PAST MASTERS 182

Arthur B. Reeve
G K Chesterton
A E W Mason
Edgar Allan Poe
Robert Barr
H G Wells
Sheridan Le Fanu
Anatole France

and more

PAST MASTERS 182

Produced and Edited by Terry Walker from short stories in magazines, newspapers and other sources, and all in the Life + 70 years public domain.

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Arthur B. Reeve

1880-1936

Cosmopolitan Magazine, Jan 1911

Collected in: *The Silent Bullet*, 1912

This is the story that introduced Craig Kennedy, the American "scientific detective" to the public in 1911. The book, "The Silent Bullet", with the first 12 Kennedy cases, can be found free at MobileRead, Project Gutenberg (US), and if you are ambitious, first edition hardbacks sell at around $1,000 USD a pop!

Craig Kennedy's Theories

"IT HAS ALWAYS seemed strange to me that no one has ever endowed a professorship in criminal science in any of our large universities."

Craig Kennedy laid down his evening paper and filled his pipe with my tobacco. In college we had roomed together, had shared everything, even poverty, and now that Craig was a professor of chemistry and I was on the staff of the Star, we had continued the arrangement. Prosperity found us in a rather neat bachelor apartment on the Heights, not far from the University.

"Why should there be a chair in criminal science?" I remarked argumentatively, settling back in my chair. "I've done my turn at police headquarters reporting, and I can tell you, Craig, it's no place for a college professor. Crime is just crime. And as for dealing with it, the good detective is born and bred to it. College professors for the sociology of the thing, yes; for the detection of it, give me a Byrnes."

"On the contrary," replied Kennedy, his clean-cut features betraying an earnestness which I knew indicated that he was leading up to something important, "there is a distinct place for science in the detection of crime. On the Continent they are far in advance of us in that respect. We are mere children beside a dozen crime-specialists in Paris, whom I could name."

"Yes, but where does the college professor come in?" I asked, rather doubtfully.

"You must remember, Walter," he pursued, warming up to his subject, "that it's only within the last ten years or so that we have had the really practical college professor who could do it. The silk-stockinged variety is out of date now. To-day it is the college professor who is the third arbitrator in labour disputes, who reforms our currency, who heads our tariff commissions, and conserves our farms and forests. We have professors of everything—why not professors of crime?"

Still, as I shook my head dubiously, he hurried on to clinch his point. "Colleges have gone a long way from the old ideal of pure culture. They have got down to solving the hard facts of life—pretty nearly all, except one. They still treat crime in the old way, study its statistics and pore over its causes and the theories of how it can be prevented. But as for running the criminal himself down, scientifically, relentlessly—bah! we haven't made an inch of progress since the hammer and tongs method of your Byrnes."

"Doubtless you will write a thesis on this most interesting subject," I suggested, "and let it go at that."

"No, I am serious," he replied, determined for some reason or other to make a convert of me. "I mean exactly what I say. I am going to apply science to the detection of crime, the same sort of methods by which you trace out the presence of a chemical, or run an unknown germ to earth. And before I have gone far, I am going to enlist Walter Jameson as an aide. I think I shall need you in my business."

"How do I come in?"

"Well, for one thing, you will get a scoop, a beat,—whatever you call it in that newspaper jargon of yours."

I smiled in a skeptical way, such as newspapermen are wont to affect toward a thing until it is done—after which we make a wild scramble to exploit it.

Nothing more on the subject passed between us for several days.

"DETECTIVES IN FICTION nearly always make a great mistake," said Kennedy one evening after our first conversation on crime and science. "They almost invariably antagonize the regular detective force. Now in real life that's impossible— it's fatal."

"Yes," I agreed, looking up from reading an account of the failure of a large Wall Street brokerage house, Kerr Parker & Co., and the peculiar suicide of Kerr Parker. "Yes, it's impossible, just as it is impossible for the regular detectives to antagonize the newspapers. Scotland Yard found that out in the Crippen case."

"My idea of the thing, Jameson," continued Kennedy, "is that the professor of criminal science ought to work with, not against, the regular detectives. They're all right. They're indispensable, of course. Half the secret of success nowadays is organisation. The professor of criminal science should be merely what the professor in a technical school often is— a sort of consulting engineer. For instance, I believe that organisation plus science would go far toward clearing up that Wall Street case I see you are reading."

I expressed some doubt as to whether the regular police were enlightened enough to take that view of it.

"Some of them are," he replied. "Yesterday the chief of police in a Western city sent a man East to see me about the Price murder: you know the case?"

Indeed I did. A wealthy banker of the town had been murdered on the road to the golf club, no one knew why or by whom. Every clue had proved fruitless, and the list of suspects was itself so long and so impossible as to seem most discouraging.

"He sent me a piece of a torn handkerchief with a deep blood-stain on it," pursued Kennedy. "He said it clearly didn't belong to the murdered man, that it indicated that the murderer had himself been wounded in the tussle, but as yet it had proved utterly valueless as a clue. Would I see what I could make of it?

"After his man had told me the story I had a feeling that the murder was committed by either a Sicilian labourer on the links or a negro waiter at the club. Well, to make a short story shorter, I decided to test the blood-stain. Probably you didn't know it, but the Carnegie Institution has just published a minute, careful, and dry study of the blood of human beings and of animals.

"In fact, they have been able to reclassify the whole animal kingdom on this basis, and have made some most surprising additions to our knowledge of evolution. Now I don't propose to bore you with the details of the tests, but one of the things they showed was that the blood of a certain branch of the human race gives a reaction much like the blood of a certain group of monkeys, the chimpanzees, while the blood of another branch gives a reaction like that of the gorilla. Of course there's lots more to it, but this is all that need concern us now.

"I tried the tests. The blood on the handkerchief conformed strictly to the latter test. Now the gorilla was, of course, out of the question— this was no Rue Morgue murder. Therefore it was the negro waiter."

"But," I interrupted, "the negro offered a perfect alibi at the start, and— "

"No buts, Walter. Here's a telegram I received at dinner: 'Congratulations. Confronted Jackson your evidence as wired. Confessed.'"

"Well, Craig, I take off my hat to you," I exclaimed. "Next you'll be solving this Kerr Parker case for sure."

"I would take a hand in it if they'd let me," said he simply.

THAT NIGHT, without saying anything, I sauntered down to the imposing new police building amid the squalor of Center Street. They were very busy at headquarters, but, having once had that assignment for the Star, I had no trouble in getting in. Inspector Barney O'Connor of the Central Office carefully shifted a cigar from corner to corner of his mouth as I poured forth my suggestion to him.

"Well, Jameson," he said at length, "do you think this professor fellow is the goods?"

I didn't mince matters in my opinion of Kennedy. I told him of the Price case and showed him a copy of the telegram. That settled it.

"Can you bring him down here to-night?" he asked quickly.

I reached for the telephone, found Craig in his laboratory finally, and in less than an hour he was in the office.

"This is a most bating case, Professor Kennedy, this case of Kerr Parker," said the inspector, launching at once into his subject. "Here is a broker heavily interested in Mexican rubber. It looks like a good thing— plantations right in the same territory as those of the Rubber Trust. Now in addition to that he is branching out into coastwise steamship lines; another man associated with him is heavily engaged in a railway scheme from the United States down into Mexico. Altogether the steamships and railroads are tapping rubber, oil, copper, and I don't know what other regions. Here in New York they have been pyramiding stocks, borrowing money from two trust companies which they control. It's a lovely scheme— you've read about it, I suppose. Also you've read that it comes into competition with a certain group of capitalists whom we will call 'the System.'

"Well, this depression in the market comes along. At once rumours are spread about the weakness of the trust companies; runs start on both of them. The System,— you know them— make a great show of supporting the market. Yet the runs continue. God knows whether they will spread or the trust companies stand up under it to-morrow after what happened to-day. It was a good thing the market was closed when it happened.

"Kerr Parker was surrounded by a group of people who were in his schemes with him. They are holding a council of war in the directors' room. Suddenly Parker rises, staggers toward the window, falls, and is dead before a doctor can get to him. Every effort is made to keep the thing quiet. It is given out that he committed suicide. The papers don't seem to accept the suicide theory, however. Neither do we. The coroner, who is working with us, has kept his mouth shut so far, and will say nothing till the inquest. For, Professor Kennedy, my first man on the spot found that— Kerr Parker— was— murdered.

"Now here comes the amazing part of the story. The doors to the offices on both sides were open at the time. There were lots of people in each office. There was the usual click of typewriters, and the buzz of the ticker, and the hum of conversation. We have any number of witnesses of the whole affair, but as far as any of them knows no shot was fired, no smoke was seen, no noise was heard, nor was any weapon found. Yet here on my desk is a thirty-

two-calibre bullet. The coroner's physician probed it out of Parker's neck this afternoon and turned it over to us."

Kennedy reached for the bullet, and turned it thoughtfully in his fingers for a moment. One side of it had apparently struck a bone in the neck of the murdered man, and was flattened. The other side was still perfectly smooth. With his inevitable magnifying-glass he scrutinised the bullet on every side. I watched his face anxiously, and I could see that he was very intent and very excited.

"Extraordinary, most extraordinary," he said to himself as he turned it over and over. "Where did you say this bullet struck?"

"In the fleshy part of the neck, quite a little back of and below his ear and just above his collar. There wasn't much bleeding. I think it must have struck the base of his brain."

"It didn't strike his collar or hair?"

"No," replied the inspector.

"Inspector, I think we shall be able to put our hands on the murderer— I think we can get a conviction, sir, on the evidence that I shall get from this bullet in my laboratory."

"That's pretty much like a story-book," drawled the inspector incredulously, shaking his head.

"Perhaps," smiled Kennedy. "But there will still be plenty of work for the police to do, too. I've only got a clue to the murderer. It will take the whole organisation to follow it up, believe me. Now, Inspector, can you spare the time to go down to Parker's office and take me over the ground? No doubt we can develop something else there."

"Sure," answered O'Connor, and within five minutes we were hurrying down town in one of the department automobiles.

We found the office under guard of one of the Central Office men, while in the outside office Parker's confidential clerk and a few assistants were still at work in a subdued and awed manner. Men were working in many other Wall Street offices that night during the panic, but in none was there more reason for it than here. Later I learned that it was the quiet tenacity of this confidential clerk that saved even as much of Parker's estate as was saved for his widow— little enough it was, too. What he saved for the clients of the firm no one will ever know. Somehow or other I liked John Downey, the clerk, from the moment I was introduced to him. He seemed to me, at least, to be the typical confidential clerk who would carry a secret worth millions and keep it.

The officer in charge touched his hat to the inspector, and Downey hastened to put himself at our service. It was plain that the murder had

completely mystified him, and that he was as anxious as we were to get at the bottom of it.

"Mr. Downey," began Kennedy, "I understand you were present when this sad event took place."

"Yes, sir, sitting right here at the directors' table," he replied, taking a chair, "like this."

"Now can you recollect just how Mr. Parker acted when he was shot? Could you-er— could you take his place and show us just how it happened?"

"Yes, sir," said Downey. "He was sitting here at the head of the table. Mr. Bruce, who is the 'CO.' of the firm, had been sitting here at his right; I was at the left. The inspector has a list of all the others present. That door to the right was open, and Mrs. Parker and some other ladies were in the room— "

"Mrs. Parker?" broke in Kennedy.

"Yes: Like a good many brokerage firms we have a ladies' room. Many ladies are among our clients. We make a point of catering to them. At that time I recollect the door was open— all the doors were open. It was not a secret meeting. Mr. Bruce had just gone into the ladies' department; I think to ask some of them to stand by the firm— he was an artist at smoothing over the fears of customers, particularly women. Just before he went in I had seen the ladies go in a group toward the far end of the room— to look down at the line of depositors on the street, which reached around the corner from one of the trust companies, I thought. I was making a note of an order to send into the outside office there on the left, and had just pushed this button here under the table to call a boy to carry it. Mr. Parker had just received a letter by special delivery, and seemed considerably puzzled over it. No, I don't know what it was about. Of a sudden I saw him start in his chair, rise up unsteadily, clap his hand on the back of his head, stagger across the floor— like this— and fall here."

"Then what happened?"

"Why, I rushed to pick him up. Everything was confusion. I recall someone behind me saying, 'Here, boy, take all these papers off the table and carry them into my office before they get lost in the excitement.' I think it was Bruce's voice. The next moment I heard someone say, 'Stand back, Mrs. Parker has fainted.' But I didn't pay much attention, for I was calling to someone not to get a doctor over the telephone, but to go down to the fifth floor where one has an office. I made Mr. Parker as comfortable as I could. There wasn't much I could do. He seemed to want to say something to me, but he couldn't talk. He was paralysed, at least his throat was. But I did manage to make out finally what sounded to me like, 'Tell her I don't believe the scandal, I don't believe it.' But before he could say whom to tell he had again become unconscious, and

by the time the doctor arrived he was dead. I guess you know everything else as well as I do."

"You didn't hear the shot fired from any particular direction?" asked Kennedy.

"No, sir."

"Well, where do you think it came from?"

"That's what puzzles me, sir. The only thing I can figure out is that it was fired from the outside office— perhaps by some customer who had lost money and sought revenge. But no one out there heard it either, any more than they did in the directors' room or the ladies' department."

"About that message," asked Kennedy, ignoring what to me seemed to be the most important feature of the case, the mystery of the silent bullet. "Didn't you see it after all was over?"

"No, sir; in fact I had forgotten about it till this moment when you asked me to reconstruct the circumstances exactly. No, sir, I don't know a thing about it. I can't say it impressed itself on my mind at the time, either."

"What did Mrs. Parker do when she came to?"

"Oh, she cried as I have never seen a woman cry before. He was dead by that time, of course."

"Bruce and I saw her down in the elevator to her car. In fact, the doctor, who had arrived; said that the sooner she was taken home the better she would be. She was quite hysterical."

"Did she say anything that you remember?"

Downey hesitated.

"Out with it Downey," said the inspector. "What did she say as she was going down in the elevator?"

"Nothing."

"Tell us. I'll arrest you if you don't."

"Nothing about the murder, on my honour," protested Downey.

Kennedy leaned over suddenly and shot a remark at him, "Then it was about the note."

Downey was surprised, but not quickly enough. Still he seemed to be considering something, and in a moment he said:

"I don't know what it was about, but I feel it is my duty, after all, to tell you. I heard her say, 'I wonder if he knew.'"

"Nothing else?"

"Nothing else."

"What happened after you came back?"

"We entered the ladies' department. No one was there. A woman's automobile-coat was thrown over a chair in a heap. Mr. Bruce picked it up. 'It's Mrs. Parker's,' he said. He wrapped it up hastily, and rang for a messenger."

"Where did he send it?"

"To Mrs. Parker, I suppose. I didn't hear the address."

We next went over the whole suite of offices, conducted by Mr. Downey. I noted how carefully Kennedy looked into the directors' room through the open door from the ladies' department. He stood at such an angle that had he been the assassin he could scarcely have been seen except by those sitting immediately next Mr. Parker at the directors' table. The street windows were directly in front of him, and back of him was the chair on which the motorcoat had been found.

In Parker's own office we spent some time, as well as in Bruce's. Kennedy made a search for the note, but finding nothing in either office, turned out the contents of Bruce's scrap-basket. There didn't seem to be anything in it to interest him, however, even after he had pieced several torn bits of scraps together with much difficulty, and he was about to turn the papers back again, when he noticed something sticking to the side of the basket. It looked like a mass of wet paper, and that was precisely what it was.

"That's queer," said Kennedy, picking it loose. Then he wrapped it up carefully and put it in his pocket. "Inspector, can you lend me one of your men for a couple of days?" he asked, as we were preparing to leave. "I shall want to send him out of town to-night, and shall probably need his services when he gets back."

"Very well. Riley will be just the fellow. We'll go back to headquarters, and I'll put him under your orders."

IT WAS not until late in the following day that I saw Kennedy again. It had been a busy day at the Star. We had gone to work that morning expecting to see the very financial heavens fall. But just about five minutes to ten, before the Stock Exchange opened, the news came in over the wire from our financial man on Broad Street: "'The System' has forced James Bruce, partner of Kerr Parker, the dead banker; to sell his railroad, steamship, and rubber holdings to it. On this condition it promises unlimited support to the market."

"Forced!" muttered the managing editor, as he waited on the office phone to get the composing-room, so as to hurry up the few lines in red ink on the first page and beat our rivals on the streets with the first extras. "Why, he's been working to bring that about for the past two weeks. What that System doesn't control isn't worth having— it edits the news before our men get it,

and as for grist for the divorce courts, and tragedies, well— Hello, Jenkins, yes, a special extra. Change the big heads— copy is on the way up— rush it."

"So you think this Parker case is a mess?" I asked.

"I know it. That's a pretty swift bunch of females that have been speculating at Kerr Parker & Co.'s. I understand there's one Titian-haired young lady— who, by the way, has at least one husband who hasn't yet been divorced— who is a sort of ringleader, though she rarely goes personally to her brokers' offices. She's one of those uptown plungers, and the story is that she has a whole string of scalps of alleged Sunday-school superintendents at her belt. She can make Bruce do pretty nearly anything, they say. He's the latest conquest. I got the story on pretty good authority, but until I verified the names, dates, and places, of course I wouldn't dare print a line of it. The story goes that her husband is a hanger-on of the System, and that she's been working in their interest, too. That was why he was so complacent over the whole affair. They put her up to capturing Bruce, and after she had acquired an influence over him they worked it so that she made him make love to Mrs. Parker. It's a long story, but that isn't all of it. The point was, you see, that by this devious route they hoped to worm out of Mrs. Parker some inside information about Parker's rubber schemes, which he hadn't divulged even to his partners in business. It was a deep and carefully planned plot, and some of the conspirators were pretty deeply in the mire, I guess. I wish I'd had all the facts about who this red-haired female Machiavelli was— what a piece of muckraking it would have made! Oh, here comes the rest of the news story over the wire. By Jove, it is said on good authority that Bruce will be taken in as one of the board of directors. What do you think of that?"

So that was how the wind lay— Bruce making love to Mrs. Parker and she presumably betraying her husband's secrets. I thought I saw it all: the note from somebody exposing the scheme, Parker's incredulity, Bruce sitting by him and catching sight of the note, his hurrying out into the ladies' department, and then the shot. But who fired it? After all, I had only picked up another clue.

Kennedy was not at the apartment at dinner, and an inquiry at the laboratory was fruitless also. So I sat down to fidget for a while. Pretty soon the buzzer on the door sounded, and I opened it to find a messenger-boy with a large brown paper parcel.

"Is Mr. Bruce here?" he asked.

"Why, no, he doesn't— " then I checked myself and added "He will be here presently. You can leave the bundle."

"Well, this is the parcel he telephoned for. His valet told me to tell him that they had a hard time to find it, but he guesses it's all right. The charges are forty cents. Sign here."

I signed the book, feeling like a thief, and the boy departed. What it all meant I could not guess.

Just then I heard a key in the lock, and Kennedy came in.

"Is your name Bruce?" I asked.

"Why?" he replied eagerly. "Has anything come?"

I pointed to the package. Kennedy made a dive for it and unwrapped it. It was a woman's pongee automobile-coat. He held it up to the light. The pocket on the right-hand side was scorched and burned, and a hole was torn clean through it. I gasped when the full significance of it dawned on me.

"How did you get it?" I exclaimed at last in surprise.

"That's where organisation comes in," said Kennedy. "The police at my request went over every messenger call from Parker's office that afternoon, and traced every one of them up. At last they found one that led to Bruce's apartment. None of them led to Mrs. Parker's home. The rest were all business calls and satisfactorily accounted for. I reasoned that this was the one that involved the disappearance of the automobile-coat. It was a chance worth taking, so I got Downey to call up Bruce's valet. The valet of course recognised Downey's voice and suspected nothing. Downey assumed to know all about the coat in the package received yesterday. He asked to have it sent up here. I see the scheme worked."

"But, Kennedy, do you think she— " I stopped, speechless, looking at the scorched coat.

"Nothing to say— yet," he replied laconically. "But if you could tell me anything about that note Parker received I'd thank you."

I related what our managing editor had said that morning. Kennedy only raised his eyebrows a fraction of an inch.

"I had guessed something of that sort," he said merely. "I'm glad to find it confirmed even by hearsay evidence. This red-haired young lady interests me. Not a very definite description, but better than nothing at all. I wonder who she is. Ah, well, what do you say to a stroll down the White Way before I go to my laboratory? I'd like a breath of air to relax my mind."

We had got no further than the first theatre when Kennedy slapped me on the back. "By George, Jameson, she's an actress, of course."

"Who is? What's the matter with you, Kennedy? Are you crazy?"

"The red-haired person— she must be an actress. Don't you remember the auburn-haired leading lady in the 'Follies'— the girl who sings that song about 'Mary, Mary, quite contrary'? Her stage name, you know, is Phoebe La Neige. Well, if it's she who is concerned in this case I don't think she'll be playing to-night. Let's inquire at the box-office."

She wasn't playing, but just what it had to do with anything in particular I couldn't see, and I said as much.

"Why, Walter, you'd never do as a detective. You lack intuition. Sometimes I think I haven't quite enough of it, either. Why didn't I think of that sooner? Don't you know she is the wife of Adolphus Hesse, the most inveterate gambler in stocks in the System? Why, I had only to put two and two together and the whole thing flashed on me in an instant. Isn't it a good hypothesis that she is the red-haired woman in the case, the tool of the System in which her husband is so heavily involved? I'll have to add her to my list of suspects."

"Why, you don't think she did the shooting?" I asked, half hoping, I must admit, for an assenting nod from him.

"Well," he answered dryly, "one shouldn't let any preconceived hypothesis stand between him and the truth. I've made a guess at the whole thing already. It may or it may not be right. Anyhow she will fit into it. And if it's not right, I've got to be prepared to make a new guess, that's all."

When we reached the laboratory on our return, the inspector's man Riley was there, waiting impatiently for Kennedy.

"What luck?" asked Kennedy.

"I've got a list of purchasers of that kind of revolver," he said. "We have been to every sporting-goods and arms-store in the city which bought them from the factory, and I could lay my hands on pretty nearly every one of those weapons in twenty-four hours— provided, of course, they haven't been secreted or destroyed."

"Pretty nearly all isn't good enough," said Kennedy. "It will have to be all, unless— "

"That name is in the list," whispered Riley hoarsely.

"Oh, then it's all right," answered Kennedy, brightening up. "Riley, I will say that you're a wonder at using the organisation in ferreting out such things. There's just one more thing I want you to do. I want a sample of the notepaper in the private desks of every one of these people." He handed the policeman a list of his 9 "suspects," as he called them. It included nearly every one mentioned in the case.

Riley studied it dubiously and scratched his chin thoughtfully. "That's a hard one, Mr. Kennedy, sir. You see, it means getting into so many different houses and apartments. Now you don't want to do it by means of a warrant, do you, sir? Of course not. Well, then, how can we get in?"

"You're a pretty good-looking chap yourself, Riley," said Kennedy. "I should think you could jolly a housemaid, if necessary. Anyhow, you can get the fellow on the beat to do it— if he isn't already to be found in the kitchen. Why, I see a dozen ways of getting the notepaper."

"Oh, it's me that's the lady-killer, sir," grinned Riley. "I'm a regular Blarney stone when I'm out on a job of that sort. Sure, I'll have some of them for you in the morning."

"Bring me what you get, the first thing in the morning, even if you've landed only a few samples," said Kennedy, as Riley departed, straightening his tie and brushing his hat on his sleeve.

"And now, Walter, you too must excuse me to-night," said Craig. "I've got a lot to do, and sha'n't be up to our apartment till very late— or early. But I feel sure I've got a strangle-hold on this mystery. If I get those papers from Riley in good time to-morrow I shall invite you and several others to a grand demonstration here to-morrow night. Don't forget. Keep the whole evening free. It will be a big story."

Kennedy's laboratory was brightly lighted when I arrived early the next evening. One by one his "guests" dropped in. It was evident that they had little liking for the visit, but the coroner had sent out the "invitations," and they had nothing to do but accept. Each one was politely welcomed by the professor and assigned a seat, much as he would have done with a group of students. The inspector and the coroner sat back a little. Mrs.Parker, Mr. Downey, Mr. Bruce, myself, and Miss La Neige sat inthat order in the very narrow and uncomfortable little armchairsused by the students during lectures.

At last Kennedy was ready to begin. He took his position behind the long, flat-topped table which he used for his demonstrations before his classes. "I realise, ladies and gentlemen," he began formally, "that I am about to do a very unusual thing; but, as you all know, the police and the coroner have been completely baffled by this terrible mystery and have requested me to attempt to clear up at least certain points in it. I will begin what I have to say by remarking that the tracing out of a crime like this differs in nothing, except as regards the subject-matter, from the search for a scientific truth. The forcing of man's secrets is like the forcing of nature's secrets. Both are pieces of detective work. The methods employed in the detection of crime are, or rather should be, like the methods employed in the process of discovering scientific truth. In a crime of this sort, two kinds of evidence need to be secured. Circumstantial evidence must first be marshalled, and then a motive must be found. I have been gathering facts. But to omit motives and rest contented with mere facts would be inconclusive. It would never convince anybody or convict anybody. In other words, circumstantial evidence must first lead to a suspect, and then this suspect must prove equal to accounting for the facts. It is my hope that each of you may contribute something that will be of service in arriving at the truth of this unfortunate incident."

The tension was not relieved even when Kennedy stopped speaking and began to fuss with a little upright target which he set up at one end of his table. We seemed to be seated over a powder magazine which threatened to explode at any moment. I, at least, felt the tension so greatly that it was only after he had started speaking again, that I noticed that the target was composed of a thick layer of some putty-like material.

Holding a thirty-two-calibre pistol in his right hand and aiming it at the target, Kennedy picked up a large piece of coarse homespun from the table and held it loosely over the muzzle of the gun. Then he fired. The bullet tore through the cloth, sped through the air, and buried itself in the target. With a knife he pried it out.

"I doubt if even the inspector himself could have told us that when an ordinary leaden bullet is shot through a woven fabric the weave of that fabric is in the majority of cases impressed on the bullet, sometimes clearly, sometimes faintly."

Here Kennedy took up a piece of fine batiste and fired another bullet through it.

"Every leaden bullet, as I have said, which has struck such a fabric bears an impression of the threads which is recognisable even when the bullet has penetrated deeply into the body. It is only obliterated partially or entirely when the bullet has been flattened by striking a bone or other hard object. Even then, as in this case, if only a part of the bullet is flattened the remainder may still show the marks of the fabric. A heavy warp, say of cotton velvet or, as I have here, homespun, will be imprinted well on the bullet, but even a fine batiste, containing one hundred threads to the inch, will show marks. Even layers of goods such as a coat, shirt, and undershirt may each leave their marks, but that does not concern us in this case. Now I have here a piece of pongee silk, cut from a woman's automobile-coat. I discharge the bullet through it— so. I compare the bullet now with the others and with the one probed from the neck of Mr. Parker. I find that the marks on that fatal bullet correspond precisely with those on the bullet fired through the pongee coat."

Startling as was this revelation, Kennedy paused only an instant before the next.

