if Irene Lanson inherited the bulk of her father's wealth, why this cold-blooded reticence on the lawyer's part?

Furneaux for once remained silent, but his eyes danced in his head, and his thin lips parted in a satirical smile when Sevastopolo's troubled glance met his. The unspoken words leapt the broad table. It was as though he had said aloud:

"You can't afford to wait! You *must* know! The loss of three days now may cost you all that you hope for in that faction-torn little kingdom which should be, and can yet be made, the key of the Middle East."

The unuttered taunt nerved the Greek to a decision. The immediate financial outlook dominated all other considerations. He wanted control of money in millions—must have such control, in fact, if his secret ambitions were to be gratified.

"Let me say once more," he began, "that my marriage is regular in every sense of the word, and cannot be set aside by any other means than death or divorce. I believe in absolute candour in business matters such as we are now dealing with, so I give you another vital fact to digest: My wife has executed a general power of attorney in my favour, thus constituting me her unfettered representative. If I were not in a company admittedly hostile I would go on to say that this authority is not usurped for any gross personal end. In her judgment and mine it was essential that I should have control of her fortune for a certain time. When our common purpose is attained she will resume her great financial responsibilities. I do not ask you to take my word for that pledge. Your approval or disapproval does not weigh with me at all. I simply make a plain statement, and leave it at that. And now.

Mr. Hassall, if I have cleared the air to some extent, I give you all the sanction I possess for making known the arrangements contemplated by Mr. Lanson."

"That is to say, you wish me to tell you in plain English, divested of legal phraseology, how Mr. Lanson's will disposes of his estate?"

"Yes."

"Have I your permission, too, Mr. Glen?"

"Mine!" cried the artist, who obviously did not anticipate being drawn into this discussion.

"Yes. It is necessary."

Glen, on the verge of expressing his astonishment more forcibly, bethought himself of something Davidson had said the previous night, so kept quiet.

Mr. Hassall, apparently, awaited no further developments. Keeping the thumbs and fingers of both hands spread widely, he pressed their tips together, an attitude some men adopt when marshalling their thoughts. When he spoke, he looked at the centre of the table as though its damask covering held some tabulated record of the complicated document he was about to describe. An autumn sun was bathing the garden in gold, and its diffused light, streaming in through the windows, revealed every face clearly. The lawyer's expression was thoughtful, Winter's stern, Furneaux's sardonic. Glen, Davidson and Trevor were intensely interested. The doctor, student of psychology, managed to steal an occasional shrewd glance at Sevastopolo, on whose features had fallen an impenetrable mask. Superintendent Wood looked tired and patient. He wondered, perhaps, what all this verbal fencing had to do with the discovery of a murderer, but he had great faith in Winter, while, if the truth must be told, Furneaux puzzled him. This

was his first meeting with the "Little 'Un" of the "Yard," and he was well aware that the Derby County Constabulary would not retain such an oddity on its detective staff for five minutes—no longer, indeed, than a head-quarters clerk would require to write a letter dismissing him.

"Mr. Lanson's will," said Mr. Hassall, "runs to many folios, but its intent is clearly expressed and put in the simplest possible language. He wrote it himself. All that my partners had to do, after a brief consultation, was to see that its wording kept within the letter of the law. At his request, they took counsel's opinion on its various points. In the result, I can stake my professional reputation as to the validity of its clauses. They cannot be interpreted variously to meet the desires of possible litigants. I don't believe the Court of Appeal could find any excuse for doubting the meaning of any solitary word."

He paused, for every lawyer loves a preamble.

"There are bequests to his assistants, servants and others which I need not trouble to recall now," he went on. "They are generous, of course. Was he not a prince in finance? The amount disposed of is not stated specifically, but he told me quite recently that he had over ten millions sterling invested in gilt-edged securities, almost exclusively British and American, while he kept some millions of pounds in a so-called fluid state in London, New York, and Amsterdam, with relatively smaller sums in Paris, Rome and Athens. The probability is that these liquid assets will be absorbed in paying the death duties—a big plum for the Exchequer—so we may regard the ten millions I have spoken of as the heritable estate, exclusive of buildings, land, and personal effects. There are two principal legatees—his daughter

who receives, say, nine millions, together with the real estate, and his distant relative, Felix Glen, who receives a million sterling, free of succession duties."

"Poor old chap!" cried Glen, in a voice trembling with emotion. "He did that for me, yet we parted in anger!"

Sevastopolo uttered not a syllable. He moistened his lips with his tongue, and that was all. Mr. Hassall frowned, and separated his finger-tips for an instant to raise a deprecatory hand.

"I make due allowance for the excitement of discovering that one has inherited a vast sum of money, Mr. Glen, but I must beg you not to interrupt," he said. "Both of these amounts—the nine millions and the one million—are in trust. My client recognised, better than any other man of his generation, I suppose, the disturbing effect of any attempt to turn such a mass of securities into hard cash. In any event, therefore, for the next ten years, these capital sums must remain intact, subject only to such changes of investment as the trustees approve of, or rather as are suggested to them by an advisory committee consisting of the chairmen of two London and the presidents of two American banks. For our present purposes I need not pursue further the instructions for the future disposition and control of this great fortune. They are wise and far-seeing. No folly, no wild extravagances, can deprive the beneficiaries of their capital. The disposal of the income is, of course, entirely a matter for the individuals concerned. I estimate the average yield at about four and a half per cent. Therefore, Mr. Glen, you will soon have at command about £45,000 per annum, while your cousin will control nine times that amount. The net receipts will be considerably

less. The Income Tax Commissioners will see to that."

Then, for a little while, Mr. Hassall seemed to review that invisible parchment again, searching its pages with his mind's eye for extracts relevant to the business of the hour.

"I admit," he resumed, "that Miss Irene's marriage renders nugatory many clauses in her father's will. I decline to explain myself more clearly to-day. The whole document will be read after the funeral in her presence and, indeed, in the presence of all here except the gentlemen who represent the police. Nor does the altered state of affairs call for my opinion thereon. These are matters that must be left to due process of law. . . . And now to answer your question, Mr. Winter. Mr. Sevastopolo has no *locus standi* as the husband of the principal legatee. A general power of attorney cannot constitute him a trustee in his wife's behalf. Any such devolution of authority is expressly excluded by the terms of the will. The administrative trustees are Irene Lanson, Felix Glen, two directors of the Bank of England, and myself. That is why my partners, and not I, saw to its preparation, though Mr. Lanson showed his confidence in me by listening to the interpretation I placed on the more important sections. In every instance, I am glad to say, my views agreed with his intent. Speaking professionally, I shall not be surprised if Mr. Lanson's will should serve as a model for the disposition of many a large estate in the future."

Whether Mr. Hassall's concluding statement was what it professed to be—a single-minded tribute to the excellence of a legal instrument, or was meant to convey a strong hint that any attempt to dispute its validity would be the height of folly—

is an interesting but slight problem not germane to this record.

No one spoke when his rather thrilling recital came to an end. Indeed, the listeners seemed to await further revelations. It was almost fantastic to think that the heritage of such vast sums of money could be dealt with in a few guarded words. Not a man in the room failed to try and multiply 45,000 by 9, in the effort to appraise the true extent of Irene Lanson's income. Furneaux discovered later, to his great joy, that Winter's mental arithmetic was at fault, the Chief having failed to note an intrusive cipher.

When at last it became apparent that Mr. Hassall had no more to say at the moment, Glen bubbled into broken utterance.

"Can't understand it," he muttered. "A million! It beats me. He always said I was a frightful ass to go in for painting. Once he joked about it. 'Better have your signature recognisable on a tinted cheque than on daubed canvas,' he put it, and was rather pleased when I told him he had made an epigram. Yet he gives me a million! He, of all men in the world!"

"The income of an invested million, Mr. Glen," corrected the lawyer.

"Same thing, isn't it, sir? I may have a slate missing over that part of my roof which covers the financial instinct, but surely I have enough sense to know that scores of thousands of pounds a year should suffice for all my needs, and for a good many other more deserving objects, I hope."

The lawyer smiled.

"Many young men who come in for unexpected wealth do not share that eminently sane view," he said.

"Suppose I were to die suddenly? A thing like this might give a fellow heart disease, you know. What becomes of my bequest?"

"It is at your absolute discretion—in trust, of course. You ought to live many years, Felix, but I advise you to make a will without delay. You can always vary it. A man who controls a large sum of money should acquire the habit of making wills when conditions of life alter. Then he never yields in old age to the absurd delusion that the mere notion of such an act tends to shorten his days."

"Let's do it now!" said Glen excitedly. "I haven't a relative on the map except Irene, and she wants no more pelf, I should imagine. I give and bequeath everything of which I die possessed to the girl I mean to marry—Dorothy Temple!"

Winter was growing restive. He was not concerned in this game of shuttlecock with millions sterling. What he wanted was some action that would help in discovering a strangely elusive criminal.

"Mr. Hassall will, I am sure, be pleased to carry out your instructions on another occasion, Mr. Glen," he said somewhat sharply. "Just now I want to call attention to the really important issue. Who is in authority henceforth in Sleaford Castle?"

"The owner, who is also the occupant," said Hassall.

"So, if Mrs. Sevastopolo orders us all to clear out, I shall be obliged to invoke the power of the law if I wish to remain?"

The mention of his own name roused the Greek from the fit of abstraction into which he had lapsed when the significance of the lawyer's statement became apparent. With elbows propped on the table, and clenched fists supporting a bent head, he seemed to pay no heed to Glen's temperamental

chatter. His eyes were gazing into space. Evidently his thoughts had travelled far, and it might be taken for granted that he recked naught of the curious scrutiny his attitude invited. Yet he soon showed that he had heard all that passed, for he sank back into his chair at Winter's reference to his wife, and broke in before the lawyer could make up his mind how best to decide the knotty point thus raised.

"It is not for me to pronounce now on the precise effect of Mr. Lanson's will," he said quietly, "but in so far as I represent my wife's wishes, whether as her father's heiress or as his devoted daughter, you may rest assured that no obstacle whatsoever will be placed in the way of the representatives of Scotland Yard and the local police in their efforts to trace the author of a monstrous crime. The same unqualified assent is given to the presence here of every man and woman whose assistance they invoke. Is that what you want to know, Mr. Winter?"

"Yes, nearly all. It is a step in the right direction, and I congratulate you on having taken it. But points may arise constantly which I shall have to refer to someone for approval or otherwise. Who is that 'someone'?"

"My wife should not be troubled at all. She will not be fitted for many days to exercise her remarkably clear judgment. You have here two of the appointed trustees, as Mr. Hassall will not be leaving us at once, I suppose. Why not deal with him? If he is in doubt he can appeal to Mr. Glen. If they cannot agree, my wife and the other trustees can be brought in—but only as a last resource, where she is concerned."

Here, in very truth, was a new Sevastopolo speaking. He had not a friend, in the strict sense of the word,

among the eight men who listened—for a friend is one who has esteem and regard for another and loves his society—but each and all had to confess that his attitude was not only altogether unexpected, but highly correct and self-effacing.

"Thank you," said Winter, not attempting to conceal his surprise. "That is quite the right line. In view of accomplished facts—if we may so regard many things we have heard to-day—it will be well if we endeavour to pull together for a time. Now, I wish to ask every man here if he can supply, or even imagine, any sort of clue that may lead to the detection of Mr. Lanson's murderer. I begin with you, Mr. Hassall. You are an old friend of the dead man and his trusted legal adviser. Can you help?"

The lawyer was taken aback by this direct appeal. He pursed his lips and frowned.

"No," he said, not without a marked hesitancy. "I require more time, closer examination of Mr. Lanson's papers. To-day I have nothing to say."

"Now you, Mr. Sevastopolo?" went on the Chief.

"In some sense, I have forced myself to adopt Mr. Furneaux's view, and yours—that the murderer is connected with affairs in Athens. Beyond that I cannot go—on my soul. I can conceive nothing less calculated to assist or further the cause of any party in Greece to-day than the death of one who had the fortunes of that unhappy country so much at heart."

"Mr. Davidson?"

Davidson read the Chief's glance correctly. Now was the time to spring his mine.

"You ask for clues," he said slowly. "I think I have hit on one. In going through Mr. Lanson's

pass-book of the private account he keeps in a London bank, I came on an item of ten thousand pounds paid to ' bearer ' eight days ago. It was a large sum, and a peculiar one, because I knew nothing of it, and Mr. Lanson himself has not been away from Sleaford since the beginning of July. There was no explanation in the ordinary correspondence, I was sure, so I searched hurriedly through some private documents and found a letter from the manager of the bank in question to the effect that, in accordance with instructions, he was sending to Mr. Lanson two registered packets, one containing five thousand pounds in English pound notes and the other a similar sum in American dollar bills. Let me explain, Mr. Hassall, that I learnt these things a few minutes before the hour fixed for the inquest, and was unwilling to draw your attention to them until I had checked matters by telephoning the bank and ascertaining beyond doubt that the money had vanished. I believe it has. It is not in the household safe, and there is nó sign of such bulky packages in Mr. Lanson's desk, where, by the way, it is not at all likely he would keep them. The affair is mysterious, and the suggestion that the man who killed him took the money is almost obvious."

It was even more obvious that Mr. Hassall was annoyed at having this amazing revelation thrust under his nose after a delay of fully three hours by one of the three men whom he regarded as assistants in the task of overhauling a deceased client's affairs. He stiffened perceptibly, but said nothing. Davidson was not blind to these unfavourable signs. He looked at Furneaux, who took the cue promptly.

"It is only fair to Mr. Davidson that I should explain his action more fully," he broke in. "He was so startled by his discovery that he hurried straight from the library and found me. That

was only a minute or two before you others came out for luncheon. I think he acted rightly in closing down on such a sensational fact until he had verified it beyond dispute, which he has not yet been free to do."

But the lawyer remained obstinately silent, so Winter decided to leave the adjustment of a quite natural misunderstanding for a more favourable moment.

"Mr. Trevor?" he said.

The American secretary had utilised a few minutes' grace to consider his position. No matter what turn events took in the near future, he and the Greek could never again work together in amity. Like the others, he was compelled to admit that the man's latest attitude was all that it should be; but trust him? no; that was impossible.

"I have no information," he said in the crisp, staccato accents that literally demanded attention. "In an inquiry of this kind I have always held that the guiding principle is—who benefits? Mr. Lanson is dead. Who gains by his death?"

Once more did Sevastopolo electrify his audience.

"May I interpose here?" he said. "From Mr. Hassall's guarded remarks I gathered that all present benefit, except the police. Even you, Dr. Macgregor, are evidently mentioned in the will, and I am certain that Mr. Lanson rewarded his secretaries and his legal adviser. But the 'benefit' Mr. Trevor alludes to is something more than that. The real beneficiaries are my wife, Mr. Glen, and myself, inferentially. Mr. Trevor is outspoken. Mr. Davidson is rather more discreet. That is why he told the police and not his companions in the library about the missing money. In plain language, he did not want me to hear of it. Absurd as the statement may sound, I sympathise

with him. It was an awkward dilemma. I agree with Mr. Furneaux. Given the same conditions, I would have acted in the same way. I cannot help feeling that I am suspect. The clandestine marriage is not in my favour. My action in striving to force Mr. Lanson's co-operation with certain political movements in Greece is against me. My presence here is a hindrance to free discussion. Therefore, with your permission, I will withdraw."

He rose, and would have gone out without another word had not Winter cried emphatically:

"Aren't you making a mistake, Mr. Sevastopolo? What shadow of a charge has been brought against you?"

"Not openly, of course. That would be ridiculous until it is shown that I sent a hireling here to kill my wife's father and steal his ten thousand pounds. But if I have gone too far owing to a certain bitterness of spirit, I am sorry. Still, there is no shaking my belief that you will all talk more openly in my absence. If you want me again to share your councils send for me. I will come."

In face of this minor crisis, Mr. Hassall decided to unbend.

"I am inclined to agree that Mr. Sevastopolo is adopting the right course," he said judicially. "We are living in an atmosphere of doubt—of suspicion, as he put it. This will soon disappear. When next he meets us, collectively or individually, to-day's tension will have relaxed. Before he leaves us now, however, I, for one, want to know when his marriage is to be announced publicly."

"I have considered that point already," said the Greek. "My wife thinks with me that it would be a needlessly dramatic thing to proclaim it before the funeral. A few days later it will suffice if a

brief statement appears in the leading newspapers."

He waited a second or two, apparently in readiness to answer any further questions. Then he glanced at Furneaux.

"When you are at liberty, any time this evening or to-morrow morning, I want to have a chat with you," he said.

"After dinner," chirped Furneaux instantly. "I'm at my best after a good meal. A midday diet of tea and toast induces a certain acerbity of temper which is not perceptible when I have examined a wine-list under the distinguished guidance of a connoisseur like Pinkney."

The door closed behind the man who had defied them so effectually. His departure was not undignified. He had, as it were, put them in the wrong. Oddly enough, it was Superintendent Wood who brought them back to stark realities.

"That's all very well," he said, thumping a heavy fist on the table. "That chap's a fine actor. He knows how to make what stage folk call 'a good exit.' But these clever speeches and adroit admissions don't explain why he brought Victor Denasch to Sleaford, nor why Denasch damn near killed one of my men last night. Oh, yes! Mr. Ramon Sevastopolo is as plausible as you make 'em, but I don't trust him, not a yard, not an inch. Things are going his way now. Wait till they turn, and you'll see another side to him!"

"I'll bet you a new hat he had nothing to do with Mr. Lanson's death," said Furneaux.

"Do you mean that no action of his led up to it, even indirectly?" demanded the wrathful superintendent.

"Yes."

"Done with you!"

Then Winter surveyed his small colleague with an inquisitive stare. He had lost many hats to Furneaux, but never had he won one from him.

CHAPTER XIV

The Net Tightens

The fact that Davidson had concealed from his co-secretaries and Mr. Hassall his discovery of that quite remarkable remittance of ten thousand pounds still rankled in the mind of the legal adviser; even Trevor was none too pleased about it. After a moment's silence following Furneaux's wholly unlooked-for declaration of belief in Sevastopolo's innocence of any complicity in his employer's death, Mr. Hassall reverted to the matter of the missing money.

"It is now nearly five o'clock," he said, glancing at his watch, "and too late, I fear, to find a London bank manager in his office unless he should happen to be detained by some important business. Rather unfortunate, isn't it, that such a significant line of inquiry should be postponed till to-morrow?"

"We are not sure yet that the bundle of notes are not where Mr. Lanson placed them," said Trevor. "I understood Davidson to say he had not made a really thorough search. Indeed, I don't see how he could, if he rushed off at once after discovering the affair. I saw the two packages. Indeed, I feel certain I signed for them."

Davidson reddened, but, as was his habit, having nothing to say, he kept quiet.

"Take a chance, Mr. Davidson," interposed Winter, as he was by no means desirous that the one man who had actually contributed a definite clue should be taunted because he had acted correctly, yet the mere expression of his official approval would antagonise Mr. Hassall still more. "Go and phone now. I should imagine that the City is trying to discount the effect on the money market of Mr. Lanson's death, so it is more than probable that every prominent banker in London is enjoying a late session to-day."

