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CRIME AND DETECTION

With an Introduction by

E. M. WRONG



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PREFACE

A VOLUME of short stories about crime and detection is very liable to criticism. The number of such tales produced in the last thirty years is too great for any single man to have perused them all, so omissions, though perhaps different ones, will strike every reader. The (possibly pointed) omission from this volume of all American stories save those of Poe is due partly to ignorance on the part of the compiler, partly to his feeling that a detective story should have some literary quality. There are thousands of modern American detective tales, but in those that he knew the divorce between plot, often good, and style, generally execrable, seemed to him too complete to justify inclusion. This volume is an attempt to put together not necessarily the best examples available (that might limit the choice to three or four authors only), but some representative tales by different hands. It does not contain samples of all good detective writers, for several of these eschew the short story, and prefer the greater intricacy possible only in the compass of a novel.

Permission to include stories has been granted by the following, to whom thanks are rendered :

for *The Adventure of the Red-Headed League*, to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Mr. John Murray ; for *The Stanway Cameo Mystery*, to Mr. Arthur Morrison and Messrs. Ward, Lock & Co. ; for *The Case of Oscar Brodski* and *The New Jersey Sphinx*, to Dr. Austin Freeman and Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton ; for *The Tragedy at Brookbend Cottage*, to Mr. Ernest Bramah and Messrs. Methuen & Co. ; for *The Invisible Man*, to Mr. G. K. Chesterton and Messrs. Cassell & Co. ; for *The Business Minister*, to Mr. H. C. Bailey and Messrs. Methuen & Co. ; for *A Costume Piece*, to the Executors of the late Mr. E. W. Hornung and Messrs. Eveleigh Nash & Grayson ; for *Detection without Crime*, to Mr. Barry Pain and Messrs. Martin Secker.

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INTRODUCTION

[The names of characters in fiction are italicized, to avoid confusion between them and the names of authors.]

THE detective story is of respectable antiquity if we judge it by its remote forebears, though it is recent times only that have made it into a branch of art. Two early examples lie in the Apocrypha : in one, *Daniel's* cross-examination saves *Susanna* from the false witness of lecherous elders ; in the other, the same *Daniel* establishes the deceitfulness of *Bel's* priests. The modern reader, accustomed to subtlety of plot and tangled clues, finds these tales elementary, for the crimes that they record are so obvious that *Daniel* unravels them by the simplest of methods. Yet, as the pace of the detective story must always be set by the criminal and not by the detective, and since *Daniel* did solve both cases submitted to him, we are probably justified in regarding him as the remote ancestor of *Sherlock Holmes* and *Dr. Thorndyke*.

A story of crime and of unusual methods to discover the culprit can be found in Herodotus. An enterprising Egyptian with his brother robbed the royal treasury by a secret entrance ; the brother was laid by the heel in a trap, whereon the hero cut off his head to prevent identification. A few days later he fuddled the guardians of the body

with drink, stole and buried the corpse. He ended by escaping from the king's daughter turned prostitute to extort a confession ; he was pardoned and married the princess, having proved himself a bolder and more successful, though possibly a cruder, *Raffles* than any of recent times. Here are the twin themes of detection and crime sketched in their essentials. Why was there no flowering under the Roman Empire, when an urban population sought amusement in the butchery of the circus, and might have been more cheaply appeased by stories of law-breaking and discovery ? Perhaps a faulty law of evidence was to blame, for detectives cannot flourish until the public has an idea of what constitutes proof, and while a common criminal procedure is arrest, torture, confession, and death.

Whatever the cause, the art of detective fiction lay for centuries untouched, and its effective history is crowded into the last eighty years. Defoe would have made an admirable detective writer had he been drawn to the subject, for his love of piling detail on detail would have concealed all relevant clues from the ordinary reader while leaving them in plain view the whole time. Balzac flirted effectively with crime in *Vautrin*, but his criminal was much abler than his police. Our ancestors indeed took a great interest in homicide. The stir made by Eugene Aram, by Burke and Hare, shows that, as does De Quincey's famous essay on murder. But it was sensation rather than reasoning that they sought, and crude sensation is

better provided by real crimes than by imaginary. So the detective story was left for modern times to develop into an art with a technique and a code of its own.

There are still some, though fewer than a few years ago, who deny that it is or can become an art. They stand in their contention partly on the illiteracy and bad logic of many detective stories, partly on the nature of the theme. But artistic achievement must be judged by the best, not by the average, or else the popularity of any form that attracts incompetent practitioners would lower its place. Robert Montgomery injured not poetry but himself. As to the theme, the detective story is obviously not concerned with any very exalted actions, but *The Ring and the Book* finds its subject in the Old Bailey of Rome, and Agamemnon's quarrel with Achilles did not spring from lofty motives. Some criticize detective fiction because it is not realistic, gives inadequate scope for character drawing, looks chiefly to one thing only, and that mechanism. That is its nature, but there can be an art of plot as well as an art of the mimicry of life; art is not limited to realism but can show itself in diverse forms.

Detective fiction as we know it begins with Poe. When one studies the slightness, the lack of effort, in the three stories that Poe wrote between 1841 and 1845 and then turns to the multiplying progeny of his invention, the effect is impressive indeed. Poe set for all time one of the two lines on which the detective story has grown—a private

investigator chronicled by an unimaginative friend; he did this in three stories only, and then he either wearied of the game or his audience was unresponsive, and he turned from the rich pocket of gold into which he had dipped his hand to other and more barren fields. He had begun one of the two orthodox traditions of to-day, but it was not developed and made popular for over forty years—not in fact till 1887, when Sir Arthur Conan Doyle published *A Study in Scarlet*.

It was the other and less rigorous form that flourished till *Sherlock Holmes* was to revive the *Dupin* canon, and its leading English follower was Wilkie Collins. In 1860 *The Woman in White* made a happy connexion between villainy and detection; in 1868 came *The Moonstone*, more orthodox because more of a pure puzzle. The criminal theme attracted Dickens, worn-out though he was with popular lecturing, and in the autumn of 1869 he began what some regard as potentially his greatest novel. The first number of *Edwin Drood* appeared in April 1870; two months later Dickens was dead, and his mystery had not got as far as the discovery of the corpse. There are some who even deny that there is a corpse to be discovered, and speculation ranges still over the identity of *Datchery*. Whatever the secret, every lover of detective fiction would sooner have the unwritten chapters than all the lost books of Livy.

Meanwhile a considerable development went on in France. Gaboriau wrote his police tales between 1866 and 1873, Fortuné du Boisgobey took

up the theme between 1872 and 1889. Stories of crime became common in England and America largely, it appears, through the influence of Collins and Gaboriau. That they were popular in the 'eighties, even before *Sherlock Holmes*, Anna Katherine Green's stories show, and if further proof is wanted it can be found in Stevenson's unsurpassed romance, *The Wrong Box*. We read there that *Gideon Forsyth* had written a detective tale called *Who Put Back the Clock?*, and that only three copies of it had passed into circulation—if the British Museum can be called circulation when the work is secreted behind a false catalogue entry. Now *Forsyth's* way of disposing of a troublesome grand piano does not stamp him as a man of great penetration of mind, and we know moreover that his attempt at musical composition was an echo of *Tommy, make room for your uncle*; he had in fact no originality. He would assuredly not have tried the detective form of composition had it not been popular. *The Wrong Box* appeared in 1889, and *Forsyth's* literary adventure must have been at least a year or two earlier, perhaps in 1887, the great year when *Sherlock Holmes* broke upon the world.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's name must stand, in the history of the detective story, only a little lower than Poe's. He wedded plots nearly as elaborate as Gaboriau's to the methods and tradition of Poe; from the marriage was produced *Sherlock Holmes*, to become in a few years a universally recognized character of English speech.

Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona, but we have forgotten them, and tend to think of the pre-Holmes detectives as of the pre-Shakespearian drama; to call them precursors only. *Holmes* was a really great achievement. From him dates the expansion of the last thirty years, and the crystallizing of one type of detective story. The canon is not exclusive but it is fixed; a friend of the detective tells the tale, as he did in Poe; he sees or can see all that the detective does, but never understands what deductions to draw from the facts. Thus the chief relevant incidents are in reality concealed from the reader though there is an ostentatious parade of openness. The detective's friend acts in the dual capacity of very average reader and of Greek chorus; he comments freely on what he does not understand.

For a time it seemed that this might become the only accepted form of detective fiction. Mr. Morrison followed it in *Martin Hewitt*, softening the detective's eccentricities, making him more of a business man, and giving him a less striking coadjutor than *Dr. Watson*. Dr. Austin Freeman took the same line with *Thorndyke*, improving on *Sherlock's* science, raising the narrator to average intelligence, and providing mysteries more cunning and obscure. Miss Christie's *Poirot* follows the tradition, though he distrusts the laboratory and relies on 'the little grey cells' of his brain; he is assisted by the most admirably foolish of all *Watsons*, *Captain Hastings*. But some writers have revolted against the domination of a

Boswell-Watson, and have preferred to tell their stories in the third person. A school has arisen modelled more on the Collins-Gaboriau tradition than on that of *Dupin-Holmes*, and the technique of the art has of late widened considerably.

This second school divides itself unequally into two parts. Most of its adherents concern themselves with external clues; industry and mobility take the place of the instantaneous deduction loved of *Holmes*; Mr. Mason's *Hanaud* is a fine example of this kind, though he is like *Holmes* in one way—while his actions are not described by his admirer, only such actions are recorded as his admirer has seen. Better examples of the new mode are the painstaking sleuths of Mr. Crofts, who by careful inquiry and a lavish use of transport facilities explode the most detailed alibis known to fiction—alibis moreover that might easily go unquestioned in court. Mr. Bentley's *Trent* worked (in his last case, which is the only published one) chiefly on similar lines, although he refrained from arresting the suspect because his judgement of character made him come to doubt the evidence of his eyes.

A less common and rather more subtle type is that of the intuitionist detective. England knows only two of these worth mention, Mr. Chesterton's *Father Brown* and Mr. Bailey's *Mr. Fortune*. *Father Brown* needs no lengthy method of proving guilt for he can guess the secret of the crime from his wide knowledge of sin. *Mr. Fortune* feels atmosphere more keenly than any other detective, and

is marvellously accurate in his judgement of character. These men leap to conclusions while others limp behind. Those who like them like them very much indeed, even though they admit that many of the crimes discovered by *Father Brown* were impossible, and think *Mr. Fortune* perhaps too ready to assume the responsibility of granting life or death. They are at any rate the most brilliant talkers among modern detectives, not only in what they say but also in their pregnant silences.

Some other detectives share their intuitional ability, though none possess it in as high degree as these two. Miss Christie's *Poirot*, Mr. Mason's *Hanaud*, are at times helped by it; so is Mr. Brahmah's *Max Carrados*, who combines in one person all the remarkable abilities of all the blind men of history. Mr. Milne's *Antony Gillingham* has a visual memory that brings almost the same result as intuition. Yet all these last depend mainly on external things, and are detectives of exploration rather than of instinct.

Forsyth found, Stevenson tells us, that 'it is the difficulty of the police romance that the reader is always a person of such vastly greater ingenuity than the writer'. This remains the cardinal problem, but it has been fairly met and defeated many times. Technique has improved so that things once permissible can be no longer allowed, and there is now a kind of code of what is fair play to the reader. Yet even so the old problem is still too often evaded. Clues are given that are meant

only to mislead, and whose existence is never explained. Criminal and victim, one or both, will behave as no sane person would ; corpses turn out to be alive, and secret passages provide a surfeit of alibis. Father Knox's *The Viaduct Murder* was difficult to solve largely through improbable false clues, concealed passages, and inept action by the murderer which made his actions unlike those of the ordinary sensible man ; eventually he was hanged through his own stupidity. That happens, it is true, often enough in real life, but art should be better than actuality.

The detective story has now joined the novel of realism and the tale of passion as fit and proper reading for evenings and holidays, and its most devoted adherents are found principally among the highly educated. Partly this is because the modern age prides itself on its ingenuity. It enjoys mechanism and is attracted by the neatness of a good mystery. Economy, tidiness, completeness—these are qualities possessed by every good tale of detection, and they are qualities conspicuously lacking in some forms now much cried up, especially in Russian novels and English *vers libre*. Reacting against works of art with little beginning and no end but only a yawning middle, and in some measure rebelling against the discrepancies so common in real life, we go for solace to the detective of fiction. His appeal is chiefly intellectual, but there must be some emotion in it too, or else our sympathy might lie as much with the hunted as with the avenger of society. Yet the

heart must be less moved than the brain or our pleasure will be the less.

A detective story involves a problem which must nearly always be criminal, the guilty man must be discovered by the detective and brought to justice unless his breach of the law was technical rather than moral. Commonly the matter is not taken beyond arrest, and this for various reasons. Sometimes the chain of evidence that satisfies a reader would fail to convince a jury, or might not even stand the rules of cross-examination; when this seems likely the criminal sometimes commits suicide once his capture is certain. Even when this objection to a trial does not exist an author seldom brings his culprit into court. The atmosphere of a trial would not accord well with the feelings roused by the chase, and the sight of a remorseless system grinding to pieces the man who has, after all, provided half our entertainment, might swing our sympathy to his side. Even arrest is dispensed with at times; a confession is enough for *Father Brown*, who is concerned more with laying bare the heart of man than with the crude matter of punishment. In fact the detective is not often a sociologist, and tends to shun the drab side of crime, its atonement. The number of criminals in fiction who come to their end by accident or suicide is very great, and points to some laxity by the detective after he has made his arrest.

Of the crimes to be detected murder must always come first, for it is more mysterious and dramatic

than any other. Yet one cannot hold that every detective story must centre round homicide, for that would rule out many of our best stories. In the early days of detective fiction murders and attempted murders were much rarer than they are to-day. Only one of Poe's three tales was about murder, and the killers of *Marie Roget* remained in fact undiscovered. *Sherlock Holmes* and *Martin Hewitt* were more often consulted about small crimes than are the chief modern practitioners. Time has in fact exalted murder, which used to be only one of several offences, to a position of natural supremacy.

There are good reasons for this. What we want in our detective fiction is not a semblance of real life, where murder is infrequent and petty larceny common, but deep mystery and conflicting clues. Murder has removed one party to the secret, and so is essentially more mysterious than theft. Moreover, it involves an intenser motive than any other peace-time activity: the drama is keyed high from the start for the murderer is playing for the highest stake he has, and can reasonably be expected to tangle the evidence even to the committing of a second murder. The law places murder in a category by itself, not necessarily because it is more wicked than other crimes—the murder of a blackmailer appeals to us, at least in fiction, as a beneficent act—but because it is more desperate and final. When the death of a man is compassed either the victim or the slayer is generally a villain, and either the motives or

incidents of the deed, save when it is due to animal passion or to drink, are nearly always interesting. The motive for robbery, covetousness, is almost too common; most of us know it well. Hatred that is strong enough to bring murder is familiar enough to be intelligible to nearly every one, yet far enough from our normal experience to let us watch as detached observers, for we do not feel that it is our own crimes that are unmasked. So for many reasons murder is advisable, though not necessary. The author, if he withholds its appeal, must give us compensation in some other way. This is admirably done in Mr. Croft's *The Ponson Case*, where three excellent alibis make accidental death more than tolerable.

One temptation the detective novelist does well to avoid; many have walked into it and few have escaped with their artistry unblemished. It is that of including in the same book a Napoleon of crime and a Wellington of detection, drawing a master-villain who controls a huge organization of iniquity and impartially directs robbery, forgery, blackmail, and murder. It is an attractive theme, for it provides an explanation of the most improbable crimes, since anything may be part of a campaign against civilization. Yet it does not do, for all that. A small objection is that a man with the intellectual resources of the master-criminal would naturally take to politics or business rather than to crime. A greater one is that we never have the organization or the motives of the captain of evil exposed to us; we see him

only in sporadic operation and near his fall, his true greatness we have to take on faith. Greatest of all is the fact that were the enemy the intellectual prodigy he is painted, he would begin operations by snuffing out the detective before the detective knew of his existence. *Moriarty* could have had *Holmes* murdered a number of times if he had not stayed his hand until *Holmes's* plans were nearly complete. In fact one suspects *Holmes*, whose reasoning was not always perfect, of exaggerating both the power and brains of the Professor of Mathematics. And lastly, the detective who fights a universal provider of crime has to make more use than is quite proper of the official police. The final struggle is one of organization against organization; it is never really described for us, and we get instead violent but often clumsy attempts to kill the detective when the time for that is over, and the criminal's real danger has shifted from Baker Street to Scotland Yard.

Criticism of the *Moriarty* theme does not mean that the criminal must play a lone hand and be passive once his work is accomplished. He may have a gang, provided it does not grow into a departmental store, and he may attempt the life of the detective. A counter-attack makes the problem dynamic rather than static, and gives life to the story. The greatest master of tales where the criminal fights to the end is Dr. Austin Freeman: in *The Silent Witness* he achieved a unique success, an unsuspected man fearing that his

identity was known made detection possible by his needless struggle. Such a war is better than a tame pursuit.

Tales of giant conspiracy against civilization share many of the defects of the master-criminal theme. Like it they have a pleasant side—they make the detective run for his life. We may get a little tired of the security of our detectives who take the money while the criminal runs the risk. So we are glad to see him fleeing either because his particular *Moriarty* is after him or because he has trespassed on some vast design against the state or society in general. A good chase described by the fugitive, though it falls a little outside the ordinary scope of detective fiction, is in some ways better than the plain narrative of pursuit, and Mr. Buchan's *The Thirty-Nine Steps* and *The Power House* contain such hunts in classic perfection. Possibly it is unfair to complain that the revelation of such mysteries when it comes is never quite up to the chase. The spy story has been well developed on the lines of pursuit of the pursuer before and during the war; when peace made the Teuton innocuous, author and reader turned for similar enjoyment to Russian communist agents. They have on the whole brought a poor return. We knew what the spy wanted, he had an intelligible purpose; but these new conspirators, supposedly subtle and dangerous, never quite convince. What do they hope for? Their organization is generally far too large for their secret, which in itself never is convincing. In an attempt to explain conduct

that is sometimes foolish, always unusual, the author may tell us that these villains work from a pure passion for 'evil', it is for this that they abduct, assassinate, and rob. But this 'evil' remains inexplicable, and we can only guess its power from the dark deeds of its apostles. So intellect though reluctant will creep in and complain that the mystery does not explain the action. It is, one may remark, time for a pause in subtle Bolshevik plots; the other side should have a chance, and there is room for a tale of the unmasking of a dastardly capitalist intrigue by some bright spark in the labour movement. Mr. Wells in *When the Sleeper Awakes* approaches such a theme, and Mr. Baines in *The Black Circle* comes very near it.

From the habits of the great detectives of fiction it is possible to draw some general rules, provided they are not made too dogmatic to cramp genius. The relations of an investigator to the police have varied a good deal since Poe. *Dupin* and *Holmes* were private citizens with an extreme contempt for their salaried rivals. *Dupin* retired or died soon after his failure to solve the *Marie Roget* problem; *Holmes* continued in occasional practice till 1914, and gradually established a more friendly relationship with Scotland Yard. The greatest detective now in business, *Thorndyke*, works freely with the police, and has always been willing to use them as his instruments. Mr. Bailey's *Fortune* has gone further and become himself an official, though it is not easy to define his exact position; he has a freer hand than most civil servants enjoy.

Mr. Mason's *Hanaud* goes further still and has never engaged in genuine private practice. The tendency is clear, it is towards greater laxity and away from a rigid convention. Yet the detective should be careful, lest he become swallowed up in the government machine and lose the freedom to take a case when and as he will.

When the tale follows the Poe canon and the story is told by the detective's Boswell, certain obvious advantages follow. The narrative of an eye-witness attains a dramatic quality more easily than does an impersonal record. The clues can, as we have seen, be described not as they really are, but as they appear to a man of average, or generally less than average, intelligence. This parade of openness pleases while it deceives. Yet if there is a Boswell he must be present at all times, and this may prove inconvenient. The intuitionist detective like *Father Brown* or *Mr. Fortune* would only be hampered by him. It is true that they often need companions, partly as foil, partly to share in the conversation. But they get assistance as it is required, *Fortune* from the police, *Father Brown* from *Flambeau*, who was a prosperous thief till he reformed and became an unsuccessful detective. Mr. Bramah's *Max Carrados* generally operates with a private investigator called *Carlyle*, who is competent in a normal divorce case but quite at sea against subtlety.

The habit of running in couples, generally very ill-matched couples, at first sight appears strange. Why should a client seek out *Holmes* in some very

private affair, and never object to *Watson's* presence at the most intimate revelations—guessing (as he must) that *Watson's* help will be negligible? But man in general likes telling his secrets to an interested audience, and there is more difficulty in checking confidences than in extorting them. Moreover, a great detective's help can only be obtained on his own terms, and if he insists on companionship he must have it.

Dupin began the practice of instantaneous deduction; *Holmes* continued it, became overconfident, and was rather lucky that his occasional *non sequiturs* avoided exposure. A criminal who had grasped his methods could have defeated him. *Holmes* knew which way a bicycle had gone because the back wheel's impression was deeper than that of the front wheel; the fact is true but, save possibly on a hill, contributes nothing to the question of direction. *Holmes* guessed that two persons, not three, had drunk out of three glasses because all the lees were in the third, but two clever men could have drunk from all three and avoided this, or three might thus have masqueraded as two. Many have discerned a weakening in *Holmes's* powers as he grew older, and attributed this to a fall over a cliff at the hands of *Moriarty*. But in fact he never had such a fall, and if he deteriorated it was probably through his long addiction to cocaine.

What one loves in *Holmes*, in truth, is not his logic but his habits and his colleague. No detective has been so successfully eccentric as he was. None has

had as satisfactory a companion as *Watson*, who is not quite the fool he is often thought. Once, as Mr. Vernon Rendall points out,¹ *Watson* deceived *Holmes* and induced him at *St. Luke's College* to detect an imaginary bit of cribbing for a scholarship examination. *Watson* is in fact a remarkable person, and his stories, like Boswell's *Johnson*, are the records of not one but two great men. His brain remains consistently a trifle below the average; his restraint, devotion, and character are constantly above it, and his medical practice is obliging if not lucrative.

Holmes dabbled in science, but his knowledge therein bears the same relation to *Thorndyke's* as his pocket magnifying-glass to the latter's research case. In *Thorndyke* we have complete use of all the resources of the laboratory, coupled with a logic that is safer than that of *Holmes* because it is less cock-sure. The chief blemish in *Thorndyke* is the deplorable habit his associates possess of falling in love in the course of an investigation. The record of detection should in general be as cold as a scientific experiment, and to mix romance with it is in some measure to spoil it. A detective ought to remain single or at least not obtrude his own family affairs on us, and the same applies to the victim, the criminal, and the associate, save only when a love affair forms an integral part of the mystery. For in a detective story the true beauty is in mass and line, not in irrelevant orna-

¹ Vernon Rendall, *The London Nights of Belsize*, 1917, pp. 147-57.

ment without structural value: that should be left for the realists to exploit.

Few other detectives need specific mention, but it may be worth pointing out that Miss Christie's *Poirot* has twice been mistaken on a point of English law. He thinks that arrest for a crime relieves a man who is discharged of all further risk, and he may find his tasks easier in future if he learns that only trial and acquittal have this result.

One last problem remains: should a detective tell all, lay bare his clues as they are found, with all their significance, or may he keep them secret till the revelation scene when all is made clear? Real life could give but one answer; the detective would have to explain the position from day to day, else with his death from murder or accident the fears of the criminal would perish. But in fiction it is another matter, and almost the only detectives who take us fully into their confidence are those of Mr. Crofts. *Holmes* was extremely secretive; *Thorndyke* makes a parade of openness but keeps his special knowledge, on which the meaning of his clues depends, to himself; *Hanaud* not only conceals all that he can, but even starts every quest with some special information not known to the reader. *Father Brown* may only see what his companions see, but it is by no means described as he sees it. Lord Gorell's *Humblethorne* and *Evelyn Temple*¹ let us know what they know as they learn it, and so to some extent does Mr. Bentley's *Trent*, but all these investigators were proved

¹ *In the Night.*

wrong, so their honesty was a subtle kind of deception. If the rules of art are made by the artists, a detective is entitled to secrecy provided it is not too flagrant.

The detective story has proved capable of high development and has become a definite art; the same cannot be said of the tale of crime with the criminal as hero. Why is there this difference? Why is *Holmes* a greater figure than the late *Raffles*?

There are several reasons. A detective thrives on difficulties, cannot be great without them, but does not make his own. A criminal is in a different position. The better criminal he is, the more thoroughly he plans his campaign, every chance is allowed for, all goes smoothly, and as a result there should be no story. An account of his greatest successes would be as even and undramatic as the life of a stockbroker. Therefore many crime stories have by the nature of things to deal with episodes that should never have occurred were the criminal a true superman; the author may cry 'Here is a great though misguided intellect', but our reason stirs uneasily. Then there is the question of morality. Perhaps art in general should have no moral purpose, but the art of the detective story has one and must have; it seeks to justify the law and to bring retribution on the guilty. The criminal must be unmasked, the detective represents good and must triumph. To make a hero of the criminal is to reverse the moral law, which is after all based on common sense, for crime is not

in fact generous and open but mean. *Robin Hood* may have robbed the rich and given to the poor, but his accounts were never audited, and the proportion of his charity to his thefts remains obscure. *Raffles* stole principally from unpleasant people, but steal he did; not even success can make robbery appeal to us as a truly noble career. Is the criminal then to try other crimes than theft? Blackmail hardly provides a fitting career for a hero, and we are driven back on murder. Now it is possible for murderers to show courage and resource, to be less mean than the pickpocket or forger. But murder to be successful must be selfish, the victim cannot be given a chance, so a narrative of successful murders, like a narrative of successful robbery, leaves us at the end with a bad taste in our mouth. If each murder is to be done from the highest motives (as those by Mr. Wallace's *Four Just Men*) it will not be easy for there to be enough of them to keep our interest and approval. Even the *Four Just Men* began public life by killing a fairly harmless Secretary of State to prevent the Cabinet, of which he was but one member, from carrying a bill through Parliament. We might wink at this if we disapproved of the bill, but can it be called justice? Was this the only way? After all, if we are to regard murder as just, we must credit the murderer with an omniscience that we deny to our courts of law. Even if he thinks himself omniscient has he any business to act on his own opinion, regardless of the consequences to the innocent?

It is probably for some such reasons that the crime story has on the whole been a failure as compared with the tale of detection. Even *Raffles*, supposed to be a Bayard of crime, did many mean things, and caused great unhappiness to innocent policemen and amiable wives. If we analyse him we find that he took to crime because he preferred it to honest work, for it is futile to assure us that a man of his abilities could not have supported himself in a more orthodox way. Morally *Raffles* stood much lower than the *Bunny* he despised and led astray; *Bunny* was not an admirable citizen; but he had as great courage as his leader and seducer and far greater unselfishness. Mr. Barry Pain's *Constantine Dix* was a better man than *Raffles* for he had the decency to play a lone hand, and to spend his non-professional hours in trying to stop others walking down the road he had taken. Yet even he, a good man save for his profession, does not quite do as a hero. In fact the tale of crime is best seen from the detective's angle.

CRIME AND DETECTION

THE MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE

BY E. A. POE

'What song the Syrens sang, or what name Achilles assumed when he hid himself among women, although puzzling questions, are not beyond *all* conjecture.'—
SIR THOMAS BROWNE.

THE mental features discoursed of as the analytical are, in themselves, but little susceptible of analysis. We appreciate them only in their effects. We know of them, among other things, that they are always to their possessor, when inordinately possessed, a source of the liveliest enjoyment. As the strong man exults in his physical ability, delighting in such exercises as call his muscles into action, so glories the analyst in that moral activity which *disentangles*. He derives pleasure from even the most trivial occupations bringing his talent into play. He is fond of enigmas, of conundrums, of hieroglyphics; exhibiting in his solutions of each a degree of acumen which appears to the ordinary apprehension preternatural. His results, brought about by the very soul and essence of method, have, in truth, the whole air of intuition.

The faculty of re-solution is possibly much invigorated by mathematical study, and especially

by that highest branch of it which, unjustly, and merely on account of its retrograde operations, has been called, as if *par excellence*, analysis. Yet to calculate is not in itself to analyse. A chess-player, for example, does the one, without effort at the other. It follows that the game of chess, in its effects upon mental character, is greatly misunderstood. I am not now writing a treatise, but simply prefacing a somewhat peculiar narrative by observations very much at random; I will, therefore, take occasion to assert that the higher powers of the reflective intellect are more decidedly and more usefully tasked by the unostentatious game of draughts than by all the elaborate frivolity of chess. In this latter, where the pieces have different and bizarre motions, with various and variable values, what is only complex is mistaken (a not unusual error) for what is profound. The *attention* is here called powerfully into play. If it flag for an instant, an oversight is committed, resulting in injury or defeat. The possible moves being not only manifold, but involute, the chances of such oversights are multiplied; and in nine cases out of ten, it is the more concentrative rather than the more acute player who conquers. In draughts, on the contrary, where the moves are *unique* and have but little variation, the probabilities of inadvertence are diminished, and the mere attention being left comparatively unemployed, what advantages are obtained by either party are obtained by superior acumen. To be less abstract—let us suppose a game of draughts where the pieces are reduced to four kings, and where, of course, no oversight is to be expected. It is obvious that here the victory can be decided (the players being at all

equal) only by some *recherché* movement, the result of some strong exertion of the intellect. Deprived of ordinary resources, the analyst throws himself into the spirit of his opponent, identifies himself therewith, and not unfrequently sees thus, at a glance, the sole methods (sometimes indeed absurdly simple ones) by which he may seduce into error or hurry into miscalculation.

Whist has long been noted for its influence upon what is termed the calculating power; and men of the highest order of intellect have been known to take an apparently unaccountable delight in it, while eschewing chess as frivolous. Beyond doubt there is nothing of a similar nature so greatly tasking the faculty of analysis. The best chess-player in Christendom *may* be little more than the best player of chess; but proficiency in whist implies capacity for success in all these more important undertakings where mind struggles with mind. When I say proficiency, I mean that perfection in the game which includes a comprehension of *all* the sources whence legitimate advantage may be derived. These are not only manifold, but multi-form, and lie frequently among recesses of thought altogether inaccessible to the ordinary understanding. To observe attentively is to remember distinctly; and, so far, the concentrative chess-player will do very well at whist; while the rules of Hoyle (themselves based upon the mere mechanism of the game) are sufficiently and generally comprehensible. Thus to have a retentive memory, and to proceed by 'the book', are points commonly regarded as the sum total of good playing. But it is in matters beyond the limits of mere rule that the skill of the analyst is evinced. He makes in

silence, a host of observations and inferences. So, perhaps, do his companions; and the difference in the extent of the information obtained, lies not so much in the validity of the inference as in the quality of the observation. The necessary knowledge is that of *what* to observe. Our player confines himself not at all; nor, because the game is the object, does he reject deductions from things external to the game. He examines the countenance of his partner, comparing it carefully with that of each of his opponents. He considers the mode of assorting the cards in each hand; often counting trump by trump, and honour by honour, through the glances bestowed by their holders upon each. He notes every variation of face as the play progresses, gathering a fund of thought from the differences in the expression of certainty, of surprise, of triumph, or of chagrin. From the manner of gathering up a trick he judges whether the person taking it can make another in the suit. He recognizes what is played through feint, by the air with which it is thrown upon the table. A casual or inadvertent word; the accidental dropping or turning of a card, with the accompanying anxiety or carelessness in regard to its concealment; the counting of the tricks, with the order of their arrangement; embarrassment, hesitation, eagerness or trepidation—all afford, to his apparently intuitive perception, indications of the true state of affairs. The first two or three rounds having been played, he is in full possession of the contents of each hand, and thenceforward puts down his cards with as absolute a precision of purpose as if the rest of the party had turned outward the faces of their own.

The analytical power should not be confounded with simple ingenuity; for while the analyst is necessarily ingenious, the ingenious man is often remarkably incapable of analysis. The constructive or combining power, by which ingenuity is usually manifested, and to which the phrenologists (I believe erroneously) have assigned a separate organ, supposing it a primitive faculty, has been so frequently seen in those whose intellect bordered otherwise upon idiocy, as to have attracted general observation among writers on morals. Between ingenuity and the analytic ability there exists a difference far greater indeed than that between the fancy and the imagination, but of a character very strictly analogous. It will be found, in fact, that the ingenious are always fanciful, and the *truly* imaginative never otherwise than analytic.

The narrative which follows will appear to the reader somewhat in the light of a commentary upon the propositions just advanced.

Residing in Paris during the spring and part of the summer of 18—, I there became acquainted with a Monsieur C. Auguste Dupin. This young gentleman was of an excellent—indeed of an illustrious family, but, by a variety of untoward events, had been reduced to such poverty that the energy of his character succumbed beneath it, and he ceased to bestir himself in the world, or to care for the retrieval of his fortunes. By courtesy of his creditors there still remained in his possession a small remnant of his patrimony; and, upon the income arising from this, he managed, by means of a rigorous economy, to procure the necessaries of life, without troubling himself about its super-

fluities. Books, indeed, were his sole luxuries, and in Paris these are easily obtained.

Our first meeting was at an obscure library in the Rue Montmartre, where the accident of our both being in search of the same very rare and very remarkable volume, brought us into closer communion. We saw each other again and again. I was deeply interested in the little family history which he detailed to me with all that candour which a Frenchman indulges whenever mere self is the theme. I was astonished, too, at the vast extent of his reading; and, above all, I felt my soul enkindled within me by the wild fervour, and the vivid freshness of his imagination. Seeking in Paris the objects I then sought, I felt that the society of such a man would be to me a treasure beyond price; and this feeling I frankly confided to him. It was at length arranged that we should live together during my stay in the city; and as my worldly circumstances were somewhat less embarrassed than his own, I was permitted to be at the expense of renting, and furnishing in a style which suited the rather fantastic gloom of our common temper, a time-eaten and grotesque mansion, long deserted through superstitions into which we did not inquire, and tottering to its fall in a retired and desolate portion of the Faubourg St. Germain.

Had the routine of our life at this place been known to the world, we should have been regarded as madmen—although, perhaps, as madmen of a harmless nature. Our seclusion was perfect. We admitted no visitors. Indeed the locality of our retirement had been carefully kept a secret from my own former associates; and it had been many

years since Dupin had ceased to know or be known in Paris. We existed within ourselves alone.

It was a freak of fancy in my friend (for what else shall I call it?) to be enamoured of the Night for her own sake; and into this *bizarrerie*, as into all his others, I quietly fell, giving myself up to his wild whims with a perfect abandon. The sable divinity would not herself dwell with us always; but we could counterfeit her presence. At the first dawn of the morning we closed all the massy shutters of our old building; lighted a couple of tapers which, strongly perfumed, threw out only the ghastliest and feeblest of rays. By the aid of these we then busied our souls in dreams—reading, writing, or conversing, until warned by the clock of the advent of the true Darkness. Then we sallied forth into the streets, arm in arm, continuing the topics of the day, or roaming far and wide until a late hour, seeking, amid the wild lights and shadows of the populous city, that infinity of mental excitement which quiet observation can afford.

At such times I could not help remarking and admiring (although from his rich ideality I had been prepared to expect it) a peculiar analytic ability in Dupin. He seemed, too, to take an eager delight in its exercise—if not exactly in its display—and did not hesitate to confess the pleasure thus derived. He boasted to me, with a low chuckling laugh, that most men, in respect to himself, wore windows in their bosoms, and was wont to follow up such assertions by direct and very startling proofs of his intimate knowledge of my own. His manner at these moments was frigid and abstract; his eyes were vacant in expression; while his voice, usually a rich tenor, rose into a treble which would

have sounded petulantly but for the deliberateness and entire distinctness of the enunciation. Observing him in these moods, I often dwelt meditatively upon the old philosophy of the Bi-Part Soul, and amused myself with the fancy of a double Dupin—the creative and the resolvent.

Let it not be supposed, from what I have just said, that I am detailing any mystery, or penning any romance. What I have described in the Frenchman was merely the result of an excited, or perhaps of a diseased intelligence. But of the character of his remarks at the periods in question an example will best convey the idea.

We were strolling one night down a long dirty street, in the vicinity of the Palais Royal. Being both apparently occupied with thought, neither of us had spoken a syllable for fifteen minutes at least. All at once Dupin broke forth with these words—

‘He is a very little fellow, that’s true, and would do better for the *Théâtre des Variétés*.’

‘There can be no doubt of that,’ I replied unwittingly, and not at first observing (so much had I been absorbed in reflection) the extraordinary manner in which the speaker had chimed in with my meditations. In an instant afterward I recollected myself, and my astonishment was profound.

‘Dupin,’ said I, gravely, ‘this is beyond my comprehension. I do not hesitate to say that I am amazed, and can scarcely credit my senses. How was it possible you should know I was thinking of——?’ Here I paused, to ascertain beyond a doubt whether he really knew of whom I thought.

‘Of Chantilly,’ said he; ‘why do you pause?’

You were remarking to yourself that his diminutive figure unfitted him for tragedy.'

This was precisely what had formed the subject of my reflections. Chantilly was a quondam cobbler of the Rue St. Denis, who, becoming stage-mad, had attempted the rôle of Xerxes, in Crébillon's tragedy so called, and been notoriously pasquinaded for his pains.

'Tell me, for Heaven's sake,' I exclaimed, 'the method—if method there is—by which you have been enabled to fathom my soul in this matter.' In fact I was even more startled than I would have been willing to express.

'It was the fruiterer,' replied my friend, 'who brought you to the conclusion that the mender of soles was not of sufficient height for Xerxes *et id genus omne*.'

'The fruiterer!—you astonish me—I know no fruiterer whomsoever.'

'The man who ran up against you as we entered the street—it may have been fifteen minutes ago.'

I now remembered that, in fact, a fruiterer, carrying upon his head a large basket of apples, had nearly thrown me down, by accident, as we passed from the Rue C—— into the thoroughfare where we stood; but what this had to do with Chantilly I could not possibly understand.

There was not a particle of *charlatanerie* about Dupin. 'I will explain,' he said, 'and that you may comprehend all clearly, we will first retrace the course of your meditations, from the moment in which I spoke to you until that of the rencontre with the fruiterer in question. The larger links of the chain run thus—Chantilly, Orion, Dr. Nichols,

Epicurus, Stereotomy, the street stones, the fruiterer.'

There are few persons who have not, at some period of their lives, amused themselves in retracing the steps by which particular conclusions of their own minds have been attained. The occupation is often full of interest; and he who attempts it for the first time is astonished by the apparently illimitable distance and incoherence between the starting-point and the goal. What then must have been my amazement when I heard the Frenchman speak what he had just spoken, and when I could not help acknowledging that he had spoken the truth! He continued—

'We had been talking of horses, if I remember aright, just before leaving the Rue C——. This was the last subject we discussed. As we crossed into the street, a fruiterer, with a large basket upon his head, brushing quickly past us, thrust you upon a pile of paving-stones collected at a spot where the causeway is undergoing repair. You stepped upon one of the loose fragments, slipped, slightly strained your ankle, appeared vexed or sulky, muttered a few words, turned to look at the pile, and then proceeded in silence. I was not particularly attentive to what you did; but observation has become with me, of late, a species of necessity.

'You kept your eyes upon the ground—glancing, with a petulant expression, at the holes and ruts in the pavement (so that I saw you were still thinking of the stones), until we reached the little alley called Lamartine, which has been paved, by way of experiment, with the overlapping and riveted blocks. Here your countenance brightened up, and, perceiving your lips move, I could not doubt

that you murmured the word "stereotomy", a term very affectedly applied to this species of pavement. I knew that you could not say to yourself "stereotomy" without being brought to think of atomies, and thus of the theories of Epicurus; and since, when we discussed this subject not very long ago, I mentioned to you how singularly, yet with how little notice, the vague guesses of that noble Greek had met with confirmation in the late nebular cosmogony, I felt that you could not avoid casting your eyes upward to the great nebula Orion, and I certainly expected that you would do so. You did look up; and I was now assured that I had correctly followed your steps. But in that bitter tirade upon Chantilly, which appeared in yesterday's *Musée*, the satirist, making some disgraceful allusions to the cobbler's change of name upon assuming the buskin, quoted a Latin line about which we have often conversed. I mean the line

"Perdidit antiquum litera prima sonum."

I had told you that this was in reference to Orion, formerly written Urion; and, from certain pungencies connected with this explanation, I was aware that you could not have forgotten it. It was clear, therefore, that you would not fail to combine the two ideas of Orion and Chantilly. That you did combine them I saw by the character of the smile which passed over your lips. You thought of the poor cobbler's immolation. So far you had been stooping in your gait; but now I saw you draw yourself up to your full height. I was then sure that you reflected upon the diminutive figure of Chantilly. At this point I interrupted your medita-

tions to remark that as, in fact, he *was* a very little fellow, that Chantilly, he would do better at the *Théâtre des Variétés*.'

Not long after this, we were looking over an evening edition of the *Gazette des Tribunaux* when the following paragraphs arrested our attention:—

'EXTRAORDINARY MURDERS.—This morning, about three o'clock, the inhabitants of the Quartier St. Roch were aroused from sleep by a succession of terrific shrieks, issuing, apparently, from the fourth story of a house in the Rue Morgue, known to be in the sole occupancy of one Madame L'Españaye, and her daughter, Mademoiselle Camille L'Españaye. After some delay, occasioned by a fruitless attempt to procure admission in the usual manner, the gateway was broken in with a crowbar, and eight or ten of the neighbours entered, accompanied by two gendarmes. By this time the cries had ceased; but, as the party rushed up the first flight of stairs, two or more rough voices in angry contention were distinguished, and seemed to proceed from the upper part of the house. As the second landing was reached, these sounds also had ceased, and everything remained perfectly quiet. The party spread themselves, and hurried from room to room. Upon arriving at a large back chamber in the fourth story (the door of which, being found locked with the key inside, was forced open), a spectacle presented itself which struck every one present not less with horror than with astonishment.

'The apartment was in the wildest disorder—the furniture broken and thrown about in all directions. There was only one bedstead; and from this the bed had been removed and thrown into the middle

of the floor. On a chair lay a razor, besmeared with blood. On the hearth were two or three long and thick tresses of grey human hair, also dabbled in blood, and seeming to have been pulled out by the roots. Upon the floor were found four napoleons, an earring of topaz, three large silver spoons, three smaller of *métal d'Alger*, and two bags, containing nearly four thousand francs in gold. The drawers of a bureau, which stood in one corner, were open, and had been apparently rifled although many articles still remained in them. A small iron safe was discovered under the *bed* (not under the bedstead). It was open, with the key still in the door. It had no contents beyond a few old letters, and other papers of little consequence.

‘Of Madame L’Espanaye no traces were here seen; but an unusual quantity of soot being observed in the fireplace, a search was made in the chimney, and (horrible to relate!) the corpse of the daughter, head downward, was dragged therefrom; it having been thus forced up the narrow aperture for a considerable distance. The body was quite warm. Upon examining it, many excoriations were perceived, no doubt occasioned by the violence with which it had been thrust up and disengaged. Upon the face were many severe scratches, and, upon the throat, dark bruises, and deep indentations of finger nails, as if the deceased had been throttled to death.

‘After a thorough investigation of every portion of the house, without further discovery, the party made its way into a small paved yard in the rear of the building, where lay the corpse of the old lady, with her throat so entirely cut that, upon an attempt to raise her, the head fell off. The body

as well as the head was fearfully mutilated—the former so much so as scarcely to retain any semblance of humanity.

‘ To this horrible mystery there is not as yet, we believe, the slightest clue.’

The next day’s paper had these additional particulars :—

‘ THE TRAGEDY IN THE RUE MORGUE.—Many individuals have been examined in relation to this most extraordinary and frightful affair’ [the word ‘ *affaire* ’ has not yet in France that levity of import which it conveys with us], ‘ but nothing whatever has transpired to throw light upon it. We give below all the material testimony elicited.

‘ *Pauline Dubourg*, laundress, deposes that she has known both the deceased for three years, having washed for them during that period. The old lady and her daughter seemed on good terms—very affectionate towards each other. They were excellent pay. Could not speak in regard to their mode or means of living. Believed that Madame L. told fortunes for a living. Was reputed to have money put by. Never met any persons in the house when she called for the clothes or took them home. Was sure that they had no servant in employ. There appeared to be no furniture in any part of the building, except in the fourth story.

‘ *Pierre Moreau*, tobacconist, deposes that he has been in the habit of selling small quantities of tobacco and snuff to Madame L’Espanaye for nearly four years. Was born in the neighbourhood, and has always resided there. The deceased and her daughter had occupied the house in which the corpses were found for more than six years. It was formerly occupied by a jeweller, who under-let the

upper rooms to various persons. The house was the property of Madame L. She became dissatisfied with the abuse of the premises by her tenant, and moved into them herself, refusing to let any portion. The old lady was childish. Witness had seen the daughter some five or six times during the six years. The two lived an exceedingly retired life—were reputed to have money. Had heard it said among the neighbours that Madame L. told fortunes—did not believe it. Had never seen any person enter the door except the old lady and her daughter, a porter once or twice, and a physician some eight or ten times.

‘ Many other persons, neighbours, gave evidence to the same effect. No one was spoken of as frequenting the house. It was not known whether there were any living connections of Madame L. and her daughter. The shutters of the front windows were seldom opened. Those in the rear were always closed, with the exception of the large back room, fourth story. The house was a good house—not very old.

‘ *Isidore Muset*, gendarme, deposes that he was called to the house about three o'clock in the morning, and found some twenty or thirty persons at the gateway, endeavouring to gain admittance. Forced it open, at length, with a bayonet—not with a crowbar. Had but little difficulty in getting it open, on account of its being a double or folding gate, and bolted neither at bottom nor top. The shrieks were continued until the gate was forced, and then suddenly ceased. They seemed to be screams of some person (or persons) in great agony, were loud and drawn out, not short and quick. Witness led the way upstairs. Upon reaching the first

landing, heard two voices in loud and angry contention—the one a gruff voice, the other much shriller—a very strange voice. Could distinguish some words of the former, which was that of a Frenchman. Was positive that it was not a woman's voice. Could distinguish the words "*sacré*" and "*diable*". The shrill voice was that of a foreigner. Could not be sure whether it was the voice of a man or of a woman. Could not make out what was said, but believed the language to be Spanish. The state of the room and of the bodies was described by this witness as we described them yesterday.

' *Henri Duval*, a neighbour, and by trade a silversmith, deposes that he was one of the party who first entered the house. Corroborates the testimony of Muset in general. As soon as they forced an entrance, they reclosed the door, to keep out the crowd, which collected very fast, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour. The shrill voice, this witness thinks, was that of an Italian. Was certain it was not French. Could not be sure that it was a man's voice. It might have been a woman's. Was not acquainted with the Italian language. Could not distinguish the words, but was convinced by the intonation that the speaker was an Italian. Knew Madame L. and her daughter. Had conversed with both frequently. Was sure that the shrill voice was not that of either of the deceased.