"Now I have another demonstration. A certain note figures in this case. Mr. Parker was reading it, or perhaps re-reading it, at the time he was shot. I have not been able to obtain that note— at least not in a form such as I could use in discovering what were its contents. But in a certain wastebasket I found a mass of wet and pulp-like paper. It had been cut up, macerated, perhaps chewed; perhaps it had been also soaked with water. There was a washbasin with running water in this room. The ink had run, and of course was illegible. The

thing was so unusual that I at once assumed that this was the remains of the note in question. Under ordinary circumstances it would be utterly valueless as a clue to anything. But to-day science is not ready to let anything pass as valueless.

"I found on microscopic examination that it was an uncommon linen bond paper, and I have taken a large number of microphotographs of the fibres in it. They are all similar. I have here also about a hundred microphotographs of the fibres in other kinds of paper, many of them bonds. These I have accumulated from time to time in my study of the subject. None of them, as you can see, shows fibres resembling this one in question, so we may conclude that it is of uncommon quality. Through an agent of the police I have secured samples of the notepaper of every one who could be concerned, as far as I could see, with this case. Here are the photographs of the fibres of these various notepapers, and among them all is just one that corresponds to the fibres in the wet mass of paper I discovered in the scrap-basket. Now lest anyone should question the accuracy of this method I might cite a case where a man had been arrested in Germany charged with stealing a government bond. He was not searched till later. There was no evidence save that after the arrest a large number of spitballs were found around the courtyard under his cell window. This method of comparing the fibres with those of the regular government paper was used, and by it the man was convicted of stealing the bond. I think it is almost unnecessary to add that in the present case we know precisely who—"

At this point the tension was so great that it snapped. Miss La Neige, who was sitting beside me, had been leaning forward involuntarily. Almost as if the words were wrung from her she whispered hoarsely: "They put me up to doing it; I didn't want to. But the affair had gone too far. I couldn't see him lost before my very eyes. I didn't want her to get him. The quickest way out was to tell the whole story to Mr. Parker and stop it. It was the only way I could think of to stop this thing between another man's wife and the man I loved better than my own husband. God knows, Professor Kennedy, that was all—"

"Calm yourself, madame," interrupted Kennedy soothingly. "Calm yourself. What's done is done. The truth must come out. Be calm. Now," he continued, after the first storm of remorse had spent itself and we were all outwardly composed again, "we have said nothing whatever of the most mysterious feature of the case, the firing of the shot. The murderer could have thrust the weapon into the pocket or the folds of this coat"— here he drew forth the automobile coat and held it aloft, displaying the bullet hole— "and he or she (I will not say which) could have discharged the pistol unseen. By removing and secreting the weapon afterward one very important piece of evidence would be suppressed. This person could have used such a cartridge as I have here,

made with smokeless powder, and the coat would have concealed the flash of the shot very effectively. There would have been no smoke. But neither this coat nor even a heavy blanket would have deadened the report of the shot.

"What are we to think of that? Only one thing. I have often wondered why the thing wasn't done before. In fact I have been waiting for it to occur. There is an invention that makes it almost possible to strike a man down with impunity in broad daylight in any place where there is sufficient noise to cover up a click, a slight 'Pouf!' and the whir of the bullet in the air.

"I refer to this little device of a Hartford inventor. I place it over the muzzle of the thirty-two-calibre revolver I have so far been using— so. Now, Mr. Jameson, if you will sit at that typewriter over there and write— anything so long as you keep the keys clicking. The inspector will start that imitation stock-ticker in the corner. Now we are ready. I cover the pistol with a cloth. I defy anyone in this room to tell me the exact moment when I discharged the pistol. I could have shot any of you, and an outsider not in the secret would never have thought that I was the culprit. To a certain extent I have reproduced the conditions under which this shooting occurred.

"At once on being sure of this feature of the case I despatched a man to Hartford to see this inventor. The man obtained from him a complete list of all the dealers in New York to whom such devices had been sold. The man also traced every sale of those dealers. He did not actually obtain the weapon, but if he is working on schedule-time according to agreement he is at this moment armed with a search-warrant and is ransacking every possible place where the person suspected of this crime could have concealed his weapon. For, one of the persons intimately connected with this case purchased not long ago a silencer for a thirty-two-calibre revolver, and I presume that that person carried the gun and the silencer at the time of the murder of Kerr Parker."

Kennedy concluded in triumph, his voice high pitched, his eyes flashing. Yet to all outward appearance not a heart-beat was quickened. Someone in that room had an amazing store of self-possession. The fear flitted across my mind that even at the last Kennedy was baffled.

"I had anticipated some such anti-climax," he continued after a moment. "I am prepared for it."

He touched a bell, and the door to the next room opened. One of Kennedy's graduate students stepped in.

"You have the records, Whiting" he asked.

"Yes, Professor."

"I may say," said Kennedy, "that each of your chairs is wired under the arm in such a way as to betray on an appropriate indicator in the next room every sudden and undue emotion. Though it may be concealed from the eye, even of

one like me who stands facing you, such emotion is nevertheless expressed by physical pressure on the arms of the chair. It is a test that is used frequently with students to demonstrate various points of psychology. You needn't raise your arms from the chairs, ladies and gentlemen. The tests are all over now. What did they show, Whiting?"

The student read what he had been noting in the next room. At the production of the coat during the demonstration of the markings of the bullet, Mrs. Parker had betrayed great emotion, Mr. Bruce had done likewise, and nothing more than ordinary emotion had been noted for the rest of us. Miss La Neige's automatic record during the tracing out of the sending of the note to Parker had been especially unfavourable to her; Mr. Bruce showed almost as much excitement; Mrs. Parker very little and Downey very little. It was all set forth in curves drawn by self-recording pens on regular ruled paper. The student had merely noted what took place in the lecture-room as corresponding to these curves.

"At the mention of the noiseless gun," said Kennedy, bending over the record, while the student pointed it out to him and we leaned forward to catch his words, "I find that the curves of Miss La Neige, Mrs. Parker, and Mr. Downey are only so far from normal as would be natural. All of them were witnessing a thing for the first time with only curiosity and no fear. The curve made by Mr. Bruce shows great agitation and—"

I heard a metallic click at my side and turned hastily. It was Inspector Barney O'Connor, who had stepped out of the shadow with a pair of hand-cuffs.

"James Bruce, you are under arrest," he said.

There flashed on my mind, and I think on the minds of some of the others, a picture of another electrically wired chair.

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2: The Pudding Test

Val Jameson

fl 1900-1930s

Sunday Press (Perth) 21 Dec 1902

For just on 20 years Valerie Jameson, who married in Kalgoorlie in 1898, produced many cheerful short stories located on the Western Australian goldfields. After 1921 she ceased writing short stories, and was living in New South Wales. The last record of her I can find is a brief mention in the Sydney press in about 1936 that she was in poor health.

SHE leaned her elbows on the table and supported her fair young face with its serio-comic expression on clasped hands, propped beneath her chin.

"You've placed me in a difficult position," she said gravely. "I like you about the same quantity each, but according to existing legal conditions I cannot marry both."

The two young men shifted their worshipping gaze from the girl's face to scowl darkly at each other. What an exasperating lovely little witch she was, seated there in conscious power like a princess of fairy lore doling out conditions to her lover-subjects.

"Now, I'll tell you what I'll do," she continued. "In fact, it's the only fair way out of the difficulty."

Four eyes brightened expectantly and reverted to their idol.

"I'll set you a task, and whichever one of you performs that task most successfully shall," the fair face dimpled as she paused an instant, "that is, if he has not come to his senses by that time, shall have his wish."

The rivals, Jim Herrick and Fritz Plover, who had been inseparable chums until the advent of Miss Nancy Colville, straightened up and exchanged glances of triumph, each feeling secure of victory, for the vanity of man far exceeds the vanity of woman.

"You haven't asked what I want you to do?" pouted the spoilt girl.

"What is it?" both cried in a breath, anxious to atone for the omission. The girl laughed and clapped her hands.

"Ah! Now you are interested. Tell you what I think before I let you know. I won't be Mrs. either of you, because I don't believe in spite of your bragging about camp-cookery that you can do it."

"What?" almost gasped the eager lovers, hanging on her next word.

"Make a Christmas pudding," she replied with dancing eyes.

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" and "Ho! Ho! Ho!" laughed the two men.

"That's easy enough," said Fritz.

"I'm a don at puddings," put in Jim.

"I don't think so." objected Fritz. "Your last gave Joe Hicks the nightmare. Wasn't he talking about tons of mullock on his chest, and woke the whole camp with his yells,' Dig me out!' "

"It's a lie," denied Jim hotly.

"Oh, dear!" sighed Nancy, "You horrid things, don't quarrel before me!"

"Are you in earnest about this pudding, Nance?" asked Fritz.

"Oh, quite!" replied the girl, gravely nodding her head.

"When does the competition close?" inquired-Jim, equally practical. "They must both be here on the morning of Christmas Eve before ten."

"And the result?"

"We are planning an excursion to Picnic Gully on Boxing Day. My cousin Mvra is coming from Perth to spend Christmas with me. The successful competitor will receive an invitation."

With these words the elf waved her white hand in farewell and danced out of the room. The rivals, after exchanging glances of mutual hatred, departed by separate exits.

THAT NIGHT Fritz strolled about the streets of the small mining township deeply engrossed in the coming pudding test. The condition of his mind was unstable; cocksureness had given way to doubt, and doubt was fast yielding to despair. Could he do it? was the question he mentally asked himself a hundred times over. True, he had turned out very fair plum doughs in his capacity of camp sergeant, but then, he reflected, a lot of hungry miners would not be nearly so critical as the dainty Nance.

After pacing the streets for two solid hours Fritz arrived at the decision that the prize was too precious to risk on the off-chance of his own unaided efforts. Great thoughts are inspirations. Kitty, the cook at the comer hotel, was famed for her culinary skill. The recollection of Kitty's powers and a resolution to enlist her services cleared the fog of anxiety from the young man's mind. He was conscious of a sneaky feeling as he wandered cautiously around the back premises of the hotel and watched a favorable opportunity to interview the cook. He pacified his conscience with the old excuse: "All's fair in love."

The opportune moment arrived.

"Good evening, Kitty." The salutation was accompanied by an apprehensive glance— Kitty had moods.

"Good evening, Mr. Plover."

The cordial response sent Mr. Plover's heart down from his throat to its correct place, and he breathed again. Surface indications showed that, Kitty's excitable temperament was under placid control. Fritz plunged straight to the point:—

"I want you to do me a favor, Kitty. I intend to give the boys a treat for Christmas. It is to be a great surprise," extending a cautioning finger. "A real spanking, tip-top Christmas pudding!— a pudding, Kitty" (impressively) "that only you can make to perfection."

He now extended his hand. In the palm glittered a new-minted sovereign. Kitty stood, arms akimbo and eyes wide with surprise, regarding her visitor.

"Well, I'm blest," she exclaimed, then glued her lips to keep her from saying more, plucked the sovereign from his hand, and slipped it into her capacious pocket, where it found a mate to jingle against.

"And remember, Kitty," concluded Fritz, "it must be kept secret. Don't blab to anyone, and you shall have another on Christmas Day."

When he departed, Kitty sank down on a chair and laughed till the tears ran over her fat cheeks and her sides ached so that the pain put a stop to her merriment.

"A pair o' lunatics," she exclaimed. "Whativer's in the wind, I wondher? Niver mind, a still tongue makes a wise head."

She produced the two sovereigns from her pocket and fingered them lovingly:

"I'd never ha' got the second hif I'd ha' blabbed on the first; it's a curious warld."

AT THE CAMP on the day before Christmas Eve Jim was busily toiling with a mass of stickiness in a bowl, keeping a blank, expressionless face meanwhile, as though his mind were concentrated on the task. Fritz laughed quietly as he set about preparing his own share in the farce. What pains they took to aim dust in each other's eyes, and by their skilful manoeuvres succeeded in covering their tracks. The crows up aloft in the gum-trees could tell, if their language was translatable, how the bogus puddings were buried silently at dead of night, like the hero immortalised in It was the morning of Christmas Eve.

The fair judges stood beside a table on which reposed two Christmas puddings. Dark-eyed Myra was in the secret, and was keenly conscious of the gravity of a final decision. The man who made the best pudding would appropriate that sweet atom of sauciness, her cousin Nancy, for the rest of her natural life. No marvel that on the two young faces there rested an unusually grave egression.

"They both look alike," said Myra doubtfully.

"Perhaps they don't taste alike," suggested Nance hopefully, "Here is a knife, you cut for luck and taste first, I feel quite nervous."

Myra slowly masticated a tiny piece from one, then a portion of the other.

"They are both delicious," she announced, gently smacking her lips, "and one's as good as the other."

"Oh, don't say that!" objected Nance, eagerly sampling them herself. A perplexed look crept over her face; she laughed and then burst into tears.

"Oh, Myra, whatever shall I do? I am so sorry I suggested such a mad-brained thing."

They were twin puddings. The rivals were still rivals, and the judges were despondent. Myra was cross, and availed herself of two years' seniority by scolding her frivolous cousin.

"You're a genuine gambler, Nance! Taking your choice of a husband on purely a two-up principle. It just serves you right, only that you win either way ; but think of the poor boys— of the torture you have inflicted on them in the uncertainty of these last few days. It's a case of heads I win, tails you lose, with them, poor fellows."

Tears of vexation were now succeeded by tears of repentance, and Myra's anger was moved to pity.

"Pooh! Don't cry, silly! You can't marry both, even if the puddings are alike. Tell me who you like best, and I'll agree to say his pudding was the best. There's worse wicked things than that done, you know."

"I ca-a-ant!" sobbed Nancy, "they are both very clever. Fancy men turning out puddings like these."

In despair Myra turned again to examine the puddings. Her bright eyes scanned them critically, and presently she gave a little scream of delight.

"Cheer up, Nance! there are no almonds in Jim's pudding."

Nance brushed away the tears from her face and smiled brightly.

"Oh! dear old Fritz!" she exclaimed in tender accents, I'm so glad he remembered the almonds. That proves his love. Myra, kiss me, I'm the happiest woman in the world."

Myra gave the caress willingly, and added: "Some people are more like babes than women at eighteen. You were shedding tears copiously just now; haven't you got a few to spare for poor Jim?"

"Not one," replied Nance, "I am too happy."

"The result of the small item of almonds in a pudding," said Myra ironically.

"Oh! no!" replied Nancy, "not altogether. It just came to me in a flash, Myra, that I could bear to lose Jim, but not Fritz."

"I am pleased you have discovered that in time, dear, juggling with Fate is a serious pastime."

So well did Myra perform her self-imposed role of consoler-in-chief and bestowed such a wealth of compassion through her eloquent orbs, that the

man who failed in the pudding contest at the end of a month was competing, this time without a rival, for the hand and heart of Nancy's cousin.

When he drew a shy consent from her lips to the usual question concerning matrimony, he made a spurt for the Corner Hotel and pounced on Kitty.

"Here you are, Kitty," slipping a sovereign into the astonished cook's hand, who by this time was fully convinced that men were a species of semi-lunatic, "That's for forgetting the almonds," he said, and was off before Kitty had time to wink.

The true account of the pudding was not confessed to the cousins till months of happy wifehood had passed over their heads, then somehow it leaked out and caused general mirth. None of them had cause to regret that Fate had a finger in the mixing of the puddings.

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3: The Red Egg

Anatole France

Anatole-François Thibault, 1844-1924
Translated by Mrs John Lane (d. 1927)
From: *Balthasar and Other Tales*, (London, John Lane) 1909

Dr. N—— placed his coffee-cup on the mantelpiece, threw his cigar into the fire, and said to me:

"My dear friend, you recently told me of the strange suicide of a woman tortured by terror and remorse. Her nature was fine and she was exquisitely cultivated. Being suspected of complicity in a crime of which she had been the silent witness, in despair at her own irreparable cowardice, she was haunted by a perpetual nightmare in which her husband appeared to her dead and decomposing and pointing her out with his finger to the inquisitive magistrates. She was the victim of her own morbid imagination. In this condition an insignificant and casual circumstance decided her fate.

"Her nephew, a child, lived with her. One morning he was, as usual, studying his lessons in the dining-room where she happened to be. The child began to translate word by word a verse of Sophocles, and as he wrote he pronounced aloud both the Greek and the translation:

Kara Theon, the head divine; Iokartis, of Jokasta; tethneke, is dead… spos' komen, tearing her hair; kalei, she calls; Laion nekron, Laïos dead… eisedomen, we see; tin gunaik' kremasten, the woman hung.

He added a flourish which tore the paper, stuck out his ink-stained tongue, and repeated in sing-song, 'Hung, hung, hung!'

"The wretched woman, whose will-power had been destroyed, passively obeyed the suggestion in the word, repeated three times. She rose, and without a word or look went straight to her room. Some hours later the police-inspector, called to verify a violent death, made this reflection: 'I have seen many women who have committed suicide, but this is the first time I have seen one who has hanged herself.'

"We speak of suggestion. Here is an instance which is at once natural and credible. I am a little doubtful, in spite of everything, of those which are arranged in the medical schools.

"But that a being in whom the will-power is dead obeys every external impulse is a truth which reason admits and which experience proves. The example which you cited reminds me of another one somewhat similar. It is that of my unfortunate comrade, Alexandre Le Mansel. A verse of Sophocles killed your heroine. A phrase of Lampridius destroyed the friend of whom I will tell you.

"Le Mansel, with whom I studied at the high school of Avranches, was unlike all his comrades. He seemed at once younger and older than he really was. Small and fragile, he was at fifteen years of age afraid of everything that alarms little children. Darkness caused him an overpowering terror, and he could never meet one of the servants of the school, who happened to have a big lump on the top of his head, without bursting into tears. And yet at times, when we saw him close at hand, he looked quite old. His parched skin, glued to his temples, nourished his thin hair very inadequately. His forehead was polished like that of a middle-aged man. As for his eyes, they had no expression, and strangers often thought he was blind. His mouth alone gave character to his face. His sensitive lips expressed in turn a child-like joy and strange sufferings. The sound of his voice was clear and charming. When he recited his lessons he gave the verses their full harmony and rhythm, which made us laugh very much. During recreation he willingly joined our games, and he was not awkward, but he played with such feverish enthusiasm, and yet he was so absent-minded, that some of us felt an insurmountable aversion towards him.

"He was not popular, and we would have made him our butt had he not rather overawed us by something of savage pride and by his reputation as a clever scholar, for though he was unequal in his work he was often at the head of his class. It was said that he would often talk in his sleep and that he would leave his bed in the dormitory while sound asleep. This, however, we had not observed for ourselves as we were at the age of sound sleep.

"For a long time he inspired me with more surprise than sympathy. Then of a sudden we became friends during a walk which the whole class took to the Abbey of Mont St. Michel. We tramped barefooted along the beach, carrying our shoes and our bread at the end of a stick and singing at the top of our voices. We passed the postern, and having thrown our bundles at the foot of the 'Michelettes,' we sat down side by side on one of those ancient iron cannons corroded by five centuries of rain and fog.

"Looking dreamily from the ancient stones to the sky, and swinging his bare feet, he said to me: 'Had I but lived in the time of those wars and been a knight, I would have captured these two old cannons; I would have captured twenty, I would have captured a hundred! I would have captured all the cannons of the English. I would have fought single-handed in front of this gate. And the Archangel Michel would have stood guard over my head like a white cloud.'

"These words and the slow chant in which he uttered them thrilled me. I said to him, 'I would have been your squire. I like you, Le Mansel; will you be my friend?' And I held my hand out to him and he took it solemnly.

"At the master's command we put on our shoes, and our little band climbed the steep ascent that leads to the abbey. Midway, near a spreading fig-tree, we saw the cottage where Tiphaine Raguel, widow of Bertrand de Guesclin, lived in peril of the sea.

"This dwelling is so small that it is a wonder that it was ever inhabited. To have lived there the worthy Tiphaine must have been a queer old body, or, rather, a saint living only the spiritual life. Le Mansel opened his arms as if to embrace this sacred hut; then, falling on his knees, he kissed the stones, heedless of the laughter of his comrades who, in their merriment, began to pelt him with pebbles. I will not describe our walk among the dungeons, the cloisters, the halls and the chapel. Le Mansel seemed oblivious to everything. Indeed, I should not have recalled this incident except to show how our friendship began.

"In the dormitory the next morning I was awakened by a voice at my ear which said:

" 'Tiphaine is not dead.' I rubbed my eyes as I saw Le Mansel in his shirt at my side. I requested him rather rudely to let me sleep, and I thought no more of this singular communication.

"From that day on I understood the character of our fellow pupil much better than before, and I discovered an inordinate pride which I had never before suspected. It will not surprise you if I acknowledge that at the age of fifteen I was but a poor psychologist. But Le Mansel's pride was too subtle to strike one at once. It had no concrete shape, but seemed to embrace remote phantasms. And yet it influenced all his feelings and gave to his ideas, uncouth and incoherent though they were, something of unity.

"During the holidays that followed our walk to the Mont St. Michel, Le Mansel invited me to spend a day at the home of his parents, who were farmers and landowners at Saint Julien.

"My mother consented with some repugnance. Saint Julien is six kilometres from the town. Having put on a white waistcoat and a smart blue tie I started on my way there early one Sunday morning.

"Alexandre stood at the door waiting for me and smiling like a little child. He took me by the hand and led me into the 'parlour.' The house, half country, half town-like, was neither poor nor ill furnished. And yet my heart was deeply oppressed when I entered, so great was the silence and sadness that reigned.

"Near the window, whose curtains were slightly raised as if to satisfy some timid curiosity, I saw a woman who seemed old, though I cannot be sure that she was as old as she appeared to be. She was thin and yellow, and her eyes, under their red lids glowed in their black sockets. Though it was summer her body and her head were shrouded in some black woollen material. But that

which made her look most ghastly was a band of metal which encircled her forehead like a diadem.

" 'This is mama,' Le Mansel said to me, 'she has a headache.'

"Madam Le Mansel greeted me in a plaintive voice, and doubtless observing my astonished glance at her forehead, said, smiling:

" 'What I wear on my forehead, young sir, is not a crown; it is a magnetic band to cure my headache.' I did my best to reply when Le Mansel dragged me away to the garden, where we found a bald little man who flitted along the paths like a ghost. He was so thin and so light that there seemed some danger of his being blown away by the wind. His timid manner and his long and lean neck, when he bent forward, and his head, no larger than a man's fist, his shy side-glances and his skipping gait, his short arms uplifted like a pair of flippers, gave him undeniably a great resemblance to a plucked chicken.

"My friend, Le Mansel, explained that this was his father, but that they were obliged to let him stay in the yard as he really only lived in the company of his chickens, and he had in their society quite forgotten to talk to human beings. As he spoke his father suddenly disappeared, and very soon an ecstatic clucking filled the air. He was with his chickens.

"Le Mansel and I strolled several times around the garden and he told me that at dinner, presently, I should see his grandmother, but that I was to take no notice of what she said, as she was sometimes a little out of her mind. Then he drew me aside into a pretty arbour and whispered, blushing:

" 'I have written some verses about Tiphaine Raguel. I'll repeat them to you some other time. You'll see, you'll see.'

"The dinner-bell rang and we went into the dining-room. M. Le Mansel came in with a basket full of eggs.

" 'Eighteen this morning,' he said, and his voice sounded like a cluck.

"A most delicious omelette was served. I was seated between Madame Le Mansel, who was moaning under her crown, and her mother, an old Normandy woman with round cheeks, who, having lost all her teeth, smiled with her eyes. She seemed very attractive to me. While we were eating roast-duck and chicken à la crème the good lady told us some very amusing stories, and, in spite of what her grandson had said, I did not observe that her mind was in the slightest degree affected. On the contrary, she seemed to be the life of the house.

"After dinner we adjourned to a little sitting-room whose walnut furniture was covered with yellow Utrecht velvet. An ornamental clock between two candelabra decorated the mantelpiece, and on the top of its black plinth, and protected and covered by a glass globe, was a red egg. I do not know why, once having observed it, I should have examined it so attentively. Children

have such unaccountable curiosity. However, I must say that the egg was of a most wonderful and magnificent colour. It had no resemblance whatever to those Easter eggs dyed in the juice of the beetroot, so much admired by the urchins who stare in at the fruit-shops. It was of the colour of royal purple. And with the indiscretion of my age I could not resist saying as much.

"M. Le Mansel's reply was a kind of crow which expressed his admiration.

" 'That egg, young sir,' he added, 'has not been dyed as you seem to think. It was laid by a Cingalese hen in my poultry-yard just as you see it there. It is a phenomenal egg.'

" 'You must not forget to say,' Madame Le Mansel added in a plaintive voice, 'that this egg was laid the very day our Alexandre was born.'

" 'That's a fact,' M. Le Mansel assented.

"In the meantime the old grandmother looked at me with sarcastic eyes, and pressed her loose lips together and made a sign that I was not to believe what I heard.

" 'Humph!' she whispered, 'chickens often sit on what they don't lay, and if some malicious neighbour slips into their nest a—'

"Her grandson interrupted her fiercely. He was pale, and his hands shook.

" 'Don't listen to her,' he cried to me. 'You know what I told you. Don't listen!'

" 'It's a fact!' M. Le Mansel repeated, his round eye fixed in a side glance at the red egg.

"My further connection with Alexandre Le Mansel contains nothing worth relating. My friend often spoke of his verses to Tiphaine, but he never showed them to me. Indeed, I very soon lost sight of him. My mother sent me to Paris to finish my studies. I took my degree in two faculties, and then I studied medicine. During the time that I was preparing for my doctor's thesis I received a letter from my mother, who told me that poor Alexandre had been very ailing, and that after a serious attack he had become timid and excessively suspicious; that, however, he was quite harmless, and in spite of the disordered state of his health and reason he showed an extraordinary appetite for mathematics. There was nothing in these tidings to surprise me. Often, as I studied the diseases of the nervous centres, my mind reverted to my poor friend at Saint Julien, and in spite of myself I foresaw for him the general paralysis which inevitably threatened the offspring of a mother racked by chronic headaches and a rheumatic, addle-brained father.

"The sequel, however, did not, apparently, prove me to be in the right. Alexandre Le Mansel, as I heard from Avranches, regained his normal health, and as he grew towards manhood gave active proof of the brilliancy of his intellect. He worked with ardour at his mathematical studies, and he even sent

to the Academy of Sciences solutions of several problems hitherto unsolved, which were found to be as elegant as they were accurate. Absorbed in his work, he rarely found time to write to me. His letters were affectionate, clear, and to the point, and nothing could be found in them to arouse the mistrust of the most suspicious neurologist. However, very soon after this our correspondence ceased, and I heard nothing more of him for the next ten years.

"Last year I was greatly surprised when my servant brought me the card of Alexandre Le Mansel, and said that the gentleman was waiting for me in the ante-room.

"I was in my study consulting with a colleague on a matter of some importance. However, I begged him to excuse me for a moment while I hurried to greet my old friend. I found he had grown very old, bald, haggard, and terribly emaciated. I took him by the arm and led him into the salon.

