can hardly do that, seeing that there is nothing to give away. But I think he may make a statement. There were some exceptional circumstances, I feel sure."

"How long have you known that the body was in the Museum?" I asked.

"About thirty or forty seconds longer than you have, I should say."

"Do you mean," I exclaimed, "that you didn't know until the negative was developed?"

"My dear fellow," he replied, "do you suppose that, if I had had certain knowledge where the body was, I should have allowed that noble girl to go on dragging out a lingering agony of suspense that I could have cut short in a moment? Or that I should have made these humbugging pretences of scientific experiments if a more dignified course had been open to me?"

"As to the experiments," said Jervis, "Norbury could hardly have refused if you had taken him into your confidence."

"Indeed he could, and probably would. My 'confidence' would have involved a charge of murder against a highly respectable gentleman who was well known to him. He would probably have referred me to the police, and then what could I have done? I had plenty of suspicions, but not a single solid fact."

Our discussion was here interrupted by hurried foot-

steps on the stairs and a thundering rat-tat on our knocker.

As Jervis opened the door, Inspector Badger burst into the room in a highly excited state.

"What is all this, Doctor Thorndyke?" he asked. "I see you've sworn an information against Mr. Jellicoe, and I have a warrant to arrest him; but before anything is done I think it right to tell you that we have more evidence than is generally known pointing to quite a different quarter."

"Derived from Mr. Jellicoe's information," said Thorndyke. "But the fact is that I have just examined and identified the body at the British Museum, where it was deposited by Mr. Jellicoe. I don't say that he murdered John Bellingham—though that is what the appearances suggest—but I do say that he will have to account for his secret disposal of the body."

Inspector Badger was thunderstruck. Also he was visibly annoyed. The salt which Mr. Jellicoe had so adroitly sprinkled on the constabulary tail appeared to develop irritating properties, for when Thorndyke had given him a brief outline of the facts he stuck his hands in his pockets and exclaimed gloomily:

"Well, I'm hanged! And to think of all the time and trouble I've spent on those damned bones! I suppose they were just a plant?"

"Don't let us disparage them," said Thorndyke. "They have played a useful part. They represent the inevitable mistake that every criminal makes sooner or later. The murderer will always do a little too much. If he would only lie low and let well alone, the detective might whistle for a clue. But it is time we were starting."

"Are we all going?" asked the inspector, looking at me in particular with no very gracious recognition.

"We will all come with you," said Thorndyke; "but you will, naturally, make the arrest in the way that seems best to you."

"It's a regular procession," grumbled the inspector; but he made no more definite objection, and we started forth on our quest.

The distance from the Temple to Lincoln's Inn is not great. In five minutes we were at the gateway in Chancery Lane, and a couple of minutes later saw us gathered round the threshold of the stately old house in New Square.

"Seems to be a light in the first floor front," said Badger. "You'd better move away before I ring the bell."

But the precaution was unnecessary. As the inspector advanced to the bell-pull a head was thrust out of the open window immediately above the street door.

"Who are you?" inquired the owner of the head in a voice which I recognized as that of Mr. Jellicoe.

"I am Inspector Badger, of the Criminal Investigation Department. I wish to see Mr. Arthur Jellicoe."

"Then look at me. I am Mr. Arthur Jellicoe."

"I hold a warrant for your arrest, Mr. Jellicoe. You are charged with the murder of Mr. John Bellingham, whose body has just been discovered in the British Museum."

"By whom?"

'By Doctor Thorndyke."

"Indeed," said Mr. Jellicoe. "Is he here?"

"Yes."

"Ha! And you wish to arrest me, I presume?"

"Yes. That is what I am here for."

"Well, I will agree to surrender myself subject to certain conditions."

"I can't make any conditions, Mr. Jellicoe."

"No. I will make them, and you will accept them. Otherwise you will not arrest me."

"It's no use for you to talk like that," said Badger. "If you don't let me in I shall have to break in. And I may as well tell you," he added mendaciously, "that the house is surrounded."

"You may accept my assurance," Mr. Jellicoe re-

plied calmly, "that you will not arrest me if you do not accept my conditions."

"Well, what are your conditions?" demanded Badger impatiently.

"I desire to make a statement," said Mr. Jellicoe.

"You can do that, but I must caution you that anything you say may be used in evidence against you."

"Naturally. But I wish to make the statement in the presence of Doctor Thorndyke, and I desire to hear a statement from him of the method of investigation by which he discovered the whereabouts of the body. That is to say, if he is willing."

"If you mean that we should mutually enlighten one another, I am very willing indeed," said Thorndyke.

"Very well. Then my conditions, Inspector, are that I shall hear Doctor Thorndyke's statement and that I shall be permitted to make a statement myself, and that until those statements are completed, with any necessary interrogation and discussion, I shall remain at liberty and shall suffer no molestation or interference of any kind. And I agree that, on the conclusion of the said proceedings, I will submit without resistance to any course that you may adopt."

"I can't agree to that," said Badger.

"Can't you?" said Mr. Jellicoe coldly; and, after a pause, he added: "Don't be hasty. I have given you full warning."

There was something in Mr. Jellicoe's passionless tone that disturbed the inspector exceedingly, for he turned to Thorndyke and said in a low tone:

"I wonder what his game is? He can't get away, you know."

"There are several possibilities," said Thorndyke.

"M'yes," said Badger, stroking his chin perplexedly. "After all, is there any objection? His statement might save trouble, and you'd be on the safe side. It would take you some time to break in."

"Well," said Mr. Jellicoe, with his hand on the window, "do you agree—yes or no?"

"All right," said Badger sulkily. "I agree."

"You promise not to molest me in any way until I have quite finished?"

"I promise."

Mr. Jellicoe's head disappeared and the window closed. After a short interval we heard the jar of massive bolts and the clank of a chain, and, as the heavy door swung open, Mr. Jellicoe stood revealed, calm and impassive, with an old-fashioned office candlestick in his hand.

"Who are the others?" he inquired, peering out sharply through his spectacles.

"Oh, they are nothing to do with me," replied Badger.

"They are Doctor Berkeley and Doctor Jervis," said Thorndyke.

"Ha!" said Mr. Jellicoe; "very kind and attentive of them to call. Pray come in, gentlemen. I am sure you will be interested to hear our little discussion."

He held the door open with a certain stiff courtesy, and we all entered the hall led by Inspector Badger. He closed the door softly and preceded us up the stairs and into the apartment from the window of which he had dictated the terms of surrender. It was a fine old room, spacious, lofty, and dignified, with panelled walls and a carved mantelpiece, the central escutcheon of which bore the initials "J. W. P." with the date "1671." A large writing-table stood at the farther end, and behind it an iron safe.

"I have been expecting this visit," Mr. Jellicoe remarked tranquilly as he placed four chairs opposite the table.

"Since when?" asked Thorndyke.

"Since last Monday evening, when I had the pleasure of seeing you conversing with my friend Doctor Berkeley at the Inner Temple gate, and then inferred that you were retained in the case. That was a circumstance that had not been fully provided for. May I

offer you gentlemen a glass of sherry ?" As he spoke he placed on the table a decanter and a tray of glasses, and looked at us interrogatively with his hand on the stopper.