"May I suggest that Mr. Trevor should put the call through?" said Davidson doggedly.

"Certainly. But why?"

"Because he will then be convinced of its futility. To my thinking, it is quite certain that Mr. Lanson wished no record of the notes to be kept. English banks do not check the numbers of pound notes or dollar bills. Perhaps, in a transaction of this magnitude, something of the kind might have been done, since the notes were being forwarded by post, but if Mr. Lanson asked specifically that the precaution should be omitted it may be taken for granted his instructions were obeyed."

Winter smiled wearily. How strange it was that men should be so ready to quarrel about futilities!

"Please oblige me by making the call yourself," he said.

When Davidson had gone, he surprised some, at least, of his hearers by the comment that each one of them, in the young man's place, would undoubtedly have acted in the same way.

"We are all distressed and perhaps a trifle short-tempered owing to our failure to lay hands on the murderer," he said. "I have never known any case

so peculiar in all its aspects as this one. It has elements which suggest necromancy, or black magic, or any other trick of sorcery which bamboozles one's brains. No stage illusionist has ever succeeded in causing either himself or an assistant to disappear so thoroughly and mysteriously as the masked man who presumably stabbed Mr. Lanson, knocked down the butler, and ran up the opposite stairs. Please remember that according to all calculations, he is still in the Castle. If so, he, a complete stranger, as several credible witnesses testify, was able to hit upon an effective hiding-place at a moment's notice. Yet no building could be searched more thoroughly from cellars to attics than this one last night and during the early hours of this morning. Then we have a series of stupefying coincidences. Mr. Glen began them. He, heir to a million, has a bitter dispute at nine o'clock with the man who left him so much money. What was the cause of that falling out? A perfectly natural desire on Mr. Lanson's part that his neurotic daughter should be wed to a normal-minded and healthy young Briton."

Mr. Hassall seemed to be nerving himself to make some disclosure here, but Winter continued his analysis almost brusquely.

"Of course, we shall hear more of that when the will is read," he cried. "Surely we all realised that side of the affair from Mr. Hassall's evident and quite reasonable avoidance of certain explanatory clauses? Well, Mr. Glen rushes out of the Castle in a tantrum, secures a room in the Crown Hotel, and is beguiled into making the acquaintance of that international crook, Victor Denasch. At 10.15 Mr. Sevastopolo, the man who introduced Denasch to Sleaford, telephones from London, and there is another quarrel—this time concerning affairs of state in the Greek capital. At

10.30 Denasch, it is supposed, seriously assaults a policeman in the White Friars ruins, and about the same hour Mr. Lanson is done to death. At 11 p.m. Miss Lanson's personal maid signals Denasch, who is once more prowling about the ruins—now accompanied by Mr. Glen—while the girl herself is frightened by a ghost, as she puts it, and pitches headlong down the turret stairs. At that hour, I come here, brought from the hotel by Mr. Wood, because I happen to be in Sleaford at Mr. Lanson's request. What was my mission? To help in circumventing a financial plot which he suspected Sevastopolo of engineering, with Denasch as the active agent. I set on foot what has proved a thoroughly abortive survey of every nook and cranny within these walls, because I was satisfied that it was literally impossible for the murderer to have gone beyond them. I was engaged in this and other important work when Mr. Davidson and I, returning to the library about midnight, found Miss Lanson there, alone, braving the dead body of her father and the presence on the table of the blood-stained dagger taken from his heart, so that she might telephone unhindered to the man who now claims to be her husband."

"Yes, gentlemen"—for a gasp of dismay came from many lips—"you ought to know these things before you find fault with Mr. Davidson for declining to blurt out in Sevastopolo's presence his knowledge that a large sum of money was missing. I think you will agree that you may have done him an injustice in your thoughts. Even Mr. Trevor forgot momentarily that at five o'clock this morning he and Davidson, with Mr. Glen and myself, examined every safe and set of drawers in the lower suite of offices, and I refuse to believe that we could have missed seeing two such piles of notes as those which came from

London. Let us assume the money was taken from the library last night, though it may well have been given to some other person by Mr. Lanson himself several days ago. Who took it? The murderer? Possibly. A whole crowd of people gathered in the library after the crime was discovered, but in their case, as in that of Miss Lanson, is it not reasonable to suppose that no bulky parcel of the kind could be carried away unnoticed? Ten thousand sheets of paper! No matter how tightly they were pressed together, their cubical content must have been large. Even if the dollar bills were of high denominations, twenties, fifties, or hundreds, there is no material diminution of the size of the parcel, because there remains the solid foundation of five thousand one-pound notes. So we hark back to the murderer, and where is the witness who notices that his pockets are bulging with contents approximating in size to at least fifteen ordinary octavo volumes? Not a whisper of such a thing from anyone. Am I exaggerating the size of the registered packets you signed for, Mr. Trevor? Probably that particular difficulty would have occurred to you when you thought the matter out. Again, those present may have decided that the police should arrest Denasch and the maid. Well, we have had that very thing in mind, but it is certain that neither the man nor the woman shared in the actual commission of the crime—by their literal presence in the library at the time the blow was struck, I mean—so we adopt the hypothesis that they can be far more useful to us at liberty than in a jail. You may take it from me that not they only, but others, have come under review as suspects."

"No, please!" and he held up a restraining hand. "Don't expect me to attach nebulous theories to named persons at this stage. I simply cannot do it.

Already I have gone miles beyond my legal powers. Have I not practically detained, if not arrested, nearly two hundred people in this Castle, and censored all means of communication between its inmates and the outside world? These methods must cease as soon as they are seriously challenged. This is England, not Bolshevist Russia. I want you all, therefore, to forget opinions formed without full knowledge of the few established facts. If——"

The door opened and Davidson came in.

"Well?" demanded Winter, breaking off abruptly.

"It was as we anticipated," said the secretary, without any hint of triumph in his placid tone. "The bank manager had not left the City, and after some demur, owing to the very private nature of the conversation, he told me there was no record of the numbers of the notes. The American dollar bills were of small denominations, mostly ones and twos. He believes there were five hundred fives. He would not have given me these particulars if he had not realised that we knew a good deal already and had seen his own accompanying letter."

"I want to say at once that if any remark of mine was hurtful, Mr. Davidson, I withdraw it unreservedly, and apologise," put in the lawyer.

"Sorry if I peeved you, Davy," smiled Trevor. "You had the right end of the stick all the time."

"So the incident ends," exclaimed Winter.

"It begins, rather," chirped Furneaux, who had sat still as a mouse more than half aware of a lurking cat during many minutes. "Where is that money? Did Mr. Lanson dispose of it? If so, to whom? Dollar bills would be viewed askance by any self-respecting Britisher outside an Exchange bureau."

"Why should they be put in circulation immediately

by any man or woman who also had command of so many pound notes ? " asked Hassall.

" Why, then, were they stipulated for in the first instance ? You two youngsters are well acquainted with Mr. Lanson's methods," and he looked at Davidson and Trevor. " Can you project yourselves into his mind, and make some sort of guess as to why he wanted so much money in a form so easily negotiable ? "

" He has never done anything like it before to my knowledge," said Davidson.

" Nor to mine," agreed Trevor.

" But doesn't its ultimate destination leap to the eye ? Ten thousand pounds ! Ten thousand men ! Where is the benighted corner of Europe to-day where a pound note or five dollars apiece cannot purchase the service of half an army corps for a day or two, at least ? "

" Gee whizz ! That money may have stirred up things in Athens this morning ! " yelped Trevor. " This is where we ought to send for Polo, right now."

" I'll let you off with a straw, superintendent," grinned Furneaux. " I take a seven in hats. I've a quite fair-sized occiput for a shrimp."

" Bring back Sevastopolo, by all means," said Davidson ; " but Mr. Winter could have been aware last night of some such action on Mr. Lanson's part as that now suggested by Mr. Furneaux if he knew of the missing money then."

Winter produced a folded paper from a breast pocket.

" On my authorisation, Mr. Davidson and Mr. Sevastopolo held a conversation over the phone about 12.30 p.m.," he explained. " Then, obviously for the first time, Mr. Sevastopolo heard of the murder. At

my request, Mr. Davidson lost no time in recording fully what passed. Mr. Sevastopolo, though greatly shocked and almost incoherent at the outset, calmed down sufficiently to give a summary of his earlier discussion with Mr. Lanson. Here is what he said, as Mr. Davidson wisely adopted the first person throughout in his memorandum.

DAVIDSON (alluding to the proposed Greek loan): *Surely the guv'nor did not fly into a rage about a matter which he had dealt with so thoroughly during the past three weeks?*

SEVASTOPOLO: *No. I urged him to reconsider it, but he refused even to listen. He said that he had already devised other measures, and was giving them financial backing, in literal cash, as a beginning, and by supplying funds for material needs later.*

"That, I think, is what you have in mind, Mr. Davidson?"

"Yes."

"God bless my soul!" ejaculated Hassall. "This inquiry becomes more involved every five minutes. You, of course, Mr. Furneaux, have seen the memorandum already?"

"Not a word of it," vowed Winter. "He knew it existed—that is all. During the past five hours he and I have not had as many seconds to ourselves. Moreover, it was not until we all went to luncheon that we heard of the money. No. This is one of Mr. Furneaux's own particular stunts. He excels in them. I don't profess to understand them. Neither does he. But he pulls them off. I look for them periodically."

"And they fall like rain on a parched soil," cackled Furneaux.

"Of course," said Winter, "it is merely guesswork at present."

"A most perplexing business," sighed Hassall. "Shall we ask Mr. Sevastopolo to rejoin us?"

Winter seemed to weigh the idea, so his subordinate seized the opening.

"While my worthy chief tries to guess the right answer may I suggest it?" he said with a smirk that caused Winter to wriggle in his chair. "It is 'No.' Our Greek friend feels that he is under a cloud. His vivid imagination will darken it. Let him expect thunder and lightning during the next hour or two."

"The truth is that none of us would feel quite comfortable if he were in the room," said Winter. "He has not taken us into his confidence yet. He is one of those men who will never tell us more than he thinks we ought to know."

"It seems to me," put in Dr. Macgregor, sharing in the discussion at last after sitting at the table like a sphinx, "that we might pay special attention to his friend Denasch."

"The very thing!" cried Furneaux, springing up and pressing a bell. "Let's ask the butler. A splendid fellow, Pinkney. He solves any problem for you offhand."

Pinkney himself appeared. He was aware, of course, of the conclave in the morning-room, and kept an eye on it, so to speak.

"Has Alice Romer returned?" began Furneaux.

"Yes, sir. She has just come in."

"Half-past four was her hour. It is now after five. Where is she?"

"In Miss Lanson's room, sir?"

"Anybody else there?"

"Yes, sir. Mr. Sevastopolo."

"Thank you. By the way, what time is dinner served?"

"At eight o'clock, sir, usually, but to-day I thought you gentlemen might like it a little earlier, so I have arranged provisionally for 7.30."

"'Provisionally' is quite the right word. You and I have a little matter to discuss about a quarter to seven. Will that date suit you?"

"Yes, sir." And the butler vanished.

"Observe?" said Furneaux, looking around with a self-satisfied grin. "Pinkney has given us the right dope. Is that the correct phrase, Mr. Trevor?"

"I don't quite follow," exclaimed the lawyer.

Furneaux glanced at Winter. Jesting was all very well, but it was for the Chief to determine what, if any, explanation should be proffered.

"There is no use in mincing matters," said Winter at once. "Miss Lanson and Denasch have been in unbroken communication for some weeks past. The maid, Alice Romer, has acted as their go-between in Sleaford. Mr. Sevastopolo shares their confidence. That is a rather staggering statement, but a well-founded one."

"What are we to deduce from it?" inquired Hassall with a hesitancy quite foreign to his usual lawyer-like air.

"I don't know yet." The Chief uttered each word separately, and a touch of fierceness in his voice revealed how thoroughly he was stirred. "But, trust me, I shall know before long. Now, gentlemen, I propose that we adjourn until after dinner, when I hope that all who can make it convenient will attend a further discussion. I look on this gathering as a sort of advisory committee, and promise that no material fact will be withheld. . . . You, Mr. Macgregor, have given us a lot of your valuable time.

If there is nothing really new I'll phone you about 8.30, and thus save you a needless journey."

"I must see Miss Lanson before she retires to rest," said Macgregor, and left it at that.

Hassall, Davidson and Trevor went to the library to discuss the ways and means of a superficial examination of every document both there and in the offices beneath—a task that could not be completed within ten days or a fortnight. Glen and the police officers decided to overhaul the turret while the light was still strong enough. A painstaking scrutiny merely confirmed the opinion formed by Winter and Glen the previous evening. No possible hiding-place existed there. The walls were solid, and the space between the wooden roof of the cupola and its outer covering of lead would not harbour any living creature larger than a bat.

Superintendent Wood reported that the architect and builder whom he had requested to go over the Abbey ruins were quite positive as to the non-existence of any secret passage. They took nothing for granted. Ladders were obtained, and every broken wall and open window space tested. The usual narrow gallery led along both sides of the nave above the main arches, but it had no other openings. After hours of hard work they assured the superintendent that the building held no concealed doorway. In effect, therefore, Alice Romer's story was true. Denasch had used the place as the best available position whence he could see a light flashed from the turret's south window.

Furneaux grew restive under all these negatives.

"I think we ought to bring Denasch here," he growled, when Wood had told his story.

"For what purpose?" said the Chief.

"To torture him until he tells us why he asked Alice Romer to signal twice last night."

"The rack and the thumbscrew seldom if ever produced the truth," said Winter rather impatiently. "It is, or should be, a notorious fact that people subjected to them said what their oppressors wished. To escape further agony they would swear anything."

"Denasch wouldn't. You see, he cannot imagine who it is we want to implicate in the crime. After one wrench at his effeminate joints he would yell that he was awaiting a message from Irene Lanson."

"Don't you think my cousin's name is being bandied about rather too freely?" said Glen.

"Oh! Are *you* going to turn savage now?" jeered Furneaux.

"Possibly. Miss Lanson may be abnormal in some respects, but you're on dangerous ground when you dare even to hint that she took some share in her father's murder."

"I have always disliked committees," said Furneaux, apparently addressing himself. "They're almost as difficult to work with as Chief Commissioners. 'You really should not mention the lady's name,' says the committeeman. 'The Home Secretary will be greatly annoyed if he hears of your action,' says the Commissioner. Felix, I love thee, but never more be officer of mine. Mr. Wood, will you ask your architect and builder to come here to-morrow morning at 9.30? I need their professional advice."

With that he skipped down the spiral stairs and did not return.

"I seem to have annoyed that little humorist," said Glen stiffly.

"You'll be begging his pardon by this time to-morrow," was Winter's dispassionate comment. Evidently Glen found it rather disconcerting.

"But—my cousin!" he protested.

"It may interest you to learn that I laid the strong hand of the law on Miss Lanson last night, and have been tempted more than once since to arrest her. She has done nothing but hinder us. Sevastopolo is aware of it, and I believe he is trying to persuade her at this very moment that her wisest, her only safe course, is to speak out. He knows she has been engaged in some intrigue. Of course, being a Greek, and her husband, he will not tell us so himself, but if she acted in innocent folly she ought to clear her conscience now. For the rest, if you, her only male relative, feel that you cannot take an active part in our investigations, you have but to say so."

"I seem to have a genius for getting myself into trouble," said Glen with a dismay that would have been amusing in less tragic conditions.

"I don't suppose you and I would ever fall out, though you put me to the test when we met last night. But Furneaux will not stand any high-and-mightiness. He will hit back, and shrewdly."

"All right! I'll bend the knee! Surely both you and he will acknowledge I had some sort of reason for being shocked at the implication against my cousin?"

"Yes, we'll admit anything if only we can get on with our work. Now, suppose I begin with you. You have lived in the Castle since July. Can you recall any visitor, man or woman, to Mr. Lanson, his daughter, or Sevastopolo, whom you regarded as distinct from the usual class of person seen here?"

"I've been turning that very thing over in my mind all day, and even looked through the visitors' book in the hall where the names of callers are recorded, with the date and hour and the name of the person they inquire for. I'm sorry, but I cannot help you. Mr. Lanson gave appointments to all sorts of queer

folk—Greek popes, Armenian patriarchs, Tsarist generals and Polish Jews, not to mention the ordinary politician or financier in a silk hat or plus-fours. Social visitors saw Miss Lanson or Miss Temple, or both. I recognised every name of that class appearing in the book during the past month. They ranged from a countess arranging a tennis tournament to the rector's wife asking our ladies to co-operate in forming a local cookery class."

"You never saw or heard anything to arouse even a whiff of suspicion?"

Glen looked uncomfortable then.

"Of course, there was Irene's attitude towards Polo."

"Slightly scandalising, I take it?"

"It was more than slightly so. Dorothy—Miss Temple—was horribly upset. Neither she nor I knew what to say or how to act."

"Well, well. We understand now. You said nothing of this to Mr. Lanson?"

"Not a word."

"It is fairly certain that he died in ignorance of his daughter's marriage?"

"Why, of course! Didn't he——"

"Press you to marry her? Um—yes. He was a masterful man. He knew his Greeks. Sevastopolo would probably take the cash and let the credit go."

"Dash it all! Irene couldn't commit bigamy!"

Winter laughed.

"That would be crude, indeed," he said. "Well, we can do nothing more here until Furneaux has consulted his experts, and we have a sectional drawing showing the construction of this turret from base to pinnacle."

Superintendent Wood pricked his ears at that. He

was beginning to see how the Scotland Yard men dispensed with the spoken word. At the Chief's request he wrapped in a handkerchief the electric torch still lying on the table and undertook to safeguard it. Alice Romer's finger-prints would be there, but there was no point in checking them, as she had made no secret of its ownership.

The butler waylaid the three men in the hall.

"Mr. Furneaux wishes you to bulldoze—that was what he said, sir—'bulldoze'—a footman who waited on you at luncheon," he confided to Winter's private ear. "The man's name is Ferdinand Rossi——"

"Irish?" inquired the Chief pleasantly.

"No, sir. Maltese-Italian. He is a first-rate servant, and extra useful because he speaks several languages. Mr. Furneaux asked me to tell you that Rossi seemed to listen attentively to all that passed at table."

"Send Rossi to the goring-room—I mean the morning-room; but first let me have any letters received here for him or posted by him to-day."

"There is only one, sir—a post card, which he dropped in the box an hour ago. I thought you might wish to see it. Here it is."

"Capital! Where is Mr. Furneaux now?"

"In Mr. Sevastopolo's suite."

"Alone?"

"Oh, no, sir. Miss Irene is there, too, and Mr. Sevastopolo, of course."

"Mr. Pinkney, I do nothing but waste time when I leave you. However, produce Rossi in two minutes. I'll ring. Detail him for the job."

He turned to Glen.

"I want to get rid of you for half an hour," he said. "I'll explain later. Meanwhile, Miss Temple is mooning around without anyone to talk to. You can

entertain her with recent history. Omit nothing. She's a clever girl. The butler will tell you where she is."