" 'I am glad to see you again,' he said, 'and I have much to tell you. I am exposed to the most unheard-of persecutions. But I have courage, and I shall struggle bravely, and I shall triumph over my enemies.'

"These words disquieted me, as they would have disquieted in my place any other nerve specialist. I recognised a symptom of the disease which, by the fatal laws of heredity, menaced my friend, and which had appeared to be checked.

" 'My dear friend,' I said, 'we will talk about that presently. Wait here a moment. I just want to finish something. In the meantime take a book and amuse yourself.'

"You know I have a great number of books, and my drawing-room contains about six thousand volumes in three mahogany book-cases. Why, then, should my unfortunate friend choose the very one likely to do him harm, and open it at that fatal page? I conferred some twenty minutes longer with my colleague, and having taken leave of him I returned to the room where I had left Le Mansel. I found the unfortunate man in the most fearful condition. He struck a book that lay open before him, which I at once recognised as a translation of the Historia Augusta. He recited at the top of his voice this sentence of Lampridius:

" 'On the day of the birth of Alexander Severus, a chicken, belonging to the father of the newly-born, laid a red egg— augury of the imperial purple to which the child was destined.'

"His excitement increased to fury. He foamed at the mouth. He cried: 'The egg, the egg of the day of my birth. I am an Emperor. I know that you want to kill me. Keep away, you wretch!' He strode down the room, then, returning, came towards me with open arms. 'My friend,' he said, 'my old comrade, what

do you wish me to bestow on you? An Emperor— an Emperor… My father was right… the red egg. I must be an Emperor! Scoundrel, why did you hide this book from me? This is a crime of high treason; it shall be punished! I shall be Emperor! Emperor! Yes, it is my duty… Forward… forward!'

"He was gone. In vain I tried to detain him. He escaped me. You know the rest. All the newspapers have described how, after leaving me, he bought a revolver and blew out the brains of the sentry who tried to prevent his forcing his way into the Elysée.

"And thus it happens that a sentence written by a Latin historian of the fourth century was the cause, fifteen hundred years after, of the death in our country of a wretched private soldier. Who will ever disentangle the web of cause and effect?

"Who can venture to say, as he accomplishes some simple act: 'I know what I am doing.' My dear friend, this is all I have to tell. The rest is of no interest except in medical statistics. Le Mansel, shut up in an insane asylum, remained for fifteen days a prey to the most violent mania. Whereupon he fell into a state of complete imbecility, during which he became so greedy that he even devoured the wax with which they polished the floor. Three months later he was suffocated while trying to swallow a sponge."

The doctor ceased and lighted a cigarette. After a moment of silence, I said to him, "You have told me a terrible story, doctor."

"It is terrible," he replied, "but it is true. I should be glad of a little brandy."

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4: The Castaways

E. and H. Heron

Kate (1851-1935) and Hesketh (1876-1922) Prichard

West Australian, 11 Aug 1900

THE MOON was an hour below the meeting line of star-struck sky and tepid ocean. Of the seven human souls who had looked upon her swift sinking some had pursued her retreat with curses, two lay heavily silent, and there was one other, tossing and moaning upon the slimy weeds, who saw not. In the short darkness the men slept by turns; then night stood for a moment white and dead in the east.

A dim blot floated almost level on the waste of water as the growing dawn drew the horizons into view. The *Rosas*, of Liverpool, 1,300 tons register, that had carried eight passengers and a cargo of coffee and sundries three days earlier from the port of Colon, was lying keel uppermost and lifting imperceptibly to the swell of the Caribbean Sea. Of the 90 souls on board only the lucky or unlucky seven had saved themselves by clambering upon her foul and weed-hung bottom. It was six-and-twenty hours since the *Rosas* had turned turtle, and even now the castaways, were divided into two camps: the three seamen, with a second-class passenger, at the one end; at the other the mate, and unconscious woman, and Cahusac.

The mate, a fair-haired Dane, was crouching beside the woman, when Cahusac swung himself round to shelter her from the level rays that already beat across the swells with such force that they seemed to strike the hull and re bound.

As the shadow fell on the woman's face, the Dane looked up with a snarl from his anxious gazing.

"This is my place," he said in a husky voice.

Cahusac moved silently, and a fleeting vision crossed him of the saloon table, across which the gleaming sea cast rippling shadows upon two faces Ericssen's flushed with an eager self abandon, the woman's pale, dark and strong in its cold withdrawal. He also recalled that he had read her name, Anne D'Arcy, with a certain annoyance and disfavour in the passenger list, that was otherwise a line of men's names.

For a good while past Cahusac had been at the stage regarding Fortune when a man comes to regard the fickle Goddess as his own personal and malevolent foe. He had looked upon the seamy side of events, and had lived in company from which the female element may profitably be eliminated. Ten years ago he had spent his last available coin in securing a first-class berth on the Royal. Mail. He stepped off the quay at Colon a point-device English swell, and lost himself amongst strange people who knew him not. At the end of the

ten years he emerged from the Americans with the means to return to his old world if he willed it. As a first step towards that end he sailed aboard the ancient *Rosas*.

He looked round.

The wreck made no way. She was drifting with infinite slowness through a widening rim of scum. A few large bubbles, like sinister eyes, sailed close in about her sides. And above all the squalor, the swelter of heat, the rank odours, the wild blasphemies, the infinite despair, the sun rode joyously up into a blue heaven.

Now and then, as one cramped position became unbearable, a man would painfully slide into another with a curse.

And all the time Gender, the second class passenger, with that extraordinary staying power cockneys, occasionally exhibit, lay clear-headed and still, watching the group at the stern with malign eyes. His nimble brain was turning over the few poor chances left to them; and he was, on the whole, inclined to rely on the brute force that shuffled and snored behind him. They were four men to two.

As the sun rose higher, the woman's merciful stupor broke into delirium. The three sailors and Gender crept closer to listen to her words. It was one way of passing the time.

Gender's hard eyes were alight with recklessness. Ericssen and Cahusac had retired within themselves; it was the only retirement possible upon the hulk.

Presently Ericssen spoke. He had been trying to hold his coat tent-wise over Anne D'Arcy's head.

"You must help me." Cahusac's ready recognition of the mate's right to do all there was to be done for the sick woman had had its effects in quieting some jealous suspicion in the man's heart. He swung his long legs over and took his side of the boat in silence.

The fever gained upon her, and in her piteous laughing talk Cahusac caught a glimpse of an Anne other than the proud and self-possessed Miss D'Arcy he had avoided upon the *Rosas*— a sweet, light-hearted Anne of a lost home.

He glanced from her to the mate with a quick rush of unreasonable anger. That Ericsson, sick, haggard, with the sour squalor of their surroundings thick upon him, should dare to aspire to a girl of this class! Cahusac made no allowances yet it was true that Ericsson's very manhood was sapped with the consuming fire of anxiety for Anne's sake. He loved her as he suffered for her, with every fibre in him. It was an exhaustive process, and it left him nerve wrung.

Upon her pillow of rotting sea-growths Anne tossed to and fro; her long hair was clotted with slime, Cahusac suggested that it might give her ease to cut it short. Ericssen scowled, but in a little he drew out a clasp knife, and signing to Cahusac to hold the coat, he gathered the thick damp tresses into his hand. As Cahusac bent over her, Anne D'Arcy suddenly opened her eyes and smiled.

"Dear little mother!— Don't I look nice ?-See how they've done my hair!"

Then putting one trembling arm to Cahusac's neck, she tried to draw down his lips to her own.

An oath from the Dane, a plunge of the knife, and the two men were looking murder into each other's faces.

A burst of laughter upon the quivering air broke the strain. Cahusac's crushing hold upon the mate's wrist relaxed. "You fool! We must defend her," he whispered, and turned upon the other group.

The men had drawn up closer, like tadpoles round a bait, and the eight inquisitive, hungry eyes maddened Cahusac. Gender, for the pure fascination of checking a gentleman, opened his jaws and guffawed again.

ii

THE SUN was going down upon the fifth day. The position of the castaways had been, and was still, changing with every half-hour for the worst. Some of them must have died but for the fact heaven sent a dead dolphin against their sides. It was drawn up and divided. That had happened on the third day.

Night and the moon came together, men lay as much at full length as possible, almost nude. All their garments were laid out to soak in the heavy dews— the dew that meant salvation in the hot mornings, but all night long sent the chill of fever groping its deadly way among them.

The moon hung clear and burnished overhead in the radiant heaven, lighting the mid ocean scene in ghastly tones of luminous white. By its light Cahusac wrung out his handkerchief over the woman's parched lips. She was conscious, and, though she could not speak, her eyes thanked him.

An air that was an exhausted sigh rather than a breath rolled the waves of fetid smell along the hulk.

A sudden hubbub of strained and cracked voices broke out at the fore-part of the keel.

"Lie still," said Cahusac, "and you will be quite safe. I am going for'ard to see what Ericssen's doing with the men."

Anna D'Arcy tried to smile, and moved her hand in acquiescence.

Cahusac moved away in the only fashion it was possible to move on the shelving space above the water-line, as a voice called out:

"Votes 'as it mister. 'We cawn't say no fairer!" The voice was Gender's.

"What's this?" Cahusac asked, as the mate drew up to his side.

"Are you heeled?"

At Ericssen's breathless whisper the other man's figure stiffened.

"No, there was no time, but our fists are as good as theirs. What do you mean?"

Ericssen hesitated. Cahusac's powerful personality oppressed him at the moment. How could he be made to see the thing in its true light?"

"The chances are that we must make up our minds to die where we lie about this day week. But God, in His mercy, will send us madness first."

"How loathsome!" said Cahusac, suddenly. There was no need of actual statement: each saw in anticipation the horror of that week. "How about being picked up?"

"Some old wind-jammers do come by here, but we can't count on them. Look here, Mr. Cahusac," the mate went on, " long before that each man of us will represent 150 lbs-odd of food in the eyes of those brutes down there. We've got to face it," he paused

"Go on." Cahusac's tone was hard.

"Look here," repeated Ericssen, licking his dry lips, "we must keep those wolves quiet anyhow— we must save her! They're going to draw lots, and it's not likely that you and I will escape. We must save her, Cahusac, don't you see?"

"That will do."' Cahusac spoke shortly. "Of course Miss D'Arcy's safety is the first thing to be thought of. Leave Gender to me, and go aft. She's conscious."

"What can they do They won't stand much from any man."

"I'm going to stop this lot-drawing. If we let them fix on a victim, our troubles won't end there. They'll begin! So I'm going to stop lot-drawing and all that sort of wickedness right now. We may have to die. That is kismet. But I will make it my business to see that we die clean!"

He began to move away. Ericssen caught at him.

"Be careful! Don't anger them!" He had the desire but not the willpower to stop Cahusac.

Cahusac shook him off.

"All right," he said, indifferently, and pursued his way forward to where Gender and his mates were sprawling and talking together.

On his approach the talk broke off into silence. At a distance of a few feet Cahusac sat up. In his very attitude he made it plain that he held them aloof in sheer pride of class.

"We've drorn lots," began Gender, with an unpleasant drawl that was in itself a dangerous signal.

"For what?" Cahusac's question fell like cold water on hot iron.

Gender pulled himself together after an involuntary squirm.

"I can put a nime to it if you want it!" he replied insolently; "but we've got to consider the lidy."

"Thank you," said Cahusac. "Of course you can draw lots among your selves. It is nothing to us."

"Ain't it though? Like the hearly Christians, we've all things in common on this blooming craft, eh, mateys? And when we threw the lots we didn't think to leave you out."

"No? Then it remains with us to leave you out. We will not abide by any decision you may make for any purpose whatever."

Gender glared up at him. Cahusac had the bearing of one accustomed to rule, which is hard to meet. But Gender relied on the fact that he had the majority on his side.

"Perhaps when you know that your precious carcase is safe— Lord, you'd poison pore fellers like us!— you'll drop your objectins."

"I understand you now," said Cahusac.

"I'll bet you dew— now! The lot's tumbled strite for once. It's Miss D'Arcy, and best so. She's 'arf dead already. Don't streck me!" with a yell, flinging up a shielding hand.

Cahusac's black hair was pasted with blood to his forehead, and under it his fierce'eves flicked in the moonlight. For mere than a moment Gender's fate hung in the balance. Then he began slowly.

"So you would add a few days to your life at the cost of a woman half a world above you? Well, listen and understand that I am, speaking the truth, neither more nor less, and that what I say, I will do." Cahusac crawled back a yard or two and with a shell drew a deep mark across the slime. Then he went back to the group and issued his orders.

"Now you men, and you, Gender in particular, see that line? Whoever of you crosses it I'll kill with my naked hands. You'll find it worth your while to obey, as you are all so keen on living. If you stay on your own side you've a small chance, for a ship may come along. Put straight, the case is this: You don't leave where you are except to go up a ship's side, or to drop over on to the berth that's waiting for you on the sea bottom. Do you understand?"

"Who are yew, 'eavy dragoon?" jeered Gender. "I'd chuck yew out for tuppence, myself. Whose master are you, I'd like to 'ear?"

"Yours," said Cahusac, with deadly quietness.

A little howl of derision greeted this, but Cahusac had done what he came to do. He had levied his inexorable law. He went aft.

Ericssen and Anne D'Arcy saw him stop once more at the line he had drawn, as though challenging revolt, and presently he was beside them. The woman was lying with closed eyes as if asleep. Ericssen glanced apprehensively at her.

"I could hear all," he said, aside. "We must save her. I only ask to die for her!"

Miss D'Arcy raised himself on her elbow.

"No, the difference between man and woman dies here. The lot has fallen upon me— I will not take my life at that price."

"It has not come to any question of that kind, nor ever shall as long as I am alive to stop it," said Cahusac, hardly. "The whole black business is against man's law, and— and— God's. And I look to you, Miss D'Arcy, as well as to Ericssen, to back me. Chivalry and self-sacrifice have no place in this thing. We three merely represent law and order, and our single duty is to keep that crowd from crime."

iii

IN PHYSICIAL experience the two next days baffle any words to follow. For the little group of three, they were also full of a sweeping confluence and struggle of emotion. Anne D'Arcy gave her promise to Cahusac with one reservation.

"If things should come to the worst," she said, very quietly, "I will die. The lot fell upon me, and I have no one to live for. My religion and my self-respect will not allow me to shirk my part. And fever will be my chloroform."

Cahusac looked at her. She was green from head to foot with the drying slush of the ship's bottom. As she ended her speech her white teeth flashed.

To him, at that moment, she seemed beautiful.

In the verve of his strong life, he had never taken women seriously, though he had dominated many in his day. To find a woman entirely reasonable, and as dominant as himself, woke in him a wave of new feeling. Life appeared to have enlarged suddenly upon his spiritual vision. But through many an ensuing hour he fought against the dream as a bewilderment born of his weakening forces.

For Ericssen the personal sufferings were merged in one long ecstasy of dread. In solid fact he had ground for fear. Hunger was fast destroying, breaking down all barriers before the rush of its final claim, and at last it was obvious that even Cahusac's threat was beginning to lose its original power.

It was in the darkest hour of the night, and in spite of himself, Cahusac dozed. He was awakened by a touch of feeble fingers upon his face.

"Ericssen!"

Cahusac caught Anne's hand in his own, and listened. Above the soft rippling of water he heard a crackling of dry seaweed. The situation flashed upon him. The mate was crawling for'ard to give himself up. A moment later Cahusac seized a naked heel, there was a quick struggle, and he dragged the Dane backwards.

"Mr. Cahusac, let me die for her! It will give her two days more. Let me go I say!" Ericssen almost sobbed. "There is no other way— this is the only one."

"And this one is not to be thought of! Emotionally, it is all very fine and large." Cahusac was in no easy mood. "If you leave me single-handed, I can't keep Gender's gang off for all my strength."

"I love her, man!"

Cahusac gripped him hard. "I also," he said.

"And she? Don't tell me she—"

"She doesn't know, and it is not likely to matter one way or the other," said Cahusac, curtly. Ericssen grew rigid under his hands.

"Do you hear? They're going to rush." And, indeed, through the gloom four figures were worming themselves aft.

Night hung heavy, as if with intentional malignity, above the stirless sea. The great patches of gulf-weed were lit with livid pin points of phosphorescence, and literally, as Gender and his sailors crawled cautiously on their errand, the large and placid curve of the moon grew up over the sea edge.

Cahusac kicked softly till he had secured a firm hold. The men were very near and heard him.

"We wanter parley." It was Gender's voice, "D'you 'ear, 'eavy dragoon?"

"You have crossed the line and you are going to die," came the inexorable answer.

There was no hesitation about Cahusac. At all times an inflexible man, his justice was of the awful cold ruthlessness that fitted the time and the occasion. He sprang forward on his trembling feet. For a second he was a knotted shape in the level moon rays. Followed by a dull splash and shriek, "I cawn't swim— I cawn't swim!"

And then a confused, a wild calling out, of which the mate's voice rose highest:

"Ship! Her riding light! Saved!"

Cahusac looked round. Out of the night-cloud, and low against the blue black sky, the glow-worm of safety was growing larger.

"Gawd! I cawn't swim!"

Cahusac laughed.

"Keep on shouting. I'm coming!" he cried, and the shark-haunted waters closed upon him. He clutched Gender beneath the arms, and with the last drain of his strength pulled him upon the hulk once more.

THE breakfast-bell went on the big liner almost at the moment when the chief engineer gave her full steam ahead. The last the castaways saw of their prison was the screw-torn water boiling up around her. Then the red weed settled back in oily persistence.

In due course the steamer carrying the castaways made its port, which happened to be Southampton, and when in the time after Anne D'Arcy married Cahusac, Ericssen made much of his despair. To do him justice his wretchedness blotted out the whole world to him for three months. Then came the inevitable reaction of extremes, which flung him back into a new, and it would be hard not to call it, an equally rapturous, consolation; for he married a lady of his own people, and lives in Copenhagen.

Cahusac returned once more to the haunts of his youth, and only now and then can one see beneath the veneer of Park Lane the qualities that brought him up "from under."

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5: The Brunswick Diamond

W. A. Fraser

William Alexander Fraser, 1859-1933

The Saturday Evening Post February 24 1900

West Australian 10 Nov 1900

WHEN Viscount Mordaunt was murdered there was queer work over some family jewels. Circumstantial evidence the trump card of Fate, had been played heavily against his nephew, but there was another, Jules Vaughn, mixed up in it.

There was no direct evidence against him beyond that he was much with the Viscount, and was as plausible a gentleman as ever stole a gem or slit a throat. Also, friends of the nephew asserted that he had been with the Viscount the night of the murder, and knew all about it, even if he himself weren't guilty.

My mission was to obtain his confidence and fasten the guilt on the right man. I had an ambiguous photo of Vaughn, sufficiently indefinite to do duty for every third man in the Empire; but Jules had lost the first joint of the index finger of the right hand, and carried a scar in the palm of it which could not fail to identify him; that was something.

Presently Vaughn disappeared. That is why I went to Calcutta.

I may say that my registered address was John Mara, Scotland Yard. A detective's trade is to become acquainted with everybody and known to nobody.

In Calcutta there was only one man who knew me. My cousin, William Mars, was City Editor of the "*Englishman;*" it was only six months since he had gone out to that appointment. At the tiffin-table in my Calcutta hotel each day I sat next a pleasant gentleman named Rainsford. This little intimacy, which ripened somewhat during the few days I spent in Calcutta looking for traces of Vaughn, led to an invitation to spend an evening at his quarters to see a wonderful Hindu juggler who had come down from the North.

Mr. Rainsford was the resident' partner in the great jewellery firm of Hammond and Co. The firm occupied an immense isolated white building on the main street. Mr. Rainsford had for his quarters the whole upper flat of this building, the first floor being given over to the jewellery showrooms and the workshops.

I had read much of the power of these native jugglers, but that night the realisation was something that I hesitate to write. If it were not that it had much bearing on the fate of the Brunswick Diamond I should pass it over. In the East there are things which cannot be explained, and until seen are open to disbelief.

A dozen guests had been invited by Rainsford to see the wonder-working Ramatha, the Hindu juggler. These wonders were performed in our host's large drawing-room, and I noticed that the juggler wore only a loin-cloth tightly bound across his hips.

Ramatha was tall and gaunt, and intensely black. His teeth were even and brilliantly white; his features classically cut, and of delicate contour. It was said that he had been bred in the shadow of the great black temple at Pooree, though he had perfected his art with a hermit in the Himalayas.

After some minor tricks, Ramatha took a little earth from his basket, made a mound the size of a bowl on the lard floor, poured a little water on it from a brass Iota, placed a cloth the size of a large silk handkerchief over it, and for the space of a minute made a weird, soft music on a reed pipe. With a graceful sweep of his long, sinewy arm he flicked the cloth to one side, and the sprout of a mango leaf was disclosed peeping through the earth mound.

A dozen times he repeated this, and at each removal of the cloth the mango tree had grown a few inches, until finally it was three feet high. I remembered explanations of this trick in which hypnotism had played a part; but Ramatha plucked his tree by the roots and, coming among the guests. distributed leaves and bits of branches, and I knew that there was no hypnotism about that. What it was I do not know; simply that I remembered these wondrous things when the mystery of the loss of the Brunswick Diamond was given me to solve.

Next the Hindu brought forth a ball of twine and, having placed the loose end under his toe, threw the ball op against the ceiling. There it remained. He clapped his hands twice, and through the *purdah* of Rainsford's bedroom a small, dark Hindu lad glided up to the juggler, went up the string hand-over-hand, and disappeared through the ceiling.

I rubbed my eyes and waited. A second before I had seen him, and now he was gone. Ramatha pretended to be dumfounded also.

"The rascal is hiding," he said: "he must be in the other room."

He slipped into the bedroom, pretending to look for the boy. We sat silent, waiting. In a minute or two he came back— there was no boy.

"The Destroyer has taken him," he said with dramatic sincerity.

That may have been hypnotism— I do not know; I tell only what I saw. There was no corporeal evidence that the boy had been there. Ramatha did not offer us a finger or a toe to convince us, as he had distributed the leaves of the mango tree.

Rainsford declared that no boy had come with the juggler. While Ramatha rested a little, Rainsford sent for the *durwan* (doorkeeper) and questioned him. No boy had come in. neither had one gone out; there were eight of his *jat*

(caste), four on the front door and four on the back, sitting and sleeping— always some of them on guard, and no boy had passed. Then somebody asked for another trick— only they didn't seem to be quite like tricks— and Ramatha begged, in the profuse politeness of his Oriental speech, that the Sahibs might arrange themselves in a semi-circle.

He had something in his hand; Rainsford. whose business was of jewels. said it was a jade-stone figure, could see that the Thing had evil red eyes like a karait's. The host said they were ruby eyes.

Ramatha came down the circle. placing his hands on the wrists of each guest. I felt the tips of his fingers scorch like the fire end of a cheroot. Suddenly he stopped, with his hands on the wrists of one of the party His black body quivered; with a quick motion he drew the man forward and placed his hand, palm downward, upon the white Penang matting which covered the floor. Then he released the wrist and stepped back.

There was a red print on the floor like a bear track. Everybody crowded near in intense eagerness and looked at this extraordinary thing; it was blood. I saw that the first joint of the index finger was not marked. I looked at the man whose face I had not observed before: I felt certain it was Vaughn.

This was the last thing Ramatha did. Rainsford tried by bright chatter, and starting up a song at the piano, to dispel the eerie feeling that had settled down over the guests because of that thing on the floor; but everybody wanted to get away.

I asked Rainsford carelessly who the gentleman was. He answered that his name was Burroughs; he had met him casually a few times in Calcutta and had taken a fancy to him. He was stopping at the Punjab Club in Chosringhee— he would introduce me— so stupid of him not to have done so before; he was awfully sorry.

The next day Burroughs had disappeared; he had gone away from the club— to Bombay they thought. But it is the simplest thing in the world to trace a white man in or out of Calcutta, and I discovered that he had gone to Rangoon. There was not another steamer for three days; therefore for three days of waiting and three more of passage to Rangoon I must defer the developing of that acquaintanceship so auspiciously begun. It was tantalising; but now that I was on his track. and the scent was hot, it would only be a question of time and delicate manipulation until I mastered his secret.

As had been my daily habit, I went to the office of my cousin, Editor Mara, to have a chat over old times. He was out, but would be in presently, a clerk assured me; so I took a seat in his editorial chair to wait. Taking off my hat, I picked up a pencil and was jotting down a few figures when I heard a step at the door. Looking up I saw Rainsford.

"By Jove! Mr. Mara," he exclaimed, "I'm deuced glad to see you."

I returned the compliment and asked him to be seated. I felt justified in this, I because I was considerably at home in my cousin's office.

"You know," he said, drawing his chair I close up to mine, "something serious has happened— something very serious, and I wanted to speak to you about it; in fact, I want your assistance in the matter. It's very fortunate we're acquainted, really."

I assented.

He bent his head lower, and said, speaking in a low, intense voice, "The Brunswick Diamond has been stolen."

"The Brunswick Diamond " I repeated questioningly in my astonishment.

"Al! I see you haven't heard about it yet. That's good. This jewel was stolen from my place last night, and I want you to keep this fact out of your paper. You're sure to hear about it."

I saw in an instant that he had blundered. Finding me there, he had mistaken me for Mara, the editor. Evidently he was not personally acquainted with my cousin. He was proceeding with his narrative, when I interrupted him.

"Excuse me," I said; "I'm awfully sorry, but I'm not the editor. He will be here in a minute." He stared at me in astonishment.

"You're not— what ?"

"The editor," I answered. "His name is Mara also; he's a cousin of mine."

"I understand," he said. "It's my fault— you will not—"

"No," I said; "I'll say nothing about it if you wish."

At that moment the editor came in and I introduced Mr. Rainsford.

"You see," he said, "the Brunswick Diamond is a well-known stone. It was in the Empress Eugenie's collection. It is a peerless, rose-coloured gem of the purest water. It is worth at least £20,000, and was sent out to us on commission sale: if its loss becomes known, that fact will cause me great inconvenience, and perhaps prevent its recovery. Of course I had to make some inquiries, and was afraid the fact might get into your columns."

My cousin promised to suppress all reference to the theft. Rainsford was profuse in his thanks as he prepared to depart.

"If you don't mind," I said, "I'll walk with you as far as your office. I should like to talk over this matter."

We went up to his rooms.

"Look here," I began, "I've an idea that Fate, who is always meddling in the affairs of men, placed me in that seat today to await your arrival."

He questioned me with his eyes.

"You were kind enough to entrust me with your secret."

"I really didn't mean to," he laughed. "Well, I'll return the compliment. That will even up things, won't it?"

"Ye-s," he replied dubiously, politeness struggling with his apparent lack of interest in my proposed confidence.

"I'm a detective," I continued, speaking with abrupt sharpness.

"You're—"

"Yes— Scotland Yard."

He took out his handkerchief, mopped his forehead, and exclaimed: "By Jove! What' luck! I shouldn't have thought it, though. Are you out here on business?"

"Yes," I answered. "I've come out to make the acquaintance of an interesting gentleman."

He smiled. "I know," he said, nodding his head; "wanted at home, eh? Did you find him?"