"Well, I don't mind if I do, Mr. Jellicoe," said Badger, on whom the lawyer's glance had finally settled. Mr. Jellicoe filled a glass and handed it to him with a stiff bow; then, with the decanter still in his hand, he said persuasively: "Doctor Thorndyke, pray allow me to fill you a glass ?"

"No, thank you," said Thorndyke, in a tone so decided that the inspector looked round at him quickly. And as Badger caught his eye, the glass which he was about to raise to his lips became suddenly arrested and was slowly returned to the table untasted.

"I don't want to hurry you, Mr. Jellicoe," said the inspector, "but it's rather late, and I should like to get this business settled. What is it that you wish to do ?"

"I desire," replied Mr. Jellicoe, "to make a detailed statement of the events that have happened, and I wish to hear from Doctor Thorndyke precisely how he arrived at his very remarkable conclusion. When this has been done I shall be entirely at your service; and I suggest that it would be more interesting if Doctor Thorndyke would give us his statement before I furnish you with the actual facts."

"I am entirely of your opinion," said Thorndyke.

"Then in that case," said Mr. Jellicoe, "I suggest that you disregard me, and address your remarks to your friends as if I were not present."

Thorndyke acquiesced with a bow, and Mr. Jellicoe, having seated himself in his elbow-chair behind the table, poured himself out a glass of water, selected a cigarette from a neat silver case, lighted it deliberately, and leaned back to listen at his ease.

"My first acquaintance with this case," Thorndyke began without preamble, "was made through the medium of the daily papers about two years ago; and

I may say that, although I had no interest in it beyond the purely academic interest of a specialist in a case that lies in his particular specialty, I considered it with deep attention. The newspaper reports contained no particulars of the relations of the parties that could furnish any hints as to motives on the part of any of them, but merely a bare statement of the events. And this was a distinct advantage, inasmuch as it left one to consider the facts of the case without regard to motive—to balance the *prima facie* probabilities with an open mind. And it may surprise you to learn that those *prima facie* probabilities pointed from the very first to that solution which has been put to the test of experiment this evening. Hence it will be well for me to begin by giving the conclusions that I reached by reasoning from the facts set forth in the newspapers before any of the further facts came to my knowledge.

"From the facts as stated in the newspaper reports it is obvious that there were four possible explanations of the disappearance.

"1. The man might be alive and in hiding. This was highly improbable, for the reasons that were stated by Mr. Loram at the late hearing of the application, and for a further reason that I shall mention presently.

"2. He might have died by accident or disease, and his body failed to be identified. This was even more improbable, seeing that he carried on his person abundant means of identification, including visiting cards.

"3. He might have been murdered by some stranger for the sake of his portable property. This was highly improbable for the same reason: his body could hardly have failed to be identified.

"These three explanations are what we may call the outside explanations. They touched none of the parties mentioned; they were all obviously improbable on general grounds; and to all of them there was one conclusive answer—the scarab which was found in Godfrey Bellingham's garden. Hence I put them aside

and gave my attention to the fourth explanation. This was that the missing man had been made away with by one of the parties mentioned in the report. But, since the reports mentioned three parties, it was evident that there was a choice of three hypotheses, namely :

"(*a*) That John Bellingham had been made away with by Hurst ; or (*b*) by the Bellinghams ; or (*c*) by Mr. Jellicoe.

"Now, I have constantly impressed on my pupils that the indispensable question that must be asked at the outset of such an inquiry as this is, 'When was the missing person last undoubtedly seen or known to be alive ?' That is the question that I asked myself after reading the newspaper report ; and the answer was, that he was last certainly seen alive on the fourteenth of October, nineteen hundred and two, at 141 Queen Square, Bloomsbury. Of the fact that he was alive at that time and place there could be no doubt whatever ; for he was seen at the same moment by two persons, both of whom were intimately acquainted with him, and one of whom, Doctor Norbury, was apparently a disinterested witness. After that date he was never seen, alive or dead, by any person who knew him and was able to identify him. It was stated that he had been seen on the twenty-third of November following by the housemaid of Mr. Hurst ; but as this person was unacquainted with him, it was uncertain whether the person whom she saw was or was not John Bellingham.

"Hence the disappearance dated, not from the twenty-third of November, as everyone seems to have assumed, but from the fourteenth of October ; and the question was not, 'What became of John Bellingham after he entered Mr. Hurst's house ?' but, 'What became of him after his interview in Queen Square ?'

"But as soon as I had decided that that interview must form the real starting-point of the inquiry, a most striking set of circumstances came into view. It became obvious that if Mr. Jellicoe had had any reason

for wishing to make away with John Bellingham, he had such an opportunity as seldom falls to the lot of an intending murderer.

"Just consider the conditions. John Bellingham was known to be setting out alone upon a journey beyond the sea. His exact destination was not stated. He was to be absent for an undetermined period, but at least three weeks. His disappearance would occasion no comment; his absence would lead to no inquiries, at least for several weeks, during which the murderer would have leisure quietly to dispose of the body and conceal all traces of the crime. The conditions were, from a murderer's point of view, ideal.

"But that was not all. During that very period of John Bellingham's absence Mr. Jellicoe was engaged to deliver to the British Museum what was admittedly a dead human body; and that body was to be enclosed in a sealed case. Could any more perfect or secure method of disposing of a body be devised by the most ingenious murderer? The plan would have had only one weak point: the mummy would be known to have left Queen Square *after* the disappearance of John Bellingham, and suspicion might in the end have arisen. To this point I shall return presently; meanwhile we will consider the second hypothesis—that the missing man was made away with by Mr. Hurst.

"Now, there seemed to be no doubt that some person, purporting to be John Bellingham, did actually visit Mr. Hurst's house; and he must either have left that house or remained in it. If he left, he did so surreptitiously; if he remained, there could be no reasonable doubt that he had been murdered and that his body had been concealed. Let us consider the probabilities in each case.

"Assuming—as everyone seems to have done—that the visitor was really John Bellingham, we are dealing with a responsible, middle-aged gentleman, and the idea that such a person would enter a house, announce

his intention of staying, and then steal away unobserved is very difficult to accept. Moreover, he would appear to have come down to Eltham by rail immediately on landing in England, leaving his luggage in the cloak-room at Charing Cross. This pointed to a definiteness of purpose quite inconsistent with his casual disappearance from the house.

"On the other hand, the idea that he might have been murdered by Hurst was not inconceivable. The thing was physically possible. If Bellingham had really been in the study when Hurst came home, the murder could have been committed—by appropriate means—and the body temporarily concealed in the cupboard or elsewhere. But, although possible, it was not at all probable. There was no real opportunity. The risk and the subsequent difficulties would be very great; there was not a particle of positive evidence that a murder had occurred; and the conduct of Hurst in immediately leaving the house in possession of the servants is quite inconsistent with the supposition that there was a body concealed in it. So that, while it is almost impossible to believe that John Bellingham left the house of his own accord, it is equally difficult to believe that he did not leave it.

"But there is a third possibility, which, strange to say, no one seems to have suggested. Supposing that the visitor was not John Bellingham at all, but someone who was personating him? That would dispose of the difficulties completely. The strange disappearance ceases to be strange, for a personator would necessarily make off before Mr. Hurst should arrive and discover the imposture. But if we accept this supposition, we raise two further questions: 'Who was the personator?' and 'What was the object of the personation?'