' ——— *Odenheimer*, restaurateur. This witness volunteered his testimony. Not speaking French, was examined through an interpreter. Is a native of Amsterdam. Was passing the house at the time of the shrieks. They lasted for several minutes—probably ten. They were long and loud—very awful and distressing. Was one of those who

entered the building. Corroborated the previous evidence in every respect but one. Was sure that the shrill voice was that of a man—of a Frenchman. Could not distinguish the words uttered. They were loud and quick—unequal—spoken apparently in fear as well as in anger. The voice was harsh—not so much shrill as harsh. Could not call it a shrill voice. The gruff voice said repeatedly “*sacré*”, “*diable*”, and once “*mon Dieu*”.

‘*Jules Mignaud*, banker, of the firm of Mignaud et Fils, Rue Deloraine. Is the elder Mignaud. Madame L’Espanaye had some property. Had opened an account with his banking house in the spring of the year — (eight years previously). Made frequent deposits in small sums. Had checked for nothing until the third day before her death, when she took out in person the sum of 4000 francs. This sum was paid in gold, and a clerk sent home with the money.

‘*Adolphe Le Bon*, clerk to Mignaud et Fils, deposes that on the day in question, about noon, he accompanied Madame L’Espanaye to her residence with the 4000 francs put up in two bags. Upon the door being opened, Mademoiselle L. appeared and took from his hands one of the bags, while the old lady relieved him of the other. He then bowed and departed. Did not see any person in the street at the time. It is a by-street—very lonely.

‘*William Bird*, tailor, deposes that he was one of the party who entered the house. Is an Englishman. Has lived in Paris two years. Was one of the first to ascend the stairs. Heard the voices in contention. The gruff voice was that of a Frenchman. Could make out several words, but cannot now remember all. Heard distinctly “*sacré*” and

"*mon Dieu*". There was a sound at the moment as if of several persons struggling—a scraping and scuffling sound. The shrill voice was very loud—louder than the gruff one. Is sure that it was not the voice of an Englishman. Appeared to be that of a German. Might have been a woman's voice. Does not understand German.

Four of the above-named witnesses, being recalled, deposed that the door of the chamber in which was found the body of Mademoiselle L. was locked on the inside when the party reached it. Everything was perfectly silent—no groans or noises of any kind. Upon forcing the door no person was seen. The windows, both of the back and front room, were down and firmly fastened from within. A door between the two rooms was closed, but not locked. The door leading from the front room into the passage was locked, with the key on the inside. A small room in the front of the house, on the fourth story, at the head of the passage, was open, the door being ajar. This room was crowded with old beds, boxes, and so forth. These were carefully removed and searched. There was not an inch of any portion of the house which was not carefully searched. Sweeps were sent up and down the chimneys. The house was a four-story one, with garrets (*mansardes*). A trap-door on the roof was nailed down very securely—did not appear to have been opened for years. The time elapsing between the hearing of the voices in contention and the breaking open of the room door was variously stated by the witnesses. Some made it as short as three minutes—some as long as five. The door was opened with difficulty.

'*Alfonzo Garcio*, undertaker, deposes that he

resides in the Rue Morgue. Is a native of Spain. Was one of the party who entered the house. Did not proceed upstairs. Is nervous, and was apprehensive of the consequences of agitation. Heard the voices in contention. The gruff voice was that of a Frenchman. Could not distinguish what was said. The shrill voice was that of an Englishman—is sure of this. Does not understand the English language, but judges by the intonation.

'*Alberto Montani*, confectioner, deposes that he was among the first to ascend the stairs. Heard the voices in question. The gruff voice was that of a Frenchman. Distinguished several words. The speaker appeared to be expostulating. Could not make out the words of the shrill voice. Spoke quick and unevenly. Thinks it the voice of a Russian. Corroborates the general testimony. Is an Italian. Never conversed with a native of Russia.

'Several witnesses, recalled, here testified that the chimneys of all the rooms on the fourth story were too narrow to admit the passage of a human being. By "sweeps" were meant cylindrical sweeping-brushes, such as are employed by those who clean chimneys. These brushes were passed up and down every flue in the house. There is no back passage by which any one could have descended while the party proceeded upstairs. The body of Mademoiselle L'Esplanaye was so firmly wedged in the chimney that it could not be got down until four or five of the party united their strength.

'*Paul Dumas*, physician, deposes that he was called to view the bodies about daybreak. They were both then lying on the sacking of the bedstead in the chamber where Mademoiselle L. was found.

The corpse of the young lady was much bruised and excoriated. The fact that it had been thrust up the chimney would sufficiently account for these appearances. The throat was greatly chafed. There were several deep scratches just below the chin, together with a series of livid spots which were evidently the impression of fingers. The face was fearfully discoloured, and the eyeballs protruded. The tongue had been partially bitten through. A large bruise was discovered upon the pit of the stomach, produced, apparently, by the pressure of a knee. In the opinion of M. Dumas, Mademoiselle L'Esplanaye had been throttled to death by some person or persons unknown. The corpse of the mother was horribly mutilated. All the bones of the right leg and arm were more or less shattered. The left tibia much splintered, as well as all the ribs of the left side. Whole body dreadfully bruised and discoloured. It was not possible to say how the injuries had been inflicted. A heavy club of wood, or a broad bar of iron—a chair—any large, heavy, and obtuse weapon would have produced such results, if wielded by the hands of a very powerful man. No woman could have inflicted the blows with any weapon. The head of the deceased, when seen by witness, was entirely separated from the body, and was also greatly shattered. The throat had evidently been cut with some very sharp instrument—probably with a razor.

' *Alexandre Etienne*, surgeon, was called with M. Dumas, to view the bodies. Corroborated the testimony, and the opinions of M. Dumas.

' Nothing further of importance was elicited, although several other persons were examined. A

murder so mysterious, and so perplexing in all its particulars, was never before committed in Paris—if indeed a murder has been committed at all. The police are entirely at fault—an unusual occurrence in affairs of this nature. There is not, however, the shadow of a clue apparent.’

The evening edition of the paper stated that the greatest excitement still continued in the Quartier St. Roch—that the premises in question had been carefully re-searched, and fresh examinations of witnesses instituted, but all to no purpose. A post-script, however, mentioned that Adolphe Le Bon had been arrested and imprisoned—although nothing appeared to criminate him, beyond the facts already detailed.

Dupin seemed singularly interested in the progress of this affair—at least so I judged from his manner, for he made no comments. It was only after the announcement that Le Bon had been imprisoned, that he asked me my opinion respecting the murders.

I could merely agree with all Paris in considering them an insoluble mystery. I saw no means by which it would be possible to trace the murderer.

‘We must not judge of the means,’ said Dupin, ‘by this shell of an examination. The Parisian police, so much extolled for acumen, are cunning, but no more. There is no method in their proceedings, beyond the method of the moment. They make a vast parade of measures; but, not unfrequently, these are so ill adapted to the objects proposed, as to put us in mind of Monsieur Jourdain’s calling for his *robe de chambre*—*pour mieux entendre la musique*. The results attained by them are not unfrequently surprising, but for the most

part are brought about by simple diligence and activity. When these qualities are unavailing, their schemes fail. Vidocq, for example, was a good guesser, and a persevering man. But, without educated thought, he erred continually by the very intensity of his investigations. He impaired his vision by holding the object too close. He might see, perhaps, one or two points with unusual clearness, but in so doing, he necessarily lost sight of the matter as a whole. Thus there is such a thing as being too profound. Truth is not always in a well. In fact, as regards the more important knowledge, I do believe that she is invariably superficial. The depth lies in the valleys where we seek her, and not upon the mountain-top where she is found. The modes and sources of this kind of error are well typified in the contemplation of the heavenly bodies. To look at a star by glances—to view it in a sidelong way, by turning toward it the exterior portions of the retina (more susceptible of feeble impressions of light than the interior), is to behold the star distinctly—is to have the best appreciation of its lustre—a lustre which grows dim just in proportion as we turn our vision *fully* upon it. A greater number of rays actually fall upon the eye in the latter case, but, in the former, there is the more refined capacity for comprehension. By undue profundity we perplex and enfeeble thought; and it is possible to make even Venus herself vanish from the firmament by a scrutiny too sustained, too concentrated, or too direct.

‘As for these murders, let us enter into some examinations for ourselves, before we make up an opinion respecting them. An inquiry will afford us amusement’ [I thought this an odd term, so

applied, but said nothing], 'and, besides, Le Bon once rendered me a service for which I am not ungrateful. We will go and see the premises with our own eyes. I know G——, the Prefect of Police, and shall have no difficulty in obtaining the necessary permission.'

The permission was obtained, and we proceeded at once to the Rue Morgue. This is one of those miserable thoroughfares which intervene between the Rue Richelieu and the Rue St. Roch. It was late in the afternoon when we reached it, as this quarter is at a great distance from that in which we resided. The house was readily found; for there were still many persons gazing up at the closed shutters, with an objectless curiosity, from the opposite side of the way. It was an ordinary Parisian house, with a gateway, on one side of which was a glazed watch-box, with a sliding panel in the window, indicating a *loge de concierge*. Before going in we walked up the street, turned down an alley, and then, again turning, passed in the rear of the building—Dupin, meanwhile, examining the whole neighbourhood as well as the house, with a minuteness of attention for which I could see no possible object.

Retracing our steps, we came again to the front of the dwelling, rang, and having shown our credentials, were admitted by the agents in charge. We went upstairs—into the chamber where the body of Mademoiselle L'Espanaye had been found, and where both the deceased still lay. The disorders of the room had, as usual, been suffered to exist. I saw nothing beyond what had been stated in the *Gazette des Tribunaux*. Dupin scrutinized everything—not excepting the bodies of the

victims. We then went into the other rooms, and into the yard; a gendarme accompanying us throughout. The examination occupied us until dark, when we took our departure. On our way home my companion stepped in for a moment at the office of one of the daily papers.

I have said that the whims of my friend were manifold, and that *Je les ménagais*—for this phrase there is no English equivalent. It was his humour, now, to decline all conversation on the subject of the murders, until about noon the next day. He then asked me, suddenly, if I had observed anything *peculiar* at the scene of the atrocity.

There was something in his manner of emphasizing the word 'peculiar', which caused me to shudder, without knowing why.

'No, nothing *peculiar*,' I said; 'nothing more, at least, than we both saw stated in the paper.'

'The *Gazette*,' he replied, 'has not entered, I fear, into the unusual horror of the thing. But dismiss the idle opinions of this print. It appears to me that this mystery is considered insoluble, for the very reason which should cause it to be regarded as easy of solution—I mean for the *outré* character of its features. The police are confounded by the seeming absence of motive—not for the murder itself—but for the atrocity of the murder. They are puzzled, too, by the seeming impossibility of reconciling the voices heard in contention, with the facts that no one was discovered upstairs but the assassinated Mademoiselle L'Españaye, and that there were no means of egress without the notice of the party ascending. The wild disorder of the room; the corpse thrust, with the head downward, up the chimney; the

frightful mutilation of the body of the old lady; these considerations, with those just mentioned, and others which I need not mention, have sufficed to paralyse the powers, by putting completely at fault the boasted acumen of the government agents. They have fallen into the gross but common error of confounding the unusual with the abstruse. But it is by these deviations from the plane of the ordinary that reason feels its way, if at all, in its search for the true. In investigations such as we are now pursuing, it should not be so much asked "what has occurred?" as "what has occurred that has never occurred before?" In fact, the facility with which I shall arrive, or have arrived, at the solution of this mystery, is in the direct ratio of its apparent insolubility in the eyes of the police.'

I stared at the speaker in mute astonishment.

'I am now awaiting,' continued he, looking toward the door of our apartment—'I am now awaiting a person who, although perhaps not the perpetrator of these butcheries, must have been in some measure implicated in their perpetration. Of the worst portion of the crimes committed, it is probable that he is innocent. I hope that I am right in this supposition; for upon it I build my expectation of reading the entire riddle. I look for the man here—in this room—every moment. It is true that he may not arrive; but the probability is that he will. Should he come, it will be necessary to detain him. Here are pistols; and we both know how to use them when occasion demands their use.'

I took the pistols, scarcely knowing what I did, or believing what I heard, while Dupin went on,

very much as if in a soliloquy. I have already spoken of his abstract manner at such times. His discourse was addressed to myself; but his voice, although by no means loud, had that intonation which is commonly employed in speaking to some one at a great distance. His eyes, vacant in expression, regarded only the wall.

‘That the voices heard in contention,’ he said, ‘by the party upon the stairs, were not the voices of the women themselves, was fully proved by the evidence. This relieves us of all doubt upon the question whether the old lady could have first destroyed the daughter, and afterward have committed suicide. I speak of this point chiefly for the sake of method; for the strength of Madame L’Espanaye would have been utterly unequal to the task of thrusting her daughter’s corpse up the chimney as it was found; and the nature of the wounds upon her own person entirely precludes the idea of self-destruction. Murder, then, has been committed by some third party; and the voices of this third party were those heard in contention. Let me now advert—not to the whole testimony respecting these voices—but to what was *peculiar* in that testimony. Did you observe anything peculiar about it?’

I remarked that, while all the witnesses agreed in supposing the gruff voice to be that of a Frenchman, there was much disagreement in regard to the shrill, or, as one individual termed it, the harsh voice.

‘That was the evidence itself,’ said Dupin, ‘but it was not the peculiarity of the evidence. You have observed nothing distinctive. Yet there *was* something to be observed. The witnesses, as you

remark, agreed about the gruff voice ; they were here unanimous. But in regard to the shrill voice, the peculiarity is—not that they disagreed—but, that, while an Italian, an Englishman, a Spaniard, a Hollander, and a Frenchman attempted to describe it, each one spoke of it as that of *a foreigner*. Each is sure that it was not the voice of one of his own countrymen. Each likens it—not to the voice of an individual of any nation with whose language he is conversant—but the converse. The Frenchman supposes it the voice of a Spaniard, and “ might have distinguished some words *had he been acquainted with the Spanish*”. The Dutchman maintains it to have been that of a Frenchman ; but we find it stated that, “ *not understanding French, this witness was examined through an interpreter.*” The Englishman thinks it the voice of a German, and “ *does not understand German*”. The Spaniard “ is sure ” that it was that of an Englishman, but “ judges by the intonation ” altogether, “ *as he has no knowledge of the English.*” The Italian believes it the voice of a Russian, but “ *has never conversed with a native of Russia*”. A second Frenchman differs, moreover, with the first, and is positive that the voice was that of an Italian ; but, *not being cognizant of that tongue*, is, like the Spaniard, “ convinced by the intonation.” Now, how strangely unusual must that voice have really been, about which such testimony as this *could* have been elicited !—in whose *tones*, even, denizens of the five great divisions of Europe could recognize nothing familiar ! You will say that it might have been the voice of an Asiatic—of an African. Neither Asiatics nor Africans abound in Paris ; but, without denying the inference, I will now merely

call your attention to three points. The voice is termed by one witness "harsh rather than shrill". It is represented by two others to have been "quick and *unequal*". No words—no sounds resembling words—were by any witness mentioned as distinguishable.

'I know not,' continued Dupin, 'what impression I may have made, so far, upon your own understanding; but I do not hesitate to say that legitimate deductions even from this portion of the testimony—the portion respecting the gruff and shrill voices—are in themselves sufficient to engender a suspicion which should give direction to all further progress in the investigation of the mystery. I said "legitimate deductions"; but my meaning is not thus fully expressed. I designed to imply that the deductions are the *sole* proper ones, and that the suspicion arises *inevitably* from them as the single result. What the suspicion is, however, I will not say just yet. I merely wish you to bear in mind that, with myself, it was sufficiently forcible to give a definite form—a certain tendency—to my inquiries in the chamber.

'Let us now transport ourselves, in fancy, to this chamber. What shall we first seek here? The means of egress employed by the murderers. It is not too much to say that neither of us believe in preternatural events. Madame and Mademoiselle L'Esplanaye were not destroyed by spirits. The doers of the deed were material, and escaped materially. Then how? Fortunately, there is but one mode of reasoning upon the point, and that mode *must* lead us to a definite decision. Let us examine, each by each, the possible means of egress. It is clear that the assassins were in the

room where Mademoiselle L'Esplanaye was found, or at least in the room adjoining, when the party ascended the stairs. It is, then, only from these two apartments that we have to seek issues. The police have laid bare the floors, the ceilings, and the masonry of the walls, in every direction. No *secret* issues could have escaped their vigilance. But, not trusting to *their* eyes, I examined with my own. There were, then, *no* secret issues. Both doors leading from the rooms into the passage were securely locked, with the keys inside. Let us turn to the chimneys. These, although of ordinary width for some eight or ten feet above the hearths, will not admit, throughout their extent, the body of a large cat. The impossibility of egress, by means already stated, being thus absolute, we are reduced to the windows. Through those of the front room no one could have escaped without notice from the crowd in the street. The murderers *must* have passed, then, through those of the back room. Now, brought to this conclusion in so unequivocal a manner as we are, it is not our part, as reasoners, to reject it on account of apparent impossibilities. It is only left for us to prove that these apparent "impossibilities" are, in reality, not such.

' There are two windows in the chamber. One of them is unobstructed by furniture, and is wholly visible. The lower portion of the other is hidden from view by the head of the unwieldy bedstead which is thrust close up against it. The former was found securely fastened from within. It resisted the utmost force of those who endeavoured to raise it. A large gimlet hole had been pierced in its frame to the left, and a very stout nail was found

fitted therein, nearly to the head. Upon examining the other window, a similar nail was seen similarly fitted in it; and a vigorous attempt to raise this sash, failed also. The police were now entirely satisfied that egress had not been in these directions. And, *therefore*, it was thought a matter of supererogation to withdraw the nails and open the windows.

‘ My own examination was somewhat more particular, and was so for the reason I have just given—because here it was, I knew, that all apparent impossibilities *must* be proved to be not such in reality.

‘ I proceeded to think thus—*a posteriori*. The murderers *did* escape from one of these windows. This being so, they could not have re-fastened the sashes from the inside, as they were found fastened—the consideration which put a stop, through its obviousness, to the scrutiny of the police in this quarter. Yet the sashes *were* fastened. They *must*, then, have the power of fastening themselves. There was no escape from this conclusion. I stepped to the unobstructed casement, withdrew the nail with some difficulty, and attempted to raise the sash. It resisted all my efforts, as I had anticipated. A concealed spring must, I now knew, exist; and this corroboration of my idea convinced me that my premisses, at least, were correct, however mysterious still appeared the circumstances attending the nails. A careful search soon brought to light the hidden spring. I pressed it, and, satisfied with the discovery, forbore to upraise the sash.

‘ I now replaced the nail and regarded it attentively. A person passing out through this window might have reclosed it, and the spring would have

caught; but the nail could not have been replaced. The conclusion was plain, and again narrowed in the field of my investigations. The assassins *must* have escaped through the other window. Supposing, then, the springs upon each sash to be the same, as was probable, there *must* be found a difference between the nails, or at least between the modes of their fixture. Getting upon the sacking of the bedstead, I looked over the head-board minutely at the second casement. Passing my hand down behind the board, I readily discovered and pressed the spring, which was, as I had supposed, identical in character with its neighbour. I now looked at the nail. It was as stout as the other, and apparently fitted in the same manner, driven in nearly up to the head.

‘ You will say that I was puzzled; but, if you think so, you must have misunderstood the nature of the inductions. To use a sporting phrase, I had not been once “at fault”. The scent had never for an instant been lost. There was no flaw in any link of the chain. I had traced the secret to its ultimate result—and that result was *the nail*. It had, I say, in every respect, the appearance of its fellow in the other window; but this fact was an absolute nullity (conclusive as it might seem to be) when compared with the consideration that here, at this point, terminated the clue. “There *must* be something wrong,” I said, “about the nail.” I touched it; and the head, with about a quarter of an inch of the shank, came off in my fingers. The rest of the shank was in the gimlet hole, where it had been broken off. The fracture was an old one (for its edges were incrustated with rust), and had apparently been accomplished by the blow of a

hammer, which had partially embedded, in the top of the bottom sash, the head portion of the nail. I now carefully replaced this head portion in the indentation whence I had taken it, and the resemblance to a perfect nail was complete—the fissure was invisible. Pressing the spring, I gently raised the sash for a few inches; the head went up with it, remaining firm in its bed. I closed the window, and the semblance of the whole nail was again perfect.

‘The riddle, so far, was now unriddled. The assassin had escaped through the window which looked upon the bed. Dropping of its own accord upon his exit (or perhaps purposely closed), it had become fastened by the spring; and it was the retention of this spring which had been mistaken by the police for that of the nail—further inquiry being thus considered unnecessary.

‘The next question is that of the mode of descent. Upon this point I had been satisfied in my walk with you around the building. About five feet and a half from the casement in question there runs a lightning-rod. From this rod it would have been impossible for any one to reach the window itself, to say nothing of entering it. I observed, however, that the shutters of the fourth story were of the peculiar kind called by Parisian carpenters *ferrades*—a kind rarely employed at the present day, but frequently seen upon very old mansions at Lyons and Bordeaux. They are in the form of an ordinary door (a single, not a folding door), except that the lower half is latticed or worked in open trellis, thus affording an excellent hold for the hands. In the present instance these shutters are fully three feet and a half broad.

When we saw them from the rear of the house, they were both about half open—that is to say, they stood off at right angles from the wall. It is probable that the police, as well as myself, examined the back of the tenement; but, if so, in looking at these *fenêtres* in the line of their breadth (as they must have done), they did not perceive this great breadth itself, or at all events, failed to take it into due consideration. In fact, having once satisfied themselves that no egress could have been made in this quarter, they would naturally bestow here a very cursory examination. It was clear to me, however, that the shutter belonging to the window at the head of the bed, would, if swung fully back to the wall, reach to within two feet of the lightning-rod. It was also evident that, by exertion of a very unusual degree of activity and courage, an entrance into the window, from the rod, might have been thus effected. By reaching to the distance of two feet and a half (we now suppose the shutter open to its whole extent) a robber might have taken a firm grasp upon the trellis-work. Letting go, then, his hold upon the rod, placing his feet securely against the wall, and springing boldly from it, he might have swung the shutter so as to close it, and, if we imagine the window open at the time, might even have swung himself into the room.

‘ I wish you to bear especially in mind that I have spoken of a *very* unusual degree of activity as requisite to success in so hazardous and so difficult a feat. It is my design to show you, first, that the thing might possibly have been accomplished; but, secondly and *chiefly*, I wish to impress upon your understanding the *very extraordinary*—the almost

preternatural character of that agility which could have accomplished it.

' You will say, no doubt, using the language of the law, that " to make out my case ", I should rather undervalue, than insist upon a full estimation of the activity required in this matter. This may be the practice in law, but it is not the usage of reason. My ultimate object is only the truth. My immediate purpose is to lead you to place in juxtaposition that *very unusual* activity of which I have just spoken, with that *very peculiar* shrill (or harsh) and *unequal* voice, about whose nationality no two persons could be found to agree, and in whose utterance no syllabification could be detected.'

At these words a vague and half-formed conception of the meaning of Dupin flitted over my mind. I seemed to be upon the verge of comprehension, without power to comprehend, as men, at times, find themselves upon the brink of remembrance, without being able in the end to remember. My friend went on with his discourse.

' You will see,' he said, ' that I have shifted the question from the mode of egress to that of ingress. It was my design to convey the idea that both were effected in the same manner, at the same point. Let us now revert to the interior of the room. Let us survey the appearances here. The drawers of the bureau, it is said, had been rifled, although many articles of apparel still remained within them. The conclusion here is absurd. It is a mere guess—a very silly one—and no more. How are we to know that the articles found in the drawers were not all these drawers had originally contained? Madame L'Esplanaye and her daughter lived an exceedingly

retired life—saw no company—seldom went out—had little use for numerous changes of habiliment. Those found were at least of as good quality as any likely to be possessed by these ladies. If a thief had taken any, why did he not take the best—why did he not take all? In a word, why did he abandon four thousand francs in gold to encumber himself with a bundle of linen? The gold *was* abandoned. Nearly the whole sum mentioned by Monsieur Mignaud, the banker, was discovered, in bags, upon the floor. I wish you, therefore, to discard from your thoughts the blundering idea of *motive*, engendered in the brains of the police by that portion of the evidence which speaks of money delivered at the door of the house. Coincidences ten times as remarkable as this (the delivery of the money, and murder committed within three days upon the party receiving it) happen to all of us every hour of our lives, without attracting even momentary notice. Coincidences, in general, are great stumbling-blocks in the way of that class of thinkers who have been educated to know nothing of the theory of probabilities—that theory to which the most glorious objects of human research are indebted for the most glorious of illustration. In the present instance, had the gold been gone, the fact of its delivery three days before would have formed something more than a coincidence. It would have been corroborative of this idea of motive. But, under the real circumstances of the case, if we are to suppose gold the motive of this outrage, we must also imagine the perpetrator so vacillating an idiot as to have abandoned his gold and his motive together.

‘ Keeping now steadily in mind the points to

which I have drawn your attention—that peculiar voice, that unusual agility, and that startling absence of motive in a murder so singularly atrocious as this—let us glance at the butchery itself. Here is a woman strangled to death by manual strength, and thrust up a chimney, head downward. Ordinary assassins employ no such modes of murder as this. Least of all, do they thus dispose of the murdered. In the manner of thrusting the corpse up the chimney, you will admit that there was something *excessively outré*—something altogether irreconcilable with our common notions of human action, even when we suppose the actors the most depraved of men. Think, too, how great must have been that strength which could have thrust the body *up* such an aperture so forcibly that the united vigour of several persons was found barely sufficient to drag it *down*!

‘ Turn, now, to other indications of the employment of a vigour most marvellous. On the hearth were thick tresses—very thick tresses—of grey human hair. These had been torn out by the roots. You are aware of the great force necessary in tearing thus from the head even twenty or thirty hairs together. You saw the locks in question as well as myself. Their roots (a hideous sight!) were clotted with fragments of the flesh of the scalp—sure token of the prodigious power which had been exerted in uprooting perhaps half a million of hairs at a time. The throat of the old lady was not merely cut, but the head absolutely severed from the body: the instrument was a mere razor. I wish you also to look at the *brutal* ferocity of these deeds. Of the bruises upon the body of Madame L’Espanaye I do not speak. Monsieur Dumas, and

his worthy coadjutor Monsieur Etienne, have pronounced that they were inflicted by some obtuse instrument; and so far these gentlemen are very correct. The obtuse instrument was clearly the stone pavement in the yard, upon which the victim had fallen from the window which looked in upon the bed. This idea, however simple it may now seem, escaped the police for the same reason that the breadth of the shutters escaped them—because, by the affair of the nails, their perceptions had been hermetically sealed against the possibility of the windows having ever been opened at all.

‘ If now, in addition to all these things, you have properly reflected upon the odd disorder of the chamber, we have gone so far as to combine the ideas of an agility astounding, a strength superhuman, a ferocity brutal, a butchery without motive, a *grotesquerie* in horror absolutely alien from humanity, and a voice foreign in tone to the ears of men of many nations, and devoid of all distinct or intelligible syllabification. What result, then, has ensued? What impression have I made upon your fancy?’

I felt a creeping of the flesh as Dupin asked me the question. ‘ A madman,’ I said, ‘ has done this deed—some raving maniac escaped from a neighbouring *Maison de Santé*.’

‘ In some respects,’ he replied, ‘ your idea is not irrelevant. But the voices of madmen, even in their wildest paroxysms, are never found to tally with that peculiar voice heard upon the stairs. Madmen are of some nation, and their language, however incoherent in its words, has always the coherence of syllabification. Besides, the hair of a madman is not such as I now hold in my hand.

I disentangled this little tuft from the rigidly clutched fingers of Madame L'Esplanade. Tell me what you can make of it.'

'Dupin,' I said, completely unnerved, 'this hair is most unusual—this is no *human* hair.'

'I have not asserted that it is,' said he; 'but, before we decide this point, I wish you to glance at the little sketch I have here traced upon this paper. It is a *fac-simile* drawing of what has been described in one portion of the testimony as "dark bruises, and deep indentations of finger nails", upon the throat of Mademoiselle L'Esplanade, and in another (by Messrs. Dumas and Etienne), as a "series of livid spots, evidently the impression of fingers".'

'You will perceive,' continued my friend, spreading out the paper upon the table before me, 'that this drawing gives the idea of a firm and fixed hold. There is no *slipping* apparent. Each finger has retained—possibly until the death of the victim—the fearful grasp by which it originally embedded itself. Attempt, now, to place all your fingers, at the same time, in the respective impressions as you see them.'

I made the attempt in vain.

'We are possibly not giving this matter a fair trial,' he said. 'The paper is spread out upon a plane surface; but the human throat is cylindrical. Here is a billet of wood, the circumference of which is about that of the throat. Wrap the drawing round it, and try the experiment again.'

I did so; but the difficulty was even more obvious than before. 'This,' I said, 'is the mark of no human hand.'

'Read now,' replied Dupin, 'this passage from Cuvier.'

It was a minute anatomical and generally descriptive account of the large fulvous Ourang-Outang of the East Indian Islands. The gigantic stature, the prodigious strength and activity, the wild ferocity, and the imitative propensities of these mammalia are sufficiently well known to all. I understood the full horrors of the murder at once.

'The description of the digits,' said I, as I made an end of reading, 'is in exact accordance with this drawing. I see that no animal but an Ourang-Outang, of the species here mentioned, could have impressed the indentations as you have traced them. This tuft of tawny hair, too, is identical in character with that of the beast of Cuvier. But I cannot possibly comprehend the particulars of this frightful mystery. Besides, there were *two* voices heard in contention, and one of them was unquestionably the voice of a Frenchman.'

'True; and you will remember an expression attributed almost unanimously, by the evidence, to this voice—the expression "*Mon Dieu!*" This, under the circumstances, has been justly characterized by one of the witnesses (Montani, the confectioner) as an expression of remonstrance or expostulation. Upon these two words, therefore, I have mainly built my hopes of a full solution of the riddle. A Frenchman was cognizant of the murder. It is possible—indeed it is far more than probable—that he was innocent of all participation in the bloody transactions which took place. The Ourang-Outang may have escaped from him. He may have traced it to the chamber; but, under the agitating circumstances which ensued, he could never have re-captured it. It is still at large. I will not pursue these guesses—for I have no right

to call them more—since the shades of reflection upon which they are based are scarcely of sufficient depth to be appreciable to my own intellect, and since I could not pretend to make them intelligible to the understanding of another. We will call them guesses, then, and speak of them as such. If the Frenchman in question is indeed, as I suppose, innocent of this atrocity, this advertisement, which I left last night, upon our return home, at the office of *Le Monde* (a paper devoted to the shipping interest, and much sought by sailors), will bring him to our residence.'

He handed me a paper, and I read thus:—

'CAUGHT—*In the Bois de Boulogne, early in the morning of the — inst. [the morning of the murder], a very large, tawny Ourang-Outang of the Bornese species. The owner (who is ascertained to be a sailor, belonging to a Maltese vessel) may have the animal again, upon identifying it satisfactorily, and paying a few charges arising from its capture and keeping. Call at No. —, Rue —, Faubourg St. Germain—au troisième.*

'How was it possible,' I asked, 'that you should know the man to be a sailor, and belonging to a Maltese vessel?'

'I do not know it,' said Dupin. 'I am not sure of it. Here, however, is a small piece of ribbon, which from its form, and from its greasy appearance, has evidently been used in tying the hair in one of those long *queues* of which sailors are so fond. Moreover, this knot is one which few besides sailors can tie, and is peculiar to the Maltese. I picked the ribbon up at the foot of the lightning-rod. It could not have belonged to either of the deceased.'

Now if, after all, I am wrong in my induction from this ribbon, that the Frenchman was a sailor belonging to a Maltese vessel, still I can have done no harm in saying what I did in the advertisement. If I am in error, he will merely suppose that I have been misled by some circumstance into which he will not take the trouble to inquire. But if I am right, a great point is gained. Cognizant although innocent of the murder, the Frenchman will naturally hesitate about replying to the advertisement—about demanding the Ourang-Outang. He will reason thus: “I am innocent; I am poor; my Ourang-Outang is of great value—to one in my circumstances a fortune of itself—why should I lose it through idle apprehensions of danger? Here it is within my grasp. It was found in the Bois de Boulogne—at a vast distance from the scene of that butchery. How can it ever be suspected that a brute beast should have done the deed? The police are at fault, they have failed to procure the slightest clue. Should they even trace the animal, it would be impossible to prove me cognizant of the murder, or to implicate me in guilt on account of that cognizance. Above all, *I am known*. The advertiser designates me as the possessor of the beast. I am not sure to what limit his knowledge may extend. Should I avoid claiming a property of so great value, which it is known that I possess, I will render the animal at least liable to suspicion. It is not my policy to attract attention either to myself or to the beast. I will answer the advertisement, get the Ourang-Outang, and keep it close until this matter has blown over.”

At this moment we heard a step upon the stairs. ‘Be ready,’ said Dupin, ‘with your pistols, but

neither use them nor show them until at a signal from myself.'

The front door of the house had been left open, and the visitor had entered, without ringing, and advanced several steps upon the staircase. Now, however, he seemed to hesitate. Presently we heard him descending. Dupin was moving quickly to the door, when we again heard him coming up. He did not turn back a second time, but stepped up with decision, and rapped at the door of our chamber.

'Come in,' said Dupin, in a cheerful and hearty tone.

A man entered. He was a sailor, evidently—a tall, stout, and muscular-looking person, with a certain dare-devil expression of countenance, not altogether unprepossessing. His face, greatly sunburnt, was more than half hidden by whisker and mustachio. He had with him a huge oaken cudgel, but appeared to be otherwise unarmed. He bowed awkwardly, and bade us 'good evening', in French accents, which, although somewhat Neufchatelish, were still sufficiently indicative of a Parisian origin.

'Sit down, my friend,' said Dupin. 'I suppose you have called about the Ourang-Outang. Upon my word, I almost envy you the possession of him; a remarkably fine, and no doubt a very valuable animal. How old do you suppose him to be?'

The sailor drew a long breath, with the air of a man relieved of some intolerable burden, and then replied, in an assured tone.

'I have no way of telling—but he can't be more than four or five years old. Have you got him here?'

'Oh no; we had no conveniences for keeping

him here. He is at a livery stable in the Rue Dubourg, just by. You can get him in the morning. Of course, you are prepared to identify the property ?'

'To be sure I am, sir.'

'I shall be sorry to part with him,' said Dupin.

'I don't mean that you should be at all this trouble for nothing, sir,' said the man. 'Couldn't expect it. Am very willing to pay a reward for the finding of the animal—that is to say, anything in reason.'

'Well,' replied my friend, 'that is all very fair, to be sure. Let me think! what should I have? Oh! I will tell you. My reward shall be this. You shall give me all the information in your power about these murders in the Rue Morgue.'

Dupin said the last words in a very low tone, and very quietly. Just as quietly, too, he walked toward the door, locked it, and put the key in his pocket. He then drew a pistol from his bosom, and placed it, without the least flurry, upon the table.

The sailor's face flushed up as if he were struggling with suffocation. He started to his feet and grasped his cudgel; but the next moment he fell back into his seat, trembling violently, and with the countenance of death itself. He spoke not a word. I pitied him from the bottom of my heart.

'My friend,' said Dupin, in a kind tone, 'you are alarming yourself unnecessarily—you are indeed. We mean you no harm whatever. I pledge you the honour of a gentleman, and of a Frenchman, that we intend you no injury. I perfectly well know that you are innocent of the atrocities in the Rue Morgue. It will not do, however, to deny that you are in some measure implicated in them. From

what I have already said, you must know that I have had means of information about this matter—means of which you could never have dreamed. Now the thing stands thus. You have done nothing which you could have avoided—nothing, certainly, which renders you culpable. You were not even guilty of robbery, when you might have robbed with impunity. You have nothing to conceal. You have no reason for concealment. On the other hand, you are bound by every principle of honour to confess all you know. An innocent man is now imprisoned, charged with that crime of which you can point out the perpetrator.'

The sailor had recovered his presence of mind, in a great measure, while Dupin uttered these words; but his original boldness of bearing was all gone.

'So help me God,' said he, after a brief pause, 'I will tell you all I know about this affair; but I do not expect you to believe one half I say—I would be a fool indeed if I did. Still, I *am* innocent, and I will make a clean breast if I die for it.'

What he stated was in substance this. He had lately made a voyage to the Indian Archipelago. A party, of which he formed one, landed at Borneo, and passed into the interior on an excursion of pleasure. Himself and a companion had captured the Ourang-Outang. This companion dying, the animal fell into his own exclusive possession. After great trouble, occasioned by the intractable ferocity of his captive during the home voyage, he at length succeeded in lodging it safely at his own residence in Paris, where, not to attract toward himself the unpleasant curiosity of his neighbours, he kept it carefully secluded, until such time as it should recover from a wound in the foot, received

from a splinter on board ship. His ultimate design was to sell it.

Returning home from some sailors' frolic on the night, or rather in the morning of the murder, he found the beast occupying his own bedroom, into which it had broken from a closet adjoining, where it had been, as was thought, securely confined. Razor in hand, and fully lathered, it was sitting before a looking-glass, attempting the operation of shaving, in which it had no doubt previously watched its master through the key-hole of the closet. Terrified at the sight of so dangerous a weapon in the possession of an animal so ferocious, and so well able to use it, the man, for some moments, was at a loss what to do. He had been accustomed, however, to quiet the creature, even in its fiercest moods, by the use of a whip, and to this he now resorted. Upon sight of it, the Ourang-Outang sprang at once through the door of the chamber, down the stairs, and thence, through a window, unfortunately open, into the street.

The Frenchman followed in despair; the ape, razor still in hand, occasionally stopping to look back and gesticulate at its pursuer, until the latter had nearly come up with it. It then again made off. In this manner the chase continued for a long time. The streets were profoundly quiet, as it was nearly three o'clock in the morning. In passing down an alley in the rear of the Rue Morgue, the fugitive's attention was arrested by a light gleaming from the open window of Madame L'Esplanaye's chamber, in the fourth story of her house. Rushing to the building, it perceived the lightning-rod, clambered up with inconceivable agility, grasped the shutter, which was thrown fully back against

the wall, and, by its means, swung itself directly upon the headboard of the bed. The whole feat did not occupy a minute. The shutter was kicked open again by the Ourang-Outang as it entered the room.

The sailor, in the meantime, was both rejoiced and perplexed. He had strong hopes of now recapturing the brute, as it could scarcely escape from the trap into which it had ventured, except by the rod, where it might be intercepted as it came down. On the other hand, there was much cause for anxiety as to what it might do in the house. This latter reflection urged the man still to follow the fugitive. A lightning-rod is ascended without difficulty, especially by a sailor; but, when he had arrived as high as the window, which lay far to his left, his career was stopped; the most that he could accomplish was to reach over so as to obtain a glimpse of the interior of the room. At this glimpse he nearly fell from his hold through excess of horror. Now it was that those hideous shrieks arose upon the night, which had startled from slumber the inmates of the Rue Morgue. Madame L'Esplanaye and her daughter, habited in their night clothes, had apparently been occupied in arranging some papers in the iron chest already mentioned, which had been wheeled into the middle of the room. It was open, and its contents lay beside it on the floor. The victims must have been sitting with their backs toward the window; and, from the time elapsing between the ingress of the beast and the screams, it seems probable that it was not immediately perceived. The flapping-to of the shutter would naturally have been attributed to the wind.

As the sailor looked in, the gigantic animal had seized Madame L'Esplanaye by the hair (which was loose, as she had been combing it), and was flourishing the razor about her face, in imitation of the motions of a barber. The daughter lay prostrate and motionless; she had swooned. The screams and struggles of the old lady (during which the hair was torn from her head) had the effect of changing the probably pacific purposes of the Ourang-Outang into those of wrath. With one determined sweep of its muscular arm it nearly severed her head from her body. The sight of blood inflamed its anger into frenzy. Gnashing its teeth and flashing fire from its eyes, it flew upon the body of the girl, and embedded its fearful talons in her throat, retaining its grasp until she expired. Its wandering and wild glances fell at this moment upon the head of the bed, over which the face of its master, rigid with horror, was just discernible. The fury of the beast, who no doubt bore still in mind the dreaded whip, was instantly converted into fear. Conscious of having deserved punishment, it seemed desirous of concealing its bloody deeds, and skipped about the chamber in an agony of nervous agitation; throwing down and breaking the furniture as it moved, and dragging the bed from the bedstead. In conclusion, it seized first the corpse of the daughter, and thrust it up the chimney, as it was found; then that of the old lady, which it immediately hurled through the window headlong.

As the ape approached the casement with its mutilated burden, the sailor shrank aghast to the rod, and rather gliding than clambering down it, hurried at once home—dreading the consequences of the butchery, and gladly abandoning, in his

terror, all solicitude about the fate of the Ourang-Outang. The words heard by the party upon the staircase were the Frenchman's exclamations of horror and affright, commingled with the fiendish jabberings of the brute.

I have scarcely anything to add. The Ourang-Outang must have escaped from the chamber, by the rod, just before the breaking of the door. It must have closed the window as it passed through it. It was subsequently caught by the owner himself, who obtained for it a very large sum at the *Jardin des Plantes*. Le Bon was instantly released upon our narration of the circumstances (with some comments from Dupin) at the bureau of the Prefect of Police. This functionary, however well disposed to my friend, could not altogether conceal his chagrin at the turn which affairs had taken, and was fain to indulge in a sarcasm or two, about the propriety of every person minding his own business.

'Let him talk,' said Dupin, who had not thought it necessary to reply. 'Let him discourse; it will ease his conscience. I am satisfied with having defeated him in his own castle. Nevertheless, that he failed in the solution of this mystery is by no means that matter for wonder which he supposes it; for in truth, our friend the Prefect is somewhat too cunning to be profound. In his wisdom is no *stamen*. It is all head and no body, like the pictures of the goddess Laverna—or, at best, all head and shoulders, like a codfish. But he is a good creature after all. I like him especially for one master-stroke of cant, by which he has attained his reputation for ingenuity. I mean the way he has "*de nier ce qui est, et d'expliquer ce qui n'est pas.*"'¹

¹ Rousseau, *Nouvelle Héloïse*.

THE PURLOINED LETTER

BY E. A. POE

' Nil sapientiæ odiosius acumine nimio.'—SENECA.

AT Paris, just after dark one gusty evening in the autumn of 18—, I was enjoying the twofold luxury of meditation, and a meerschaum, in company with my friend, C. Auguste Dupin, in his little back library or book-closet, *au troisième*, No. 33 Rue Dunôt, Faubourg St. Germain. For one hour at least we had maintained a profound silence; while each, to any casual observer, might have seemed intently and exclusively occupied with the curling eddies of smoke that oppressed the atmosphere of the chamber. For myself, however, I was mentally discussing certain topics which had formed matter for conversation between us at an earlier period of the evening; I mean the affair of the Rue Morgue, and the mystery attending the murder of Marie Rogêt. I looked upon it, therefore, as something of a coincidence, when the door of our apartment was thrown open and admitted our old acquaintance, Monsieur G——, the Prefect of the Parisian police.

We gave him a hearty welcome; for there was nearly half as much of the entertaining as of the contemptible about the man, and we had not seen him for several years. We had been sitting in the dark, and Dupin now arose for the purpose of lighting a lamp, but sat down again, without doing

so, upon G.'s saying that he had called to consult us, or rather to ask the opinion of my friend, about some official business which had occasioned a great deal of trouble.

'If it is any point requiring reflection,' observed Dupin, as he forbore to enkindle the wick, 'we shall examine it to better purpose in the dark.'

'That is another of your odd notions,' said the Prefect, who had a fashion of calling everything 'odd' that was beyond his comprehension, and thus lived amid an absolute legion of 'oddities'.

'Very true,' said Dupin, as he supplied his visitor with a pipe, and rolled towards him a comfortable chair.

'And what is the difficulty now?' I asked. 'Nothing more in the assassination way, I hope?'

'Oh no; nothing of that nature. The fact is, the business is *very* simple indeed, and I make no doubt that we can manage it sufficiently well ourselves; but then I thought Dupin would like to hear the details of it, because it is so excessively *odd*.'

'Simple and odd,' said Dupin.

'Why, yes; and not exactly that, either. The fact is, we have all been a good deal puzzled because the affair is so simple, and yet baffles us altogether.'

'Perhaps it is the very simplicity of the thing which puts you at fault,' said my friend.

'What nonsense you *do* talk!' replied the Prefect, laughing heartily.

'Perhaps the mystery is a little *too* plain,' said Dupin.

'Oh, good heavens! who ever heard of such an idea?'

'A little *too* self-evident.'

'Ha! ha! ha!—ha! ha! ha!—ho! ho! ho!' roared our visitor, profoundly amused; 'O Dupin, you will be the death of me yet!'

'And what, after all, is the matter on hand?' I asked.

'Why, I will tell you,' replied the Prefect, as he gave a long, steady, and contemplative puff, and settled himself in his chair. 'I will tell you in a few words; but, before I begin, let me caution you that this is an affair demanding the greatest secrecy, and that I should most probably lose the position I now hold, were it known that I confided it to any one.'

'Proceed,' said I.

'Or not,' said Dupin.

'Well, then; I have received personal information, from a very high quarter, that a certain document of the last importance has been purloined from the royal apartments. The individual who purloined it is known; this beyond a doubt; he was seen to take it. It is known, also, that it still remains in his possession.'

'How is this known?' asked Dupin.

'It is clearly inferred,' replied the Prefect, 'from the nature of the document, and from the non-appearance of certain results which would at once arise from its passing *out* of the robber's possession—that is to say, from his employing it as he must design in the end to employ it.'

'Be a little more explicit,' I said.

'Well, I may venture so far as to say that the paper gives its holder a certain power in a certain quarter where such power is immensely valuable.' The Prefect was fond of the cant of diplomacy.

‘Still I do not quite understand,’ said Dupin.

‘No? Well; the disclosure of the document to a third person, who shall be nameless, would bring in question the honour of a personage of most exalted station; and this fact gives the holder of the document an ascendancy over the illustrious personage whose honour and peace are so jeopardized.’

‘But this ascendancy,’ I interposed, ‘would depend upon the robber’s knowledge of the loser’s knowledge of the robber. Who would dare——’

‘The thief,’ said G., ‘is the Minister D——, who dares all things, those unbecoming as well as those becoming a man. The method of the theft was not less ingenious than bold. The document in question—a letter, to be frank—had been received by the personage robbed while alone in the royal *boudoir*. During its perusal she was suddenly interrupted by the entrance of the other exalted personage from whom especially it was her wish to conceal it. After a hurried and vain endeavour to thrust it in a drawer, she was forced to place it, open as it was, upon a table. The address, however, was uppermost, and, the contents thus unexposed, the letter escaped notice. At this juncture enters the Minister D——. His lynx eye immediately perceives the paper, recognizes the handwriting of the address, observes the confusion of the personage addressed, and fathoms her secret. After some business transactions, hurried through in his ordinary manner, he produces a letter somewhat similar to the one in question, opens it, pretends to read it, and then places it in close juxtaposition to the other. Again he converses, for some fifteen minutes, upon the public affairs.

At length, in taking leave, he takes also from the table the letter to which he had no claim. Its rightful owner saw, but, of course, dared not call attention to the act, in the presence of the third personage who stood at her elbow. The Minister decamped, leaving his own letter—one of no importance—upon the table.’

‘Here, then,’ said Dupin to me, ‘you have precisely what you demand to make the ascendancy complete—the robber’s knowledge of the loser’s knowledge of the robber.’