"No my friend that is to be has gone to Rangoon for change of air. The next steamer does not leave for three days If I can be of any, assistance to you "

"You certainly can," he interrupted eagerly. "But you leave in three days," he added regretfully. "That's too bad; but," and he brightened up. "I'm not sure but that you'll be going in the very direction. Let me explain.

"The thief will have great difficulty in disposing of the Brunswick Diamond. He will not attempt to sell it here. It is likely he will go to Delhi— that place throngs with native jewels merchants whose scruples are— well, Oriental. Or he may go to Mandalay. King Theebaw is a great buyer of gems, and his scruples— well, he has none. Do you see the point?"

"I understand. Who do you think stole the diamond?" I queried.

"Ramatha," he answered without a moment's hesitation.

"The juggler?"

"Yes; nobody but he could have taken it: The reward for its recovery will be £5,000."

"A goodly sum," I exclaimed; "I hope I may be able to claim it."

"So do I," he rejoined. "You leave for Rangoon in three days?" he asked.

I nodded my head. "In the meantime—"

"Yes; in the meantime what had we better do?" he demanded.

"Find Ramatha."

"That's it!" he ejaculated. "I'll give you my bearer to help; he knows every Hindu corner in Calcutta. I'm afraid Ramatha will have gone to Delhi, though," he added despondently.

To ensure his complete confidence, I showed him my credentials from Scotland Yard. "Not necessary— not necessary," he demurred.

I asked him to describe the missing jewel.

"There's a model of it in the museum here," he said. "The Brunswick Diamond is 22 carats, but the great value lies in its unrivalled beauty of colour and its exquisite facets. It is of the most delicate rose tint, and so evenly cut that it will cling to the underside of a sheet of glass by its flat surface. You can't make any mistake in the Brunswick Diamond," he added fondly, "it's peerless. I'll show you where it was taken from."

I followed him. We passed from the drawing-room into his sleeping apartment, through the door from which had come Ramatha's boy. In one corner of the room was a strong steel safe, set with a combination lock.

"I keep a few rare gems and some papers here close to my hand," he said; "the *badmash* took it out of that. What do you think of it— clever, eh?"

"Was the safe locked?" I asked.

"Yes."

"Did anybody know the combination?"

"No: not a soul."

"You think Ramatha—"

"Yes; one of his devil tricks; like the red hand, or the boy. He must be in league with Old Nick to have done those things— don't you think so?"

"That's the easiest solution," I affirmed. "But how do you account for his getting the diamond out of the safe?"

"I don't account for it, any more than I attempt to account for the things we saw last night. We saw them, and now the diamond is gone; and that's all there is about it— only to get it back, of course, if we can."

I examined the room. Another door led from it to a hall. At the farther end of the hall was a stairway leading down to a cookhouse and servants' quarters.

"It's possible," I suggested, "for some one to come up this way to your room; probably Ramatha's boy did so."

"No, the back door is locked at night immediately after dinner. The *durwans* spread their *charpoys* (beds) across the outer passage, and sleep there. Besides, the safe was locked. Nobody but a man like the juggler, who can do supernatural things, could have opened it."

"Are you sure the stone was in the safe last night?" I asked.

"Yes; I showed it to the Maharaja of Darwaza, who was here late in the afternoon: I put it back in the safe and set the combination while he was still present.

"Did anybody else see it? Was anybody here with the Maharaja?"

"His secretary, of course, and— by the way, Burroughs and Tremayne, whom you met last night-they were here when Darwaza called."

"Could either of—"

"Impossible!" he interjected; "there I was no chance, even if they had been so disposed. I set the combination and nobody knows it."

I sat for a moment pondering over the problem, while Rainsford rolled a cigarette, lighted it at a fire ball on the centre table and puffed in nervous silence.

Either Ramatha or the gentleman I was after, Vaughn, had taken the stone, I felt sure. Eliminating the essence of jugglery, it seemed more likely that Vaughn had stolen it. His English education had been somewhat along these lines. According to Rainsford, neither one knew the combination. Without this knowledge Vaughn could not open it. Judging from what I had seen of Ramatha there was no limit to his powers.

"It looks like Ramatha," I said at last.

"Yes, it does," assented Rainsford emphatically, driving the cigarette smoke out with a decisive whiff.

"At any rate," I said, "we must try and catch him with the jewel in his possession.

"That's the idea," he concurred. "I'll send the bearer, Tez Singh, along; you can trust him."

For two days I toiled hopelessly. There was no evidence that Ramatha had ever I existed. The utter absence of information as to his whereabouts was in itself suspicious.

"They don't know," said Tez Singh; "also they will not tell. If the Sahib asks for Ramatha, and Ramatha is not here to answer, then also they think that perhaps Ramatha has offended the *Sirdar*, and of a surety they will not tell."

On the evening of the second day, as we were driving back in a gharry past the burning *ghats* north of the Hugli bridge, Tez Singh suddenly clutched me by the arm, and pointing to a carriage just ahead of us, exclaimed: "There is Ramatha! That gharry within is he, because I have seen his head, which was shortly looking at the outside."

His figurative statement caused me joy.

"Tell the driver to follow close," I ordered. I kept my eye on the oval tag on the back of the gharry Tez Singh had pointed out. No.1,117 was printed in black figures on its yellow surface. In and out among jute-laden bullock carts and black foot passengers that were numerous as flies, we wound at a dog trot. To the right over the Hugli bridge No. 1,117 turned. We followed. Over the long, floating bridge, to the left on the other side, and up into the Howrah railway station jogged the watched gharry. Close behind our driver slashed and coaxed and swore at his knock-kneed ponies; and as No. 1,117 emptied itself of Ramatha, and pulled out of the way, our gharry took its place at the steps. I saw the Hindu pass into the station.

"If he has taken the stone he will have it about his neck," said Tez Singh. "The Gods who are good to the Sahibs, because they are the fathers of the poor have so arranged it that Ramatha will have the star-lighted stone with him. He will have it about his neck, Sahib. He is going to Delhi of a surety."

"Remain here," I commanded.

It was certainly a glorious chance. Ramatha would have all his possessions with him. He was squatted on his heels on the platform beside a small, brass-bound, camphor-wood box. I went in and spoke to the station master.

"I want the use of a small room in which to search a native who is accused of stealing a valuable gem," I said.

"You may use my private office," he answered.

I reasoned that even if I arrested Ramatha and did not search him at once ne would probably make away with the jewel.

I lost no time over it. The stationmaster placed one of the railway police at my service, and together we explained to Ramatha what was wanted.

He was indignant; but it was too serious a matter to allow routine scruples to stand in the way. He was escorted into the office being watched carefully, and his box brought in also. The policeman ordered him to strip standing in the centre of the bare floor. His thin muslin *copra* was carefully shaken out: his *vagri* taken off his head and examined; his long black hair let down; the box opened and minutely searched; but there was no Brunswick Diamond—nothing but his juggling paraphernalia and a change of muslin cloth. I was beaten. If he had taken the diamond it had been sent on to Delhi by someone else; possibly the boy we had seen as in a dream that night had gone ahead with it. Ramatha had been watching me with a curious expression in his wild black eyes.

"The diamond is not here, at any rate," I said angrily, for I was disappointed, "but I arrest you, Ramatha, on suspicion of having taken it."

I looked at him narrowly as I said this.

His face fell. If he had sent the stone away, the possession of the juggler might lead to the finding of it. He dressed. We placed the box on my gharry, the owner inside, and started back.

We drove straight to Rainsford's quarters. I took Ramatha with me up to the rooms and explained matters to my friend.

"We must certainly hold him," the latter agreed.

"Sahibs," said my prisoner suddenly, '"Ramatha did not take the jewel. The Sahib with the hand that had been dipped in blood took it."

We looked at each other, and there was a minute's intense stillness.

"What I" exclaimed Rainsford; '"Burroughs Sahib stole the diamond, you say? Bosh! that's a game to hide your own guilt."

"No, *Huzoor*," answered Ramatha impressively; "the Sahib with the hand that was red stole the diamond."

Rainsford was about to speak again; but I stooped him. "Wait," I said. Then I spoke to the juggler.

"How do you know this, Ramatha? Did you steal it together?"

"No *Huzoor*; Ramatha knows the Sahib took it, even as he knew that there was blood on his hand."

"How can you prove that?" I asked. "Prove it, and help us get the stone back, and you shall have half the reward— half the £5,000."

"By Jove! if that's so we must arrest Burroughs at once," exclaimed Rainsford.

"You can't do that," I answered; "he's gone to Rangoon."

Rainsford looked at me questioningly. I nodded. My friend understood.

"You see Ramatha may be right," I whispered, taking him to one side; "at any rate, it's worth trying, because I'll never let this out of my sight until I get the jewel."

"Will you get it back for us then?" I asked Ramatha.

"If the Sahibs will protect me from this evil Sahib afterwards, I will," answered the Hindu.

"Why did you not tell of it before, if you knew?" queried Rainsford.

"It is not good to make an enemy of a Sahib who has blood on his hands," answered Ramatha. That was why he had not spoken— he was afraid that Burroughs would kill him.

"Had we better wire to Rangoon and have Burroughs arrested?" asked Rainsford.

"*Huzoor*," said Ramatha, "you will then probably not get the stone."

"How shall we recover it?" I asked.

"The ways of my people are, that if there is one false witness, of a surety the other side will get two. Also, if a thing is stolen they will hire a *chor* (thief) to steal it back."

"We must steal it from him?"

He nodded.

"Who will play the *chor*?" I questioned.

"Ramatha, Huzoor."

"You are certain you can get it back?"

He salaamed gravely.

"By Jove!" said Rainsford, "I like it."

"So do I," I rejoined, "for it's in my territory, as it were. Besides, if I wire now and arrest Burroughs the other the pleasant friendship is off, you know."

"I understand," said Rainsford. "Is it something about— the hand—"

I assented with a nod.

"Horrible!" he said. "And I entertained this man."

"You must remain with me all the time as evidence of good faith," I told the juggler. He agreed to this.

The next day we took the Karagola to Rangoon. In three days we arrived.

To my joy. Burroughs was still in Rangoon at Evershed's Hotel. I also became a patient sufferer at that wondrously managed place. Ramatha took up his quarters with the servants, and I foregathered at the cookhouse.

The cookhouse in the East is like a telegraph receiving station. From each Sahib's estate runs a direct line of wireless telegraphy conveying all the news, and all the inner things of his life. Each Sahib has a private servant, therefore the telegraph is always in operation. The juggler would know all that Burroughs did, or thought, or said, even as though he were domiciled under his bed.

"Do not take a servant," he advised; "it is well that your affairs be not known." We had a distinct advantage over Burroughs evidently.

I asked Ramatha when he meant to try for the jewel.

"Not now, *Huzoor*," he said: "have patience. When the Sahib moves he will carry the star-kissed rose with him, then Ramatha will acquire it."

By the purest accident my place at the *table d'hôte* was next Burroughs: by the purest accident I spilled a glass of water over his plate; and by these chances we became acquainted. The first joint of his right index finger was missing; likewise in the centre of his palm was the scar beyond cavil. The link was forged solid. Now if I could recover the diamond— for I felt convinced that he must have it.

How he had taken it Ramatha either did not know or would not tell. Of course if he had stolen it he had managed somehow to get hold of the combination and had seized an opportunity to open the safe.

All this time I was watching Ramatha carefully— he might be playing a deep game. Of course he could not get away from me in Rangoon; that was impossible.

Each day I made a little progress in Burrough's friendship. I was prepared to spend three months over the English part of it. so I went very gently.

On the fourth evening from our arrival the Hindu assured me that Burroughs was going to Mandalay by that night's train.

"And to-night, Sahib," he added, "Ramatha will get the rose-stone as the Sahib sleeps he will sleep a big sleep, *Huzoor*," he explained with emphasis.

"You won't do anything serious. Ramatha?" I asked. He shook his head, and showed his white, even teeth.

"No, Protector of the Poor, the Sahib will wake in the morning— but he'll sleep sound. Also you must give Ramatha five rupees as *backshish* for the

guard, so that we can have the compartment alone. The Sahib will travel second class with Ramatha. Is that good?"'

I nodded.

The train from Prome left at 9 o'clock. The Hindu and I drove to the station in separate gharries. If possible, I wished Burroughs not to see me. I remained ii my -harry while the juggler investigated. He also secured the tickets. Presently he came to me in the dusk and said in a low voice:

"Come now quickly Sahib, it is all arranged."

I followed him. He led the way to a second-class compartment. The carriages were small, and divided in the centre into two compartments by washrooms. The door was at the end. opening on to a platform. A seat ran the length of the compartment on either side, forming a bed. Above were two more which could be let down.

We hastily passed into our carriage, closed the door, and pulled down the blinds. Burroughs had not seen me. There was a single light in the ceiling of the carriage. Ramatha pulled the green baize over the lamp and our compartment became quite dim.

"The Sahib is in there," said Ramatha, pointing in the direction of the carriage next ours. It was a first-class, and the door was immediately opposite, across the two platforms.

Presently the guard came, looked at our tickets, closed the door. and the train started. The five rupees had evidently worked: we were alone.

"Sleep, *Huzoor,*" said Ramatha: "I will wake your honour when it is time to see."

After a little while I fell asleep. I was awakened by somebody tapping me gently on the arm. It was the Hindu. I rose. held my watch up to the bleary smoking lamp in the car ceiling, and looked at the time— it was half-past two.

The train was swaying drunkenly as it rushed over the curved track. The whistle of the engine shrieked back a warning that we were coming to some village: the next minute the loose, silly clack of a switch told that we had passed it. Then my companion took something from the folds of his loin-cloth, rubbed it violently into the palms of his hands, nodded knowingly at me, and. as the compartment became filled with a drowsy odour, opened the door cautiously and passed out. I noticed that his black body was stripped except for the cloth bound tightly about his loins and hips.

I raised the blind of the corner window a little and watched, wondering how he would het in the door. Burroughs would surely have locked it. The Hindu passed over to the other platform and down the steps: my eyes followed him. I noticed that a footboard ran along the side of the carriage. He stood on this and I could see that he was working at the window. I examined

the one I was looking through: it was a drop window. By lifting it a trifle it could be lowered.

For fully five minutes he stood there: then he came back up the steps, crossed over the platform like a black shadow, and down on the other side. Either the window had been impossible or Burroughs was sleeping on the other seat. I could just see a part of Ramatha's body as he stood on the footboard.

Once he drew back quickly and crouched on the end of the platform. Had he failed? Had he wakened Burroughs?

I was trembling with excitement. The diamond was surely at stake— if he alarmed Burroughs we would never get another chance I felt sure.

It seemed an age that he crouched there but it was really only a few minutes. Then he went down on the footboard again: the train swayed and rocked: the carriages jostled and bumped, and the shrill screech of the engine came back every few minutes like a devil-call.

Presently I rubbed my eyes. I could not see the Hindu; my breath had made a moisture on the glass. I rubbed it off and looked. Ramatha had disappeared. Had he fallen off? I waited, with my eyes riveted on the footboard. We might soon run into some station and the whole thing be upset. Presently a black leg outlined itself against the faintly moon-lighted sky: then more of Ramatha's anatomy crossed my line of sight and silently, swiftly, came up the steps, across the platform, and into my compartment.

I looked at him.

"There, Sahib," he said in a low voice, "there is the rose stone," and placed it in my hand.

I pulled the green cloth a little to one side. so that the light fell upon the jewel. It glinted and sparkled in the palm of my hand, shooting back rays of warm wine-light. There could be no doubt about it; it was the missing gem.

As Ramatha moved his hands there was a heavy odour which made me drowsy.

"The Sahib is sleeping." he said, nodding his head backward toward the other coach as he passed into the washroom to cleanse the drug from his hands. "He had the stone in a little box hung about his neck. There was another Sahib, and Ramatha had to put them both to sleep."

"That's rich," I thought. "Burroughs will blame his companion, and perhaps there'll be a fine shindy."

I determined to go back to Rangoon from Prome, to dispatch the jewel by parcel post to Calcutta. It was a tremendous risk to have it in one's possession for even a day. I persuaded Ramatha to go on to Mandalay to keep in touch

with Burroughs for me until I could take up the broken-off thread of the other matter.

At Prome I remained in the compartment until Burroughs went to the river steamer for Mandalay. That night I returned to Rangoon and the next day sent the diamond to Calcutta with a letter to Rainsford, asking that Ramatha's part of the reward be remitted to Rangoon. This was the juggler's request. Then I made my way to Mandalay.

The retrospect was pleasant. I had marked down my man, and would never leave him till I had fathomed his secret. Incidentally, by the rarest good fortune, I had recovered a valuable jewel, and there was as good as to my credit over this a matter of £2,500. I liked India. Thinking about these things I landed in Mandalay.

A Portuguese half-caste, Gomez, kept a house that, unfearful of the wrath of the gods, he was pleased to call a hotel. The hopeless desolation of the place chilled my soul. I expected to find Burroughs there. I asked casually as though it were not of much moment, if a Mr. Burroughs had come to the hotel.

"The Sahib was here yesterday." said Gomez. "but they have buried him that side to-day."

"Buried him!" I exclaimed.

The fat Portuguese bobbed his head solemnly and tried to look unutterably sad. His verbose recital, condensed, read—

Burroughs had been brought in wounded to death the night before. It was something about a diamond, according to Gomez, as big as his fist. A Hindu juggler, or dacoits, or somebody had driven a knife through the gentleman. The diamond had, or had not, been sold at the palace— Gomez was equally positive on both points. Nobody else would give any information. Theebaw's men slit the throats of people who talked too much, therefore much silence was in the market.

Ramatha had disappeared completely; perhaps he also had been slain. But Burroughs, before he died had got in a *vakil* (lawyer) and written a confession that he had killed the Viscount. It was witnessed by Gomez, and was in proper shape.

Of course I didn't believe the diamond story at all, for I had sent the jewel off to Calcutta; but Burroughs and Ramatha might have fought over the stealing of it if Burroughs knew. I got the confession from the vakil and returned to Rangoon. There was a letter for me from Rainsford.

This is what it said:

"I regret to say that evidently you have been deceived. The thing you have sent is not the Brunswick Diamond at all— it is a rather poor paste imitation.

"I read our letter of its recovery, and either Ramatha himself was the original thief and having the paste copy for emergencies, pretended to steal it from Burroughs: or Burroughs, being the thief, had the paste duplicate in his possession to guard against the original being stolen, and Ramatha found that. Or another possibility: Burroughs may have been the thief, and had the original only in his possession; Ramatha got this duplicate made, and when he stole the real stone from Burroughs passed the false one over to you and retained the true gem.

"You had better look into this at once for one of these two men has the real gem."

This was a crushing blow. Look into it! Burroughs was dead. Ramatha had disappeared— possibly dead also— and, according to report, the jewel was in Theebaw's possession. It was hopeless.

I wrote Rainsford to that effect, and sailed straight back to England from Rangoon with the papers which made my other undertaking completely successful.

To this day it is not known who stole the Brunswick Diamond; neither has it been recovered.

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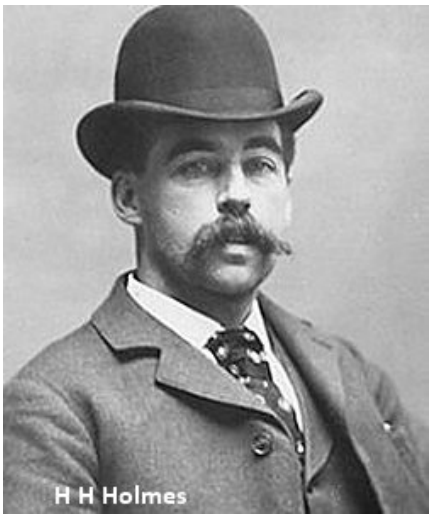
True story of a serial killer



6: The Mysterious Mr. Holmes

H. B. Irving

Harry Brodribb Irving, 1870-1919
In: *A Book of Remarkable Criminals*, 1918

H. B. Irving was a celebrated English theatre actor and manager who retired from the stage in about 1915 and returned to his first love, the law. (He had qualified as a Barrister in 1894, after coming down from Oxford, but had turned to the stage).

1: Honour Amongst Thieves

IN THE YEAR 1894 Mr. Smith, a carpenter, of Philadelphia, had patented a new saw-set. Wishing to make some money out of his invention, Mr. Smith was attracted by the sign:

B. F. PERRY
PATENTS BOUGHT AND SOLD

which he saw stretched across the window of a two-storied house, 1,316 Callowhill Street. He entered the house and made the acquaintance of Mr. Perry, a tall, dark, bony man, to whom he explained the merits of his invention. Perry listened with interest, and asked for a model. In the meantime he suggested that Smith should do some carpenter's work for him in the house. Smith agreed, and on August 22, while at work there saw a man enter the house and go up with Perry to a room on the second story.

A few days later Smith called at Callowhill Street to ask Perry about the sale of the patent. He waited half an hour in the shop below, called out to Perry

who, he thought, might be in the rooms above, received no answer and went away. Next day, September 4, Smith returned, found the place just as he had left it the day before; called Perry again, but again got no answer. Surprised, he went upstairs, and in the back room of the second story the morning sunshine, streaming through the window, showed him the dead body of a man, his face charred beyond recognition, lying with his feet to the window and his head to the door. There was evidence of some sort of explosion: a broken bottle that had contained an inflammable substance, a broken pipe filled with tobacco, and a burnt match lay by the side of the body.

The general appearance of the dead man answered to that of B. F. Perry. A medical examination of the body showed that death had been sudden, that there had been paralysis of the involuntary muscles, and that the stomach, besides showing symptoms of alcoholic irritation, emitted a strong odour of chloroform. An inquest was held, and a verdict returned that B. F. Perry had died of congestion of the lungs caused by the inhalation of flame or chloroform. After lying in the mortuary for eleven days the body was buried.

In the meantime the Philadelphia branch of the Fidelity Mutual Life Association had received a letter from one Jephtha D. Howe, an attorney at St. Louis, stating that the deceased B. F. Perry was Benjamin F. Pitezel of that city, who had been insured in their office for a sum of ten thousand dollars. The insurance had been effected in Chicago in the November of 1893. Mr. Howe proposed to come to Philadelphia with some members of the Pitezel family to identify the remains. Referring to their Chicago branch, the insurance company found that the only person who would seem to have known Pitezel when in that city, was a certain H. H. Holmes, living at Wilmette, Illinois. They got into communication with Mr. Holmes, and forwarded to him a cutting from a newspaper, which stated erroneously that the death of B. F. Perry had taken place in Chicago.

On September 18 they received a letter from Mr. Holmes, in which he offered what assistance he could toward the identification of B. F. Perry as B. F. Pitezel. He gave the name of a dentist in Chicago who would be able to recognise teeth which he had made for Pitezel, and himself furnished a description of the man, especially of a malformation of the knee and a warty growth on the back of the neck by which he could be further identified. Mr. Holmes offered, if his expenses were paid, to come to Chicago to view the body. Two days later he wrote again saying that he had seen by other papers that Perry's death had taken place in Philadelphia and not in Chicago, and that as he had to be in Baltimore in a day or two, he would run over to Philadelphia and visit the office of the Fidelity Life Association.

On September 20 the assiduous Mr. Holmes called at the office of the Association in Philadelphia, inquired anxiously about the nature and cause of Perry's death, gave again a description of him and, on learning that Mr. Howe, the attorney from St. Louis, was about to come to Philadelphia to represent the widow, Mrs. Pitezel, and complete the identification, said that he would return to give the company any further help he could in the matter. The following day Mr. Jephtha D. Howe, attorney of St. Louis, arrived in Philadelphia, accompanied by Alice Pitezel, a daughter of the deceased. Howe explained that Pitezel had taken the name of Perry owing to financial difficulties. The company said that they accepted the fact that Perry and Pitezel were one and the same man, but were not convinced that the body was Pitezel's body. The visit of Holmes was mentioned. Howe said that he did not know Mr. Holmes, but would be willing to meet him. At this moment Holmes arrived at the office. He was introduced to Howe as a stranger, and recognised as a friend by Alice Pitezel, a shy, awkward girl of fourteen or fifteen years of age. It was then arranged that all the parties should meet again next day to identify, if possible, the body, which had been disinterred for that purpose.

The unpleasant duty of identifying the rapidly decomposing remains was greatly curtailed by the readiness of Mr. Holmes. When the party met on the 22nd at the Potter's Field, where the body had been disinterred and laid out, the doctor present was unable to find the distinctive marks which would show Perry and Pitezel to have been the same man. Holmes at once stepped into the breach, took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, put on the rubber gloves, and taking a surgeon's knife from his pocket, cut off the wart at the back of the neck, showed the injury to the leg, and revealed also a bruised thumbnail which had been another distinctive mark of Pitezel. The body was then covered up all but the teeth; the girl Alice was brought in, and she said that the teeth appeared to be like those of her father. The insurance company declared themselves satisfied, and handed to Mr. Howe a cheque for $9,175, and to Mr. Holmes ten dollars for his expenses. Smith, the carpenter, had been present at the proceedings at the Potter's Field. For a moment he thought he detected a likeness in Mr. Holmes to the man who had visited Perry at Callowhill Street on August 22 and gone upstairs with him, but he did not feel sure enough of the fact to make any mention of it.

In the prison at St. Louis there languished in the year 1894 one Marion Hedgspeth, serving a sentence of twenty years' imprisonment for an audacious train robbery. On the night of November 30, 1891, the 'Friscow express from St. Louis had been boarded by four ruffians, the express car blown open with dynamite, and $10,000 carried off. Hedgspeth and another man were tried for the robbery, and sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment. On October 9,

1894, Hedgspeth made a statement to the Governor of the St. Louis prison, which he said he wished to be communicated to the Fidelity Mutual Life Association. In the previous July Hedgspeth said that he had met in the prison a man of the name of H. M. Howard, who was charged with fraud, but had been released on bail later in the month.

While in prison Howard told Hedgspeth that he had devised a scheme for swindling an insurance company of 10,000 dollars, and promised Hedgspeth that, if he would recommend him a lawyer suitable for such an enterprise, he should have 500 dollars as his share of the proceeds. Hedgspeth recommended Jephtha D. Howe. The latter entered with enthusiasm into the scheme, and told Hedgspeth that he thought Mr. Howard "one of the smoothest and slickest" men he had ever known. A corpse was to be found answering to Pitezel's description, and to be so treated as to appear to have been the victim of an accidental explosion, while Pitezel himself would disappear to Germany. From Howe Hedgspeth learnt that the swindle had been carried out successfully, but he had never received from Howard the $500 promised him. Consequently, he had but little compunction in divulging the plot to the authorities.

It was realised at once that H. M. Howard and H. H. Holmes were the same person, and that Jephtha D. Howe and Mr. Holmes were not the strangers to each other that they had affected to be when they met in Philadelphia. Though somewhat doubtful of the truth of Hedgspeth's statement, the insurance company decided to set Pinkerton's detectives on the track of Mr. H. H. Holmes. After more than a month's search he was traced to his father's house at Gilmanton, N. H., and arrested in Boston on November 17.

Inquiry showed that, early in 1894, Holmes and Pitezel had acquired some real property at Fort Worth in Texas and commenced building operations, but had soon after left Texas under a cloud, arising from the theft of a horse and other dubious transactions.