"Now, the personator was clearly not Hurst himself, for he would have been recognized by his housemaid; he was therefore either Godfrey Bellingham or Mr. Jellicoe or some other person; and as no other

person was mentioned in the newspaper reports. I confined my speculations to these two.

"And, first, as to Godfrey Bellingham. It did not appear whether he was or was not known to the housemaid, so I assumed—wrongly, as it turns out—that he was not. Then he might have been the personator. But why should he have personated his brother? He could not have already committed the murder. There had not been time enough. He would have had to leave Woodford before John Bellingham had set out from Charing Cross. And even if he had committed the murder, he would have had no object in raising this commotion. His cue would have been to remain quiet and know nothing. The probabilities were all against the personator being Godfrey Bellingham.

"Then could it be Mr. Jellicoe? The answer to this question is contained in the answer to the further question: What could have been the object of the personation?

"What motive could this unknown person have had in appearing, announcing himself as John Bellingham, and forthwith vanishing? There could only have been one motive: that, namely, of fixing the date of John Bellingham's disappearance—of furnishing a definite moment at which he was last seen alive.

"But who was likely to have had such a motive? Let us see.

"I said just now that if Mr. Jellicoe had murdered John Bellingham and disposed of the body in the mummy-case, he would have been absolutely safe for the time being. But there would be a weak spot in his armour. For a month or more the disappearance of his client would occasion no remark. But presently, when he failed to return, inquiries would be set on foot; and then it would appear that no one had seen him since he left Queen Square. Then it would be noted that the last person with whom he was seen was Mr. Jellicoe. It might, further, be remembered that the mummy had been delivered to the Museum some

time *after* the missing man was last seen alive. And so suspicion might arise and be followed by disastrous investigations. But supposing it should be made to appear that John Bellingham had been seen alive more than a month after his interview with Mr. Jellicoe and some weeks after the mummy had been deposited in the Museum ? Then Mr. Jellicoe would cease to be in any way connected with the disappearance, and henceforth would be absolutely safe.

" Hence, after carefully considering this part of the newspaper report, I came to the conclusion that the mysterious occurrence at Mr. Hurst's house had only one reasonable explanation, namely, that the visitor was not John Bellingham, but someone personating him ; and that that someone was Mr. Jellicoe.

" It remains to consider the case of Godfrey Bellingham and his daughter, though I cannot understand how any sane person can have seriously suspected either " (here Inspector Badger smiled a sour smile). " The evidence against them was negligible, for there was nothing to connect them with the affair save the finding of the scarab on their premises ; and that event, which might have been highly suspicious under other circumstances, was robbed of any significance by the fact that the scarab was found on a spot which had been passed a few minutes previously by the other suspected party, Hurst. The finding of the scarab did, however, establish two important conclusions ; namely, that John Bellingham had probably met with foul play, and that of the four persons present when it was found, one at least had had possession of the body. As to which of the four was the one, the circumstances furnished only a hint, which was this : If the scarab had been purposely dropped, the most likely person to find it was the one who dropped it. And the person who discovered it was Mr. Jellicoe.

" Following up this hint, if we ask ourselves what motive Mr. Jellicoe could have had for dropping it—assuming him to be the murderer—the answer is

obvious. It would not be his policy to fix the crime on any particular person, but rather to set up a complication of conflicting evidence which would occupy the attention of investigators and divert it from himself.

"Of course, if Hurst had been the murderer, he would have had a sufficient motive for dropping the scarab, so that the case against Mr. Jellicoe was not conclusive; but the fact that it was he who found it was highly significant.

"This completes the analysis of the evidence contained in the original newspaper report describing the circumstances of the disappearance. The conclusions that followed from it were, as you will have seen:

"1. That the missing man was almost certainly dead, as proved by the finding of the scarab after his disappearance.

"2. That he had probably been murdered by one or more of four persons, as proved by the finding of the scarab on the premises occupied by two of them and accessible to the others.

"3. That, of those four persons, one—Mr. Jellicoe—was the last person who was known to have been in the company of the missing man; had had an exceptional opportunity for committing the murder; and was known to have delivered a dead body to the Museum subsequently to the disappearance.

"4. That the supposition that Mr. Jellicoe had committed the murder rendered all the other circumstances of the disappearance clearly intelligible, whereas on any other supposition they were quite inexplicable.

"The evidence of the newspaper report, therefore, clearly pointed to the probability that John Bellingham had been murdered by Mr. Jellicoe and his body concealed in the mummy-case.

"I do not wish to give you the impression that I, then and there, believed that Mr. Jellicoe was the murderer. I did not. There was no reason to suppose that the report contained all the essential facts, and I

merely considered it speculatively as a study in probabilities. But I did decide that that was the only probable conclusion from the facts that were given.

"Nearly two years passed before I heard anything more of the case. Then it was brought to my notice by my friend, Doctor Berkeley, and I became acquainted with certain new facts, which I will consider in the order in which they became known to me.

"The first new light on the case came from the will. As soon as I had read that document I felt convinced that there was something wrong. The testator's evident intention was that his brother should inherit the property, whereas the construction of the will was such as almost certainly to defeat that intention. The devolution of the property depended on the burial clause—clause two; but the burial arrangements would ordinarily be decided by the executor, who happened to be Mr. Jellicoe. Thus the will left the disposition of the property under the control of Mr. Jellicoe, though his action could have been contested.

"Now, this will, although drawn up by John Bellingham, was executed in Mr. Jellicoe's office, as is proved by the fact that it was witnessed by two of his clerks. He was the testator's lawyer, and it was his duty to insist on the will being properly drawn. Evidently he did nothing of the kind, and this fact strongly suggested some kind of collusion on his part with Hurst, who stood to benefit by the miscarriage of the will. And this was the odd feature in the case; for whereas the party responsible for the defective provisions was Mr. Jellicoe, the party who benefited was Hurst.

"But the most startling peculiarity of the will was the way in which it fitted the circumstances of the disappearance. It looked as if clause two had been drawn up with those very circumstances in view. Since, however, the will was ten years old, this was impossible. But if clause two could not have been devised to fit the disappearance, could the disappearance have been devised to fit clause two? That was by no means im-

possible: under the circumstances it looked rather probable. And if it had been so contrived, who was the agent in that contrivance? Hurst stood to benefit, but there was no evidence that he even knew the contents of the will. There remained only Mr. Jellicoe, who had certainly connived at the misdrawing of the will for some purpose of his own—some dishonest purpose.

"The evidence of the will, then, pointed to Mr. Jellicoe as the agent in the disappearance, and, after reading it, I definitely suspected him of the crime.

"Suspicion, however, is one thing and proof is another. I had not nearly enough evidence to justify me in laying an information, and I could not approach the Museum officials without making a definite accusation. The great difficulty of the case was that I could discover no motive. I could not see any way in which Mr. Jellicoe would benefit by the disappearance. His own legacy was secure, whenever and however the testator died. The murder and concealment apparently benefited Hurst alone; and, in the absence of any plausible motive, the facts required to be much more conclusive than they were."