‘Yes,’ replied the Prefect; ‘and the power thus attained has, for some months past, been wielded for political purposes to a very dangerous extent. The personage robbed is more thoroughly convinced, every day, of the necessity of reclaiming her letter. But this, of course, cannot be done openly. In fine, driven to despair, she has committed the matter to me.’

‘Than whom,’ said Dupin, amid a perfect whirlwind of smoke, ‘no more sagacious agent could, I suppose, be desired, or even imagined.’

‘You flatter me,’ replied the Prefect, ‘but it is possible that some such opinion may have been entertained.’

‘It is clear,’ said I, ‘as you observe, that the letter is still in the possession of the Minister; since it is this possession, and not any employment of the letter, which bestows the power. With the employment the power departs.’

‘True,’ said G.; ‘and upon this conviction I proceeded. My first care was to make thorough search of the Minister’s hotel; and here my chief embarrassment lay in the necessity of searching without his knowledge. Beyond all things, I have

been warned of the danger which would result from giving him reason to suspect our design.'

'But,' said I, 'you are quite *au fait* in these investigations. The Parisian police have done this thing often before.'

'Oh yes; and for this reason I did not despair. The habits of the Minister gave me, too, a great advantage. He is frequently absent from home all night. His servants are by no means numerous. They sleep at a distance from their master's apartment, and, being chiefly Neapolitans, are readily made drunk. I have keys, as you know, with which I can open any chamber or cabinet in Paris. For three months a night has not passed, during the greater part of which I have not been engaged, personally, in ransacking the D—— Hotel. My honour is interested, and, to mention a great secret, the reward is enormous. So I did not abandon the search until I had become fully satisfied that the thief is a more astute man than myself. I fancy that I have investigated every nook and corner of the premises in which it is possible that the paper can be concealed.'

'But is it not possible,' I suggested, 'that although the letter may be in possession of the Minister, as it unquestionably is, he may have concealed it elsewhere than upon his own premises?'

'This is barely possible,' said Dupin. 'The present peculiar condition of affairs at court, and especially of those intrigues in which D—— is known to be involved, would render the instant availability of the document—its susceptibility of being produced at a moment's notice—a point of nearly equal importance with its possession.'

'Its susceptibility of being produced?' said I.

'That is to say, of being *destroyed*,' said Dupin.

'True,' I observed; 'the paper is clearly then upon the premises. As for its being upon the person of the Minister, we may consider that as out of the question.'

'Entirely,' said the Prefect. 'He has been twice waylaid, as if by footpads, and his person rigorously searched under my own inspection.'

'You might have spared yourself this trouble,' said Dupin. 'D——, I presume, is not altogether a fool, and, if not, must have anticipated these waylayings, as a matter of course.'

'Not *altogether* a fool,' said G.; 'but then he's a poet, which I take to be only one remove from a fool.'

'True,' said Dupin, after a long and thoughtful whiff from his meerschaum, 'although I have been guilty of certain doggerel myself.'

'Suppose you detail,' said I, 'the particulars of your search.'

'Why, the fact is we took our time, and we searched *everywhere*. I have had long experience in these affairs. I took the entire building, room by room; devoting the nights of a whole week to each. We examined, first, the furniture of each apartment. We opened every possible drawer; and I presume you know that, to a properly trained police agent, such a thing as a *secret* drawer is impossible. Any man is a dolt who permits a "secret" drawer to escape him in a search of this kind. The thing is *so* plain. There is a certain amount of bulk—of space—to be accounted for in every cabinet. Then we have accurate rules. The fiftieth part of a line could not escape us. After

the cabinets we took the chairs. The cushions we probed with the fine long needles you have seen me employ. From the tables we removed the tops.'

'Why so?'

'Sometimes the top of a table, or other similarly arranged piece of furniture, is removed by the person wishing to conceal an article; then the leg is excavated, the article deposited within the cavity, and the top replaced. The bottoms and tops of bedposts are employed in the same way.'

'But could not the cavity be detected by sounding?' I asked.

'By no means, if, when the article is deposited, a sufficient wadding of cotton be placed around it. Besides, in our case, we were obliged to proceed without noise.'

'But you could not have removed—you could not have taken to pieces *all* articles of furniture in which it would have been possible to make a deposit in the manner you mention. A letter may be compressed into a thin spiral roll, not differing much in shape or bulk from a large knitting-needle, and in this form it might be inserted into the rung of a chair, for example. You did not take to pieces all the chairs?'

'Certainly not; but we did better—we examined the rungs of every chair in the hotel, and, indeed, the jointings of every description of furniture, by the aid of a most powerful microscope. Had there been any traces of recent disturbance we should not have failed to detect it instantly. A single grain of gimlet-dust, for example, would have been as obvious as an apple. Any disorder in the glueing—any unusual gaping in the joints—would have sufficed to ensure detection.'

'I presume you looked to the mirrors, between the boards and the plates, and you probed the beds and the bedclothes, as well as the curtains and carpets.'

'That of course; and when we had absolutely completed every particle of the furniture in this way, then we examined the house itself. We divided its entire surface into compartments, which we numbered, so that none might be missed; then we scrutinized each individual square inch throughout the premises, including the two houses immediately adjoining, with the microscope, as before.'

'The two houses adjoining!' I exclaimed; 'you must have had a great deal of trouble.'

'We had; but the reward offered is prodigious.'

'You include the *grounds* about the houses?'

'All the grounds are paved with brick. They gave us comparatively little trouble. We examined the moss between the bricks, and found it undisturbed.'

'You looked among D——'s papers, of course, and into the books of the library?'

'Certainly; we opened every package and parcel; we not only opened every book, but we turned over every leaf in each volume, not contenting ourselves with a mere shake, according to the fashion of some of our police officers. We also measured the thickness of every book-cover, with the most accurate admeasurement, and applied to each the most jealous scrutiny of the microscope. Had any of the bindings been recently meddled with, it would have been utterly impossible that the fact should have escaped observation. Some five or six volumes, just from the hands of the

binder, we carefully probed longitudinally, with the needles.'

'You explored the floors beneath the carpets?'

'Beyond doubt. We removed every carpet, and examined the boards with the microscope.'

'And the paper on the walls?'

'Yes.'

'You looked into the cellars?'

'We did.'

'Then,' I said, 'you have been making a miscalculation, and the letter is *not* upon the premises, as you suppose.'

'I fear you are right there,' said the Prefect. 'And now, Dupin, what would you advise me to do?'

'To make a thorough research of the premises.'

'That is absolutely needless,' replied G——. 'I am not more sure that I breathe than I am that the letter is not at the hotel.'

'I have no better advice to give you,' said Dupin. 'You have, of course, an accurate description of the letter?'

'Oh yes!' And here the Prefect, producing a memorandum-book, proceeded to read aloud a minute account of the internal, and especially of the external appearance of the missing document. Soon after finishing the perusal of this description, he took his departure more entirely depressed in spirits than I had ever known the good gentleman before.

In about a month afterwards he paid us another visit, and found us occupied very nearly as before. He took a pipe and a chair and entered into some ordinary conversation. At length I said—

'Well, but G——, what of the purloined letter?'

I presume you have at last made up your mind that there is no such thing as overreaching the Minister ?'

'Confound him, say I—yes; I made the re-examination, however, as Dupin suggested—but it was all labour lost, as I knew it would be.'

'How much was the reward offered, did you say ?' asked Dupin.

'Why, a very great deal—a *very* liberal reward—I don't like to say how much, precisely; but I *will* say, that I wouldn't mind giving my individual cheque for fifty thousand francs to any one who could obtain me that letter. The fact is, it is becoming of more and more importance every day; and the reward has been lately doubled. If it were trebled, however, I could do no more than I have done.'

'Why, yes,' said Dupin drawlingly, between the whiffs of his meerschaum, 'I really—think, G——, you have not exerted yourself—to the utmost—in this matter. You might—do a little more, I think, eh ?'

'How?—in what way ?'

'Why—puff, puff—you might—puff, puff—employ counsel in the matter, eh?—puff, puff, puff. Do you remember the story they tell of Abernethy ?'

'No; hang Abernethy !'

'To be sure! hang him and welcome. But once upon a time, a certain rich miser conceived the design of sponging upon this Abernethy for a medical opinion. Getting up, for this purpose, an ordinary conversation in a private company, he insinuated his case to the physician, as that of an imaginary individual.

“ We will suppose,” said the miser, “ that his symptoms are such and such ; now, doctor, what would *you* have directed him to take ? ”

“ Take ! ” said Abernethy, “ why, take *advice*, to be sure. ”

‘ But,’ said the Prefect, a little discomposed, ‘ I am *perfectly* willing to take advice, and to pay for it. I would *really* give fifty thousand francs to any one who would aid me in the matter. ’

‘ In that case,’ replied Dupin, opening a drawer, and producing a cheque-book, ‘ you may as well fill me up a cheque for the amount mentioned. When you have signed it, I will hand you the letter. ’

I was astounded. The Prefect appeared absolutely thunderstricken. For some minutes he remained speechless and motionless, looking incredulously at my friend with open mouth, and eyes that seemed starting from their sockets ; then, apparently recovering himself in some measure, he seized a pen, and after several pauses and vacant stares, finally filled up and signed a cheque for fifty thousand francs, and handed it across the table to Dupin. The latter examined it carefully and deposited it in his pocket-book ; then, unlocking an *escritoire*, took thence a letter and gave it to the Prefect. This functionary grasped it in a perfect agony of joy, opened it with a trembling hand, cast a rapid glance at its contents, and then, scrambling and struggling to the door, rushed at length unceremoniously from the room and from the house, without having uttered a syllable since Dupin had requested him to fill up the cheque.

When he had gone, my friend entered into some explanations.

‘ The Parisian police,’ he said, ‘ are exceedingly

able in their way. They are persevering, ingenious, cunning, and thoroughly versed in the knowledge which their duties seem chiefly to demand. Thus, when G—— detailed to us his mode of searching the premises at the Hôtel D——, I felt entire confidence in his having made a satisfactory investigation—so far as his labours extended.’

‘So far as his labours extended?’ said I.

‘Yes,’ said Dupin. ‘The measures adopted were not only the best of their kind, but carried out to absolute perfection. Had the letter been deposited within the range of their search, these fellows would, beyond a question, have found it.’

I merely laughed—but he seemed quite serious in all that he said.

‘The measures, then,’ he continued, ‘were good in their kind, and well executed; their defect lay in their being inapplicable to the case, and to the man. A certain set of highly ingenious resources are, with the Prefect, a sort of Procrustean bed, to which he forcibly adapts his designs. But he perpetually errs by being too deep or too shallow for the matter in hand; and many a schoolboy is a better reasoner than he. I knew one about eight years of age, whose success at guessing in the game of “even and odd” attracted universal admiration. This game is simple, and is played with marbles. One player holds in his hand a number of these toys, and demands of another whether that number is even or odd. If the guess is right, the guesser wins one; if wrong, he loses one. The boy to whom I allude won all the marbles of the school. Of course he had some principle of guessing; and this lay in mere observation and admeasurement of the astuteness of his opponents. For example, an

arrant simpleton is his opponent, and, holding up his closed hand, asks, "Are they even or odd?" Our schoolboy replies "Odd", and loses; but upon the second trial he wins, for he then says to himself, "The simpleton had them even upon the first trial, and his amount of cunning is just sufficient to make him have them odd upon the second; I will therefore guess odd"—he guesses odd, and wins. Now, with a simpleton a degree above the first, he would have reasoned thus: "This fellow finds that in the first instance I guessed odd, and in the second he will propose to himself, upon the first impulse, a simple variation from even to odd, as did the first simpleton; but then a second thought will suggest that this is too simple a variation, and finally he will decide upon putting it even as before. I will therefore guess even"—he guesses even, and wins. Now this mode of reasoning in the schoolboy, whom his fellows termed "lucky"—what, in its last analysis, is it?

'It is merely,' I said, 'an identification of the reasoner's intellect with that of his opponent.'

'It is,' said Dupin; 'and upon inquiring of the boy by what means he effected the *thorough* identification in which his success consisted, I received answer as follows: "When I wish to find out how wise, or how stupid, or how good, or how wicked is any one, or what are his thoughts at the moment, I fashion the expression of my face, as accurately as possible, in accordance with the expression of his, and then wait to see what thoughts or sentiments arise in my mind or heart, as if to match or correspond with the expression." This response of the schoolboy lies at the bottom of all the spurious profundity which has been

attributed to Rochefoucauld, to La Bruyère, to Machiavelli, and to Campanella.'

'And the identification,' I said, 'of the reasoner's intellect with that of his opponent depends, if I understand you aright, upon the accuracy with which the opponent's intellect is admeasured.'

'For its practical value it depends upon this,' replied Dupin; 'and the Prefect and his cohort fail so frequently, first, by default of this identification, and, secondly, by ill-admeasurement, or rather through non-admeasurement, of the intellect with which they are engaged. They consider only their *own* ideas of ingenuity; and, in searching for anything hidden, advert only to the modes in which *they* would have hidden it. They are right in this much—that their own ingenuity is a faithful representative of that of *the mass*; but when the cunning of the individual felon is diverse in character from their own, the felon foils them, of course. This always happens when it is above their own, and very usually when it is below. They have no variation of principle in their investigations; at best, when urged by some unusual emergency, by some extraordinary reward, they extend or exaggerate their old modes of *practice*, without touching their principles. What, for example, in this case of D——, has been done to vary the principle of action? What is all this boring, and probing, and sounding, and scrutinizing with the microscope, and dividing the surface of the building into registered square inches—what is it all but an exaggeration of *the application* of the one principle or set of principles of search, which are based upon the one set of notions regarding human ingenuity, to which the Prefect, in the long

routine of his duty, has been accustomed? Do you not see he has taken it for granted that *all* men proceed to conceal a letter—not exactly in a gimlet-hole bored in a chair-leg—but, at least, in *some* out-of-the-way hole or corner suggested by the same tenor of thought which would urge a man to secrete a letter in a gimlet-hole bored in a chair-leg? And do you not see also, that such *recherchés* nooks for concealment are adapted only for ordinary occasions, and would be adopted only by ordinary intellects; for, in all cases of concealment, a disposal of the article concealed—a disposal of it in this *recherché* manner—is, in the very first instance, presumable and presumed; and thus its discovery depends, not at all upon the acumen, but altogether upon the mere care, patience, and determination of the seekers; and where the case is of importance, or what amounts to the same thing in the policial eyes, when the reward is of magnitude, the qualities in question have *never* been known to fail. You will now understand what I meant in suggesting that, had the purloined letter been hidden anywhere within the limits of the Prefect's examination—in other words, had the principle of its concealment been comprehended within the principles of the Prefect—its discovery would have been a matter altogether beyond question. This functionary, however, has been thoroughly mystified; and the remote source of his defeat lies in the supposition that the Minister is a fool, because he has acquired renown as a poet. All fools are poets—this the Prefect *feels*; and he is merely guilty of a *non distributio medii* in thence inferring that all poets are fools.'

‘But is this really the poet?’ I asked. ‘There are two brothers, I know; and both have attained reputation in letters. The Minister, I believe, has written learnedly on the Differential Calculus. He is a mathematician, and no poet.’

‘You are mistaken; I know him well; he is both. As poet *and* mathematician, he would reason well; as mere mathematician, he could not have reasoned at all, and thus would have been at the mercy of the Prefect.’

‘You surprise me,’ I said, ‘by these opinions, which have been contradicted by the voice of the world. You do not mean to set at naught the well-digested idea of centuries. The mathematical reason has long been regarded as *the* reason *par excellence*.’

‘“*Il y a à parier,*”’ replied Dupin, quoting from Chamfort, “*que toute idée publique, toute convention reçue, est une sottise, car elle a convenu au plus grand nombre.*” The mathematicians, I grant you, have done their best to promulgate the popular error to which you allude, and which is none the less an error for its promulgation as truth. With an art worthy a better cause, for example, they have insinuated the term “analysis” into application to algebra. The French are the originators of this particular deception; but if a term is of any importance—if words derive any value from applicability—then “analysis” conveys “algebra” about as much as, in Latin, “*ambitus*” implies “ambition”, “*religio*” “religion”, or “*homines honesti*” a set of honourable men.’

‘You have a quarrel on hand, I see,’ said I, ‘with some of the algebraists of Paris; but proceed.’

‘I dispute the availability, and thus the value,

of that reason which is cultivated in any especial form other than the abstractly logical. I dispute in particular the reason educed by mathematical study. The mathematics are the science of form and quantity; mathematical reasoning is merely logic applied to observation upon form and quantity. The great error lies in supposing that even the truths of what is called *pure algebra* are abstract or general truths. And this error is so egregious that I am confounded at the universality with which it has been received. Mathematical axioms are *not* axioms of general truth. What is true of *relation*—of form and quantity—is often grossly false in regard to morals, for example. In this latter science it is very usually *untrue* that the aggregated parts are equal to the whole. In chemistry also the axiom fails. In the consideration of motive it fails; for two motives, each of a given value, have not necessarily a value when united, equal to the sum of their values apart. There are numerous other mathematical truths which are only truths within the limits of *relation*. But the mathematician argues, from his *finite truths*, through habit, as if they were of an absolutely general applicability—as the world indeed imagines them to be. Bryant, in his very learned "Mythology", mentions an analogous source of error, when he says that "although the Pagan fables are not believed, yet we forget ourselves continually, and make inferences from them as existing realities". With the algebraists, however, who are Pagans themselves, the "Pagan fables" are believed, and the inferences are made, not so much through lapse of memory, as through an unaccountable addling of the brains. In short, I

never yet encountered the mere mathematician who could be trusted out of equal roots, or one who did not clandestinely hold it as a point of his faith that $x^2 + px$ was absolutely and unconditionally equal to q . Say to one of these gentlemen, by way of experiment, if you please, that you believe occasions may occur where $x^2 + px$ is *not* altogether equal to q , and, having made him understand what you mean, get out of his reach as speedily as convenient, for beyond doubt he will endeavour to knock you down.

'I mean to say,' continued Dupin, while I merely laughed at his last observations, 'that if the Minister had been no more than a mathematician, the Prefect would have been under no necessity of giving me this cheque. I knew him, however, as both mathematician and poet, and my measures were adapted to his capacity, with reference to the circumstances by which he was surrounded. I knew him as a courtier, too, and as a bold *intrigant*. Such a man, I considered, could not fail to be aware of the ordinary policial modes of action. He could not have failed to anticipate—and events have proved that he did not fail to anticipate—the waylayings to which he was subjected. He must have foreseen, I reflected, the secret investigations of his premises. His frequent absences from home at night, which were hailed by the Prefect as certain aids to his success, I regarded only as ruses, to afford opportunity for thorough search to the police, and thus the sooner to impress them with the conviction at which G——, in fact, did finally arrive—the conviction that the letter was not upon the premises. I felt, also, that the whole train of thought, which I was at some pains in detailing to

you just now, concerning the invariable principle of policial action in searches for articles concealed—I felt that this whole train of thought would necessarily pass through the mind of the Minister. It would imperatively lead him to despise all the ordinary *nooks* of concealment. *He* could not, I reflected, be so weak as not to see that the most intricate and remote recess of his hotel would be as open as his commonest closets to the eyes, to the probes, to the gimlets, and to the microscopes of the Prefect. I saw, in fine, that he would be driven, as a matter of course, to *simplicity*, if not deliberately induced to it as a matter of choice. You will remember, perhaps, how desperately the Prefect laughed when I suggested, upon our first interview, that it was just possible this mystery troubled him so much on account of its being so *very* self-evident.'

'Yes,' said I, 'I remember his merriment well. I really thought he would have fallen into convulsions.'

'The material world,' continued Dupin, 'abounds with very strict analogies to the immaterial; and thus some colour of truth has been given to the rhetorical dogma, that metaphor, or simile, may be made to strengthen an argument, as well as to embellish a description. The principle of the *vis inertiae*, for example, seems to be identical in physics and metaphysics. It is not more true in the former, that a large body is with more difficulty set in motion than a smaller one, and that its subsequent momentum is commensurate with this difficulty, than it is, in the latter, that intellects of the vaster capacity, while more forcible, more constant, and more eventful in their movements

than those of inferior grade, are yet the less readily moved, and more embarrassed and full of hesitation in the first few steps of their progress. Again, have you ever noticed which of the street signs over the shop-doors are the most attractive of attention ?

‘ I have never given the matter a thought,’ I said.

‘ There is a game of puzzles,’ he resumed, ‘ which is played upon a map. One party playing requires another to find a given word—the name of town, river, state or empire—any word, in short, upon the motley and perplexed surface of the chart. A novice in the game generally seeks to embarrass his opponents by giving them the most minutely lettered names ; but the adept selects such words as stretch, in large characters, from one end of the chart to the other. These, like the over-largely lettered signs and placards of the street, escape observation by dint of being excessively obvious ; and here the physical oversight is precisely analogous with the moral inapprehension by which the intellect suffers to pass unnoticed those considerations which are too obtrusively and too palpably self-evident. But this is a point, it appears, somewhat above or beneath the understanding of the Prefect. He never once thought it probable, or possible, that the Minister had deposited the letter immediately beneath the nose of the whole world, by way of best preventing any portion of that world from perceiving it.

‘ But the more I reflected upon the daring, dashing, and discriminating ingenuity of D—— ; upon the fact that the document must always have been *at hand*, if he intended to use it to good purpose ;

and upon the decisive evidence, obtained by the Prefect, that it was not hidden within the limits of that dignitary's ordinary search—the more satisfied I became that, to conceal this letter, the Minister had resorted to the comprehensive and sagacious expedient of not attempting to conceal it at all.

‘ Full of these ideas, I prepared myself with a pair of green spectacles, and called one fine morning, quite by accident, at the Ministerial hotel. I found D—— at home, yawning, lounging, and dawdling, as usual, and pretending to be in the last extremity of *ennui*. He is, perhaps, the most really energetic human being now alive—but that is only when nobody sees him.

‘ To be even with him, I complained of my weak eyes, and lamented the necessity of the spectacles, under cover of which I cautiously and thoroughly surveyed the whole apartment, while seemingly intent only upon the conversation of my host.

‘ I paid especial attention to a large writing-table near which he sat, and upon which lay confusedly some miscellaneous letters and other papers, with one or two musical instruments and a few books. Here, however, after a long and very deliberate scrutiny, I saw nothing to excite particular suspicion.

‘ At length my eyes, in going the circuit of the room, fell upon a trumpery filigree card-rack of paste-board, that hung dangling by a dirty blue ribbon, from a little brass knob just beneath the middle of the mantelpiece. In this rack, which had three or four compartments, were five or six visiting cards and a solitary letter. This last was much soiled and crumpled. It was torn nearly in two,

across the middle—as if a design, in the first instance, to tear it entirely up as worthless, had been altered, or stayed, in the second. It had a large black seal, bearing the D— cipher *very* conspicuously, and was addressed, in a diminutive female hand, to D—, the Minister, himself. It was thrust carelessly, and even, as it seemed, contemptuously, into one of the uppermost divisions of the rack.

‘No sooner had I glanced at this letter, than I concluded it to be that of which I was in search. To be sure, it was, to all appearance, radically different from the one of which the Prefect had read us so minute a description. Here the seal was large and black, with the D— cipher; there it was small and red, with the ducal arms of the S— family. Here the address, to the Minister, was diminutive and feminine; there the superscription, to a certain royal personage, was markedly bold and decided; the size alone formed a point of correspondence. But then the *radicalness* of these differences, which was excessive; the dirt; the soiled and torn condition of the paper, so inconsistent with the *true* methodical habits of D—, and so suggestive of a design to delude the beholder into an idea of the worthlessness of the document; these things, together with the hyperobtrusive situation of this document, full in the view of every visitor, and thus exactly in accordance with the conclusions at which I had previously arrived; these things, I say, were strongly corroborative of suspicion, in one who came with the intention to suspect.

‘I protracted my visit as long as possible, and, while I maintained a most animated discussion

with the Minister, upon a topic which I knew well had never failed to interest and excite him, I kept my attention really riveted upon the letter. In this examination, I committed to memory its external appearance and arrangement in the rack; and also fell, at length, upon a discovery, which set at rest whatever trivial doubt I might have entertained. In scrutinizing the edges of the paper, I observed them to be more *chafed* than seemed necessary. They presented the *broken* appearance which is manifested when a stiff paper, having been once folded and pressed with a folder, is refolded in a reversed direction, in the same creases or edges which had formed the original fold. This discovery was sufficient. It was clear to me that the letter had been turned, as a glove, inside out, redirected and resealed. I bade the Minister good-morning, and took my departure at once, leaving a gold snuff-box upon the table.

'The next morning I called for the snuff-box, when we resumed, quite eagerly, the conversation of the preceding day. While thus engaged, however, a loud report, as if of a pistol, was heard immediately beneath the windows of the hotel, and was succeeded by a series of fearful screams, and the shoutings of a terrified mob. D—— rushed to a casement, threw it open, and looked out. In the meantime I stepped to the card-rack, took the letter, put it in my pocket, and replaced it by a fac-simile (so far as regards externals) which I had carefully prepared at my lodgings—imitating the D—— cipher, very readily, by means of a seal formed of bread.

'The disturbance in the street had been occasioned by the frantic behaviour of a man with

a musket. He had fired it among a crowd of women and children. It proved, however, to have been without ball, and the fellow was suffered to go his way as a lunatic or a drunkard. When he had gone, D—— came from the window, whither I had followed him immediately upon securing the object in view. Soon afterwards I bade him farewell. The pretended lunatic was a man in my own pay.'

'But what purpose had you,' I asked, 'in replacing the letter by a fac-simile? Would it not have been better, at the first visit, to have seized it openly, and departed?'

'D——,' replied Dupin, 'is a desperate man, and a man of nerve. His hotel, too, is not without attendants devoted to his interests. Had I made the wild attempt you suggest, I might never have left the Ministerial presence alive. The good people of Paris might have heard of me no more. But I had an object apart from these considerations. You know my political prepossessions. In this matter, I act as a partisan of the lady concerned. For eighteen months the Minister has had her in his power. She has now him in hers—since, being unaware that the letter is not in his possession, he will proceed with his exactions as if it was. Thus will he inevitably commit himself, at once, to his political destruction. His downfall, too, will not be more precipitate than awkward. It is all very well to talk about the *facilis descensus Averni*; but in all kinds of climbing, as Catalani said of singing, it is far more easy to get up than to come down. In the present instance I have no sympathy—at least no pity—for him who descends. He is that *monstrum horrendum*, an unprincipled man of genius. I confess, however, that I should like very

well to know the precise character of his thoughts, when, being defied by her whom the Prefect terms "a certain personage", he is reduced to opening the letter which I left for him in the card-rack.'

'How? did you put anything particular in it?'

'Why—it did not seem altogether right to leave the interior blank—that would have been insulting. D——, at Vienna once, did me an evil turn, which I told him, quite good-humouredly, that I should remember. So, as I knew he would feel some curiosity in regard to the identity of the person who had outwitted him, I thought it a pity not to give him a clue. He is well acquainted with my MSS., and I just copied into the middle of the blank sheet the words:—

' " ——Un dessein si funeste,
S'il n'est digne d'Atrée, est digne de Thyeste."

They are to be found in Crébillon's "Atrée."

THE ADVENTURE OF THE RED- HEADED LEAGUE

BY A. CONAN DOYLE

I HAD called upon my friend, Mr. Sherlock Holmes, one day in the autumn of last year, and found him in deep conversation with a very stout, florid-faced, elderly gentleman, with fiery red hair. With an apology for my intrusion, I was about to withdraw, when Holmes pulled me abruptly into the room, and closed the door behind me.

'You could not possibly have come at a better time, my dear Watson,' he said, cordially.

'I was afraid that you were engaged.'

'So I am. Very much so.'

'Then I can wait in the next room.'

'Not at all. This gentleman, Mr. Wilson, has been my partner and helper in many of my most successful cases, and I have no doubt that he will be of the utmost use to me in yours also.'

The stout gentleman half rose from his chair, and gave a bob of greeting, with a quick little questioning glance from his small, fat-encircled eyes.

'Try the settee,' said Holmes, relapsing into his arm-chair, and putting his finger-tips together, as was his custom when in judicial moods. 'I know, my dear Watson, that you share my love of all that is bizarre and outside the conventions and humdrum routine of everyday life. You have

shown your relish for it by the enthusiasm which has prompted you to chronicle, and, if you will excuse my saying so, somewhat to embellish so many of my own little adventures.'

'Your cases have indeed been of the greatest interest to me,' I observed.

'You will remember that I remarked the other day, just before we went into the very simple problem presented by Miss Mary Sutherland, that for strange effects and extraordinary combinations we must go to life itself, which is always far more daring than any effort of the imagination.'

'A proposition which I took the liberty of doubting.'

'You did, Doctor, but none the less you must come round to my view, for otherwise I shall keep piling fact upon fact on you, until your reason breaks down under them and acknowledges me to be right. Now, Mr. Jabez Wilson here has been good enough to call upon me this morning, and to begin a narrative which promises to be one of the most singular which I have listened to for some time. You have heard me remark that the strangest and most unique things are very often connected not with the larger but with the smaller crimes, and occasionally, indeed, where there is room for doubt whether any positive crime has been committed. As far as I have heard, it is impossible for me to say whether the present case is an instance of crime or not, but the course of events is certainly among the most singular that I have ever listened to. Perhaps, Mr. Wilson, you would have the great kindness to recommence your narrative. I ask you not merely because my friend Dr. Watson has not heard the opening

part, but also because the peculiar nature of the story makes me anxious to have every possible detail from your lips. As a rule, when I have heard some slight indication of the course of events I am able to guide myself by the thousands of other similar cases which occur to my memory. In the present instance I am forced to admit that the facts are, to the best of my belief, unique.'

The portly client puffed out his chest with an appearance of some little pride, and pulled a dirty and wrinkled newspaper from the inside pocket of his greatcoat. As he glanced down the advertisement column, with his head thrust forward, and the paper flattened out upon his knee, I took a good look at the man, and endeavoured after the fashion of my companion to read the indications which might be presented by his dress or appearance.

I did not gain very much, however, by my inspection. Our visitor bore every mark of being an average common-place British tradesman, obese, pompous, and slow. He wore rather baggy grey shepherd's check trousers, a not overclean black frockcoat, unbuttoned in the front, and a drab waistcoat with a heavy brassy Albert chain, and a square pierced bit of metal dangling down as an ornament. A frayed top hat and a faded brown overcoat with a wrinkled velvet collar lay upon a chair beside him. Altogether, look as I would, there was nothing remarkable about the man save his blazing red head, and the expression of extreme chagrin and discontent upon his features.

Sherlock Holmes's quick eye took in my occupation, and he shook his head with a smile as he

noticed my questioning glances. 'Beyond the obvious facts that he has at some time done manual labour, that he takes snuff, that he is a Freemason, that he has been in China, and that he has done a considerable amount of writing lately, I can deduce nothing else.'

Mr. Jabez Wilson started up in his chair, with his forefinger upon the paper, but his eyes upon my companion.

'How, in the name of good fortune, did you know all that, Mr. Holmes?' he asked. 'How did you know, for example, that I did manual labour? It's as true as gospel, and I began as a ship's carpenter.'

'Your hands, my dear sir. Your right hand is quite a size larger than your left. You have worked with it, and the muscles are more developed.'

'Well, the snuff, then, and the Freemasonry?'

'I won't insult your intelligence by telling you how I read that, especially as, rather against the strict rules of your order, you use an arc and compass breastpin.'

'Ah, of course, I forgot that. But the writing?'

'What else can be indicated by that right cuff so very shiney for five inches, and the left one with the smooth patch near the elbow where you rest it upon the desk.'

'Well, but China?'

'The fish which you have tattooed immediately above your right wrist could only have been done in China. I have made a small study of tattoo marks, and have even contributed to the literature of the subject. That trick of staining the fishes' scales of a delicate pink is quite peculiar to China.'

When, in addition, I see a Chinese coin hanging from your watch-chain, the matter becomes even more simple.'

Mr. Jabez Wilson laughed heavily. 'Well, I never!' said he. 'I thought at first you had done something clever, but I see that there was nothing in it after all.'

'I begin to think, Watson,' said Holmes, 'that I make a mistake in explaining. "Omne ignotum pro magnifico," you know, and my poor little reputation, such as it is, will suffer shipwreck if I am so candid. Can you not find the advertisement, Mr. Wilson?'

'Yes, I have got it now,' he answered, with his thick, red finger planted half-way down the column. 'Here it is. This is what began it all. You just read it for yourself, sir.'

I took the paper from him and read as follows:—

'TO THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE. On account of the bequest of the late Ezekiah Hopkins, of Lebanon, Penn., U.S.A., there is now another vacancy open which entitles a member of the League to a salary of four pounds a week for purely nominal services. All red-headed men who are sound in body and mind, and above the age of twenty-one years, are eligible. Apply in person on Monday, at eleven o'clock, to Duncan Ross, at the offices of the League, 7, Pope's-court, Fleet-street.'

'What on earth does this mean?' I ejaculated, after I had twice read over the extraordinary announcement.

Holmes chuckled, and wriggled in his chair, as was his habit when in high spirits. 'It is

a little off the beaten track, isn't it?' said he. 'And now, Mr. Wilson, off you go at scratch, and tell us all about yourself, your household, and the effect which this advertisement had upon your fortunes. You will first make a note, Doctor, of the paper and the date.'

'It is *The Morning Chronicle*, of April 27, 1890. Just two months ago.'

'Very good. Now, Mr. Wilson?'

'Well, it is just as I have been telling you, Mr. Sherlock Holmes,' said Jabez Wilson, mopping his forehead, 'I have a small pawnbroker's business at Coburg-square, near the City. It's not a very large affair, and of late years it has not done more than just give me a living. I used to be able to keep two assistants, but now I only keep one; and I would have a job to pay him, but that he is willing to come for half wages, so as to learn the business.'

'What is the name of this obliging youth?' asked Sherlock Holmes.

'His name is Vincent Spaulding, and he's not such a youth either. It's hard to say his age. I should not wish a smarter assistant, Mr. Holmes; and I know very well that he could better himself, and earn twice what I am able to give him. But after all, if he is satisfied, why should I put ideas in his head?'

'Why, indeed? You seem most fortunate in having an *employé* who comes under the full market price. It is not a common experience among employers in this age. I don't know that your assistant is not as remarkable as your advertisement.'

'Oh, he has his faults, too,' said Mr. Wilson.

‘ Never was such a fellow for photography. Snapping away with a camera when he ought to be improving his mind, and then diving down into the cellar like a rabbit into its hole to develop his pictures. That is his main fault ; but on the whole, he ’s a good worker. There ’s no vice in him.’

‘ He is still with you, I presume ? ’

‘ Yes, sir. He and a girl of fourteen, who does a bit of simple cooking, and keeps the place clean—that ’s all I have in the house, for I am a widower, and never had any family. We live very quietly, sir, the three of us ; and we keep a roof over our heads, and pay our debts, if we do nothing more.

‘ The first thing that put us out was that advertisement. Spaulding, he came down into the office just this day eight weeks with this very paper in his hand, and he says :—

‘ “ I wish to the Lord, Mr. Wilson, that I was a red-headed man.”

‘ “ Why that ? ” I asks.

‘ “ Why,” says he, “ here ’s another vacancy on the League of the Red-headed Men. It ’s worth quite a little fortune to any man who gets it, and I understand that there are more vacancies than there are men, so that the trustees are at their wits’ end what to do with the money. If my hair would only change colour, here ’s a nice little crib all ready for me to step into.”

‘ “ Why, what is it, then ? ” I asked. You see, Mr. Holmes, I am a very stay-at-home man, and, as my business came to me instead of my having to go to it, I was often weeks on end without putting my foot over the door-mat. In that way I didn’t know much of what was going on outside, and I was always glad of a bit of news.

“Have you never heard of the League of the Red-headed Men?” he asked, with his eyes open.

“Never.”

“Why, I wonder at that, for you are eligible yourself for one of the vacancies.”

“And what are they worth?” I asked.

“Oh, merely a couple of hundred a year, but the work is slight, and it need not interfere much with one’s other occupations.”

“Well, you can easily think that that made me prick up my ears, for the business has not been over good for some years, and an extra couple of hundred would have been very handy.”

“Tell me all about it,” said I.

“Well,” said he, showing me the advertisement, “you can see for yourself that the League has a vacancy, and there is the address where you should apply for particulars. As far as I can make out, the League was founded by an American millionaire, Ezekiah Hopkins, who was very peculiar in his ways. He was himself red-headed, and he had a great sympathy for all red-headed men; so, when he died, it was found that he had left his enormous fortune in the hands of trustees, with instructions to apply the interest to the providing of easy berths to men whose hair is of that colour. From all I hear it is splendid pay, and very little to do.”

“But,” said I, “there would be millions of red-headed men who would apply.”

“Not so many as you might think,” he answered. “You see it is really confined to Londoners, and to grown men. This American had started from London when he was young, and he wanted to do the old town a good turn. Then,

again, I have heard it is no use your applying if your hair is light red, or dark red, or anything but real, bright, blazing, fiery red. Now, if you cared to apply, Mr. Wilson, you would just walk in; but perhaps it would hardly be worth your while to put yourself out of the way for the sake of a few hundred pounds."

'Now, it is a fact, gentlemen, as you may see for yourselves, that my hair is of a very full and rich tint, so that it seemed to me that, if there was to be any competition in the matter, I stood as good a chance as any man that I had ever met. Vincent Spaulding seemed to know so much about it that I thought he might prove useful, so I just ordered him to put up the shutters for the day, and to come right away with me. He was very willing to have a holiday, so we shut the business up, and started off for the address that was given us in the advertisement.

'I never hope to see such a sight as that again, Mr. Holmes. From north, south, east, and west every man who had a shade of red in his hair had tramped into the City to answer the advertisement. Fleet-street was choked with red-headed folk, and Pope's-court looked like a coster's orange barrow. I should not have thought there were so many in the whole country as were brought together by that single advertisement. Every shade of colour they were—straw, lemon, orange, brick, Irish-setter, liver, clay; but, as Spaulding said, there were not many who had the real vivid flame-coloured tint. When I saw how many were waiting, I would have given it up in despair; but Spaulding would not hear of it. How he did it I could not imagine, but he pushed and pulled and

butted until he got me through the crowd, and right up to the steps which led to the office. There was a double stream upon the stair, some going up in hope, and some coming back dejected; but we wedged in as well as we could, and soon found ourselves in the office.'

'Your experience has been a most entertaining one,' remarked Holmes, as his client paused and refreshed his memory with a huge pinch of snuff. 'Pray continue your very interesting statement.'

'There was nothing in the office but a couple of wooden chairs and a deal table, behind which sat a small man, with a head that was even redder than mine. He said a few words to each candidate as he came up, and then he always managed to find some fault in them which would disqualify them. Getting a vacancy did not seem to be such a very easy matter after all. However, when our turn came, the little man was more favourable to me than to any of the others, and he closed the door as we entered, so that he might have a private word with us.

'“This is Mr. Jabez Wilson,” said my assistant, ‘and he is willing to fill a vacancy in the League.’

'“And he is admirably suited for it,” the other answered. “He has every requirement. I cannot recall when I have seen anything so fine.” He took a step backwards, cocked his head on one side, and gazed at my hair until I felt quite bashful. Then suddenly he plunged forward, wrung my hand, and congratulated me warmly on my success.

'“It would be injustice to hesitate,” said he. “You will, however, I am sure, excuse me for taking an obvious precaution.” With that he

seized my hair in both his hands, and tugged until I yelled with the pain. "There is water in your eyes," said he, as he released me. "I perceive that all is as it should be. But we have to be careful, for we have twice been deceived by wigs and once by paint. I could tell you tales of cobbler's wax which would disgust you with human nature." He stepped over to the window, and shouted through it at the top of his voice that the vacancy was filled. A groan of disappointment came up from below, and the folk all trooped away in different directions, until there was not a red head to be seen except my own and that of the manager.

"My name," said he, "is Mr. Duncan Ross, and I am myself one of the pensioners upon the fund left by our noble benefactor. Are you a married man, Mr. Wilson? Have you a family?"

'I answered that I had not.

'His face fell immediately.

"Dear me!" he said, gravely, "that is very serious indeed! I am sorry to hear you say that. The fund was, of course, for the propagation and spread of the red-heads as well as for their maintenance. It is exceedingly unfortunate that you should be a bachelor."

'My face lengthened at this, Mr. Holmes, for I thought that I was not to have the vacancy after all; but after thinking it over for a few minutes, he said that it would be all right.

"In the case of another," said he, "the objection might be fatal, but we must stretch a point in favour of a man with such a head of hair as yours. When shall you be able to enter upon your new duties?"

“ Well, it is a little awkward, for I have a business already,” said I.

“ Oh, never mind about that, Mr. Wilson ! ” said Vincent Spaulding. “ I shall be able to look after that for you.”

“ What would be the hours ? ” I asked.

“ Ten to two.”

‘ Now a pawnbroker’s business is mostly done of an evening, Mr. Holmes, especially Thursday and Friday evening, which is just before pay-day ; so it would suit me very well to earn a little in the mornings. Besides, I knew that my assistant was a good man, and that he would see to anything that turned up.

“ That would suit me very well,” said I. “ And the pay ? ”

“ Is four pounds a week.”

“ And the work ? ”

“ Is purely nominal.”

“ What do you call purely nominal ? ”

“ Well, you have to be in the office, or at least in the building, the whole time. If you leave, you forfeit your whole position for ever. The will is very clear upon that point. You don’t comply with the conditions if you budge from the office during that time.”

“ It’s only four hours a day, and I should not think of leaving,” said I.

“ No excuse will avail,” said Mr. Duncan Ross, “ neither sickness, nor business, nor anything else. There you must stay, or you lose your billet.”

“ And the work ? ”

“ Is to copy out the ‘ Encyclopædia Britannica ’. There is the first volume of it in that press. You must find your own ink, pens, and blotting

paper, but we provide this table and chair. Will you be ready to-morrow ? ”

“ Certainly,” I answered.

“ Then, good-bye, Mr. Jabez Wilson, and let me congratulate you once more on the important position which you have been fortunate enough to gain.” He bowed me out of the room, and I went home with my assistant, hardly knowing what to say or do, I was so pleased at my own good fortune.

Well, I thought over the matter all day, and by evening I was in low spirits again ; for I had quite persuaded myself that the whole affair must be some great hoax or fraud, though what its object might be I could not imagine. It seemed altogether past belief that any one could make such a will, or that they would pay such a sum for doing anything so simple as copying out the “ Encyclopædia Britannica ”. Vincent Spaulding did what he could to cheer me up, but by bedtime I had reasoned myself out of the whole thing. However, in the morning I determined to have a look at it anyhow, so I bought a penny bottle of ink, and with a quill pen, and seven sheets of foolscap paper, I started off for Pope’s-court.

Well, to my surprise and delight everything was as right as possible. The table was set out ready for me, and Mr. Duncan Ross was there to see that I got fairly to work. He started me off upon the letter A, and then he left me ; but he would drop in from time to time to see that all was right with me. At two o’clock he bade me good-day, complimented me upon the amount that I had written, and locked the door of the office after me.

This went on day after day, Mr. Holmes, and on Saturday the manager came in and planked down

four golden sovereigns for my week's work. It was the same next week, and the same the week after. Every morning I was there at ten, and every afternoon I left at two. By degrees, Mr. Duncan Ross took to coming in only once of a morning, and then, after a time, he did not come in at all. Still, of course, I never dared to leave the room for an instant, for I was not sure when he might come, and the billet was such a good one, and suited me so well that I would not risk the loss of it.

'Eight weeks passed away like this, and I had written about Abbots, and Archery, and Armour, and Architecture, and Attica, and hoped with diligence that I might get on to the B's before very long. It cost me something in foolscap, and I had pretty nearly filled a shelf with my writings. And then suddenly the whole business came to an end.'

'To an end?'

'Yes, sir. And no later than this morning. I went to my work as usual at ten o'clock, but the door was shut and locked, with a little square of cardboard hammered on to the middle of the panel with a tack. Here it is, and you can read for yourself.'

He held up a piece of white cardboard, about the size of a sheet of note-paper. It read in this fashion:—

'THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE IS DISSOLVED.

Oct. 9, 1890.'

Sherlock Holmes and I surveyed this curt announcement and the rueful face behind it, until the comical side of the affair so completely overtopped every other consideration that we both burst out into a roar of laughter.

'I cannot see that there is anything very funny,' cried our client, flushing up to the roots of his flaming head. 'If you can do nothing better than laugh at me, I can go elsewhere.'

'No, no,' cried Holmes, shoving him back into the chair from which he had half risen. 'I really wouldn't miss your case for the world. It is most refreshingly unusual. But there is, if you will excuse me saying so, something just a little funny about it. Pray what steps did you take when you found the card upon the door?'

'I was staggered, sir. I did not know what to do. Then I called at the offices round, but none of them seemed to know anything about it. Finally, I went to the landlord, who is an accountant living on the ground floor, and I asked him if he could tell me what had become of the Red-headed League. He said that he had never heard of any such body. Then I asked him who Mr. Duncan Ross was. He answered that the name was new to him.'

'"Well," said I, "the gentleman at No. 4."

'"What, the red-headed man?"'

'"Yes."

'"Oh," said he, "his name was William Morris. He was a solicitor, and was using my room as a temporary convenience until his new premises were ready. He moved out yesterday."

'"Where could I find him?"'

'"Oh, at his new offices. He did tell me the address. Yes, 17, King Edward-street, near St. Paul's.'

'I started off, Mr. Holmes, but when I got to that address it was a manufactory of artificial knee-caps, and no one in it had ever heard of either Mr. William Morris, or Mr. Duncan Ross.'

'And what did you do then?' asked Holmes.

'I went home to Saxe-Coburg-square, and I took the advice of my assistant. But he could not help me in any way. He could only say that if I waited I should hear by post. But that was not quite good enough, Mr. Holmes. I did not wish to lose such a place without a struggle, so, as I had heard that you were good enough to give advice to poor folk who were in need of it, I came right away to you.'

'And you did very wisely,' said Holmes. 'Your case is an exceedingly remarkable one, and I shall be happy to look into it. From what you have told me I think that it is possible that graver issues hang from it than might at first sight appear.'

'Grave enough!' said Mr. Jabez Wilson. 'Why, I have lost four pound a week.'

'As far as you are personally concerned,' remarked Holmes, 'I do not see that you have any grievance against this extraordinary league. On the contrary, you are, as I understand, richer by some thirty pounds, to say nothing of the minute knowledge which you have gained on every subject which comes under the letter A. You have lost nothing by them.'

'No, sir. But I want to find out about them, and who they are, and what their object was in playing this prank—if it was a prank—upon me. It was a pretty expensive joke for them, for it cost them two-and-thirty pounds.'

'We shall endeavour to clear up these points for you. And, first, one or two questions, Mr. Wilson. This assistant of yours who first called your attention to the advertisement—how long had he been with you?'

'About a month then.'

'How did he come?'

'In answer to an advertisement.'

'Was he the only applicant?'

'No, I had a dozen.'

'Why did you pick him?'

'Because he was handy, and would come cheap.'

'At half wages, in fact.'

'Yes.'

'What is he like, this Vincent Spaulding?'

'Small, stout-built, very quick in his ways, no hair on his face, though he's not short of thirty. Has a white splash of acid upon his forehead.'

Holmes sat up in his chair in considerable excitement. 'I thought as much,' said he. 'Have you ever observed that his ears are pierced for earrings?'