When Ferdinand Rossi, footman, "tall, dark-complexioned, and of good appearance, with excellent refs.," as he might be described in a registry office, entered the morning-room, he was received agreeably by the Chief, who was lighting a long-deferred cigar and standing near the central window. Wood, not far away, was filling his pipe.

"How does one raise these blinds?" purred Winter, busy with a match.

"This way, sir," said the man, who spoke without any trace of accent. Incidentally, he caused the maximum amount of light to fall on his swarthy features.

"Now, Rossi, I want you to lift another curtain," went on Winter. "Why are you communicating with Mr. Alexis Simonides, in the Metropole Hotel, London? Above all, seeing what tremendous things are happening here, why have you nothing more striking to say than that the fine weather still continues unbroken, and you have every reason to believe it will last?"

For that brief space which is marked on a camera "one hundredth of a second" the shadow of fear flashed across Rossi's eyes. Then, respectful as a man-servant ought to be, he said:

"I wrote to a friend, sir, and thought it advisable not to allude to other matters."

"Is that the only explanation you offer?"

"Yes, sir. It—is—all——" The obsequious voice died away in sheer terror because of the new menace in the detective's stern face.

"All right!" Winter nodded to Wood. "Have him locked up! I'll take care Simonides is attended to."

Then Rossi did quite the wrong thing—he tried to escape. He would never have believed, without personal experience, that a man of the Chief's size could move so swiftly. Before he knew exactly what had happened he was sprawled on the carpet, with a heavy knee pressing the small of his back.

"Lend me your 'cuffs, Wood," said Winter. "I may use mine before the night is out."

"No, no!" wheezed the captive. "Let me up! I've done nothing, I swear it, but I don't want to go to prison. I'll tell you everything!"

"You'll feel even better disposed when you're 'cuffed. Turn over! I won't hurt you if you behave. There! Sit down now, and let's have a friendly chat!"

CHAPTER XV

Furneaux Receives Promotion

Meanwhile Furneaux was enjoying a séance much to his taste.

A message that he was free long before the time appointed brought a speedy request that he should come to the Greek's set of rooms, which were situated in the same corridor as the library—next, in fact, to apartments where the owner of Sleaford Castle was now lying dead.

When the detective entered, brought thither by Rossi, as it happened, he found Irene Lanson seated near a window. Sevastopolo, smoking a cigarette, had his back to the fire-place. The room wore the aspect of use. Packed bookshelves and a littered

writing-desk provided its chief articles of furniture. A fine mezzotint of the Acropolis occupied the position usually allotted to a mirror over the mantelpiece.

Whether by accident or design, the girl-wife kept her face averted. She was looking out into the very garden across which her shadow had fallen from the library roof. But the man was alert, even affable.

"You anticipated me by less than a minute, Mr. Furneaux," he said with a welcoming smile. "I was just on the point of sending for you. Will you sit down? Try one of these," and he proffered a cigarette-case.

"No, thanks. I'm a non-smoker. It is my only virtue. At times I drink like a fish and swear like a trooper. . . . Nice view that, Mrs. Sevastopolo. I've been drawn to it more than once to-day."

Irene did not turn her head, though she heard her name as a married woman for the first time in her own home.

"Please leave me out of your conversation," she said listlessly. "I am here only because my husband insists on my presence. He has some absurd notion that you will convince where he has failed."

"Is this another phase of the eternal triangle?" chirped the detective.

"What can you possibly mean?"

"It is not altogether unknown that another man should persuade when a husband is not listened to. . . . Now, don't be angry! I merely wished to see your eyes. Every husband is a potential brute. This one has made you cry, I notice."

A glint of astonished amusement chased away the gloom from the girl's quite beautiful and expressive features.

"Ramon said you were a good ambassador," she

admitted. "At least you have made me smile, which is more than anyone else has accomplished this day."

"Ambassador!" squealed Furneaux. "*Nom d'un nom!* That's going some, as Mr. Trevor might say in an unguarded moment."

Sevastopolo nodded approvingly.

"I thought so," he murmured, seeming to pat himself on the back for his own divination. "You're quick! Oh, yes—always sharp and ready! Have you guessed, then?"

"I spend my life guessing. I love riddles. Propound!"

"But—if only to verify my judgment before my wife—say what you think. Why have we brought you here?"

"To tell me who killed Mr. Lanson."

"True, in a sense. Of course, we do not know yet. If you gentlemen from Scotland Yard are as reasonable-minded as I take you to be, I shall be in a position to supply full information within a week."

"And how are we to occupy ourselves meanwhile—study the traffic problem in London—or shoot more partridges?"

"Public opinion would not allow that. It is always so ill-informed. No, Mr. Furneaux. Your big friend remains here. I go to Athens. If you approve, I leave Sleaford by the night mail."

"And if I don't approve?"

"We need not consider any alternative until you have heard my proposition. I told you I had come round to your point of view. Mr. Lanson's slaying was a political execution of the first magnitude. No other theory explains it. Where will its effect be felt? In Athens, and on the Stock Exchanges of the principal nations—above all, in Athens. I take no count of

the foolish notion that some financial group removed a rival by such means. Money is not made in that way. There remains Athens. Here, in Sleaford, I can only indulge in fanciful musings. In Athens I shall ascertain facts. Within twenty-four hours of my arrival there, Scotland Yard will have the name of the murderer, or, if not that, the names of a small number of men of whom he is one."

Furneaux, who had taken a chair at Sevastopolo's invitation, leaned forward, with hands on knees, and eyes piercing Irene Lanson, who had not turned away again, but was watching the faces of the two men.

"What do *you* think?" he inquired, after a few seconds of a silence heavy with fate, since none of the three could divine the final outcome of the decision then being made.

"There is force in what Ramon says," she admitted sorrowfully. "I have only urged that he should remain here until—until—my dear father is buried."

"That means a loss of four whole days if the result warrants the journey."

"Ah, yes, I understand that. But I am frightened and miserable."

"You don't wish to be deserted—in some sense of the word—at this crisis in your life?"

"Yes. That is it—not quite all."

"Please speak openly. What other objection have you?"

"I fear the risk to my husband."

"You think he will be in danger out there?"

"I am sure of it."

"From what source?"

"I—Ramon—why do you leave *me* to answer these questions?"

"Because, my dear, Mr. Furneaux is putting them to you. If he wanted to hear my opinion he would not seek yours."

"Well, then, do not tell me later I was mad to blurt out that which is most secret and hidden. . . . Mr. Furneaux, my husband has some prospect of being chosen King of Greece. The moment that happens—the moment he is even nominated for the vacant throne—he becomes an object of hatred to those Greeks who want to establish a militarist Republic."

"Unfortunately, that is more or less true of all kings and, oddly enough, of all presidents."

"Yes, I know. But I am not thinking now of regicides and political maniacs. Greece is torn asunder by factions. A King and a Queen have just been expelled. Why should not Ramon wait until the situation is clearer?"

"But he is going to Athens to find out who killed your father?"

"He will keep his word—do not doubt it—but, once in Athens, he cannot evade the dynastic trouble. Moreover"—and her full, rich voice subsided into a pitiful wail—"where he is I ought to be. If he risks his life I should stand by his side. That is a wife's duty, her privilege. And how can I leave Sleaford to-night?"

"That, I think, tells the whole story," said Sevastopolo quietly.

Furneaux for once was abashed. This emotional girl appealed to him most strongly as a psychological study. He had expected her at any moment to pass into a trance, but here she was behaving like any other normal daughter and wife subjected to an almost intolerable strain. Suddenly the notion occurred that she was influenced mainly by environment. All her

seizures were associated with the turret and its legend. Was it not a recognised fact that her visions centred round the luckless Abbot of White Friars who met his death in the oldest inhabited part of the Castle? But this was no time to indulge in irrational theorising, and he dared not allow his sympathies to go out to this strange couple. His intelligence must be ruthless as a surgeon's knife. If he could project himself into the secret places of their hearts, the mystery of Charles Lanson's death would be a mystery no longer.

"We are far from having the whole story yet," he said sharply, forcing the semblance of a dryly official aloofness which he certainly did not feel.

"No," admitted the Greek, evidently on the point of going to comfort his wife, but compelling himself to forbear. "Between us, we have told you everything except that which may be the greatest surprise of all to you personally. I want you to come with me to Athens!"

Furneaux merely put a question with his eyebrows. It sufficed.

"I think I am a judge of men," went on the other. "You appeal to me. Time is pressing if I would catch that eight o'clock train. How much do you earn as a detective-inspector?"

"Net—about four hundred a year."

"Join me as my private secretary, and I will pay you four thousand."

"Pounds, or drachmas?"

"Pounds."

"And retain my services a fortnight?"

"I will guarantee you a four years' engagement, and make it binding by an order on a London bank."

"Are you really serious?"

"Absolutely. I want your help. You know how to think. So few men have that quality."

"But, in the conditions, isn't this offer open to grave misconstruction?"

"Do you mean as a bribe? How can it be that? There is no suggestion of interference with your police duties in this affair. We go together to Athens. You indicate to Scotland Yard that the murder was committed by a man who, if now in England—or in Greece for that matter—can be arrested, tried, and hanged. What claim has the Criminal Investigation Department on you for the rest of your days that you should not accept a well-paid position of real importance in the world and, if it comes to that, to your own country?"

Furneaux had never before been so surprised by any of the strange incidents which had enlivened his varied and adventurous career. The most remarkable thing about a quite unprecedented situation was that he believed the Greek to be in dead earnest. Of course, the offer sounded preposterous. But was it? His brain almost buzzed. In the whirl of thought he clung fast to the traditions of the great service in which he had been schooled. Whether for his personal gain or loss, for good or evil, the claims of duty were paramount.

"What do *you* say to this?" he cried, looking at Irene Lanson.

"If I knew," she faltered, "that you—were with Ramon—I might reconcile myself—to his going."

The little man sprang to his feet.

"Come, both of you!" he shrilled. "We must discuss this *entr'acte* with that renowned impresario, James Leander Winter!"

So it chanced that Ferdinand Rossi, pale and shaken, had just subsided into a chair with his manacled hands

clasped across his breast, when Furneaux opened the door of the morning-room.

"Who is there?" demanded Winter sharply.

"I," said Furneaux. "And others," he added, taking in the tableau at a glance.

"What others?"

"Miss Lanson and Mr. Sevastopolo."

Some men, in the heat of the moment, might have blundered in describing his companions. Not so Furneaux, who was not likely to acquaint Rossi with any sensational news the man had not heard already.

"That's all right," agreed Winter. "They may come in. Then lock the door."

"Why, what has Ferdinand done?" cried the girl, when she discovered the handcuffs. Her astonishment was genuine. Indeed, she looked quite distressed.

"He is now going to tell us, Miss Lanson. Will you please sit down, and leave this inquiry to me? . . . Begin at the beginning, Rossi. What made you a spy?"

"Sir," said the footman, "I am not a spy. Certain friends of mine asked for harmless information. I gave it. That does not make me a spy."

"What information?"

"They wanted to know about Mr. Sevastopolo's movements. If he went away, I was to find out where he was going. If he returned, I only had to state the hour. The postmark showed the date. Please put your hand in my breast pocket, and take out a folded paper. It is a code."

Winter examined the document. The wording of the post card in his possession corresponded with the statement that the Greek secretary had reached the Castle at noon that day.

"Who is Monsieur Simonides?" he inquired.

"I do not know, sir."

"But *I* do. That rascal——"

Sevastopolo stopped in deference to Winter's raised hand.

"Rossi is giving his own evidence," said the Chief emphatically. "It interests you, I have no doubt, but I can permit no interference."

His temper was wearing thin where the Greek element in Sleaford Castle was concerned. He distrusted both Sevastopolo and his wife, and he had determined to treat them with no more politeness than was necessary. But he wondered why Furneaux grinned broadly. What comic element could his deputy possibly find in this interlude, and why had he brought these two people to a room in which, as he must have realised, a rather important phase of the investigation was in progress?

"Now, Rossi," the Chief literally barked, "I have no time to waste on you. If you want to make a statement let us have it. If not, you cool your heels in jail."

"I have done nothing to warrant my arrest, sir," said the man doggedly.

"Of course not. That is why you tried to bolt when I tackled you about Simonides."

"That was a mistake, sir. I was nervous. I gave way to panic."

Winter did not reply. He simply stared at the prisoner with those prominent blue eyes which, in their way, were as effective as Furneaux's brilliant black ones.

"I have never met Monsieur Simonides, sir," stammered Rossi. "We servants—in big houses like this—have lots of professional friends—if I may use the term. We know valets, and butlers, and such

like, all over the country. An old schoolmate of mine, a Maltese boy, is a waiter in the Hotel Metropole. His name is Carlo Pieri. He wrote saying that Monsieur Simonides was greatly interested in Mr. Sevastopolo's whereabouts owing to his influence in Greek affairs, and would pay me five shillings for every post card I sent. I was to write daily. I have forwarded nineteen. Is that a crime?"

"If that is all you have done, why were you so keen on overhearing the conversation at luncheon to-day?"

"Having read so much in the newspapers about the revolutions in Greece, I couldn't help it, sir."

"In effect, having tasted blood by drawing money for revealing your master's business, you thought you might aspire to higher things?"

"Never a word have I written about Mr. Lanson, sir."

"What? Is not Mr. Sevastopolo his trusted secretary? Were not his affairs Mr. Lanson's?"

"That's putting it at the worst."

"How can you put it better?"

It is difficult for a man to wriggle when he is handcuffed, but Rossi managed a shrug of sheer desperation.

"If you must know," he grumbled, "I had an idea that Monsieur Simonides was on another track altogether. I thought he was keeping an eye on Mr. Sevastopolo—and a lady."

"What lady?"

"I'm d——d if I tell you. So there!"

"Was it Miss Lanson?" said Sevastopolo. This time the Chief did not stop him, as Furneaux was licking his thin lips in sheer physical enjoyment of life's unconscious but exquisite humour.

"Well, if *you* ask me, sir, it was," and Rossi raised a sickly smile.

"This poor dupe is telling the truth," pronounced the Greek. "He can go. Let Mr. Pinkney see to his instant dismissal."

Furneaux's left eyelid drooped, whereupon Winter laughed.

"All right, Rossi!" he said. "You're fired! It was your own fault that I had to grab you. . . . Mr. Wood, how about your key?"

The footman was released. Mr. Pinkney, summoned by bell, was impressive when he heard how the delinquent should be dealt with.

"This way, Rossi!" he said, holding the door open.

"Let me off, please, miss," the man whined to Irene. "I'll never make such a mistake again."

"Not here!" said Sevastopolo. "Go to Simonides, and tell him from me that I always knew he was a scoundrel, but now I realise he is merely a fool. . . . Mr. Pinkney, give this fellow a month's wages and his fare to London. Throw in a taxi. I want him to reach Simonides quickly."

"Rossi, this way!" said the butler, and Rossi faded from the room.

"I should hate to be slung out by Mr. Pinkney," cackled Furneaux. "He has the grand manner. What a 'Pooh-Bah' he would make! And to think I shall not have the consultation with him about the wines for dinner! That is hard. It goes against the grain. Really, Mr. Sevastopolo, I'm afraid you will journey to Athens to-night alone. Don't look so flabbergasted, Chief. I'm sure Miss Lanson will let you relight that cigar. I want to prepare you for the worst shock of your official career. . . . Go ahead, Mr. Sevastopolo. *I* daren't tell him. It's your star turn, not mine."

Nothing daunted, the Greek repeated the offer

he had made upstairs. He covered the ground thoroughly. A man who would be king must be able to subdue other men. It was a big feather in his cap that he had snatched the erring footman out of Winter's clutch. He accumulated a whole plume by getting him to listen in silence.

The Chief never hesitated when grave decision was called for. He glanced at his watch, and checked it with a clock in the room.

"I must consult the Foreign Office," he said when Sevastopolo ceased speaking. "I don't know whether or not I can get hold of anyone in authority at this hour, but, in any event, *you* can go, and Mr. Furneaux will accompany you as far as London, where you must remain till ten o'clock to-morrow if you travel by the Orient express."

"Then you personally approve?" cried the Greek elatedly.

"Allow me to interpret," broke in Furneaux as Winter rose. "Mr. Winter and I think alike in these matters. If British interests demand that I become a highly-paid filibuster, behold in me from this instant a small but determined pirate. In the train you'll tell me how to dress the part, though I'll look a frightful guy in a white petticoat and a brimless cap with a tassel. If, on the other hand, I am ordered to retain the more modest rôle of a detective-inspector, I require no comic opera additions to my wardrobe."

"What about Denasch?" said Superintendent Wood stolidly.

That excellent officer was wandering in a maze. He did not even try to understand Furneaux, but that Winter should lend himself to these scandalous irregularities went almost beyond belief.

"Denasch is of no account," said Sevastopolo with

a "so-much-for-a-Buckingham!" air that was quite impressive.

"He may not bulk large in your estimate of affairs, but he committed a serious assault on one of my men last night, for which I hope to give him at least six months' hard," persisted Wood.

"By all means. Make it twelve and you will please me."

"But what crime is it that Mr. Denasch has committed?"

Irene Lanson's voice was calm enough, but her face had become ashen white. Wood was about to answer when Furneaux rapped sharply on the table with his knuckles.

"I am particularly anxious that nothing more shall be said about Denasch or any other person till the Chief comes back," he cried. "You and he will soon be rid of me, Mr. Wood, for a whole day if not for four years, so any kind of police-court proceedings can be considered carefully by both of you when my disturbing presence is removed."

Wood might be befogged by the extraordinary course taken by events, but it did dawn on him then that any reference to the White Friars ruins might have an immediate and disastrous effect on Irene Lanson. He was so pleased by the discovery that he had succeeded at last in sensing the true intent of one of Furneaux's cryptic utterances that he dropped the subject. The little detective contrived a further diversion by suggesting that Sevastopolo should order dinner to be served earlier for the pair of them, and arrange for a car to be in readiness soon after 7.30, as he, Furneaux, had to pick up his baggage at the Crown Hotel. These minor details necessitated the butler's presence once more, and by the time they were settled Winter came back.

Disregarding the others, he went straight up to Furneaux.

"You are given six months' leave of absence," he said. "Take care of yourself. I'll miss you horribly."

For a tense moment the two looked into each other's eyes. Then Furneaux, who will surely die with a quip on his lips, turned to Superintendent Wood.

"Somebody had to get six months," he squeaked. "I am the victim. Be content!"

"What's the joke?" demanded Winter, glad of the chance to say something banal, for he would feel deeply the loss of his well-tried friend and colleague during the heavy days yet to come.

"Oh, Mr. Wood wants to put Denasch in choky," grinned Furneaux.

"All in good time," said the Chief carelessly. "We can sweep up such rubbish when convenient. Meanwhile, Mr. Wood, while these young people are saying 'Good-bye' to each other—for not too long a parting, I trust—we poor bobbies can snatch a few minutes' quiet talk."