"Did you form absolutely no opinion as to motive?" asked Mr. Jellicoe.

He put the question in a quiet, passionless tone, as if he were discussing some *cause célèbre* in which he had nothing more than a professional interest. Indeed, the calm, impersonal interest that he displayed in Thorndyke's analysis, his unmoved attention, punctuated by little nods of approval at each telling point in the argument, were the most surprising features of this astounding interview.

"I did form an opinion," replied Thorndyke, "but it was merely speculative, and I was never able to confirm it. I discovered that about ten years ago Mr. Hurst had been in difficulties and that he had suddenly raised a considerable sum of money, no one knew how or on what security. I observed that this event coin-

cided in time with the execution of the will, and I surmised that there might be some connection between them. But that was only a surmise; and, as the proverb has it, 'He discovers who proves.' I could prove nothing, so that I never discovered Mr. Jellicoe's motive, and I don't know it now."

"Don't you, really?" said Mr. Jellicoe, in something approaching a tone of animation. He laid down the end of his cigarette, and, as he selected another from the silver case, he continued: "I think that is the most interesting feature of your really remarkable analysis. It does you great credit. The absence of motive would have appeared to most persons a fatal objection to the theory of, what I may call, the prosecution. Permit me to congratulate you on the consistency and tenacity with which you have pursued the actual, visible facts."

He bowed stiffly to Thorndyke (who returned his bow with equal stiffness), lighted the fresh cigarette, and once more leaned back in his chair with the calm, attentive manner of a man who is listening to a lecture or a musical performance.

"The evidence, then, being insufficient to act upon," Thorndyke resumed, "there was nothing for it but to wait for some new facts. Now, the study of a large series of carefully conducted murders brings into view an almost invariable phenomenon. The cautious murderer, in his anxiety to make himself secure, does too much; and it is this excess of precaution that leads to detection. It happens constantly; indeed, I may say that it always happens—in those murders that are detected; of those that are not we say nothing—and I had strong hopes that it would happen in this case. And it did.

"At the very moment when my client's case seemed almost hopeless, some human remains were discovered at Sidcup. I read the account of the discovery in the evening paper, and, scanty as the report was, it recorded enough facts to convince me that the inevitable mistake had been made."

"Did it, indeed?" said Mr. Jellicoe. "A mere, inexpert, hearsay report! I should have supposed it to be quite valueless from a scientific point of view."

"So it was," said Thorndyke. "But it gave the date of the discovery and the locality, and it also mentioned what bones had been found. Which were all vital facts. Take the question of time. These remains, after lying *perdu* for two years, suddenly come to light just as the parties—who have also been lying *perdu*—have begun to take action in respect of the will; in fact, within a week or two of the hearing of the application. It was certainly a remarkable coincidence. And when the circumstances that occasioned the discovery were considered, the coincidence became still more remarkable. For these remains were found on land actually belonging to John Bellingham, and their discovery resulted from certain operations (the clearing of the watercress-beds) carried out on behalf of the absent landlord. But by whose orders were those works undertaken? Clearly by the orders of the landlord's agent. But the landlord's agent was known to be Mr. Jellicoe. Therefore these remains were brought to light at this peculiarly opportune moment by the action of Mr. Jellicoe. The coincidence, I say again, was very remarkable.

"But what instantly arrested my attention on reading the newspaper report was the unusual manner in which the arm had been separated; for, besides the bones of the arm proper, there were those of what anatomists call the 'shoulder-girdle'—the shoulder-blade and collar-bone. This was very remarkable. It seemed to suggest a knowledge of anatomy, and yet no murderer, even if he possessed such knowledge, would make a display of it on such an occasion. It seemed to me that there must be some other explanation. Accordingly, when other remains had come to light and all had been collected at Woodford, I asked my friend Berkeley to go down there and inspect them. He did so, and this is what he found:

"Both arms had been detached in the same peculiar manner; both were complete, and all the bones were from the same body. The bones were quite clean—of soft structures, I mean. There were no cuts, scratches, or marks on them. There was not a trace of adipocere—the peculiar waxy soap that forms in bodies that decay in water or in a damp situation. The right hand had been detached at the time the arm was thrown into the pond, and the left ring finger had been separated and had vanished. This latter fact had attracted my attention from the first, but I will leave its consideration for the moment and return to it later."

"How did you discover that the hand had been detached?" Mr. Jellicoe asked.

"By the submersion marks," replied Thorndyke. "It was lying on the bottom of the pond in a position which would have been impossible if it had been attached to the arm."

"You interest me exceedingly," said Mr. Jellicoe. "It appears that a medico-legal expert finds 'books in the running brooks, sermons in bones, and evidence in everything.' But don't let me interrupt you."

"Doctor Berkeley's observations," Thorndyke resumed, "together with the medical evidence at the inquest, led me to certain conclusions.

"Let me first state the facts which were disclosed.

"The remains which had been assembled formed a complete human skeleton with the exception of the skull, one finger, and the legs from knee to ankle, including both knee-caps. This was a very impressive fact; for the bones that were missing included all those which could have been identified as belonging or not belonging to John Bellingham; and the bones that were present were the unidentifiable remainder.

"It had a suspicious appearance of selection.

"But the parts that were present were also curiously suggestive. In all cases the mode of dismemberment was peculiar; for an ordinary person would have divided the knee-joint leaving the knee-cap attached

to the thigh, whereas it had evidently been left attached to the shin-bone; and the head would most probably have been removed by cutting through the neck instead of being neatly detached from the spine. And all these bones were also entirely free from marks or scratches such as would naturally occur in an ordinary dismemberment, and all were quite free from adipocere. And now as to the conclusions which I drew from these facts. First, there was the peculiar grouping of the bones. What was the meaning of that? Well, the idea of a punctilious anatomist was obviously absurd, and I put it aside. But was there any other explanation? Yes, there was. The bones had appeared in the natural groups that are held together by ligaments; and they had separated at points where they were attached principally by muscles. The knee-cap, for instance, which really belongs to the thigh, is attached to it by muscle, but to the shin-bone by a stout ligament. And so with the bones of the arm; they are connected to one another by ligaments; but to the trunk only by muscle, excepting at one end of the collar-bone.

"But this was a very significant fact. Ligament decays much more slowly than muscle, so that in a body of which the muscles had largely decayed the bones might still be held together by ligament. The peculiar grouping therefore suggested that the body had been partly reduced to a skeleton before it was dismembered; that it had then been merely pulled apart and not divided with a knife.

"This suggestion was remarkably confirmed by the total absence of knife-cuts or scratches.

"Then there was the fact that all the bones were quite free from adipocere. Now, if an arm or a thigh should be deposited in water and left undisturbed to decay, it is certain that large masses of adipocere would be formed. Probably more than half of the flesh would be converted into this substance. The absence of adipocere therefore proved that the bulk of the flesh had disappeared or been removed from the bones

before they were deposited in the pond. That, in fact, it was not a body, but a skeleton, that had been deposited.

"But what kind of skeleton? If it was the recent skeleton of a murdered man, then the bones had been carefully stripped of flesh so as to leave the ligaments intact. But this was highly improbable; for there could be no object in preserving the ligaments. And the absence of scratches was against this view.