'Yes, sir. He told me that a gipsy had done it for him when he was a lad.'

'Hum!' said Holmes, sinking back in deep thought. 'He is still with you?'

'Oh yes, sir; I have only just left him.'

'And has your business been attended to in your absence?'

'Nothing to complain of, sir. There's never very much to do of a morning.'

'That will do, Mr. Wilson. I shall be happy to give you an opinion upon the subject in the course of a day or two. To-day is Saturday, and I hope that by Monday we may come to a conclusion.'

'Well, Watson,' said Holmes, when our visitor had left us, 'what do you make of it all?'

'I make nothing of it,' I answered, frankly. 'It is a most mysterious business.'

'As a rule,' said Holmes, 'the more bizarre a thing is the less mysterious it proves to be. It is

your commonplace, featureless crimes which are really puzzling, just as a commonplace face is the most difficult to identify. But I must be prompt over this matter.'

'What are you going to do then?' I asked.

'To smoke,' he answered. 'It is quite a three-pipe problem, and I beg that you won't speak to me for fifty minutes. He curled himself up in his chair, with his thin knees drawn up to his hawk-like nose, and there he sat with his eyes closed and his black clay pipe thrusting out like the bill of some strange bird. I had come to the conclusion that he had dropped asleep, and indeed was nodding myself, when he suddenly sprang out of his chair with the gesture of a man who had made up his mind, and put his pipe down upon the mantelpiece.

'Sarasate plays at the St. James's Hall this afternoon,' he remarked. 'What do you think, Watson? Could your patients spare you for a few hours?'

'I have nothing to do to-day. My practice is never very absorbing.'

'Then, put on your hat, and come. I am going through the City first, and we can have some lunch on the way. I observe that there is a good deal of German music on the programme, which is rather more to my taste than Italian or French. It is introspective, and I want to introspect. Come along!'

We travelled by the Underground as far as Aldersgate; and a short walk took us to Saxe-Coburg-square, the scene of the singular story which we had listened to in the morning. It was a pokey, little, shabby-genteel place, where four lines of dingy two-storied brick houses looked out

into a small railed-in enclosure, where a lawn of weedy grass, and a few clumps of faded laurel bushes made a hard fight against a smoke-laden and uncongenial atmosphere. Three gilt balls and a brown board with 'JABEZ WILSON' in white letters, upon a corner house, announced the place where our red-headed client carried on his business. Sherlock Holmes stopped in front of it with his head on one side and looked it all over, with his eyes shining brightly between puckered lids. Then he walked slowly up the street and then down again to the corner, still looking keenly at the houses. Finally he returned to the pawnbroker's, and, having thumped vigorously upon the pavement with his stick two or three times, he went up to the door and knocked. It was instantly opened by a bright-looking, clean-shaven young fellow, who asked him to step in.

'Thank you,' said Holmes, 'I only wished to ask you how you would go from here to the Strand.'

'Third right, fourth left,' answered the assistant promptly, closing the door.

'Smart fellow, that,' observed Holmes as we walked away. 'He is, in my judgement, the fourth smartest man in London, and for daring I am not sure that he has not a claim to be third. I have known something of him before.'

'Evidently,' said I, 'Mr. Wilson's assistant counts for a good deal in this mystery of the Red-headed League. I am sure that you inquired your way merely in order that you might see him.'

'Not him.'

'What then?'

'The knees of his trousers.'

'And what did you see?'

'What I expected to see.'

'Why did you beat the pavement?'

'My dear Doctor, this is a time for observation, not for talk. We are spies in an enemy's country. We know something of Saxe-Coburg-square. Let us now explore the paths which lie behind it.'

The road in which we found ourselves as we turned round the corner from the retired Saxe-Coburg-square presented as great a contrast to it as the front of a picture does to the back. It was one of the main arteries which convey the traffic of the City to the north and west. The roadway was blocked with the immense stream of commerce flowing in a double tide inwards and outwards, while the footpaths were black with the hurrying swarm of pedestrians. It was difficult to realize as we looked at the line of fine shops and stately business premises that they really abutted on the other side upon the faded and stagnant square which we had just quitted.

'Let me see,' said Holmes, standing at the corner, and glancing along the line, 'I should like just to remember the order of the houses here. It is a hobby of mine to have an exact knowledge of London. There is Mortimer's, the tobacconist, the little newspaper shop, the Coburg branch of the City and Suburban Bank, the Vegetarian Restaurant, and McFarlane's carriage-building dépôt. That carries us right on to the other block. And now, Doctor, we've done our work, so it's time we had some play. A sandwich, and a cup of coffee, and then off to violin-land, where all is sweetness, and delicacy, and harmony, and there are no red-headed clients to vex us with their conundrums.'

My friend was an enthusiastic musician, being

himself not only a very capable performer, but a composer of no ordinary merit. All the afternoon he sat in the stalls wrapped in the most perfect happiness, gently waving his long thin fingers in time to the music, while his gently smiling face and his languid dreamy eyes were as unlike those of Holmes the sleuth-hound, Holmes the relentless, keen-witted, ready-handed criminal agent, as it was possible to conceive. In his singular character the dual nature alternately asserted itself, and his extreme exactness and astuteness represented, as I have often thought, the reaction against the poetic and contemplative mood which occasionally predominated in him. The swing of his nature took him from extreme languor to devouring energy; and, as I knew well, he was never so truly formidable as when, for days on end, he had been lounging in his arm-chair amid his improvisations and his black-letter editions. Then it was that the lust of the chase would suddenly come upon him, and that his brilliant reasoning power would rise to the level of intuition, until those who were unacquainted with his methods would look askance at him as on a man whose knowledge was not that of other mortals. When I saw him that afternoon so enwrapped in the music at St. James's Hall I felt that an evil time might be coming upon those whom he had set himself to hunt down.

'You want to go home, no doubt, Doctor,' he remarked, as we emerged.

'Yes, it would be as well.'

'And I have some business to do which will take some hours. This business at Coburg-square is serious.'

'Why serious?'

'A considerable crime is in contemplation. I have every reason to believe that we shall be in time to stop it. But to-day being Saturday rather complicates matters. I shall want your help to-night.'

'At what time?'

'Ten will be early enough.'

'I shall be at Baker-street at ten.'

'Very well. And, I say, Doctor! there may be some little danger, so kindly put your army revolver in your pocket.' He waved his hand, turned on his heel, and disappeared in an instant among the crowd.

I trust that I am not more dense than my neighbours, but I was always oppressed with a sense of my own stupidity in my dealings with Sherlock Holmes. Here I had heard what he had heard, I had seen what he had seen, and yet from his words it was evident that he saw clearly not only what had happened, but what was about to happen, while to me the whole business was still confused and grotesque. As I drove home to my house in Kensington I thought over it all, from the extraordinary story of the red-headed copier of the 'Encyclopædia' down to the visit to Saxe-Coburg-square, and the ominous words with which he had parted from me. What was this nocturnal expedition, and why should I go armed? Where were we going, and what were we to do? I had the hint from Holmes that this smooth-faced pawnbroker's assistant was a formidable man—a man who might play a deep game. I tried to puzzle it out, but gave it up in despair, and set the matter aside until night should bring an explanation.

It was a quarter past nine when I started from

home and made my way across the Park, and so through Oxford-street to Baker-street. Two hansoms were standing at the door, and, as I entered the passage, I heard the sound of voices from above. On entering his room, I found Holmes in animated conversation with two men, one of whom I recognized as Peter Jones, the official police agent; while the other was a long, thin, sad-faced man, with a very shiny hat and oppressively respectable frock-coat.

‘Ha! our party is complete,’ said Holmes, buttoning up his pea-jacket, and taking his heavy hunting-crop from the rack. ‘Watson, I think you know Mr. Jones, of Scotland Yard? Let me introduce you to Mr. Merryweather, who is to be our companion in to-night’s adventure.’

‘We’re hunting in couples again, Doctor, you see,’ said Jones, in his consequential way. ‘Our friend here is a wonderful man for starting a chase. All he wants is an old dog to help him to do the running down.’

‘I hope a wild goose may not prove to be the end of our chase,’ observed Mr. Merryweather, gloomily.

‘You may place considerable confidence in Mr. Holmes, sir,’ said the police agent, loftily. ‘He has his own little methods, which are, if he won’t mind my saying so, just a little too theoretical and fantastic, but he has the makings of a detective in him. It is not too much to say that once or twice, as in that business of the Sholto murder and the Agra treasure, he has been more nearly correct than the official force.’

‘Oh, if you say so, Mr. Jones, it is all right!’ said the stranger, with deference. ‘Still, I confess

that I miss my rubber. It is the first Saturday night for seven-and-twenty years that I have not had my rubber.'

'I think you will find,' said Sherlock Holmes, 'that you will play for a higher stake to-night than you have ever done yet, and that the play will be more exciting. For you, Mr. Merryweather, the stake will be some thirty thousand pounds; and for you, Jones, it will be the man upon whom you wish to lay your hands.'

'John Clay, the murderer, thief, smasher, and forger. He's a young man, Mr. Merryweather, but he is at the head of his profession, and I would rather have my bracelets on him than on any criminal in London. He's a remarkable man, is young John Clay. His grandfather was a Royal Duke, and he himself has been to Eton and Oxford. His brain is as cunning as his fingers, and though we meet signs of him at every turn, we never know where to find the man himself. He'll crack a crib in Scotland one week, and be raising money to build an orphanage in Cornwall the next. I've been on his track for years, and have never set eyes on him yet.'

'I hope that I may have the pleasure of introducing you to-night. I've had one or two little turns also with Mr. John Clay, and I agree with you that he is at the head of his profession. It is past ten, however, and quite time that we started. If you two will take the first hansom, Watson and I will follow in the second.'

Sherlock Holmes was not very communicative during the long drive, and lay back in the cab humming the tunes which he had heard in the afternoon. We rattled through an endless laby-

rinth of gas-lit streets until we emerged into Farringdon-street.

'We are close there now,' my friend remarked.

This fellow Merryweather is a bank director and personally interested in the matter. I thought it as well to have Jones with us also. He is not a bad fellow, though an absolute imbecile in his profession. He has one positive virtue. He is as brave as a bulldog, and as tenacious as a lobster if he gets his claws upon any one. Here we are, and they are waiting for us.'

We had reached the same crowded thoroughfare in which we had found ourselves in the morning. Our cabs were dismissed, and, following the guidance of Mr. Merryweather, we passed down a narrow passage, and through a side door, which he opened for us. Within there was a small corridor, which ended in a very massive iron gate. This also was opened, and led down a flight of winding stone steps, which terminated at another formidable gate. Mr. Merryweather stopped to light a lantern, and then conducted us down a dark, earth-smelling passage, and so, after opening a third door, into a huge vault or cellar, which was piled all round with crates and massive boxes.

'You are not very vulnerable from above,' Holmes remarked, as he held up the lantern and gazed about him.

'Nor from below,' said Mr. Merryweather, striking his stick upon the flags which lined the floor.

'Why, dear me, it sounds quite hollow!' he remarked, looking up in surprise.

'I must really ask you to be a little more quiet,' said Holmes, severely. 'You have already imperilled the whole success of our expedition.'

Might I beg that you would have the goodness to sit down upon one of those boxes, and not to interfere ?'

The solemn Mr. Merryweather perched himself upon a crate, with a very injured expression upon his face, while Holmes fell upon his knees upon the floor, and, with the lantern and a magnifying lens, began to examine minutely the cracks between the stones. A few seconds sufficed to satisfy him, for he sprang to his feet again, and put his glass in his pocket.

'We have at least an hour before us,' he remarked, 'for they can hardly take any steps until the good pawnbroker is safely in bed. Then they will not lose a minute, for the sooner they do their work the longer time they will have for their escape. We are at present, Doctor—as no doubt you have divined—in the cellar of the City branch of one of the principal London banks. Mr. Merryweather is the chairman of directors, and he will explain to you that there are reasons why the more daring criminals of London should take a considerable interest in this cellar at present.'

'It is our French gold,' whispered the director. 'We have had several warnings that an attempt might be made upon it.'

'Your French gold ?'

'Yes. We had occasion some months ago to strengthen our resources, and borrowed, for that purpose, thirty thousand napoleons from the Bank of France. It has become known that we have never had occasion to unpack the money, and that it is still lying in our cellar. The crate upon which I sit contains two thousand napoleons packed between layers of lead foil. Our reserve of bullion

is much larger at present than is usually kept in a single branch office, and the directors have had misgivings upon the subject.'

'Which were very well justified,' observed Holmes. 'And now it is time that we arranged our little plans. I expect that within an hour matters will come to a head. In the meantime, Mr. Merryweather, we must put the screen over that dark lantern.'

'And sit in the dark?'

'I am afraid so. I had brought a pack of cards in my pocket, and I thought that, as we were a *partie carrée*, you might have your rubber after all. But I see that the enemy's preparations have gone so far that we cannot risk the presence of a light. And, first of all, we must choose our positions. These are daring men, and, though we shall take them at a disadvantage, they may do us some harm, unless we are careful. I shall stand behind this crate, and do you conceal yourselves behind those. Then, when I flash a light upon them, close in swiftly. If they fire, Watson, have no compunction about shooting them down.'

I placed my revolver, cocked, upon the top of the wooden case behind which I crouched. Holmes shot the slide across the front of his lantern, and left us in pitch darkness—such an absolute darkness as I have never before experienced. The smell of hot metal remained to assure us that the light was still there, ready to flash out at a moment's notice. To me, with my nerves worked up to a pitch of expectancy, there was something depressing and subduing in the sudden gloom, and in the cold, dank air of the vault.

'They have but one retreat,' whispered Holmes.

'That is back through the house into Saxe-Coburg-square. I hope that you have done what I asked you, Jones?'

'I have an inspector and two officers waiting at the front dōor.'

'Then we have stopped all the holes. And now we must be silent and wait.'

What a time it seemed! From comparing notes afterwards it was but an hour and a quarter, yet it appeared to me that the night must have almost gone, and the dawn be breaking above us. My limbs were weary and stiff, for I feared to change my position, yet my nerves were worked up to the highest pitch of tension, and my hearing was so acute that I could not only hear the gentle breathing of my companions, but I could distinguish the deeper, heavier in-breath of the bulky Jones from the thin sighing note of the bank director. From my position I could look over the case in the direction of the floor. Suddenly my eyes caught the glint of a light.

At first it was but a lurid spark upon the stone pavement. Then it lengthened out until it became a yellow line, and then, without any warning or sound, a gash seemed to open and a hand appeared, a white, almost womanly hand, which felt about in the centre of the little area of light. For a minute or more the hand, with its writhing fingers, protruded out of the floor. Then it was withdrawn as suddenly as it appeared, and all was dark again save the single lurid spark, which marked a chink between the stones.

Its disappearance, however, was but momentary. With a rending, tearing sound, one of the broad, white stones turned over upon its side, and left

a square, gaping hole, through which streamed the light of a lantern. Over the edge there peeped a clean-cut, boyish face, which looked keenly about it, and then, with a hand on either side of the aperture, drew itself shoulder high and waist high, until one knee rested upon the edge. In another instant he stood at the side of the hole, and was hauling after him a companion, lithe and small like himself, with a pale face and a shock of very red hair.

'It's all clear,' he whispered. 'Have you the chisel and the bags? Great Scott! Jump, Archie, jump, and I'll swing for it!'

Sherlock Holmes had sprung out and seized the intruder by the collar. The other dived down the hole, and I heard the sound of rending cloth as Jones clutched at his skirts. The light flashed upon the barrel of a revolver, but Holmes's hunting crop came down on the man's wrist, and the pistol clinked upon the stone floor.

'It's no use, John Clay,' said Holmes, blandly; 'you have no chance at all.'

'So I see,' the other answered, with the utmost coolness. 'I fancy that my pal is all right, though I see you have got his coat-tails.'

'There are three men waiting for him at the door,' said Holmes.

'Oh, indeed. You seem to have done the thing very completely. I must compliment you.'

'And I you,' Holmes answered. 'Your red-headed idea was very new and effective.'

'You'll see your pal again presently,' said Jones. 'He's quicker at climbing down holes than I am. Just hold out while I fix the darbies.'

'I beg that you will not touch me with your

filthy hands,' remarked our prisoner, as the handcuffs clattered upon his wrists. 'You may not be aware that I have royal blood in my veins. Have the goodness also when you address me always to say "sir" and "please".'

'All right,' said Jones, with a stare and a snigger. 'Well, would you please, sir, march upstairs, where we can get a cab to carry your highness to the police-station.'

'That is better,' said John Clay, serenely. He made a sweeping bow to the three of us, and walked quietly off in the custody of the detective.

'Really, Mr. Holmes,' said Mr. Merryweather, as we followed them from the cellar, 'I do not know how the bank can thank you or repay you. There is no doubt that you have detected and defeated in the most complete manner one of the most determined attempts at bank robbery that have ever come within my experience.'

'I have had one or two little scores of my own to settle with Mr. John Clay,' said Holmes. 'I have been at some small expense over this matter, which I shall expect the bank to refund, but beyond that I am amply repaid by having had an experience which is in many ways unique, and by hearing the very remarkable narrative of the Red-headed League.'

'You see, Watson,' he explained, in the early hours of the morning, as we sat over a glass of whisky and soda in Baker-street, 'it was perfectly obvious from the first that the only possible object of this rather fantastic business of the advertisement of the League, and the copying of the "Encyclopædia", must be to get this not over-

bright pawnbroker out of the way for a number of hours everyday. It was a curious way of managing it, but really it would be difficult to suggest a better. The method was no doubt suggested to Clay's ingenious mind by the colour of his accomplice's hair. The four pounds a week was a lure which must draw him, and what was it to them, who were playing for thousands? They put in the advertisement; one rogue has the temporary office, the other rogue incites the man to apply for it, and together they manage to secure his absence every morning in the week. From the time that I heard of the assistant having come for half wages, it was obvious to me that he had some strong motive for securing the situation.'

'But how could you guess what the motive was?'

'Had there been women in the house, I should have suspected a mere vulgar intrigue. That, however, was out of the question. The man's business was a small one, and there was nothing in his house which could account for such elaborate preparations, and such an expenditure as they were at. It must then be something out of the house. What could it be? I thought of the assistant's fondness for photography, and his trick of vanishing into the cellar. The cellar! There was the end of this tangled clue. Then I made inquiries as to this mysterious assistant, and found that I had to deal with one of the coolest and most daring criminals in London. He was doing something in the cellar—something which took many hours a day for months on end. What could it be, once more? I could think of nothing save that he was running a tunnel to some other building.

'So far I had got when we went to visit the scene

of action. I surprised you by beating upon the pavement with my stick. I was ascertaining whether the cellar stretched out in front or behind. It was not in front. Then I rang the bell, and, as I hoped, the assistant answered it. We have had some skirmishes, but we had never set eyes on each other before. I hardly looked at his face. His knees were what I wished to see. You must yourself have remarked how worn, wrinkled, and stained they were. They spoke of those hours of burrowing. The only remaining point was what they were burrowing for. I walked round the corner, saw that the City and Suburban Bank abutted on our friend's premises, and felt that I had solved my problem. When you drove home after the concert I called upon Scotland Yard, and upon the chairman of the bank directors, with the result that you have seen.'

'And how could you tell that they would make their attempt to-night?' I asked.

'Well, when they closed their League offices that was a sign that they cared no longer about Mr. Jabez Wilson's presence; in other words, that they had completed their tunnel. But it was essential that they should use it soon, as it might be discovered, or the bullion might be removed. Saturday would suit them better than any other day, as it would give them two days for their escape. For all these reasons I expected them to come to-night.'

'You reasoned it out beautifully,' I exclaimed, in unfeigned admiration. 'It is so long a chain, and yet every link rings true.'

'It saved me from ennui,' he answered, yawning. 'Alas! I already feel it closing in upon me. My life

is spent in one long effort to escape from the commonplaces of existence. These little problems help me to do so.'

'And you are a benefactor of the race,' said I.

He shrugged his shoulders. 'Well, perhaps, after all, it is of some little use,' he remarked. '“L'homme c'est rien—l'œuvre c'est tout,” as Gustave Flaubert wrote to Georges Sand.'

THE STANWAY COMEYO MYSTERY

BY ARTHUR MORRISON

It is now a fair number of years back since the loss of the famous Stanway Cameo made its sensation, and the only person who had the least interest in keeping the real facts of the case secret has now been dead for some time, leaving neither relatives nor other representatives. Therefore no harm will be done in making the inner history of the case public; on the contrary, it will afford an opportunity of vindicating the professional reputation of Hewitt, who is supposed to have completely failed to make anything of the mystery surrounding the case. At the present time connoisseurs in ancient objects of art are often heard regretfully to wonder whether the wonderful cameo—so suddenly discovered and so quickly stolen—will ever again be visible to the public eye. Now this question need be asked no longer.

The cameo, as may be remembered from the many descriptions published at the time, was said to be absolutely the finest extant. It was a sardonyx of three strata—one of those rare sardonyx cameos in which it has been possible for the artist to avail himself of three different colours of superimposed stone—the lowest for the ground and the two others for the middle and high relief of the design. In size it was, for a cameo, immense, measuring seven and a half

inches by nearly six. In subject it was similar to the renowned Gonzago Cameo—now the property of the Czar of Russia—a male and a female head with Imperial insignia; but in this case supposed to represent Tiberius Claudius and Messalina. Experts considered it probably to be the work of Athenion, a famous gem-cutter of the first Christian century, whose most notable other work now extant is a smaller cameo, with a mythological subject, preserved in the Vatican.

The Stanway Cameo had been discovered in an obscure Italian village by one of those travelling agents who scour all Europe for valuable antiquities and objects of art. This man had hurried immediately to London with his prize and sold it to Mr. Claridge, of St. James's Street, eminent as a dealer in such objects. Mr. Claridge, recognizing the importance and value of the article, lost no opportunity of making its existence known, and very soon the Claudius Cameo, as it was at first usually called, was as famous as any in the world. Many experts in ancient art examined it, and several large bids were made for its purchase. In the end it was bought by the Marquis of Stanway for £5,000, for the purpose of presentation to the British Museum. The Marquis kept the cameo at his town house for a few days, showing it to his friends, and then returned it to Mr. Claridge to be finally and carefully cleaned before passing into the national collection. Two nights after, Mr. Claridge's premises were broken into and the cameo stolen.

Such, in outline, was the generally known history of the Stanway Cameo. The circumstances of the burglary in detail were these: Mr. Claridge

had himself been the last to leave the premises at about eight in the evening, at dusk, and had locked the small side door as usual. His assistant, Mr. Cutler, had left an hour and a half earlier. When Mr. Claridge left, everything was in order, and the policeman on fixed point duty just opposite, who bade Mr. Claridge good evening as he left, saw nothing suspicious during the rest of his term of duty, nor did his successors at the point throughout the night.

In the morning, however, Mr. Cutler, the assistant, who arrived first, soon after nine o'clock, at once perceived that something unlooked-for had happened. The door, of which he had a key, was still fastened, and had not been touched; but in the room behind the shop Mr. Claridge's private desk had been broken open, and the contents turned out in confusion. The door leading on to the staircase had also been forced. Proceeding up the stairs, Mr. Cutler found another door open, leading from the top landing to a small room—this door had been opened by the simple expedient of unscrewing and taking off the lock, which had been on the inside. In the ceiling of this room was a trap-door, and this was six or eight inches open, the edge resting on the half-wrenched-off bolt, which had been torn away when the trap was levered open from the outside.

Plainly, then, this was the path of the thief or thieves. Entrance had been made through the trap-door, two more doors had been opened, and then the desk had been ransacked. Mr. Cutler afterwards explained that at this time he had no precise idea what had been stolen, and did not

know where the cameo had been left on the previous evening. Mr. Claridge had himself undertaken the cleaning, and had been engaged on it, the assistant said, when he left.

There was no doubt, however, after Mr. Claridge's arrival at ten o'clock: the cameo was gone. Mr. Claridge, utterly confounded at his loss, explained incoherently, and with curses on his own carelessness, that he had locked the precious article in his desk on relinquishing work on it the previous evening, feeling rather tired and not taking the trouble to carry it as far as the safe in another part of the house.

The police were sent for at once, of course, and every investigation made, Mr. Claridge offering a reward of £500 for the recovery of the cameo. The affair was scribbled of at large in the earliest editions of the evening papers, and by noon all the world was aware of the extraordinary theft of the Stanway Cameo, and many people were discussing the probabilities of the case, with very indistinct ideas of what a sardonyx cameo precisely was.

It was in the afternoon of this day that Lord Stanway called on Martin Hewitt. The Marquis was a tall, upstanding man of spare figure and active habits, well known as a member of learned societies and a great patron of art. He hurried into Hewitt's private room as soon as his name had been announced, and, as soon as Hewitt had given him a chair, plunged into business.

'Probably you already guess my business with you, Mr. Hewitt—you have seen the early evening papers? Just so; then I needn't tell you again what you already know. My cameo is gone, and

I badly want it back. Of course, the police are hard at work at Claridge's, but I'm not quite satisfied. I have been there myself for two or three hours, and can't see that they know any more about it than I do myself. Then, of course, the police, naturally and properly enough from their point of view, look first to find the criminal—regarding the recovery of the property almost as a secondary consideration. Now, from *my* point of view, the chief consideration is the property. Of course I want the thief caught, if possible, and properly punished; but still more, I want the cameo.'

'Certainly it is a considerable loss. Five thousand pounds——'

'Ah, but don't misunderstand me. It isn't the monetary value of the thing that I regret. As a matter of fact, I am indemnified for that already. Claridge has behaved most honourably—more than honourably. Indeed, the first intimation I had of the loss was a cheque from him for £5,000, with a letter assuring me that the restoration to me of the amount I had paid was the least he could do to repair the result of what he called his unpardonable carelessness. Legally, I'm not sure that I could demand anything of him, unless I could prove very flagrant neglect indeed to guard against theft.'

'Then I take it, Lord Stanway,' Hewitt observed, 'that you much prefer the cameo to the money?'

'Certainly. Else I should never have been willing to pay the money for the cameo. It was an enormous price—perhaps much above the market value, even for such a valuable thing; but

I was particularly anxious that it should not go out of the country. Our public collections here are not so fortunate as they should be in the possession of the very finest examples of that class of work. In short, I had determined on the cameo, and, fortunately, happen to be able to carry out determinations of that sort without regarding an extra thousand pounds or so as an obstacle. So that, you see, what I want is not the value, but the thing itself. Indeed, I don't think I can possibly keep the money Claridge has sent me—the affair is more his misfortune than his fault. But I shall say nothing about returning it for a little while: it may possibly have the effect of sharpening everybody in the search.'

'Just so. Do I understand that you would like me to look into the case independently, on your behalf?'

'Exactly. I want you, if you can, to approach the matter entirely from *my* point of view—your sole object being to find the cameo. Of course, if you happen on the thief as well, so much the better. Perhaps, after all, looking for the one is the same thing as looking for the other?'

'Not always; but usually it is, of course—even if they are not together, they certainly *have* been at one time, and to have one is a very long step toward having the other. Now, to begin with, is anybody suspected?'

'Well, the police are reserved, but I believe the fact is they've nothing to say. Claridge won't admit that he suspects any one, though he believes that whoever it was must have watched him yesterday evening through the back window of

his room, and must have seen him put the cameo away in his desk; because the thief would seem to have gone straight to the place. But I half fancy that, in his inner mind, he is inclined to suspect one of two people. You see, a robbery of this sort is different from others. That cameo would never be stolen, I imagine, with the view of its being sold—it is much too famous a thing; a man might as well walk about offering to sell the Tower of London. There are only a very few people who buy such things, and every one of them knows all about it. No dealer would touch it—he could never even show it, much less sell it, without being called to account. So that it really seems more likely that it has been taken by somebody who wishes to keep it for mere love of the thing—a collector, in fact—who would then have to keep it secretly at home, and never let a soul beside himself see it, living in the consciousness that at his death it must be found and his theft known; unless, indeed, an ordinary vulgar burglar has taken it without knowing its value.

‘That isn’t likely,’ Hewitt replied. ‘An ordinary burglar, ignorant of its value, wouldn’t have gone straight to the cameo and have taken it in preference to many other things of more apparent worth, which must be lying near in such a place as Claridge’s.’

‘True—I suppose he wouldn’t. Although the police seem to think that the breaking in is clearly the work of a regular criminal—from the jemmy marks, you know, and so on.’

‘Well, but what of the two people you think Mr. Claridge suspects?’

‘Of course, I can’t say that he does suspect

them—I only fancied from his tone that it might be possible; he himself insists that he can't in justice suspect anybody. One of these men is Hahn, the travelling agent who sold him the cameo. This man's character does not appear to be absolutely irreproachable—no dealer trusts him very far. Of course, Claridge doesn't say what he paid him for the cameo—these dealers are very reticent about their profits, which I believe are as often something like 500 per cent. as not. But it seems Hahn bargained to have something extra, depending on the amount Claridge could sell the carving for. According to the appointment he should have turned up this morning, but he hasn't been seen, and nobody seems to know exactly where he is.'

'Yes; and the other person?'

'Well, I scarcely like mentioning him, because he is certainly a gentleman, and I believe, in the ordinary way, quite incapable of anything in the least degree dishonourable; although, of course, they say a collector has no conscience in the matter of his own particular hobby, and certainly Mr. Woollett is as keen a collector as any man alive. He lives in chambers in the next turning past Claridge's premises—can, in fact, look into Claridge's back windows if he likes. He examined the cameo several times before I bought it, and made several high offers—appeared, in fact, very anxious indeed to get it. After I had bought it, he made, I understand, some rather strong remarks about people like myself, "spoiling the market" by paying extravagant prices, and altogether cut up "crusty", as they say, at losing the specimen.' Lord Stanway paused for a few

seconds, and then went on : ' I'm not sure that I ought to mention Mr. Woollett's name for a moment in connection with such a matter—I am personally perfectly certain that he is as incapable of anything like theft as myself. But I am telling you all I know.'

' Precisely. I can't know too much in a case like this. It can do no harm if I know all about fifty innocent people, and may save me from the risk of knowing nothing about the thief. Now, let me see : Mr. Woollett's rooms, you say, are near Mr. Claridge's place of business ? Is there any means of communication between the roofs ?'

' Yes, I am told that it is perfectly possible to get from one place to the other by walking along the leads.'

' Very good. Then, unless you can think of any other information that may help me, I think, Lord Stanway, I will go at once and look at the place.'

' Do, by all means. I think I'll come back with you. Somehow, I don't like to feel idle in the matter, though I suppose I can't do much. As to more information—I don't think there is any.'

' In regard to Mr. Claridge's assistant, now : do you know anything of him ?'

' Only that he has always seemed a very civil and decent sort of man. Honest, I should say, or Claridge wouldn't have kept him so many years—there are a good many valuable things about at Claridge's. Besides, the man has keys of the place himself, and even if he were a thief he wouldn't need to go breaking in through the roof.'

' So that,' said Hewitt, ' we have, directly connected with this cameo, besides yourself, these

people : Mr. Claridge, the dealer ; Mr. Cutler, the assistant in Mr. Claridge's business ; Hahn, who sold the article to Claridge ; and Mr. Woollett, who made bids for it. These are all ?'

' All that I know of. Other gentlemen made bids, I believe, but I don't know them.'

' Take these people in their order. Mr. Claridge is out of the question, as a dealer with a reputation to keep up would be, even if he hadn't immediately sent you this £5,000—more than the market value, I understand, of the cameo. The assistant is a reputable man, against whom nothing is known, who would never need to break in, and who must understand his business well enough to know that he could never attempt to sell the missing stone without instant detection. Hahn is a man of shady antecedents, probably clever enough to know as well as anybody how to dispose of such plunder—if it be possible to dispose of it at all ; also, Hahn hasn't been to Claridge's to-day, although he had an appointment to take money. Lastly, Mr. Woollett is a gentleman of the most honourable record, but a perfectly rabid collector, who had made every effort to secure the cameo before you bought it ; who, moreover, could have seen Mr. Claridge working in his back room, and who has perfectly easy access to Mr. Claridge's roof. If we find it can be none of these, then we must look where circumstances indicate.'

There was unwonted excitement at Mr. Claridge's place when Hewitt and his client arrived. It was a dull old building, and in the windows there was never more show than an odd blue china vase or two, or, mayhap, a few old silver shoe-buckles and a curious small-sword. Nine men out of ten

would have passed it without a glance; but the tenth at least would probably know it for a place famous through the world for the number and value of the old and curious objects of art that had passed through it.

On this day two or three loiterers, having heard of the robbery, extracted what gratification they might from staring at nothing between the railings guarding the windows. Within, Mr. Claridge, a brisk, stout, little old man, was talking earnestly to a stout police inspector in uniform, and Mr. Cutler, who had seized the opportunity to attempt amateur detective work on his own account, was grovelling perseveringly about the floor among old porcelain and loose pieces of armour in the futile hope of finding any clue that the thieves might have considerably dropped.

Mr. Claridge came forward eagerly.

'The leather case has been found, I am pleased to be able to tell you, Lord Stanway, since you left.'

'Empty, of course?'

'Unfortunately, yes. It had evidently been thrown away by the thief behind a chimney-stack a roof or two away, where the police have found it. But it is a clue, of course.'

'Ah, then this gentleman will give me his opinion of it,' Lord Stanway said, turning to Hewitt. 'This, Mr. Claridge, is Mr. Martin Hewitt, who has been kind enough to come with me here at a moment's notice. With the police on the one hand, and Mr. Hewitt on the other, we shall certainly recover that cameo, if it is to be recovered, I think.'

Mr. Claridge bowed, and beamed on Hewitt

through his spectacles. 'I'm very glad Mr. Hewitt has come,' he said. 'Indeed, I had already decided to give the police till this time to-morrow, and then, if they had found nothing, to call in Mr. Hewitt myself.'

Hewitt bowed in his turn, and then asked, 'Will you let me see the various breakages? I hope they have not been disturbed.'

'Nothing whatever has been disturbed. Do exactly as seems best—I need scarcely say that everything here is perfectly at your disposal. You know all the circumstances, of course?'

'In general, yes. I suppose I am right in the belief that you have no resident housekeeper?'

'No,' Claridge replied, 'I haven't. I had one housekeeper who sometimes pawned my property in the evening, and then another who used to break my most valuable china, till I could never sleep or take a moment's ease at home for fear my stock was being ruined here. So I gave up resident housekeepers. I felt some confidence in doing it, because of the policeman who is always on duty opposite.'

'Can I see the broken desk?'

Mr. Claridge led the way into the room behind the shop. The desk was really a sort of work-table, with a lifting top and a lock. The top had been forced roughly open by some instrument which had been pushed in below it and used as a lever, so that the catch of the lock was torn away. Hewitt examined the damaged parts and the marks of the lever, and then looked out at the back window.

'There are several windows about here,' he remarked, 'from which it might be possible to see

into this room. Do you know any of the people who live behind them ?'

'Two or three I know,' Mr. Claridge answered, 'but there are two windows—the pair almost immediately before us—belonging to a room or office which is to let. Any stranger might get in there and watch.'

'Do the roofs above any of those windows communicate in any way with yours ?'

'None of those directly opposite. Those at the left do—you may walk all the way along the leads.'

'And whose windows are they ?'

Mr. Claridge hesitated. 'Well,' he said, 'they're Mr. Woollett's—an excellent customer of mine. But he's a gentleman and—well, I really think it's absurd to suspect him.'

'In a case like this,' Hewitt answered, 'one must disregard nothing but the impossible. Somebody—whether Mr. Woollett himself or another person—could possibly have seen into this room from those windows, and equally possibly could have reached this roof from that one. Therefore, we must not forget Mr. Woollett. Have any of your neighbours been burgled during the night? I mean that strangers anxious to get at your trap-door would probably have to begin by getting into some other house close by, so as to reach your roof.'

'No,' Mr. Claridge replied, 'there has been nothing of that sort. It was the first thing the police ascertained.'

Hewitt examined the broken door and then made his way up the stairs, with the others. The unscrewed lock of the door of the top back room required little examination. In the room, below

the trap-door, was a dusty table on which stood a chair, and at the other side of the table sat Detective-Inspector Plummer, whom Hewitt knew very well, and who bade him 'good-day', and then went on with his docket.

'This chair and table were found as they are now, I take it?' Hewitt asked.

'Yes,' said Mr. Claridge; 'the thieves, I should think, dropped in through the trap-door, after breaking it open, and had to place this chair where it is to be able to climb back.'

Hewitt scrambled up through the trap-way and examined it from the top. The door was hung on long external barn-door hinges, and had been forced open in a similar manner to that practised on the desk. A jemmy had been pushed between the frame and the door near the bolt, and the door had been prised open, the bolt being torn away from the screws in the operation.

Presently, Inspector Plummer, having finished his docket, climbed up to the roof after Hewitt, and the two together went to the spot, close under a chimney-stack on the next roof but one, where the case had been found. Plummer produced the case, which he had in his coat-tail pocket, for Hewitt's inspection.

'I don't see anything particular about it; do you?' he said. 'It shows us the way they went, though, being found just here.'

'Well, yes,' Hewitt said; 'if we kept on in this direction we should be going towards Mr. Woollett's house, and his trap-door, shouldn't we?'

The inspector pursed his lips, smiled, and shrugged his shoulders. 'Of course; we haven't waited till now to find that out,' he said.

'No, of course. And, as you say, I don't think there is much to be learned from this leather case. It is almost new, and there isn't a mark on it.' And Hewitt handed it back to the inspector.

'Well,' said Plummer, as he returned the case to his pocket, 'what's your opinion?'

'It's rather an awkward case.'

'Yes, it is. Between ourselves, I don't mind telling you, I'm having a sharp look-out kept over there'—Plummer jerked his head in the direction of Mr. Woollett's chambers—'because the robbery's an unusual one. There's only two possible motives—the sale of the cameo or the keeping of it. The sale's out of the question, as you know; the thing's only saleable to those who would collar the thief at once, and who wouldn't have the thing in their places now for anything. So that it must be taken to keep—and that's a thing nobody but the maddest of collectors would do—just such persons as ——' and the inspector nodded again towards Mr. Woollett's quarters. 'Take that with the other circumstances,' he added, 'and I think you'll agree it's worth while looking a little farther that way. Of course, some of the work—taking off the lock and so on—looks rather like a regular burglar, but it's just possible that any one badly wanting the cameo would hire a man who was up to the work.'

'Yes, it's possible.'

'Do you know anything of Hahn, the agent?' Plummer asked, a moment later.

'No, I don't. Have you found him yet?'

'I haven't yet, but I'm after him. I've found he was at Charing Cross a day or two ago, book-

ing a ticket for the Continent. That and his failing to turn up to-day seem to make it worth while not to miss *him* if we can help it. He isn't the sort of man that lets a chance of drawing a bit of money go for nothing.'

They returned to the room. 'Well,' said Lord Stanway, 'what's the result of the consultation? We've been waiting here very patiently while you two clever men have been discussing the matter on the roof.'

On the wall just beneath the trap-door a very dusty old tall hat hung on a peg. This Hewitt took down and examined very closely, smearing his fingers with the dust from the inside lining. 'Is this one of your valuable and crusted old antiques?' he asked, with a smile, of Mr. Claridge.

'That's only an old hat that I used to keep here for use in bad weather,' Mr. Claridge said, with some surprise at the question. 'I haven't touched it for a year or more.'

'Oh, then it couldn't have been left here by your last night's visitor,' Hewitt replied, carelessly replacing it on the hook. 'You left here at eight last night, I think?'

'Eight exactly—or within a minute or two.'

'Just so. I think I'll look at the room on the opposite side of the landing, if you'll let me.'

'Certainly, if you'd like to,' Claridge replied; but they haven't been there—it is exactly as it was left. Only a lumber-room, you see,' he concluded, flinging the door open.

A number of partly broken-up packing-cases were littered about this room, with much other rubbish. Hewitt took the lid of one of the newest-looking packing-cases, and glanced at the address label.

Then he turned to a rusty old iron box that stood against a wall. 'I should like to see behind this,' he said, tugging at it with his hands. 'It is heavy and dirty. Is there a small crowbar about the house, or some similar lever?'

Mr. Claridge shook his head. 'Haven't such a thing in the place,' he said.

'Never mind,' Hewitt replied, 'another time will do to shift that old box, and perhaps after all there's little reason for moving it. I will just walk round to the police station, I think, and speak to the constables who were on duty opposite during the night. I think, Lord Stanway, I have seen all that is necessary here.'

'I suppose,' asked Mr. Claridge, 'it is too soon yet to ask if you have formed any theory in the matter?'

'Well—yes, it is,' Hewitt answered. 'But perhaps I may be able to surprise you in an hour or two; but that I don't promise. By the by,' he added suddenly, 'I suppose you're sure the trap-door was bolted last night?'

'Certainly,' Mr. Claridge answered, smiling. 'Else how could the bolt have been broken? As a matter of fact, I believe the trap hasn't been opened for months. Mr. Cutler, do you remember when the trap-door was last opened?'

Mr. Cutler shook his head. 'Certainly not for six months,' he said.

'Ah, very well; it's not very important,' Hewitt replied.

As they reached the front shop, a fiery-faced old gentleman bounced in at the street door, stumbling over an umbrella that stood in a dark corner, and kicking it three yards away.

'What the deuce do you mean,' he roared at Mr. Claridge, 'by sending these police people smelling about my rooms and asking questions of my servants? What do you mean, sir, by treating me as a thief? Can't a gentleman come into this place to look at an article without being suspected of stealing it, when it disappears through your wretched carelessness? I'll ask my solicitor, sir, if there isn't a remedy for this sort of thing. And if I catch another of your spy fellows on my staircase, or crawling about my roof, I'll—I'll shoot him!'

'Really, Mr. Woollett,' began Mr. Claridge, somewhat abashed; but the angry old man would hear nothing.

'Don't talk to me, sir; you shall talk to my solicitor. And am I to understand, my lord'—turning to Lord Stanway—'that these things are being done with your approval?'

'Whatever is being done,' Lord Stanway answered, 'is being done by the police on their own responsibility, and entirely without prompting, I believe, by Mr. Claridge—certainly without a suggestion of any sort from myself. I think that the personal opinion of Mr. Claridge—certainly my own—is that anything like a suspicion of your position in this wretched matter is ridiculous. And if you will only consider the matter calmly—'

'Consider it calmly? Imagine yourself considering such a thing calmly, Lord Stanway. I *won't* consider it calmly. I'll—I'll—I won't have it. And if I find another man on my roof, I'll pitch him off.' And Mr. Woollett bounced into the street again.

'Mr. Woollett is annoyed,' Hewitt observed,

with a smile. 'I'm afraid Plummer has a clumsy assistant somewhere.'

Mr. Claridge said nothing, but looked rather glum. For Mr. Woollett was a most excellent customer.

Lord Stanway and Hewitt walked slowly down the street, Hewitt staring at the pavement in profound thought. Once or twice Lord Stanway glanced at his face, but refrained from disturbing him. Presently, however, he observed, 'You seem at least, Mr. Hewitt, to have noticed something that has set you thinking. Does it look like a clue?'

Hewitt came out of his cogitation at once. 'A clue?' he said; 'the case bristles with clues. The extraordinary thing to me is that Plummer, usually a smart man, doesn't seem to have seen one of them. He must be out of sorts, I'm afraid. But the case is decidedly a very remarkable one.'

'Remarkable in what particular way?'

'In regard to motive. Now it would seem, as Plummer was saying to me just now on the roof, that there were only two possible motives for such a robbery. Either the man who took all this trouble and risk to break into Claridge's place must have desired to sell the cameo at a good price, or he must have desired to keep it for himself, being a lover of such things. But neither of these has been the actual motive.'

'Perhaps he thinks he can extort a good sum from me by way of ransom?'

'No, it isn't that. Nor is it jealousy, nor spite, nor anything of that kind. I know the motive, I think—but I wish we could get hold of Hahn. I

will shut myself up alone and turn it over in my mind for half an hour presently.'

'Meanwhile, what I want to know is, apart from all your professional subtleties—which I confess I can't understand—can you get back the cameo?'

'That,' said Hewitt, stopping at the corner of the street, 'I am rather afraid I cannot—nor anybody else. But I am pretty sure I know the thief.'

'Then surely that will lead you to the cameo?'

'It *may*, of course; but then it is just possible that by this evening you may not want to have it back after all.'

Lord Stanway stared in amazement.

'Not want to have it back!' he exclaimed.

Why, of course I shall want to have it back. I don't understand you in the least; you talk in conundrums. Who is the thief you speak of?'

'I think, Lord Stanway,' Hewitt said, 'that perhaps I had better not say until I have quite finished my inquiries, in case of mistakes. The case is quite an extraordinary one, and of quite a different character from what one would at first naturally imagine, and I must be very careful to guard against the possibility of error. I have very little fear of a mistake, however, and I hope I may wait on you in a few hours at Piccadilly with news. I have only to see the policemen.'

'Certainly, come whenever you please. But why see the policemen? They have already most positively stated that they saw nothing whatever suspicious in the house or near it.'

'I shall not ask them anything at all about the house,' Hewitt responded. 'I shall just have a little chat with them—about the weather.' And

with a smiling bow he turned away, while Lord Stanway stood and gazed after him, with an expression that implied a suspicion that his special detective was making a fool of him.

In rather more than an hour Hewitt was back in Mr. Claridge's shop. 'Mr. Claridge,' he said, 'I think I must ask you one or two questions in private. May I see you in your own room?'

They went there at once, and Hewitt, pulling a chair before the window, sat down with his back to the light. The dealer shut the door, and sat opposite him, with the light full in his face.

'Mr. Claridge,' Hewitt proceeded slowly, '*when did you first find that Lord Stanway's cameo was a forgery?*'

Claridge literally bounced in his chair. His face paled, but he managed to stammer sharply, 'What—what—what d'you mean? Forgery? Do you mean to say I sell forgeries? Forgery? It wasn't a forgery!'

'Then,' continued Hewitt, in the same deliberate tone, watching the other's face the while, 'if it wasn't a forgery, *why did you destroy it and burst your trap-door and desk to imitate a burglary?*'

The sweat stood thick on the dealer's face, and he gasped. But he struggled hard to keep his faculties together, and ejaculated hoarsely, 'Destroy it? What—what—I didn't—didn't destroy it!'

'Threw it into the river, then—don't prevaricate about details.'

'No—no—it's a lie. Who says that? Go away. You're insulting me!' Claridge almost screamed.

'Come, come, Mr. Claridge,' Hewitt said, more placably, for he had gained his point; 'don't distress yourself, and don't attempt to deceive me—you can't, I assure you. I know everything you did before you left here last night—everything.'

Claridge's face worked painfully. Once or twice he appeared to be on the point of returning an indignant reply, but hesitated, and finally broke down altogether.

'Don't expose me, Mr. Hewitt,' he pleaded; 'I beg you won't expose me. I haven't harmed a soul but myself. I've paid Lord Stanway every penny back, and I never knew the thing was a forgery till I began to clean it. I'm an old man, Mr. Hewitt, and my professional reputation has been spotless till now. I beg you won't expose me.'