Irene Lanson was obviously suffering. Her lissom elegance of carriage was little in evidence as she went out with her husband. If the old saw be true that a man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still it is a hundredfold more applicable to a woman. She dreaded this excursion to far-off Athens and its political whirlpools. Even Lady Macbeth, though she could spur on her mate to murder, flinched from the grim task herself, and this frail girl, confronted now by the swirling currents and hidden rocks that render thrones so difficult of access, was not minded to let her lover brave them. Nor would she have drawn any shred of comfort from Winter's first words when the three men were alone.

"I don't like this new development a little bit, Frog," he said, frowning thoughtfully. "Of course Sevastopolo is right. Athens is the nerve centre of the disturbance, and he will soon find the clique which sought Lanson's death. If he goes, one of our men must go with him, but I wish to goodness he had not hit on you."

"There are elements of greatness in our Greek!" smirked Furneaux.

"You little rat! You love the job!"

"It has only one drawback. The old firm shouldn't have been parted."

The Chief laughed, though by no means because he was amused.

"I hinted as much to the F.O., but they wouldn't hear of it," he said. "I pointed out that Wood could carry on here, with Sheldon and another of our men, if he felt like having them, and was told plainly that Sleaford Castle is my address till this mess is cleaned up. They're not worrying so much about Lanson. That is ordinary police business. It is the dynastic factor that counts, and that is why they jumped at the idea that you should accompany the candidate for royalty. And—a word in your ear—they don't think much of his chance. It's a spin of a coin, at the best."

"Doesn't it rather depend on how many coins he spins?"

"And on how many he has to spin," put in Wood.

"He has plenty of money at command," said Winter. "I can tell you now what I was not at liberty to reveal earlier, that Lanson's own doubts took shape when he found out, quite by accident, that Sevastopolo was feathering a large nest for himself by copying his master's methods. It's all very well for people to talk

of jackals sharing the lion's feast, but I'm inclined to believe that the jackals have to keep a jolly long way off. I don't mean to convey that the Greek controls millions in his own name, but he owns enough to start the pot boiling. It gave him a shock to-day when he heard about the trust fund. But what of it? His wife has an income of half a million a year, and that, plus his own hoard of a couple of hundred thousand, may well found a monarchy. However, that's my own opinion. The Foreign Office crowd are not nearly so sanguine."

"They never are!" said Furneaux. "If you want a set of first-class mutes for a diplomatic funeral before the corpse has even sent for the doctor, walk into Downing Street and turn to the left."

"Yet it's singular what faith they repose in you," snapped Winter.

"The trouble is, James, you've seen too much of me. I'm no Cleopatra. Age has withered and custom staled my infinite variety."

"You two talk a language I don't understand," complained Wood. "Anyhow, I'm glad you are not both hopping off to Athens and leaving this infernal business on my hands. If you hadn't been here I would now have three people—possibly four—in the cells at the back of my station. Yet you tell Number One to behave like a nice girl, and visit Number Two at the Crown Hotel, and you give Number Three a month's wages and extras to enjoy a holiday in London. Your ways are not my ways, and that's a fact."

"Don't leave us in the dark, Superintendent," urged Furneaux. "Who is the possible fourth?"

"It's either a man or a woman, though I'm jiggered if I know which. Well, I'll drop quietly down the hill. Someone may have stolen a duck or smashed a

street lamp while I'm fooling around here. Send for me when you want me. Maybe I'll stroll up with Doctor Macgregor."

Winter caught Wood by his broad shoulders and forced him into a chair.

"What?" he shouted. "Are you going to cut up rough, too? My dear fellow, this imp of a Jerseyite will soon be in the train, and you and I can conduct a proper police inquiry according to the law of the land, which he ignores and scoffs at and flaunts through every sub-section of every Act of Parliament. With him away we may be dull, but we shall at least be free of suspicion by the County Chief Constable."

A knock at the door heralded Mr. Pinkney. He bowed gravely to Furneaux.

"Your dinner is served, sir," he said. "In the conditions, as time is pressing, I took the liberty of providing a nice Graves with the soup and fish and a full-bodied Chambertin with the joint."

"*Cré nom!*" vowed Furneaux, "the man's not a butler, but an oracle, with ever the right word!"

Dorothy Temple, summoning to her aid that spirit of self-sacrifice which is the most blessed attribute of women, subdued her pride and went to Irene Lanson's rooms at half-past seven to make a friendly inquiry about a meal, and whether they should partake of it together. She had her hand out to knock when an agonised cry from within caused her to disregard ceremony and throw open the door. Irene was in Sevastopolo's arms, sobbing frenziedly, and Dorothy would have hastened out again if the man had not called to her in utmost agitation.

"Please come!" he cried. "She will listen to you. Tell her she is fretting needlessly. I shall count the

hours rather than the days until we are together again."

"But—what has happened now?" was Dorothy's amazed question.

"Rene will explain. God help me, I must go! Take her! Speak to her! Oh, be good to her now! She needs a friend sorely."

With a passionate kiss he placed his wife on a couch and disengaged her clinging hands.

Not knowing in the least what all the commotion was about, and rather fearful lest she might be acting wrongly in aiding and abetting the sudden departure which the Greek had spoken of, Dorothy went perforce to the stricken girl's assistance. For a time, after the door had closed on Sevastopolo, Irene seemed to be nearly unconscious. But she was not. Suddenly she opened her eyes, and crooned in heart-rending accents:

"He is going to his death! I shall never see him again! It is not a throne, but a grave they offer him!"

At the main entrance Winter and Wood, with Glen and Davidson, who happened to pass through the hall on their way to the dining-room, were bidding farewell to the travellers. The two younger men were staggered by the news which the Chief whispered, but they had the good sense to shake hands with the Greek and wish him God-speed in his errand. He was greatly agitated. His speech was hardly coherent, but he did contrive to ask Glen to do all in his power to comfort and reassure his cousin during the next few days.

"Do you know," Glen confided to Winter when the car was hurrying to the gateway, "I'm afraid I did that chap an injustice. He is really in love with his wife."

"How odd!" said the Chief.

Now that Furneaux was gone, the big man had to don the little man's mantle. So much, at least, was due to his memory.

CHAPTER XVI

The Second Tragedy

The two Scotland Yard men had snatched the opportunity for a quiet talk while Furneaux ate his dinner (his travelling companion sent a message of regret at being unable to join him), so Winter, in the course of a hurried review of minor points, gave his friend a memorandum of certain things found in Lanson's pockets. Few were noteworthy, but among these was a small diary. The entries consisted mainly of initials, hours and dates. Thus Winter's own name figured as "W. 2 p.m., 15th," which he recognised at once as an appointment he kept with the millionaire at a farm he was shooting over. "Write S." occurred on two recent days. Was "S" Simonides? The same initial appeared five times in June—once it read "See S. 6.30"—but not at all during July or August. Mr. Lanson had spent June in London.

"I'll put Sheldon on to Simonides as soon as you've gone, Frog," said Winter. He produced a pink-coloured object about the size of a hazel-nut. "Now, this puzzles me. It was in a waistcoat pocket. What is it?"

"A scarab," pronounced Furneaux instantly.

"It looks like a beetle."

"It *is* a beetle."

"We have no time for back-chat, Charles. Get on with the story."

"Scarabeus is the Latin for beetle, an insect which the Egyptians worshipped. I don't know what Tut-ankhemen called it. How can one pronounce a language which is written in snakes and birds and animals? Remind me some time to discourse on the Egyptian veneration for cats. This strikes me as a modern copy of an ornament worn by a three-thousand-year-old mummy, though it is made of real onyx."

"A queer article for a rich man to carry around. Could one regard it as a charm?"

"Possibly. A charm, or a token. *Mille diables!* I wish you had shown me this earlier."

"Take it with you."

"Gee! That's an idea! I may flash it on Sevastopolo! Anything else?"

"Yes. Something rather serious. I must show it to Hassall. A draft codicil to the will, which stipulates that in the event of F. not marrying I. during the testator's life, the legacy of a million becomes one thousand only."

"Jumping Jehosophat! Good job for F. you saw him in the Crown Hotel last night! Of course, the codicil doesn't exist as such, while the initials deprive this screed of any legal value."

"True. But Hassall must know. . . . Now, Froggie, a whisper in your ear. You're not called on to stop a bullet or intercept a knife-thrust merely because Sevastopolo wishes to become a king."

"My boy, I'm a firm believer in allowing these extemporised potentates to lead their troops in action. I'll phone you from the Yard at nine in the morning,

as I'm going straight to bye-bye when we arrive in town."

"One more word! Don't try and learn Greek. It'll crack that small nut of yours."

"My dear James, shall I ever forget your heroic struggles while learning English?"

A record of the foregoing conversation explains Mr. Hassall's attitude when he read the memorandum as to the codicil.

"If you don't mind," he said, "I'll retain this until the mystery of my friend's death is solved, and probate of the will granted. Then I shall burn it. It is valueless except as supplying evidence of possible motive for the crime. To make known its existence now to Glen would introduce new complexities, of which we have a surfeit already. Remember, at any moment we may call for his unflinching support as a trustee."

Winter agreed instantly, though he was bound to reflect that during the twenty-one hours which had elasped since Superintendent Wood brought him to the Castle he, like Furneaux, had broken every hard-and-fast police regulation. Twenty-one hours! Never before in any case offering comparable difficulties had he learnt so much and accomplished so little. He had opened many doors and peered into many dark places, but ever was faced by a blank wall when he sought the actual murderer. He was still obsessed by the notion that the murderer had not left the Castle, yet, after having seen and questioned the scores of people employed there, he had not the slightest cause to suspect any one of them. True early that morning he had noticed a certain shiftiness in Ferdinand Rossi's eyes, but this man had undeniably formed one of the small party in the hall which rushed to the butler's assistance. It certainly

was a baffling business. He was glad of the break created by dinner, when, by tacit consent, the talk ran on other matters than the tragedy.

Later, when the diminished company was free to discuss recent events, the Chief went into a full explanation of Sevastopolo's departure. He told his hearers, of course, that Furneaux also was journeying to Athens, but the little man's sudden promotion to a highly-paid position was far too nebulous to be spoken of.

Dr. Macgregor, summoned specially, saw Irene Lanson about half-past eight. Dorothy had persuaded her to undress and lie in her bed. She was calm enough, but utterly depressed. She recognised, however, that her wearied spirit craved for respite, so she was almost grateful when the doctor administered an opiate the potency of which would have astonished every other general practitioner in Derbyshire. He waited until she was stupefied into sleep; then he crooked a finger at Dorothy.

"Now, you," he said in his authoritative way.

"What's the matter with me, Doctor?" said the girl, smiling with a fine assumption of cheerfulness.

"You're just a silly woman like the rest of them. Twelve hours between the sheets will do you a world of good."

"But I'm not ill, really."

"You're a first-class subject for life assurance, I admit. But the female gender suffers from ills not classified in the textbooks. Has Glen been telling you things?"

Dorothy blushed a little.

"Yes," she said.

"I thought so. You wish he hadn't picked up a million so quickly?"

"Well, I looked forward to a home established by

our joint efforts. I have seen no happiness conferred by money. It ruined my father. See what it has done to his successors here."

"It's not the money that is at fault, my dear, but the fools who use it to make themselves and others miserable. Did Glen tell you the first thing he said when he understood that he was a rich man?"

"Said to whom?"

"To all of us in the room. He asked Mr. Hassall to draw up a will making you his sole executrix in case he dropped dead from heart disease. which he will not do, as his heart is in the right place in every sense. Now, take my advice. Have you eaten anything?"

"No. I — couldn't. Irene was in a terrible state."

"She always is. Go to your room, and I'll send Pinkney, to consult about a meal. Then, if you won't take my drugs, let Mr. Glen know it's a fine evening, and a stroll in the grounds will be better than a dose of bromide. Don't tell Glen I said that, or he might feel annoyed. Half an hour later say your prayers and go to bed."

He led her out. Alice Romer, tidying her mistress's boudoir, met his stern look rather shamefacedly.

"You be off, too!" he said. "I can't have you routing about here while Miss Lanson is hardly asleep. No, drop that!" because the girl made to hang some garment in a wardrobe. "You come on duty again to-morrow morning. If you don't clear out at once I'll see that you are made to obey orders."

There was no gainsaying a command of that sort. She hurried away without a word of protest.

"It has always puzzled me," he muttered, while Dorothy stood with him a moment in the corridor, "that a Sleaford girl of no experience should be Miss

Lanson's lady's-maid. Of course, a mere fool of a man does not understand these things, but I imagine that, on first principles, a young lady owning a large and varied wardrobe needs the services of someone accustomed to handling such articles."

"Alice is clever, and a good needlewoman. I think Mr. Lanson wished his daughter to employ local people, and Alice was recommended for the place by the rector's wife."

The doctor sniffed, but dropped the subject. As it happened, he knew far more than the rector's wife about Alice Romer and her family.

Before Winter sought his room for a real sleep he held a long and serious consultation by telephone with the Chief Commissioner. The great man was so perplexed by the strange features of the affair that he promised to visit the Castle next day, and Winter undertook to ask the local Chief Constable to meet him. In this instance he welcomed the presence of his departmental Head. The Lanson Case threatened to stir the mud beneath deep waters, and it was advisable for one in active charge of the inquiry to have the unstinted support of the higher authorities.

Early next morning he kept Furneaux's tryst with the architect and builder brought to the Castle by Superintendent Wood. The two men impressed him favourably. The doctor, who it will be remembered dabbled in archæology, sent a note to the effect that Mr. Hilson Forbes, the architect, though quite a young man, was regarded as an expert. His repute, in fact, extended far beyond the bounds of Sleaford, and it was believed the town would soon lose him, as his commissions ranged already from Leeds to London.

"I want you gentlemen," said Winter, "to make a

thorough examination of the turret in particular, and of any other part of the Castle where any person could possibly lie hidden since the night before last. As to the turret, please supply a complete analysis of its construction from top to bottom, with an elevation and cross sections. Simplicity of language and clearness of drawing are essentials. If any plaster, or stones, or wainscoting must be disturbed to enable you to determine doubtful points, you have the sanction of Mr. Lanson's trustees for the necessary work, though, owing to Miss Lanson's nervous state, these things should be done as noiselessly and unobtrusively as possible. Be as painstaking as you like. Naturally, I am anxious to have your report quickly."

"The turret is a solid but simple structure, Mr. Winter," said Forbes. "I know it well, because the late Sir John Temple allowed me and other members of a technical class to go over it some years since. It happens to be an unusual blend of Norman-French and Tudor architecture. May I take it—— ? Well, perhaps I had better ask no questions."

"I am not a slave to the underground passage theory, if that is what you have in mind," smiled Winter. "What I want you to know is this—that, in my opinion, by no evident means can any human being have left this place unobserved since Mr. Lanson met his death. I may be mistaken. If you can hit on any method, even a far-fetched one, showing how an athlete or skilled climber can not only get out of the main building, but also cross the battlements, without being seen by the cordon of watchers maintained without a break since a few minutes after the murder was discovered, don't hesitate to state it. Of course, I impose no time limit. If the same man could have escaped before the sentries were posted,

that is even more important. But do tell me how."

Forbes and the builder devoted their energies to the task forthwith. Their report, presented next day, went into full detail. Its conclusions were summed up in the final sentence.

"Short of razing the turret to the ground, and laying bare its structure course by course, we are convinced that its walls are solid throughout. As for the remainder of the Castle, though it abounds in nooks where a fugitive could hide temporarily, exit by other way than the main door is a physical impossibility unless a number of ropes and ladders are employed. Such appliances could not have been adjusted in the time available, namely, some fifteen minutes, because Bates, the night-watchman, acted promptly. We have scrutinised carefully the system of search used by the different groups told off for the purpose on the night of the crime, and believe that none of the hiding-places mentioned above escaped minute examination."

Meanwhile Winter was probably the busiest man in England. It must not be imagined, because no mention has been made hitherto of certain measures adopted by the Criminal Investigation Department in relation to all crimes of the first magnitude, that the only persons engaged in the hunt for the murderer were those actually to the fore in and around Sleaford.

Greek centres in London and other towns were watched day and night. All the ports had their keen-eyed guardians. Three Greek subjects were detained at Dover until they proved conclusively that ordinary business affairs were taking them abroad. Long telegrams in cipher were exchanged by Whitehall and the British Chargé d'Affairs at Athens.

Ferdinand Rossi was shadowed. Monsieur Simonides was invited to explain himself and his activities. Superintendent Wood made adroit use of Mr. Fletcher, the ex-sergeant of engineers, and two other local tradesmen in the strict surveillance maintained on Victor Denasch. An astute rogue of his calibre would soon pick out a plain-clothes policeman, but he might fail to observe men who could always find someone to converse with at a corner of the High Street, and who, moreover, had the inestimable advantage of knowing by sight every inhabitant of the town; a stranger calling on Denasch would be noted instantly.

These and many other sources of intelligence centred in Winter. He hardly had time to eat, but he could, and did, smoke almost incessantly. He was compelled to telephone for the aid of Inspector Sheldon and a stenographer, and the morning-room was definitely allotted to him as an office.

He had a long and interesting discussion with the Chief Commissioner and the County Chief Constable, but these potentates failed to make any suggestion which pierced the fog shrouding the one vital fact—the identity of the criminal—while, as to his whereabouts after the murder, they, like every other man engaged in the inquiry, were completely at sea.

Though the police guard was maintained outside, and all traffic to and from the Castle supervised, Winter was compelled to relax the order confining the inmates within the walls, while letters were freed from close censorship. Telegrams, however, were read if received, and approved if dispatched, while the use of the telephone was absolutely prohibited unless by permission.

Sevastopolo telegraphed to his wife: I

Be brave. Am just starting. Will wire and write from every point en route.

A few minutes later Furneaux telegraphed to Winter:

Of course, I won't let him do anything of the sort. Am writing myself with a gold pen thickly studded with diamonds.

The meaning of the first sentence was clear. Furneaux had seen his companion's message, and would show him the utter folly of proclaiming to scores of minor employees in the Post Office the exact stages of his journey across Europe. But what was this nonsense about the pen? Furneaux's jokes were often acrid but seldom lacked point, and the Chief coined several new and pungent comments on the little man's personal attributes, both physical and mental, on the many occasions during the day that the absurd phrase recurred to his mind. Each man prided himself on grasping the significance of even the most elusive utterances by the other; indeed, they could hardly have worked together so efficiently if they failed in this essential, yet here was a quite straightforward statement which was intended to convey something, but what that thing was Winter could not guess. Furneaux was writing with a gold pen thickly studded with diamonds! A plague on him and his humour!

About nine o'clock that evening the Chief was called to the telephone. The matter must be an important one, because he had now interposed an assistant who dealt with ordinary inquiries.

Mr. Victor Denasch was at the other end of the wire!

"I have taken the liberty of giving you a ring," said the clear-cut voice with its slight foreign accent, "because I would like to have a word with you."

"Go ahead!"

"But I mean the kind of discussion which can hardly be carried on over the phone."

"Will you come here?"

After a moment's hesitancy Denasch said he would be delighted.

"All right! I'll expect you in ten minutes or less."