"Then they did not appear to be graveyard bones. The collection was too complete. It is very rare to find a graveyard skeleton of which many of the small bones are not missing. And such bones are usually more or less weathered and friable.

"They did not appear to be bones such as may be bought at an osteological dealer's, for these usually have perforations to admit the macerating fluid to the marrow cavities. Dealers' bones, too, are very seldom all from the same body; and the small bones of the hand are drilled with holes to enable them to be strung on catgut.

"They were not dissecting-room bones, as there was no trace of red-lead in the openings for the nutrient arteries.

"What the appearances did suggest was that these were parts of a body which had decayed in a very dry atmosphere (in which no adipocere would be formed), and which had been pulled or broken apart. Also that the ligaments which held the body—or rather skeleton—together were brittle and friable, as suggested by the detached hand, which had probably broken off accidentally. But the only kind of body that completely answers this description is an Egyptian mummy. A mummy, it is true, has been more or less preserved; but on exposure to the air of such a climate as ours it perishes rapidly, the ligaments being the last of the soft parts to disappear.

"The hypothesis that these bones were parts of a mummy naturally suggested Mr. Jellicoe. If he had

murdered John Bellingham and concealed his body in the mummy-case, he would have a spare mummy on his hands, and that mummy would have been exposed to the air and to somewhat rough handling.

"A very interesting circumstance connected with these remains was that the ring finger was missing. Now, fingers have on sundry occasions been detached from dead hands for the sake of the rings on them. But in such cases the object has been to secure a valuable ring uninjured. If this hand was the hand of John Bellingham, there was no such object. The purpose was to prevent identification; and that purpose would have been more easily, and much more completely, achieved by sacrificing the ring, by filing through it or breaking it off the finger. The appearances, therefore, did not quite agree with the apparent purpose.

"Then, could there be any other purpose with which they agreed better? Yes, there could.

"If it had happened that John Bellingham were known to have worn a ring on that finger, and especially if that ring fitted tightly, the removal of the finger would serve a very useful purpose. It would create an impression that the finger had been removed on account of a ring, to prevent identification; which impression would, in turn, produce a suspicion that the hand was that of John Bellingham. And yet it would not be evidence that could be used to establish identity. Now, if Mr. Jellicoe were the murderer and had the body hidden elsewhere, vague suspicion would be precisely what he would desire, and positive evidence what he would wish to avoid.

"It transpired later that John Bellingham did wear a ring on that finger and that the ring fitted very tightly. Whence it followed that the absence of the finger was an additional point tending to implicate Mr. Jellicoe.

"And now let us briefly review this mass of evidence. You will see that it consists of a multitude of items, each either trivial or speculative. Up to the time of

the actual discovery I had not a single crucial fact, nor any clue as to motive. But, slight as the individual points of evidence were, they pointed with impressive unanimity to one person—Mr. Jellicoe. Thus :

" The person who had the opportunity to commit the murder and dispose of the body was Mr. Jellicoe.

" The deceased was last certainly seen alive with Mr. Jellicoe.

" An unidentified human body was delivered to the Museum by Mr. Jellicoe.

" The only person who could have a motive for personating the deceased was Mr. Jellicoe.

" The only known person who could possibly have done so was Mr. Jellicoe.

" One of the two persons who could have had a motive for dropping the scarab was Mr. Jellicoe. The person who found that scarab was Mr. Jellicoe, although, owing to his defective eyesight and his spectacles, he was the most unlikely person of those present to find it.

" The person who was responsible for the execution of the defective will was Mr. Jellicoe.

" Then as to the remains. They were apparently not those of John Bellingham, but parts of a particular kind of body. But the only person who was known to have had such a body in his possession was Mr. Jellicoe.

" The only person who could have had any motive for substituting those remains for the remains of the deceased was Mr. Jellicoe.

" Finally, the person who caused the discovery of those remains at that singularly opportune moment was Mr. Jellicoe.

" This was the sum of the evidence that was in my possession up to the time of the hearing and, indeed, for some time after, and it was not enough to act upon. But when the case had been heard in Court, it was evident either that the proceedings would be abandoned—which was unlikely—or that there would be new developments.

"I watched the progress of events with profound interest. An attempt had been made (by Mr. Jellicoe or some other person) to get the will administered without producing the body of John Bellingham; and that attempt had failed. The coroner's jury had refused to identify the remains; the Probate Court had refused to presume the death of the testator. As affairs stood, the will could not be administered.

"What would be the next move?

"It was virtually certain that it would consist in the production of something which would identify the unrecognized remains as those of the testator.

"But what would that something be?

"The answer to that question would contain the answer to another question: Was my solution of the mystery the true solution?

"If I was wrong, it was possible that some of the undoubtedly genuine bones of John Bellingham might presently be discovered; for instance, the skull, the knee-cap, or the left fibula, by any of which the remains could be positively identified.

"If I was right, only one thing could possibly happen. Mr. Jellicoe would have to play the trump card that he had been holding back in case the Court should refuse the application; a card that he was evidently reluctant to play.

"He would have to produce the bones of the mummy's finger, together with John Bellingham's ring. No other course was possible.

"But not only would the bones and the ring have to be found together. They would have to be found in a place which was accessible to Mr. Jellicoe, and so far under his control that he could determine the exact time when the discovery should be made.

"I waited patiently for the answer to my question. Was I right or was I wrong?

"And, in due course, the answer came.

"The bones and the ring were discovered in the well in the grounds of Godfrey Bellingham's late house.

That house was the property of John Bellingham. Mr. Jellicoe was John Bellingham's agent. Hence it was practically certain that the date on which the well was emptied was settled by Mr. Jellicoe.

"The Oracle had spoken.

"The discovery proved conclusively that the bones were not those of John Bellingham (for if they had been the ring would have been unnecessary for identification). But if the bones were not John Bellingham's, the ring was; from which followed the important corollary that whoever had deposited those bones in the well had had possession of the body of John Bellingham. And there could be no doubt that that person was Mr. Jellicoe.

"On receiving this final confirmation of my conclusions, I applied forthwith to Doctor Norbury for permission to examine the mummy of Sebek-hotep, with the result that you are already acquainted with."

As Thorndyke concluded, Mr. Jellicoe regarded him thoughtfully for a moment, and then said: "You have given us a most complete and lucid exposition of your method of investigation, sir. I have enjoyed it exceedingly, and should have profited by it hereafter—under other circumstances. Are you sure you won't allow me to fill your glass?" He touched the stopper of the decanter, and Inspector Badger ostentatiously consulted his watch.

"Time is running on, I fear," said Mr. Jellicoe.

"It is, indeed," Badger assented emphatically.

"Well, I need not detain you long," said the lawyer. "My statement is a mere narration of events. But I desire to make it, and you, no doubt, will be interested to hear it."

He opened the silver case and selected a fresh cigarette, which, however, he did not light. Inspector Badger produced a funereal notebook, which he laid open on his knee; and the rest of us settled ourselves in our chairs with no little curiosity to hear Mr. Jellicoe's statement.

CHAPTER XX

THE END OF THE CASE

A PROFOUND silence had fallen on the room and its occupants. Mr. Jellicoe sat with his eyes fixed on the table as if deep in thought, the unlighted cigarette in one hand, the other grasping the tumbler of water. Presently Inspector Badger coughed impatiently and he looked up. "I beg your pardon, gentlemen," he said. "I am keeping you waiting."