Holmes had obtained the property at Fort Worth from a Miss Minnie Williams, and transferred it to Pitezel. Pitezel was a drunken "crook," of mean intelligence, a mesmeric subject entirely under the influence of Holmes, who claimed to have considerable hypnotic powers. Pitezel had a wife living at St. Louis and five children, three girls— Dessie, Alice, and Nellie— a boy, Howard, and a baby in arms. At the time of Holmes' arrest Mrs. Pitezel, with her eldest daughter, Dessie, and her little baby, was living at a house rented by Holmes at Burlington, Vermont. She also was arrested on a charge of complicity in the insurance fraud and brought to Boston.

Two days after his arrest Holmes, who dreaded being sent back to Texas on a charge of horse-stealing, for which in that State the punishment is apt to be

rough and ready, made a statement to the police, in which he acknowledged the fraud practised by him and Pitezel on the insurance company. The body substituted for Pitezel had been obtained, said Holmes, from a doctor in New York, packed in a trunk and sent to Philadelphia, but he declined for the present to give the doctor's name. Pitezel, he said, had gone with three of his children— Alice, Nellie and Howard— to South America. This fact, however, Holmes had not communicated to Mrs. Pitezel.

When she arrived at Boston, the poor woman was in great distress of mind. Questioned by the officers, she attempted to deny any complicity in the fraud, but her real anxiety was to get news of her husband and her three children. Alice she had not seen since the girl had gone to Philadelphia to identify the supposed remains of her father. Shortly after this Holmes had come to Mrs. Pitezel at St. Louis, and taken away Nellie and Howard to join Alice, who, he said, was in the care of a widow lady at Ovington, Kentucky. Since then Mrs. Pitezel had seen nothing of the children or her husband. At Holmes' direction she had gone to Detroit, Toronto, Ogdensberg and, lastly, to Burlington in the hope of meeting either Pitezel or the children, but in vain. She believed that her husband had deserted her; her only desire was to recover her children.

On November 20 Holmes and Mrs. Pitezel were transferred from Boston to Philadelphia, and there, along with Benjamin Pitezel and Jephtha D. Howe, were charged with defrauding the Fidelity Life Association of 10,000 dollars. Soon after his arrival in Philadelphia Holmes, who was never averse to talking, was asked by an inspector of the insurance company who it was that had helped him to double up the body sent from New York and pack it into the trunk. He replied that he had done it alone, having learned the trick when studying medicine in Michigan. The inspector recollected that the body when removed from Callowhill Street had been straight and rigid. He asked Holmes what trick he had learnt in the course of his medical studies by which it was possible to re-stiffen a body once the rigor mortis had been broken. To this Holmes made no reply. But he realised his mistake, and a few weeks later volunteered a second statement.

He now said that Pitezel, in a fit of depression, aggravated by his drinking habits, had committed suicide on the third story of the house in Callowhill Street. There Holmes had found his body, carried it down on to the floor below, and arranged it in the manner agreed upon for deceiving the insurance company. Pitezel, he said, had taken his life by lying on the floor and allowing chloroform to run slowly into his mouth through a rubber tube placed on a chair. The three children, Holmes now stated, had gone to England with a friend of his, Miss Minnie Williams.

Miss Minnie Williams was the lady, from whom Holmes was said to have acquired the property in Texas which he and Pitezel had set about developing. There was quite a tragedy, according to Holmes, connected with the life of Miss Williams. She had come to Holmes in 1893, as secretary, at a drug store which he was then keeping in Chicago. Their relations had become more intimate, and later in the year Miss Williams wrote to her sister, Nannie, saying that she was going to be married, and inviting her to the wedding. Nannie arrived, but unfortunately a violent quarrel broke out between the two sisters, and Holmes came home to find that Minnie in her rage had killed her sister. He had helped her out of the trouble by dropping Nannie's body into the Chicago lake. After such a distressing occurrence Miss Williams was only too glad of the opportunity of leaving America with the Pitezel children. In the meantime Holmes, under the name of Bond, and Pitezel, under that of Lyman, had proceeded to deal with Miss Williams' property in Texas.

For women Holmes would always appear to have possessed some power of attraction, a power of which he availed himself generously. Holmes, whose real name was Herman W. Mudgett, was thirty-four years of age at the time of his arrest. As a boy he had spent his life farming in Vermont, after which he had taken up medicine and acquired some kind of medical degree. In the course of his training Holmes and a fellow student, finding a body that bore a striking resemblance to the latter; obtained $1,000 from an insurance company by a fraud similar to that in which Holmes had engaged subsequently with Pitezel.

After spending some time on the staff of a lunatic asylum in Pennsylvania, Holmes set up as a druggist in Chicago. His affairs in this city prospered, and he was enabled to erect, at the corner of Wallace and Sixty-Third Streets, the four-storied building known later as "Holmes Castle." It was a singular structure. The lower part consisted of a shop and offices. Holmes occupied the second floor, and had a laboratory on the third. In his office was a vault, air proof and sound proof. In the bathroom a trap-door, covered by a rug, opened on to a secret staircase leading down to the cellar, and a similar staircase connected the cellar with the laboratory. In the cellar was a large grate. To this building Miss Minnie Williams had invited her sister to come for her wedding with Holmes, and it was in this building, according to Holmes, that the tragedy of Nannie's untimely death occurred.

In hoping to become Holmes' wife, Miss Minnie Williams was not to enjoy an exclusive privilege. At the time of his arrest Holmes had three wives, each ignorant of the others' existence. He had married the first in 1878, under the name of Mudgett, and was visiting her at Burlington, Vermont, when the Pinkerton detectives first got on his track. The second he had married at Chicago, under the name of Howard, and the third at Denver as recently as

January, 1894, under the name of Holmes. The third Mrs. Holmes had been with him when he came to Philadelphia to identify Pitezel's body. The appearance of Holmes was commonplace, but he was a man of plausible and ingratiating address, apparent candour, and able in case of necessity to "let loose," as he phrased it, "the fount of emotion."

The year 1895 opened to find the much enduring Holmes still a prisoner in Philadelphia. The authorities seemed in no haste to indict him for fraud; their interest was concentrated rather in endeavouring to find the whereabouts of Miss Williams and her children, and of one Edward Hatch, whom Holmes had described as helping him in arranging for their departure. The "great humiliation" of being a prisoner was very distressing to Holmes.

"I only know the sky has lost its blue,
The days are weary and the night is drear."

These struck him as two beautiful lines very appropriate to his situation. He made a New Year's resolve to give up meat during his close confinement. The visits of his third wife brought him some comfort. He was "agreeably surprised" to find that, as an unconvicted prisoner, he could order in his own meals and receive newspapers and periodicals. But he was hurt at an unfriendly suggestion on the part of the authorities that Pitezel had not died by his own hand, and that Edward Hatch was but a figment of his rich imagination. He would like to have been released on bail, but in the same unfriendly spirit was informed that, if he were, he would be detained on a charge of murder. And so the months dragged on. Holmes, studious, patient, injured, the authorities puzzled, suspicions, baffled— still no news of Miss Williams or the three children. It was not until June 3 that Holmes was put on his trial for fraud, and the following day pleaded guilty. Sentence was postponed.

The same day Holmes was sent for to the office of the District Attorney, who thus addressed him: "It is strongly suspected, Holmes, that you have not only murdered Pitezel, but that you have killed the children. The best way to remove this suspicion is to produce the children at once. Now, where are they?" Unfriendly as was this approach, Holmes met it calmly, reiterated his previous statement that the children had gone with Miss Williams to England, and gave her address in London, 80 Veder or Vadar Street, where, he said, Miss Williams had opened a massage establishment. He offered to draw up and insert a cipher advertisement in the New York Herald, by means of which, he said, Miss Williams and he had agreed to communicate, and almost tearfully he added, "Why should I kill innocent children?"

Asked to give the name of any person who had seen Miss Williams and the children in the course of their journeyings in America, he resented the disbelief implied in such a question, and strong was his manly indignation when one of the gentlemen present expressed his opinion that the story was a lie from beginning to end. This rude estimate of Holmes' veracity was, however, in some degree confirmed when a cipher advertisement published in the New York Herald according to Holmes' directions, produced no reply from Miss Williams, and inquiry showed that no such street as Veder or Vadar Street was to be found in London.

In spite of these disappointments, Holmes' quiet confidence in his own good faith continued unshaken. When the hapless Mrs. Pitezel was released, he wrote her a long letter. "Knowing me as you do," he said, "can you imagine me killing little and innocent children, especially without any motive?" But even Mrs. Pitezel was not wholly reassured. She recollected how Holmes had taken her just before his arrest to a house he had rented at Burlington, Vermont, how he had written asking her to carry a package of nitro-glycerine from the bottom to the top of the house, and how one day she had found him busily removing the boards in the cellar.

2: The Wandering Assassin

THE DISTRICT Attorney and the Insurance Company were not in agreement as to the fate of the Pitezel children. The former still inclined to the hope and belief that they were in England with Miss Williams, but the insurance company took a more sinister view. No trace of them existed except a tin box found among Holmes' effects, containing letters they had written to their mother and grandparents from Cincinnati, Indianapolis, and Detroit, which had been given to Holmes to dispatch but had never reached their destination. The box contained letters from Mrs. Pitezel to her children, which Holmes had presumably intercepted.

It was decided to make a final attempt to resolve all doubts by sending an experienced detective over the route taken by the children in America. He was to make exhaustive inquiries in each city with a view to tracing the visits of Holmes or the three children. For this purpose a detective of the name of Geyer was chosen. The record of his search is a remarkable story of patient and persistent investigation.

Alice Pitezel had not seen her mother since she had gone with Holmes to identify her father's remains in Philadelphia. From there Holmes had taken her to Indianapolis. In the meantime he had visited Mrs. Pitezel at St. Louis, and taken away with him the girl, Nellie, and the boy, Howard, alleging as his reason for doing so that they and Alice were to join their father, whose

temporary effacement was necessary to carry out successfully the fraud on the insurance company, to which Mrs. Pitezel had been from the first an unwilling party. Holmes, Nellie and Howard had joined Alice at Indianapolis, and from there all four were believed to have gone to Cincinnati. It was here, accordingly, on June 27, 1895, that Geyer commenced his search.

After calling at a number of hotels, Geyer found that on Friday, September 28, 1894, a man, giving the name of Alexander E. Cook, and three children had stayed at a hotel called the Atlantic House. Geyer recollected that Holmes, when later on he had sent Mrs. Pitezel to the house in Burlington, had described her as Mrs. A. E. Cook and, though not positive, the hotel clerk thought that he recognised in the photographs of Holmes and he three children, which Geyer showed him, the four visitors to the hotel.

They had left the Atlantic House the next day, and on that same day, the 29th, Geyer found that Mr. A. E. Cook and three children had registered at the Bristol Hotel, where they had stayed until Sunday the 30th.

Knowing Holmes' habit of renting houses, Geyer did not confine his enquiries to the hotels. He visited a number of estate agents and learnt that a man and a boy, identified as Holmes and Howard Pitezel, had occupied a house No. 305 Poplar Street. The man had given the name of A. C. Hayes. He had taken the house on Friday the 28th, and on the 29th had driven up to it with the boy in a furniture wagon. A curious neighbour, interested in the advent of a newcomer, saw the wagon arrive, and was somewhat astonished to observe that the only furniture taken into the house was a large iron cylinder stove. She was still further surprised when, on the following day, Mr. Hayes told her that he was not going after all to occupy the house, and made her a present of the cylinder stove.

From Cincinnati Geyer went to Indianapolis. Here inquiry showed that on September 30 three children had been brought by a man identified as Holmes to the Hotel English, and registered in the name of Canning. This was the maiden name of Mrs. Pitezel. The children had stayed at the hotel one night. After that Geyer seemed to lose track of them until he was reminded of a hotel then closed, called the Circle House. With some difficulty he got a sight of the books of the hotel, and found that the three Canning children had arrived there on October 1 and stayed until the 10th. From the former proprietor of the hotel he learnt that Holmes had described himself as the children's uncle, and had said that Howard was a bad boy, whom he was trying to place in some institution. The children seldom went out; they would sit in their room drawing or writing, often they were found crying; they seemed homesick and unhappy.

There are letters of the children written from Indianapolis to their mothers, letters found in Holmes' possession, which had never reached her. In these

letters they ask their mother why she does not write to them. She had written, but her letters were in Holmes' possession. Alice writes that she is reading "Uncle Tom's Cabin." She has read so much that her eyes hurt; they have bought a crystal pen for five cents which gives them some amusement; they had been to the Zoo in Cincinnati the Sunday before: "I expect this Sunday will pass away slower than I don't know— Howard is two (sic) dirty to be seen out on the street to-day." Sometimes they go and watch a man who paints "genuine oil paintings" in a shoe store, which are given away with every dollar purchase of shoes— "he can paint a picture in one and a half minutes, ain't that quick!"

Howard was getting a little troublesome. "I don't like to tell you," writes Alice, "but you ask me, so I will have to. Howard won't mind me at all. He wanted a book and I got *'Life of General Sheridan*,' and it is awful nice, but now he don't read it at all hardly." Poor Howard! One morning, says Alice, Mr. Holmes told him to stay in and wait for him, as he was coming to take him out, but Howard was disobedient, and when Mr. Holmes arrived he had gone out. Better for Howard had he never returned! "We have written two or three letters to you," Alice tells her mother, "and I guess you will begin to get them now." She will not get them. Mr. Holmes is so very particular that the insurance company shall get no clue to the whereabouts of any member of the Pitezel family.

Geyer knew that from Indianapolis Holmes had gone to Detroit. He ascertained that two girls, "Etta and Nellie Canning," had registered on October 12 at the New Western Hotel in that city, and from there had moved on the 15th to a boarding-house in Congress Street. From Detroit Alice had written to her grandparents. It was cold and wet, she wrote; she and Etta had colds and chapped hands: "We have to stay in all the time. All that Nell and I can do is to draw, and I get so tired sitting that I could get up and fly almost. I wish I could see you all. I am getting so homesick that I don't know what to do. I suppose Wharton (their baby brother) walks by this time, don't he? I would like to have him here, he would pass away the time a good deal." As a fact little Wharton, his mother and sister Dessie, were at this very moment in Detroit, within ten minutes' walk of the hotel at which Holmes had registered "Etta and Nellie Canning."

On October 14 there had arrived in that city a weary, anxious-looking woman, with a girl and a little baby. They took a room at Geis's Hotel, registering as Mrs. Adams and daughter. Mrs. Adams seemed in great distress of mind, and never left her room.

The housekeeper, being shown their photographs, identified the woman and the girl as Mrs. Pitezel and her eldest daughter Dessie. As the same time

there had been staying at another hotel in Detroit a Mr. and Mrs. Holmes, whose photographs showed them to be the Mr. Holmes in question and his third wife. These three parties— the two children, Mrs. Pitezel and her baby, and the third Mrs. Holmes— were all ignorant of each other's presence in Detroit; and under the secret guidance of Mr. Holmes the three parties (still unaware of their proximity to each other), left Detroit for Canada, arriving in Toronto on or about October 18, and registering at three separate hotels. The only one who had not to all appearances reached Toronto was the boy Howard.

In Toronto "Alice and Nellie Canning" stayed at the Albion Hotel.

They arrived there on October 19, and left on the 25th. During their stay a man, identified as Holmes, had called every morning for the two children, and taken them out; but they had come back alone, usually in time for supper. On the 25th he had called and taken them out, but they had not returned to supper. After that date Geyer could find no trace of them. Bearing in mind Holmes' custom of renting houses, he compiled a list of all the house agents in Toronto, and laboriously applied to each one for information. The process was a slow one, and the result seemed likely to be disappointing.

To aid his search Geyer decided to call in the assistance of the Press. The newspapers readily published long accounts of the case and portraits of Holmes and the children. At last, after eight days of patient and untiring investigation, after following up more than one false clue, Geyer received a report that there was a house— No. 16 St. Vincent Street— which had been rented in the previous October by a man answering to the description of Holmes. The information came from an old Scottish gentleman living next door. Geyer hastened to see him. The old gentleman said that the man who had occupied No. 16 in October had told him that he had taken the house for his widowed sister, and he recognised the photograph of Alice Pitezel as one of the two girls accompanying him. The only furniture the man had taken into the house was a bed, a mattress and a trunk. During his stay at No. 16 this man had called on his neighbour about four o'clock one afternoon and borrowed a spade, saying that he wanted to dig a place in the cellar where his widowed sister could keep potatoes; he had returned the spade the following morning. The lady to whom the house belonged recognised Holmes' portrait as that of the man to whom she had let No. 16.

At last Geyer seemed to be on the right track. He hurried back to St. Vincent Street, borrowed from the old gentleman at No. 18 the very spade which he had lent to Holmes in the previous October, and got the permission of the present occupier of No. 16 to make a search. In the centre of the kitchen Geyer found a trap-door leading down into a small cellar. In one corner of the

cellar he saw that the earth had been recently dug up. With the help of the spade the loose earth was removed, and at a depth of some three feet, in a state of advanced decomposition, lay the remains of what appeared to be two children. A little toy wooden egg with a snake inside it, belonging to the Pitezel children, had been found by the tenant who had taken the house after Holmes; a later tenant had found stuffed into the chimney, but not burnt, some clothing that answered the description of that worn by Alice and Etta Pitezel; and by the teeth and hair of the two corpses Mrs. Pitezel was able to identify them as those of her two daughters. The very day that Alice and Etta had met their deaths at St. Vincent Street, their mother had been staying near them at a hotel in the same city, and later on the same day Holmes had persuaded her to leave Toronto for Ogdensburg. He said that they were being watched by detectives, and so it would be impossible for her husband to come to see her there.

But the problem was not yet wholly solved. What had become of Howard? So far Geyer's search had shown that Holmes had rented three houses, one in Cincinnati, one in Detroit, and one in Toronto. Howard had been with his sisters at the hotels in Indianapolis, and in Detroit the house agents had said that, when Holmes had rented a house there, he had been accompanied by a boy. Yet an exhaustive search of that house had revealed no trace of him. Geyer returned to Detroit and again questioned the house agents; on being pressed their recollection of the boy who had accompanied Holmes seemed very vague and uncertain. This served only to justify a conclusion at which Geyer had already arrived, that Howard had never reached Detroit, but had disappeared in Indianapolis. Alice's letters, written from there, had described how Holmes had wanted to take Howard out one day and how the boy had refused to stay in and wait for him. In the same way Holmes had called for the two girls at the Albion Hotel in Toronto on October 25 and taken them out with him, after which they had never been seen alive except by the old gentleman at No. 18 St. Vincent Street.

If Geyer could discover that Holmes had not departed in Indianapolis from his usual custom of renting houses, he might be on the high way to solving the mystery of Howard's fate. Accordingly he returned to Indianapolis.

In the meantime, Holmes, in his prison at Philadelphia, learnt of the discovery at Toronto. "On the morning of the 16th of July," he writes in his journal, "my newspaper was delivered to me about 8.30 a.m., and I had hardly opened it before I saw in large headlines the announcement of the finding of the children in Toronto. For the moment it seemed so impossible that I was inclined to think it was one of the frequent newspaper excitements that had attended the earlier part of the case, but, in attempting to gain some accurate

comprehension of what was stated in the article, I became convinced that at least certain bodies had been found there, and upon comparing the date when the house was hired I knew it to be the same as when the children had been in Toronto; and thus being forced to realise the awfulness of what had probably happened, I gave up trying to read the article, and saw instead the two little faces as they had looked when I hurriedly left them— felt the innocent child's kiss so timidly given, and heard again their earnest words of farewell, and realised that I had received another burden to carry to my grave with me, equal, if not worse, than the horrors of Nannie Williams' death."

Questioned by the district attorney, Holmes met this fresh evidence by evoking once again the mythical Edward Hatch and suggesting that Miss Minnie Williams, in a "hellish wish for vengeance" because of Holmes' fancied desertion, and in order to make it appear probable that he, and not she, had murdered her sister, had prompted Hatch to commit the horrid deed. Holmes asked to be allowed to go to Toronto that he might collect any evidence which he could find there in his favour. The district attorney refused his request; he had determined to try Holmes in Philadelphia. "What more could, be said?" writes Holmes. Indeed, under the circumstances, and in the unaccountable absence of Edward Hatch and Minnie Williams, there was little more to be said.

Detective Geyer reopened his search in Indianapolis by obtaining a list of advertisements of houses to let in the city in 1894. Nine hundred of these were followed up in vain. He then turned his attention to the small towns lying around Indianapolis with no happier result. Geyer wrote in something of despair to his superiors: "By Monday we will have searched every outlying town except Irvington. After Irvington, I scarcely know where we shall go." Thither he went on August 27, exactly two months from the day on which his quest had begun. As he entered the town he noticed the advertisement of an estate agent. He called at the office and found a "pleasant-faced old gentleman," who greeted him amiably. Once again Geyer opened his now soiled and ragged packet of photographs, and asked the gentleman if in October, 1894, he had let a house to a man who said that he wanted one for a widowed sister. He showed him the portrait of Holmes.

The old man put on his glasses and looked at the photograph for some time. Yes, he said, he did remember that he had given the keys of a cottage in October, 1894, to a man of Holmes' appearance, and he recollected the man the more distinctly for the uncivil abruptness with which he had asked for the keys; "I felt," he said, "he should have had more respect for my grey hairs."

From the old gentleman's office Geyer hastened to the cottage, and made at once for the cellar. There he could find no sign of recent disturbance. But

beneath the floor of a piazza adjoining the house he found the remains of a trunk, answering to the description of that which the Pitezel children had had with them, and in an outhouse he discovered the inevitable stove, Holmes' one indispensable piece of furniture. It was stained with blood on the top. A neighbour had seen Holmes in the same October drive up to the house in the furniture wagon accompanied by a boy, and later in the day Holmes had asked him to come over to the cottage and help him to put up a stove. The neighbour asked him why he did not use gas; Holmes replied that he did not think gas was healthy for children. While the two men were putting up the stove, the little boy stood by and watched them. After further search there were discovered in the cellar chimney some bones, teeth, a pelvis and the baked remains of a stomach, liver and spleen.

Medical examination showed them to be the remains of a child between seven and ten years of age. A spinning top, a scarf-pin, a pair of shoes and some articles of clothing that had belonged to the little Pitezels, had been found in the house at different times, and were handed over to Geyer.

His search was ended. On September 1 he returned to Philadelphia.

Holmes was put on his trial on October 28, 1895, before the Court of Oyer and Terminer in Philadelphia, charged with the murder of Benjamin Pitezel. In the course of the trial the district attorney offered to put in evidence showing that Holmes had also murdered the three children of Pitezel, contending that such evidence was admissible on the ground that the murders of the children and their father were parts of the same transaction. The judge refused to admit the evidence, though expressing a doubt as to its inadmissibility. The defence did not dispute the identity of the body found in Callowhill Street, but contended that Pitezel had committed suicide. The medical evidence negatived such a theory. The position of the body, its condition when discovered, were entirely inconsistent with self-destruction, and the absence of irritation in the stomach showed that the chloroform found there must have been poured into it after death. In all probability, Holmes had chloroformed Pitezel when he was drunk or asleep. He had taken the chloroform to Callowhill Street as a proposed ingredient in a solution for cleaning clothes, which he and Pitezel were to patent. It was no doubt with the help of the same drug that he had done to death the little children, and failing the nitro-glycerine, with that drug he had intended to put Mrs. Pitezel and her two remaining children out of the way at the house in Burlington; for after his trial there was found there, hidden away in the cellar, a bottle containing eight or ten ounces of chloroform.

Though assisted by counsel, Holmes took an active part in his defence. He betrayed no feeling at the sight of Mrs. Pitezel, the greater part of whose family he had destroyed, but the appearance of his third wife as a witness he

made an opportunity for "letting loose the fount of emotion," taking care to inform his counsel beforehand that he intended to perform this touching feat. He was convicted and sentenced to death on November 2.

Previous to the trial of Holmes the police had made an exhaustive investigation of the mysterious building in Chicago known as "Holmes' Castle." The result was sufficiently sinister. In the stove in the cellar charred human bones were found, and in the middle of the room stood a large dissecting table stained with blood. On digging up the cellar floor some human ribs, sections of vertebrae and teeth were discovered buried in quicklime, and in other parts of the "castle" the police found more charred bones, some metal buttons, a trunk, and a piece of a watch chain.

The trunk and piece of watch chain were identified as having belonged to Miss Minnie Williams.

Inquiry showed that Miss Williams had entered Holmes' employment as a typist in 1893, and had lived with him at the castle. In the latter part of the year she had invited her sister, Nannie, to be present at her wedding with Holmes. Nannie had come to Chicago for that purpose, and since then the two sisters had never been seen alive. In February in the following year Pitezel, under the name of Lyman, had deposited at Fort Worth, Texas, a deed according to which a man named Bond had transferred to him property in that city which had belonged to Miss Williams, and shortly after, Holmes, under the name of Pratt, joined him at Fort Worth, whereupon the two commenced building on Miss Williams' land.

Other mysterious cases besides those of the Williams sisters revealed the Bluebeard-like character of this latterday castle of Mr. Holmes. In 1887 a man of the name of Connor entered Holmes' employment. He brought with him to the castle a handsome, intelligent wife and a little girl of eight or nine years of age.

After a short time Connor quarrelled with his wife and went away, leaving Mrs. Connor and the little girl with Holmes. After 1892 Mrs. Connor and her daughter had disappeared, but in August, 1895, the police found in the castle some clothes identified as theirs, and the janitor, Quinlan, admitted having seen the dead body of Mrs. Connor in the castle. Holmes, questioned in his prison in Philadelphia, said that Mrs. Connor had died under an operation, but that he did not know what had become of the little girl.

In the year of Mrs. Connor's disappearance, a typist named Emily Cigrand, who had been employed in a hospital in which Benjamin Pitezel had been a patient, was recommended by the latter to Holmes. She entered his employment, and she and Holmes soon became intimate, passing as "Mr. and Mrs. Gordon." Emily Cigrand had been in the habit of writing regularly to her

parents in Indiana, but after December 6, 1892, they had never heard from her again, nor could any further trace of her be found.

A man who worked for Holmes as a handy man at the castle stated to the police that in 1892 Holmes had given him a skeleton of a man to mount, and in January, 1893, showed him in the laboratory another male skeleton with some flesh still on it, which also he asked him to mount. As there was a set of surgical instruments in the laboratory and also a tank filled with a fluid preparation for removing flesh, the handy man thought that Holmes was engaged in some kind of surgical work.

About a month before his execution, when Holmes' appeals from his sentence had failed and death appeared imminent, he sold to the newspapers for $7,500 a confession in which he claimed to have committed twenty-seven murders in the course of his career. The day after it appeared he declared the whole confession to be a "fake." He was tired, he said, of being accused by the newspapers of having committed every mysterious murder that had occurred during the last ten years. When it was pointed out to him that the account given in his confession of the murder of the Pitezel children was clearly untrue, he replied, "Of course, it is not true, but the newspapers wanted a sensation and they have got it." The confession was certainly sensational enough to satisfy the most exacting of penny-a-liners, and a lasting tribute to Holmes' undoubted power of extravagant romancing.