Winter hoped that this move on Denasch's part betokened real action. Was the man becoming alarmed by the way in which the police disregarded his very existence? Any development that would lift the Lanson Case out of its rut was welcome.

Detective-Inspector Sheldon met Denasch at the main gate, and escorted him to the morning-room. Sheldon was a quiet-mannered officer. In his youth he had been a noted rock-climber in Cumberland, and that is an occupation which forbids needless strain on the lungs. The visitor treated him as a mere underling, and gave him little heed when he sat at table, while Winter motioned Denasch to a chair placed hospitably near the fire-place, for the nights were growing chill, and the Castle's heating apparatus was not yet in use.

"I have been wondering," began Denasch, "how long you wish me to remain in Sleaford?"

"I, too, have been thinking about it," said the Chief.

"Well, if two such intellects are hard at work, something should happen soon."

"Aren't you comfortable at the hotel?"

"Quite."

"If I were you I should stop there. Any change of residence might be for the worse."

"I don't profess to misunderstand you. Surely it is but fair that I should be told what charge the police have against me."

"One quite serious charge. You assaulted a policeman on the night of the murder."

"I did nothing of the sort."

"In view of Alice Romer's evidence and mine, you will find it hard to convince a magistrate of your innocence."

"It was not I who threw that stone at Police-Constable Barker," said Denasch, shaking his head with an air of solemnity. "I was going to White Friars, I admit, and saw the man running away. Then a number of vedettes were thrown out, so I could not enter the ruins. As a matter of precaution I took Felix Glen with me at eleven."

"Why the devil didn't you tell me this sooner?" cried Winter sarcastically, though he almost feared the man was speaking truly.

"Why the devil didn't you ask me? In any case I was after a bigger game than fellows who heave bricks at policemen."

"Do you expect me to believe this?"

"You've got to. If you persist in suspecting me you'll never get on the track of the right man."

"Did you recognise him?"

"No. I think he was an Englishman, and that has puzzled me, because, in the light of subsequent events, I should have expected him to be a Greek."

"A friend of Simonides?" put in Sheldon.

Then Denasch made the disconcerting discovery that the new-comer was looking at him with a pair of shrewd grey eyes, of which the pupil of the right eye

was noticeably bigger than that of the left. He blinked a little before he answered :

"I should not be surprised at any rascal turning out to be a friend of Simonides."

"But didn't you realise that in keeping back this story of another man being in the White Friars ruins that night, you were not only running some risk yourself but interfering with the course of justice ? "

"Mr. Winter, no man likes being treated as a felon. Why have you not troubled to see me since you sent me off, practically under arrest ? Why is Alice Romer threatened because she carried out a perfectly lawful compact ? Why did Sevastopolo disregard me, and rush away from Sleaford last night without a word ? I have been treated badly, and I don't care who knows it."

"What can be done now to make amends ? "

"Tell me I am free to follow Sevastopolo to Athens."

"To Athens ? To London, you mean."

"Athens, I said. That is where he is going. I am Greek enough to be sure of his ultimate destination, at any rate."

"But suppose Mr. Sevastopolo wants to be rid of you, whether in London or Athens ? "

"That is simply impossible. Men climb to power over other men's shoulders, but they cannot ignore all their supporters, however much they wish to do it."

"You have a special hold on him, I suppose ? "

"I did not say that. Our relations are, or were, those of intimate finance. I may have been careless of the law some years ago, but I've stopped that. The effort to put Greece on her feet by financial assistance properly safeguarded can withstand any inquiry. Indeed, as you are aware, it has withstood

all your research in Hamburg, in Amsterdam, and in Athens itself."

"You are outspoken, Denasch. I'll emulate you. I cannot permit you to rush off to Athens, and prefer that you remain here until this affair is much farther advanced than its present stage. Why not pass the time agreeably by marrying Alice Romer?"

Denasch stood up.

"I'm sorry you are refusing my request," he said quietly. "I would not have hurt Sevastopolo; I might have benefited him greatly."

"So you pass up my suggestion?"

"About Alice Romer? One does not marry a chambermaid—or is it a lady's-maid?"

"One might fare worse. Before you go, Denasch, a straight tip for you. You don't carry guns enough to bluff Scotland Yard. Never try that game again. If I were not convinced you will serve my purposes better and more quickly by fancying yourself at liberty I would lock you up this instant. As for the charge on which you may be brought to trial, I can pick and choose among half a dozen indictable offences."

"In that case I would certainly have some rather notable companions in the dock."

"Do you dare me, you blackmailer?"

Denasch was cowed then. He could not change colour, but his nostrils twitched and his eyes paled.

"You persist in treating me as a villain when I am trying to be honest," he cried.

"I've given you two bits of advice to-night. One is that you remain in the comparative safety of Sleaford, the other that you marry Alice Romer. Your wife got her Viennese divorce three days ago. Ah! You didn't know that? Well, it's a fact. You're

taking a horrible risk, Hugo Marcoulis, in converting into implacable enemies *two* women who thought you loved them."

"That will be all from him for some days to come," growled the Chief when Sheldon returned after seeing the visitor off the premises. The younger detective looked thoughtful.

"He was telling the truth about that other man, sir," he said.

"Very likely. The next thing we know he will be telling the truth about the other woman, and then the sky will catch fire. Of course, you have not been here long enough to appreciate the real difficulty. Irene Lanson, assisted by Denasch, or prompted by him, or both, took a hand in this king business without her lover's, or rather her husband's, knowledge. Yes—the young lady is Mrs. Sevastopolo. You'll find a telegram from Guildford on that file there giving all particulars. Her action led directly to her father's death, though I don't believe Denasch knows that yet. But he suspects it, the rat. Anyhow, that is why he is not in custody. He'd squeal at once, and his testimony isn't wanted, anywhere, by anyone. Now, that's all I can say. Draw your own conclusions, and maybe that other eye of yours will widen a bit!"

"Some letters came for you, sir, by the late post. There's one from Mr. Furneaux——"

Winter, who had almost lost his temper, lighted a cigar and laughed.

"Now for the solution to the conundrum!" he cried.

This is what he read:

Best of Chiefs:—That diamond-encrusted pen was a snorter, wasn't it? Well, I had to give you something

to chew on, seeing that King Ramon handed me a rib-tickler this morning in the shape of a cheque for £2,000, bidding me pay it into my bank! Six months' salary in advance! Two thousand quidlets! My brain reels after an attempt to compute the number of drachmas. Who'd be a wretched bobby after this? How much is that per diem? I'm anxious to know because I may have to refund a stiff balance if my job only lasts a week.

I say this in all seriousness. Life can be very mad at times, but never quite so exquisitely loony as to make me a Greek politician. Why, the very rocks on Olympus would be split by the laughter of the gods.

Sevastopolo is hard at it. If only I can persuade him not to deal out telegrams in sheafs to all manner of folk at every possible opportunity, I might get him to Athens in safety. Really, I ought to have taken him there as a prisoner. I'm growing rather fond of the fellow. He has quite a pretty wit when he forgets the Kingship. For the love of Mike, tell me why any sane man should want to become a King. It must be bad enough to be born one, and have to carry on the business for the sake of the nation, but that anyone should deliberately leave Sleaford and Pinkney and go to a place where they make wine out of currant grapes!—well, je m'en fiche de ça!

S. thinks nothing of the scarab—says Lanson had a habit of picking up worthless curios. He could earn a million as easy as kiss your fist, but was golden wax in the fingers of dealers in the antique. I think S. is wrong—about the scarab, I mean—but time will show. Again, will it? I'm scribbling on my knee in Victoria Station. S. had all his papers and passport ready. Luckily, I had mine, so there is no

delay. Watch I, which does not mean Me. Thine ever.

P.S.—I'll cable some sort of address at Athens. If it's in Greek, Mizpah, which I'm told signifies: "The Lord watch between me and thee"! If anything urgent, communicate it to our Embassy. I'll call there at once, say Monday, to-day being Thursday.

P.P.S.—Those thousands are still spinning in my occiput. Of course, the Embassy is the best possible address.

P-s-s-t! Guard says I have another minute. You gather I got on well with S. in the train. Well, he knows I am writing you, and asks you to safeguard I. The man loves her, and is worried about her.

Dr. Macgregor came in just as the Chief had deciphered the third of Furneaux's postscripts. The very man!

"Doctor," said Winter promptly, "don't you agree that Miss Lanson should not be left alone for many hours at a time—at any rate until Mr. Sevastopolo returns, and the marriage is announced formally?"

"I've been thenkin' aboot yon," said the Scot, for Winter understood the Doric. "Polo will not come back. He canna git awa'. She'll hae te gae te him."

"By Jove, you're right! It's odd, but I missed that. However, till she leaves Sleaford—why not day and night nurses? Urge dietary and sleeping draughts. The latter can be harmless."

"She's off now, for hours. I'll tackle her about the nurses in the morning. Puir wee girlie! She's easy to handle these days."

"Why this collapse?"

"Man, I don't know. If I could lift the top off her skull and rearrange a few nerve centres I might make a new woman of her."

The doctor gained his point. Irene did not object at all to the installation of two capable and pleasant-mannered companions. Indeed, if she woke during the night, she would murmur her gratitude for the nurse's presence.

And thus the days wore until the Monday, with a species of Nirvana for the châtelaine of Sleaford, with incessant activities for the men, but without any forward step in the quest which occupied all thoughts —the search for Charles Lanson's murderer. Winter himself nearly yielded to an attack of nerves. It was not that he cared a brass farthing for the storm of criticism which raged in the press, but the dead weight of utter failure was heavy on him, and he was strung to a high tension when the hours of Monday passed without any message from Furneaux. He had ascertained that the Orient Express was due in Athens about midnight on Sunday, but it was six hours late in leaving Belgrade. Of course, it was foolish to expect that either Furneaux or Sevastopolo could work miracles. They might fail altogether to discover a definite clue. Even though the Greek made good his boast, it would not be unreasonable if many days passed without a sign. So the Chief chewed dozens of cigars; that he might feel he was literally doing something useful, he helped Hassall and the two secretaries in their struggles with piles of documents.

Glen had his hands full with the arrangements for the funeral, which took place on the Monday afternoon. Real privacy, though desired, was out of the question. The tragic death of a man of Charles Lanson's importance in the world had attracted such attention that

the newspapers alone sent a whole battalion of reporters and photographers. The ceremonial passed off quietly, however. Dr. Macgregor saw to it that Irene did not create a scene. She was so placid and bemused that he asked Dorothy Temple to take her into the gardens for an hour before sunset. She refused positively to hear her father's will read, so, with the doctor's approval, her presence was dispensed with. By this means, too, she was saved the distress which the marriage clauses must have induced, for Lanson had gone fully into his projects where she and Glen were concerned.

As the adjourned inquest was fixed for the following day, Winter thought it advisable to invite the coroner to a conference in the Castle at six o'clock that evening. The authorities in Whitehall wished for an open verdict, with the resultant closing of the inquiry, and the Chief knew that a pompous little lawyer would fall in with this arrangement all the more readily if he were taken behind the scenes to a certain extent, and felt that he had become a party to affairs of state.

Indeed, the matter was settled, and the men gathered in the morning-room were listening with marked attention to the coroner's views on the disturbed condition of Europe, when Mr. Pinkney rushed in. The old butler appeared to be utterly broken by distress. He leaned on the back of a chair for support, and his face was livid. Most sinister token of all, his clothes were bloodstained.

"Oh, sirs!" he gasped. "Oh, Mr. Glen!—Miss Irene—is dead!"

For a couple of seconds no one stirred or spoke. Then Winter, whom no shock could move when a situation grew really desperate, said quietly:

"Perhaps you are mistaken, Pinkney. It is not

for you to judge. Where is your mistress now? Dr. Macgregor is here. Tell *him*."

"She is lying dead before her own front door, sir!" came the astounding cry, for the old man's voice rose to a shrill falsetto. "She fell from the turret—nowhere else—and her poor body crashed through the glass porch. She will never speak again in this life. She smiled into my face when I ran to pick her up, and died in my very arms!"

CHAPTER XVII

What the Clock Decided

"Go straight to the turret!" Winter almost hissed into Sheldon's ear. "Wait there till I come to you! Take this, though I doubt if you will need it," and he thrust a key into his assistant's hand.

Then he grabbed Superintendent Wood.

"Send two of your men to arrest Denasch on a charge of being concerned in the murder of Charles Lanson," he said.

"How about getting him on a certainty—the attack on Barker?" muttered the other.

"We may fail there. I'm giving you the stronger case."

In the hall Dr. Macgregor was stooping over an inanimate form which the butler and one of the policemen stationed there had lifted to a chair in the vain hope that life might not be extinct. The doctor examined the girl's eyes, felt for a pulse that had ceased to beat, listened for the throb of a heart that

had ceased to act. Then he signed to some of the police and men-servants standing mute and dismayed in the presence of this new horror.

"Carry Miss Lanson's body to her room," he said huskily. "I must make a useless examination. Her spine is broken, and there are other injuries. The miracle is that she lived even a few seconds after such a fall."

Some minutes elapsed before it was possible to obtain a fairly connected account of events immediately preceding the tragedy. The two girls, Irene and Dorothy, had remained in the western garden till half-past six. The butler and others could fix the time exactly, because the Castle letter-box had its first clearance at that hour for the London mail. A footman was literally watching the clock before unlocking the box when both girls came in together.

Irene, who seemed to be subdued in manner, asked Dorothy to look through the letters and ascertain if she, Irene, had posted one to Mr. Sevastopolo. She feared the address was not the right one. It ought to read: "Poste Restante, Athenes." If such a letter were missing, or there was any error in the address, the man need not wait, as the first collection next day would serve equally well. Meanwhile she, Irene, being tired and inclined to rest, would use the lift.

Dorothy, though scrutinising hurriedly some forty odd envelopes, nevertheless had an ear tuned for the commonplace sounds of the Castle, and did not fail to note that the lift went on to the second floor. This seemingly unimportant fact troubled her, because she knew that her friend should not be allowed to wander about the house alone. She gave no thought to the turret. What she really feared was the flat roof,

since Glen had told her of the scene between Irene and Furneaux on the library leads.

She could trace no letter for Sevastopolo in the pile of correspondence, but, singularly enough, came across one addressed to Mr. Hassall in Irene's handwriting, and another to the local bank in which she, Dorothy, had an account. These small matters went clean out of her recollection, however, under the stress of the next few minutes. Almost running to the lift, she pressed the button which should have brought it down, but there was no response. The iron grille had been left open on a higher floor, so the mechanism could not work. Then, yielding to a sort of panic, she raced up the stairs. She was an active girl, and reached the second storey speedily. There, as she expected, she found the lift door open. She stopped to slam it into position; saw in passing that the door leading to the turret was closed, and sped on to the smaller door which gave access to the roof. This, however, was locked and bolted on the inside. Then, disregarding the lift, she hastened to Irene's suite, where the day nurse was seated near a window reading a newspaper. Of course, the nurse had not set eyes on her patient during the past hour, so Dorothy rushed out again—to meet Sheldon on the landing.

"Miss Lanson is dead!" he muttered. "She fell from the turret!"

For the life of her, Dorothy could not face those stairs again. If she essayed one step of them she would have plunged headlong down. A woman may be physically strong and mentally sound, but she can faint for all that, and this gently-reared English girl had been subjected to unceasing strain since the night her employer died. Indeed, she mystified the nurse, who could not hear Sheldon's few dreadful

words, by reeling back into the boudoir again and sinking into a chair.

She had recovered her senses, and had blanched the other woman's lips by the detective's tidings, before the shuffling feet of the bearers coming nearer announced that the hapless mistress of Sleaford Castle was being borne into her own domain for the last time.

Alice Romer appeared with hysterical cries and wringing of hands, but was curtly ordered away by Winter, who gave strict injunctions to Sergeant Phillips that once the doctor had completed his survey of the maimed body the rooms were to be cleared, the doors locked and no one admitted on any pretext until he, Winter, and the other officials had examined the place. Here, at last, he hoped to find something, some document, some letter or memorandum, which might serve to lift the death-pall weighing so heavily on the Castle and its inmates.

Meanwhile, a bit of direct evidence was forthcoming at once. Bates, the night-watchman, keeping an eye on the doorway from the gate for the man who took the post-bag into the town, had actually seen Irene Lanson fall.

He was quite positive that she did not throw herself out.

"I noticed the south window in the turret being opened," he said, "and then Miss Lanson showed up. I recognised her instantly and wanted to shout to her, because she was kneeling in a dangerous way on the framework of the window. Her head was raised, as though she were looking at the sky, and her arms were stretched out, just like anyone praying or begging for mercy. Then she toppled over. I know now she was in one of her trances. She did not understand the risk. She would always sink to her knees and

bend forward at the end of an attack. This time she was on her knees already. She lost her balance. Why, I even heard her scream when she realised she was going."

Winter regarded the man's statement as so important that he asked Trevor to take him to the morning-room and help to put in writing not merely the facts, but Bates's deductions from them while they were still vivid in his memory.

The events crowded into those tumultuous moments seemed to move with the solemn inevitableness of Greek drama. But their ordered sequence was hard to distinguish. The Castle was in an uproar. Every man and woman employed in the place gathered in the hall. At that hour, when household activities were much in evidence, it was impossible, or at any rate highly impracticable, to bid all these people retire to their own quarters. As a hundred or more had attended Lanson's funeral, the sombre garments of every group heightened the effect. Alice Romer's outcry, when she came down the stairs with loud lamentation after being forbidden to enter her mistress's room, added greatly to the commotion. Miss Lanson's secretary, who had seen little of her employer of late, collapsed in a faint, and her example was followed by a parlourmaid and a gardener. Davidson succeeded in controlling the resultant pandemonium. He had the two girls carried to the housekeeper's room, and the man into the courtyard. Winter, before going upstairs, directed that a table-cloth should be spread over the tiled pavement where Irene's body had crashed. He could hardly have given an explicit reason for this precaution, but his prescience was justified later by the finding of a master key among the debris of broken glass and wooden framework. That at least explained how the unlucky

heiress of so many millions could wander where she pleased, irrespective of locked doors.

The Chief found the door to the turret staircase open. At first, on reaching the six-sided chamber, the place appeared to be empty, but he had not passed the table before he saw Sheldon stretched at full length in the circular embrasure of the south window, with head and shoulders thrust well beyond the perpendicular line of the external wall. The man was a climber, one accustomed to precipitous heights and precarious perches on rock faces, and his present position was absolutely safe. But Winter had had a surfeit of the evils associated with the turret, so he clasped Sheldon's ankles firmly, and shouted:

"Come in here! What do you expect to find by gazing down the side of a blank wall?"

The younger man drew himself backwards, and squirmed round to a sitting posture.

"That poor young woman did not throw herself out, sir," he announced, with the slow utterance characteristic of him. "She fell. If she meant to spring clear of the sill she must have struck the glass roof of the porch two or three feet farther from the wall."

"I'm glad to hear that," declared Winter wearily. "It bears out what Bates says. But don't you go craning your neck out there again unless someone is holding your feet. This infernal place is haunted, I do believe. In any case, what good is it?"