He took a sip from the tumbler, opened a match-box and took out a match, but apparently altering his mind, laid it down and commenced:

'The unfortunate affair which has brought you here to-night, had its origin ten years ago. At that time my friend Hurst became suddenly involved in financial difficulties—am I speaking too fast for you, Mr. Badger?"

"No, not all," replied Badger. "I am taking it down in shorthand."

"Thank you," said Mr. Jellicoe. "He became involved in serious difficulties and came to me for assistance. He wished to borrow five thousand pounds to enable him to meet his engagements. I had a certain amount of money at my disposal, but I did not consider Hurst's security satisfactory; accordingly I felt compelled to refuse. But on the very next day, John Bellingham called on me with the draft of his will which he wished me to look over before it was executed.

"It was an absurd will, and I nearly told him so;

but then an idea occurred to me in connection with Hurst. It was obvious to me, as soon as I had glanced through the will, that, if the burial clause was left as the testator had drafted it, Hurst had a very good chance of inheriting the property; and, as I was named as the executor, I should be able to give full effect to that clause. Accordingly, I asked for a few days to consider the will, and I then called upon Hurst and made a proposal to him; which was this: That I should advance him five thousand pounds without security; that I should ask for no repayment, but that he should assign to me any interest that he might have or acquire in the estate of John Bellingham up to ten thousand pounds, or two-thirds of any sum that he might inherit if over that amount. He asked if John had yet made any will, and I replied, quite correctly, that he had not. He inquired if I knew what testamentary arrangements John intended to make, and again I answered, quite correctly, that I believed that John proposed to devise the bulk of his property to his brother, Godfrey.

"Thereupon, Hurst accepted my proposal; I made him the advance and he executed the assignment. After a few days' delay, I passed the will as satisfactory. The actual document was written from the draft by the testator himself; and a fortnight after Hurst had executed the assignment, John signed the will in my office. By the provisions of that will I stood an excellent chance of becoming virtually the principal beneficiary, unless Godfrey should contest Hurst's claim and the Court should override the conditions of clause two.

"You will now understand the motives which governed my subsequent actions. You will also see, Doctor Thorndyke, how very near to the truth your reasoning carried you; and you will understand, as I wish you to do, that Mr. Hurst was no party to any of those proceedings which I am about to describe.

"Coming now to the interview in Queen Square in

October, nineteen hundred and two, you are aware of the general circumstances from my evidence in Court, which was literally correct up to a certain point. The interview took place in a room on the third floor, in which were stored the cases which John had brought with him from Egypt. The mummy was unpacked, as were some other objects that he was not offering to the Museum, but several cases were still unopened. At the conclusion of the interview I accompanied Doctor Norbury down to the street door, and we stood on the doorstep conversing for perhaps a quarter of an hour. Then Doctor Norbury went away and I returned upstairs.

"Now the house in Queen Square is virtually a museum. The upper part is separated from the lower by a massive door which opens from the hall and gives access to the staircase, and which is fitted with a Chubb night-latch. There are two latchkeys, of which John used to keep one and I the other. You will find them both in the safe behind me. The caretaker had no key and no access to the upper part of the house unless admitted by one of us.

"At the time when I came in, after Doctor Norbury had left, the caretaker was in the cellar, where I could hear him breaking coke for the hot-water furnace. I had left John on the third floor opening some of the packing-cases by the light of a lamp with a tool somewhat like a plasterer's hammer; that is, a hammer with a small axe-blade at the reverse of the head. As I stood talking to Doctor Norbury, I could hear him knocking out the nails and wrenching up the lids; and when I entered the doorway leading to the stairs, I could still hear him. Just as I closed the staircase door behind me, I heard a rumbling noise from above; then all was still.

"I went up the stairs to the second floor, where, as the staircase was all in darkness, I stopped to light the gas. As I turned to ascend the next flight, I saw a hand projecting over the edge of the half-way landing.

I ran up the stairs, and there, on the landing, I saw John lying huddled up in a heap at the foot of the top flight. There was a wound at the side of his forehead from which a little blood was trickling. The case-opener lay on the floor close by him and there was blood on the axe-blade. When I looked up the stairs I saw a rag of torn matting hanging over the top stair.

"It was quite easy to see what had happened. He had walked quickly out on the landing with the case-opener in his hand. His foot had caught in the torn matting and he had pitched head foremost down the stairs, still holding the case-opener. He had fallen so that his head had come down on the upturned edge of the axe-blade; he had then rolled over and the case-opener had dropped from his hand.

"I lit a wax match and stooped down to look at him. His head was in a very peculiar position, which made me suspect that his neck was broken. There was extremely little bleeding from the wound; he was perfectly motionless; I could detect no sign of breathing; and I felt no doubt that he was dead.

"It was an exceedingly regrettable affair, and it placed me, as I perceived at once, in an extremely awkward position. My first impulse was to send the caretaker for a doctor and a policeman; but a moment's reflection convinced me that there were serious objections to this course.

"There was nothing to show that I had not, myself, knocked him down with the case-opener. Of course, there was nothing to show that I had; but we were alone in the house with the exception of the caretaker, who was down in the basement out of ear-shot.

"There would be an inquest. At the inquest, inquiries would be made as to the will which was known to exist. But, as soon as the will was produced, Hurst would become suspicious. He would probably make a statement to the coroner and I should be charged with the murder. Or, even if I were not charged, Hurst would suspect me and would probably repudiate the

assignment; and, under the circumstances, it would be practically impossible for me to enforce it. He would refuse to pay and I could not take my claim into Court.

"I sat down on the stairs just above poor John's body and considered the matter in detail. At the worst, I stood a fair chance of hanging; at the best, I stood to lose close upon fifty thousand pounds. These were not pleasant alternatives.

"Supposing, on the other hand, I concealed the body and gave out that John had gone to Paris. There was, of course, the risk of discovery, in which case I should certainly be convicted of the murder. But if no discovery occurred, I was not only safe from suspicion, but I secured the fifty thousand pounds. In either case there was considerable risk, but in one there was the certainty of loss, whereas in the other there was a material advantage to justify the risk. The question was whether it would be possible to conceal the body. If it were, then the contingent profit was worth the slight additional risk. But a human body is a very difficult thing to dispose of, especially to a person of so little scientific culture as myself.

"It is curious that I considered this question for a quite considerable time before the obvious solution presented itself. I turned over at least a dozen methods of disposing of the body, and rejected them all as impracticable. Then, suddenly, I remembered the mummy upstairs.

"At first it only occurred to me as a fantastic possibility that I could conceal the body in the mummy-case. But as I turned over the idea, I began to see that it was really practicable; and not only practicable but easy; and not only easy but eminently safe. If once the mummy-case was in the Museum, I was rid of it for ever.