Hewitt's voice softened. 'Don't make an unnecessary trouble of it,' he said. 'I see a decanter on your sideboard—let me give you a little brandy and water. Come, there's nothing criminal, I believe, in a man's breaking open his own desk, or his own trap-door, for that matter. Of course, I'm acting for Lord Stanway in this affair, and I must, in duty, report to him without reserve. But Lord Stanway is a gentleman, and I'll undertake he'll do nothing inconsiderate of your feelings, if you're disposed to be frank. Let us talk the affair over; tell me about it.'

'It was that swindler Hahn who deceived me in the beginning,' Claridge said. 'I have never made a mistake with a cameo before, and I never thought so close an imitation was possible. I examined it most carefully, and was perfectly satisfied, and many experts examined it after-

wards, and were all equally deceived. I felt as sure as I possibly could feel that I had bought one of the finest, if not actually the finest cameo known to exist. It was not until after it had come back from Lord Stanway's, and I was cleaning it, the evening before last, that in course of my work it became apparent that the thing was nothing but a consummately clever forgery. It was made of three layers of moulded glass, nothing more or less. But the glass was treated in a way I had never before known of, and the surface had been cunningly worked on till it defied any ordinary examination. Some of the glass imitation cameos made in the latter part of the last century, I may tell you, are regarded as marvellous pieces of work, and, indeed, command very fair prices; but this was something quite beyond any of those.

I was amazed and horrified. I put the thing away and went home. All that night I lay awake in a state of distraction, quite unable to decide what to do. To let the cameo go out of my possession was impossible. Sooner or later the forgery would be discovered, and my reputation—the highest in these matters in this country, I may safely claim, and the growth of nearly fifty years of honest application and good judgement—this reputation would be gone for ever. But without considering this, there was the fact that I had taken £5,000 of Lord Stanway's money for a mere piece of glass, and that money I must, in mere common honesty as well as for my own sake, return. But how? The name of the Stanway Cameo had become a household word, and to confess that the whole thing was a sham would

ruin my reputation and destroy all confidence—past, present, and future—in me and in my transactions. Either way spelled ruin. Even if I confided in Lord Stanway privately, returned his money and destroyed the cameo, what then? The sudden disappearance of an article so famous would excite remark at once. It had been presented to the British Museum, and if it never appeared in that collection, and no news were to be got of it, people would guess at the truth at once. To make it known that I myself had been deceived would have availed nothing. It is my business *not* to be deceived; and to have it known that my most expensive specimens might be forgeries would equally mean ruin, whether I sold them cunningly as a rogue or ignorantly as a fool. Indeed, my pride, my reputation as a connoisseur is a thing near to my heart, and it would be an unspeakable humiliation to me to have it known that I had been imposed on by such a forgery. What could I do? Every expedient seemed useless, but one—the one I adopted. It was not straightforward, I admit; but, oh! Mr. Hewitt, consider the temptation—and remember that it couldn't do a soul any harm. No matter who might be suspected, I knew there could not possibly be evidence to make them suffer. All the next day—yesterday—I was anxiously worrying out the thing in my mind and carefully devising the—the trick, I'm afraid you'll call it—that you by some extraordinary means have seen through. It seemed the only thing—what else was there? More I needn't tell you—you know it. I have only now to beg that you will use your best influence with Lord Stanway

to save me from public derision and exposure. I will do anything—pay anything—anything but exposure, at my age, and with my position.'

'Well, you see,' Hewitt replied thoughtfully, 'I've no doubt Lord Stanway will show you every consideration, and certainly I will do what I can to save you, in the circumstances; though you must remember that you *have* done some harm—you have caused suspicions to rest on at least one honest man. But as to reputation—I've a professional reputation of my own. If I help to conceal your professional failure, I shall appear to have failed in *my* part of the business.'

'But the cases are different, Mr. Hewitt—consider. You are not expected—it would be impossible—to succeed invariably; and there are only two or three who know you have looked into the case. Then your other conspicuous successes —'

'Well, well—we shall see. One thing I don't know, though—whether you climbed out of a window to break open the trap-door, or whether you got up through the trap-door itself and pulled the bolt with a string through the jamb, so as to bolt it after you.'

'There was no available window—I used the string, as you say. My poor little cunning must seem very transparent to you, I fear. I spent hours of thought over the question of the trap-door—how to break it open so as to leave a genuine appearance, and especially how to bolt it inside after I had reached the roof. I thought I had succeeded beyond the possibility of suspicion; how you penetrated the device surpasses my comprehension. How, to begin with, could

you possibly know that the cameo was a forgery? Did you ever see it?’

‘Never. And if I had seen it, I fear I should never have been able to express an opinion on it; I’m not a connoisseur. As a matter of fact, I *didn’t* know that the thing was a forgery in the first place; what I knew in the first place was that it was *you* who had broken into the house. It was from that that I arrived at the conclusion—after a certain amount of thought—that the cameo must have been forged. Gain was out of the question—you, beyond all men, could never sell the Stanway Cameo again, and, besides, you had paid back Lord Stanway’s money. I knew enough of your reputation to know that you would never incur the scandal of a great theft at your place for the sake of getting the cameo for yourself, when you might have kept it in the beginning, with no trouble and mystery. Consequently, I had to look for another motive, and at first another motive seemed an impossibility. Why should you wish to take all this trouble to lose £5,000? You had nothing to gain; perhaps you had something to save—your professional reputation, for instance. Looking at it so, it was plain that you were *suppressing* the cameo—burking it; since, once taken as you had taken it, it could never come to light again. That suggested the solution of the mystery at once—you had discovered, after the sale, that the cameo was not genuine.’

‘Yes, yes—I see; but you say you began with the knowledge that I broke into the place myself. How did you know that? I cannot imagine a trace—’

' My dear sir, you left traces everywhere. In the first place, it struck me as curious, before I came here, that you had sent off that cheque for £5,000 to Lord Stanway an hour or so after the robbery was discovered—it looked so much as though you were sure of the cameo never coming back, and were in a hurry to avert suspicion. Of course, I understood that, so far as I then knew the case, you were the most unlikely person in the world, and that your eagerness to repay Lord Stanway might be the most credible thing possible. But the point was worth remembering and I remembered it.

' When I came here I saw suspicious indications in many directions, but the conclusive piece of evidence was that old hat hanging below the trap-door.'

' But I never touched it. I assure you, Mr. Hewitt, I never touched the hat—haven't touched it for months——'

' Of course. If you *had* touched it, I might never have got the clue. But we'll deal with the hat presently; that wasn't what struck me at first. The trap-door first took my attention. Consider, now: here was a trap-door, most insecurely hung on *external* hinges; the burglar had a screw-driver, for he took off the door-lock below with it. Why, then, didn't he take this trap off by the hinges, instead of making a noise and taking longer time and trouble to burst the bolt from its fastenings? And why, if he were a stranger, was he able to plant his jemmy from the outside just exactly opposite the interior bolt? There was only one mark on the frame, and that precisely in the proper place.

' After that, I saw the leather case. It had not been thrown away, or some corner would have shown signs of the fall. It had been put down carefully where it was found. These things, however, were of small importance compared with the hat. The hat, as you know, was exceedingly thick with dust—the accumulation of months. But, on the top side, presented toward the trap-door, were a score or so of *raindrop marks*. That was all. They were new marks, for there was no dust over them; they had merely had time to dry and cake the dust they had fallen on. *Now, there had been no rain since a sharp shower just after seven o'clock last night.* At that time you, by your own statement, were in the place. You left at eight, and the rain was all over at ten minutes or a quarter-past seven. The trap-door, you also told me, had not been opened for months. The thing was plain. You, or somebody who was here when you were, had opened that trap-door during, or just before, that shower. I said little then, but went, as soon as I had left, to the police-station. There I made perfectly certain that there had been no rain during the night by questioning the policemen who were on duty outside all the time. There had been none. I knew everything.

' The only other evidence there was pointed with all the rest. There were no rain-marks on the leather case; it had been put on the roof as an after-thought when there was no rain. A very poor after-thought, let me tell you, for no thief would throw away a useful case that concealed his booty and protected it from breakage, and throw it away just so as to leave a clue as to

what direction he had gone in. I also saw, in the lumber-room, a number of packing-cases—one with a label dated two days back—which had been opened with an iron lever; and yet, when I made an excuse to ask for it, you said there was no such thing in the place. Inference: you didn't want me to compare it with the marks on the desks and doors. That is all, I think.'

Mr. Claridge looked dolorously down at the floor. 'I'm afraid,' he said, 'that I took an unsuitable rôle when I undertook to rely on my wits to deceive men like you. I thought there wasn't a single vulnerable spot in my defence, but you walk calmly through it at the first attempt. Why did I never think of those raindrops?'

'Come,' said Hewitt, with a smile, 'that sounds unrepentant. I am going, now, to Lord Stanway's. If I were you, I think I should apologize to Mr. Woollett in some way.'

Lord Stanway, who, in the hour or two of reflection left him after parting with Hewitt, had come to the belief that he had employed a man whose mind was not always in order, received Hewitt's story with natural astonishment. For some time he was in doubt as to whether he would be doing right in acquiescing in anything but a straightforward public statement of the facts connected with the disappearance of the cameo, but in the end was persuaded to let the affair drop, on receiving an assurance from Mr. Woollett that he unreservedly accepted the apology offered him by Mr. Claridge.

As for the latter, he was at least sufficiently punished in loss of money and in personal humiliation for his escapade. But the bitterest and last

blow he sustained was when the unblushing Hahn walked smilingly into his office two days later to demand the extra payment agreed on in consideration of the sale. He had been called suddenly away, he explained, on the day he should have come, and hoped his missing the appointment had occasioned no inconvenience. As to the robbery of the cameo, of course he was very sorry, but 'pishness was pishness', and he would be glad of a cheque for the sum agreed on. And the unhappy Claridge was obliged to pay it, knowing that the man had swindled him, but unable to open his mouth to say so.

The reward remained on offer for a long time—indeed, it was never publicly withdrawn, I believe, even at the time of Claridge's death. And several intelligent newspapers enlarged upon the fact that an ordinary burglar had completely baffled and defeated the boasted acumen of Mr. Martin Hewitt, the well-known private detective.

THE CASE OF OSCAR BRODSKI

BY R. AUSTIN FREEMAN

PART I

THE MECHANISM OF CRIME

A SURPRISING amount of nonsense has been talked about conscience. On the one hand remorse (or the 'again-bite', as certain scholars of ultra-Teutonic leanings would prefer to call it); on the other hand 'an easy conscience': these have been accepted as the determining factors of happiness or the reverse.

Of course there is an element of truth in the 'easy conscience' view, but it begs the whole question. A particularly hardy conscience may be quite easy under the most unfavourable conditions—conditions in which the more feeble conscience might be severely afflicted with the 'again-bite'. And, then, it seems to be the fact that some fortunate persons have no conscience at all; a negative gift that raises them above the mental vicissitudes of the common herd of humanity.

Now, Silas Hickler was a case in point. No one, looking into his cheerful, round face, beaming with benevolence and wreathed in perpetual smiles, would have imagined him to be a criminal. Least of all, his worthy, high-church housekeeper, who was a witness to his unvarying amiability,

who constantly heard him carolling light-heartedly about the house and noted his appreciative zest at meal-times.

Yet it is a fact that Silas earned his modest, though comfortable, income by the gentle art of burglary. A precarious trade and risky withal, yet not so very hazardous if pursued with judgement and moderation. And Silas was eminently a man of judgement. He worked invariably alone. He kept his own counsel. No confederate had he to turn King's Evidence at a pinch; no one he knew would bounce off in a fit of temper to Scotland Yard. Nor was he greedy and thriftless, as most criminals are. His 'scoops' were few and far between, carefully planned, secretly executed, and the proceeds judiciously invested in 'weekly property'.

In early life Silas had been connected with the diamond industry, and he still did a little rather irregular dealing. In the trade he was suspected of transactions with I.D.B.s, and one or two indiscreet dealers had gone so far as to whisper the ominous word 'fence'. But Silas smiled a benevolent smile and went his way. He knew what he knew, and his clients in Amsterdam were not inquisitive.

Such was Silas Hickler. As he strolled round his garden in the dusk of an October evening, he seemed the very type of modest, middle-class prosperity. He was dressed in the travelling suit that he wore on his little continental trips; his bag was packed and stood in readiness on the sitting-room sofa. A parcel of diamonds (purchased honestly, though without impertinent questions, at Southampton) was in the inside pocket of his

waistcoat, and another more valuable parcel was stowed in a cavity in the heel of his right boot. In an hour and a half it would be time for him to set out to catch the boat train at the junction; meanwhile there was nothing to do but to stroll round the fading garden and consider how he should invest the proceeds of the impending deal. His housekeeper had gone over to Welham for the week's shopping, and would probably not be back until eleven o'clock. He was alone in the premises and just a trifle dull.

He was about to turn into the house when his ear caught the sound of footsteps on the unmade road that passed the end of the garden. He paused and listened. There was no other dwelling near, and the road led nowhere, fading away into the waste land beyond the house. Could this be a visitor? It seemed unlikely, for visitors were few at Silas Hickler's house. Meanwhile the footsteps continued to approach, ringing out with increasing loudness on the hard, stony path.

Silas strolled down to the gate, and, leaning on it, looked out with some curiosity. Presently a glow of light showed him the face of a man, apparently lighting his pipe; then a dim figure detached itself from the enveloping gloom, advanced towards him and halted opposite the garden. The stranger removed a cigarette from his mouth and, blowing out a cloud of smoke, asked—

'Can you tell me if this road will take me to Badsham Junction?'

'No,' replied Hickler, 'but there is a footpath farther on that leads to the station.'

'Footpath!' growled the stranger, 'I've had enough of footpaths. I came down from town to

Catley intending to walk across to the junction. I started along the road, and then some fool directed me to a short cut, with the result that I have been blundering about in the dark for the last half-hour. My sight isn't very good, you know,' he added.

'What train do you want to catch?' asked Hickler.

'Seven fifty-eight,' was the reply.

'I am going to catch that train myself,' said Silas, 'but I shan't be starting for another hour. The station is only three-quarters of a mile from here. If you like to come in and take a rest, we can walk down together and then you'll be sure of not missing your way.'

'It's very good of you,' said the stranger, peering, with spectacled eyes, at the dark house, 'but—I think——'

'Might as well wait here as at the station,' said Silas in his genial way, holding the gate open, and the stranger, after a momentary hesitation, entered and, flinging away his cigarette, followed him to the door of the cottage.

The sitting-room was in darkness, save for the dull glow of the expiring fire, but, entering before his guest, Silas applied a match to the lamp that hung from the ceiling. As the flame leaped up, flooding the little interior with light, the two men regarding one another with mutual curiosity.

'Brodski, by Jingo!' was Hickler's silent commentary, as he looked at his guest. 'Doesn't know me, evidently—wouldn't, of course, after all these years and with his bad eyesight. Take a seat, sir,' he added aloud. 'Will you join me in a little refreshment to while away the time?'

Brodski murmured an indistinct acceptance, and, as his host turned to open a cupboard, he deposited his hat (a hard, grey felt) on a chair in a corner, placed his bag on the edge of the table, resting his umbrella against it, and sat down in a small arm-chair.

‘Have a biscuit?’ said Hickler, as he placed a whisky-bottle on the table together with a couple of his best star-pattern tumblers and a siphon.

‘Thanks, I think I will,’ said Brodski. ‘The railway journey and all this confounded tramping about, you know——’

‘Yes,’ agreed Silas. ‘Doesn’t do to start with an empty stomach. Hope you don’t mind oat-cakes; I see they’re the only biscuits I have.’

Brodski hastened to assure him that oat-cakes were his special and peculiar fancy; and in confirmation, having mixed himself a stiff jorum, he fell to upon the biscuits with evident gusto.

Brodski was a deliberate feeder, and at present appeared to be somewhat sharp set. His measured munching being unfavourable to conversation, most of the talking fell to Silas; and, for once, that genial transgressor found the task embarrassing. The natural thing would have been to discuss his guest’s destination and perhaps the object of his journey; but this was precisely what Hickler avoided doing. For he knew both, and instinct told him to keep his knowledge to himself.

Brodski was a diamond merchant of considerable reputation, and in a large way of business. He bought stones principally in the rough, and of these he was a most excellent judge. His fancy was for stones of somewhat unusual size and value,

and it was well known to be his custom, when he had accumulated a sufficient stock, to carry them himself to Amsterdam and supervise the cutting of the rough stones. Of this Hickler was aware, and he had no doubt that Brodski was now starting on one of his periodical excursions; that somewhere in the recesses of his rather shabby clothing was concealed a paper packet possibly worth several thousand pounds.

Brodski sat by the table munching monotonously and talking little. Hickler sat opposite him, talking nervously and rather wildly at times, and watching his guest with a growing fascination. Precious stones, and especially diamonds, were Hickler's speciality. 'Hard stuff'—silver plate—he avoided entirely; gold, excepting in the form of specie, he seldom touched; but stones, of which he could carry off a whole consignment in the heel of his boot and dispose of with absolute safety, formed the staple of his industry. And here was a man sitting opposite him with a parcel in his pocket containing the equivalent of a dozen of his most successful 'scoops'; stones worth perhaps— Here he pulled himself up short and began to talk rapidly, though without much coherence. For, even as he talked, other words, formed subconsciously, seemed to insinuate themselves into the interstices of the sentences, and to carry on a parallel train of thought.

'Gets chilly in the evenings now, doesn't it?' said Hickler.

'It does indeed,' Brodski agreed, and then resumed his slow munching, breathing audibly through his nose.

'Five thousand at least,' the subconscious

train of thought resumed ; ' probably six or seven, perhaps ten.' Silas fidgeted in his chair and endeavoured to concentrate his ideas on some topic of interest. He was growing disagreeably conscious of a new and unfamiliar state of mind.

' Do you take any interest in gardening ? ' he asked. Next to diamonds and weekly ' property ', his besetting weakness was fuchsias.

Brodski chuckled sourly. ' Hatton Garden is the nearest approach.' He broke off suddenly, and then added, ' I am a Londoner, you know.'

The abrupt break in the sentence was, not unnoticed by Silas, nor had he any difficulty in interpreting it. A man who carried untold wealth upon his person must needs be wary in his speech.

' Yes,' he answered absently, ' it's hardly a Londoner's hobby.' And then, half consciously, he began a rapid calculation. Put it at five thousand pounds. What would that represent in weekly property ? His last set of houses had cost two hundred and fifty pounds apiece, and he had let them at ten shillings and sixpence a week. At that rate, five thousand pounds represented twenty houses at ten and sixpence a week—say ten pounds a week—one pound eight shillings a day—five hundred and twenty pounds a year—for life. It was a competency. Added to what he already had, it was wealth. With that income he could fling the tools of his trade into the river and live out the remainder of his life in comfort and security.

He glanced furtively at his guest across the table, and then looked away quickly as he felt stirring within him an impulse the nature of which he could not mistake. This must be put an end

to. Crimes against the person he had always looked upon as sheer insanity. There was, it is true, that little affair of the Weybridge policeman, but that was unforeseen and unavoidable, and it was the constable's doing after all. And there was the old housekeeper at Epsom, too, but, of course, if the old idiot would shriek in that insane fashion—well, it was an accident, very regrettable, to be sure, and no one could be more sorry for the mishap than himself. But deliberate homicide!—robbery from the person! It was the act of a stark lunatic.

Of course, if he had happened to be that sort of person, here was the opportunity of a lifetime. The immense booty, the empty house, the solitary neighbourhood, away from the main road and from other habitations; the time, the darkness—but, of course, there was the body to be thought of; that was always the difficulty. What to do with the body— Here he caught the shriek of the up express, rounding the curve in the line that ran past the waste land at the back of the house. The sound started a new train of thought, and, as he followed it out, his eyes fixed themselves on the unconscious and taciturn Brodski, as he sat thoughtfully sipping his whisky. At length, averting his gaze with an effort, he rose suddenly from his chair and turned to look at the clock on the mantelpiece, spreading out his hands before the dying fire. A tumult of strange sensations warned him to leave the house. He shivered slightly, though he was rather hot than chilly, and, turning his head, looked at the door.

'Seems to be a confounded draught,' he said, with another slight shiver; 'did I shut the door

properly, I wonder?' He strode across the room and, opening the door wide, looked out into the dark garden. A desire, sudden and urgent, had come over him to get out into the open air, to be on the road and have done with this madness that was knocking at the door of his brain.

'I wonder if it is worth while to start yet,' he said, with a yearning glance at the murky, starless sky.

Brodski roused himself and looked round. 'Is your clock right?' he asked.

Silas reluctantly admitted that it was.

'How long will it take us to walk to the station?' inquired Brodski.

'Oh, about twenty-five minutes to half-an-hour,' replied Silas, unconsciously exaggerating the distance.

'Well,' said Brodski, 'we've got more than an hour yet, and it's more comfortable here than hanging about the station. I don't see the use of starting before we need.'

'No; of course not,' Silas agreed. A wave of strange emotion, half-regretful, half-triumphant, surged through his brain. For some moments he remained standing on the threshold, looking out dreamily into the night. Then he softly closed the door; and, seemingly without the exercise of his volition, the key turned noiselessly in the lock.

He returned to his chair and tried to open a conversation with the taciturn Brodski, but the words came faltering and disjointed. He felt his face growing hot, his brain full and intense, and there was a faint, high-pitched singing in his ears. He was conscious of watching his guest with a new

and fearful interest, and, by sheer force of will, turned away his eyes; only to find them a moment later involuntarily returning to fix the unconscious man with yet more horrible intensity. And ever through his mind walked, like a dreadful procession, the thoughts of what that other man—the man of blood and violence—would do in these circumstances. Detail by detail the hideous synthesis fitted together the parts of the imagined crime, and arranged them in due sequence until they formed a succession of events, rational, connected and coherent.

He rose uneasily from his chair, with his eyes still riveted upon his guest. He could not sit any longer opposite that man with his hidden store of precious gems. The impulse that he recognized with fear and wonder was growing more ungovernable from moment to moment. If he stayed it would presently overpower him, and then—He shrank with horror from the dreadful thought, but his fingers itched to handle the diamonds. For Silas was, after all, a criminal by nature and habit. He was a beast of prey. His livelihood had never been earned; it had been taken by stealth or, if necessary, by force. His instincts were predacious, and the proximity of unguarded valuables suggested to him, as a logical consequence, their abstraction or seizure. His unwillingness to let these diamonds go away beyond his reach was fast becoming overwhelming.

But he would make one more effort to escape. He would keep out of Brodski's actual presence until the moment for starting came.

'If you'll excuse me,' he said, 'I will go and put on a thicker pair of boots. After all this dry

weather we may get a change, and damp feet are very uncomfortable when you are travelling.'

'Yes; dangerous too,' agreed Brodski.

Silas walked through into the adjoining kitchen, where, by the light of the little lamp that was burning there, he had seen his stout, country boots placed, cleaned and in readiness, and sat down upon a chair to make the change. He did not, of course, intend to wear the country boots, for the diamonds were concealed in those he had on. But he would make the change and then alter his mind; it would all help to pass the time. He took a deep breath. It was a relief, at any rate, to be out of that room. Perhaps, if he stayed away, the temptation would pass. Brodski would go on his way—he wished that he was going alone—and the danger would be over—at least—and the opportunity would have gone—the diamonds——

He looked up as he slowly unlaced his boot. From where he sat he could see Brodski sitting by the table with his back towards the kitchen door. He had finished eating now, and was composedly rolling a cigarette. Silas breathed heavily and, slipping off his boot, sat for a while motionless, gazing steadily at the other man's back. Then he unlaced the other boot, still staring abstractedly at his unconscious guest, drew it off, and laid it very quietly on the floor.

Brodski calmly finished rolling his cigarette, licked the paper, put away his pouch, and, having dusted the crumbs of tobacco from his knees, began to search his pockets for a match. Suddenly, yielding to an uncontrollable impulse, Silas stood up and began stealthily to creep along the passage

to the sitting-room. Not a sound came from his stockinged feet. Silently as a cat he stole forward, breathing softly with parted lips, until he stood at the threshold of the room. His face flushed duskiy, his eyes, wide and staring, glittered in the lamplight, and the racing blood hummed in his ears.

Brodski struck a match—Silas noted that it was a wooden vesta—lighted his cigarette, blew out the match and flung it into the fender. Then he replaced the box in his pocket and commenced to smoke.

Slowly and without a sound Silas crept forward into the room, step by step, with catlike stealthiness, until he stood close behind Brodski's chair—so close that he had to turn his head that his breath might not stir the hair upon the other man's head. So, for half a minute, he stood motionless, like a symbolical statue of Murder, glaring down with horrible, glittering eyes upon the unconscious diamond merchant, while his quick breath passed without a sound through his open mouth and his fingers writhed slowly like the tentacles of a giant hydra. And then, as noiselessly as ever, he backed away to the door, turned quickly and walked back into the kitchen.

He drew a deep breath. It had been a near thing. Brodski's life had hung upon a thread. For it had been so easy. Indeed, if he had happened, as he stood behind the man's chair, to have a weapon—a hammer, for instance, or even a stone—

He glanced round the kitchen and his eye lighted on a bar that had been left by the workmen who had put up the new greenhouse. It was an

odd piece cut off from a square, wrought-iron stanchion, and was about a foot long and perhaps three-quarters of an inch thick. Now, if he had had that in his hand a minute ago——

He picked the bar up, balanced it in his hand and swung it round his head. A formidable weapon this: silent, too. And it fitted the plan that had passed through his brain. Bah! He had better put the thing down.

But he did not. He stepped over to the door and looked again at Brodski, sitting, as before, meditatively smoking, with his back towards the kitchen.

Suddenly a change came over Silas. His face flushed, the veins of his neck stood out and a sullen scowl settled on his face. He drew out his watch, glanced at it earnestly and replaced it. Then he strode swiftly but silently along the passage into the sitting-room.

A pace away from his victim's chair he halted and took deliberate aim. The bar swung aloft, but not without some faint rustle of movement, for Brodski looked round quickly even as the iron whistled through the air. The movement disturbed the murderer's aim, and the bar glanced off his victim's head, making only a trifling wound. Brodski sprang up with a tremulous, bleating cry, and clutched his assailant's arms with the tenacity of mortal terror.

Then began a terrible struggle, as the two men, locked in a deadly embrace, swayed to and fro and trampled backwards and forwards. The chair was overturned, an empty glass swept from the table and, with Brodski's spectacles, crushed beneath stamping feet. And thrice that dreadful,

pitiful, bleating cry rang out into the night, filling Silas, despite his murderous frenzy, with terror lest some chance wayfarer should hear it. Gathering his great strength for a final effort, he forced his victim backwards on to the table and, snatching up a corner of the table-cloth, thrust it into his face and crammed it into his mouth as it opened to utter another shriek. And thus they remained for a full two minutes, almost motionless, like some dreadful group of tragic allegory. Then, when the last faint twitchings had died away, Silas relaxed his grasp and let the limp body slip softly on to the floor.

It was over. For good or for evil, the thing was done. Silas stood up, breathing heavily, and, as he wiped the sweat from his face, he looked at the clock. The hands stood at one minute to seven. The whole thing had taken a little over three minutes. He had nearly an hour in which to finish his task. The goods train that entered into his scheme came by at twenty minutes past, and it was only three hundred yards to the line. Still, he must not waste time. He was now quite composed, and only disturbed by the thought that Brodski's cries might have been heard. If no one had heard them it was all plain sailing.

He stooped, and, gently disengaging the table-cloth from the dead man's teeth, began a careful search of his pockets. He was not long finding what he sought, and, as he pinched the paper packet and felt the little hard bodies grating on one another inside, his faint regrets for what had happened were swallowed up in self-congratulations.

He now set about his task with business-like

briskness and an attentive eye on the clock. A few large drops of blood had fallen on the table-cloth, and there was a small bloody smear on the carpet by the dead man's head. Silas fetched from the kitchen some water, a nail-brush and a dry cloth, and, having washed out the stains from the table-cover—not forgetting the deal table-top underneath—and cleaned away the smear from the carpet and rubbed the damp places dry, he slipped a sheet of paper under the head of the corpse to prevent further contamination. Then he set the table-cloth straight, stood the chair upright, laid the broken spectacles on the table and picked up the cigarette, which had been trodden flat in the struggle, and flung it under the grate. Then there was the broken glass, which he swept up into a dust-pan. Part of it was the remains of the shattered tumbler, and the rest the fragments of the broken spectacles. He turned it out on to a sheet of paper and looked it over carefully, picking out the larger recognizable pieces of the spectacle-glasses and putting them aside on a separate slip of paper, together with a sprinkling of the minute fragments. The remainder he shot back into the dust-pan and, having hurriedly put on his boots, carried it out to the rubbish-heap at the back of the house.

It was now time to start. Hastily cutting off a length of string from his string-box—for Silas was an orderly man and despised the oddments of string with which many people make shift—he tied it to the dead man's bag and umbrella and slung them from his shoulder. Then he folded up the paper of broken glass, and, slipping it and the spectacles into his pocket, picked up the body and

threw it over his shoulder. Brodski was a small, spare man, weighing not more than nine stone; not a very formidable burden for a big, athletic man like Silas.

The night was intensely dark, and, when Silas looked out of the back gate over the waste land that stretched from his house to the railway, he could hardly see twenty yards ahead. After listening cautiously and hearing no sound, he went out, shut the gate softly behind him and set forth at a good pace, though carefully, over the broken ground. His progress was not as silent as he could have wished, for, though the scanty turf that covered the gravelly land was thick enough to deaden his footfalls, the swinging bag and umbrella made an irritating noise; indeed, his movements were more hampered by them than by the weightier burden.

The distance to the line was about three hundred yards. Ordinarily he would have walked it in from three to four minutes, but now, going cautiously with his burden and stopping now and again to listen, it took him just six minutes to reach the three-bar fence that separated the waste land from the railway. Arrived here he halted for a moment and once more listened attentively, peering into the darkness on all sides. Not a living creature was to be seen or heard in this desolate spot, but far away, the shriek of an engine's whistle warned him to hasten.

Lifting the corpse easily over the fence, he carried it a few yards farther to a point where the line curved sharply. Here he laid it face downwards, with the neck over the near rail. Drawing out his pocket-knife, he cut through the knot that

fastened the umbrella to the string and also secured the bag; and when he had flung the bag and umbrella on the track beside the body, he carefully pocketed the string, excepting the little loop that had fallen to the ground when the knot was cut.

The quick snort and clanking rumble of an approaching goods train began now to be clearly audible. Rapidly, Silas drew from his pockets the battered spectacles and the packet of broken glass. The former he threw down by the dead man's head, and then, emptying the packet into his hand, sprinkled the fragments of glass around the spectacles.

He was none too soon. Already the quick, laboured puffing of the engine sounded close at hand. His impulse was to stay and watch; to witness the final catastrophe that should convert the murder into an accident or suicide. But it was hardly safe: it would be better that he should not be near lest he should not be able to get away without being seen. Hastily he climbed back over the fence and strode away across the rough fields, while the train came snorting and clattering towards the curve.

He had nearly reached his back gate when a sound from the line brought him to a sudden halt; it was a prolonged whistle accompanied by the groan of brakes and the loud clank of colliding trucks. The snorting of the engine had ceased and was replaced by the penetrating hiss of escaping steam.

The train had stopped!

For one brief moment Silas stood with bated breath and mouth agape like one petrified; then he strode forward quickly to the gate, and, letting

himself in, silently slid the bolt. He was undeniably alarmed. What could have happened on the line? It was practically certain that the body had been seen; but what was happening now? and would they come to the house? He entered the kitchen, and having paused again to listen—for somebody might come and knock at the door at any moment—he walked through the sitting-room and looked round. All seemed in order there. There was the bar, though, lying where he had dropped it in the scuffle. He picked it up and held it under the lamp. There was no blood on it; only one or two hairs. Somewhat absently he wiped it with the table-cover, and then, running out through the kitchen into the back garden, dropped it over the wall into a bed of nettles. Not that there was anything incriminating in the bar, but, since he had used it as a weapon, it had somehow acquired a sinister aspect to his eye.

He now felt that it would be well to start for the station at once. It was not time yet, for it was barely twenty-five minutes past seven; but he did not wish to be found in the house if any one should come. His soft hat was on the sofa with his bag, to which his umbrella was strapped. He put on the hat, caught up the bag and stepped over to the door; then he came back to turn down the lamp. And it was at this moment, when he stood with his hand raised to the burner, that his eye, travelling by chance into the dim corner of the room, lighted on Brodski's grey felt hat, reposing on the chair where the dead man had placed it when he entered the house.

Silas stood for a few moments as if petrified, with the chilly sweat of mortal fear standing in

beads upon his forehead. Another instant and he would have turned the lamp down and gone on his way; and then—— He strode over to the chair, snatched up the hat and looked inside it. Yes, there was the name, 'Oscar Brodski,' written plainly on the lining. If he had gone away, leaving it to be discovered, he would have been lost; indeed, even now, if a search-party should come to the house, it was enough to send him to the gallows.

His limbs shook with horror at the thought, but in spite of his panic he did not lose his self-possession. Darting through into the kitchen, he grabbed up a handful of the dry brush-wood that was kept for lighting fires and carried it to the sitting-room grate where he thrust it on the extinct, but still hot, embers, and crumpling up the paper that he had placed under Brodski's head—on which paper he now noticed, for the first time, a minute bloody smear—he poked it in under the wood, and, striking a wax match, set light to it. As the wood flared up, he hacked at the hat with his pocket knife and threw the ragged strips into the blaze.

And all the while his heart was thumping and his hands a-tremble with the dread of discovery. The fragments of felt were far from inflammable, tending rather to fuse into cindery masses that smoked and smouldered, than to burn away into actual ash. Moreover, to his dismay, they emitted a powerful resinous stench mixed with the odour of burning hair, so that he had to open the kitchen window (since he dared not unlock the front door) to disperse the reek. And still, as he fed the fire with small cut fragments, he strained his ears to

catch, above the crackling of the wood, the sound of the dreaded footsteps, the knock on the door that should be as the summons of Fate.

The time, too, was speeding on. Twenty-one minutes to eight! In a few minutes more he must set out or he would miss the train. He dropped the dismembered hat-brim on the blazing wood and ran upstairs to open a window, since he must close that in the kitchen before he left. When he came back, the brim had already curled up into a black, clinkery mass that bubbled and hissed as the fat, pungent smoke rose from it sluggishly to the chimney.

Nineteen minutes to eight! It was time to start. He took up the poker and carefully beat the cinders into small particles, stirring them into the glowing embers of the wood and coal. There was nothing unusual in the appearance of the grate. It was his constant custom to burn letters and other discarded articles in the sitting-room fire: his housekeeper would notice nothing out of the common. Indeed, the cinders would probably be reduced to ashes before she returned. He had been careful to notice that there were no metallic fittings of any kind in the hat, which might have escaped burning.

Once more he picked up his bag, took a last look round, turned down the lamp and, unlocking the door, held it open for a few moments. Then he went out, locked the door, pocketed the key (of which his housekeeper had a duplicate) and set off at a brisk pace for the station.

He arrived in good time after all, and, having taken his ticket, strolled through on to the platform. The train was not yet signalled, but there

seemed to be an unusual stir in the place. The passengers were collected in a group at one end of the platform, and were all looking in one direction down the line; and, even as he walked towards them, with a certain tremulous, nauseating curiosity, two men emerged from the darkness and ascended the slope to the platform, carrying a stretcher covered with a tarpaulin. The passengers parted to let the bearers pass, turning fascinated eyes upon the shape that showed faintly through the rough pall; and, when the stretcher had been borne into the lamp-room, they fixed their attention upon a porter who followed carrying a hand-bag and an umbrella.

Suddenly one of the passengers started forward with an exclamation.

'Is that his umbrella?' he demanded.

'Yes, sir,' answered the porter, stopping and holding it out for the speaker's inspection.

'My God!' ejaculated the passenger; then, turning sharply to a tall man who stood close by, he said excitedly: 'That's Brodski's umbrella. I could swear to it. You remember Brodski?' The tall man nodded, and the passenger, turning once more to the porter, said: 'I identify that umbrella. It belongs to a gentleman named Brodski. If you look in his hat you will see his name written in it. He always writes his name in his hat.'

'We haven't found his hat yet,' said the porter; 'but here is the station-master coming up the line.' He awaited the arrival of his superior and then announced: 'This gentleman, sir, has identified the umbrella.'

'Oh,' said the station-master, 'you recognize the umbrella, sir, do you? Then perhaps you

would step into the lamp-room and see if you can identify the body.'

The passenger recoiled with a look of alarm.

'Is it—is he—very much injured?' he asked tremulously.

'Well, yes,' was the reply. 'You see, the engine and six of the trucks went over him before they could stop the train. Took his head clean off, in fact.'

'Shocking! shocking!' gasped the passenger. 'I think, if you don't mind—I'd—I'd rather not. You don't think it's necessary, doctor, do you?'

'Yes, I do,' replied the tall man. 'Early identification may be of the first importance.'

'Then I suppose I must,' said the passenger.

Very reluctantly he allowed himself to be conducted by the station-master to the lamp-room, as the clang of the bell announced the approaching train. Silas Hickler followed and took his stand with the expectant crowd outside the closed door. In a few moments the passenger burst out, pale and awe-stricken, and rushed up to his tall friend. 'It is!' he exclaimed breathlessly, 'it's Brodski! Poor old Brodski! Horrible! horrible! He was to have met me here and come on with me to Amsterdam.'

'Had he any—merchandize about him?' the tall man asked; and Silas strained his ears to catch the reply.

'He had some stones, no doubt, but I don't know what. His clerk will know, of course. By the way, doctor, could you watch the case for me? Just to be sure it was really an accident or—you know what. We were old friends, you know, fellow townsmen, too; we were both born in

Warsaw. I'd like you to give an eye to the case.'

'Very well,' said the other. 'I will satisfy myself that—there is nothing more than appears, and let you have a report. Will that do?'

'Thank you. It's excessively good of you, doctor. Ah! here comes the train. I hope it won't inconvenience you to stay and see to this matter.'

'Not in the least,' replied the doctor. 'We are not due at Warmington until to-morrow afternoon, and I expect we can find out all that is necessary to know and still keep our appointment.'

Silas looked long and curiously at the tall, imposing man who was, as it were, taking his seat at the chess-board, to play against him for his life. A formidable antagonist he looked, with his keen, thoughtful face, so resolute and calm. As Silas stepped into his carriage he looked back at his opponent, and thinking with deep discomfort of Brodski's hat, he hoped that he had made no other oversight.

PART II

THE MECHANISM OF DETECTION

(Related by Christopher Jervis, M.D.)

THE singular circumstances that attended the death of Mr. Oscar Brodski, the well-known diamond merchant of Hatton Garden, illustrated very forcibly the importance of one or two points in medico-legal practice which Thorndyke was accustomed to insist were not sufficiently appreciated. What those points were, I shall leave my friend and teacher to state at the proper place;

and meanwhile, as the case is in the highest degree instructive, I shall record the incidents in the order of their occurrence.

The dusk of an October evening was closing in as Thorndyke and I, the sole occupants of a smoking compartment, found ourselves approaching the little station of Ludham; and, as the train slowed down, we peered out at the knot of country people who were waiting on the platform. Suddenly Thorndyke exclaimed in a tone of surprise: 'Why, that is surely Boscovitch!' and almost at the same moment a brisk, excitable little man darted at the door of our compartment and literally tumbled in.

'I hope I don't intrude on this learned conclave,' he said, shaking hands genially and banging his Gladstone with impulsive violence into the rack; 'but I saw your faces at the window, and naturally jumped at the chance of such pleasant companionship.'

'You are very flattering,' said Thorndyke; 'so flattering that you leave us nothing to say. But what in the name of fortune are you doing at—what's the name of the place?—Ludham?'

'My brother has a little place a mile or so from here, and I have been spending a couple of days with him,' Mr. Boscovitch explained. 'I shall change at Badsham Junction and catch the boat train for Amsterdam. But whither are you two bound? I see you have your mysterious little green box up on the hat-rack, so I infer that you are on some romantic quest, eh? Going to unravel some dark and intricate crime?'

'No,' replied Thorndyke. 'We are bound for Warmington on a quite prosaic errand. I am

instructed to watch the proceedings at an inquest there to-morrow on behalf of the Griffin Life Insurance Office, and we are travelling down to-night as it is rather a cross-country journey.'

'But why the box of magic?' asked Boscovitch, glancing up at the hat-rack.

'I never go away from home without it,' answered Thorndyke. 'One never knows what may turn up; the trouble of carrying it is small when set off against the comfort of having one's appliances at hand in case of an emergency.'

Boscovitch continued to stare up at the little square case covered with Willesden canvas. Presently he remarked: 'I often used to wonder what you had in it when you were down at Chelmsford in connection with that bank murder—what an amazing case that was, by the way, and didn't your methods of research astonish the police!' As he still looked up wistfully at the case, Thorndyke good-naturedly lifted it down and unlocked it. As a matter of fact he was rather proud of his 'portable laboratory', and certainly it was a triumph of condensation, for, small as it was—only a foot square by four inches deep—it contained a fairly complete outfit for a preliminary investigation.

'Wonderful!' exclaimed Boscovitch, when the case lay open before him, displaying its rows of little re-agent bottles, tiny test-tubes, diminutive spirit-lamp, dwarf microscope and assorted instruments on the same Lilliputian scale; 'it's like a doll's house—everything looks as if it was seen through the wrong end of a telescope. But are these tiny things really efficient? That microscope now——'

'Perfectly efficient at low and moderate magnifications,' said Thorndyke. 'It looks like a toy, but it isn't one; the lenses are the best that can be had. Of course, a full-sized instrument would be infinitely more convenient—but I shouldn't have it with me, and should have to make shift with a pocket-lens. And so with the rest of the under-sized appliances; they are the alternative to no appliances.'

Boscovitch pored over the case and its contents, fingering the instruments delicately and asking questions innumerable about their uses; indeed, his curiosity was but half appeased when, half an hour later, the train began to slow down.

'By Jove!' he exclaimed, starting up and seizing his bag, 'here we are at the junction already. You change here too, don't you?'

'Yes,' replied Thorndyke. 'We take the branch train on to Warmington.'

As we stepped out on to the platform, we became aware that something unusual was happening or had happened. All the passengers and most of the porters and supernumeraries were gathered at one end of the station, and all were looking intently into the darkness down the line.

'Anything wrong?' asked Mr. Boscovitch, addressing the station-inspector.

'Yes, sir,' the official replied; 'a man has been run over by the goods train about a mile down the line. The station-master has gone down with a stretcher to bring him in, and I expect that is his lantern that you see coming this way.'

As we stood watching the dancing light grow momentarily brighter, flashing fitful reflections from the burnished rails, a man came out of the

booking-office and joined the group of onlookers. He attracted my attention, as I afterwards remembered, for two reasons : in the first place his round, jolly face was excessively pale and bore a strained and wild expression, and, in the second, though he stared into the darkness with eager curiosity he asked no questions.

The swinging lantern continued to approach, and then suddenly two men came into sight bearing a stretcher covered with a tarpaulin, through which the shape of a human figure was dimly discernible. They ascended the slope to the platform, and proceeded with their burden to the lamp-room, when the inquisitive gaze of the passengers was transferred to a porter who followed carrying a hand-bag and umbrella and to the station-master who brought up the rear with his lantern.

As the porter passed, Mr. Boscovitch started forward with sudden excitement.

'Is that his umbrella?' he asked.

'Yes, sir,' answered the porter, stopping and holding it out for the speaker's inspection.

'My God!' ejaculated Boscovitch; then, turning sharply to Thorndyke, he exclaimed: 'That's Brodski's umbrella. I could swear to it. You remember Brodski?'

Thorndyke nodded, and Boscovitch, turning once more to the porter, said: 'I identify that umbrella. It belongs to a gentleman named Brodski. If you look in his hat, you will see his name written in it. He always writes his name in his hat.'

'We haven't found his hat yet,' said the porter; 'but here is the station-master.' He turned to

his superior and announced: 'This gentleman, sir, has identified the umbrella.'

'Oh,' said the station-master, 'you recognize the umbrella, sir, do you? Then perhaps you would step into the lamp-room and see if you can identify the body.'

Mr. Boscovitch recoiled with a look of alarm. 'Is it—is he—very much injured?' he asked nervously.

'Well, yes,' was the reply. 'You see, the engine and six of the trucks went over him before they could stop the train. Took his head clean off, in fact.'

'Shocking! shocking!' gasped Boscovitch. 'I think—if you don't mind—I'd—I'd rather not. You don't think it necessary, doctor, do you?'

'Yes, I do,' replied Thorndyke. 'Early identification may be of the first importance.'

'Then I suppose I must,' said Boscovitch; and, with extreme reluctance, he followed the station-master to the lamp-room, as the loud ringing of the bell announced the approach of the boat train. His inspection must have been of the briefest, for, in a few moments, he burst out, pale and awe-stricken, and rushed up to Thorndyke.

'It is!' he exclaimed breathlessly, 'it's Brodski! Poor old Brodski! Horrible! horrible! He was to have met me here and come on with me to Amsterdam.'

'Had he any—merchandize about him?' Thorndyke asked; and, as he spoke, the stranger whom I had previously noticed edged up closer as if to catch the reply.

'He had some stones, no doubt,' answered Boscovitch, 'but I don't know what they were.'

His clerk will know, of course. By the way, doctor, could you watch the case for me? Just to be sure it was really an accident or—you know what. We were old friends, you know, fellow townsmen, too; we were both born in Warsaw. I'd like you to give an eye to the case.'

'Very well,' said Thorndyke. 'I will satisfy myself that there is nothing more than appears, and let you have a report. Will that do?'

'Thank you,' said Boscovitch. 'It's excessively good of you, doctor. Ah, here comes the train. I hope it won't inconvenience you to stay and see to the matter.'

'Not in the least,' replied Thorndyke. 'We are not due at Warmington until to-morrow afternoon, and I expect we can find out all that is necessary to know and still keep our appointment.'

As Thorndyke spoke, the stranger, who had kept close to us with the evident purpose of hearing what was said, bestowed on him a very curious and attentive look; and it was only when the train had actually come to rest by the platform that he hurried away to find a compartment.

No sooner had the train left the station than Thorndyke sought out the station-master and informed him of the instructions that he had received from Boscovitch. 'Of course,' he added, in conclusion, 'we must not move in the matter until the police arrive. I suppose they have been informed?'

'Yes,' replied the station-master; 'I sent a message at once to the Chief Constable, and I expect him or an inspector at any moment. In fact, I think I will slip out to the approach and

see if he is coming.' He evidently wished to have a word in private with the police officer before committing himself to any statement.

As the official departed, Thorndyke and I began to pace the now empty platform, and my friend, as was his wont, when entering on a new inquiry, meditatively reviewed the features of the problem.

'In a case of this kind,' he remarked, 'we have to decide on one of three possible explanations: accident, suicide, or homicide; and our decision will be determined by inferences from three sets of facts: first, the general facts of the case; second, the special data obtained by examination of the body; and, third, the special data obtained by examining the spot on which the body was found. Now the only general facts at present in our possession are that the deceased was a diamond merchant making a journey for a specific purpose and probably having on his person property of small bulk and great value. These facts are somewhat against the hypothesis of suicide and somewhat favourable to that of homicide. Facts relevant to the question of accident would be the existence or otherwise of a level crossing, a road or path leading to the line, an enclosing fence with or without a gate, and any other facts rendering probable or otherwise the accidental presence of the deceased at the spot where the body was found. As we do not possess these facts, it is desirable that we extend our knowledge.'