According to his story, some of his twenty-seven victims had met their death by poison, some by more violent methods, some had died a lingering death in the air-tight and sound-proof vault of the castle. Most of these he mentioned by name, but some of these were proved afterwards to be alive. Holmes had actually perpetrated, in all probability, about ten murders. But, given further time and opportunity, there is no reason why this peripatetic assassin should not have attained to the considerable figure with which he credited himself in his bogus confession.

Holmes was executed in Philadelphia on May 7, 1896. He seemed to meet his fate with indifference.

The motive of Holmes in murdering Pitezel and three of his children and in planning to murder his wife and remaining children, originated in all probability in a quarrel that occurred between Pitezel and himself in the July of 1894. Pitezel had tired apparently of Holmes and his doings, and wanted to break off the connection. But he must have known enough of Holmes' past to make him a dangerous enemy. It was Pitezel who had introduced to Holmes, Emily Cigrand, the typist, who had disappeared so mysteriously in the castle; Pitezel had been his partner in the fraudulent appropriation of Miss Minnie Williams' property in Texas; it is more than likely, therefore, that Pitezel knew

something of the fate of Miss Williams and her sister. By reviving, with Pitezel's help, his old plan for defrauding insurance companies, Holmes saw the opportunity of making $10,000, which he needed sorely, and at the same time removing his inconvenient and now lukewarm associate. Having killed Pitezel and received the insurance money, Holmes appropriated to his own use the greater part of the $10,000, giving Mrs. Pitezel in return for her share of the plunder a bogus bill for $5,000. Having robbed Mrs. Pitezel of both her husband and her money, to this thoroughgoing criminal there seemed only one satisfactory way of escaping detection, and that was to exterminate her and the whole of her family.

Had Holmes not confided his scheme of the insurance fraud to Hedgspeth in St. Louis prison and then broken faith with him, there is no reason why the fraud should ever have been discovered. The subsequent murders had been so cunningly contrived that, had the Insurance Company not put the Pinkerton detectives on his track, Holmes would in all probability have ended by successfully disposing of Mrs. Pitezel, Dessie, and the baby at the house in Burlington, Vermont, and the entire Pitezel family would have disappeared as completely as his other victims.

Holmes admitted afterwards that his one mistake had been his confiding to Hedgspeth his plans for defrauding an insurance company— a mistake, the unfortunate results of which might have been avoided, if he had kept faith with the train robber and given him the $500 which he had promised.

The case of Holmes illustrates the practical as well as the purely ethical value of "honour among thieves," and shows how a comparatively insignificant misdeed may ruin a great and comprehensive plan of crime. To dare to attempt the extermination of a family of seven persons, and to succeed so nearly in effecting it, could be the work of no tyro, no beginner like J. B. Troppmann. It was the act of one who having already succeeded in putting out of the way a number of other persons undetected, might well and justifiably believe that he was born for greater and more compendious achievements in robbery and murder than any who had gone before him. One can almost subscribe to America's claim that Holmes is the "greatest criminal" of a century boasting no mean record in such persons.

In the remarkable character of his achievements as an assassin we are apt to lose sight of Holmes' singular skill and daring as a liar and a bigamist. As an instance of the former may be cited his audacious explanation to his family, when they heard of his having married a second time. He said that he had met with a serious accident to his head, and that when he left the hospital, found that he had entirely lost his memory; that, while in this state of oblivion, he had married again and then, when his memory returned, realised to his horror

his unfortunate position. Plausibility would seem to have been one of Holmes' most useful gifts; men and women alike— particularly the latter— he seems to have deceived with ease. His appearance was commonplace, in no way suggesting the conventional criminal, his manner courteous, ingratiating and seemingly candid, and like so many scoundrels, he could play consummately the man of sentiment.

The weak spot in Holmes' armour as an enemy of society was a dangerous tendency to loquacity, the defect no doubt of his qualities of plausible and insinuating address and ever ready mendacity.

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7: Incandescent Cats

W. L. Alden

1837-1908

In: *Van Wagener's Ways*, 1898

ONE DAY Professor Van Wagener comes into my house and says: 'Colonel! tell me how I can get two dozen full-grown cats without attracting attention.'

'What's the matter with you now?' says I. 'Are you lonesome, and going in for general cat society?'

'I'm going to try an electrical experiment,' says he. 'My wife's away from home, and now's the time to do it. I'm going to light my house with incandescent cats.'

'What are you giving us ?' said I. 'What's an incandescent cat, anyhow?'

'This is what I mean,' says Van Wagener. 'Did you ever rub a cat's fur in the dark?'

'Of course I have,' said I.

'Well, then,' says he, 'you know that a cat is just chock-full of electricity. I rubbed our cat for a full hour last night, and she gave off on an average twenty-five sparks a second. I've calculated that at that rate a cat can furnish enough electricity to run candle-power Edison light for just as long as the cat's fur is rubbed. What's more, it isn't necessary to rub her fur. The electricity is there all the same, whether she is rubbed or not; and if you attach an Edison lamp to a cat, and complete the circuit, that lamp will burn just as long as the cat lives.'

'How are you going to complete the circuit?' said I, beginning to get interested in the thing.

'That's what I haven't worked out yet,' says he, 'and I want two dozen cats for experiments.'

'Limp or stiff cats?' says I.

'I don't know what you mean,' says Van Wagener.

'Why,' says I, 'there's one kind of cat that is as limp as a rag when you pick her up, and you can do pretty near anything with her. Then there's another kind that is as stiff as a poker; and when you try to handle a stiff cat, the chances are that you'll wish you had let her alone.'

'Then give me two dozen limp cats,' says he, and I'll be eternally obliged to you.'

Well, I told a boy who worked in my shop to gather in some cats without making any fuss about it, and in the course of a couple of days he'd gathered in the two dozen that Van Wagener wanted. I didn't see much of Van Wagener for about a week, but by the caterwauling that came from his house I

calculated that he was working at his experiments. At last he got through with them, and called me in to see how his invention worked.

Van Wagener looked as if he had been having an argument with a dozen drunken Indian squaws. There wasn't an inch of his face that hadn't been scratched, and as for his hands, they were pretty near raw. However, he was about as proud and happy as they make 'em.

The first thing I saw when I went into his front hall was a cat sleeping on the hall table, with an electric light on her back. You see, Van Wagener had completed his circuit by fastening the end of the cat's tail in the upper part of the lamp, and running two wires from the lower part of the lamp to the cat's ears. At least, this was the way that he explained the thing to me, though I don't profess to understand it. The lamp didn't give out very much light, but, as the Professor explained, that was because the cat was asleep.

'You just wait,' said he, 'till she begins to exercise her muscles, and then you'll see that I didn't make an overestimate when I said a cat could keep a ten candle-power light going.'

Van Wagener's dining-room was lit up as brilliant as the saloon of a big steamer. He had six cats scattered round the room, and he had a small puppy-dog, who stirred up the electrical action of the cats, and kept their lamps burning, as the hymn says. There's no denying that the cats looked mighty unhappy, except when they were swearing at the puppy; and they had a way of creeping under the table and concealing their lights by squeezing between the furniture and the wall, that reminded me of the woman in Scripture who hid her light under a bushel. On the other hand, it was clear enough that one or two cats lighted up the room better than half-a-dozen gas-jets would have done, and accordingly I congratulated Van Wagener on the success of his invention.

'Here's my reading-cat,' says he, picking up a mighty limp and dispirited-looking cat, and setting her on the table. You see, when I want to read, I just put this cat on the table where the light falls over my left shoulder, and I take a book and sit down and read, as comfortable as you please.'

So he sat down with an open book in his hand, and made believe to read, and the cat sat quiet until she judged the right moment had come, and then she made a jump and lit on the Professor's head, and started in to scalp him. But that's just the way with cats: you can't ever trust 'em any farther than you can see 'em.

Van Wagener tore the cat off his head, losing considerable hair in the process, and then went on discoursing of the merits of his invention.

'Now,' said he, 'suppose you want to go down cellar. Instead of carrying a lamp or a candle, and setting the house on fire, you just start an incandescent

cat down the cellar stairs ahead of you, and she lights up the whole place till you're ready to come up again. Or suppose you want to go out into your back-yard at night, where you can't carry a light on account of the wind. If you've got an incandescent cat, all you have to do is to let her out of the back door, and there you have the whole yard illuminated.'

'Do you calculate to go to bed by cat-light?' says I.

'Of course I do,' says he. 'That is, provided I can get Mrs. Van Wagener to see the advantages of it. It's going to take considerable talking, however, before she can be got to allow a cat in her room. She is everlastingly prejudiced against science.'

"Now,' continued Van Wagener, 'we'll come into the parlour, and I'll bring in the dining-room cats, and you'll see what a brilliant effect a dozen incandescent cats will make.'

There were six cats in the parlour already, and when Van Wagener had routed them out from under the sofa and from behind the chairs, and had brought in his six dining-room cats and the puppy, there is no doubt that the room was, as you might say, a blaze of light. But while the Professor was lecturing on the cheapness of the new light, which cost absolutely nothing to run except what the cats might eat, one of the brightest of the cats had a fit, and took to running round the room at about fifty miles an hour, and producing the effect of a big Catherine-wheel that had broke loose and was celebrating the Fourth of July on its own hook. Then the other cats joined in the circus, and what with the upsetting of the furniture, and the smashing of Mrs. Van Wagener's china images, and the barking of the puppy, and the yelling and swearing of the cats, that parlour was almost as lively a place as a man could wish to see.

The circus lasted till the original cat who had started the thing with a fit, fell down exhausted, and two other cats who had engaged in a rough and tumble fight, had filled the air with black and grey fur. Then things sort of quieted down, and most of the cats got together under the sofa, and freed their minds in language that I wouldn't like to repeat. Only two of the lamps were broken, but the rest of them either went entirely out or burned mighty dim; and Van Wagener, when he reflected on what his wife would probably say when she should come to see the state of her parlour, was a little down in the mouth; or, as you might say, a prey to the devouring element of grief.

However, he braced up after a little while, and said that the only discouraging feature of the affair was the fact that a cat's electricity seemed to give out after too much excitement. He maintained that the cats could be trained to behave as incandescent cats ought to behave, but that it would probably take time and patience to train them.

'Thinking it over,' said he, 'I'm not a bit discouraged. I've demonstrated that cats can be used for lighting purposes, and that is all I set out to do. The invention is all right, and just as soon as the cats are trained properly, they will supersede all other means of lighting houses. I've got a week before my wife comes home, and by that time I'll have those cats in a first-class state of discipline.' With that he gets a broom and starts the cats out from under the sofa, and turns off their electricity, so as not to waste it; and then I said 'Good-night,' and left him to carry his cats down cellar, one by one, and put them to bed for the night.

About two days later there was to be a great Democratic torchlight procession in the evening, it being pretty near election time. Now Van Wagener was a Democrat, and when he heard that the procession was going to pass his house, he said he would illuminate. I told him that if he wanted to illuminate he had better stick to candles; but he said No; he would illuminate with cats, and with nothing else.

So he set to work and fitted shelves in the inside of his two parlour windows and the two windows of the front room upstairs; and when night came he had six cats seated on the shelf in each window and tied by a string around the neck, so that they couldn't jump down and interfere with the illumination.

Just before the procession reached the house he turned on his cats, and they made a first-class illumination, which laid over anything in the line of illumination that any of the neighbours had done. The cats seemed on the whole satisfied to sit in the windows and I complimented Van Wagener on the progress he had made in training them.

8: The Silver Ingots

Clifford Ashdown

(R. Austin Freeman 1862-1943, & John James Pitcairn, 1860-1936)

Cassell's Magazine, Oct 1903

THE morning was raw, the sun, when it deigned to shine, feeling chill and distant. There was no wind, and as they threaded the curves of the river the occasional funnels wrote persistent sooty lines upon the grey clouds. The park, with its avenues mere damp vistas of naked and grimy boughs, was deserted even by the sparrows, no longer finding a precarious meal at the hands of the children as yet only playing in their slums.

There is little pleasure in cycling towards the end of February, and, preferring walking to the perils of sideslip in the mud, Mr. Pringle had walked from Furnival's Inn by way of the Embankment and Grosvenor Road and now sat smoking on the terrace in front of Battersea Park.

There was a new moon, and the rubbish borne during the night on the spring tide from downstream was returning on the ebb to the lower reaches from which it had been ravished. As Mr. Pringle smoked and gazed absently at the river, now nearly at its lowest, a large 'sou'-wester' caught his eye; it swam gravely with the stream, giving an occasional pirouette as it swirled every now and then into an eddy.

As it floated opposite him he caught a glimpse of some white thing below it— the whole mass seemed to quiver, as if struggling and fighting for life. Could it be a drowning man? Just there the river was solitary; not a soul was visible to help. Vaulting lightly over the low railings, Pringle sprang from the Embankment on to a bed of comparatively clean shingle, which here replaced the odorous mud-level, and reached the water side just as the 'sou'wester', in a more violent gyration, displayed in its grasp a woolen comforter.

Amused and a trifle vexed at his own credulity, Pringle turned, and, walking a yard or two along the beach, tripped and fell as his toe caught in something. Scrambling to his feet, he discovered a loop of half-inch manila rope, the colour of which told of no long stay there. He gave it a gentle pull, without moving it in the slightest. A harder tug gave no better result; and, his curiosity now thoroughly aroused, he seized it with both hands, and, with his heels dug into the shingle, dragged out of the water just a plaited carpenter's tool-basket.

The rope, in length about six feet, was rove through the handles as if for carrying over the shoulder. Surprised at its weightiness, he peeped inside. They were odd-looking things he found— no mallets or chisels, planes or turnscrews, only half a dozen dirty-looking bricks.

Wondering more and more, he picked one up and examined it carefully. Towards the end was faint suggestion as it were of a scallop-shell, and, turning it over, he detected another and more perfect impression of the same with a crest and monogram, the whole enclosed within an oblong ornamental border, which a closer scrutiny revealed as the handle of a spoon. On another brick he identified a projection as the partially fused end of a candlestick; and, when he scraped off some of the dirt with his knife, the unmistakable lustre of silver met his gaze. All six ingots were of very irregular outline, as if cast in a clumsy or imperfect mould.

A cold sensation about the feet made him look down. Unnoticed by him, the tide had turned and he now stood to the ankles in water. For a moment longer he continued to crouch, while sending a cautious glance about him. In the quarter of an hour or less he had spent by the waterside only a single lighter had passed, and the man in charge had been too much occupied in making the most of the tide to spare any attention ashore. The terrace behind him was quite deserted, and he was sheltered from any observation from the bridge by a projection of the Embankment, which made of the patch of shingle a miniature bay. As to the little steamboat pier, to the naked eye his movements were as indistinguishable from that as from the opposite side of the river. His privacy was complete.

Straightening up, he turned his back on the water and directly faced the terrace. Right in front of him he could see a sycamore standing in the park, and, carefully noting its appearance, he scrambled up the ten feet or so of embankment wall, which at that point was much eroded and gave an easy foothold.

Once on the terrace, he walked briskly up and down to warm his frozen feet, and as he walked he tried to reason out the meaning of his discovery. Here was an innocent-looking carpenter's basket with half a dozen silver ingots of obviously illicit origin— for they had been clumsily made by the fusing together indiscriminately of various articles of plate.

Roughly estimating their weight at about eight pounds apiece, then their aggregate value was something over £100— not a large sum, perhaps, but no doubt representing the proceeds of more than one burglary. They must have been sunk below low-water mark, say, about a week ago, when they would have been covered at all states of the tide; now, with the onset of the spring tides, they would be exposed twice daily for an hour.

Could the owner have known of this fact? Probably not. Pringle hardly credited him with much skill or premeditation. Such a hiding-place rather pointed to a hasty concealment of compromising articles, and the chances were all against the spot having been noted.

On the whole, although it was a comparatively trifling find, Pringle decided it was worth annexing. Nothing could be done for the present, however. By this time the rising tide had concealed even the rope; besides, he could never walk out of the park with a carpenter's basket over his shoulder, even if he were to wait about until it had dried. No; he must return for it in clothing more suited to its possession.

As he walked back to Furnival's Inn, a clock striking half-past eleven suggested a new idea. By ten that night the basket would be again exposed, and it might be his last chance of securing it; the morning might see its discovery by someone else. The place was a public one, and although he had been singularly fortunate in its loneliness to-day, who could tell how many might be there tomorrow? This decided him.

ABOUT half-past ten that evening Pringle crossed the Albert Bridge to the south side, and turning short off to the left descended a flight of steps which led down to the water; the park gates had been long closed, and this was the only route available. His tall, lithe figure was clothed in a seedy, ill-fitting suit he reserved for such occasions; his tie was of a pattern unspeakable, his face and hands dirty; but although his boots were soiled and unpolished, they showed no further departure from their wonted, and even feminine, neatness. Since the morning his usually fair hair had turned black, and a small strip of whisker had grown upon his clean-shaven face, whilst the port-wine mark emblazoning his right cheek had disappeared altogether.

At the foot of the steps he waited until a nearing wagon had got well upon the bridge, and then, as its thunder drowned his footsteps, he tramped over the shelving beach, and rounding the projection of the embankment found himself in the little bay once more. With his back to the water, he sidled along until opposite the sycamore, and then, facing about, he went down on his hands and knees groping for the loop. Everything seemed as he had left it, and the basket, already loosened from its anchorage, came rattling up the pebbles as soon as he made a very moderate traction on the rope. What with the noise he made himself, slight though it was, and his absorption in the work, Pringle never heard a gentle step approaching by the path he had himself taken; but as he hastily arranged the ingots on the beach, and was about to hold the basket up to drain, his arm was gripped by a muscular hand.

"Fishing this time of night?" inquired a refined voice in singular contrast to the rough appearance of the speaker. Then, more sharply, "Come— get up! Let's have a look at you."

Pringle rose in obedience to the upward lift upon his arm, and as the two men faced each other the stranger started, exclaiming: "So it's you, is it! I thought we should meet again some day."

"Meet again?" repeated Pringle stupidly, as for about the second or third time in his life his presence of mind deserted him

"Don't say you've forgotten me at Wurzleford last summer! Let's see— what was your name? I ought to remember it, too— ah, yes, Courtley! Have you left the Church, Mr. Courtley? Seem rather down on your luck now. Why, Solomon in all his glory wasn't in it with you at Wurzleford? And you don't seem to need your glasses, either. Has your sight improved?"

Pringle remembered him before he had got half way through his string of sarcasms. He had not altered in the least; the shell might be rough, but the voice and manner of the gentleman-burglar were as Chesterfieldian as ever. Of all people in the world, he was the one whom Pringle would have least desired to see at that moment, and he prepared himself for a very bad quarter of an hour.

"It's lucky for you we haven't met before," continued the other. "If I could have got at you that night, it would have been your life or mine! Don't think I've forgiven you. I must say, though, you did it very neatly; it's something, I can tell you, to get the better of me. Why, I've never dared to breathe a word of it since; I should be a laughing-stock for the rest of my days. I, the 'Toff,' as they call me!

"But I can see a joke, even if it's against myself, and I've laughed several times since when I've thought of it. Fancy locking me in that room while you coolly walked off with the stuff that I'd been working for for months. And such stuff too! I think you'd have done better to act squarely with me. Those rubies don't seem to have done you much good. I never thought you'd do much with them at the time. It needs a man with capital to plant such stuff as that. But what's the game now? Who put you up to this?"

He had been taking short steps up and down the beach, half soliloquising as he walked, and now he broke off abruptly and fronted Pringle.

"No one." Pringle had now recovered his self-possession. They were alone; it was man to man, and anyhow, the "Toff" did not seem to be very vindictive.

"Then how did you know it was here? You're a smart fellow, I know; but I don't think you're quite smart enough to see to the bottom of the river."

"It was quite accidental," said Pringle frankly. "It was this way." And he sketched the doings of the morning.

"Upon my word," exclaimed the "Toff", "you and I seem fated to cross one another's paths. But I'll be kinder than you deserve. This stuff"— he kicked the ingots—"is the result of a 'wedge-hunt,' as we call it. Nervous chap, bringing it

up the river, got an idea that he was being shadowed— dropped it from a steamer three days ago— wasn't certain of his bearings when he had done it. That comes of losing one's head. Now, if it hadn't been for you, I might never have found it, although it looks as if I was right in calculating the tides and so on. As you seem in rather hard case, I'll see you're not a loser over the night's work so long as you make yourself useful."

Pringle assented cheerfully; he was curious to see the end of it all. While the other was speaking he had decided to fall in with his humour. Indeed, unless he fled in cowardly retreat, there was nothing else to be done. The "Toff", as he knew, was wiry, but although in good form himself, Pringle's arm throbbed and tingled where it had been gripped. They were equally matched so far as strength went, unless the "Toff" still carried a revolver. Besides, the ingots were not worth disputing over. Had they been gold now—!

"Well, just lend a hand then." And, the "Toff" producing some cotton-waste, they commenced to pack the ingots back into the basket.

"Look here," the "Toff" continued as they worked; "why don't you join me? You want someone to advise you, I should say. Whatever your game was at Wurzleford, you don't seem to have made much at it, nor out of me, either— ah!"

The subject was evidently a sore one, and the "Toff's" face hardened and he clenched his hands at the memories it aroused.

"Yes," he went on, "you seem a man of some resource, and if only you'd join me, what with that and my experience— why, we'd make our pile and retire in a couple of years! And what a life it is! Talk of adventure and excitement and all that— what is there to equal it? Canting idiots talk of staking one's liberty. Liberty, indeed! Why, what higher stake can one play for?— except one's life, and I've done that before now. I've played for a whole week at Monte Carlo, and believe I broke the bank (I couldn't tell for certain— they don't let you know, and never close till eleven, in spite of all people think and talk to the contrary); I've played poker with some of the 'cutest American players; I've gambled on the Turf; I've gambled on the Stock Exchange; I've run Kanakas to Queensland; I've smuggled diamonds; I've hunted big game all over the world; I've helped to get a revolution in Ecuador, and nearly (ha! ha!) got myself made President; I've— hang it, what haven't I done?

"And I tell you there's nothing in all I've gone through to equal the excitement of the life I'm leading now. Then, too, we're educated men. I'm Rugby and John's, and that's where I score over most I have to work with; they sicken me with their dirty, boozy lives. They have a bit of luck, then they're drunk for a month, and have to start again without a penny, and the rats

running all over them Now, we two— Gentle! Don't take it by the handles. Wait a second. D'you hear anything?"

A cab trotted over the wooden-paved bridge, then silenced again. The "Toff" wound one end of the rope round and round his wrist, and motioned Pringle to do the same; then, with a sign to tread warily, he started to make the circuit of the promontory, the basket swaying between them as they kept step. Pringle, with an amused sense of the other's patronising airs, followed submissively behind him up the shelving beach. By the wooden steps the "Toff" paused.

"Under here," he directed; and they stuffed the basket under the bottom step.

"Now," he murmured in Pringle's ear, "you go up to the road, and if you see no one about walk a little way down, as if you'd come off the bridge, and stamp your feet like this." He stamped once or twice, as if to restore the circulation in his feet, but with a rhythmical cadence in the movement.

"Yes; what then?"

"There ought to be a trap waiting down the first turning on the opposite side of the road. If it doesn't come up, count twenty and stamp again."

"And then?"

"If nothing happens, come back and tell me."

When he stood at the top of the stairs Pringle felt much inclined, instead of turning to the left, to go the other way and cross the bridge, leaving the "Toff" to secure the ingots as best he could. Later on he had cause to regret that he had not done so; but for the moment love of adventure prevailed and, walking down the gradient from the bridge, he gave the signal. There was no one in sight, but the action was such a natural one on a damp and foggy night that had the street been ever so crowded it would have pass unnoticed.

Pringle counted twenty, and repeated the signal. By this time he had reached the corner, and looking down the side street, he distinctly saw the twin lights of a carriage advancing at a trot. He turned back and reached the stairs as a rubber-tyred miniature brougham pulled up beside him.

"Is it there?" whispered the "Toff" impatiently.

"There's a brougham stopping. I don't know—"

"Yes, yes; that's it. Lend a hand, now; we mustn't keep it waiting about."

Marvelling at the style in which the "Toff" appeared to work, Pringle helped to lug the basket up, and between them they bundled it into the carriage.

"Now," said the "Toff", fumbling in his waistcoat pocket, "what do you say about my proposal?"

"Well, really, I should like to think over it a little," replied Pringle evasively.

"Oh, I can't wait here all night while you're making up your mind. If you don't recognize a good thing when you see it, you're not the man for me. It's not everyone I should make the offer to."

"Then I think I had better say 'No'."

"Please yourself, and sink a little lower than you are."

The "Toff" appeared nettled at Pringle's refusal. He ceased to grope in his waistcoat, and drawing a leather purse from his trouser pocket, took something from it.

"That's for your trouble," said he shortly; and the next minute was bowling swiftly over the bridge. Pringle, who had mechanically extended his hand, found by the glimmer of a lamp that the "Toff" had appraised his services at the sum of seven shillings, and was moved to throw the coins into the river.

As he hesitated over the fate of the florin and two half-crowns in his palm, a policeman approached and glanced suspiciously at him. His hand closed on the money, and he passed on to the bridge. He felt hot and grimy with his exertions; also his boots were damp, and the night wind began to grow chilly. Half way across he broke into a run, the elastic structure swaying perceptibly beneath his feet. Over on the other side the lights of a public-house pierced the mist, and he struck into the roadway towards it.

"Outside— on the right!" said a voice, as he opened the door of the saloon bar. For the time he had forgotten the shabbiness of his dress, enhanced as it was by the many things it had suffered in the course of the night's work, and with an unwonted diffidence he sought the public bar. There, with a steaming glass in hand, he strove to dry his boots at a gas-stove in one corner, but he still felt cold and miserable when, about half past eleven, he rose to go.

" 'Ere— what's this?" The barman had inserted the proffered coin in a *trier*, and giving it a deft jerk, now flung it, bent nearly double, across the counter.

"I beg your pardon," Pringle apologised, as he produced another. "I had no idea it was bad."

The barman threw the second coin upon the counter. It rang clearly, but doubled in the *trier* like so much putty.

"Bad!" chorused the onlookers.

"Fetch a constable, Ted!" was the solo of the landlord, who had come round from the other side of the bar.

For the second time that evening Pringle's nerve took flight. A horrible idea seized him— a crevasse seemed to open at his feet. Had the "Toff" played some treachery upon him? And as the door swung after the pot-man, he made a break for liberty. But the barman was quick as he, and with a cat-like spring over the counter, he held Pringle before he had got half across the threshold, several customers officiously aiding.

"I'm going to prosecute this man," announced the landlord; adding, for the benefit of the audience generally, "I've taken six bad half-crowns this week."

"Swine! Sarve 'im right! Oughter be shot!" were the virtuous comments on this statement.

As resistance was clearly useless Pringle submitted to his arrest, and was presently accompanied to the police station by an escort of most of the loafers in the bar.

"What's your name?" asked the night inspector, as he took the charge.