"The circumstances were, as you, sir, have justly observed, singularly favourable. There would be no hue and cry, no hurry, no anxiety; but ample time

for all the necessary preparations. Then the mummy-case itself was curiously suitable. Its length was ample, as I knew from having measured it. It was a cartonnage of rather flexible material and had an opening behind, secured with a lacing so that it could be opened without injury. Nothing need be cut but the lacing, which could be replaced. A little damage might be done in extracting the mummy and in introducing the deceased; but such cracks as might occur would all be at the back and would be of no importance. For here again Fortune favoured me. The whole of the back of the mummy-case was coated with bitumen, and it would be easy when once the deceased was safely inside to apply a fresh coat, which would cover up not only the cracks but also the new lacing.

"After careful consideration, I decided to adopt the plan. I went downstairs and sent the caretaker on an errand to the Law Courts. Then I returned and carried the deceased up to one of the third-floor rooms, where I removed his clothes and laid him out on a long packing-case in the position in which he would lie in the mummy-case. I folded his clothes neatly and packed them, with the exception of his boots, in a suit-case that he had been taking to Paris and which contained nothing but his night-clothes, toilet articles, and a change of linen. By the time I had done this and thoroughly washed the oilcloth on the stairs and landing, the caretaker had returned. I informed him that Mr. Bellingham had started for Paris and then I went home. The upper part of the house was, of course, secured by the Chubb lock, but I had also—*ex abundantiâ cautelæ*—locked the door of the room in which I had deposited the deceased.

"I had, of course, some knowledge of the methods of embalming, but principally of those employed by the ancients. Hence, on the following day, I went to the British Museum library and consulted the most recent works on the subject; and exceedingly interesting they were, as showing the remarkable improvements

that modern knowledge has effected in this ancient art. I need not trouble you with details that are familiar to you. The process that I selected as the simplest for a beginner was that of formalin injection, and I went straight from the Museum to purchase the necessary materials. I did not, however, buy an embalming syringe : the book stated that an ordinary anatomical injecting syringe would answer the purpose, and I thought it a more discreet purchase.

" I fear that I bungled the injection terribly, although I had carefully studied the plates in a treatise on anatomy—Gray's, I think. However, if my methods were clumsy, they were quite effectual. I carried out the process on the evening of the third day ; and when I locked up the house that night, I had the satisfaction of knowing that poor John's remains were secure from corruption and decay.

" But this was not enough. The great weight of a fresh body as compared with that of a mummy would be immediately noticed by those who had the handling of the mummy-case. Moreover, the damp from the body would quickly ruin the cartonnage and would cause a steamy film on the inside of the glass case in which it would be exhibited. And this would probably lead to an examination. Clearly, then, it was necessary that the remains of the deceased should be thoroughly dried before they were enclosed in the cartonnage.

" Here my unfortunate deficiency in scientific knowledge was a great drawback. I had no idea how this result would be achieved, and in the end was compelled to consult a taxidermist, to whom I represented that I wished to collect small animals and reptiles and rapidly dry them for convenience of transport. By this person I was advised to immerse the dead animals in a jar of methylated spirit for a week and then expose them in a current of warm, dry air.

" But the plan of immersing the remains of the deceased in a jar of methylated spirit was obviously impracticable. However, I bethought me that we

had in our collection a porphyry sarcophagus, the cavity of which had been shaped to receive a small mummy in its case. I tried the deceased in the sarcophagus and found that he just fitted the cavity loosely. I obtained a few gallons of methylated spirit which I poured into the cavity, just covering the body, and then I put on the lid and luted it down air-tight with putty. I trust I do not weary you with these particulars ? "

" I'll ask you to cut it as short as you can, Mr. Jellicoe," said Badger. " It has been a long yarn and time is running on."

" For my part," said Thorndyke, " I find these details deeply interesting and instructive. They fill in the outline that I had drawn by inference."

" Precisely," said Mr. Jellicoe ; " then I will proceed.

" I left the deceased soaking in the spirit for a fortnight and then took him out, wiped him dry, and laid him on four cane-bottomed chairs just over the hot-water pipes. I turned off the hot water in the other rooms so as to concentrate the heat in these pipes, and I let a free current of air pass through the room. The result interested me exceedingly. By the end of the third day the hands and feet had become quite dry and shrivelled and horny — so that the ring actually dropped off the shrunken finger—the nose looked like a fold of parchment ; and the skin of the body was so dry and smooth that you could have engrossed a lease on it. For the first day or two I turned the deceased at intervals so that he should dry evenly, and then I proceeded to get the case ready. I divided the lacing and extracted the mummy with great care—with great care as to the case, I mean ; for the mummy suffered some injury in the extraction. It was very badly embalmed, and so brittle that it broke in several places while I was getting it out ; and when I unrolled it the head separated and both the arms came off.

" On the sixth day after the removal from the sarcophagus, I took the bandages that I had removed from

Sebek-hotep and very carefully wrapped the deceased in them, sprinkling powdered myrrh and gum benzoin freely on the body and between the folds of the wrappings to disguise the faint odour of the spirit and the formalin that still lingered about the body. When the wrappings had been applied, the deceased really had a most workmanlike appearance; he would have looked quite well in a glass case even without the cartonnage, and I felt almost regretful at having to put him out of sight for ever.

"It was a difficult business getting him into the case without assistance, and I cracked the cartonnage badly in several places before he was safely enclosed. But I got him in at last, and then, when I had closed up the case with a new lacing, I applied a fresh layer of bitumen which effectually covered up the cracks and the new cord. A dusty cloth dabbed over the bitumen when it was dry disguised its newness, and the cartonnage with its tenant was ready for delivery. I notified Doctor Norbury of the fact, and five days later he came and removed it to the Museum.

"Now that the main difficulty was disposed of, I began to consider the further difficulty to which you, sir, have alluded with such admirable perspicuity. It was necessary that John Bellingham should make one more appearance in public before sinking into final oblivion.

"Accordingly, I devised the visit to Hurst's house, which was calculated to serve two purposes. It created a satisfactory date for the disappearance, eliminating me from any connection with it, and by throwing some suspicion on Hurst it would make him more amenable —less likely to dispute my claim when he learned the provisions of the will.

"The affair was quite simple. I knew that Hurst had changed his servants since I was last at his house, and I knew his habits. On that day I took the suit-case to Charing Cross and deposited it in the cloak-room, called at Hurst's office to make sure that he was there,

and went from thence direct to Cannon Street and caught the train to Eltham. On arriving at the house, I took the precaution to remove my spectacles—the only distinctive feature of my exterior—and was duly shown into the study at my request. As soon as the housemaid had left the room I quietly let myself out by the French window, which I closed behind me but could not fasten, went out at the side gate and closed that also behind me, holding the bolt of the latch back with my pocket-knife so that I need not slam the gate to shut it.

"The other events of that day, including the dropping of the scarab, I need not describe, as they are known to you. But I may fitly make a few remarks on the unfortunate tactical error into which I fell in respect of the bones. That error arose, as you have doubtless perceived, from the lawyer's incurable habit of underestimating the scientific expert. I had no idea that mere bones were capable of furnishing so much information to a man of science.

"The way in which the affair came about was this: The damaged mummy of Sebek-hotep, perishing gradually by exposure to the air, was not only an eyesore to me: it was a definite danger. It was the only remaining link between me and the disappearance. I resolved to be rid of it and cast about for some means of destroying it. And then, in an evil moment, the idea of utilizing it occurred to me.