'Why not put a few discreet questions to the porter who brought in the bag and umbrella?' I suggested. 'He is at this moment in earnest conversation with the ticket collector and would, no doubt, be glad of a new listener.'

'An excellent suggestion, Jervis,' answered Thorndyke. 'Let us see what he has to tell us.' We approached the porter and found him, as I had anticipated, bursting to unburden himself of the tragic story.

'The way the thing happened, sir, was this,' he said, in answer to Thorndyke's question: 'There's a sharpish bend in the road just at that place, and the goods train was just rounding the curve when the driver suddenly caught sight of something lying across the rails. As the engine turned, the head-lights shone on it and then he saw it was a man. He shut off steam at once, blew his whistle, and put the brakes down hard, but, as you know, sir, a goods train takes some stopping; before they could bring her up, the engine and half a dozen trucks had gone over the poor beggar.'

'Could the driver see how the man was lying?' Thorndyke asked.

'Yes, he could see him quite plain, because the head-lights were full on him. He was lying on his face with his neck over the near rail on the down side. His head was in the four-foot and his body by the side of the track. It looked as if he had laid himself out a-purpose.'

'Is there a level crossing thereabouts?' asked Thorndyke.

'No, sir. No crossing, no road, no path, no nothing,' said the porter, ruthlessly sacrificing grammar to emphasis. 'He must have come across the fields and climbed over the fence to get on to the permanent way. Deliberate suicide is what it looks like.'

'How did you learn all this?' Thorndyke inquired.

'Why, the driver, you see, sir, when him and his mate had lifted the body off the track, went on to the next signal-box and sent in his report by telegram. The station-master told me all about it as we walked down the line.'

Thorndyke thanked the man for his information, and, as we strolled back towards the lamp-room, discussed the bearing of these new facts.

'Our friend is unquestionably right in one respect,' he said; 'this was not an accident. The man might, if he were near-sighted, deaf or stupid, have climbed over the fence and got knocked down by the train. But his position, lying across the rails, can only be explained by one of two hypotheses: either it was, as the porter says, deliberate suicide, or else the man was already dead or insensible. We must leave it at that until we have seen the body, that is, if the police will allow us to see it. But here comes the station-master and an officer with him. Let us hear what they have to say.'

The two officials had evidently made up their minds to decline any outside assistance. The divisional surgeon would make the necessary examination, and information could be obtained through the usual channels. The production of Thorndyke's card, however, somewhat altered the situation. The police inspector hummed and hawed irresolutely, with the card in his hand, but finally agreed to allow us to view the body, and we entered the lamp-room together, the station-master leading the way to turn up the gas.

The stretcher stood on the floor by one wall, its grim burden still hidden by the tarpaulin, and the hand-bag and umbrella lay on a large box,

together with the battered frame of a pair of spectacles from which the glasses had fallen out.

'Were these spectacles found by the body?' Thorndyke inquired.

'Yes,' replied the station-master. 'They were close to the head and the glass was scattered about on the ballast.'

Thorndyke made a note in his pocket-book, and then, as the inspector removed the tarpaulin, he glanced down on the corpse, lying limply on the stretcher and looking grotesquely horrible with its displaced head and distorted limbs. For fully a minute he remained silently stooping over the uncanny object, on which the inspector was now throwing the light of a large lantern; then he stood up and said quietly to me: 'I think we can eliminate two out of the three hypotheses.'

The inspector looked at him quickly, and was about to ask a question, when his attention was diverted by the travelling-case which Thorndyke had laid on a shelf and now opened to abstract a couple of pairs of dissecting forceps.

'We've no authority to make a *post mortem*, you know,' said the inspector.

'No, of course not,' said Thorndyke. 'I am merely going to look into the mouth.' With one pair of forceps he turned back the lip and, having scrutinized its inner surface, closely examined the teeth.

'May I trouble you for your lens, Jervis?' he said; and, as I handed him my doublet ready opened, the inspector brought the lantern close to the dead face and leaned forward eagerly. In his usual systematic fashion, Thorndyke slowly passed the lens along the whole range of sharp,

uneven teeth, and then, bringing it back to the centre, examined with more minuteness the upper incisors. At length, very delicately, he picked out with his forceps some minute object from between two of the upper front teeth and held it in the focus of the lens. Anticipating his next move, I took a labelled microscope-slide from the case and handed it to him together with a dissecting needle, and, as he transferred the object to the slide and spread it out with the needle, I set up the little microscope on the shelf.

'A drop of Farrant and a cover-glass, please, Jervis,' said Thorndyke.

I handed him the bottle, and, when he had let a drop of the mounting fluid fall gently on the object and put on the cover-slip, he placed the slide on the stage of the microscope and examined it attentively.

Happening to glance at the inspector, I observed on his countenance a faint grin, which he politely strove to suppress when he caught my eye.

'I was thinking, sir,' he said apologetically, 'that it's a bit off the track to be finding out what he had for dinner. He didn't die of unwholesome feeding.'

Thorndyke looked up with a smile. 'It doesn't do, inspector, to assume that anything is off the track in an inquiry of this kind. Every fact must have some significance, you know.'

'I don't see any significance in the diet of a man who has had his head cut off,' the inspector rejoined defiantly.

'Don't you?' said Thorndyke. 'Is there no interest attaching to the last meal of a man who has met a violent death? These crumbs, for in-

stance, that are scattered over the dead man's waistcoat. Can we learn nothing from them ?'

'I don't see what you can learn,' was the dogged rejoinder.

Thorndyke picked off the crumbs, one by one, with his forceps, and, having deposited them on a slide, inspected them, first with the lens and then through the microscope.

'I learn,' said he, 'that shortly before his death, the deceased partook of some kind of whole-meal biscuits, apparently composed partly of oatmeal.'

'I call that nothing,' said the inspector. 'The question that we have got to settle is not what refreshments had the deceased been taking, but what was the cause of his death: did he commit suicide? was he killed by accident? or was there any foul play?'

'I beg your pardon,' said Thorndyke, 'the questions that remain to be settled are, who killed the deceased and with what motive? The others are already answered as far as I am concerned.'

The inspector stared in sheer amazement not unmixed with incredulity.

'You haven't been long coming to a conclusion, sir,' he said.

'No, it was a pretty obvious case of murder,' said Thorndyke. 'As to the motive, the deceased was a diamond merchant and is believed to have had a quantity of stones about his person. I should suggest that you search the body.'

The inspector gave vent to an exclamation of disgust. 'I see,' he said. 'It was just a guess on your part. The dead man was a diamond merchant and had valuable property about him;

therefore he was murdered.' He drew himself up, and, regarding Thorndyke with stern reproach, added: 'But you must understand, sir, that this is a judicial inquiry, not a prize competition in a penny paper. And, as to searching the body, why, that is what I principally came for.' He ostentatiously turned his back on us and proceeded systematically to turn out the dead man's pockets, laying the articles, as he removed them, on the box by the side of the hand-bag and umbrella.

While he was thus occupied, Thorndyke looked over the body generally, paying special attention to the soles of the boots, which, to the inspector's undissembled amusement, he very thoroughly examined with the lens.

'I should have thought, sir, that his feet were large enough to be seen with the naked eye,' was his comment; 'but perhaps,' he added, with a sly glance at the station-master, 'you're a little near-sighted.'

Thorndyke chuckled good-humouredly, and, while the officer continued his search, he looked over the articles that had already been laid on the box. The purse and pocket-book he naturally left for the inspector to open, but the reading-glasses, pocket-knife and card-case, and other small pocket articles were subjected to a searching scrutiny. The inspector watched him out of the corner of his eye with furtive amusement; saw him hold up the glasses to the light to estimate their refractive power, peer into the tobacco pouch, open the cigarette book and examine the watermark of the paper, and even inspect the contents of the silver match-box.

'What might you have expected to find in his

tobacco pouch?' the officer asked, laying down a bunch of keys from the dead man's pocket.

'Tobacco,' Thorndyke replied stolidly; 'but I did not expect to find fine-cut Latakia. I don't remember ever having seen pure Latakia smoked in cigarettes.'

'You do take an interest in things, sir,' said the inspector, with a side glance at the stolid station-master.

'I do,' Thorndyke agreed; 'and I note that there are no diamonds among this collection.'

'No, and we don't know that he had any about him; but there's a gold watch and chain, a diamond scarf-pin, and a purse containing'—he opened it and tipped out its contents into his hand—'twelve pounds in gold. That doesn't look much like robbery, does it? What do you say to the murder theory now?'

'My opinion is unchanged,' said Thorndyke, 'and I should like to examine the spot where the body was found. Has the engine been inspected?'

he added, addressing the station-master.

'I telegraphed to Bradfield to have it examined,' the official answered. 'The report has probably come in by now. I'd better see before we start down the line.'

We emerged from the lamp-room and, at the door, found the station-inspector waiting with a telegram. He handed it to the station-master who read it aloud.

'The engine has been carefully examined by me. I find small smear of blood on near leading wheel and smaller one on next wheel following. No other marks.' He glanced questioningly at Thorndyke, who nodded and remarked: 'It will

be interesting to see if the line tells the same tale.'

The station-master looked puzzled and was apparently about to ask for an explanation; but the inspector, who had carefully pocketed the dead man's property, was impatient to start and, accordingly, when Thorndyke had repacked his case and had, at his own request, been furnished with a lantern, we set off down the permanent way, Thorndyke carrying the light and I the indispensable green case.

'I am a little in the dark about this affair,' I said, when we had allowed the two officials to draw ahead out of earshot; 'you came to a conclusion remarkably quickly. What was it that so immediately determined the opinion of murder as against suicide?'

'It was a small matter but very conclusive,' replied Thorndyke. 'You noticed a small scalp-wound above the left temple? It was a glancing wound, and might easily have been made by the engine. But—the wound had bled; and it had bled for an appreciable time. There were two streams of blood from it, and in both the blood was firmly clotted and partially dried. But the man had been decapitated; and this wound if inflicted by the engine, must have been made after the decapitation, since it was on the side most distant from the engine as it approached. Now a decapitated head does not bleed. Therefore this wound was inflicted before the decapitation.'

'But not only had the wound bled: the blood had trickled down in two streams at right angles to one another. First, in the order of time as

shown by the appearance of the stream, it had trickled down the side of the face and dropped on the collar. The second stream ran from the wound to the back of the head. Now, you know, Jervis, there are no exceptions to the law of gravity. If the blood ran down the face towards the chin, the face must have been upright at the time; and if the blood trickled from the front to the back of the head, the head must have been horizontal and face upwards. But the man when he was seen by the engine-driver, was lying *face downwards*. The only possible inference is that when the wound was inflicted, the man was in the upright position—standing or sitting; and that subsequently, and while he was still alive, he lay on his back for a sufficiently long time for the blood to have trickled to the back of his head.'

'I see. I was a duffer not to have reasoned this out for myself,' I remarked contritely.

'Quick observation and rapid inference come by practice,' replied Thorndyke. 'But, tell me, what did you notice about the face?'

'I thought there was a strong suggestion of asphyxia.'

'Undoubtedly,' said Thorndyke. 'It was the face of a suffocated man. You must have noticed, too, that the tongue was very distinctly swollen and that on the inside of the upper lip were deep indentations made by the teeth, as well as one or two slight wounds, obviously caused by heavy pressure on the mouth. And now observe how completely these facts and inferences agree with those from the scalp wound. If we knew that the deceased had received a blow on the head, had struggled with his assailant and been finally borne

down and suffocated, we should look for precisely those signs which we have found.'

'By the way, what was it that you found wedged between the teeth? I did not get a chance to look through the microscope.'

'Ah!' said Thorndyke, 'there we not only get confirmation, but we carry our inferences a stage further. The object was a little tuft of some textile fabric. Under the microscope I found it to consist of several different fibres, differently dyed. The bulk of it consisted of wool fibres dyed crimson, but there were also cotton fibres dyed blue and a few which looked like jute, dyed yellow. It was obviously a parti-coloured fabric and might have been part of a woman's dress, though the presence of the jute is much more suggestive of a curtain or rug of inferior quality.'

'And its importance?'

'Is that, if it is not part of an article of clothing, then it must have come from an article of furniture, and furniture suggests a habitation.'

'That doesn't seem very conclusive,' I objected.

'It is not; but it is valuable corroboration.'

'Of what?'

'Of the suggestion offered by the soles of the dead man's boots. I examined them most minutely and could find no trace of sand, gravel or earth, in spite of the fact that he must have crossed fields and rough land to reach the place where he was found. What I did find was fine tobacco ash, a charred mark as if a cigar or cigarette had been trodden on, several crumbs of biscuit, and, on a projecting brad, some coloured fibres, apparently from a carpet. The manifest suggestion is that the man was killed in a house with a

carpeted floor, and carried from thence to the railway.'

I was silent for some moments. Well as I knew Thorndyke, I was completely taken by surprise; a sensation, indeed, that I experienced anew every time that I accompanied him on one of his investigations. His marvellous power of co-ordinating apparently insignificant facts, of arranging them into an ordered sequence and making them tell a coherent story, was a phenomenon that I never got used to; every exhibition of it astonished me afresh.

'If your inferences are correct,' I said, 'the problem is practically solved. There must be abundant traces inside the house. The only question is, which house is it?'

'Quite so,' replied Thorndyke; 'that is the question, and a very difficult question it is. A glance at that interior would doubtless clear up the whole mystery. But how are we to get that glance? We cannot enter houses speculatively to see if they present traces of a murder. At present, our clue breaks off abruptly. The other end of it is in some unknown house, and, if we cannot join up the two ends, our problem remains unsolved. For the question is, you remember, Who killed Oscar Brodski?'

'Then what do you propose to do?' I asked.

'The next stage of the inquiry is to connect some particular house with this crime. To that end, I can only gather up all available facts and consider each in all its possible bearings. If I cannot establish any such connection, then the inquiry will have failed and we shall have to make a fresh start—say, at Amsterdam, if it turns out

that Brodski really had diamonds on his person, as I have no doubt he had.'

Here our conversation was interrupted by our arrival at the spot where the body had been found. The station-master had halted, and he and the inspector were now examining the near rail by the light of their lanterns.

'There's remarkably little blood about,' said the former. 'I've seen a good many accidents of this kind and there has always been a lot of blood, both on the engine and on the road. It's very curious.'

Thorndyke glanced at the rail with but slight attention: that question had ceased to interest him. But the light of his lantern flashed on to the ground at the side of the track—a loose, gravelly soil mixed with fragments of chalk—and from thence to the soles of the inspector's boots, which were displayed as he knelt by the rail.

'You observe, Jervis?' he said in a low voice, and I nodded. The inspector's boot-soles were covered with adherent particles of gravel and conspicuously marked by the chalk on which he had trodden.

'You haven't found the hat, I suppose?' Thorndyke asked, stooping to pick up a short piece of string that lay on the ground at the side of the track.

'No,' replied the inspector, 'but it can't be far off. You seem to have found another clue, sir,' he added, with a grin, glancing at the piece of string.

'Who knows,' said Thorndyke. 'A short end of white twine with a green strand in it. It may tell us something later. At any rate we'll keep it,' and, taking from his pocket a small tin box

containing, among other things, a number of seed envelopes, he slipped the string into one of the latter and scribbled a note in pencil on the outside. The inspector watched his proceedings with an indulgent smile, and then returned to his examination of the track, in which Thorndyke now joined.

'I suppose the poor chap was near-sighted,' the officer remarked, indicating the remains of the shattered spectacles; 'that might account for his having strayed on to the line.'

'Possibly,' said Thorndyke. He had already noticed the fragments scattered over a sleeper and the adjacent ballast, and now once more produced his 'collecting-box', from which he took another seed envelope. 'Would you hand me a pair of forceps, Jervis,' he said; 'and perhaps you wouldn't mind taking a pair yourself and helping me to gather up these fragments.'

As I complied, the inspector looked up curiously.

'There isn't any doubt that these spectacles belonged to the deceased, is there?' he asked.

He certainly wore spectacles, for I saw the mark on his nose.'

'Still, there is no harm in verifying the fact,' said Thorndyke, and he added to me in a lower tone, 'Pick up every particle you can find, Jervis. It may be most important.'

'I don't quite see how,' I said, groping amongst the shingle by the light of the lantern in search of the tiny splinters of glass.

'Don't you?' returned Thorndyke. 'Well, look at these fragments; some of them are a fair size, but many of these on the sleeper are mere grains. And consider their number. Obviously,

the condition of the glass does not agree with the circumstances in which we find it. These are thick concave spectacle-lenses broken into a great number of minute fragments. Now how were they broken? Not merely by falling, evidently: such a lens, when it is dropped, breaks into a small number of large pieces. Nor were they broken by the wheel passing over them, for they would then have been reduced to fine powder, and that powder would have been visible on the rail, which it is not. The spectacle-frames, you may remember, presented the same incongruity: they were battered and damaged more than they would have been by falling, but not nearly so much as they would have been if the wheel had passed over them.'

'What do you suggest, then?' I asked.

'The appearances suggest that the spectacles had been trodden on. But, if the body was carried here, the probability is that the spectacles were carried here too, and that they were then already broken; for it is more likely that they were trodden on during the struggle than that the murderer trod on them after bringing them here. Hence the importance of picking up every fragment.'

'But why?' I inquired, rather foolishly, I must admit.

'Because, if, when we have picked up every fragment that we can find, there still remains missing a larger portion of the lenses than we could reasonably expect, that would tend to support our hypothesis and we might find the missing remainder elsewhere. If, on the other hand, we find as much of the lenses as we could expect to find, we must conclude that they were broken on this spot.'

While we were conducting our search, the two

officials were circling around with their lanterns in quest of the missing hat; and, when we had at length picked up the last fragment, and a careful search, even aided by a lens, failed to reveal any other, we could see their lanterns moving, like will-o'-the-wisps, some distance down the line.

'We may as well see what we have got before our friends come back,' said Thorndyke, glancing at the twinkling lights. 'Lay the case down on the grass by the fence; it will serve for a table.'

I did so, and Thorndyke, taking a letter from his pocket, opened it, spread it out flat on the case, securing it with a couple of heavy stones, although the night was quite calm. Then he tipped the contents of the seed envelope out on the paper, and, carefully spreading out the pieces of glass, looked at them for some moments in silence. And, as he looked, there stole over his face a very curious expression; with sudden eagerness he began picking out the larger fragments and laying them on two visiting-cards which he had taken from his card-case. Rapidly and with wonderful deftness he fitted the pieces together, and, as the reconstituted lenses began gradually to take shape on their cards I looked on with growing excitement, for something in my colleague's manner told me that we were on the verge of a discovery.

At length the two ovals of glass lay on their respective cards, complete save for one or two small gaps; and the little heap that remained consisted of fragments so minute as to render further reconstruction impossible. Then Thorndyke leaned back and laughed softly.

'This is certainly an unlooked-for result,' said he.

'What is?' I asked.

'Don't you see, my dear fellow? *There's too much glass.* We have almost completely built up the broken lenses, and the fragments that are left over are considerably more than are required to fill up the gaps.'

I looked at the little heap of small fragments and saw at once that it was as he had said. There was a surplus of small pieces.

'This is very extraordinary,' I said. 'What do you think can be the explanation?'

'The fragments will probably tell us,' he replied, 'if we ask them intelligently.'

He lifted the paper and the two cards carefully on to the ground, and, opening the case, took out the little microscope, to which he fitted the lowest-power objective and eye-piece—having a combined magnification of only ten diameters. Then he transferred the minute fragments of glass to a slide, and, having arranged the lantern as a microscope-lamp, commenced his examination.

'Ha!' he exclaimed presently. 'The plot thickens. There is too much glass and yet too little; that is to say, there are only one or two fragments here that belong to the spectacles; not nearly enough to complete the building up of the lenses. The remainder consists of a soft, uneven, moulded glass, easily distinguished from the clear, hard optical glass. These foreign fragments are all curved, as if they had formed part of a cylinder, and are, I should say, portions of a wine-glass or tumbler.' He moved the slide once or twice, and then continued: 'We are in luck, Jervis. Here is a fragment with two little diverging lines etched on it, evidently the points of an eight-rayed star—and here is another with three points—the ends

of three rays. This enables us to reconstruct the vessel perfectly. It was a clear, thin glass—probably a tumbler—decorated with scattered stars; I dare say you know the pattern. Sometimes there is an ornamented band in addition, but generally the stars form the only decoration. Have a look at the specimen.'

I had just applied my eye to the microscope when the station-master and the inspector came up. Our appearance, seated on the ground with the microscope between us, was too much for the police officer's gravity, and he laughed long and joyously.

'You must excuse me, gentlemen,' he said apologetically, 'but really, you know, to an old hand, like myself, it does look a little—well—you understand—I dare say a microscope is a very interesting and amusing thing, but it doesn't get you much forrader in a case like this, does it?'

'Perhaps not,' replied Thorndyke. 'By the way, where did you find the hat, after all?'

'We haven't found it,' the inspector replied, a little sheepishly.

'Then we must help you to continue the search,' said Thorndyke. 'If you will wait a few moments, we will come with you.' He poured a few drops of xylol balsam on the cards to fix the reconstituted lenses to their supports and then, packing them and the microscope in the case, announced that he was ready to start.

'Is there any village or hamlet near?' he asked the station-master.

'None nearer than Corfield. That is about half a mile from here.'

'And where is the nearest road?'

'There is a half-made road that runs past a

house about three hundred yards from here. It belonged to a building estate that was never built. There is a footpath from it to the station.'

'Are there any other houses near?'

'No. That is the only house for half a mile round, and there is no other road near here.'

'Then the probability is that Brodski approached the railway from that direction, as he was found on that side of the permanent way.'

The inspector agreeing with this view, we all set off slowly towards the house, piloted by the station-master and searching the ground as we went. The waste land over which we passed was covered with patches of docks and nettles, through each of which the inspector kicked his way, searching with feet and lantern for the missing hat. A walk of three hundred yards brought us to a low wall enclosing a garden, beyond which we could see a small house; and here we halted while the inspector waded into a large bed of nettles beside the wall and kicked vigorously. Suddenly there came a clinking sound mingled with objurgations, and the inspector hopped out holding one foot and soliloquizing profanely.

'I wonder what sort of a fool put a thing like that into a bed of nettles!' he exclaimed, stroking the injured foot. Thorndyke picked the object up and held it in the light of the lantern, displaying a piece of three-quarter inch rolled iron bar about a foot long. 'It doesn't seem to have been there very long,' he observed, examining it closely; 'there is hardly any rust on it.'

'It has been there long enough for me,' growled the inspector, 'and I'd like to bang it on the head of the blighter that put it there.'

Callously indifferent to the inspector's sufferings, Thorndyke continued calmly to examine the bar. At length, resting his lantern on the wall, he produced his pocket-lens, with which he resumed his investigation, a proceeding that so exasperated the inspector that that afflicted official limped off in dudgeon, followed by the station-master, and we heard him, presently, rapping at the front door of the house.

'Give me a slide, Jervis, with a drop of Farrant on it,' said Thorndyke. 'There are some fibres sticking to this bar.'

I prepared the slide, and, having handed it to him together with a cover-glass, a pair of forceps and a needle, set up the microscope on the wall.

'I'm sorry for the inspector,' Thorndyke remarked, with his eye applied to the little instrument, 'but that was a lucky kick for us. Just take a look at the specimen.'

I did so, and, having moved the slide about until I had seen the whole of the object, I gave my opinion. 'Red wool fibres, blue cotton fibres, and some yellow, vegetable fibres that look like jute.'

'Yes,' said Thorndyke; 'the same combination of fibres as that which we found on the dead man's teeth and probably from the same source. This bar has probably been wiped on that very curtain or rug with which poor Brodski was stifled. We will place it on the wall for future reference, and meanwhile, by hook or by crook, we must get into that house. This is much too plain a hint to be disregarded.'

Hastily repacking the case, we hurried to the front of the house, where we found the two officials looking rather vaguely up the unmade road.

'There's a light in the house,' said the inspector, 'but there's no one at home. I have knocked a dozen times and got no answer. And I don't see what we are hanging about here for at all. The hat is probably close to where the body was found, and we shall find it in the morning.'

Thorndyke made no reply, but, entering the garden, stepped up the path, and having knocked gently at the door, stooped and listened attentively at the key-hole.

'I tell you there's no one in the house, sir,' said the inspector irritably; and, as Thorndyke continued to listen, he walked away, muttering angrily. As soon as he was gone, Thorndyke flashed his lantern over the door, the threshold, the path and the small flower-beds; and, from one of the latter, I presently saw him stoop and pick something up.

'Here is a highly instructive object, Jervis,' he said, coming out to the gate, and displaying a cigarette of which only half an inch had been smoked.

'How instructive?' I asked. 'What do you learn from it?'

'Many things,' he replied. 'It has been lit and thrown away unsmoked; that indicates a sudden change of purpose. It was thrown away at the entrance to the house, almost certainly by some one entering it. That person was probably a stranger, or he would have taken it in with him. But he had not expected to enter the house, or he would not have lit it. These are the general suggestions; now as to the particular ones. The paper of the cigarette is of the kind known as the "Zig-Zag" brand; the very conspicuous water-mark is

quite easy to see. Now Brodski's cigarette book was a "Zig-Zag" book—so called from the way in which the papers pull out. But let us see what the tobacco is like.' With a pin from his coat, he hooked out from the unburned end a wisp of dark, dirty brown tobacco, which he held out for my inspection.

'Fine-cut Latakia,' I pronounced, without hesitation.

'Very well,' said Thorndyke. 'Here is a cigarette made of an unusual tobacco similar to that in Brodski's pouch and wrapped in an unusual paper similar to those in Brodski's cigarette book. With due regard to the fourth rule of the syllogism, I suggest that this cigarette was made by Oscar Brodski. But, nevertheless, we will look for corroborative detail.'

'What is that?' I asked.

'You may have noticed that Brodski's match-box contained round wooden vestas—which are also rather unusual. As he must have lighted the cigarette within a few steps of the gate, we ought to be able to find the match with which he lighted it. Let us try up the road in the direction from which he would probably have approached.'

We walked very slowly up the road, searching the ground with the lantern, and we had hardly gone a dozen paces when I espied a match lying on the rough path and eagerly picked it up. It was a round wooden vesta.

Thorndyke examined it with interest and having deposited it, with the cigarette, in his 'collecting-box', turned to retrace his steps. 'There is now, Jervis, no reasonable doubt that Brodski was murdered in that house. We have succeeded in

connecting that house with the crime, and now we have got to force an entrance and join up the other clues.' We walked quickly back to the rear of the premises, where we found the inspector conversing disconsolately with the station-master.

'I think, sir,' said the former, 'we had better go back now; in fact, I don't see what we came here for, but—here! I say, sir, you mustn't do that!' For Thorndyke, without a word of warning, had sprung up lightly and thrown one of his long legs over the wall.

'I can't allow you to enter private premises, sir,' continued the inspector; but Thorndyke quietly dropped down on the inside and turned to face the officer over the wall.

'Now, listen to me, inspector,' said he. 'I have good reasons for believing that the dead man, Brodski, has been in this house, in fact, I am prepared to swear an information to that effect. But time is precious; we must follow the scent while it is hot. And I am not proposing to break into the house off-hand. I merely wish to examine the dust-bin.'

'The dust-bin!' gasped the inspector. 'Well, you really are a most extraordinary gentleman! What do you expect to find in the dust-bin?'

'I am looking for a broken tumbler or wine-glass. It is a thin glass vessel decorated with a pattern of small, eight-pointed stars. It may be in the dust-bin or it may be inside the house.'

The inspector hesitated, but Thorndyke's confident manner had evidently impressed him.

'We can soon see what is in the dust-bin,' he said, 'though what in creation a broken tumbler has to do with the case is more than I can under-

stand. However, here goes.' He sprang up on to the wall, and, as he dropped down into the garden, the station-master and I followed.

Thorndyke lingered a few moments by the gate examining the ground, while the two officials hurried up the path. Finding nothing of interest, however, he walked towards the house, looking keenly about him as he went; but we were hardly half-way up the path when we heard the voice of the inspector calling excitedly.

'Here you are, sir, this way,' he sang out, and, as we hurried forward, we suddenly came on the two officials standing over a small rubbish-heap and looking the picture of astonishment. The glare of their lanterns illuminated the heap, and showed us the scattered fragments of a thin glass, star-pattern tumbler.

'I can't imagine how you guessed it was here, sir,' said the inspector, with a new-born respect in his tone, 'nor what you're going to do with it now you have found it.'

'It is merely another link in the chain of evidence,' said Thorndyke, taking a pair of forceps from the case and stooping over the heap. 'Perhaps we shall find something else.' He picked up several small fragments of glass, looked at them closely and dropped them again. Suddenly his eye caught a small splinter at the base of the heap. Seizing it with the forceps, he held it close to his eye in the strong lamplight, and, taking out his lens, examined it with minute attention. 'Yes,' he said at length, 'this is what I was looking for. Let me have those two cards, Jervis.'

I produced the two visiting-cards with the reconstructed lenses stuck to them, and, laying them

on the lid of the case, threw the light of the lantern on them. Thorndyke looked at them intently for some time, and from them to the fragment that he held. Then, turning to the inspector, he said: 'You saw me pick up this splinter of glass?'

'Yes, sir,' replied the officer.

'And you saw where we found these spectacle-glasses and know whose they were?'

'Yes, sir. They are the dead man's spectacles, and you found them where the body had been.'

'Very well,' said Thorndyke; 'now observe'; and, as the two officials craned forward with parted lips, he laid the little splinter in a gap in one of the lenses and then gave it a gentle push forward, when it occupied the gap perfectly, joining edge to edge with the adjacent fragments and rendering that portion of the lens complete.

'My God!' exclaimed the inspector. 'How on earth did you know?'

'I must explain that later,' said Thorndyke. 'Meanwhile we had better have a look inside the house. I expect to find there a cigarette—or possibly a cigar—which has been trodden on, some whole-meal biscuits, possibly a wooden vesta, and perhaps even the missing hat.'

At the mention of the hat, the inspector stepped eagerly to the back door, but, finding it bolted, he tried the window. This also was securely fastened and, on Thorndyke's advice, we went round to the front door.

'This door is locked too,' said the inspector. 'I'm afraid we shall have to break in. It's a nuisance, though.'

'Have a look at the window,' suggested Thorndyke.

The officer did so, struggling vainly to undo the patent catch with his pocket-knife.

'It's no go,' he said, coming back to the door. 'We shall have to——' He broke off with an astonished stare, for the door stood open and Thorndyke was putting something in his pocket.

'Your friend doesn't waste much time—even in picking a lock,' he remarked to me, as we followed Thorndyke into the house; but his reflections were soon merged in a new surprise. Thorndyke had preceded us into a small sitting-room dimly lighted by a hanging lamp turned down low.

As we entered he turned up the light and glanced about the room. A whisky-bottle was on the table, with a siphon, a tumbler and a biscuit-box. Pointing to the latter, Thorndyke said to the inspector: 'See what is in that box.'

The inspector raised the lid and peeped in, the station-master peered over his shoulder, and then both stared at Thorndyke.

'How in the name of goodness did you know that there were whole-meal biscuits in the house, sir?' exclaimed the station-master.

'You'd be disappointed if I told you,' replied Thorndyke. 'But look at this.' He pointed to the hearth, where lay a flattened, half-smoked cigarette and a round wooden vesta. The inspector gazed at these objects in silent wonder, while, as to the station-master, he continued to stare at Thorndyke with what I can only describe as superstitious awe.

'You have the dead man's property with you, I believe?' said my colleague.

'Yes,' replied the inspector; 'I put the things in my pocket for safety.'

'Then,' said Thorndyke, picking up the flattened cigarette, 'let us have a look at his tobacco-pouch.'

As the officer produced and opened the pouch, Thorndyke neatly cut open the cigarette with his sharp pocket-knife. 'Now,' said he, 'what kind of tobacco is in the pouch?'

The inspector took out a pinch, looked at it and smelt it distastefully. 'It's one of those stinking tobaccos,' he said, 'that they put in mixtures—Latakia, I think.'

'And what is this?' asked Thorndyke, pointing to the open cigarette.

'Same stuff, undoubtedly,' replied the inspector.

'And now let us see his cigarette papers,' said Thorndyke.

The little book, or rather packet—for it consisted of separated papers—was produced from the officer's pocket and a sample paper abstracted. Thorndyke laid the half-burnt paper beside it, and the inspector having examined the two, held them up to the light.

'There isn't much chance of mistaking that 'Zig-Zag' water-mark,' he said. 'This cigarette was made by the deceased; there can't be the shadow of a doubt.'

'One more point,' said Thorndyke, laying the burnt wooden vesta on the table. 'You have his match-box?'

The inspector brought forth the little silver casket, opened it and compared the wooden vestas that it contained with the burnt end. Then he shut the box with a snap.

'You've proved it up to the hilt,' said he. 'If we could only find the hat, we should have a complete case.'

'I'm not sure that we haven't found the hat,' said Thorndyke. 'You notice that something besides coal has been burned in the grate.'

The inspector ran eagerly to the fire-place and began, with feverish hands, to pick out the remains of the extinct fire. 'The cinders are still warm,' he said, 'and they are certainly not all coal cinders. There has been wood burned here on top of the coal, and these little black lumps are neither coal nor wood. They may quite possibly be the remains of a burnt hat, but, lord! who can tell? You can put together the pieces of broken spectacle-glasses, but you can't build up a hat out of a few cinders.' He held out a handful of little, black, spongy cinders and looked ruefully at Thorndyke, who took them from him and laid them out on a sheet of paper.

'We can't reconstitute the hat, certainly,' my friend agreed, 'but we may be able to ascertain the origin of these remains. They may not be cinders of a hat, after all.' He lit a wax match and, taking up one of the charred fragments, applied the flame to it. The cindery mass fused at once with a crackling, seething sound, emitting a dense smoke, and instantly the air became charged with a pungent, resinous odour mingled with the smell of burning animal matter.

'Smells like varnish,' the station-master remarked.

'Yes. Shellac,' said Thorndyke; 'so the first test gives a positive result. The next test will take more time.'

He opened the green case and took from it a little flask, fitted for Marsh's arsenic test, with a safety funnel and escape tube, a small folding

tripod, a spirit-lamp and a disc of asbestos to serve as a sand-bath. Dropping into the flask several of the cindery masses, selected after careful inspection, he filled it up with alcohol and placed it on the disc, which he rested on the tripod. Then he lighted the spirit-lamp underneath and sat down to wait for the alcohol to boil.

'There is one little point that we may as well settle,' he said presently, as the bubbles began to rise in the flask. 'Give me a slide with a drop of Farrant on it, Jervis.'

I prepared the slide while Thorndyke, with a pair of forceps, picked out a tiny wisp from the table-cloth. 'I fancy we have seen this fabric before,' he remarked, as he laid the little pinch of fluff in the mounting fluid and slipped the slide on to the stage of the microscope. 'Yes,' he continued, looking into the eye-piece, 'here are our old acquaintances, the red wool fibres, the blue cotton, and the yellow jute. We must label this at once or we may confuse it with the other specimens.'

'Have you any idea how the deceased met his death?' the inspector asked.

'Yes,' replied Thorndyke. 'I take it that the murderer enticed him into this room and gave him some refreshments. The murderer sat in the chair in which you are sitting, Brodski sat in that small arm-chair. Then I imagine the murderer attacked him with that iron bar that you found among the nettles, failed to kill him at the first stroke, struggled with him and finally suffocated him with the table-cloth. By the way, there is just one more point. You recognize this piece of string?' He took from his 'collecting-box' the

little end of twine that had been picked up by the line. The inspector nodded. 'If you look behind you, you will see where it came from.'

The officer turned sharply and his eye lighted on a string-box on the mantelpiece. He lifted it down, and Thorndyke drew out from it a length of white twine with one green strand, which he compared with the piece in his hand. 'The green strand in it makes the identification fairly certain,' he said. 'Of course, the string was used to secure the umbrella and hand-bag. He could not have carried them in his hand, encumbered as he was with the corpse. But I expect our other specimen is ready now.' He lifted the flask off the tripod, and, giving it a vigorous shake, examined the contents through his lens. The alcohol had now become dark-brown in colour, and was noticeably thicker and more syrupy in consistence.

'I think we have enough here for a rough test,' said he, selecting a pipette and a slide from the case. He dipped the former into the flask and, having sucked up a few drops of the alcohol from the bottom, held the pipette over the slide on which he allowed the contained fluid to drop.

Laying a cover-glass on the little pool of alcohol, he put the slide on the microscope stage and examined it attentively, while we watched him in expectant silence.

At length he looked up, and, addressing the inspector, asked: 'Do you know what felt hats are made of?'

'I can't say that I do, sir,' replied the officer.

'Well, the better quality hats are made of rabbits' and hares' wool—the soft under-fur, you know—cemented together with shellac. Now

there is very little doubt that these cinders contain shellac, and with the microscope I find a number of small hairs of a rabbit. I have, therefore, little hesitation in saying that these cinders are the remains of a hard felt hat; and, as the hairs do not appear to be dyed, I should say it was a grey hat.'

At this moment our conclave was interrupted by hurried footsteps on the garden path and, as we turned with one accord, an elderly woman burst into the room.

She stood for a moment in mute astonishment, and then, looking from one to the other, demanded: 'Who are you? and what are you doing here?'

The inspector rose. 'I am a police officer, madam,' said he. 'I can't give you any further information just now, but, if you will excuse me asking, who are you?'

'I am Mr. Hickler's housekeeper,' she replied.

'And Mr. Hickler; are you expecting him home shortly?'

'No, I am not,' was the curt reply. 'Mr. Hickler is away from home just now. He left this evening by the boat train.'

'For Amsterdam?' asked Thorndyke.

'I believe so, though I don't see what business it is of yours,' the housekeeper answered.

'I thought he might, perhaps, be a diamond broker or merchant,' said Thorndyke. 'A good many of them travel by that train.'

'So he is,' said the woman, 'at least, he has something to do with diamonds.'

'Ah. Well, we must be going, Jervis,' said Thorndyke, 'we have finished here, and we have

to find an hotel or inn. Can I have a word with you, inspector ?'

The officer, now entirely humble and reverent, followed us out into the garden to receive Thorn-dyke's parting advice.

'You had better take possession of the house at once, and get rid of the housekeeper. Nothing must be removed. Preserve those cinders and see that the rubbish-heap is not disturbed, and, above all, don't have the room swept. The station-master or I will let them know at the police station, so that they can send an officer to relieve you.'

With a friendly 'good-night' we went on our way, guided by the station-master; and here our connection with the case came to an end. Hickler (whose Christian name turned out to be Silas) was, it is true, arrested as he stepped ashore from the steamer, and a packet of diamonds, subsequently identified as the property of Oscar Brodski, found upon his person. But he was never brought to trial, for on the return voyage he contrived to elude his guards for an instant as the ship was approaching the English coast, and it was not until three days later, when a handcuffed body was cast up on the lonely shore by Orfordness, that the authorities knew the fate of Silas Hickler.

'An appropriate and dramatic end to a singular and yet typical case,' said Thorndyke, as he put down the newspaper. 'I hope it has enlarged your knowledge, Jervis, and enabled you to form one or two useful corollaries.'

'I prefer to hear you sing the medico-legal

doxology,' I answered, turning upon him like the proverbial worm and grinning derisively (which the worm does not).

'I know you do,' he retorted, with mock gravity, 'and I lament your lack of mental initiative. However, the points that this case illustrates are these: First, the danger of delay; the vital importance of instant action before that frail and fleeting thing that we call a clue has time to evaporate. A delay of a few hours would have left us with hardly a single datum. Second, the necessity of pursuing the most trivial clue to an absolute finish, as illustrated by the spectacles. Third, the urgent need of a trained scientist to aid the police; and, last,' he concluded, with a smile, 'we learn never to go abroad without the invaluable green case.'

THE NEW JERSEY SPHINX

BY R. AUSTIN FREEMAN

'A RATHER curious neighbourhood this, Jervis,' my friend Thorndyke remarked as we turned into Upper Bedford Place; 'a sort of temporary aviary for cosmopolitan birds of passage, especially those of the Oriental variety. The Asiatic and African faces that one sees at the windows of these Bloomsbury boarding-houses almost suggest an overflow from the ethnographical galleries of the adjacent British Museum.'

'Yes,' I agreed, 'there must be quite a considerable population of Africans, Japanese and Hindus in Bloomsbury; particularly Hindus.'

As I spoke, and as if in illustration of my statement, a dark-skinned man rushed out of one of the houses farther down the street and began to advance towards us in a rapid, bewildered fashion, stopping to look at each street door as he came to it. His hatless condition—though he was exceedingly well dressed—and his agitated manner immediately attracted my attention, and Thorndyke's too, for the latter remarked, 'Our friend seems to be in trouble. An accident, perhaps, or a case of sudden illness.'

Here the stranger, observing our approach, ran forward to meet us and asked in an agitated tone, 'Can you tell me, please, where I can find a doctor?'

'I am a medical man,' replied Thorndyke, 'and so is my friend.'

Our acquaintance grasped Thorndyke's sleeve and exclaimed eagerly :

'Come with me, then, quickly if you please. A most dreadful thing has happened.'

He hurried us along at something between a trot and a quick walk, and as we proceeded he continued excitedly, 'I am quite confused and terrified; it is all so strange and sudden and terrible.'

'Try,' said Thorndyke, 'to calm yourself a little and tell us what has happened.'

'I will,' was the agitated reply. 'It is my cousin, Dinanath Byramji—his surname is the same as mine. Just now I went to his room and was horrified to find him lying on the floor, staring at the ceiling and blowing—like this,' and he puffed out his cheeks with a soft blowing noise. 'I spoke to him and shook his hand, but he was like a dead man. This is the house.'

He darted up the steps to an open door at which a rather scared page-boy was on guard, and running along the hall, rapidly ascended the stairs. Following him closely, we reached a rather dark first-floor landing where, at a half-open door, a servant-maid stood listening with an expression of awe to a rhythmical snoring sound that issued from the room.

The unconscious man lay as Mr. Byramji had said, staring fixedly at the ceiling with wide-open, glazy eyes, puffing out his cheeks slightly at each breath. But the breathing was shallow and slow, and it grew perceptibly slower, with lengthening pauses. And even as I was timing it with my

watch while Thorndyke examined the pupils with the aid of a wax match, it stopped. I laid my finger on the wrist and caught one or two slow, flickering beats. Then the pulse stopped too.

'He is gone,' said I. 'He must have burst one of the large arteries.'

'Apparently,' said Thorndyke, 'though one would not have expected it at his age. But wait! What is this?'

He pointed to the right ear, in the hollow of which a few drops of blood had collected, and as he spoke he drew his hand gently over the dead man's head and moved it slightly from side to side.

'There is a fracture of the base of the skull,' said he, 'and quite distinct signs of contusion of the scalp.' He turned to Mr. Byramji, who stood wringing his hands and gazing incredulously at the dead man, and asked:

'Can you throw any light on this?'

The Indian looked at him vacantly. The sudden tragedy seemed to have paralysed his brain. 'I don't understand,' said he. 'What does it mean?'

'It means,' replied Thorndyke, 'that he has received a heavy blow on the head.'

For a few moments Mr. Byramji continued to stare vacantly at my colleague. Then he seemed suddenly to realize the import of Thorndyke's reply, for he started up excitedly and turned to the door, outside which the two servants were hovering.

'Where is the person gone who came in with my cousin?' he demanded.

'You saw him go out, Albert,' said the maid. 'Tell Mr. Byramji where he went to.'

The page tiptoed into the room with a fearful eye fixed on the corpse, and replied falteringly, 'I only see the back of him as he went out, and all I know is that he turned to the left. P'raps he's gone for a doctor.'

'Can you give us any description of him?' asked Thorndyke.

'I only see the back of him,' repeated the page. 'He was a shortish gentleman and he had on a dark suit of clothes and a bowler. That's all I know.'

'Thank you,' said Thorndyke. 'We may want to ask you some more questions presently,' and having conducted the page to the door, he shut it and turned to Mr. Byramji.

'Have you any idea who it was that was with your cousin?' he asked.

'None at all,' was the reply. 'I was sitting in my room opposite, writing, when I heard my cousin come up the stairs with another person, to whom he was talking. I could not hear what he was saying. They went into his room—this room—and I could occasionally catch the sound of their voices. In about a quarter of an hour I heard the door open and shut, and then some one went downstairs, softly and rather quickly. I finished the letter that I was writing, and when I had addressed it I came in here to ask my cousin who the visitor was. I thought it might be some one who had come to negotiate for the ruby.'

'The ruby!' exclaimed Thorndyke. 'What ruby do you refer to?'

'The great ruby,' replied Byramji. 'But of course you have not——' He broke off suddenly and stood for a few moments staring at Thorndyke

with parted lips and wide-open eyes; then abruptly he turned, and kneeling beside the dead man he began, in a curious, caressing, half-apologetic manner, first to pass his hand gently over the body at the waist and then to unfasten the clothes. This brought into view a handsome, soft leather belt, evidently of native workmanship, worn next to the skin and furnished with three pockets. Mr. Byramji unbuttoned and explored them in quick succession, and it was evident that they were all empty.

'It is gone!' he exclaimed in low, intense tones. 'Gone! Ah! But how little would it signify! But thou, dear Dinanath, my brother, my friend, thou art gone, too!'

He lifted the dead man's hand and pressed it to his cheek, murmuring endearments in his own tongue. Presently he laid it down reverently, and sprang up, and I was startled at the change in his aspect. The delicate, gentle, refined face had suddenly become the face of a Fury—fierce, sinister, vindictive.

'This wretch must die!' he exclaimed huskily. 'This sordid brute who, without compunction, has crushed out a precious life as one would carelessly crush a fly, for the sake of a paltry crystal—he must die, if I have to follow him and strangle him with my own hands!'

Thorndyke laid his hand on Byramji's shoulder. 'I sympathize with you most cordially,' said he. 'If it is as you think, and appearances suggest, that your cousin has been murdered as a mere incident of robbery, the murderer's life is forfeit, and Justice cries aloud for retribution. The fact of murder will be determined, for or against, by

a proper inquiry. Meanwhile we have to ascertain who this unknown man is and what happened while he was with your cousin.'

Byramji made a gesture of despair. 'But the man has disappeared, and nobody has seen him! What can we do?'

'Let us look around us,' replied Thorndyke, 'and see if we can judge what has happened in this room. What, for instance, is this?'

He picked up from a corner near the door a small leather object, which he handed to Mr. Byramji. The Indian seized it eagerly, exclaiming:

'Ah! It is the little bag in which my cousin used to carry the ruby. So he had taken it from his belt.'

'It hasn't been dropped, by any chance?' I suggested.

In an instant Mr. Byramji was down on his knees, peering and groping about the floor, and Thorndyke and I joined in the search. But, as might have been expected, there was no sign of the ruby, nor, indeed, of anything else, excepting a hat which I picked up from under the table.

'No,' said Mr. Byramji, rising with a dejected air. 'It is gone—of course it is gone, and the murderous villain—'

Here his glance fell on the hat, which I had laid on the table, and he bent forward to look at it.

'Whose hat is this?' he demanded, glancing at the chair on which Thorndyke's hat and mine had been placed.

'Is it not your cousin's?' asked Thorndyke.

'No, certainly not. His hat was like mine—we bought them both together. It had a white silk lining with his initials, D.B., in gold. This has

no lining and is a much older hat. It must be the murderer's hat.'