"I wanted to form an opinion as to Miss Lanson's intent—if she meant suicide. I think it was really an accident, though, to be sure, one asks what she was doing in such a perilous and extraordinarily queer spot."

Winter glanced around, lest some person might

have crept behind him up the winding stairs. The mere action was eloquent of the strain he was enduring.

"She was more closely mixed up in that signalling business than has been ascertained yet," he said. "Perhaps, now she is dead, we may hear the truth. This is a dark and hidden business, Sheldon. Why, do you think, have I left at liberty a rogue like Denasch if I didn't jib at the prospect of raising a fierce scandal which might ultimately lead nowhere, simply because it had been brought into court too soon?"

"I appreciated that side of the affair, sir. Mr. Furneaux and I discussed it in London. The most perplexing element in the whole business is the surprise all concerned showed when they heard of Mr. Lanson being killed. Even Simonides was rattled. Somehow, it was the last thing he seemed to expect. Well, the light has gone. To-morrow morning I want you to come here with me again. Away round to the left of the window, just visible if you lean well out, is an iron holdfast sunk into the masonry. It's a stout thing, though small, and would give a first-rate hand grip."

The Chief took thought. Of what avail was a hand grip in a blank wall seventy feet above the ground?

"It may have been put there to hold a line of flags for some festivity," he said.

"Hardly that, sir. It would not have been made so inaccessible."

"But surely it can be seen from the courtyard?"

"Perhaps—if one is definitely looking for it. Otherwise it is the same colour as the mortar, and has been there for centuries."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, if it is really old wrought iron. Of course, a modern thing, half sand, would rot quickly in the open air."

"Well, come in, and close that window. Was the staircase door open when you arrived?"

"No. It had been locked from the inside."

"How do you know that?"

"The dust was rubbed away quite recently. Someone had used a small key, smaller than the one you gave me, I imagine."

"Strange," mused Winter. "Did she lock the door to avoid being followed? You found the window open, of course?"

"Yes, and this was on the floor. It probably slipped out of her blouse as she climbed into the embrasure."

He handed the Chief a letter addressed: "Monsieur Ramon Sevastopolo, Poste Restante, Athenes, Grèce."

"Although sealed, it was crumpled up just like that," he added.

Winter was tempted to slit open the envelope then and there. But he could not bring himself to do this thing unless circumstances arose which rendered it a sheer necessity. That unfortunate fellow now chasing the mirage of a throne would set great store on this last letter from his wife. Even though it bade him farewell for ever, what was the gain in letting all the world know that the woman he loved had committed suicide? Well, that knotty point need not be dealt with that instant. He, Winter, would discuss it later with Hassall and the Commissioner. Even when he heard from Dorothy Temple of the ruse employed to detain her in the hall, there was still no clear proof of suicidal intent.

Certainly Irene Lanson's actions during the last few minutes of her life were hard to explain by any

other theory than a set resolve to make an end of everything. Her friend, it appeared, had believed it would be helpful if they discussed affairs in Greece, and told her of a telegram from Athens in the day's newspapers to the effect that a constitutional party was being formed, and would soon make its influence felt.

"That should be good for Mr. Sevastopolo, I think," Dorothy had said.

"I fear he will fail," was the listless reply. "I keep listening when in the Castle for the signal that announces the opening of the main gate on his return, but I shall never hear it. . . . Aren't the flowers wonderful this autumn? One can hardly compel the mind to admit that so much beauty and fragrance must die soon."

"They will all come back with the spring," was the best Dorothy could find to say. Thenceforth she avoided the political topic, while she knew, of course, that the electric recorder had been disconnected by Winter's order.

The Chief squirmed somewhat when he heard of the incident.

"The unexpected click was disturbing when one was engaged in an affair the difficulties of which mounted every half-hour," he explained.

"Oh, I hated it," Dorothy said. "It seemed always to convey a sort of warning. I never understood what real purpose it filled. At first it was rather amusing, as we would guess who was arriving, and be wrong invariably, but, ever since the beginning of this month, Irene, and Polo, and even Mr. Lanson himself, would have a watchful and almost anxious air when they heard it, and seem distinctly relieved when a servant brought an ordinary visitor's card, or nothing at all happened, as was often the case,

because tradesmen's carts had to enter that way, like all other vehicles."

The two were talking in the drawing-room, whither Glen had insisted on the girl accompanying him, on the well-advised plea that she would make herself ill if she kept to the seclusion of her room. Sheldon was deputed to receive the dozens of journalists brought to the Castle by this latest sensation. Winter knew it was hopeless to try and keep the news from leaking out that night; the coroner, after five minutes of stupefaction, had bustled off to make arrangements for another inquest.

But the Chief himself refused definitely to see anyone from without, or answer the telephone unless the call came from a Government Department. He had been in touch with the Commissioner already, and it was evident that the folk higher up were disturbed.

"There can be no further concealment in this unfortunate affair," was the judgment of Scotland Yard and the Home Office. "You must take the lid off this time. Public opinion will be dead against us if there is the slightest suspicion that any material fact is being withheld. Matters have gone so far now that the widest publicity may even be helpful."

Winter agreed cordially. Indeed, he was searching his own mind with merciless self-analysis to discover any means whereby he could have safeguarded Irene Lanson. Short of placing her under physical restraint, he could see none.

He was musing on the significance of Dorothy's statement as to the uneasiness she had observed in the Lanson household early in the month, when he heard Mr. Hassall urging the girl to join them at dinner.

"We cannot be a cheerful party," he was saying, "but we must eat to live, and we certainly will not sit at table like deaf mutes. Moping alone is bad for you. The sooner we all get back to the normal the better it will be for each one of us, and for you especially, because you resemble a ghost. . . . Well, I can't pick and choose my words to-night, but, for some inexplicable reason, I think we shall hear no more of Abbot Gervaise and his plaints."

Never was prophet bewrayed more speedily. The words were hardly out of his mouth when a man came running for Winter.

"Will you come at once, sir?" he cried excitedly. "There is something funny going on outside the turret!"

"Funny?" cried the Chief, stifling an almost overwhelming impulse to laugh harshly.

"Well, queer, sir! A sort of fight up there!"

Winter rushed out. The others followed. They had to troop past the library and down the great staircase, where the four knights in armour seemed to watch so stolidly the scurrying to and fro of these uneasy moderns.

In the courtyard they found a group of bewildered policemen and house-servants, with Dr. Macgregor and Superintendent Wood, who had just returned from the town. High in air, on the right front of the turret, but well below the line of windows, a fierce struggle was in progress. Some large birds were the actors, and the clamour they made was startling in the extreme. But, after the first alarm had subsided, though the battle was losing none of its noise or ruthlessness, some of the country-born men present could tell what was happening.

"There's owls up there," said one of them, "and they're having a regular set-to with some hoodie

crows. I've often seen owls about, but never a hoodie crow. Mr. Lanson wouldn't have such a thing in the place, for the sake of the small birds nesting in the gardens."

Carrion crows! What was it Sheldon had said as to an iron holdfast in the wall just a little to the left of where the birds were settling some mortal feud? Well, the next day might determine many things. Perhaps, after all, Mr. Hassall was right in his belief that the ghost was laid for ever!

After a little while a rush of wings and the hurtling of a black body to the ground proved that a colony of owls cannot be disturbed with impunity at night-time by any crows, carrion or otherwise. Soon the uproar died down, and deep gurglings of triumph showed that the owls had defended their territory successfully. But where could owls roost in such a barren place? Six days earlier the Chief and Glen stood beneath the rafters of the turret's pagoda-shaped roof, and there was no sign then of even a bat in the interior.

Ultimately, the would-be diners were allowed to eat in peace.

"How about Denasch?" inquired Winter, for Wood and the doctor were pressed to table with the others.

"He kicked up an awful row," said the superintendent, smiling serenely. "But he's safe under lock and key, and will remain there, I hope, for many years, unless he is taken out early some fine morning soon for a slow march headed by the prison chaplain."

"Did he make any statement?"

"Not a word, after he was brought in. He was full of threats in the hotel, but seemed to be very badly

hipped when he heard the charge recorded in the police-station."

"Does he know of—of what has happened here?"

"No. He was in a cell too quickly for the news to have reached the town."

Mr. Pinkney, who had been called out of the room, approached now and bent over Winter.

"If you please, sir," he whispered, "Alice Romer wishes to leave the Castle immediately. She refuses to sleep here to-night."

"Dear me! A young woman who knows what she wants and sees that she gets it! Tell her that the only alternative is to sleep in the lock-up. I don't care which bed she chooses."

"Certainly, sir. By the way, Château-Yquem will be served with the partridges. It is now at its best."

"Did Pinkney bring you some agreeable message?" inquired Hassall when the butler went out again.

"Like the curate's doubtful egg, parts of it were excellent."

The Chief refused to intrude any reference to Alice Romer at a meal which was proceeding pleasantly. Dorothy Temple had lost her pallor, and some of those present would need solid sustenance before the night was much older, because of the gruesome task awaiting them in searching the dead girl's belongings.

They did not hurry. Why should they? There are times in life when the cup of human emotions is full to the brim, and the addition of one more drop, or incident, actually brings relief by the spilling of the already surcharged contents. They even strolled in the more open eastern garden, though this was done for the benefit of Dorothy, so that when the gathering dispersed she might go straight to her room, and leave the men to their work.

She did not wait long, and declined the suggestion that she should ask one of the four lady secretaries still in the Castle to sleep with her.

"I am not afraid of my own company," she said quietly. "I only regret that it was not possible to avoid seeing poor Irene after her death. It would have been nicer to remember her as she was when we parted in the hall—a sad and disillusioned woman, perhaps, but quite resigned to the inevitable, and looking so sweet and pathetic. No matter what happens, I shall never believe she meant to kill herself. She felt one of her seizures coming on, and wanted to be alone. I am sure she expected bad news from Greece. She would not listen to me when I told her to-day's telegrams were reassuring."

No man can fathom the sources of a woman's intuition. Even Dorothy herself did not know until she awoke next morning that her words had carried to all who heard a phenomenally true forecast of hidden events, though not a man among them interpreted it correctly.

She said "Good night" about a quarter-past nine. Davidson and Trevor resumed their labours in the library. Winter, Wood, Hassall, and Glen went to the room in which lay Irene Lanson's body. With them was the night nurse, charged with the brief duty of ascertaining whether or not the dead girl's dress or bodice held documents or other objects which might further the inquiry into the murder. The nurse found a tiny diary, an exact replica of that taken from Charles Lanson's clothing, which contained many entries, nearly all in Greek. Obviously it had been deemed important, because it fitted into a linen pocket stitched to the girl's corsets.

Then the four men conducted a systematic search of wardrobes, chests of drawers, and writing-tables,

of which there were two. Everything that seemed to demand careful scrutiny they placed apart, and a number of letters, mostly in Greek and signed by initials, formed the bulk of the collection.

They took nothing for granted. Each coat and dress, each wrap and hat, was examined methodically. Their labours ceased about eleven o'clock. Hassall, an Honours man in the Greek language and literature at his University, was reviving a half-forgotten lore by puzzling out a brief note, signed "S," undated and without an envelope, which seemed to describe the credentials of some man who would visit the Castle "soon," when Sheldon came in.

"I've just taken a message by phone from the Foreign Office, sir," he said, handing a typed paper to Winter. "It was received in cipher, and had to be decoded, but they rushed it out."

And this is what Winter read, in a room separated only by a partition wall from Irene Lanson's death chamber:

From First Secretary of Legation, Athens, to Foreign Secretary, London. (Begins.) *Furneaux of Scotland Yard states that Ramon Sevastopolo was shot dead at eight o'clock this evening in the dining-room of Hotel Abydos. Assassin fired from street through open window. Furneaux recommends immediate arrest of Denasch and Simonides, with close observation or arrest of Alice Romer. Name of Lanson's probable murderer is Gregorio Silver, a Salonica Greek of English descent. Furneaux will cable more fully to-morrow.* (Ends.)

The Chief mastered the text carefully. The few sentences were devoid of punctuation, but the writer of the cablegram knew his craft, and escaped the

pitfalls which beset the unwary when condensing important facts into the fewest possible words.

Then, after glancing at the faces of his companions, who had gathered already from his set expression that some event out of the ordinary run must have produced a communication from the Foreign Office at so belated an hour, he read it aloud. Glen was the first to break an awed silence.

"I wonder if she knows," he murmured, turning with bent head toward the bedroom door, now locked.

"Knows—or knew?" said Winter, himself hardly aware of the strangeness of such a question.

"This is a worse mix-up than ever," vowed Wood in his unemotional way. "When shall we reach the end of this long lane? Whoever it was that threw a lump of rock at Barker started something, didn't he?"

Only the purely legal mind could have envisaged at that moment the much longer lane opened up by the succession of tragedies.

"Eight o'clock!" growled Hassall. "Irene dies at half-past six, Polo at eight! I don't suppose either of them made a will! Two intestacies! What a tangle! It will occupy the Chancery Division for a year, while the Treasury will exact not only its financial pound of flesh, but nearly the whole of the estate!"

No one passed any comment for at least half a minute. Here was a new difficulty to be faced, though it resolved itself into a not unheard-of problem for the law to grapple with. But Sheldon glanced inquiringly at Winter, who nodded.

"May I ask, sir," said the younger detective in his slow speech, "if you are assuming that Mr. Sevastopolo became his wife's heir because she died first?"

"Why, of course," replied Hassall.

"But, sir, you are not allowing for the difference in time between Greenwich and Athens. Eight o'clock there is six o'clock here. Mr. Furneaux would make no mistake as to the hour. Mrs. Sevastopolo lived some thirty-three or thirty-four minutes after her husband."

"Are you certain as to the time variation?" demanded the lawyer excitedly.

"Yes, sir. That is one of the first things we check when cablegrams are necessary. It often means the gain or loss of a whole day."

"Well, well. I'm very much obliged to you. That takes a heavy load off my mind. What about calling Davidson and Trevor from the library? I think we might tell Pinkney, too. He will be sitting up till we retire for the night."

"Dash it all!" cried Glen, whose artist's temperament was angered by these cold-blooded calculations and deductions. "I never thought I'd find it in my heart to grieve over Sevastopolo, but, if I were a woman, I'd want to howl my eyes out now. Did we give the poor devil a square deal? I know *I* didn't. I shall worry about it all my life."

"Don't say that, Mr. Glen!" Winter exclaimed with an air of profound conviction. "We measured a man of another race by our own standards. He could not help being different. Perhaps some of us, working in a foreign land, might act as strangely and be judged as harshly. Moreover, he was striving for a throne, and that is a disease more dangerous to its sufferers than cancer. . . . Honestly, what I want now is a whisky and soda, and a cigar. Sheldon, will you look in at the library? Give Pinkney a ring, too."

In descending the stairs, Hassall caught the Chief's arm.

"Tell me!" he said. "Have you many assistants like Furneaux and Sheldon?"

Winter smiled grimly.

"They don't grow along the hedgerows," he answered, "but there are some promising youngsters now in the Yard. And thank goodness for that! I keep my job by picking their brains!"

Which meant that the big man had nearly reached the end of his tether for one day. Richard would not be himself again till the sun rose.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Secret of the Turret

It is no figure of speech to say that Winter was a new man in the morning. He slept the sleep of exhaustion, but awoke with all his splendid physical faculties in full vigour and his brain cleared of the cobwebs spun by night and its fantasies. Superintendent Wood was not out of bed before his telephone rang. It was the Chief demanding the aid of Mr. Forbes and the builder and their knowledgeable men, so that quite an early hour saw a procession of artisans to the Castle gate, escorting a lorry laden with ladders, scaffolding poles, and ropes.

Sheldon was keen to essay an outward swing from that iron holdfast which he had been the first to observe, but Winter would have none of it, even

though his subordinate were safeguarded by being well roped.

"If the thing is done at all, let us do it thoroughly," was his common-sense decision. "We may find something, or nothing. In the event of a complete investigation of an unsuspected hiding-place being necessary, why should any risk be incurred in a preliminary effort? There is no question of expense. The trustees of the estate authorise us to go to the limit. Let us set about this phase of the inquiry in a businesslike way."

For all that, the erection of scaffolding to a height of seventy or eighty feet—or even more, as there was no reliable guide to the class of structure needed—was no light undertaking, so, when both Mr. Forbes and the builder guaranteed that a travelling cradle slung from the roof of the turret, movable by ropes and pulleys easily manipulated, would serve immediate needs, the Chief sanctioned this speedier method of examination. Naturally, the first survey was made on the left front of the hexagon. Here occurred one of the six recesses which formed such a peculiar feature of the tower, for each face was separated from its neighbours by a gap of at least two feet, and the resultant crevice ran back nearly five feet before the masonry met in an unbroken circle.

After two hours' work the apparatus was pronounced fit for use. The stout wooden platform was protected by handrails and carried on two strong iron hoops, while a couple of experienced workmen handled the ropes which raised or lowered it at will. Sheldon, of course, went with them, and all three entered from the south window. The cradle itself was about six feet in length, and could be slewed sideways with absolute safety for a yard or more. In the result, this was necessary, and the man directly beneath the

window asked for a couple of short planks, and a supply of rope.

Owing to the peculiar angle at which the operations were being conducted, those stationed at the window and on the flat roof of the front of the Castle could see nothing of what was going on, whereas onlookers standing near the main gate or on the south wall could watch the whole of the proceedings, though at such a distance that field-glasses were needed to make out details. Winter elected to remain inside the turret. Sheldon would return thither and, if any discussion ensued, it could be held in comparative privacy.

The first sensation was provided by a pair of large owls, which flew out into the sunshine and fluttered away blindly, giving vent to a series of bell-like cries which seemed to create a rare commotion among the hundreds of other birds in the gardens. Big and little—pigeons, blackbirds, sparrows, robins, and all the varieties of finches—they swooped to the attack, for an owl, the pirate of the night skies, is almost helpless in broad daylight. Seemingly by instinct, the owls lurched toward some distant woodland, and probably had a memorable transit, if they lived to reach a refuge.

After a brief interval, not five minutes all told, the cradle was worked back to the perpendicular, and began to rise. To Winter's astonishment, Sheldon had to be roped and lifted bodily into the open embrasure. Then he contrived to slide into the room, bringing with him that faint odour of the charnel-house which so many millions of men learnt to recognise so unmistakably during the Great War.

But already the colour was returning to his pallid cheeks. He sat down, and actually summoned a smile.

"It's all right, sir!" he said. "There's one dead man, if not two, down there, but we shan't get near till the place is drenched with disinfectant. Can I have a stiff dose of brandy?"

The spirit, of course, was soon forthcoming and, after it had stopped the nausea to which he had yielded, he explained matters in his slow, straightforward way.