"There was an undoubted danger that the Court might refuse to presume death after so short an interval; and if the permission should be postponed, the will might never be administered during my lifetime. Hence, if these bones of Sebek-hotep could be made to simulate the remains of the deceased testator, a definite good would be achieved. But I knew that the entire skeleton could never be mistaken for his. The deceased had broken his knee-caps and damaged his ankle, injuries which I assumed would leave some permanent trace. But if a judicious selection of the

bones were deposited in a suitable place, together with some object clearly identifiable as appertaining to the deceased, it seemed to me that the difficulty would be met. I need not trouble you with details. The course which I adopted is known to you with the attendant circumstances, even to the accidental detachment of the right hand—which broke off as I was packing the arm in my handbag. Erroneous as that course was, it would have been successful but for the unforeseen contingency of your being retained in the case.

"Thus, for nearly two years, I remained in complete security. From time to time I dropped in at the Museum to see if the deceased was keeping in good condition; and on those occasions I used to reflect with satisfaction on the gratifying circumstance—accidental though it was—that his wishes, as expressed (very imperfectly) in clause two, had been fully complied with, and that without prejudice to my interests.

"The awakening came on that evening when I saw you at the Temple gate talking with Doctor Berkeley. I suspected immediately that something had gone amiss and that it was too late to take any useful action. Since then, I have waited here in hourly expectation of this visit. And now the time has come. You have made the winning move and it remains only for me to pay my debts like an honest gambler."

He paused and quietly lit his cigarette. Inspector Badger yawned and put away his notebook.

"Have you done, Mr. Jellicoe?" the inspector asked.

"I want to carry out my contract to the letter, you know, though it's getting devilish late."

Mr. Jellicoe took his cigarette from his mouth and drank a glass of water.

"I forgot to ask," he said, "whether you unrolled the mummy—if I may apply the term to the imperfectly treated remains of my deceased client."

"I did not open the mummy-case," replied Thorndyke.

"You did not!" exclaimed Mr. Jellicoe. "Then how did you verify your suspicions?"

"I took an X-ray photograph."

"Ah! Indeed!" Mr. Jellicoe pondered for some moments. "Astonishing!" he murmured; "and most ingenious. The resources of science at the present day are truly wonderful."

"Is there anything more that you want to say?" asked Badger; "because, if you don't, time's up."

"Anything more?" Mr. Jellicoe repeated slowly; "anything more? No—I—think—think—the time—is—up. Yes—the—the time——"

He broke off and sat with a strange look fixed on Thorndyke.

His face had suddenly undergone a curious change. It looked shrunken and cadaverous and his lips had assumed a peculiar cherry-red colour.

"Is anything the matter, Mr. Jellicoe?" Badger asked uneasily. "Are you not feeling well, sir?"

Mr. Jellicoe did not appear to have heard the question, for he returned no answer, but sat motionless, leaning back in his chair, with his hands spread out on the table and his strangely intent gaze bent on Thorndyke.

Suddenly his head dropped on his breast and his body seemed to collapse; and as with one accord we sprang to our feet, he slid foward off his chair and disappeared under the table.

"Good Lord! The man's fainted!" exclaimed Badger.

In a moment he was down on his hands and knees, trembling with excitement, groping under the table. He dragged the unconscious lawyer out into the light and knelt over him, staring into his face.

"What's the matter with him, Doctor?" he asked, looking up at Thorndyke. "Is it apoplexy? Or is it a heart attack, think you?"

Thorndyke shook his head, though he stooped and put his fingers on the unconscious man's wrist. "Prus-

sic acid or potassium cyanide is what the appearances suggest," he replied.

"But can't you do anything?" demanded the inspector.

Thorndyke dropped the arm, which fell limply to the floor.

"You can't do much for a dead man," he said.

"Dead! Then he has slipped through our fingers after all!"

"He has anticipated the sentence. That is all." Thorndyke spoke in an even, impassive tone which struck me as rather strange, considering the suddenness of the tragedy, as did also the complete absence of surprise in his manner. He seemed to treat the occurrence as a perfectly natural one.

Not so Inspector Badger; who rose to his feet and stood with his hands thrust into his pockets scowling sullenly down at the dead lawyer.

"I was an infernal fool to agree to his blasted conditions," he growled savagely.

"Nonsense," said Thorndyke. "If you had broken in, you would have found a dead man. As it was you found a live man and obtained an important statement. You acted quite properly."

"How do you suppose he managed it?" asked Badger.

Thorndyke held out his hand. "Let us look at his cigarette-case," said he.

Badger extracted the little silver case from the dead man's pocket and opened it. There were five cigarettes in it, two of which were plain, while the other three were gold-tipped. Thorndyke took out one of each kind and gently pinched their ends. The gold-tipped one he returned; the plain one he tore through, about a quarter of an inch from the end; when two little white tabloids dropped out on the table. Badger eagerly picked one up and was about to smell it when Thorndyke grasped his wrist. "Be careful," said he; and when he had cautiously sniffed at the tabloid—

held at a safe distance from his nose—he added : " Yes, potassium cyanide. I thought so when his lips turned that queer colour. It was in that last cigarette; you can see that he has bitten off the end."

For some time we stood silently looking down at the still form stretched on the floor. Presently Badger looked up.

" As you pass the porter's lodge on your way out," said he, " you might just drop in and tell him to send a constable to me."

" Very well," said Thorndyke. " And by the way, Badger, you had better tip that sherry back into the decanter and put it under lock and key, or else pour it out of the window."

" Gad, yes ! " exclaimed the inspector. " I'm glad you mentioned it. We might have had an inquest on a constable as well as a lawyer. Good night, gentlemen, if you are off."

We went out and left him with his prisoner—passive enough, indeed, according to his ambiguously worded promise. As we passed through the gateway Thorndyke gave the inspector's message, curtly and without comment, to the gaping porter, and then we issued forth into Chancery Lane.

We were all silent and very grave, and I thought that Thorndyke seemed somewhat moved. Perhaps Mr. Jellicoe's last intent look—which I suspect he knew to be the look of a dying man—lingered in his memory as it did in mine. Half-way down Chancery Lane he spoke for the first time ; and then it was only to ejaculate, " Poor devil ! "

Jervis took him up. " He was a consummate villain, Thorndyke."

" Hardly that," was the reply. " I should rather say that he was non-moral. He acted without malice and without scruple or remorse. His conduct exhibited a passionless expediency which was rather dreadful because utterly unhuman. But he was a strong man—a courageous, self-contained man, and I had

been better pleased if it could have been ordained that some other hand than mine should let the axe fall."

Thorndyke's compunction may appear strange and inconsistent, but yet his feeling was also my own. Great as was the misery and suffering that this inscrutable man had brought into the lives of those I loved, I forgave him; and in his downfall forgot the callous relentlessness with which he had pursued his evil purpose. For he it was who had brought Ruth into my life; who had opened for me the Paradise of Love into which I had just entered. And so my thoughts turned away from the still shape that lay on the floor of the stately old room in Lincoln's Inn, away to the sunny vista of the future, where I should walk hand in hand with Ruth until my time, too, should come; until I, too, like the grim lawyer, should hear the solemn evening bell bidding me put out into the darkness of the silent sea.

THE END

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