'If it is,' said Thorndyke, 'that is a most important fact—important in two respects. Could you let us see your hat?'

'Certainly,' replied Byramji, walking quickly, but with a soft tread, to the door. As he went out, shutting the door silently behind him, Thorndyke picked up the derelict hat and swiftly tried it on the head of the dead man. As far as I could judge, it appeared to fit, and this Thorndyke confirmed as he replaced it on the table.

'As you see,' said he, 'it is at least a practicable fit, which is a fact of some significance.'

Here Mr. Byramji returned with his own hat, which he placed on the table by the side of the other, and thus placed, crown uppermost, the two hats were closely similar. Both were black, hard felts of the prevalent 'bowler' shape, and of good quality, and the difference in their age and state of preservation was not striking; but when Byramji turned them over and exhibited their interiors it was seen that whereas the strange hat was unlined save for the leather head-band, Byramji's had a white silk lining and bore the owner's initials in embossed gilt letters.

'What happened,' said Thorndyke, when he had carefully compared the two hats, 'seems fairly obvious. The two men, on entering, placed their hats crown upwards on the table. In some way—perhaps during a struggle—the visitor's hat was knocked down and rolled under the table. Then the stranger, on leaving, picked up the only visible hat—almost identically similar to his own—and put it on.'

'Is it not rather singular,' I asked, 'that he should not have noticed the different feel of a strange hat?'

'I think not,' Thorndyke replied. 'If he noticed anything unusual he would probably assume that he had put it on the wrong way round. Remember that he would be extremely hurried and agitated. And when once he had left the house he would not dare to take the risk of returning, though he would doubtless realize the gravity of the mistake. And now,' he continued, 'would you mind giving us a few particulars? You have spoken of a great ruby which your cousin had, and which seems to be missing.'

'Yes. You shall come to my room and I will tell you about it; but first let us lay my poor cousin decently on his bed.'

'I think,' said Thorndyke, 'the body ought not to be moved until the police have seen it.'

'Perhaps you are right,' Byramji agreed reluctantly, 'though it seems callous to leave him lying there.' With a sigh he turned to the door, and Thorndyke followed, carrying the two hats.

'My cousin and I,' said our host, when we were seated in his own large bed-sitting room, 'were both interested in gem-stones. I deal in all kinds of stones that are found in the East, but Dinanath dealt almost exclusively in rubies. He was a very fine judge of those beautiful gems, and he used to make periodical tours in Burma in search of uncut rubies of unusual size or quality. About four months ago he acquired at Mogok, in Upper Burma, a magnificent specimen over twenty-eight carats in weight, perfectly flawless and of the most

gorgeous colour. It had been roughly cut, but my cousin was intending to have it recut unless he should receive an advantageous offer for it in the meantime.'

'What would be the value of such a stone?' I asked.

'It is impossible to say. A really fine large ruby of perfect colour is far, far more valuable than the finest diamond of the same size. It is the most precious of all gems, with the possible exception of the emerald. A fine ruby of five carats is worth about three thousand pounds, but of course, the value rises out of all proportion with increasing size. Fifty thousand pounds would be a moderate price for Dinanath's ruby.'

During this recital I noticed that Thorndyke, while listening attentively, was turning the stranger's hat over in his hands, narrowly scrutinizing it both inside and outside. As Byramji concluded, he remarked:

'We shall have to let the police know what has happened, but, as my friend and I will be called as witnesses, I should like to examine this hat a little more closely before you hand it over to them. Could you let me have a small, hard brush? A dry nail-brush would do.'

Our host complied readily—in fact eagerly. Thorndyke's authoritative, purposeful manner had clearly impressed him, for he said as he handed my colleague a new nail-brush: 'I thank you for your help and value it. We must not depend on the police only.'

Accustomed as I was to Thorndyke's methods, his procedure was not unexpected, but Mr. Byramji watched him with breathless interest and

no little surprise as, laying a sheet of notepaper on the table, he brought the hat close to it and brushed firmly but slowly, so that the dust dislodged should fall on it. As it was not a very well-kept hat, the yield was considerable, especially when the brush was drawn under the curl of the brim, and very soon the paper held quite a little heap. Then Thorndyke folded the paper into a small packet and having written 'outside' on it, put it in his pocket-book.

'Why do you do that?' Mr. Byramji asked. 'What will the dust tell you?'

'Probably nothing,' Thorndyke replied. 'But this hat is our only direct clue to the identity of the man who was with your cousin, and we must make the most of it. Dust, you know, is only a mass of fragments detached from surrounding objects. If the objects are unusual the dust may be quite distinctive. You could easily identify the hat of a miller or a cement worker.' As he was speaking he reversed the hat and turned down the leather head-lining, whereupon a number of strips of folded paper fell down into the crown.

'Ah!' exclaimed Byramji, 'perhaps we shall learn something now.'

He picked out the folded slips and began eagerly to open them out, and we examined them systematically, one by one. But they were singularly disappointing and uninforming. Mostly they consisted of strips of newspaper, with one or two circulars, a leaf from a price list of gas stoves, a portion of a large envelope on which were the remains of an address which read '—n —don, W.C.,' and a piece of paper, evidently cut down

vertically and bearing the right-hand half of some kind of list. This read :

‘—el 3 oz. 5 dwts.

—cep 9½ oz.’

‘Can you make anything of this?’ I asked, handing the paper to Thorndyke.

He looked at it reflectively, and answered, as he copied it into his notebook: ‘It has, at least, some character. If we consider it with the other data we should get some sort of hint from it. But these scraps of paper don’t tell us much. Perhaps their most suggestive feature is their quantity and the way in which, as you have no doubt noticed, they were arranged at the sides of the hat. We had better replace them as we found them for the benefit of the police.’

The nature of the suggestion to which he referred was not very obvious to me, but the presence of Mr. Byramji rendered discussion inadvisable; nor was there any opportunity, for we had hardly reconstituted the hat when we became aware of a number of persons ascending the stairs, and then we heard the sound of rather peremptory rapping at the door of the dead man’s room.

Mr. Byramji opened the door and went out on to the landing, where several persons had collected, including the two servants and a constable.

‘I understand,’ said the policeman, ‘that there is something wrong here. Is that so?’

‘A very terrible thing has happened,’ replied Byramji. ‘But the doctors can tell you better than I can.’ Here he looked appealingly at Thorndyke, and we both went out and joined him.

‘A gentleman—Mr. Dinanath Byramji—has met with his death under somewhat suspicious

circumstances,' said Thorndyke, and, glancing at the knot of naturally curious persons on the landing, he continued: 'If you will come into the room where the death occurred, I will give you the facts so far as they are known to us.'

With this he opened the door and entered the room with Mr. Byramji, the constable, and me. As the door opened, the bystanders craned forward and a middle-aged woman uttered a cry of horror and followed us into the room.

'This is dreadful!' she exclaimed, with a shuddering glance at the corpse. 'The servants told me about it when I came in just now and I sent Albert for the police at once. But what does it mean? You don't think poor Mr. Dinanath has been murdered?'

'We had better get the facts, ma'am,' said the constable, drawing out a large black note-book and laying his helmet on the table. He turned to Mr. Byramji, who had sunk into a chair and sat, the picture of grief, gazing at his dead cousin. 'Would you kindly tell me what you know about how it happened?'

Byramji repeated the substance of what he had told us, and when the constable had taken down his statement, Thorndyke and I gave the few medical particulars that we could furnish and handed the constable our cards. Then, having helped to lay the corpse on the bed and cover it with a sheet, we turned to take our leave.

'You have been very kind,' Mr. Byramji said as he shook our hands warmly. 'I am more than grateful. Perhaps I may be permitted to call on you and hear if—if you have learned anything fresh,' he concluded discreetly.

'We shall be pleased to see you,' Thorndyke replied, 'and to give you any help that we can'; and with this we took our departure, watched inquisitively down the stairs by the boarders and the servants who still lurked in the vicinity of the chamber of death.

'If the police have no more information than we have,' I remarked as we walked homeward, 'they won't have much to go on.'

'No,' said Thorndyke. 'But you must remember that this crime—as we are justified in assuming it to be—is not an isolated one. It is the fourth of practically the same kind within the last six months. I understand that the police have some kind of information respecting the presumed criminal, though it can't be worth much, seeing that no arrest has been made. But there is some new evidence this time. The exchange of hats may help the police considerably.'

'In what way? What evidence does it furnish?'

'In the first place it suggests a hurried departure, which seems to connect the missing man with the crime. Then, he is wearing the dead man's hat, and though he is not likely to continue wearing it, it may be seen and furnish a clue. We know that that hat fits him fairly and we know its size, so that we know the size of his head. Finally, we have the man's own hat.'

'I don't fancy the police will get much information from that,' said I.

'Probably not,' he agreed. 'Yet it offered one or two interesting suggestions, as you probably observed.'

'It made no suggestions whatever to me,' said I.

'Then,' said Thorndyke, 'I can only recommend you to recall our simple inspection and consider the significance of what we found.'

This I had to accept as closing the discussion for the time being, and as I had to make a call at my bookseller's concerning some reports that I had left to be bound, I parted from Thorndyke at the corner of Chichester Rents and left him to pursue his way alone.

My business with the bookseller took me longer than I had expected, for I had to wait while the lettering on the backs was completed, and when I arrived at our chambers in King's Bench Walk, I found Thorndyke apparently at the final stage of some experiment evidently connected with our late adventure. The microscope stood on the table with one slide on the stage and a second one beside it; but Thorndyke had apparently finished his microscopical researches, for as I entered he held in his hand a test-tube filled with a smoky-coloured fluid.

'I see that you have been examining the dust from the hat,' said I. 'Does it throw any fresh light on the case?'

'Very little,' he replied. 'It is just common dust—assorted fibres and miscellaneous organic and mineral particles. But there are a couple of hairs from the inside of the hat—both lightish brown, and one of the atrophic, note-of-exclamation type that one finds at the margin of bald patches; and the outside dust shows minute traces of lead, apparently in the form of oxide. What do you make of that?'

'Perhaps the man is a plumber or a painter,' I suggested.

‘Either is possible and worth considering,’ he replied; but his tone made clear to me that this was not his own inference; and a row of five consecutive Post Office Directories, which I had already noticed ranged along the end of the table, told me that he had not only formed an hypothesis on the subject, but had probably either confirmed or disproved it. For the Post Office Directory was one of Thorndyke’s favourite books of reference; and the amount of curious and recondite information that he succeeded in extracting from its matter-of-fact pages would have surprised no one more than it would the compilers of the work.

At this moment the sound of footsteps ascending our stairs became audible. It was late for business callers, but we were not unaccustomed to late visitors; and a familiar rat-tat of our little brass knocker seemed to explain the untimely visit.

‘That sounds like Superintendent Miller’s knock,’ said Thorndyke, as he strode across the room to open the door. And the Superintendent it turned out to be. But not alone.

As the door opened the officer entered with two gentlemen, both natives of India, and one of whom was our friend Mr. Byramji.

‘Perhaps,’ said Miller, ‘I had better look in a little later.’

‘Not on my account,’ said Byramji. ‘I have only a few words to say and there is nothing secret about my business. May I introduce my kinsman, Mr. Khambata, a student of the Inner Temple?’

Byramji’s companion bowed ceremoniously. ‘Byramji came to my chambers just now,’ he explained, ‘to consult me about this dreadful

affair, and he chanced to show me your card. He had not heard of you, but supposed you to be an ordinary medical practitioner. He did not realize that he had entertained an angel unawares. But I, who knew of your great reputation, advised him to put his affairs in your hands—without prejudice to the official investigations,' Mr. Khambata added hastily, bowing to the Superintendent.

'And I,' said Mr. Byramji, 'instantly decided to act on my kinsman's advice. I have come to beg you to leave no stone unturned to secure the punishment of my cousin's murderer. Spare no expense. I am a rich man and my poor cousin's property will come to me. As to the ruby, recover it if you can, but it is of no consequence. Vengeance—justice is what I seek. Deliver this wretch into my hands, or into the hands of justice, and I give you the ruby or its value, freely—gladly.'

'There is no need,' said Thorndyke, 'of such extraordinary inducement. If you wish me to investigate this case, I will do so and will use every means at my disposal, without prejudice, as your friend says, to the proper claims of the officers of the law. But you understand that I can make no promises. I cannot guarantee success.'

'We understand that,' said Mr. Khambata. 'But we know that if you undertake the case, everything that is possible will be done. And now we must leave you to your consultation.'

As soon as our clients had gone, Miller rose from his chair with his hand in his breast pocket. 'I dare say, doctor,' said he, 'you can guess what I have come about. I was sent for to look into this Byramji case, and I heard from Mr. Byramji that you had been there and that you had made

a minute examination of the missing man's hat. So have I; and I don't mind telling you that I could learn nothing from it.'

'I haven't learnt much myself,' said Thorndyke.

'But you've picked up something,' urged Miller, 'if it is only a hint; and we have just a little clue. There is very small doubt that this is the same man—'The New Jersey Sphinx,' as the papers call him—that committed those other robberies; and a very difficult type of criminal he is to get hold of. He is bold, he is wary, he plays a lone hand, and he sticks at nothing. He has no confederates, and he kills every time. The American police never got near him but once; and that once gives us the only clues we have.'

'Finger-prints?' inquired Thorndyke.

'Yes, and very poor ones, too. So rough that you can hardly make out the pattern. And even those are not absolutely guaranteed to be his; but in any case, finger-prints are not much use until you've got the man. And there is a photograph of the fellow himself. But it is only a snapshot, and a poor one at that. All it shows is that he has a mop of hair and a pointed beard—or at least he had when the photograph was taken. But for identification purposes it is practically worthless. Still, there it is; and what I propose is this: we want this man and so do you; we've worked together before and can trust one another. I am going to lay my cards on the table and ask you to do the same.'

'But, my dear Miller,' said Thorndyke, 'I haven't any cards. I haven't a single solid fact.'

The detective was visibly disappointed. Nevertheless, he laid two photographs on the table and

pushed them towards Thorndyke, who inspected them through his lens and passed them to me.

'The pattern is very indistinct and broken up,' he remarked.

'Yes,' said Miller; 'the prints must have been made on a very rough surface, though you get prints something like those from fitters or other men who use files and handle rough metal. And now, doctor, can't you give us a lead of any kind?'

Thorndyke reflected a few moments. 'I really have not a single real fact,' said he, 'and I am unwilling to make merely speculative suggestions.'

'Oh, that's all right,' Miller replied cheerfully. 'Give us a start. I shan't complain if it comes to nothing.'

'Well,' Thorndyke said reluctantly, 'I was thinking of getting a few particulars as to the various tenants of No. 51 Clifford's Inn. Perhaps you could do it more easily and it might be worth your while.'

'Good!' Miller exclaimed gleefully. 'He gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name''.

'It is probably the wrong name,' Thorndyke reminded him.

'I don't care,' said Miller. 'But why shouldn't we go together? It's too late to-night, and I can't manage to-morrow morning. But say to-morrow afternoon. Two heads are better than one, you know, especially when the second one is yours. Or perhaps,' he added, with a glance at me, 'three would be better still.'

Thorndyke considered for a moment or two and then looked at me.

‘What do you say, Jervis?’ he asked.

As my afternoon was unoccupied, I agreed with enthusiasm, being as curious as the Superintendent to know how Thorndyke had connected this particular locality with the vanished criminal, and Miller departed in high spirits with an appointment for the morrow at three o’clock in the afternoon.

For some time after the Superintendent’s departure I sat wrapped in profound meditation. In some mysterious way the address, 51 Clifford’s Inn, had emerged from the formless data yielded by the derelict hat. But what had been the connection? Apparently the fragment of the addressed envelope had furnished the clue. But how had Thorndyke extended ‘—n’ into ‘51 Clifford’s Inn’? It was to me a complete mystery.

Meanwhile, Thorndyke had seated himself at the writing-table, and I noticed that of the two letters which he wrote, one was written on our headed paper and the other on ordinary plain note-paper. I was speculating on the reason for this when he rose, and as he stuck on the stamps, said to me, ‘I am just going out to post these two letters. Do you care for a short stroll through the leafy shades of Fleet Street? The evening is still young.’

‘The rural solitudes of Fleet Street attract me at all hours,’ I replied, fetching my hat from the adjoining office, and we accordingly sallied forth together, strolling up King’s Bench Walk and emerging into Fleet Street by way of Mitre Court. When Thorndyke had dropped his letters into the post office box he stood awhile gazing up at the tower of St. Dunstan’s Church.

'Have you ever been in Clifford's Inn, Jervis?' he inquired.

'Never,' I replied (we passed through it together on an average a dozen times a week), 'but it is not too late for an exploratory visit.'

We crossed the road, and entering Clifford's Inn Passage, passed through the still half-open gate, crossed the outer court and threaded the tunnel-like entry by the hall to the inner court, near the middle of which Thorndyke halted, and looking up at one of the ancient houses, remarked, 'No. 51.'

'So that is where our friend hangs out his flag,' said I.

'Oh come, Jervis,' he protested, 'I am surprised at you; you are as bad as Miller. I have merely suggested a possible connection between these premises and the hat that was left at Bedford Place. As to the nature of that connection I have no idea, and there may be no connection at all. I assure you, Jervis, that I am on the thinnest possible ice. I am working on an hypothesis which is in the highest degree speculative, and I should not have given Miller a hint, but that he was so eager and so willing to help—and also that I wanted his finger-prints. But we are really only at the beginning, and may never get any farther.'

I looked up at the old house. It was all in darkness excepting the top floor, where a couple of lighted windows showed the shadow of a man moving rapidly about the room. We crossed to the entry and inspected the names painted on the door-posts. The ground floor was occupied by a firm of photo-engravers, the first floor by a Mr. Carrington, whose name stood out con-

spicuously on its oblong of comparatively fresh white paint, while the tenants of the second floor—old residents, to judge by the faded and discoloured paint in which their names were announced—were Messrs. Burt & Highley, metallurgists.

‘Burt has departed,’ said Thorndyke, as I read out the names; and he pointed to two red lines of erasure which I had not noticed in the dim light, ‘so the active gentleman above is presumably Mr. Highley, and we may take it that he has residential as well as business premises. I wonder who and what Mr. Carrington is—but I dare say we shall find out to-morrow.’

With this he dismissed the professional aspects of Clifford’s Inn, and changing the subject to its history and associations, chatted in his inimitable, picturesque manner until our leisurely perambulations brought us at length to the Inner Temple Gate.

On the following morning we bustled through our work in order to leave the afternoon free, making several joint visits to solicitors from whom we were taking instructions. Returning from the last of these—a City lawyer—Thorndyke turned into St. Helen’s Place and halted at a doorway bearing the brass plate of a firm of assayers and refiners. I followed him into the outer office where, on his mentioning his name, an elderly man came to the counter.

‘Mr. Grayson has put out some specimens for you, sir,’ said he. ‘They are about thirty grains to the ton—you said that the content was of no importance—and I am to tell you that you need not return them. They are not worth treating.’ He went to a large safe from which he took a canvas bag, and returning to the counter, turned

out on it the contents of the bag, consisting of about a dozen good-sized lumps of quartz and a glittering yellow fragment, which Thorndyke picked out and dropped in his pocket.

'Will that collection do?' our friend inquired.

'It will answer my purpose perfectly,' Thorndyke replied, and when the specimens had been replaced in the bag, and the latter deposited in Thorndyke's hand-bag, my colleague thanked the assistant and we went on our way.

'We extend our activities into the domain of mineralogy,' I remarked.

Thorndyke smiled an inscrutable smile. 'We also employ the suction pump as an instrument of research,' he observed. 'However, the strategic uses of chunks of quartz—otherwise than as missiles—will develop themselves in due course, and the interval may be used for reflection.'

It was. But my reflections brought no solution. I noticed, however, that when at three o'clock we set forth in company with the Superintendent, the bag went with us; and having offered to carry it and having had my offer accepted with a sly twinkle, its weight assured me that the quartz was still inside.

'Chambers and Offices to let,' Thorndyke read aloud as we approached the porter's lodge. 'That lets us in, I think. And the porter knows Dr. Jervis and me by sight, so he will talk more freely.'

'He doesn't know me,' said the Superintendent, 'but I'll keep in the background, all the same.'

A pull at the bell brought out a clerical-looking man in a tall hat and a frock coat, who regarded Thorndyke and me through his spectacles with an amiable air of recognition.

' Good afternoon, Mr. Larkin,' said Thorndyke. ' I am asked to get particulars of vacant chambers. What have you got to let ? '

Mr. Larkin reflected. ' Let me see. There's a ground floor at No. 5—rather dark—and a small second-pair set at No. 12. And then there is—oh, yes, there is a good first floor set at No. 51. They wouldn't have been vacant until Michaelmas, but Mr. Carrington, the tenant, has had to go abroad suddenly. I had a letter from him this morning, enclosing the key. Funny letter, too.' He dived into his pocket, and hauling out a bundle of letters, selected one and handed it to Thorndyke with a broad smile.

Thorndyke glanced at the postmark (' London, E. '), and having taken out the key, extracted the letter, which he opened and held so that Miller and I could see it. The paper bore the printed heading, ' Baltic Shipping Company, Wapping,' and the further written heading, ' S.S. *Gothenburg*,' and the letter was brief and to the point :

Dear Sir,

I am giving up my chambers at No. 51, as I have been suddenly called abroad. I enclose the key, but am not troubling you with the rent. The sale of my costly furniture will more than cover it, and the surplus can be expended on painting the garden railings.

Yours sincerely,

A. Carrington.

Thorndyke smilingly replaced the letter and the key in the envelope and asked :

' What is the furniture like ? '

' You'll see,' chuckled the porter, ' if you care

to look at the rooms. And I think they might suit. They're a good set.'

'Quiet?'

'Yes, pretty quiet. There's a metallurgist overhead—Highley—used to be Burt & Highley, but Burt has gone to the City, and I don't think Highley does much business now.'

'Let me see,' said Thorndyke, 'I think I used to meet Highley sometimes—a tall, dark man, isn't he?'

'No, that would be Burt. Highley is a little, fairish man, rather bald, with a pretty rich complexion'—here Mr. Larkin tapped his nose knowingly and raised his little finger—'which may account for the falling off of business.'

'Hadn't we better have a look at the rooms?' Miller interrupted a little impatiently.

'Can we see them, Mr. Larkin?' asked Thorndyke.

'Certainly,' was the reply. 'You've got the key. Let me have it when you've seen the rooms; and whatever you do,' he added with a broad grin, 'be careful of the furniture.'

'It looks,' the Superintendent remarked as we crossed the inner court, 'as if Mr. Carrington had done a mizzle. That's hopeful. And I see,' he continued, glancing at the fresh paint on the doorpost as we passed through the entry, 'that he hasn't been here long. That's hopeful, too.'

We ascended to the first floor, and as Thorndyke unlocked and threw open the door, Miller laughed aloud. The 'costly furniture' consisted of a small kitchen table, a Windsor chair, and a dilapidated deck-chair. The kitchen contained a gas ring, a small saucepan and a frying-pan, and the bed-

room was furnished with a camp-bed devoid of bed-clothes, a wash-hand basin on a packing case, and a water can.

'Hallo!' exclaimed the Superintendent. 'He's left a hat behind. Quite a good hat, too.' He took it down from the peg, glanced at its exterior and then, turning it over, looked inside. And then his mouth opened with a jerk.

'Great Solomon Eagle!' he gasped. 'Do you see, doctor? It's *the* hat.'

He held it out to us, and sure enough on the white silk lining of the crown were the embossed, gilt letters, D.B., just as Mr. Byramji had described them.

'Yes,' Thorndyke agreed, as the Superintendent snatched up a greengrocer's paper bag from the kitchen floor and persuaded the hat into it, 'it is undoubtedly the missing link. But what are you going to do now?'

'Do!' exclaimed Miller. 'Why, I am going to collar the man. These Baltic boats put in at Hull and Newcastle—perhaps he didn't know that—and they are pretty slow boats, too. I shall wire to Newcastle to have the ship detained and take Inspector Badger down to make the arrest. I'll leave you to explain to the porter, and I owe you a thousand thanks for your valuable tip.'

With this he bustled away, clasping the precious hat, and from the window we saw him hurry across the court and dart out through the postern into Fetter Lane.

'I think Miller was rather precipitate,' said Thorndyke. 'He should have got a description of the man and some further particulars.'

'Yes,' said I. 'Miller had much better have

waited until you had finished with Mr. Larkin. But you can get some more particulars when we take back the key.'

'We shall get more information from the gentleman who lives on the floor above, and I think we will go up and interview him now. I wrote to him last night and made a metallurgical appointment, signing myself W. Polton. Your name, if he should ask, is Stevenson.'

As we ascended the stairs to the next floor, I meditated on the rather tortuous proceedings of my usually straightforward colleague. The use of the lumps of quartz was now obvious; but why these mysterious tactics? And why, before knocking at the door, did Thorndyke carefully take the reading of the gas meter on the landing?

The door was opened in response to our knock by a shortish, alert-looking, clean-shaved man in a white overall, who looked at us keenly and rather forbiddingly. But Thorndyke was geniality personified.

'How do you do, Mr. Highley?' said he, holding out his hand, which the metallurgist shook coolly. 'You got my letter, I suppose?'

'Yes. But I am not Mr. Highley. He's away and I am carrying on. I think of taking over his business, if there is any to take over. My name is Sherwood. Have you got the samples?'

Thorndyke produced the canvas bag, which Mr. Sherwood took from him and emptied out on a bench, picking up the lumps of quartz one by one and examining them closely. Meanwhile Thorndyke took a rapid survey of the premises. Against the wall were two cupel furnaces and a third larger furnace like a small pottery kiln. On a set of

narrow shelves were several rows of bone-ash cupels, looking like little white flower-pots, and near them was the cupel-press—an appliance into which powdered bone-ash was fed and compressed by a plunger to form the cupels—while by the side of the press was a tub of bone-ash—a good deal coarser, I noticed, than the usual fine powder. This coarseness was also observed by Thorndyke, who edged up to the tub and dipped his hand into the ash and then wiped his fingers on his handkerchief.

‘ This stuff doesn’t seem to contain much gold,’ said Mr. Sherwood. ‘ But we shall see when we make the assay.’

‘ What do you think of this ? ’ asked Thorndyke, taking from his pocket the small lump of glittering golden-looking mineral that he had picked out at the assayer’s. Mr. Sherwood took it from him and examined it closely. ‘ This looks more hopeful,’ said he ; ‘ rather rich, in fact.’

Thorndyke received this statement with an unmoved countenance ; but as for me, I stared at Mr. Sherwood in amazement. For this lump of glittering mineral was simply a fragment of common iron pyrites ! It would not have deceived a schoolboy, much less a metallurgist.

Still holding the specimen, and taking a watch-maker’s lens from a shelf, Mr. Sherwood moved over to the window. Simultaneously, Thorndyke stepped softly to the cupel shelves and quickly ran his eye along the rows of cupels. Presently he paused at one, examined it more closely, and then, taking it from the shelf, began to pick at it with his finger-nail.

At this moment Mr. Sherwood turned and

observed him; and instantly there flashed into the metallurgist's face an expression of mingled anger and alarm.

'Put that down!' he commanded peremptorily, and then, as Thorndyke continued to scrape with his finger-nail, he shouted furiously, 'Do you hear? Drop it!'

Thorndyke took him literally at his word and let the cupel fall on the floor, when it shattered into innumerable fragments, of which one of the largest separated itself from the rest. Thorndyke pounced upon it and in an instantaneous glance as he picked it up, I recognized it as a calcined tooth.

Then followed a few moments of weird, dramatic silence. Thorndyke, holding the tooth between his finger and thumb, looked steadily into the eyes of the metallurgist; and the latter, pallid as a corpse, glared at Thorndyke and furtively unbuttoned his overall.

Suddenly the silence broke into a tumult as bewildering as the crash of a railway collision. Sherwood's right hand darted under his overall. Instantly, Thorndyke snatched up another cupel and hurled it with such truth of aim that it shattered on the metallurgist's forehead. And as he flung the missile, he sprang forward, and delivered a swift upper-cut. There was a thunderous crash, a cloud of white dust, and an automatic pistol clattered along the floor.

I snatched up the pistol and rushed to my friend's assistance. But there was no need. With his great strength and his uncanny skill—to say nothing of the effects of the knock-out blow—Thorndyke had the man pinned down immovably.

'See if you can find some cord, Jervis,' he said in a calm, quiet tone that seemed almost ridiculously out of character with the circumstances.

There was no difficulty about this, for several corded boxes stood in a corner of the laboratory. I cut off two lengths, with one of which I secured the prostrate man's arms and with the other fastened his knees and ankles.

'Now,' said Thorndyke, 'if you will take charge of his hands, we will make a preliminary inspection. Let us first see if he wears a belt.'

Unbuttoning the man's waistcoat, he drew up the shirt, disclosing a broad, webbing belt furnished with several leather pockets, the buttoned flaps of which he felt carefully, regardless of the stream of threats and imprecations that poured from our victim's swollen lips. From the front pockets he proceeded to the back, passing an exploratory hand under the writhing body.

'Ah!' he exclaimed suddenly, 'just turn him over, and look out for his heels.'

We rolled our captive over, and as Thorndyke 'skinned the rabbit', a central pocket came into view, into which, when he had unbuttoned it, he inserted his fingers. 'Yes,' he continued, 'I think this is what we are looking for.' He withdrew his fingers, between which he held a small packet of Japanese paper, and with feverish excitement I watched him open out layer after layer of the soft wrapping. As he turned back the last fold a wonderful crimson sparkle told me that the 'great ruby' was found.

'There, Jervis,' said Thorndyke, holding the magnificent gem towards me in the palm of his hand, 'look on this beautiful, sinister thing,

charged with untold potentialities of evil—and thank the gods that it is not yours.’

He wrapped it up again carefully and, having bestowed it in an inner pocket, said, ‘And now give me the pistol and run down to the telegraph office and see if you can stop Miller. I should like him to have the credit for this.’

I handed him the pistol and made my way out into Fetter Lane and so down to Fleet Street, where at the post office my urgent message was sent off to Scotland Yard immediately. In a few minutes the reply came that Superintendent Miller had not yet left and that he was starting immediately for Clifford’s Inn. A quarter of an hour later he drove up in a hansom to the Fetter Lane gate and I conducted him up to the second floor, where Thorndyke introduced him to his prisoner and witnessed the official arrest.

‘You don’t see how I arrived at it,’ said Thorndyke as we walked homeward after returning the key. ‘Well, I am not surprised. The initial evidence was of the weakest; it acquired significance only by cumulative effect. Let us reconstruct it as it developed.’

‘The derelict hat was, of course, the starting-point. Now the first thing one noticed was that it appeared to have had more than one owner. No man would buy a new hat that fitted so badly as to need all that packing; and the arrangement of the packing suggested a long-headed man wearing a hat that had belonged to a man with a short head. Then there were the suggestions offered by the slips of paper. The fragmentary address referred to a place the name of which

ended in "n" and the remainder was evidently "London, W.C." Now what West Central place names end in "n"? It was not a street, a square or a court, and Barbican is not in the W.C. district. It was almost certainly one of the half-dozen surviving Inns of Court or Chancery. But, of course, it was not necessarily the address of the owner of the hat.

'The other slip of paper bore the end of a word ending in "el", and another word ending in "eep", and connected with these were quantities stated in ounces and pennyweights troy weight. But the only persons who use troy weight are those who deal in precious metals. I inferred therefore that the "el" was part of "leml", and that the "eep" was part of "floor-sweep", an inference that was supported by the respective quantities, three ounces five pennyweights of leml and nine and a half ounces of floor-sweep.'

'What is leml?' I asked.

'It is the trade name for the gold or silver filings that collect in the "skin" of a jeweller's bench. Floor-sweep is, of course, the dust swept up on the floor of a jeweller's or goldsmith's workshop. The leml is actual metal, though not of uniform fineness, but the "sweep" is a mixture of dirt and metal. Both are saved and sent to the refiners to have the gold and silver extracted.

'This paper, then, was connected either with a goldsmith or a gold refiner—who might call himself an assayer or a metallurgist. The connection was supported by the leaf of a price list of gas stoves. A metallurgist would be kept well supplied with lists of gas stoves and furnaces. The traces of lead in the dust from the hat gave us

another straw blowing in the same direction, for gold assayed by the dry process is fused in the cupel furnace with lead; and as the lead oxidizes and the oxide is volatile, traces of lead would tend to appear in the dust deposited in the laboratory.

'The next thing to do was to consult the directory; and when I did so, I found that there were no goldsmiths in any of the Inns and only one assayer—Mr. Highley, of Clifford's Inn. The probabilities, therefore, slender as they were, pointed to some connection between this stray hat and Mr. Highley. And this was positively all the information that we had when we came out this afternoon.

'As soon as we got to Clifford's Inn, however, the evidence began to grow like a rolling snowball. First there was Larkin's contribution; and then there was the discovery of the missing hat. Now, as soon as I saw that hat my suspicions fell upon the man upstairs. I felt a conviction that the hat had been left there purposely and that the letter to Larkin was just a red herring to create a false trail. Nevertheless, the presence of that hat completely confirmed the other evidence. It showed that the apparent connection was a real connection.'

'But,' I asked, 'what made you suspect the man upstairs?'

'My dear Jervis!' he exclaimed, 'consider the facts. That hat was enough to hang the man who left it there. Can you imagine this astute, wary villain making such an idiot's mistake—going away and leaving the means of his conviction for any one to find? But you are forgetting that whereas the missing hat was found on the first

floor, the murderer's hat was connected with the second floor. The evidence suggested that it was Highley's hat. And now, before we go on to the next stage, let me remind you of those fingerprints. Miller thought that their rough appearance was due to the surface on which they had been made. But it was not. They were the prints of a person who was suffering from ichthyosis, palmar psoriasis or some dry dermatitis.

'There is one other point. The man we were looking for was a murderer. His life was already forfeit. To such a man another murder more or less is of no consequence. If this man, having laid the false trail, had determined to take sanctuary in Highley's rooms, it was probable that he had already got rid of Highley. And remember that a metallurgist has unrivalled means of disposing of a body; for not only is each of his muffle furnaces a miniature crematorium, but the very residue of a cremated body—bone-ash—is one of the materials of his trade.

'When we went upstairs, I first took the reading of the gas meter and ascertained that a large amount of gas had been used recently. Then, when we entered I took the opportunity to shake hands with Mr. Sherwood, and immediately I became aware that he suffered from a rather extreme form of ichthyosis. That was the first point of verification. Then we discovered that he actually could not distinguish between iron pyrites and auriferous quartz. He was not a metallurgist at all. He was a masquerader. Then the bone-ash in the tub was mixed with fragments of calcined bone, and the cupels all showed similar fragments. In one of them I could see part of the

crown of a tooth. That was pure luck. But observe that by that time I had enough evidence to justify an arrest. The tooth served only to bring the affair to a crisis; and his response to my unspoken accusation saved us the trouble of further search for confirmatory evidence.'

'What is not quite clear to me,' said I, 'is when and why he made away with Highley. As the body has been completely reduced to bone-ash, Highley must have been dead at least some days.'

'Undoubtedly,' Thorndyke agreed. 'I take it that the course of events was somewhat like this: The police have been searching eagerly for this man, and every new crime must have made his position more unsafe—for a criminal can never be sure that he has not dropped some clue. It began to be necessary for him to make some arrangements for leaving the country and meanwhile to have a retreat in case his whereabouts should chance to be discovered. Highley's chambers were admirable for both purposes. Here was a solitary man who seldom had a visitor, and who would probably not be missed for some considerable time; and in those chambers were the means of rapidly and completely disposing of the body. The mere murder would be a negligible detail to this ruffian.'

'I imagine that Highley was done to death at least a week ago, and that the murderer did not take up his new tenancy until the body was reduced to ash. With that large furnace in addition to the small ones, this would not take long. When the new premises were ready, he could make a sham disappearance to cover his actual flight later; and you must see how perfectly misleading that sham disappearance was. If the police had

discovered that had in the empty room only a week later, they would have been certain that he had escaped to one of the Baltic ports; and while they were following his supposed tracks, he could have gone off comfortably via Folkestone or Southampton.'

'Then you think he had only just moved into Highley's rooms?'

'I should say he moved in last night. The murder of Byramji was probably planned on some information that the murderer had picked up, and as soon as it was accomplished he began forthwith to lay down the false tracks. When he reached his rooms yesterday afternoon, he must have written the letter to Larkin and gone off at once to the East End to post it. Then he probably had his bushy hair cut short and shaved off his beard and moustache—which would render him quite unrecognizable by Larkin—and moved into Highley's chambers, from which he would have quietly sallied forth in a few days' time to take his passage to the Continent. It was quite a good plan and but for the accident of taking the wrong hat, would almost certainly have succeeded.'

Once every year, on the second of August, there is delivered with unfailing regularity at No. 5A King's Bench Walk a large box of carved sandalwood filled with the choicest Trichinopoly cheroots and accompanied by an affectionate letter from our late client, Mr. Byramji. For the second of August is the anniversary of the death (in the execution shed at Newgate) of Cornelius Barnett, otherwise known as the 'New Jersey Sphinx'.

THE TRAGEDY AT BROOKBEND COTTAGE

BY ERNEST BRAMAH

'MAX,' said Mr. Carlyle, when Parkinson had closed the door behind him, 'this is Lieutenant Hollyer, whom you consented to see.'

'To hear,' corrected Carrados, smiling straight into the healthy and rather embarrassed face of the stranger before him. 'Mr. Hollyer knows of my disability?'

'Mr. Carlyle told me,' said the young man, 'but, as a matter of fact, I had heard of you before, Mr. Carrados, from one of our men. It was in connection with the foundering of the *Ivan Saratov*.'

Carrados wagged his head in good-humoured resignation.

'And the owners were sworn to inviolable secrecy!' he exclaimed. 'Well, it is inevitable, I suppose. Not another scuttling case, Mr. Hollyer?'

'No, mine is quite a private matter,' replied the lieutenant. 'My sister, Mrs. Creake—but Mr. Carlyle would tell you better than I can. He knows all about it.'

'No, no; Carlyle is a professional. Let me have it in the rough, Mr. Hollyer. My ears are my eyes, you know.'

'Very well, sir. I can tell you what there is to tell, right enough, but I feel that when all's said and done it must sound very little to another, although it seems important to me.'

' We have occasionally found trifles of significance ourselves,' said Carrados encouragingly. ' Don't let that deter you.'

This was the essence of Lieutenant Hollyer's narrative :

' I have a sister, Millicent, who is married to a man called Creake. She is about twenty-eight now and he is at least fifteen years older. Neither my mother (who has since died) nor I cared very much about Creake. We had nothing particular against him, except, perhaps, the moderate disparity of age, but none of us appeared to have anything in common. He was a dark, taciturn man, and his moody silence froze up conversation. As a result, of course, we didn't see much of each other.'

' This, you must understand, was four or five years ago, Max,' interposed Mr. Carlyle officiously.

Carrados maintained an uncompromising silence. Mr. Carlyle blew his nose and contrived to impart a hurt significance into the operation. Then Lieutenant Hollyer continued :

' Millicent married Creake after a very short engagement. It was a frightfully subdued wedding—more like a funeral to me. The man professed to have no relations and apparently he had scarcely any friends or business acquaintances. He was an agent for something or other and had an office off Holborn. I suppose he made a living out of it then, although we knew practically nothing of his private affairs, but I gather that it has been going down since, and I suspect that for the past few years they have been getting along almost entirely on Millicent's little income. You would like the particulars of that ?'

‘ Please,’ assented Carrados.

‘ When our father died about seven years ago, he left three thousand pounds. It was invested in Canadian stock and brought in a little over a hundred a year. By his will my mother was to have the income of that for life and on her death it was to pass to Millicent, subject to the payment of a lump sum of five hundred pounds to me. But my father privately suggested to me that if I should have no particular use for the money at the time, he would propose my letting Millicent have the income of it until I did want it, as she would not be particularly well off. You see, Mr. Carrados, a great deal more had been spent on my education and advancement than on her; I had my pay, and, of course, I could look out for myself better than a girl could.’

‘ Quite so,’ agreed Carrados.

‘ Therefore I did nothing about that,’ continued the lieutenant. ‘ Three years ago I was over again but I did not see much of them. They were living in lodgings. That was the only time since the marriage that I have seen them until last week. In the meanwhile our mother had died and Millicent had been receiving her income. She wrote me several letters at the time. Otherwise we did not correspond much, but about a year ago she sent me their new address—Brookbend Cottage, Mulling Common—a house that they had taken. When I got two months’ leave I invited myself there as a matter of course, fully expecting to stay most of my time with them, but I made an excuse to get away after a week. The place was dismal and unendurable, the whole life and atmosphere indescribably depressing.’ He looked

round with an instinct of caution, leaned forward earnestly, and dropped his voice. 'Mr. Carrados, it is my absolute conviction that Creake is only waiting for a favourable opportunity to murder Millicent.'

'Go on,' said Carrados quietly. 'A week of the depressing surroundings of Brookbend Cottage would not alone convince you of that, Mr. Hollyer.'

'I am not so sure,' declared Hollyer doubtfully. 'There was a feeling of suspicion and—before me—polite hatred that would have gone a good way towards it. All the same there *was* something more definite. Millicent told me this the day after I went there. There is no doubt that a few months ago Creake deliberately planned to poison her with some weed-killer. She told me the circumstances in a rather distressed moment, but afterwards she refused to speak of it again—even weakly denied it—and, as a matter of fact, it was with the greatest difficulty that I could get her at any time to talk about her husband or his affairs. The gist of it was that she had the strongest suspicion that Creake doctored a bottle of stout which he expected she would drink for her supper when she was alone. The weed-killer, properly labelled, but also in a beer bottle, was kept with other miscellaneous liquids in the same cupboard as the beer but on a high shelf. When he found that it had miscarried he poured away the mixture, washed out the bottle and put in the dregs from another. There is no doubt in my mind that if he had come back and found Millicent dead or dying he would have contrived it to appear that she had made a mistake in the dark and drunk some of the poison before she found out.'

'Yes,' assented Carrados. 'The open way; the safe way.'

'You must understand that they live in a very small style, Mr. Carrados, and Millicent is almost entirely in the man's power. The only servant they have is a woman who comes in for a few hours every day. The house is lonely and secluded. Creake is sometimes away for days and nights at a time, and Millicent, either through pride or indifference, seems to have dropped off all her old friends and to have made no others. He might poison her, bury the body in the garden, and be a thousand miles away before any one began even to inquire about her. What am I to do, Mr. Carrados?'

'He is less likely to try poison than some other means now,' pondered Carrados. 'That having failed, his wife will always be on her guard. He may know, or at least suspect, that others know. No. . . . The common-sense precaution would be for your sister to leave the man, Mr. Hollyer. She will not?'

'No,' admitted Hollyer, 'she will not. I at once urged that.' The young man struggled with some hesitation for a moment and then blurted out: 'The fact is, Mr. Carrados, I don't understand Millicent. She is not the girl she was. She hates Creake and treats him with a silent contempt that eats into their lives like acid, and yet she is so jealous of him that she will let nothing short of death part them. It is a horrible life they lead. I stood it for a week and I must say, much as I dislike my brother-in-law, that he has something to put up with. If only he got into a passion like a man and killed her it wouldn't be altogether incomprehensible.'

'That does not concern us,' said Carrados. 'In a game of this kind one has to take sides and we have taken ours. It remains for us to see that our side wins. You mentioned jealousy, Mr. Hollyer. Have you any idea whether Mrs. Creake has real ground for it?'

'I should have told you that,' replied Lieutenant Hollyer. 'I happened to strike up with a newspaper man whose office is in the same block as Creake's. When I mentioned the name he grinned. "Creake," he said, "oh, he's the man with the romantic typist, isn't he?" "Well, he's my brother-in-law," I replied. "What about the typist?" Then the chap shut up like a knife. "No, no," he said, "I didn't know he was married. I don't want to get mixed up in anything of that sort. I only said that he had a typist. Well, what of that? So have we; so has every one." There was nothing more to be got out of him, but the remark and the grin meant—well, about as usual, Mr. Carrados.'

Carrados turned to his friend.

'I suppose you know all about the typist by now, Louis?'

'We have had her under efficient observation, Max,' replied Mr. Carlyle, with severe dignity.

'Is she unmarried?'

'Yes; so far as ordinary repute goes, she is.'

'That is all that is essential for the moment. Mr. Hollyer opens up three excellent reasons why this man might wish to dispose of his wife. If we accept the suggestion of poisoning—though we have only a jealous woman's suspicion for it—we add to the wish the determination. Well, we will go forward on that. Have you got a photograph of Mr. Creake?'

The lieutenant took out his pocket-book.

'Mr. Carlyle asked me for one. Here is the best I could get.'

Carrados rang the bell.

'This, Parkinson,' he said, when the man appeared, 'is a photograph of a Mr. — What first name, by the way?'

'Austin,' put in Hollyer, who was following everything with a boyish mixture of excitement and subdued importance.

'—of a Mr. Austin Creake. I may require you to recognize him.'

Parkinson glanced at the print and returned it to his master's hand.

'May I inquire if it is a recent photograph of the gentleman, sir?' he asked.

'About six years ago,' said the lieutenant, taking in this new actor in the drama with frank curiosity.

'But he is very little changed.'

'Thank you, sir. I will endeavour to remember Mr. Creake, sir.'

Lieutenant Hollyer stood up as Parkinson left the room. The interview seemed to be at an end.

'Oh, there's one other matter,' he remarked.

'I am afraid that I did rather an unfortunate thing while I was at Brookbend. It seemed to me that as all Millicent's money would probably pass into Creake's hands sooner or later I might as well have my five hundred pounds, if only to help her with afterwards. So I broached the subject and said that I should like to have it now as I had an opportunity for investing.'

'And you think?'

'It may possibly influence Creake to act sooner than he otherwise might have done. He may have

got possession of the principal even and find it very awkward to replace it.'

'So much the better. If your sister is going to be murdered it may as well be done next week as next year so far as I am concerned. Excuse my brutality, Mr. Hollyer, but this is simply a case to me and I regard it strategically. Now Mr. Carlyle's organization can look after Mrs. Creake for a few weeks, but it cannot look after her for ever. By increasing the immediate risk we diminish the permanent risk.'

'I see,' agreed Hollyer. 'I'm awfully uneasy but I'm entirely in your hands.'

'Then we will give Mr. Creake every inducement and every opportunity to get to work. Where are you staying now?'

'Just now with some friends at St. Albans.'

'That is too far.' The inscrutable eyes retained their tranquil depth but a new quality of quickening interest in the voice made Mr. Carlyle forget the weight and burden of his ruffled dignity. 'Give me a few minutes, please. The cigarettes are behind you, Mr. Hollyer.' The blind man walked to the window and seemed to look out over the cypress-shaded lawn. The lieutenant lit a cigarette and Mr. Carlyle picked up *Punch*. Then Carrados turned round again.

'You are prepared to put your own arrangements aside?' he demanded of his visitor.

'Certainly.'

'Very well. I want you to go down now—straight from here—to Brookbend Cottage. Tell your sister that your leave is unexpectedly cut short and that you sail to-morrow.'

'The *Martian*?'

'No, no; the *Martian* doesn't sail. Look up the movements on your way there and pick out a boat that does. Say you are transferred. Add that you expect to be away only two or three months and that you really want the five hundred pounds by the time of your return. Don't stay in the house long, please.'