Pringle hesitated. He realized that appearances were hopelessly against him Attired as he was, to give his real name and address would only serve to increase suspicion, while a domiciliary visit to Furnival's Inn on the part of the police was to be avoided at all costs; the fiction of his literary agency, as spurious as the coins which had landed him in his present plight, would be the very least discovery to reward them.

"Now, then, what is it?" demanded the inspector impatiently.

"Augustus Stammers," Pringle blurted, on the spur of the moment.

"Ah! I thought you were a stammerer," was the facetious remark of the publican.

The inspector frowned his disapproval. "Address?" he queried. Pringle again hesitated. "No fixed?" the inspector suggested.

"No fixed," agreed Pringle; and having replied to subsequent inquiries that his age was forty and his occupation a carpenter, he was ordered to turn out his pockets. Obediently he emptied his belongings on the desk, and as his money was displayed the landlord uttered a triumphant shout.

"There y'are!" he exclaimed, pouncing on a bright half-crown. "That makes three of em!"

This incriminatory evidence, together with a knife, being appropriated, Pringle was led away down some steps, through a courtyard, and then into a long whitewashed passage flanked by doors on either side. Pushing one open, "In you go," said his conductor; and Pringle having walked in the door was shut and locked behind him.

Though lighted by a gas jet in the passage which shone through a small window above the door, the cell was rather dim, and it was some little while before his eyes, accustomed to the gloom, could properly take in his surroundings. It was a box of a place, about fourteen feet by six, with a kind of wooden bench fixed across the far end, and on this he sat down and somewhat despondently began to think.

It was impossible for Pringle to doubt that he was the victim of the "Toff's" machinations. He remembered how the latter's manner had changed when he positively refused the offer of partnership; how the "Toff" had ceased

searching in his vest, and had drawn the purse from his trouser pocket. He supposed at the time that the "Toff," nettled at his refusal, had substituted silver for gold, and had thought it strange that he should keep his gold loose and his silver in a purse. It all stood out clear and lucid enough now. "Snide" money, as he knew, must always be treated with gentleness and care, and, lest it should lose the bloom of youth, some artists in the line are even accustomed to wrap each piece separately in tissue paper. The "Toff" evidently kept his "snide" in a purse, and, feeling piqued, had seized the opportunity of vindictively settling a score.

Pringle cursed his folly in not having foreseen such a possibility. What malicious fate was it that curbed his first impulse to sink the "Toff's" generosity in the river? With all his experience of the devious ways of his fellow men, after all his fishing in troubled waters, to be tricked like this— to be caught like vermin in a trap! Well might the "Toff" sneer at him as an amateur! And most galling of all was the reflection that he was absolutely guiltless of any criminal intent. But it was useless to protest his innocence; a long term of imprisonment was the least he could expect. It was certainly the tightest place in which he had ever found himself.

Pringle was, fortunately, in no mood for sleep. He had soon received unmistakable evidence of the presence of the third of Pharaoh's plagues, and sought safety in constant motion. Besides, there were other obstacles to repose. From down the passage echoed the screams and occasional song of a drunken woman, as hysteria alternated with pleasurable ideas in her alcoholic brain; nearer, two men, who were apparently charged together, kept up an interchange of abuse from distant cells, each blaming the other for the miscarriage of their affairs; right opposite, the thunderous snoring of a drunken man filled the gaps when either the woman slumbered or the rhetoric of the disputants failed. Lastly, at regular intervals, a constable opened a trap in the cell doors to ascertain by personal observation and inquiry the continued existence of the inmates.

As time passed the cells overflowed, and every few minutes Pringle heard the tramp of feet and the renewed unlocking and sorting out as fresh guests were admitted to the hospitality of the State.

After a time the cell opposite was opened, and the voice of the snorer arose. He objected to a companion, as it seemed, and threatened unimaginable things were one forced upon him. He was too drunk to be reasoned with, so a moment after Pringle's door was flung open, and at the decision, "This un'll do," his solitude was at an end. It was a dishevelled, dirty creature who entered; also his clothes were torn rawly as from a recent struggle. He slouched in with his hands in his pockets, and with a side glance at

Pringle, flung himself down on the bench. Presently he expectorated as a preliminary to conversation, and with a jerk of the head towards the opposite cell, "I'd rawther doss wiv' im than wiv' a wet umbreller! What yer in for, guv'nor?"

"I'm charged with passing bad money," replied Pringle affably.

"Anyone wiv' yer?"

"No."

" 'Ow many'd yer got on yer?"

"They found three."

A long whistle.

"That's all three stretch for yer! Why didn't yer work the pitch 'long o' someone else? Yer ought ter 'ave 'ad a pal outside to 'old the snide, while you goes in wiv' only one on yer, see?"

Pringle humbly acknowledged the error, and his companion, taking pity on his greenness in the lower walks of criminality, then proceeded to give him several hints, the following of which, he assured Pringle, would be "slap-up claws"!

Later on he grew confidential, told how his present "pinching" was due to "collerin' a red jerry from a ole reeler", and presently, pleading fatigue, he laid him down on the bench and was soon snoring enviably. But his slumbers were fitful, for, although but little inconvenienced by the smaller inhabitants of the cell, having acquired a habit of allowing for them without waking, he was periodically roused by the gaoler's inspection. On many of these occasions he would sit up and regale Pringle for a time with such further scraps of autobiography as he appeared to pride himself on— always excepting his present misfortune, which, after his preliminary burst of confidence, he seemed anxious to ignore as a discreditable incident, being "pinched over a reeler". In this entertaining manner they passed the night until eight o'clock, when Pringle authorized the expenditure of some of his capital on a breakfast of eggs and bacon and muddy coffee from "outside," his less affluent companion having to content himself with the bare official meal.

Soon after breakfast a voice from a near cell rose in earnest colloquy. "Hasn't my bail come yet, gaoler?"

"I tell yer 'e's wired 'e'll come soon's 'e's 'ad 'is breakfast."

"But I've got a most important engagement at nine! Can't you let me out before he comes?"

"Don't talk tommy-rot! You've got to go up to the court at ten. If yer bail comes, out yer'll go; if it doesn't, yer'll have to go on to Westminster."

"Must I go in the van? Can't I have a cab— I'm only charged with being excited!"

"Yer'll 'ave to go just like everybody else."

Bang! went the trap in the door, and as the footsteps died up the passage Pringle's companions chanted:

"But the pore chap doesn't know, yer know—
E 'asn't bin in London long!"

About an hour later the cells were emptied, and the prisoners were marched down to the courtyard and packed away in the police-van to be driven the short intervening distance to Westminster Police Court. There was no lack of company here. On arrival the van-riders were turned into a basement room, already half full, and well lighted by an amply barred window which, frosted as were its panes, allowed the sun freely to penetrate as if to brighten the over-gloomy thoughts of those within. Punctually at ten the name of the first prisoner was called. It was the hysterical lady of the police cells, who disappeared amid loudly expressed wishes of "Good-luck!" The wait was a tedious one, and as the crowd dwindled, Pringle's habitual stoicism enabled him to draw a farcical parallel between his fellows and a dungeonful of aristocrats awaiting the tumbril during the Reign of Terror. The noisy converse around him consisted chiefly of speculations as to the chances of each one being either remanded, "fullied," or summarily convicted.

Pringle had no inclination to join therein; besides his over-night companion had long ago decided, with judicial precision, that he would be either "fullied"— that is, fully committed for trial— or else remanded for inquiries, but that the chances were in favour of the latter.

The room was half empty when Pringle's summons came, but the call for "Stammers" at first brought no response. He had quite forgotten his alias (not at all an unusual thing, by the way, with those who acquire such a luxury), and it was not until the gaoler repeated the name and everyone looked questioningly at his neighbour that Pringle remembered his ownership and passed out, acknowledging with a wave of the hand the chorus of "Good-luck" prescribed by the etiquette of the place.

Up a flight of steps, and along a narrow passage to a door, where he was halted for a season. A subdued hum of voices could be heard within. Suddenly the door opened.

"Three months, blimey, the 'ole image! Jus' cos my 'usband 'it me!"

And as a red-faced matron, with a bandaged head, flounced past him on her way downstairs. Pringle stepped into the iron-railed pen she had just vacated. In front of him was a space of some yards occupied by three or four desked seats, and on the bench beyond sat a benevolent-looking old

gentleman with a bald head, whom Pringle greeted with a respectful bow. The barman was at once called; he had little to say, and said it promptly.

"Any questions?"

Pringle declined the clerk's invitation, and the police evidence, officially concise, followed.

"Any questions?"

No, again.

"Is anything known of him?" inquired the old gentleman. An inspector rose from the well in front of the bench, and said: "There have been a number of cases in the neighbourhood lately, sir, and I should be glad of a remand to see if he can be identified."

"Very well. Remanded for a week." And so, after a breathless hearing of about two and three-quarter minutes by the clock, Pringle found himself standing outside the court again.

"'Ow long 'ave yer got?" Instead of going along the passage, Pringle had been turned into a room which stood handy at the foot of the steps, where he was greeted by a number of (by this time) old acquaintances.

"I'm remanded for a week."

"Same 'ere," observed his cell-fellow of the night before. "I'll see yer, mos' likely, at the show."

"Any bloke for the 'Ville?" inquired a large, red-faced gentleman, with a pimple of a nose which he accentuated by shaving clean.

"Yus; I've got six months," said one.

"Garn!" contemptuously replied the face. "Yer'll go to the Scrubbs."

"Garn yerself!" retorted the other; and as the discussion at once became warm and general Pringle sat down in a far corner, where the disjointed shreds of talk fused into an odd patchwork.

" 'E sayd you're charged with a vurry terrible thing, sayd 'e (hor! hor! hor!), I tell yer, ef yer wants the strite tip— don't you flurry yer fat, now— so, says I, then yer can swear to my character— they used to call it cocoa-castle, strite they did—"

"Answer your names, now!"

The gaoler was holding the door open. Beside him stood a sergeant with a sheaf of blue papers, from which he called the names, and as each man answered he was arranged in order along the passage. It was a welcome relief. Pringle began to feel faint, having eaten nothing since the morning, and, what with the coarse hilarity and the stuffy atmosphere by which he had been environed so many hours, his head ached distractingly.

"Forward now— keep your places!" The procession tramped into an open yard, where a police van stood waiting. With much clattering of bars, jingling of

keys, and banging of doors, the men, to the number of a dozen or so, were packed into the little sentry-boxes which ran round the inside of the van, its complement being furnished by four or five ladies, brought from another part of the establishment. This done, the sergeant, closing the door after him, gave the word to start, and the heavy van, lumbering out of the yard, rolled down the street like a ship in a gale.

"Gimme a light," said a voice close to the little trap in Pringle's cell door. Looking out, he found he was addressed by a youth in the opposite box, who extended a cigarette across the corridor.

"Sorry, I haven't got one," Pringle apologised.

" 'Ere y'are," came from the box on Pringle's right, and a smouldering stump was handed to the youth, who proceeded to light another from it.

" 'Ave a whiff, guv'nor?" courteously offered the invisible owner. An obscene paw, holding the returned fag, appeared at the aperture.

"No, thanks," declined Pringle hastily.

"Las' chance for a week," urged the man, with genuine altruism.

"I don't smoke," protested Pringle to spare his feelings, adding, as the van turned off the road and came to a stand, "Is this the House of Detention?"

"No; this is the 'Ville." The van rumbled under an archway, and then, after more banging, jingling, and clattering, half a dozen men were extracted from the boxes and deposited in the yard.

"Goodbye, Bill! Keep up yer sperrits!" screamed a soprano from the inmost recesses of the van.

"Come and meet us at the fortnight," growled a deepest base from the courtyard.

A calling of names, the tramp of feet, then silence for a while, only broken by the champing of harness. Presently a brisk order, and, rumbling through the arch again, they were surrounded by the noise of traffic. But it was not for long; a few minutes, seconds even, and they halted once more, while heavy doors groaned apart. Then, clattering through a portico full of echoes, and describing a giddy curve, the van abruptly stopped as an iron gate crashed dismally in the rear.

" 'Ere we are guv'nor!" remarked the altruist.

9: Converted

Robert Barr

1849-1912

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IN THE AMPLE, stone-paved courtyard of the Schloss Grunewald, with its mysterious babbling spring in the centre, stood the black baron beside his restive horse, both equally eager to be away. Round the baron were grouped his 16 knights and their saddled chargers, all waiting the word to mount. The warden was slowly opening the huge gates that hung between the two round entrance towers of the castle, for it was never the baron's custom to ride out at the head of his men until the great leaves of the strong gate fell full apart and showed the green landscape beyond. The baron did not promise to ride unthinkingly out and straightway fall into an ambush.

He and his 16 knights were the terror of the countryside, and many there were who would have been glad to venture a bow shot at him if they dared. There seemed to be some delay about the opening of the gates and a great chattering of underlings at the entrance, as if something unusual had occurred, whereupon the rough voice of the baron roared out to know the cause that kept him waiting, and everyone scattered, each to his own affair, leaving only the warden, who approached his master with fear on his face.

"My lord," he began, when the baron had shouted out what the devil ailed the outer gate, "there has been nailed against the outer gate, some time in the night, a parchment with characters written thereon."

"Then tear it down and bring it to me," cried the baron. "What's all this to do about a bit of parchment?"

The warden had been loath to meddle with it, fearing that witchcraft which he knew pertained to all written characters, but he feared the black baron's frown even more than the fiends who had undoubtedly nailed the document on the gate, for he knew no man in all that well crowded district would have the daring to approach the castle, even at night, much less meddle with the gate or any other belongings of the Baron von Grunewald; so, breathing a request to his patron saint (his neglect of whom he now remembered with remorse) for protection he tore the document from its fastening and :brought it trembling to the baron.

The knights crowded round as Von Grunewald held the parchment in his hand, bending his dark brows upon it, for it conveyed no meaning to him. Neither the baron nor his knights could read.

"What foolery, think you, is this?" he said, turning to the knight nearest him. "A defiance ?"

The knight shook his head.

"I am no clerk," he answered. For a moment the baron was puzzled: then he quickly bethought himself of the one person in the castle who could read.

"Bring hither old Father Gottlieb," he commanded, and two of those waiting by ran in haste toward the scullery of the place, from which they presently emerged dragging after them an old man, partly in the habit of a monk and partly in that of a scullion, who wiped his hands on the coarse apron that was tied around his waist as he was hurried forward.

"Here, good father, excellent cook and humble servitor, I trust your residence with us has not led you to forget the learning you put 'to such poor advantage in the monastery of Monnonstein. Canst thou construe this for us? Is it in good, honest German, or bastard Latin?"

"It is in Latin," said the captive monk, glancing at it in the other's hand.

"Then translate it for us, and quickly."

Father Gottlieb took the parchment handed to him by the baron, and as his eye scanned it more closely he bowed his head and made the sign of a cross upon his breast.

"Cease that mummery," roared the baron, "and read without more waiting, or the rod's upon thy back again! Who sends us this?"

"It is from our holy father, the Pope," said the monk, forgetting his menial position for the moment and becoming once more the scholar of the monastery. The sense of his captivity faded from him as he realised that the long arm of the Church had extended within the impregnable walls of that tyrannical castle.

"Good. And what has our holy father the Pope to say to us? Demands he the release of our excellent scullion, Father Gottlieb?"

The bent shoulders of the old monk straightened, his dim eyes brightened and his voice rang clear within the echoing walls of the castle churchyard.

"It is a ban of excommunication against thee, Lord Baron von Grunewald, and against all within these walls excepting those unlawfully withheld from freedom."

"Which means thyself, worthy father. Read on, good clerk, and let us hear it."

As the monk read out the awful words of the message, piling curse on curse with sonorous voice, the baron saw his trembling servitors turn pale, and even his sixteen knights, companions in robbery and rapine, fall away from him. Dark, red anger mounted to his temples. He raised his mailed hand and smote the reading monk flat across the mouth, felling the old man prone upon the stones of the court.

"That is my answer to our holy father the Pope, and when thou swearest to deliver it to him as I have given it to thee the gates are open and the way clear for thy pilgrimage to Rome."

But the monk lay where he fell, and made no reply.

"Take him away," replied the baron impatiently, whereupon several of the menials laid hands on the prostrate monk and dragged him into the scullery he had left.

Turning to his men at arms the baron roared, "Well, my gentle wolves, have a few words in Latin on a bit of sheepskin turned you all to sheep?"

"I always said," spoke up the Knight Siegfried, "that no good came of captured monks or meddling with the Church. Besides we are noble all, and do not hold with the raising of a mailed hand against an unarmed man."

There was a low murmur of approval among the knights at Siegfried's boldness.

"Close the gates!" shouted the maddened baron.

Everyone flew at the work of command, and the great oaken gates studded with iron, slowly came together, shutting out the bit of landscape their opening had disclosed.

The baron flung the reins on his charger's neck and smote the animal on the flank, causing it to trot at once to its stable.

"There will be no riding to-day," he said, his voice ominously lowering.

The stablemen of the castle came forward and led away the horses. The sixteen knights stood in a group together, with Siegfried at their head, waiting with some anxiety on their brows for the next move in the game.

The baron, his sword in his hand, strode up and down before them, his eyes bent on the ground, evidently struggling to get the master hand over his own anger. If it came to blows the odds were against him and he was too shrewd a man to break himself on a sixteen to one contest. At length the baron stopped in his walk and looked at the group. He said after a pause, in a quiet tone of voice, "Siegfried, if you doubt my courage because I strike to the ground a rascally monk step forward, draw thine own good sword; our comrades will see that all is fair betwixt us, and in this manner you may learn that I fear neither mailed nor unmailed hand."

But the knight made no motion to lay his hand upon his sword, nor did he move from his place.

"No one doubts your courage, my lord," he said, "neither is it any reflection on mine that in answer to your challenge my sword remains in its scabbard You are our overlord, and it is not meet that our weapons should be raised against you."

"I am glad that point is firmly fixed in your minds. I thought a moment since that I would be compelled to uphold the feudal law at the peril of my own body. But if that comes not in question no more need be said. Touching the unarmed, Siegfried, if I remember aright, you showed no such squeamishness at our sacking of the Convent of St. Agnes."

"A woman is a different matter, my lord," said Siegfried uneasily. The baron laughed, and so did some of the knights, evidently relieved to find the tension of the situation relaxing.

"Comrades!" cried the baron, his face aglow with enthusiasm, all traces of his former temper vanishing from his brow. "You are excellent in a melee, but useless at the council board. You see no further ahead of you than your good right arm will strike. Look round you at these stout walls. No engine that man has yet devised can batter a breach in them. In our vaults are ten years' supply of stolen grain. Our cellars are full of rich red wine, not of our vintage, but for our drinking. Here in our court bubbles for ever this good spring, excellent to drink when wine gives out, and medicinal in the morning, when too much wine has been taken in."

He waved his hand toward the living, overflowing well, charged with carbonic acid gas, one of the many that have since made the region of the Rhine famous.

"Now I ask you, can this castle of Grunewald ever be taken, excommunication or no excommunication ?"

A simultaneous shout of "No, never!" arose from the knights.

The baron stood looking grimly at them for several moments. Then he said in a quiet voice:

"Yes, the castle of Grunewald can be taken. Not from without, but from within. If any crafty enemy can sow dissension among us, can turn the sword of comrade against comrade, then falls the castle of Grunewald. To-day we have seen how nearly that has been done. We have now against us in the monastery of Monnonstein no fat-headed abbot, but one who was a warrior before he turned monk. 'Tis but a few years since that the abbot Ambrose stood at the right hand of the emperor as Baron von Stern, and it is known that the abbot's robes are but a thin veneer over the iron knight within. His hand, grasping the cross, still itches for the sword. The fighting archbishop of Traves has sent him to Monnonstein for no other purpose than to leave behind him the ruins of Grunewald, and his first bolt has shot straight into our courtyard, and for a moment I stood alone, without a single man at arms to second me."

THE KNIGHTS looked at one another in silence, then cast their eyes to the stone paved court, all too shamefaced to attempt reply to what all knew was the truth. The baron, a deep frown on his brow, gazed sternly at the chapfallen group.

"Such was the effect of the first shaft shot by good Abbot Ambrose. What will be the result of the second?"

"There will be no second," said Siegfried, stepping forward. "We must sack the monastery and hang the abbot and his craven monks in their own cords."

"Good," cried the baron, nodding his head in approval. "The worthy abbot, however, trusts not only in God, but in walls three cloth yards thick. The monastery stands by the river and partly over it. The besieged monks will, therefore, not suffer from thirst. Their leader is as amply provided as are the vaults of this castle. The militant abbot understands both defence and sortie. He is master of siegecraft inside or outside stone walls. How, then, do you propose to sack and hang, good Siegfried?"

The knights were silent. They knew the monastery was as impregnable as the castle— in fact, it was the only spot for miles around that had never owned the sway of Baron von Grunewald, and none of them were well enough provided with brains to venture a plan for its successful reduction.

A cynical smile played around the lips of their overlord as he saw the problem had overmatched them. At last he spoke:

"We must meet craft with craft. If the Pope's ban cast such terror among my good knights steeped to the gauntlets in blood, what effect, think you, will it have over the minds of devout believers in the Church and its powers. The trustful monks know that it has been launched against us; therefore are they doubtless waiting for us to came to the monastery and lay our necks under the feet of the abbot, begging his clemency. They are ready to believe any story we tell as to the influence of such scribbling over us. You, Siegfried, owe me some reparation for this morning's temporary defection, and to you therefore do I trust the carrying out of my plans.

"There was always something of the monk about you, Siegfried, and you will yet end your days sanctimoniously in a monastery unless you are first hanged at Traves or knocked in the head during an assault. Draw, then, your longest face and think of the time when you will be a monk, as Ambrose is, who in his time drew as much blood as you have done. Go to the monastery of Monnonstein in the most dejected fashion and unarmed. Ask in faltering tones speech of the abbot and say to him as if he knew nought of it that the Pope's ban is on us. Say that at first I defied it and smote down the good father who was reading it, but add that as the pious man fell, a sickness like unto a pestilence came over me and over my men, from which you only are free,

caused, you suspect, by your loudly protesting against the felling of the monk. Say that we are ready to deliver up the castle and all its contents to the care of the Holy Church so that the abbot but sees our tortured souls safely directed towards the gates of Paradise. Insist that all the monks come, saying that you fear that we have but a few moments to live, and that the abbot alone would be as helpless as one surgeon on a battlefield. Taunt them with fear of the pestilence if they hesitate, and that will bring them."

Siegfried accepted the commission and the knights warmly expressed their admiration of their master's genius.

As the great red sun began to sink behind the westward hills that border the Rhine, Siegfried departed on horseback through the castle gates and journeyed toward the monastery with hewed head and dejected mien.

The gates remained open, and as darkness fell a lighted torch was thrust in a wrought iron receptacle near the entrance at the outside, throwing a fitful flickering glare near the archway, and into the deserted court. Within all was silent as the ruined castle is to-day, save only the tinkling sound of the clear waters of the effervescing spring as it flowed over the stone, and trickled down to disappear under the walls at one corner of the courtyard. The baron and his sturdy knights sat in the darkness, with growing impatience, in the great Ritter-saale, listening for any audible token of the return of Siegfried and his ghostly company.

At last in the still night air there came faintly across the plain a monkish chant growing louder and louder, until finally the steel-shod hoofs of Siegfried's charger rang on the stones of the causeway leading up to the castle gates. Pressed close behind the two heavy open leaves of the gates stood the warder and his assistants, scarcely breathing, ready to close the gates sharply when the last monk had entered.

Still chanting, led by the abbot in his robes of office, the monks slowly marched into the deserted courtyard, while Siegfried reined his horse close inside the entrance.

"Peace be upon this house and all within," said the deep voice of the abbot, and in unison the monks murmured "Amen!" the word echoing back to them in the stillness from the four gray walls.

Then the silence was rudely broken by the ponderous clang of the closing gates and the ominous rattle of bolts being thrust into their places and the jingle of heavy chains. Down the wide stairs from the Ritter-saale came the clang of armour and rude shouts of laughter. Newly lighted torches flared up here and there, illuminating the courtyard, and showing, dangling against the northern wall, a score of ropes, with nooses at the end of each. Into the courtyard clattered the baron and his followers.

The abbot stood with arms folded pressing a gilded cross against his breast. He was a head taller than any of his frightened, cowardly brethren, and his noble, emaciated face was thin with fasting, caused by his never-ending conflict with the world that was within himself. His pale countenance betokened his office and the Church. But the angry, eagle flash of his piercing eyes spoke of the world alone and the field of conflict.

The baron bowed low to the abbot and said:

"Welcome, my lord abbot, to my humble domicile. It has long been the wish of my enemies to stand within its walls, and this pleasure is now granted you. There is little to be made of it from without."

"Baron Grunewald," said the abbot, "I and my brethren come hither on an errand of mercy, and under the protection of your knightly word."

The baron raised his eyebrows in surprise at this, and turning to Siegfried. he said in an angry tone: "Is it so? Pledged you my word for the safety of these men?"

"The reverend abbot is mistaken," replied the knight, who had not yet descended from his horse. "There was no word of safe conduct between us."

"Safe conduct is implied when an officer of the Church is summoned to administer its consolations to the dying," said the abbot.

"All trades," remarked the. baron, suavely, "have their dangers, yours among the others, as well as ours. If my follower had pledged my word regarding your safety, I would now open the gates and let you free. As he has not done so, I shall choose a manner for your exit more in keeping with your lofty aspirations."

Saying this, he gave some rapid orders.

His servitors fell upon the unresisting monks and bound them hand and foot. They were then conducted to the northern wall and the nooses there adjusted round the neck of each. When this was done the baron stood back from the pinioned victims and addressed them:

"It is not my intention that you should die without having time to repent of the many, wicked deeds you have doubtless done during your lives. Your sentence is that you be hanged at cock crow to-morrow, which was the hour when, if your teachings cling to my memory, the first of your craft turned traitor to his master. If, however, you tire of your all night vigil, you can at once obtain release by crying at the top of your voices, 'So die all Christians!' Thus you would hang yourselves, and so remove some responsibility from my perhaps overladen conscience. The hanging is a device of my own, of which I am perhaps pardonably proud, and it pleases me that it is to be first tried on so worthy an assemblage. With much labour we have elevated to the battlements on oaken tree lopped of its branches, which will not burn the less brightly next

winter in that it has helped to commit some of you to hotter flames if all ye say be true. The ropes are tied to this log, and at the cry, 'So die all Christians!' I have some stout knaves in waiting up above with levers that will straightway fling the log over the battlements on which it is now poised, and the instant after your broken necks will impinge against the inner coping of the northern wall. And now, good night, my lord, and a happy release for you all in the morning."

"Baron yon Grunewald, I ask of you that you will release one of us, who may thus administer the rites of the church to his brethren and receive in turn the same from me."

"Now, out upon me for a careless knave" cried the baron. "I had forgotten that; it is so long since I have been to mass and such like ceremonies myself. Your request is surely most reasonable, and I like you the better that you keep up the farce of your calling to the bitter end. But think not that I am so inhospitable as one guest must await upon another even in the matters spiritual. Not so. We keep with us a ghostly father for such occasions, and use him between time to wait on us with wine and other necessaries. As soon as he has filled our flagons I will ask good Father Gottlieb to wait upon you, and I doubt not he will shrive with any in the land, although he has been this while back somewhat out of practice. His habit is rather tattered and stained with the dripping of his new calling, but I warrant you, you will know the sheep, even thought his fleece be torn. And now again good night, my lord."