"There are two series of holdfasts in the wall, one lot for the hands and the other for the feet of an ordinary-sized man," he said. "They lead slightly downward until they reach the first break between the turret's sections. Then they pass inwards for three feet, until the cleft is only a foot wide. Directly opposite the last pair is a narrow, oblong window or slit, just large enough to admit a man of your build, sir—though with a squeeze, I should imagine. Those chaps working the pulleys would not hear of my using the holdfasts, and I'm not sorry now, though I ought to have been warned by the smell. That's why we sent for the planks. When I entered the window I found myself on a stone sill, two feet wide—beyond that a circular well, vertical and quite dark. I was prepared for something of the sort, so knelt, and thrust an electric torch below the first rung of an iron ladder sunk in the masonry. Some fifteen feet lower I made out the curled-up body of a man, and a broken rung, the fifth, seemed to account for it. I was so interested that I rather forgot that Mr. Lanson was killed nearly eight days ago. . . . By Jove, I was glad of those planks and the rope round my waist when I came out."

"Is there a room at the bottom of the well, do you think?"

"There must be. One of the dead man's legs was thrust out straight. I'm sure of that."

Winter sent for Mr. Forbes, who was on the roof, watching the stays holding the ropes. When the architect heard what Sheldon had discovered he pointed out that by far the safest, if not the most expeditious way of removing the cadavre and opening up the secret chamber was to break through the wall from within.

"You must let me measure the distance," he said, "so that the workmen can start at the right place with crowbars and picks. Judging from what Mr. Sheldon tells us, I think we shall only have to demolish a wall thickness of a couple of feet."

"If Sheldon nearly cracked up how do you purpose surviving?" demanded the Chief.

"I know what to avoid, and will take precautions. Don't worry about me. While I'm away you might consult Macgregor as to disinfectants and how best to use them."

The doctor was a man of resource. When the architect returned, not wholly unscathed, and set to work with rule and plumb-line to determine the point of attack, Macgregor sent for a vacuum-cleaner, and in a few minutes had it adjusted so ingeniously that the foul air in the cavity was soon dissipated. Then the men on the cradle sprayed a strong solution of carbolic acid down the pit.

So smoothly did these arrangements work that less than half an hour after Sheldon's first glimpse of another tragedy within a palace so delectable in outward guise yet so ill-omened to its occupants, the last stronghold of a most perplexing and disturbing mystery was crumbling before the fascinated eyes of the watchers. The housebreaking squad worked without difficulty, because the probable level of the concealed room was that of the cross corridor on the second floor, though the turret wall ran square here

with the side of a bedroom. Indeed, that was a clever device of the original designer. The hexagon of the turret became a square except as to the south face, where the structure merged into the mass of the main building, and ultimately developed into lofty arches and mighty pillars on the ground floor, thus giving space to the entrance and height to the hall.

The workers had prised out the first block of stone when a policeman brought a telegram to the Chief. He had to bend his brows over the message before he understood it. It ran:

Flying to Rome. Commissioner wired last night's news. Make Alice tell.—Furneaux.

To begin with, the little man was cutting off two days' train journey by crossing the Adriatic in an aeroplane—probably sharing some chance flight by an Italian aviator which he had heard of in the nick of time. He knew of Irene Lanson's death, and had reason to believe that Alice Romer could say far more than she had revealed during the interview in the morning-room.

Winter's usually cheerful features assumed an expression which might almost be described as vindictive.

"She'll speak this time!" he muttered. "Confound her and her silly love affairs! If she had married a chauffeur, three dead men and one dead woman might be living to-day!"

By noon an opening was made of sufficient width that the corpse seen by Sheldon could be lifted out from its strange tomb, and carried on a stretcher to a well-lighted garage in the main courtyard. Here it was possible to take measurements and photographs

and search clothing. A passport, with its portrait and description, proved that the man was Gregorio Silver, a Greek subject, born in Salonica; a British consular visa dated July 1st, at Athens, indicated the approximate period of his visit to England. Among other belongings, he had a master key which was a replica of that possessed by Irene Lanson, and a scarab, identical in shape and colour with the ornament found on Mr. Lanson. A letter from Simonides, though written in Greek, proved to be a personal recommendation to Mr. Lanson of "a trustworthy agent."

A fair sum of money came from a purse and a wallet, but in notes of a denomination which showed they could have formed no part of the missing ten thousand pounds. Dr. Macgregor ascertained at once that Silver's right thigh and left leg were broken. There were other injuries, sustained after death. The ghastly details need not be recorded. It was just possible to make sure that the Gregorio Silver of the passport and the disfigured remains found in the turret were one and the same person. It was evident, too, that in his flight to a safe retreat he had fallen owing to the snapping of a bar of iron oxidised by air and water.

In the secret room were stored a few simple articles of food—beef and biscuits in tins, and a flask of wine. They had not been touched. The poor wretch had lapsed into unconsciousness and death after bellowing for help that could not be given.

A strange and sad addition to the half-revealed secrets of the grave was the discovery of parts of a human skeleton in a recess on the floor of the narrow chamber to which the shaft led. Among these relics was a small but exquisitely moulded golden crucifix.

"That," said Macgregor, archæologist and antiquarian as well as skilled surgeon, "dates from the fifteenth century. It might almost be the work of Cellini. Those iron loops, which any daring man striving for life itself could use without incurring great risk, can be seen to-day on an old tower in Brittany, at a village called Le Faouët, near Quimperlé. The Breton example may have suggested this device to the architect of Sleaford, and a very remarkable hiding-place would easily develop into a 'priest's hole,' which had its uses during the reign of Elizabeth and later. I think we know now what became of Abbot Gervaise. When the coroner's quest is ended we ought to bury the poor old chap's bones in White Friars."

Winter had Alice Romer brought to the morning-room. As he required witnesses, he asked Mr. Hassall, Dr. Macgregor, and Superintendent Wood to be present.

The girl looked cowed and tearful when she came in, but the Chief was minded to show her no mercy.

"Sit there!" he said, pointing to a chair facing one of the windows. "Now, I want the truth from you. You have caused mischief enough. Perhaps you are willing to atone, to some extent, by answering my questions. Understand, however, that any statement you feel called on to make will be taken down in writing, and may be used in evidence against you if you are brought to trial. . . . What do you know about Gregorio Silver?"

"The man you found in the turret?" she said instantly.

"Yes."

"I believe, but I'm not certain, that he came here first to see Mr. Lanson. I'm quite sure they met,

and had long talks. Silver stayed in my mother's house in South Street. He came there because he was a friend of my stepfather, Thomas Jefferson, whom he got acquainted with in Salonica. I said the other day that Mr. Jefferson was killed during the war. That is not quite correct. He was badly wounded, but lived nearly three years in hospital after he was brought home, and Silver visited him there—in Roehampton, I mean—and mother and I believe it was then he told the Greek about the turret and the passage down the cliff."

She paused, not from any unwillingness to proceed, her hearers imagined, but to collect her thoughts. Obviously, it was an effort for such a girl to deliver a long and lucid account of a set of remarkable circumstances in the presence of four men whom she regarded as, in some sense, her judges. Winter realised that she needed encouragement.

"Best tell your story in your own words," he said. "I'll get you to clear up doubtful points afterwards."

Alice Romer shook her head. She seemed to be in a strange mood, broken in spirit, but resolute in her effort to do what she could to unravel the mystery.

"I don't think you can," she cried. "I mean that I can only tell you what I know. Mr. Jefferson, my stepfather, was the son of a builder who quarrelled with Sir John Temple about a contract for repairs to the Castle. Mr. Jefferson's father was employed about the place a good deal over forty years ago, and he discovered the hiding-place in the turret, as well as the path down the cliff. Lots of folk knew of the path—it is written of in the histories—but Mr. Lanson had it destroyed two years since, when he refashioned the house and library, and had all the steel bars put

on the windows. Old Mr. Jefferson told his son about the turret, but Thomas Jefferson never took mother or me into his confidence. We think now he hardly ever had these things in his mind, but they came back to him when he heard that Silver had business with the Greek banker who had bought Sleaford Castle. He might have thought it a sort of joke—that the rich man didn't know as much about his own house as the poor Tommy dying in London. And Silver never said a word of the room in the turret to Miss Lanson. He saw she was crazy about things connected with the old monks at Grey Friars and the disappearance of Abbot Gervaise. I see now he meant to use his knowledge in some way, though I'll never understand why he killed Mr. Lanson—if he did kill him—and I suppose he did, because Silver was the man who ran up the stairs to the turret that night."

"You knew that, yet said not a word to the police?" broke in Winter sternly.

"How could I, when Miss Irene herself had helped in concealing Silver in the Castle?" said the girl, speaking in a monotonous undertone that was far more convincing than a hysterical outbreak.

"That was not for you to decide. Your conscience must have told you you were behaving badly."

"But Mr. Denasch——"

"Yes. What of him?" for Alice Romer had faltered over the name.

"He knew of Silver, and assured both Miss Lanson and me that the man was working heart and soul for Mr. Sevastopolo's party."

"After the murder was committed, and this man was still hiding somewhere in the Castle, surely you realised how mistaken you both were?"

"Oh, sir, don't you understand? Miss Irene herself allowed him to be here secretly on many occasions.

She wanted to defeat her father's plans when they went against Mr. Sevastopolo. She told me herself that Mr. Lanson thought of nothing but money, whereas love and ambition used money only as a means towards an end. Those were her words, when I took the liberty of saying it was a mistake, perhaps, to allow a stranger to examine Mr. Lanson's papers."

"How was that possible?"

"They worked in the library for hours after eleven at night. It was easy to dodge Mr. Bates when he made his rounds. Silver was supposed to be something to do with Egypt—I've forgotten the word——"

"An Egyptologist," put in Macgregor.

"Yes, sir. That's it! He gave Mr. Lanson a little carved thing that looked like a beetle——"

"How do you know?" said Winter.

"I was in Miss Irene's room when her father showed it to her, and she shivered, saying she wouldn't dream of carrying about an ornament of the dead, but he only laughed and said the mummy this one came from had been dead four thousand years."

"Still I don't see how Silver could come and go without attracting attention?"

"It was not the custom, sir, to enter in the visitors' book the name of anyone who arrived in company with a member of the family. I believe Mr. Lanson himself first brought in Silver. Then Miss Irene would meet him in the town about half-past six, and bring him here in a closed car, so Bates hardly ever set eyes on him, and the two footmen on duty in the hall of an evening were never there next morning at half-past ten or eleven, when Miss Irene would escort him out."

"Was Denasch a party to these things?"

"No, sir. He told me that Mr. Silver belonged to what he called 'a group' which was working secretly at Athens for the same things he and Mr. Sevastopolo and Miss Irene were supporting openly. Unfortunately, Miss Irene was attracted by the mystery attached to Silver, and then, he could talk rubbish for hours about the persistence of human intelligence after death, and a lot more I didn't understand at all."

"If Denasch did not share in Silver's plotting, why was he so desperately anxious that you should signal him on the night of the murder?"

"That was the night something of importance was to happen in Athens, and Mr. Sevastopolo was to telephone from London. If Miss Irene wanted Mr. Denasch in a hurry I was to show the signal, which I did show twice."

"Why should she want Denasch?"

"Supposing matters went wrong, as they began doing when Mr. Glen quarrelled with his uncle, Miss Irene meant leaving the Castle with Mr. Denasch, who was to take her to London in a car. Then, next morning, Mr. Lanson would be told about the marriage."

"Which you knew of, I suppose?"

Alice Romer began to cry quietly.

"I went with Miss Irene to Guildford on her wedding day," she sobbed. "Both she and her husband trusted me. And then—there was Victor! I hoped—oh, how could I betray them all, when I was sure they had no hand in the crime? Miss Irene was the worst sufferer. She knew she was responsible for her father's death. And Mr. Sevastopolo guessed it, though she never told him all."

"I allow for *your* foolish loyalty, but what possible explanation of his silence can Denasch have?"

"He said to me, sir, that all of us were only guessing—you and Mr. Furneaux like the rest—and our best plan was to say nothing, because big affairs were at stake, and we might do great harm by telling half or quarter of a story."

"Of course, he cared not a straw who died so long as he benefited. You, I suppose, fell down the turret stairs because you heard Silver groaning when you went to the window. How could you persuade yourself to hide that fact when you knew your master had been killed?"

The girl flashed a look of genuine surprise through her tears.

"I didn't think that at all, sir," she gulped. "If I expected anything when I came to my senses it was that I'd hear of Silver's body being found—where—Miss Irene—fell—last night."

The plea was adroit in its patent honesty. How was Alice Romer to guess the actual facts when better-informed minds had failed so thoroughly in the same respect? True, she had seen Silver, and must have believed he had escaped by way of the turret. But they, who had not seen him, knew equally well of his existence.

"We are progressing—too rapidly in some ways—very slowly in others," communed the Chief aloud, turning to look out of a window while he strove to focus his thoughts on a still baffling problem.

"Where did Silver spend much of his time when in the Castle?" he resumed. "He could hardly remain in the library all night."

"He used to write in Miss Irene's boudoir. He would write for hours on end. Then, in the early

morning, I'd let him into the turret, where he would sit until Miss Irene took him out."

"How many actual nights did he spend in the Castle?"

"Five altogether, sir. I couldn't rest for the worry of it, but Miss Irene said she enjoyed fighting for her own country, which was always the way she spoke of Greece."

"Are you aware now that you have been taking a most frightful risk in behaving as you have done?"

"Yes, sir. I'm ready!"

"Ready for what?"

"To go to prison."

"What for?"

"I don't know, and don't care. Victor will never marry me now. I can't live in Sleaford, so what is to become of me?"

She hid her face in her hands. Winter glanced at Macgregor, who shook his head.

"The future may not be so black as it looks," said the Chief, with a new gentleness in his voice. "Go to your room and rest. Mix with the other servants as usual. If they bother you with questions or make things uncomfortable for you, tell Mr. Pinkney, and he will soon put a stop to any ill-treatment. Have you any further information to give?"

"No, sir. It's all a blur in my mind."

"I have no doubt. To-morrow, or next day, we'll have another chat. Try and remember everything, even little matters that seem of no importance. In the meantime you will be glad to hear that I believe you have now told me the truth, and I see, too, that you believed you were shielding your mistress to a certain extent."

"Please, sir," came the timid murmur, "what will they do to Victor?"

"That is more than I know. It depends largely on the rascal's own attitude. He, too, must be outspoken."

"I think he will be, sir. He's very frightened. He thinks everything has gone the wrong way."

The girl rose, but Mr. Hassall detained her.

"You witnessed a document for Miss Irene yesterday?" he inquired.

"Yes, sir."

"You knew what it was?"

"Yes, sir—a will. She said you advised Mr. Glen to make a will, so she was doing the same thing. I told her it might be better if she consulted you first, but she only smiled and said one could make a will every day so long as the law didn't regard you as a lunatic."

"Did she confide to you the nature of the will?"

"Not a word, sir. She said something to the day nurse and me about signing it in our presence, and—something else. Anyhow, I'd know the paper again if I saw it. It wasn't at all my idea of a proper will."

"Thank you. Don't speak of this matter to any other person."

When she had gone out the lawyer took two letters from his pocket.

"One of these reached me by post this morning," he said. "The other was delivered by hand about eleven o'clock. They are exceedingly important, but I did not mention them when we were so engaged in the pressing business of the hour. The first is from poor Irene herself. It informs me that in the event of her death, or if I do not receive another

letter telling me of a change, she has confided a will to the care of the manager of a local bank. Subject to a few personal bequests, she has given the whole of her estate to Dorothy Temple, in the belief that she is the fit and proper person to reign in this Castle. The second letter is from the bank manager, to inform me that he had received a sealed document marked to be handed to me after Miss Lanson's death. He brought it here when I telephoned, and, marvellous to relate, it is drawn up correctly. I was afraid of trouble if she had created a trust without appointing trustees. But she was her father's daughter, and did her work accurately."

"The Lanson millions revert to Miss Temple!" Winter almost gasped.

"God bless my soul!" exclaimed Macgregor.

"Yes. The Castle and its lands have come back to the old line," said Hassall gravely. "This scrap of notepaper is worth nine millions sterling at the lowest computation. I must have it lodged in a safe. I feel rather like a conspirator in even carrying it about in a pocket. By the way, that girl, Alice Romer, gets a thousand pounds and two hundred a year."

"Isn't that a trust?" said Winter.

"No. It's a direction to Miss Dorothy, and she will certainly obey it. Well, gentlemen, what in the world can happen next?"

A policeman appeared with a telegram. It was from Furneaux.

In Rome. At 5,000 *feet the brain becomes crystal.* Vento meridionali aperta est. *The missing word is* "fenestra"—*window. It must be in the turret. If necessary, pull it down, stone by stone.*

"Confound the fellow," blustered the Chief; "he won't leave us a shred of credit! First he names Silver and then tells us where to find him!"

CHAPTER XIX

Furneaux Discourses on Psychology

On the following day the Sleaford coroner covered himself with glory by holding four inquests, all bound up with the Castle on the hill. The first, and longest one, since Winter had to permit the facts to appear, dealt with Charles Lanson, who was declared to have been feloniously killed by one Gregorio Silver. The second, on Lanson's daughter, resulted in a verdict of "Accidental Death." The letter to her husband breathed only of love and good cheer, and the writer could not be contemplating suicide. Who, then, would dare tell a British jury that it was not posted because the woman knew that the man was dead? In the third, that on Silver, a similar finding could not be avoided, though the Sleaford jury was almost ferocious in its desire to put on record its belief that the said Gregorio Silver did feloniously kill and slay the said Charles Lanson. The fourth expressed a pious conviction that the few withered bones taken from the turret were those of Abbot Gervaise.

If the rector of Sleaford had not been an eminently sensible man, the murderer's body would have been refused interment in even the pauper section of the churchyard. As it was, the coroner, rather subdued by this cataclysm of horrors, pointed out that English

law assumes a man's innocence until he has been tried and convicted, and the jury's verdict against Silver was founded on presumptive evidence only. Happily, the controversy died down, and Silver's body was laid to rest without that display of public venom which might have added a touch of bathos to a great tragedy.

The newspapers, of course, did not fail to give prominence to the brief police court proceedings against Denasch in Sleaford and Simonides in London. Both men pleaded "Not Guilty" to the charge of being accessories before and after the fact in the matter of the murder of Charles Lanson, and were remanded in custody.

Winter could then draw breath. When Furneaux arrived he would know what sort of testimony was available from Athens, and in the meantime one man or both might elect to make a statement. They did. Simonides showed conclusively that Silver was one of the agents through whom Mr. Lanson's ten thousand pounds reached the "Progressive Party" in Greece, and that the money had been used already for political purposes. So he was discharged, and recommended so earnestly to clear out of England that he took the first boat to the Hook of Holland, and thence hurried to Hamburg, which is not so far from the Athens of to-day as it seems to be on the map.

Denasch—otherwise Hugo Marcoulis—sent for Winter after the second night in a cell, but the Chief referred him to Superintendent Wood, and the latter took a malicious pleasure in telling him that he must await Furneaux's reappearance. Of course, any written "confession" would be "submitted to the proper authorities," but a verbal discussion could not be encouraged.