'I understand, sir.'

'St. Albans is too far. Make your excuse and get away from there to-day. Put up somewhere in town, where you will be in reach of the telephone. Let Mr. Carlyle and myself know where you are. Keep out of Creake's way. I don't want actually to tie you down to the house, but we may require your services. We will let you know at the first sign of anything doing and if there is nothing to be done we must release you.'

'I don't mind that. Is there nothing more that I can do now?'

'Nothing. In going to Mr. Carlyle you have done the best thing possible; you have put your sister into the care of the shrewdest man in London.' Whereat the object of this quite unexpected eulogy found himself becoming covered with modest confusion.

'Well, Max?' remarked Mr. Carlyle tentatively when they were alone.

'Well, Louis?'

'Of course, it wasn't worth while rubbing it in before young Hollyer, but, as a matter of fact, every single man carries the life of any other man—only one, mind you—in his hands, do what you will.'

'Provided he doesn't bungle,' acquiesced Carrados.

'Quite so.'

'And also that he is absolutely reckless of the consequences.'

'Of course.'

'Two rather large provisos. Creake is obviously susceptible to both. Have you seen him?'

'No. As I told you, I put a man on to report his habits in town. Then, two days ago, as the case seemed to promise some interest—for he certainly is deeply involved with the typist, Max, and the thing might take a sensational turn at any time—I went down to Mulling Common myself. Although the house is lonely it is on the electric tram route. You know the sort of market garden rurality that about a dozen miles out of London offers—alternate bricks and cabbages. It was easy enough to get to know about Creake locally. He mixes with no one there, goes into town at irregular times but generally every day, and is reputed to be devilish hard to get money out of. Finally, I made the acquaintance of an old fellow who used to do a day's gardening at Brookbend occasionally. He has a cottage and a garden of his own with a greenhouse, and the business cost me the price of a pound of tomatoes.'

'Was it—a profitable investment?'

'As tomatoes, yes; as information, no. The old fellow had the fatal disadvantage from our point of view of labouring under a grievance. A few weeks ago Creake told him that he would not require him again as he was going to do his own gardening in future.'

'That is something, Louis.'

'If only Creake was going to poison his wife with hyoscyamine and bury her, instead of blowing her

up with a dynamite cartridge and claiming that it came in among the coal.'

' True, true. Still——'

' However, the chatty old soul had a simple explanation for everything that Creake did. Creake was mad. He had even seen him flying a kite in his garden where it was bound to get wrecked among the trees. A lad of ten would have known better, he declared. And certainly the kite did get wrecked, for I saw it hanging over the road myself. But that a sane man should spend his time " playing with a toy " was beyond him.'

' A good many men have been flying kites of various kinds lately,' said Carrados. ' Is he interested in aviation ?'

' I dare say. He appears to have some knowledge of scientific subjects. Now what do you want me to do, Max ?'

' Will you do it ?'

' Implicitly—subject to the usual reservations.'

' Keep your man on Creake in town and let me have his reports after you have seen them. Lunch with me here now. 'Phone up to your office that you are detained on unpleasant business and then give the deserving Parkinson an afternoon off by looking after me while we take a motor run round Mulling Common. If we have time we might go on to Brighton, feed at the " Ship ", and come back in the cool.'

' Amiable and thrice lucky mortal,' sighed Mr. Carlyle, his glance wandering round the room.

But, as it happened, Brighton did not figure in that day's itinerary. It had been Carrados's intention merely to pass Brookbend Cottage on this occasion, relying on his highly developed

faculties, aided by Mr. Carlyle's description, to inform him of the surroundings. A hundred yards before they reached the house he had given an order to his chauffeur to drop into the lowest speed and they were leisurely drawing past when a discovery by Mr. Carlyle modified their plans.

'By Jupiter!' that gentleman suddenly exclaimed, 'there's a board up, Max. The place is to be let.'

Carrados picked up the tube again. A couple of sentences passed and the car stopped by the roadside, a score of paces past the limit of the garden. Mr. Carlyle took out his note-book and wrote down the address of a firm of house agents.

'You might raise the bonnet and have a look at the engines, Harris,' said Carrados. 'We want to be occupied here for a few minutes.'

'This is sudden; Hollyer knew nothing of their leaving,' remarked Mr. Carlyle.

'Probably not for three months yet. All the same, Louis, we will go on to the agents and get a card to view whether we use it to-day or not.'

A thick hedge, in its summer dress effectively screening the house beyond from public view, lay between the garden and the road. Above the hedge showed an occasional shrub; at the corner nearest to the car a chestnut flourished. The wooden gate, once white, which they had passed, was grimed and rickety. The road itself was still the unpretentious country lane that the advent of the electric car had found it. When Carrados had taken in these details there seemed little else to notice. He was on the point of giving Harris the order to go on when his ear caught a trivial sound.

'Some one is coming out of the house, Louis,' he warned his friend. 'It may be Hollyer, but he ought to have gone by this time.'

'I don't hear any one,' replied the other, but as he spoke a door banged noisily and Mr. Carlyle slipped into another seat and ensconced himself behind a copy of *The Globe*.

'Creake himself,' he whispered across the car, as a man appeared at the gate. 'Hollyer was right; he is hardly changed. Waiting for a car, I suppose.'

But a car very soon swung past them from the direction in which Mr. Creake was looking and it did not interest him. For a minute or two longer he continued to look expectantly along the road. Then he walked slowly up the drive back to the house.

'We will give him five or ten minutes,' decided Carrados. 'Harris is behaving very naturally.'

Before even the shorter period had run out they were repaid. A telegraph-boy cycled leisurely along the road, and, leaving his machine at the gate, went up to the cottage. Evidently there was no reply, for in less than a minute he was trundling past them back again. Round the bend an approaching tram clanged its bell noisily, and, quickened by the warning sound, Mr. Creake again appeared, this time with a small portmanteau in his hand. With a backward glance he hurried on towards the next stopping-place, and, boarding the car as it slackened down, he was carried out of their knowledge.

'Very convenient of Mr. Creake,' remarked Carrados, with quiet satisfaction. 'We will now get the order and go over the house in his absence. It might be useful to have a look at the wire as well.'

'It might, Max,' acquiesced Mr. Carlyle a little dryly. 'But if it is, as it probably is, in Creake's pocket, how do you propose to get it?'

'By going to the post office, Louis.'

'Quite so. Have you ever tried to see a copy of a telegram addressed to some one else?'

'I don't think I have ever had occasion yet,' admitted Carrados. 'Have you?'

'In one or two cases I have perhaps been an accessory to the act. It is generally a matter either of extreme delicacy or considerable expenditure.'

'Then for Hollyer's sake we will hope for the former here.' And Mr. Carlyle smiled darkly and hinted that he was content to wait for a friendly revenge.

A little later, having left the car at the beginning of the straggling High Street, the two men called at the village post office. They had already visited the house agent and obtained an order to view Brookbend Cottage, declining with some difficulty the clerk's persistent offer to accompany them. The reason was soon forthcoming. 'As a matter of fact,' explained the young man, 'the present tenant is under *our* notice to leave.'

'Unsatisfactory, eh?' said Carrados, encouragingly.

'He's a corker,' admitted the clerk, responding to the friendly tone. 'Fifteen months and not a doit of rent have we had. That's why I should have liked——'

'We will make every allowance,' replied Carrados.

The post office occupied one side of a stationer's shop. It was not without some inward trepidation

that Mr. Carlyle found himself committed to the adventure. Carrados, on the other hand, was the personification of bland unconcern.

'You have just sent a telegram to Brookbend Cottage,' he said to the young lady behind the brass-work lattice. 'We think it may have come inaccurately and should like a repeat.' He took out his purse. 'What is the fee?'

The request was evidently not a common one. 'Oh,' said the girl uncertainly, 'wait a minute, please.' She turned to a pile of telegram duplicates behind the desk and ran a doubtful finger along the upper sheets. 'I think this is all right. You want it repeated?'

'Please.' Just a tinge of questioning surprise gave point to the courteous tone.

'It will be fourpence. If there is an error the amount will be refunded.'

Carrados put down his coin and received his change.

'Will it take long?' he inquired carelessly, as he pulled on his glove.

'You will most likely get it within a quarter of an hour,' she replied.

'Now you've done it,' commented Mr. Carlyle, as they walked back to their car. 'How do you propose to get that telegram, Max?'

'Ask for it,' was the laconic explanation.

And, stripping the artifice of any elaboration, he simply asked for it and got it. The car, posted at a convenient bend in the road, gave him a warning note as the telegraph-boy approached. Then Carrados took up a convincing attitude with his hand on the gate while Mr. Carlyle lent himself to the semblance of a departing friend.

That was the inevitable impression when the boy rode up.

'Creake, Brookbend Cottage?' inquired Carrados, holding out his hand, and without a second thought the boy gave him the envelope and rode away on the assurance that there would be no reply.

'Some day, my friend,' remarked Mr. Carlyle, looking nervously towards the unseen house, 'your ingenuity will get you into a tight corner.'

'Then my ingenuity must get me out again,' was the retort. 'Let us have our "view" now. The telegram can wait.'

An untidy workwoman took their order and left them standing at the door. Presently a lady whom they both knew to be Mrs. Creake appeared.

'You wish to see over the house?' she said, in a voice that was utterly devoid of any interest. Then, without waiting for a reply, she turned to the nearest door and threw it open.

'This is the drawing-room,' she said, standing aside.

They walked into a sparsely furnished, damp-smelling room and made a pretence of looking round, while Mrs. Creake remained silent and aloof.

'The dining-room,' she continued, crossing the narrow hall and opening another door.

Mr. Carlyle ventured a genial commonplace in the hope of inducing conversation. The result was not encouraging. Doubtless they would have gone through the house under the same frigid guidance had not Carrados been at fault in a way that Mr. Carlyle had never known him fail before. In crossing the hall he stumbled over a mat and almost fell.

'Pardon my clumsiness,' he said to the lady. 'I am, unfortunately, quite blind. But,' he added, with a smile, to turn off the mishap, 'even a blind man must have a house.'

The man who had eyes was surprised to see a flood of colour rush into Mrs. Creak's face.

'Blind!' she exclaimed, 'oh, I beg your pardon. Why did you not tell me? You might have fallen.'

'I generally manage fairly well,' he replied. 'But, of course in a strange house——'

She put her hand on his arm very lightly.

'You must let me guide you, just a little,' she said.

The house, without being large, was full of passages and inconvenient turnings. Carrados asked an occasional question and found Mrs. Creak quite amiable without effusion. Mr. Carlyle followed them from room to room in the hope, though scarcely the expectation, of learning something that might be useful.

'This is the last one. It is the largest bedroom,' said their guide. Only two of the upper rooms were fully furnished and Mr. Carlyle at once saw, as Carrados knew without seeing, that this was the one which the Creaks occupied.

'A very pleasant outlook,' declared Mr. Carlyle.

'Oh, I suppose so,' admitted the lady vaguely. The room, in fact, looked over the leafy garden and the road beyond. It had a French window opening on to a small balcony, and to this, under the strange influence that always attracted him to light, Carrados walked.

'I expect that there is a certain amount of repair needed?' he said, after standing there a moment.

'I am afraid there would be,' she confessed.

'I ask because there is a sheet of metal on the floor here,' he continued. 'Now that, in an old house, spells dry rot to the wary observer.'

'My husband said that the rain, which comes in a little under the window, was rotting the boards there,' she replied. 'He put that down recently. I had not noticed anything myself.'

It was the first time she had mentioned her husband; Mr. Carlyle pricked up his ears.

'Ah, that is a less serious matter,' said Carrados. 'May I step out on to the balcony?'

'Oh yes, if you like to.' Then, as he appeared to be fumbling at the catch, 'Let me open it for you.'

But the window was already open, and Carrados, facing the various points of the compass, took in the bearings.

'A sunny, sheltered corner,' he remarked. 'An ideal spot for a deck-chair and a book.'

She shrugged her shoulders half contemptuously.

'I dare say,' she replied, 'but I never use it.'

'Sometimes, surely,' he persisted mildly. 'It would be my favourite retreat. But then——'

'I was going to say that I had never even been out on it, but that would not be quite true. It has two uses for me, both equally romantic; I occasionally shake a duster from it, and when my husband returns late without his latchkey he wakes me up and I come out here and drop him mine.'

Further revelation of Mr. Creake's nocturnal habits was cut off, greatly to Mr. Carlyle's annoyance, by a cough of unmistakable significance from the foot of the stairs. They had heard a trade cart drive up to the gate, a knock at the door, and the heavy-footed woman tramp along the hall.

'Excuse me a minute, please,' said Mrs. Creake.

'Louis,' said Carrados, in a sharp whisper, the moment they were alone, 'stand against the door.'

With extreme plausibility Mr. Carlyle began to admire a picture so situated that while he was there it was impossible to open the door more than a few inches. From that position he observed his confederate go through the curious procedure of kneeling down on the bedroom floor and for a full minute pressing his ear to the sheet of metal that had already engaged his attention. Then he rose to his feet, nodded, dusted his trousers, and Mr. Carlyle moved to a less equivocal position.

'What a beautiful rose-tree grows up your balcony,' remarked Carrados, stepping into the room as Mrs. Creake returned. 'I suppose you are very fond of gardening?'

'I detest it,' she replied.

'But this *Gloire*, so carefully trained——?'

'Is it?' she replied. 'I think my husband was nailing it up recently.' By some strange fatality Carrados's most aimless remarks seemed to involve the absent Mr. Creake. 'Do you care to see the garden?'

The garden proved to be extensive and neglected. Behind the house was chiefly orchard. In front, some semblance of order had been kept up; here it was lawn and shrubbery, and the drive they had walked along. Two things interested Carrados: the soil at the foot of the balcony, which he declared on examination to be particularly suitable for roses, and the fine chestnut-tree in the corner by the road.

As they walked back to the car Mr. Carlyle lamented that they had learned so little of Creake's movements.

'Perhaps the telegram will tell us something,' suggested Carrados. 'Read it, Louis.'

Mr. Carlyle cut open the envelope, glanced at the enclosure, and in spite of his disappointment could not restrain a chuckle.

'My poor Max,' he explained, 'you have put yourself to an amount of ingenious trouble for nothing. Creake is evidently taking a few days' holiday and prudently availed himself of the Meteorological Office forecast before going. Listen: "*Immediate prospect for London warm and settled. Further outlook cooler but fine.*" Well, well; I did get a pound of tomatoes for *my* fourpence.'

'You certainly scored there, Louis,' admitted Carrados, with humorous appreciation. 'I wonder,' he added speculatively, 'whether it is Creake's peculiar taste usually to spend his week-end holiday in London.'

'Eh?' exclaimed Mr. Carlyle, looking at the words again, 'by gad, that's rum, Max. They go to Weston-super-Mare. Why on earth should he want to know about London?'

'I can make a guess, but before we are satisfied I must come here again. Take another look at that kite, Louis. Are there a few yards of string hanging loose from it?'

'Yes, there are.'

'Rather thick string—unusually thick for the purpose?'

'Yes; but how do you know?'

As they drove home again Carrados explained, and Mr. Carlyle sat aghast, saying incredulously: 'Good God, Max, is it possible?'

An hour later he was satisfied that it was possible. In reply to his inquiry some one in his office

telephoned him the information that 'they' had left Paddington by the four-thirty for Weston.

It was more than a week after his introduction to Carrados that Lieutenant Hollyer had a summons to present himself at The Turrets again. He found Mr. Carlyle already there and the two friends awaiting his arrival.

'I stayed in all day after hearing from you this morning, Mr. Carrados,' he said, shaking hands. 'When I got your second message I was all ready to walk straight out of the house. That's how I did it in the time. I hope everything is all right?'

'Excellent,' replied Carrados. 'You'd better have something before we start. We probably have a long and perhaps an exciting night before us.'

'And certainly a wet one,' assented the lieutenant. 'It was thundering over Mulling way as I came along.'

'That is why you are here,' said his host. 'We are waiting for a certain message before we start, and in the meantime you may as well understand what we expect to happen. As you saw, there is a thunderstorm coming on. The Meteorological Office morning forecast predicted it for the whole of London if the conditions remained. That was why I kept you in readiness. Within an hour it is now inevitable that we shall experience a deluge. Here and there damage will be done to trees and buildings; here and there a person will probably be struck and killed.'

'Yes.'

'It is Mr. Creak's intention that his wife should be among the victims.'

'I don't exactly follow,' said Hollyer, looking from one man to the other. 'I quite admit that Creake would be immensely relieved if such a thing did happen, but the chance is surely an absurdly remote one.'

'Yet unless we intervene it is precisely what a coroner's jury will decide has happened. Do you know whether your brother-in-law has any practical knowledge of electricity, Mr. Hollyer?'

'I cannot say. He was so reserved, and we really knew so little of him——'

'Yet in 1896 an Austin Creake contributed an article on "Alternating Currents" to the *American Scientific World*. That would argue a fairly intimate acquaintanceship.'

'But do you mean that he is going to direct a flash of lightning?'

'Only into the minds of the doctor who conducts the post-mortem, and the coroner. This storm, the opportunity for which he has been waiting for weeks, is merely the cloak to his act. The weapon which he has planned to use—scarcely less powerful than lightning but much more tractable—is the high voltage current of electricity that flows along the tram wire at his gate.'

'Oh!' exclaimed Lieutenant Hollyer, as the sudden revelation struck him.

'Some time between eleven o'clock to-night—about the hour when your sister goes to bed—and one-thirty in the morning—the time up to which he can rely on the current—Creake will throw a stone up at the balcony window. Most of his preparation has long been made; it only remains for him to connect up a short length to the window handle and a longer one at the other end to tap the

live wire. That done, he will wake his wife in the way I have said. The moment she moves the catch of the window—and he has carefully filed its parts to ensure perfect contact—she will be electrocuted as effectually as if she sat in the executioner's chair in Sing Sing prison.'

'But what are we doing here!' exclaimed Hollyer, starting to his feet, pale and horrified. 'It is past ten now and anything may happen.'

'Quite natural, Mr. Hollyer,' said Carrados, reassuringly, 'but you need have no anxiety. Creak is being watched, the house is being watched, and your sister is as safe as if she slept to-night in Windsor Castle. Be assured that whatever happens he will not be allowed to complete his scheme; but it is desirable to let him implicate himself to the fullest limit. Your brother-in-law, Mr. Hollyer, is a man with a peculiar capacity for taking pains.'

'He is a damned cold-blooded scoundrel!' exclaimed the young officer fiercely. 'When I think of Millicent five years ago—'

'Well, for that matter, an enlightened nation has decided that electrocution is the most humane way of removing its superfluous citizens,' suggested Carrados, mildly. 'He is certainly an ingenious-minded gentleman. It is his misfortune that in Mr. Carlyle he was fated to be opposed by an even subtler brain—'

'No, no! Really, Max!' protested the embarrassed gentleman.

'Mr. Hollyer will be able to judge for himself when I tell him that it was Mr. Carlyle who first drew attention to the significance of the abandoned

kite,' insisted Carrados, firmly. 'Then, of course, its object became plain to me—as indeed to any one. For ten minutes, perhaps, a wire must be carried from the overhead line to the chestnut-tree. Creake has everything in his favour, but it is just within possibility that the driver of an inopportune tram might notice the appendage. What of that? Why, for more than a week he has seen a derelict kite with its yards of trailing string hanging in the tree. A very calculating mind, Mr. Hollyer. It would be interesting to know what line of action Mr. Creake has mapped out for himself afterwards. I expect he has half a dozen artistic little touches up his sleeve. Possibly he would merely singe his wife's hair, burn her feet with a red-hot poker, shiver the glass of the French window, and be content with that to let well alone. You see, lightning is so varied in its effects that whatever he did or did not do would be right. He is in the impregnable position of the body showing all the symptoms of death by lightning shock and nothing else but lightning to account for it—a dilated eye, heart contracted in systole, bloodless lungs shrunk to a third the normal weight, and all the rest of it. When he has removed a few outward traces of his work Creake might quite safely "discover" his dead wife and rush off for the nearest doctor. Or he may have decided to arrange a convincing alibi, and creep away, leaving the discovery to another. We shall never know; he will make no confession.'

'I wish it was well over,' admitted Hollyer. 'I'm not particularly jumpy, but this gives me a touch of the creeps.'

'Three more hours at the worst, Lieutenant,'

said Carrados, cheerfully. 'Ah-ha, something is coming through now.'

He went to the telephone and received a message from one quarter; then made another connection and talked for a few minutes with some one else.

'Everything working smoothly,' he remarked between times over his shoulder. 'Your sister has gone to bed, Mr. Hollyer.'

Then he turned to the house telephone and distributed his orders.

'So we,' he concluded, 'must get up.'

By the time they were ready a large closed motor car was waiting. The lieutenant thought he recognized Parkinson in the well-swathed form beside the driver, but there was no temptation to linger for a second on the steps. Already the stinging rain had lashed the drive into the semblance of a frothy estuary; all round the lightning jagged its course through the incessant tremulous glow of more distant lightning, while the thunder only ceased its muttering to turn at close quarters and crackle viciously.

'One of the few things I regret missing,' remarked Carrados, tranquilly; 'but I hear a good deal of colour in it.'

The car slushed its way down to the gate, lurched a little heavily across the dip into the road, and, steadying as it came upon the straight, began to hum contentedly along the deserted highway.

'We are not going direct?' suddenly inquired Hollyer, after they had travelled perhaps half a dozen miles. The night was bewildering enough but he had the sailor's gift for location.

'No; through Huns cott Green and then by

a fieldpath to the orchard at the back,' replied Carrados. 'Keep a sharp look-out for the man with the lantern about here, Harris,' he called through the tube.

'Something flashing just ahead, sir,' came the reply, and the car slowed down and stopped.

Carrados dropped the near window as a man in glistening waterproof stepped from the shelter of a lich-gate and approached.

'Inspector Beedel, sir,' said the stranger, looking into the car.

'Quite right, Inspector,' said Carrados. 'Get in.'

'I have a man with me, sir.'

'We can find room for him as well.'

'We are very wet.'

'So shall we all be soon.'

The lieutenant changed his seat and the two burly forms took places side by side. In less than five minutes the car stopped again, this time in a grassy country lane.

'Now we have to face it,' announced Carrados. 'The inspector will show us the way.'

The car slid round and disappeared into the night, while Beedel led the party to a stile in the hedge. A couple of fields brought them to the Brookbend boundary. There a figure stood out of the black foliage, exchanged a few words with their guide and piloted them along the shadows of the orchard to the back door of the house.

'You will find a broken pane near the catch of the scullery window,' said the blind man.

'Right, sir,' replied the inspector. 'I have it. Now who goes through?'

'Mr. Hollyer will open the door for us. I'm afraid you must take off your boots and all wet

things, Lieutenant. We cannot risk a single spot inside.'

They waited until the back door opened, then each one divested himself in a similar manner and passed into the kitchen, where the remains of a fire still burned. The man from the orchard gathered together the discarded garments and disappeared again.

Carrados turned to the lieutenant.

'A rather delicate job for you now, Mr. Hollyer. I want you to go up to your sister, wake her, and get her into another room with as little fuss as possible. Tell her as much as you think fit and let her understand that her very life depends on absolute stillness when she is alone. Don't be unduly hurried, but not a glimmer of a light, please.

Ten minutes passed by the measure of the battered old alarum on the dresser shelf before the young man returned.

'I've had rather a time of it,' he reported, with a nervous laugh, 'but I think it will be all right now. She is in the spare room.'

'Then we will take our places. You and Parkinson come with me to the bedroom. Inspector, you have your own arrangements. Mr. Carlyle will be with you.'

They dispersed silently about the house. Hollyer glanced apprehensively at the door of the spare room as they passed it, but within was as quiet as the grave. Their room lay at the other end of the passage.

'You may as well take your place in the bed now, Hollyer,' directed Carrados when they were inside and the door closed. 'Keep well down

among the clothes. Creake has to get up on the balcony, you know, and he will probably peep through the window, but he dare come no farther. Then when he begins to throw up stones slip on this dressing-gown of your sister's. I'll tell you what to do after.'

The next sixty minutes drew out into the longest hour that the lieutenant had ever known. Occasionally he heard a whisper pass between the two men who stood behind the window curtains, but he could see nothing. Then Carrados threw a guarded remark in his direction.

'He is in the garden now.'

Something scraped slightly against the outer wall. But the night was full of wilder sounds, and in the house the furniture and the boards creaked and sprung between the yawling of the wind among the chimneys, the rattle of the thunder and the pelting of the rain. It was a time to quicken the steadiest pulse, and when the crucial moment came, when a pebble suddenly rang against the pane with a sound that the tense waiting magnified into a shivering crash, Hollyer leapt from the bed on the instant.

'Easy, easy,' warned Carrados, feelingly. 'We will wait for another knock.' He passed something across. 'Here is a rubber glove. I have cut the wire but you had better put it on. Stand just for a moment at the window, move the catch so that it can blow upon a little, and drop immediately. Now.'

Another stone had rattled against the glass. For Hollyer to go through his part was the work merely of seconds, and with a few touches Carrados spread the dressing-gown to more effective disguise

about the extended form. But an unforeseen and in the circumstances rather horrible interval followed, for Creake, in accordance with some detail of his never-revealed plan, continued to shower missile after missile against the panes until even the unimpressionable Parkinson shivered.

'The last act,' whispered Carrados, a moment after the throwing had ceased. 'He has gone round to the back. Keep as you are. We take cover now.' He pressed behind the arras of an extemporized wardrobe, and the spirit of emptiness and desolation seemed once more to reign over the lonely house.

From half a dozen places of concealment ears were straining to catch the first guiding sound. He moved very stealthily, burdened, perhaps, by some strange scruple in the presence of the tragedy that he had not feared to contrive, paused for a moment at the bedroom door, then opened it very quietly, and in the fickle light read the consummation of his hopes.

'At last!' they heard the sharp whisper drawn from his relief. 'At last!'

He took another step and two shadows seemed to fall upon him from behind, one on either side. With primitive instinct a cry of terror and surprise escaped him as he made a desperate movement to wrench himself free, and for a short second he almost succeeded in dragging one hand into a pocket. Then his wrists slowly came together and the handcuffs closed.

'I am Inspector Beedel,' said the man on his right side. 'You are charged with the attempted murder of your wife, Millicent Creake.'

'You are mad,' retorted the miserable creature.

falling into a desperate calmness. 'She has been struck by lightning.'

'No, you blackguard, she hasn't,' wrathfully exclaimed his brother-in-law, jumping up. 'Would you like to see her?'

'I also have to warn you,' continued the inspector impassively, 'that anything you say may be used as evidence against you.'

A startled cry from the farther end of the passage arrested their attention.

'Mr. Carrados,' called Hollyer, 'oh, come at once.'

At the open door of the other bedroom stood the lieutenant, his eyes still turned towards something in the room beyond, a little empty bottle in his hand.

'Dead!' he exclaimed tragically, with a sob, 'with this beside her. Dead just when she would have been free of the brute.'

The blind man passed into the room, sniffed the air, and laid a gentle hand on the pulseless heart.

'Yes,' he replied. 'That, Hollyer, does not always appeal to the woman, strange to say.'

THE INVISIBLE MAN

BY G. K. CHESTERTON

IN the cool blue twilight of two steep streets in Camden Town, the shop at the corner, a confectioner's, glowed like the butt of a cigar. One should rather say, perhaps, like the butt of a firework, for the light was of many colours and some complexity, broken up by many mirrors and dancing on many gilt and gaily-coloured cakes and sweetmeats. Against this one fiery glass were glued the noses of many gutter-snipes, for the chocolates were all wrapped in those red and gold and green metallic colours which are almost better than chocolate itself; and the huge white wedding-cake in the window was somehow at once remote and satisfying, just as if the whole North Pole were good to eat. Such rainbow provocations could naturally collect the youth of the neighbourhood up to the ages of ten or twelve. But this corner was also attractive to youth at a later stage; and a young man, not less than twenty-four, was staring into the same shop window. To him, also, the shop was of fiery charm, but this attraction was not wholly to be explained by chocolates; which, however, he was far from despising.

He was a tall, burly, red-haired young man, with a resolute face but a listless manner. He carried under his arm a flat, grey portfolio of black-and-white sketches, which he had sold with more or less success to publishers ever since his

uncle (who was an admiral) had disinherited him for Socialism, because of a lecture which he had delivered against that economic theory. His name was John Turnbull Angus.

Entering at last, he walked through the confectioner's shop into the back room, which was a sort of pastry-cook restaurant, merely raising his hat to the young lady who was serving there. She was a dark, elegant, alert girl in black, with a high colour and very quick, dark eyes; and after the ordinary interval she followed him into the inner room to take his order.

His order was evidently a usual one. 'I want, please,' he said with precision, 'one halfpenny bun and a small cup of black coffee.' An instant before the girl could turn away he added, 'Also, I want you to marry me.'

The young lady of the shop stiffened suddenly, and said, 'Those are jokes I don't allow.'

The red-haired young man lifted grey eyes of an unexpected gravity.

'Really and truly,' he said, 'it's as serious—as serious as the halfpenny bun. It is expensive, like the bun; one pays for it. It is indigestible, like the bun. It hurts.'

The dark young lady had never taken her dark eyes off him, but seemed to be studying him with almost tragic exactitude. At the end of her scrutiny she had something like the shadow of a smile, and she sat down in a chair.

'Don't you think,' observed Angus, absently, 'that it's rather cruel to eat these halfpenny buns? They might grow up into penny buns. I shall give up these brutal sports when we are married.'

The dark young lady rose from her chair and walked to the window, evidently in a state of strong but not unsympathetic cogitation. When at last she swung round again with an air of resolution she was bewildered to observe that the young man was carefully laying out on the table various objects from the shop-window. They included a pyramid of highly coloured sweets, several plates of sandwiches, and the two decanters containing that mysterious port and sherry which are peculiar to pastry-cooks. In the middle of this neat arrangement he had carefully let down the enormous load of white sugared cake which had been the huge ornament of the window.

‘What on earth are you doing?’ she asked.

‘Duty, my dear Laura,’ he began.

‘Oh, for the Lord’s sake, stop a minute,’ she cried, ‘and don’t talk to me in that way. I mean, what is all that?’

‘A ceremonial meal, Miss Hope.’

‘And what is *that*?’ she asked impatiently, pointing to the mountain of sugar.

‘The wedding-cake, Mrs. Angus,’ he said.

The girl marched to that article, removed it with some clatter, and put it back in the shop window; she then returned, and, putting her elegant elbows on the table, regarded the young man not unfavourably but with considerable exasperation.

‘You don’t give me any time to think,’ she said.

‘I’m not such a fool,’ he answered; ‘that’s my Christian humility.’

She was still looking at him; but she had grown considerably graver behind the smile.

‘Mr. Angus,’ she said steadily, ‘before there is

a minute more of this nonsense I must tell you something about myself as shortly as I can.'

'Delighted,' replied Angus. 'You might tell me something about myself, too, while you are about it.'

'Oh, do hold your tongue and listen,' she said. 'It's nothing that I'm ashamed of, and it isn't even anything that I'm specially sorry about. But what would you say if there were something that is no business of mine and yet is my nightmare?'

'In that case,' said the man seriously, 'I should suggest that you bring back the cake.'

'Well, you must listen to the story first,' said Laura, persistently. 'To begin with, I must tell you that my father owned the inn called the "Red Fish" at Ludbury, and I used to serve people in the bar.'

'I have often wondered,' he said, 'why there was a kind of a Christian air about this one confectioner's shop.'

'Ludbury is a sleepy, grassy little hole in the Eastern Counties, and the only kind of people who ever came to the "Red Fish" were occasional commercial travellers, and for the rest, the most awful people you can see, only you've never seen them. I mean little, loungy men, who had just enough to live on and had nothing to do but lean about in bar-rooms and bet on horses, in bad clothes that were just too good for them. Even these wretched young rotters were not very common at our house; but there were two of them that were a lot too common—common in every sort of way. They both lived on money of their own, and were wearisomely idle and over-dressed. But yet I was a bit sorry for them, because I half

believe they slunk into our little empty bar because each of them had a slight deformity; the sort of thing that some yokels laugh at. It wasn't exactly a deformity either; it was more an oddity. One of them was a surprisingly small man, something like a dwarf, or at least like a jockey. He was not at all jockeyish to look at, though; he had a round black head and a well-trimmed black beard, bright eyes like a bird's; he jingled money in his pockets; he jangled a great gold watch chain; and he never turned up except dressed just too much like a gentleman to be one. He was no fool though, though a futile idler; he was curiously clever at all kinds of things that couldn't be the slightest use; a sort of impromptu conjuring; making fifteen matches set fire to each other like a regular firework; or cutting a banana or some such thing into a dancing doll. His name was Isidore Smythe; and I can see him still, with his little dark face, just coming up to the counter, making a jumping kangaroo out of five cigars.

The other fellow was more silent and more ordinary; but somehow he alarmed me much more than poor little Smythe. He was very tall and slight, and light-haired; his nose had a high bridge, and he might almost have been handsome in a spectral sort of way; but he had one of the most appalling squints I have ever seen or heard of. When he looked straight at you, you didn't know where you were yourself, let alone what he was looking at. I fancy this sort of disfigurement embittered the poor chap a little; for while Smythe was ready to show off his monkey tricks anywhere, James Welkin (that was the squinting man's name)

never did anything except soak in our bar parlour, and go for great walks by himself in the flat, grey country all round. All the same, I think Smythe, too, was a little sensitive about being so small, though he carried it off more smartly. And so it was that I was really puzzled, as well as startled, and very sorry, when they both offered to marry me in the same week.

'Well, I did what I've since thought was perhaps a silly thing. But, after all, these freaks were my friends in a way; and I had a horror of their thinking I refused them for the real reason, which was that they were so impossibly ugly. So I made up some gas of another sort, about never meaning to marry any one who hadn't carved his way in the world. I said it was a point of principle with me not to live on money that was just inherited like theirs. Two days after I had talked in this well-meaning sort of way, the whole trouble began. The first thing I heard was that both of them had gone off to seek their fortunes, as if they were in some silly fairy tale.

'Well, I've never seen either of them from that day to this. But I've had two letters from the little man called Smythe, and really they were rather exciting.'

'Ever heard of the other man?' asked Angus.

'No, he never wrote,' said the girl, after an instant's hesitation. 'Smythe's first letter was simply to say that he had started out walking with Welkin to London; but Welkin was such a good walker that the little man dropped out of it, and took a rest by the roadside. He happened to be picked up by some travelling show, and, partly because he was nearly a dwarf, and partly because

he was really a clever little wretch, he got on quite well in the show business, and was soon sent up to the Aquarium, to do some tricks that I forget. That was his first letter. His second was much more of a startler, and I only got it last week.'

The man called Angus emptied his coffee-cup and regarded her with mild and patient eyes. Her own mouth took a slight twist of laughter as she resumed, 'I suppose you've seen on the hoardings all about this "Smythe's Silent Service" ? Or you must be the only person that hasn't. Oh, I don't know much about it, it's some clockwork invention for doing all the housework by machinery. You know the sort of thing ; " Press a button—A Butler who Never Drinks." " Turn a Handle—Ten Housemaids who Never Flirt." You must have seen the advertisements. Well, whatever these machines are, they are making pots of money ; and they are making it all for that little imp whom I knew down in Ludbury. I can't help feeling pleased the poor little chap has fallen on his feet ; but the plain fact is, I'm in terror of his turning up any minute and telling me he's carved his way in the world—as he certainly has.'

'And the other man ?' repeated Angus with a sort of obstinate quietude.

Laura Hope got to her feet suddenly. 'My friend,' she said, 'I think you are a witch. Yes, you are quite right. I have not seen a line of the other man's writing ; and I have no more notion than the dead of what or where he is. But it is of him that I am frightened. It is he who is all about my path. It is he who has half driven me mad. Indeed, I think he has driven me mad ; for I have felt him where he could not have been, and

I have heard his voice when he could not have spoken.'

'Well, my dear,' said the young man, cheerfully, 'if he were Satan himself, he is done for now you have told somebody. One goes mad all alone, old girl. But when was it you fancied you felt and heard our squinting friend?'

'I heard James Welkin laugh as plainly as I hear you speak,' said the girl, steadily. 'There was nobody there, for I stood just outside the shop at the corner, and could see down both streets at once. I had forgotten how he laughed, though his laugh was as odd as his squint. I had not thought of him for nearly a year. But it's a solemn truth that a few seconds later the first letter came from his rival.'

'Did you ever make the spectre speak or squeak, or anything?' asked Angus, with some interest.

Laura suddenly shuddered, and then said, with an unshaken voice, 'Yes. Just when I had finished reading the second letter from Isidore Smythe announcing his success, just then, I heard Welkin say, "He shan't have you, though." It was quite plain, as if he were in the room. It is awful; I think I must be mad.'

'If you really were mad,' said the young man, 'you would think you must be sane. But certainly there seems to me to be something a little rum about this unseen gentleman. Two heads are better than one—I spare you allusions to any other organs—and really, if you would allow me, as a sturdy, practical man, to bring back the wedding-cake out of the window——'

Even as he spoke, there was a sort of steely shriek in the street outside, and a small motor,

driven at devilish speed, shot up to the door of the shop and stuck there. In the same flash of time a small man in a shiny top hat stood stamping in the outer room.

Angus, who had hitherto maintained hilarious ease from motives of mental hygiene, revealed the strain of his soul by striding abruptly out of the inner room and confronting the new-comer. A glance at him was quite sufficient to confirm the savage guesswork of a man in love. This very dapper but dwarfish figure, with the spike of black beard carried insolently forward, the clever unrestful eyes, the neat but very nervous fingers, could be none other than the man just described to him: Isidore Smythe, who made dolls out of banana skins and match-boxes; Isidore Smythe, who made millions out of undrinking butlers and unflirting housemaids of metal. For a moment the two men, instinctively understanding each other's air of possession, looked at each other with that curious cold generosity which is the soul of rivalry.

Mr. Smythe, however, made no allusion to the ultimate ground of their antagonism, but said simply and explosively, 'Has Miss Hope seen that thing on the window?'

'On the window?' repeated the staring Angus.

'There's no time to explain other things,' said the small millionaire shortly. 'There's some tomfoolery going on here that has to be investigated.'

He pointed his polished walking-stick at the window, recently depleted by the bridal preparations of Mr. Angus; and that gentleman was astonished to see along the front of the glass a long strip of paper pasted, which had certainly not been

on the window when he had looked through it some time before. Following the energetic Smythe outside into the street, he found that some yard and a half of stamp-paper had been carefully gummed along the glass outside, and on this was written in straggly characters, 'If you marry Smythe, he will die.'

'Laura,' said Angus, putting his big red head into the shop, 'you're not mad.'

'It's the writing of that fellow Welkin,' said Smythe, gruffly. 'I haven't seen him for years, but he's always bothering me. Five times in the last fortnight he's had threatening letters left at my flat, and I can't even find out who leaves them, let alone if it is Welkin himself. The porter of the flats swears that no suspicious characters have been seen, and here he has pasted up a sort of daço on a public shop window, while the people in the shop——'

'Quite so,' said Angus, modestly, 'while the people in the shop were having tea. Well, sir, I can assure you I appreciate your common sense in dealing so directly with the matter. We can talk about other things afterwards. The fellow cannot be very far off yet, for I swear there was no paper there when I went last to the window, ten or fifteen minutes ago. On the other hand, he's too far off to be chased, as we don't even know the direction. If you'll take my advice, Mr. Smythe, you'll put this at once in the hands of some energetic inquiry man, private rather than public. I know an extremely clever fellow, who has set up in business five minutes from here in your car. His name's Flambeau, and though his youth was a bit stormy, he's a strictly honest man

now, and his brains are worth money. He lives in Lucknow Mansions, Hampstead.'

'That is odd,' said the little man, arching his black eyebrows. 'I live, myself, in Himalaya Mansions, round the corner. Perhaps you might care to come with me; I can go to my rooms and sort out these queer Welkin documents, while you run round and get your friend the detective.'

'You are very good,' said Angus, politely. 'Well, the sooner we act the better.'

Both men, with a queer kind of impromptu fairness, took the same sort of formal farewell of the lady, and both jumped into the brisk little car. As Smythe took the handles and they turned the great corner of the street, Angus was amused to see a gigantesque poster of 'Smythe's Silent Service,' with a picture of a huge headless iron doll, carrying a saucepan with the legend, 'A Cook Who is Never Cross.'

'I use them in my own flat,' said the little black-bearded man, laughing, 'partly for advertisement, and partly for real convenience. Honestly, and all above board, those big clockwork dolls of mine do bring you coals or claret or a time table quicker than any live servants I've ever known, if you know which knob to press. But I'll never deny, between ourselves, that such servants have their disadvantages, too.'

'Indeed?' said Angus; 'is there something they can't do?'

'Yes,' replied Smythe, coolly; 'they can't tell me who left those threatening letters at my flat.'

The man's motor was small and swift like himself; in fact, like his domestic service, it was of

his own invention. If he was an advertising quack, he was one who believed in his own wares. The sense of something tiny and flying was accentuated as they swept up long white curves of road in the dead but open daylight of evening. Soon the white curves came sharper and dizzier; they were upon ascending spirals, as they say in the modern religions. For, indeed, they were cresting a corner of London which is almost as precipitous as Edinburgh, if not quite so picturesque. Terrace rose above terrace, and the special tower of flats they sought rose above them all to almost Egyptian height, gilt by the level sunset. The change, as they turned the corner and entered the crescent known as Himalaya Mansions, was as abrupt as the opening of a window; for they found that pile of flats sitting above London as above a green sea of slate. Opposite to the mansions, on the other side of the gravel crescent, was a bushy enclosure more like a steep hedge or dyke than a garden, and some way below that ran a strip of artificial water, a sort of canal, like the moat of that embowered fortress. As the car swept round the crescent it passed, at one corner, the stray stall of a man selling chestnuts; and right away at the other end of the curve, Angus could see a dim blue policeman walking slowly. These were the only human shapes in that high suburban solitude; but he had an irrational sense that they expressed the speechless poetry of London. He felt as if they were figures in a story.

The little car shot up to the right house like a bullet, and shot out its owner like a bomb shell. He was immediately inquiring of a tall commis-

sionaire in shining braid, and a short porter in shirt sleeves, whether anybody or anything had been seeking his apartments. He was assured that nobody and nothing had passed these officials since his last inquiries; whereupon he and the slightly bewildered Angus were shot up in the lift like a rocket, till they reached the top floor.

‘Just come in for a minute,’ said the breathless Smythe. ‘I want to show you those Welkin letters. Then you might run round the corner and fetch your friend.’ He pressed a button concealed in the wall, and the door opened of itself.

It opened on a long, commodious ante-room, of which the only arresting features, ordinarily speaking, were the rows of tall half-human mechanical figures that stood up on both sides like tailors’ dummies. Like tailors’ dummies they were headless; and like tailors’ dummies they had a handsome unnecessary humpiness in the shoulders, and a pigeon-breasted protuberance of chest; but barring this, they were not much more like a human figure than any automatic machine at a station that is about the human height. They had two great hooks like arms, for carrying trays; and they were painted pea-green, or vermilion, or black for convenience of distinction; in every other way they were only automatic machines and nobody would have looked twice at them. On this occasion, at least, nobody did. For between the two rows of these domestic dummies lay something more interesting than most of the mechanics of the world. It was a white, tattered scrap of paper scrawled with red ink; and the agile inventor had snatched it up almost as soon as the door flew open. He handed it to

Angus without a word. The red ink on it actually was not dry, and the message ran, 'If you have been to see her to-day, I shall kill you.'

There was a short silence, and then Isidore Smythe said quietly, 'Would you like a little whisky? I rather feel as if I should.'

'Thank you; I should like a little Flambeau,' said Angus, gloomily. 'This business seems to me to be getting rather grave. I'm going round at once to fetch him.'

'Right you are,' said the other, with admirable cheerfulness. 'Bring him here as quick as you can.'

But as Angus closed the front door behind him he saw Smythe push back a button, and one of the clockwork images glided from its place and slid along a groove in the floor carrying a tray with siphon and decanter. There did seem something a trifle weird about leaving the little man alone among those dead servants, who were coming to life as the door closed.

Six steps down from Smythe's landing the man in shirt sleeves was doing something with a pail. Angus stopped to extract a promise, fortified with a prospective bribe, that he would remain in that place until the return with the detective, and would keep count of any kind of stranger coming up those stairs. Dashing down to the front hall he then laid similar charges of vigilance on the commissionaire at the front door, from whom he learned the simplifying circumstance that there was no back door. Not content with this, he captured the floating policeman and induced him to stand opposite the entrance and watch it; and finally paused an instant for a pennyworth of chestnuts, and an

inquiry as to the probable length of the merchant's stay in the neighbourhood.

The chestnut seller, turning up the collar of his coat, told him he should probably be moving shortly, as he thought it was going to snow. Indeed, the evening was growing grey and bitter, but Angus, with all his eloquence, proceeded to nail the chestnut man to his post.

'Keep yourself warm on your own chestnuts,' he said earnestly. 'Eat up your whole stock; I'll make it worth your while. I'll give you a sovereign if you'll wait here till I come back, and then tell me whether any man, woman, or child has gone into that house where the commissionaire is standing.'

He then walked away smartly, with a last look at the besieged tower.

'I've made a ring round that room, anyhow,' he said. 'They can't all four of them be Mr. Welkin's accomplices.'

Lucknow Mansions were, so to speak, on a lower platform of that hill of houses, of which Himalaya Mansions might be called the peak. Mr. Flambeau's semi-official flat was on the ground floor, and presented in every way a marked contrast to the American machinery and cold hotel-like luxury of the flat of the Silent Service. Flambeau, who was a friend of Angus, received him in a rococo artistic den behind his office, of which the ornaments were sabres, harquebuses, Eastern curiosities, flasks of Italian wine, savage cooking-pots, a plummy Persian cat, and a small dusty-looking Roman Catholic priest, who looked particularly out of place.

'This is my friend Father Brown,' said Flam-

beau. 'I've often wanted you to meet him. Splendid weather, this; a little cold for Southerners like me.'

'Yes, I think it will keep clear,' said Angus, sitting down on a violet-striped Eastern ottoman.

'No,' said the priest quietly, 'it has begun to snow.'

And indeed, as he spoke, the first few flakes, foreseen by the man of chestnuts, began to drift across the darkening window-pane.

'Well,' said Angus, heavily, 'I'm afraid I've come on business, and rather jumpy business at that. The fact is, Flambeau, within a stone's throw of your house is a fellow who badly wants your help; he's perpetually being haunted and threatened by an invisible enemy—a scoundrel whom nobody has even seen.' As Angus proceeded to tell the whole tale of Smythe and Welkin, beginning with Laura's story, and going on with his own, the supernatural laugh at the corner of two empty streets, the strange distinct words spoken in an empty room, Flambeau grew more and more vividly concerned, and the little priest seemed to be left out of it, like a piece of furniture. When it came to the scribbled stamp-paper pasted on the window, Flambeau rose, seeming to fill the room with his huge shoulders.

'If you don't mind,' he said, 'I think you had better tell me the rest on the nearest road to this man's house. It strikes me, somehow, that there is no time to be lost.'

'Delighted,' said Angus, rising also, 'though he's safe enough for the present, for I've set four men to watch the only hole to his burrow.'

They turned out into the street, the small priest