Dorothy Temple was almost dismayed when she

heard of the wealth that had been showered on her. No one could guess, within several millions, what the estate would yield. Not even a rapacious Treasury had ever before been called on to deal with succession duties leviable on a colossal fortune in conditions which implied that the ultimate beneficiary could not begin to estimate the value of Irene Lanson's bequest until some months had been devoted to settling the probate charge under Charles Lanson's will. Matters were complicated, too, by Irene's marriage to a Greek national. The other trustees came from London, and the presence of a special representative of the Treasury was sought. In the interests of all parties it was best that the High Court should pronounce on an agreed scheme. On the principle that it never rains but it pours, Dorothy Temple became Sevastopolo's heiress, as the Greek's London bank produced a will in favour of his wife.

Winter and Sheldon, though ostensibly clearing up the confused issues at Sleaford, were engaged in zealous pursuit of the unknown man who, if Denasch's story were true, co-operated with Silver. They ascertained that a "foreigner," with the not uncommon name of William Jones, had stayed at a village inn about a mile distant from Sleaford, but he disappeared after Lanson's murder, and it was assumed he had left the country. The man's habits were peculiar. He often went out at dusk and did not return till one or two o'clock in the morning, when he would be most apologetic in broken English, and offer to pay for the trouble he was causing. This was another score against Denasch. Had he told what he knew when arrested for half an hour on that fatal night, "William Jones" would probably have been forced to explain his activities.

Furneaux was detained in London, where his story

of adventure in Athens was much in demand, not only by his own department, but by the Foreign Office. Hence he did not reach Sleaford until the evening of the day Irene Lanson was buried by her father's side.

As might be expected, no affair in which the little detective was concerned moved along preconceived lines.

"The order of the day is that we let sleeping dogs lie," he told the gathering which welcomed him in the Castle. "I bring, not writs, but olive branches. Simonides is free, and no further evidence is to be offered against Denasch."

"That may be all very well in London, but we don't do business that way in Derbyshire," broke in Wood testily.

"I think you'll agree, Superintendent, when you hear the ins and outs of the business," said Furneaux with a mildness that did not mislead Winter for an instant, though it may have mollified the local man. "Great Britain doesn't want the Near East to be plunged into another war, the tenth or eleventh in the last fifteen years, simply to get Victor Denasch convicted on a minor charge of concealment of identity or something of the kind. Now that Sevastopolo is dead, Denasch knows too much, and he can raise such a rumpus in Greece by opening his mouth in court that a Turkish army corps might be marching into Thessaly the day after the case was reported. We've got to shut down on the publicity stunt, and that's a fact. Not that Denasch need ever know it. We'll see him happily married, and then sling him out of the kingdom. If Alice Romer sticks to her thousand pounds and two hundred a year, Master Victor will make the best of her, because he may need the money."

"How do *you* know anything about Alice Romer's legacy?" demanded Winter, who did not remember having passed on this bit of information to headquarters.

"Oh, Sevastopolo told me in the train. We became bosom friends during the journey. That Greek had his points. I'd have loved the job of helping to fit him with a crown and crimson plush cloak. He and his wife had planned Alice's reward between them. She was a loyal follower, and was to be treated as such. Quite recently I read some correspondence in a newspaper as to what Americans mean when they call a man a 'piker.' Well, Sevastopolo wasn't one. His ways were not our ways, yet Greece lost a decent king when the Brotherhood of Beetles shot him down last Monday night."

Winter, lighting a cigar at the moment, was so fascinated by this statement that he held a burning match too long, but Furneaux pretended to misinterpret his full-blooded comment.

"Ah!" he cackled, "I was sure you'd be startled when you heard that, Chief. 'Scarabeon Adelphoi,' they call themselves. Nice name, isn't it? Sounds like an item in a lecture on insects. The Greek for 'beetle' is '*Kantharos*,' but these heroes adapted the Egyptian symbol. They form a small but vigorous secret society—about a thousand members all told—and their theory is that public life in Greece needs stiffening by a mixture of Prussianism and Fascismo, with prompt assassination of powerful opponents as a tonic. Already they have either killed or scared out of the country quite a number of prominent Greeks who didn't happen to think along those lines. As a rule, they strike only at home, where they are safe, but at least three deaths in Paris and Rome are put down to their account, while Lanson's case is the first

in England, as well as the first external one for which they claim credit. Yes, that's the way they put it in Athens—no squeamishness about the Beetles. Lanson was all right so long as he approved Denasch's scheme, which introduced the German element, but his interference meant ruin when he promised his millions to the Constitutional Republicans. Moreover, he had made the fatal mistake of joining the Brotherhood himself. Probably he hardly realised the real objects of the society, and believed it would provide reliable information. Both he and Sevastopolo had been out of Athens too many years. They had lost touch with Greek modernism. Now, a new plot is hatched there every hour. If a politician goes for a stroll to the Parthenon he finds himself out of 'the movement' by the time he gets back. The Embassies, in sheer self-defence, have organised a close time from midnight on Fridays to nine a.m. on Mondays. Between those hours they share all diplomatic secrets impartially, otherwise they'd never get a round of golf. The leading foreign journalists have a similar arrangement. If you look in the London newspapers any Monday morning you'll find that details of the week-end revolution in Greece agree to a comma in every sheet."

"Charles," broke in Winter emphatically, "I know you're a picturesque liar, but our friends here are trying to believe you."

"Now that's what I call an unkind remark," protested Furneaux. "I throw a picture on the screen which literally shrieks its story, yet you—— Now, I ask you, gentlemen—in which term, of course, I do not include my matter-of-fact Chief—haven't I conveyed to your bright intellects the true atmosphere of a city torn by faction, a people utterly at the mercy of any predatory gang with

plenty of energy and a good supply of ammunition?"

No one answered, whereupon Furneaux sighed.

"Ah, well," he said, "let us then follow the broad high road of conventionality. The bald fact is that Lanson became suspect of the Brotherhood, and they deputed Gregorio Silver, because of his fluent English, and an associate, Johannes Pavlos, who could speak the language well enough to find his way about, as delegates to the British Committee of the section with which they work—though not a branch of the Brotherhood itself. The London leader of this crowd was Alexis Simonides. Silver came to Sleaford, and contrived to gain a hearing from Lanson as a Brother Beetle. Also, unfortunately, he took the measure of Irene Lanson, and so played on her credulity that he actually persuaded her he was Sevastopolo's devoted adherent, whereas the Brotherhood decreed Sevastopolo's 'removal' the moment it became known he was a candidate for the vacant throne. This, therefore, was the position. By a mere trick of coincidence Silver had heard from a dying man in London something which he probably regarded as a fairy tale about a secret way into the Castle, and an even more secret room inside it, but he had not been long in Sleaford before he discovered that the path down the face of the cliff had actually existed until Lanson had it destroyed by blasting operations. We can assume that he investigated the other part of the story, and saw in it an almost certain method of escape from speedy capture if bold measures became necessary, while relaxed vigilance after forty-eight hours might have enabled him to walk out unchallenged. Remember, I am speaking of a fanatical desperado. No other type of man can become a genuine Beetle. Members of the Lanson class are

regarded as mere figure-heads, dummy potentates to be destroyed when no longer useful. The fact that many active members of the Brotherhood are well known to the so-called authorities in Athens is the most striking commentary on the conditions of life there at this moment. As the Orient Express lost many hours on the way, Sevastopolo and I reached the city at three o'clock last Monday afternoon. At half-past six he was told that Charles Lanson had been condemned and executed by the Brotherhood. By midnight he would, in all likelihood, have secured the names of both Silver and Pavlos, but at eight o'clock he was shot dead while sitting opposite me in the restaurant of the Hotel Abydos."

The little man was in earnest now. The banter had gone from his voice, the dancing merriment from his eyes. He was reconstructing one of the missing acts of a great tragedy.

"The Hotel Abydos faces the Alexander Square," he explained, "and is in the centre of the fashionable quarter, near the Ministries, with the chief shopping streets on three sides. We had a window table, and, as the evening was sultry, our window was open. We had eaten some sort of almost transparent pink fish when a man thrust an automatic over the sill, and shot Sevastopolo in the chest, point blank. A waiter half-shielded me at the moment, but I saw the murderer's face closely, and noticed that he wore clean linen, a blue and brown tie, a navy blue serge suit, and a brown overcoat. A terrific commotion sprang up inside the restaurant, and my waiter fell over the table, which was the best thing that could happen for me, because I was in the street, through the window, in two seconds. I had no difficulty in spotting my man, who had mixed with the passers-by, and had the nerve to turn back for a yard or two,

as though he wondered why other people were gathering in front of a window in the Hotel Abydos. He paid not the slightest heed to me. I was not in evening dress, and half the population of Athens goes bare-headed at night. At the first corner stood a policeman, whom neither he nor I liked the look of, so we dodged. After a time, say ten minutes, when I was hopelessly lost, as I didn't even try to memorise turnings, while the names of streets, in Greek and French, were undecipherable, my special assassin halted and looked about him. A stout plane tree proved my salvation, and he did not see me. Then he skipped into the portico of a decent sort of house, and I heard the door slam. I notched the tree-trunk, counted the trees back to a well-lighted street we had crossed, and, after waiting barely a minute, had the luck to catch an empty cab. All the Greek I knew was 'Hotel Abydos,' but it sufficed, and soon the hall-porter had ascertained from my driver that we had come from the corner of the Rue Gallipoli. So far, so good. But I was being sought by the police, and they were the very last persons whose help I desired."

"May I ask why?" broke in Trevor.

"I'd hate to tell you, friend from across the seas, though a level-headed observer like you can hardly have failed to notice the asinine methods adopted in crime detection by the European cop!"

"Sure thing!" grinned Trevor.

"Having thus explained my objections to the Athens Constabulary," went on Furneaux, "I come back to my hall-porter. I couldn't guess which would be the more potent, a pound note or the nasty-looking scarab I had in my pocket, so I tried both. *Nom d'un pipe!* The blighter shrivelled at sight of the scarab, but he took the note also. Shoving me

into his cubby-hole, he brought two men who proved to be friends of Sevastopolo's. They spoke French and English, and I made out that they rated the Beetles and the police at about fifty-fifty. Those two lads were quick workers, too. We could do nothing like it in London, but then we're not properly organised for revolutions. In a very few minutes they had collected four 'comrades,' and we all hurried to the Rue Gallipoli in a couple of cars. The party was ready for action, of course. Every respectable citizen of Athens pockets an automatic and a hefty-looking knife when he dresses in the morning. He reaches for them before grabbing his cigarette-case and matches. I found my tree and the right portico, and the bright young man who took charge of the expedition was delighted when I lent him the scarab. It did the trick. The brigand who opened the door admitted us without a murmur when he saw it. We were taken to a large, well-furnished room on the first floor, and, after a brief delay, my blue-suited acquaintance came in. He showed surprise when he saw four persons, whom he evidently recognised, awaiting him, but he was quite peeved when two others sprang from behind the door and put him on the mat for the full count. Then I learnt his name. It was Johannes Pavlos!"

"Good for you!" Trevor could not help saying.

"It is not my fault if this recital sounds like a movie scenario. Things just happened that way. They trussed him like a fowl with window-blind cords and strips of tablecloth, and then persuaded him to speak. It was a nasty business—something like a surgical tourniquet, improvised with a shoe-lace, and a twisted lead-pencil applied to the wrists. In deference to my prejudices they got him to answer my questions

before the affair became too unpleasant. It was he who bowled over P.C. Barker, as he too expected to be signalled from the turret at 10.30. He believed next day that his friend, Gregorio Silver, had 'executed' Charles Lanson. Therefore, after motoring to Birmingham, he left for the Middle East by an early train. Now, I wonder if we passed him on the road? Sevastopolo and he, racing North and South, each bound hot-foot for Eternity!"

Furneaux dismissed the point after a moment's cogitation.

"I took his photograph off his own mantelpiece," he went on, "so Mr. Wood can get him identified to-morrow by the people who keep the inn where he lived. He knew all about Sevastopolo's plans. I simply couldn't stop that poor fellow from sending telegrams. His friends 'had to be prepared,' he said. I shouldn't be a bit surprised to hear he had wired to several Adelphoi. They swarm everywhere. It was Lanson's money that started the latest revolution, but that was a mere curtain-raiser for the real action which is coming along now. There's another king in embryo. He's a German-Greek, and will be 'elected' President at an early date. It was difficult for me to follow all that was said, because Sevastopolo's friends were excited, and constantly lapsed into Greek. Pavlos gurgled nothing else. Moreover, the indications were such that I thought I had better be hopping it. I got away just in time. I heard cars approaching with accelerators all out, so took cover behind a plane tree once more. The brigand, suspecting something had gone wrong, had rushed for reinforcements. One of our Embassy staff has written since to say that four dead men were carried out about nine o'clock. One was undoubtedly Pavlos. My diplomatic correspondent came to the Abydos at

ten, and arranged for my flight to Rome early next morning. He said I might find life in Athens too thrilling. It was he who sent the telegram to you, Chief."

"But you wrote it."

"Oh, yes. And now, I think, we have carried the Lanson case to the limit of our knowledge. The unknown part, the actual murder, can be reconstructed. Silver knew that a climax would take place in Athens that night. He was sure, too, that Sevastopolo would telephone from London, so hid himself in a suit of armour while the Castle folk were at dinner. Probably he expected the telephone message to come through earlier. At any rate, although he got some indication of Lanson's attitude toward Greece when he heard the quarrel between Mr. Glen and the banker about Irene Lanson, he waited for Sevastopolo's call, which was belated, and upset his calculations. We may take it for granted that Lanson's outspokenness then sealed his fate, but the arrival of the butler caught Silver at the wrong moment. How greatly the situation would have changed if he struck after Mr. Pinkney brought the hot milk! Lanson's death would not have been discovered till the following morning, as Bates could hardly know whether or not his master had left the library."

"Did you bring back the scarab?" inquired Winter.

"Yes. Here it is! I got it while we were waiting for Pavlos in his sitting-room."

The Chief produced the onyx beetle found on Silver. They were almost precisely alike, varying only in the veining of the stones.

Superintendent Wood agreed forthwith that proceedings against Denasch would be abandoned, but that

decision was not communicated to the impatient prisoner till Furneaux visited him next day. The man did not look so spruce now he was deprived of make-up and cosmetics. He consented readily to marry Alice Romer if given permission to leave England.

"The girl is a fool to want to marry you," Furneaux told him, "but you are a much bigger fool if you mix any more in Greek affairs. However, we'll keep our bond. As soon after your marriage as you wish you will be allowed to cross the Channel. Of course, both you and I know you ought to be in jail, so you are lucky to get off scot-free. Don't, I beseech you, give us another chance!"

Dorothy Temple summoned an aunt and a cousin to come and live with her while she was learning the duties of her new position. Though born and bred in the Castle, the enlarged household and lavish expenditure of its late owner did not appeal to her. Further, it was financially impossible to continue on the same scale. In all probability she would require assistance from her bank for at least two years. Glen and she elected to get married quietly within a few months, leave a small staff in the Castle as caretakers, and tour the world. Trevor remained as estate manager. Davidson announced his intention of reading for the Bar. They, and all others connected with the dead financier, were well provided for by his will.

The supposed remains of Abbot Gervaise were buried in the centre of the nave at White Friars, and an excited controversy raged for a whole week as to which religious community should conduct the funeral service. It died down quickly. Let it rest! The room and well in the turret were built up with good stones and mortar. Several archæological societies protested, but Dorothy held firmly by her decision.

The same young lady, prompted thereto by Mr. Pinkney, sent half a dozen cases of selected wines to both Winter and Furneaux, while Sheldon received a case of pre-war whisky. The Big 'Un and the Little 'Un celebrated the opening of the first bottle of Chambertin at Winter's house in Battersea, where the excellent wife he had spoken of to Davidson provided a perfect little dinner. She, good woman, did not dabble in tragedies, caring only for the telegram or telephone message announcing her husband's return home at the end of some world-famous man-hunt.

But the women in the Lanson affair interested her.

"Did Denasch take what's-her-name, the maid, with him to Hamburg?" she asked her husband when the talk turned on events at Sleaford.

"Mr. Denasch took Mrs. Denasch with him, my dear."

"Don't be silly, Jim! You know what I meant. Do you think he will treat her well?"

"I hope so. At any rate, she seemed glad to go, and was rather annoyed with me when I told her that if he behaved badly she was to let me hear of it, and I'd make things unpleasant for him, even in Germany."

"And that other poor thing, Irene Lanson. Do you really believe, Mr. Furneaux, she saw the ghosts she spoke of? There's no use in my putting such a question to James. He's such a—I forget the word."

"Lepidopterist!" suggested Winter.

"Machiavelli!" piped Furneaux.

"Well, something of the sort. But do tell me what you think."

Furneaux looked around the cosy room, so

thoroughly English in its comfortable utility. He lifted a glass of the fine Burgundy, and took joy again in its ruby perfection.

"It's hard to say, ma'am," he replied. "We all hold strongly by the belief that we own an immortal soul, so, to adjust the balance, if I may use the simile, I see no reason why we shouldn't have an immortal memory. Granted that, you and I should be able to see Abbot Gervaise, or Julius Cæsar, or any other genuine ghost either resident in these islands or visiting them occasionally."

"Now you're laughing at me. Just as bad as Jim, you are!"

"Indeed, I'm not, if I may be allowed to deal only with the first of those two statements. Irene Lanson was of mixed parentage, an inexact phrase in itself, but it conveys my meaning. Her father was a financial genius, but a man of no great mentality in other respects. Her mother, I'm told, was a well-educated and highly intelligent Greek. Such racial blends often produce a psychological phenomenon, marked by distinct, often morbid, sub-conscious developments——"

"Stop your nonsense! Did she see ghosts, or didn't she?"

"Her brain created them, and then she saw them."

"I'll never really understand how you two men do the wonderful things you're credited with," commented Mrs. Winter placidly. "Neither of you can answer the simplest question. If I create a loaf of bread by baking it, of course I can see it. What I want to know is how anyone can see a real loaf without a lot of preliminary hard work. But there! Ring for the coffee, James. I must run round to Mrs. Robertson for a few minutes. She's just had

her first baby, and it's the darlingest little mite. Oh, I've thought of that word—it's 'romancer'."

And the good lady rose in triumph.

"James," purred Furneaux, "I'm a sad man the day. I've been reckoning up how much a week £4,000 a year is—a little under seventy-seven quid. Call it an even hundred with certain expenses thrown in. I've got to refund nineteen hundred pounds to somebody."

Winter seized his empty wine-glass, and smelt it.

"That Chambertin struck me as all right," he said anxiously, "but it seems to have gone to your head, or what you call a head. What the deuce are you talking about?"

"The cheque Sevastopolo gave me."

"Did he give you a cheque?"

"Didn't I write and tell you he did?"

"This is dreadful! You can't even talk coherently! Great Scott! I hope there's no call from the Yard to-night. Now, listen to me, old scout. Sound wine has this superb quality—that although a little of it may upset you, a fair-sized dose has a steadying effect. I'll have another bottle up. But no more shop, I pray thee! Let dead cheques bury their dead, whether in Athens or Sleaford! It's for the F.O. and the Commissioner to act as resurrectionists—not for me!"

And the Chief pointed a fat cigar at the little man with such significance that the conversation changed abruptly.

THE END