The baron and his knight returned up the broad stairway that led to the Ritter-saale. Most of the torches were carried with them. The defences of the castle were so strong that no particular pains were taken to make all secure further than the stationing of an armed man at the gate. A solitary torch burned under the archway, and here the guard paced back and forth. The courtyard was in darkness, but the tops of the highest turrets were silvered by the rising, moon. The doomed men stood, with the halters about their necks, as silent as a row of spectres.

iii

THE TALL windows of the Ritter-saale being of coloured glass threw little light into the square, although they glowed with a rainbow splendour from the torches within. Into the silence of the square came the sound of song and the clash of flagons upon the oaken table. At last there came down the broad stair and out into the court a figure in the habit of a monk, who hurried shufflingly across the stones to the grim row of brown robed men.

He threw himself sobbing at the feet of the tall abbot.

"Rise, my son, and embrace me," said his superior. When Father Gottlieb did so the other whispered in his ear.

"There is a time to weep and a time for action. Now is the time for action. Unloosen quickly the bonds around me and slip this noose from my neck."

Father Gottlieb acquitted himself of his task as well as his agitation and his trembling hands would let him. " Perform a like service for each of the others," whispered the abbot curtly. "Tell each in a low tone to remain standing just as if he were still bound. Then return to me."

When the monk had done what he was told he returned to his superior.

"Have you access to the wine cellar?" asked the abbot. "What are the strongest wines?"

"Those of the district are strong. Then there is a barrel or two of the red wine of Assmanshausen."

"Decant a half of each in your flagons. Is there brandy?"

"Yes, father."

"Then mix with the two wines as much brandy as you think their already drunken palates will not detect. Make the potation stronger with brandy as the night wears on. When they drop off into their drunken sleep, bring a flagon to the guard at the gate, and tell him the baron sends it to him."

"Will you absolve me, father for the—"

"It is no falsehood, Gottlieb. I, the baron, send it I came hither the Abbot Ambrose. I am now Baron von Stern, and if I have any influence with our mother the Church the abbot's robe shall fall on thy shoulders if you but do well what I ask of you to-night. It will be some compensation for what I fear thou hast already suffered."

Gottlieb hurried away as the knights were already clamouring for more wine.

As the night wore on and the moon rose higher the sound of revelry increased, and once there was a clash of arms and much uproar, which subsided under the overmastering voice of the black baron. At last the abbot, standing there with the rope dangling behind him, saw Gottlieb bring a huge beaker of liquor to the sentinel, who at once sat down on the stone bench under the arch to enjoy.

Finally all riot died away in the hall excepts one thin voice, singing waveringly a drinking song, and when that ceased silence reigned supreme, and the moon shone full upon the bubbling spring.

Gottlieb stole silently out and told the abbot that all the knights were stretched upon the floor and the baron had his head upon the table beside his overturned flagon. The sentinel snored upon his stone bench.

"I can now unbar the gate," said Father Gottlieb, "and we may all escape."

"Not so," replied the abbot. "We came here to convert these men to Christianity, and our task is still to do."

The monks all seemed frightened at this, and wished themselves once more within the monastery, able to say "All's well that ends so."

But none ventured to offer counsel to the gaunt man who led them. He bade each bring with him the cords that had bound him, and without a word they followed him into the Ritter-saale, and there tied up the knights and their master as they themselves had been tied.

"Carry them out," commanded the abbot, "and lay them in a row, their feet toward the spring and their heads under the ropes. And go you, Gottlieb, who know the ways of the castle, and fasten the doors of all the apartments where the servitors are sleeping."

When this was done and they gathered once more in the moonlit courtyard, the abbot took off his robes of office and handed them to Father Gottlieb, saying significantly:

"The lowest among you that suffer and are true shall be exalted."

Turning to his own flock he commanded them to go in and have some rest after such a disquieting night; then to Gottlieb, when the monks had obediently departed.

"Bring me, and you know where to find such, the apparel of a fighting man and a sword."

Thus arrayed, he dismissed the old man, and alone in the silence with the row of figures, like effigies on a tomb, beside him, paced up and down through the night as the moon dropped lower and lower in the heavens.

There was a period of dark before the dawn, and at last the upper walls began to whiten with the coming day, and the black baron moaned uneasily in his drunken sleep. The abbot paused in his walk and looked down upon them, and Gottlieb stole out from the shadow of the door and asked if he could be of service. He had evidently not slept, but had watched his chief until he paused in his march.

"Tell our brothers to come out and see the justice of the Lord."

When the monks trooped out, haggard and wan, in the pure light of the dawn, the abbot asked Gottlieb to get a flagon and dash water from the spring in the faces of the sleepers. The black baron was the first to come to his senses and realise dimly, but afterward, more acutely, the changed condition of affairs. His eyes wandered apprehensively to the empty noose swaying slightly in the morning breeze above him. He then saw that the tall ascetic man before him had doffed the abbot's robe and wore a sword by his side, and from this he augured ill. At the command of the abbot the monks raised each prostrate man and placed him against the north wall.

"Gottlieb." said the abbot slowly, "the last office that will be required of you. You took from our necks the nooses last night. Place them, I pray you, on the necks of the baron and his followers."

The old man, trembling, adjusted the ropes.

"My lord abbot," began the baron.

"Baron von Grunewald," interrupted the person addressed, "the Abbot Ambrose is dead. He was foully assassinated last night. In his place stands Conrad von Stern, who answers for his deeds to the emperor and after him to God."

"Is it your purpose to hang me, baron?"

"Was it your purpose to have hanged us, my lord?"

"I swear to heaven it was not. 'Twas but an ill-timed pleasantry. Had I wished to hang you, I would have done so last night."

"That seems plausible."

The knights all swore, with many round oaths, that their overlord spoke the truth, and nothing was further from their intentions than execution. The abbot glanced down along the line, but his face was inscrutable. They could read there neither mercy nor justice. At last he spoke.

"Whether you hang or no shall depend on yourselves."

"By God, then," cried the baron, "and I have aught to say on the point, I shall hang some other day."

"Will you, then, baron, beg admittance to Mother Church, whose kindly tenants you have so outraged?"

"We will. We do," cried the baron, fervently, whispering, through his clenched teeth to Siegfried, who stood next to him. "Wait till I have the upper hand again."

Fortunately the abbot did not hear the whisper.

The knights all echoed aloud the baron's pious first remark, and perhaps in their hearts said "Amen!" to his second.

The abbot spoke a word or two to the monks, and they advanced to the pinioned men and there performed the rite sacred to their calling and to the serious situation of the penitents. As the good brothers stood back they begged the abbot for mercy to be extended towards the new converts, but the sphinx-like face of their leader gave no indication as to their fate, and the good men began to fear that it was the abbot's intention, to hang the baron and his knights.

"Now— brothers," said the abbot, with a long pause before he spoke the second word, whereupon each of the prisoners heaved a sigh of relief, "I said your fate would depend on yourselves and on your good intentions."

They all vociferously proclaimed that their intentions were and had been of the most honourable kind.

"I trust that this be true, and that you shall live long to show your faith by your works. It is written that a man digged a pit for his enemy and fell himself there in. It is also written that as a man sows, so shall he reap. If you meant us no harm, then your signal shouted to the battlements will do you no harm."

"For God's sake, my lord," screamed the baron, while all his followers groaned aloud. The abbot, unheeding, raised his voice toward the northern wall and shouted at the top of his voice:

"So die such Christians!" varying the phrase by one word. A simultaneous scream rose from the doomed men, cut short as by a knife as the huge log was hurled over the outer parapet, and the 17 victims were jerked into the air and throttled at the coping that ran around the inner wall.

The good monks groaned and fell upon their knees.

Thus did the Abbot Ambrose save the souls of Baron von Grunewald and his men at some expense of their necks.

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10: The Vanished Millionaire

B. Fletcher Robinson

1871-1907

The Lady's Home Magazine Dec 1904

One of a series of stories featuring Addington Peace, detective. This story was reprinted in 1928 as "The Vanished Billionaire." (There were 8 stories in all, collected in 1905 in "The Chronicles of Addington Peace.")

I, JAMES PHILLIPS, stood with my back to the fire, smoking and puzzling over it. It was worth all the headlines the newspapers had given it; there was no loophole to the mystery.

Both sides of the Atlantic knew Silas J. Ford. He had established a business reputation in America that had made him a celebrity in England from the day he stepped off the liner. Once in London his syndicates and companies and consolidations had startled the slow-moving British mind. The commercial sky of the United Kingdom was overshadowed by him and his schemes. The papers were full of praise and blame, of puffs and denunciations. He was a millionaire; he was on the verge of a smash that would paralyze the markets of the world. He was an abstainer, a drunkard, a gambler, a most religious man. He was a confirmed bachelor, a woman hater; his engagement was to be announced shortly. So was the gossip kept rolling with the limelight always centred upon the spot where Silas J. Ford happened to be standing.

And now he had disappeared, vanished, evaporated.

On the night of December 18, a Thursday, he had left London for Meudon Hall, the fine old Hampshire mansion that he had rented from Lord Beverley. The two most trusted men in his office accompanied him. Friday morning he had spent with them; but at three o'clock the pair had returned to London, leaving their chief behind. From four to seven he had been shut up with his secretary. It was a hard time for every one, a time verging upon panic, and at such times Silas J. Ford was not an idle man.

At eight o'clock he had dined. His one recreation was music, and after the meal he had played the organ in the picture gallery for an hour. At a quarter past eleven he retired to his bedroom, dismissing Jackson, his body servant, for the night. Three-quarters of an hour later, however, Harbord, his secretary, had been called to the private telephone, for Mr. Ford had brought an extension wire from the neighboring town of Camdon. It was a London message, and so urgent that he decided to wake his chief. There was no answer to his knock, and on entering the room he found that Mr. Ford was not in bed. He was surprised, but in no way suspicious, and started to search the house. He was joined by a footman, and, a little later, by Jackson and the

butler. Astonishment changed to alarm. Other servants were roused to aid in the quest. Finally, a party, provided with lanterns from the stables, commenced to examine the grounds.

Snow had fallen early in the day, covering the great lawns in front of the entrance porch with a soft white blanket, about an inch in thickness. It was the head groom who struck the trail. Apparently Mr. Ford had walked out of the porch, and so over the drive and across the lawn toward the wall that bounded the public road. This road, which led from Meudon village to the town of Camdon, crossed the front of Meudon Hall at a distance of some quarter of a mile.

There was no doubt as to the identity of the footprints, for Silas Ford affected a broad, square-toed boot, easily recognizable from its unusual impression.

They tracked him by their lanterns to the park wall, and there all trace of him disappeared. The wall was of rough stone, easily surmountable by an active man. The snow that covered the road outside had been churned into muddy paste by the traffic of the day; there were no further footprints observable.

The party returned to the house in great bewilderment. The telephone to London brought no explanation, and the following morning Mr. Harbord caught the first train to town to make inquiries. For private reasons his friends did not desire publicity for the affair, and it was not until the late afternoon, when all their investigations had proved fruitless, that they communicated with Scotland Yard. When the papers went to press the whereabouts of the great Mr. Ford still remained a mystery.

In keen curiosity I set off up the stairs to Inspector Peace's room. Perhaps the little detective had later news to give me.

I found him standing with his back to the fire puffing at his cigarette with a plump solemnity. A bag, neatly shaped, lay on the rug at his feet. He nodded a welcome, watching me over his glasses.

"I expected you, Mr. Phillips," he said. "And how do you explain it?"

"A love affair or temporary insanity," I suggested vaguely.

"Surely we can combine those solutions," he smiled. "Anything else?"

"No. I came to ask your opinion."

"My mind is void of theories, Mr. Phillips, and I shall endeavor to keep it so for the present. If you wish to amuse yourself by discussing possibilities, I would suggest your consideration of the reason why, if he wanted to disappear quietly, he should leave so obvious a track through the snow of his own lawn. For myself, as I am leaving for Camdon via Waterloo Station in ten minutes, I shall hope for more definite data before night."

"Peace," I asked him eagerly, "may I come with you?"

"If you can be ready in time," he said.

It was past two o'clock when we arrived at the old town of Camdon. A carriage met us at the station. Five minutes more and we were clear of the narrow streets and climbing the first bare ridge of the downs. It was a desolate prospect enough— a bare expanse of wind-swept land that rose and fell with the sweeping regularity of the Pacific swell. Here and there a clump of ragged firs showed black against the snow. Under that gentle carpet the crisp turf of the crests and the broad plow lands of the lower ground alike lay hidden. I shivered, drawing my coat more closely about me.

It was half an hour later that we topped a swelling rise and saw the gray towers of the ancient mansion beneath us. In the shelter of the valley by the quiet river, that now lay frozen into silence, the trees had grown into splendid woodlands, circling the hall on the further side. From the broad front the white lawns crept down to the road on which we were driving. Dark masses of shrubberies and the tracery of scattered trees broke their silent curves. The park wall that fenced them from the road stood out like an ink line ruled upon paper.

"It must have been there that he disappeared," I cried, with a speculative finger.

"So I imagine," said Peace. "And if he has spent two nights on the Hampshire downs, he will be looking for a fire to-day. You have rather more than your fair share of the rug, Mr. Phillips, if you will excuse my mentioning it."

A man was standing on the steps of the entrance porch when we drove up. As we unrolled ourselves he stepped forward to help us. He was a thin, pale-faced fellow, with fair hair and indeterminate eyes.

"My name is Harbord," he said. "You are Inspector Addington Peace, I believe."

His hand shook as he stretched it out in a tremulous greeting. Plainly the secretary was afraid, visibly and anxiously afraid.

"Mr. Ransome, the manager of Mr. Ford's London office, is here," he continued. "He is waiting to see you in the library."

We followed him through a great hall into a room lined with books from floor to ceiling. A stout, dark man, who was pacing it like a beast in a cage, stopped at the sight of us. His face, as he turned it toward us, looked pinched and gray in the full light.

"Inspector Peace, eh?" he said. "Well, Inspector, if you want a reward, name it. If you want to pull the house down, only say the word. But find him for us, or, by heaven, we're done."

"Is it as bad as that?"

"You can keep a secret, I suppose. Yes— it couldn't well be worse. It was a tricky time; he hid half his schemes in his own head; he never trusted even me altogether. If he were dead I could plan something, but now—"

He thumped his hand on the table and turned away to the window.

"When you last saw Mr. Ford was he in good health? Did he stand the strain?"

"Ford had no nerves. He was never better in his life."

"In these great transactions he would have his enemies. If his plans succeeded there would be many hard hit, perhaps ruined. Have you any suspicion of a man who, to save himself, might make away with Mr. Ford?"

"No," said the manager after a moment's thought. "No, I can not give you a single name. The players are all big men, Inspector. I don't say that their consciences would stop them from trying such a trick, but it wouldn't be worth their while. They hold off when jail is the certain punishment."

"Was this financial crisis in his own affairs generally known?"

"Certainly not."

"Who would know of it?"

"There might be a dozen men on both sides of the Atlantic who would suspect the truth. But I don't suppose that more than four people were actually in possession of the facts."

"And who would they be?"

"His two partners in America, myself, and Mr. Harbord there."

Peace turned to the young man with a smile and a polite bow.

"Can you add any names to the list?" he asked.

"No," said Harbord, staring at the detective with a puzzled look, as if trying to catch the drift of his questions.

"Thank you," said the Inspector; "and now will you show me the place where this curious disappearance occurred?"

We crossed the drive, where the snow lay torn and trampled by the carriages, and so to the white, even surface of the lawn. We soon struck the trail, a confused path beaten by many footprints. Peace stooped for a moment, and then turned to the secretary with an angry glance.

"Were you with them?" he said.

"Yes."

"Then why, in the name of common sense, didn't you keep them off his tracks? You have simply trampled them out of existence, between you."

"We were in a hurry, Inspector," said the secretary meekly. "We didn't think about it."

We walked forward, following the broad trail until we came to a circular patch of trodden snow. Evidently the searchers had stopped and stood talking together. On the further side I saw the footprints of a man plainly defined. There were some half-dozen clear impressions and they ended at the base of the old wall, which was some six feet in height.

"I am glad to see that you and your friends have left me something, Mr. Harbord," said the Inspector.

He stepped forward and, kneeling down, examined the nearest footprint.

"Mr. Ford dressed for dinner?" he inquired, glancing up at the secretary.

"Certainly! Why do you ask?"

"Merely that he had on heavy shooting boots when he took this evening stroll. It will be interesting to discover what clothes he wore."

The Inspector walked up to the wall, moving parallel to the tracks in the snow. With singular activity for his plump and unathletic figure he climbed to the top and seated himself while he stared about him. Then on his hands and knees he began to crawl forward along the coping. It was a quaint spectacle, but the extraordinary care and vigilance of the little man took the farce out of it.

Presently he stopped and looked down at us with a gentle smile.

"Please stay where you are," he said, and disappeared on the further side.

Harbord offered me a cigarette, and we waited with due obedience till the Inspector's bullet-head again broke the horizon as he struggled back to his position on the coping of the wall.

He seemed in a very pleasant temper when he joined us; but he said nothing of his discoveries, and I had grown too wise to inquire. When we reached the entrance hall he asked for Jackson, the valet, and in a couple of minutes the man appeared. He was a tall, hatchet-faced fellow, very neatly dressed in black. He made a little bow, and then stood watching us in a most respectful attitude.

"A queer business this, Jackson," said Addington Peace.

"Yes, sir."

"And what is your opinion on it?"

"To be frank, sir, I thought at first that Mr. Ford had run away; but now I don't know what to make of it."

"And why should he run away?"

"I have no idea, sir; but he seemed to me rather strange in his manner yesterday."

"Have you been with him long?"

"No, sir. I was valet to the Honorable John Dorn, Lord Beverley's second son. Mr. Ford took me from Mr. Dorn at the time he rented the Hall."

"I see. And now will you show me your master's room? I shall see you again later, Mr. Harbord," he continued; "in the meanwhile I will leave my assistant with you."

We sat and smoked in the secretary's room. He was not much of a talker, consuming cigarette after cigarette in silence. The winter dusk had already fallen when the Inspector joined us, and we retired to our rooms to prepare for dinner. I tried a word with Peace upon the staircase, but he shook his head and walked on.

The meal dragged itself to an end somehow, and we left Ransome with a second decanter of port before him. Peace slipped away again, and I consoled myself with a book in the library until half-past ten, when I walked off to bed. A servant was switching off the light in the hall when I mounted the great staircase.

My room was in the old wing at the further side of the picture gallery, and I had some difficulty in steering my way through the dark corridors. The mystery that hung over the house had shaken my nerves, and I remember that I started at every creak of a board and peered into the shadows as I passed along with, Heaven knows, what ghostly expectations. I was glad enough to close my door upon them and see the wood fire blazing cheerfully in the open hearth.

I WOKE WITH A START that left me sitting up in bed, with my heart thumping in my ribs like a piston rod. I am not generally a light sleeper, but that night, even while I snored, my nerves were active. Some one had tapped at my door— that was my impression.

I listened with the uncertain fear that comes to the newly waked. Then I heard it again— on the wall near my head this time. A board creaked. Some one was groping his way down the dark corridor without. Presently he stopped, and a faint line of illumination sprang out under my door. It winked, and then grew still. He had lighted a candle.

Assurance came with the streak of light. What was he doing, groping in the dark, if he had a candle with him? I crept over to the door, opened it, and stared cautiously out.

About a dozen feet away a man was standing, a striking figure against the light he carried. His back was toward me, but I could see that his hand was shading the candle from his eyes while he stared into the shadows that clung about the further end of the corridor.

Presently he began to move forward.

The picture gallery and the body of the house lay behind. The corridor in which he stood terminated in a window, set deep into the stone of the old walls. The man walked slowly, throwing the light to right and left. His attitude

was of nervous expectation— that of a man who looked for something that he feared to see.

At the window he stopped, staring about him and listening. He examined the fastenings, and then tried a door on his right. It was locked against him. As he did so I caught his profile against the light. It was Harbord, the secretary. From where I stood he was not more than forty feet away. There was no possibility of a mistake.

As he turned to come back I retreated into my room, closing the door. The fellow was in a state of great agitation, and I could hear him muttering to himself as he walked. When he had passed by I peeped out to see him and his light dwindle, reach the corner by the picture gallery, and fade into a reflection, a darkness.

I took care to turn the key before I got back into bed.

I woke again at seven, and, hurrying on my clothes, set off to tell Peace all about it. I took him to the place, and together we examined the corridor. There were only two rooms beyond mine. The one on the left was occupied by Ransome; that on the right was a large store-room, the door of which was locked. The housekeeper kept the key, we learned upon inquiry. Whom had Harbord followed? The problem was beyond me. As for Inspector Peace, he did not indulge in verbal speculations.

It was in the central hall that we encountered the secretary on his way to the breakfast-room. The man looked nervous and depressed; he nodded to us and was passing on, when Peace stopped him.

"Good-morning, Mr. Harbord," he said. "Can I have a word with you?"

"Certainly, Inspector. What is it?"

"I have a favor to ask. My assistant and myself have our hands full here. If necessary, could you help us by running up to London and—"

"For the day?" he interrupted.

"No. It may be an affair of three or four days."

"Then I must refuse. I am sorry, but—"

"Don't apologize, Mr. Harbord," said the little man, cheerfully. "I shall have to find some one else, that is all."

We walked into the breakfast-room, and a few minutes later Ransome appeared with a great bundle of letters and telegrams in his hand. He said not a word to any of us, but dropped into a chair, tearing open the envelopes and glancing at their contents. His face grew darker as he read, and once he thumped his hand upon the table with a crash that set the china jingling.

"Well, Inspector?" he said at last.

The little detective's head shook out a negative.

"Perhaps you require an incentive," he sneered. "Is it a matter of a reward?"

"No, Mr. Ransome; but it is becoming one of my personal reputation."

"Then, by thunder, you are in danger of losing it. Why don't you and your friend hustle instead of loitering around as if you were paid by the job? I tell you, man, there are thousands, hundreds of thousands melting, slipping through our fingers, every hour of the day."

He sprang from his seat and started his walk again, up and down, up and down, as we had first seen him.

"Shall you be returning to London?"

At the question the manager halted in his stride, staring sharply down into the Inspector's bland countenance.

"No," he said; "I shall stay here, Mr. Addington Peace, until such time as you have something definite to tell me."

"I have an inquiry to make which I would rather place in the hands of some one who has personal knowledge of Mr. Ford. Neither Mr. Harbord nor yourself desire to leave Meudon. Is there any one else you can suggest?"

"There is Jackson, Ford's valet," said the manager, after a moment's thought. "He can go if you think him bright enough. I'll send for him."

While the footman who answered the bell was gone upon his errand we waited in an uneasy silence. There was the shadow of an ugly mystery upon us all. Jackson, as he entered, was the only one who seemed at his ease. He stood there, a tall figure of all the respectabilities.

"The Inspector here wishes you to go to London, Jackson," said the manager. "He will explain the details. There is a fast train from Camdon at eleven."

"Certainly, sir. Do I return to-night?"

"No, Jackson," said Peace. "It will take a day or two."

The man took a couple of steps toward the door, hesitated, and then returned to his former place.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he began, addressing Ransome. "But I would rather remain at Meudon under present circumstances."

"What on earth do you mean?" thundered the manager.

"Well, sir, I was the last to see Mr. Ford. There is, as it were, a suspicion upon me. I should like to be present while the search continues, both for his sake— and my own."

"Very kind of you, I'm sure," growled Ransome. "But you either do what I tell you, Jackson, or you pack your boxes and clear out. So be quick and make up your mind."

"I think you are treating me most unfairly, sir. But I can not be persuaded out of what I know to be my duty."

"You impertinent rascal!—" began the furious manager. But Peace was already on his feet with a chubby hand outstretched.

"Perhaps, after all, I can make other arrangements, Mr. Ransome," he said. "It is natural that Jackson should consider his own reputation in this affair. That is all, Jackson; you may go now."

It was half an hour afterward, when the end of breakfast had dispersed the party, that I spoke to Peace about it, offering to go to London myself and do my best to carry out his instructions.

"I had bad luck in my call for volunteers," he said.

"I should have thought they would have been glad enough to get the chance of work. They can find no particular amusement in loafing about the place all day."

"Doubtless they all had excellent reasons," he said with a smile. "But, anyway, you can not be spared, Mr. Phillips."

"You flatter me."

"I want you to stay in your bedroom. Write, read, do what you like, but keep your door ajar. If any one passes down the corridor, see where he goes, only don't let him know that you are watching him if you can help it. I will take my turn at half-past one. I don't mean to starve you."

I obeyed. After all, it was, in a manner, promotion that the Inspector had given me; yet it was a tedious, anxious time. No one came my way, barring a sour-looking housemaid. I tried to argue out the case, but the deeper I got the more conflicting grew my theories. I was never more glad to see a friendly face than when the little man came in upon me.

The short winter's afternoon crept on, the Inspector and I taking turn and turn about in our sentry duty. Dinner-time came and went. I had been off duty from nine, but at ten-thirty I poured out a whisky and soda and went back to join him. He was sitting in the middle of the room smoking a pipe in great apparent satisfaction.

"Bed-time, isn't it?" I grumbled, sniffing at his strong tobacco.

"Oh, no," he said. "The fact is, we are going to sit up all night."

I threw myself on a couch by the window without reply. Perhaps I was not in the best of tempers; certainly I did not feel so.

"You insisted on coming down with me," he suggested.

"I know all about that," I told him. "I haven't complained, have I? If you want me to shut myself up for a week I'll do it; but I should prefer to have some idea of the reason why."

"I don't wish to create mysteries, Mr. Phillips," he said kindly; "but believe me there is nothing to be gained in vague discussions."

I knew that settled it as far as he was concerned, so I nodded my head and filled a pipe. At eleven he walked across the room and switched off the light.

"If nothing happens you can take your turn in four hours from now," he said. "In the meanwhile get to sleep. I will keep the first watch."

I shut my eyes, but there was no rest in me that night. I lay listening to the silence of the old house with a dull speculation. Somewhere far down in the lower floor a great gong-like clock chimed the hours and quarters. I heard them every one, from twelve to one, from one to two. Peace had stopped smoking. He sat as silent as a cat at a mousehole.

It must have been some fifteen minutes after two that I heard the faint, faint creak of a board in the corridor outside. I sat up, every nerve strung to a tense alertness. And then there came a sound I knew well, the soft drawing touch of a hand groping in the darkness as some one felt his way along the paneled walls. It passed us and was gone. Yet Peace never moved. Could he have fallen asleep? I whispered his name.

"Hush!"

The answer came to me like a gentle sigh.

One minute, two minutes more and the room sprang into sight under the steady glow of an electric hand-lamp. The Inspector rose from his seat and slid through the door with me upon his heels. The light he carried searched the clustered shadows; but the corridor was empty, nor was there any place where a man might hide.

"You waited too long," I whispered impatiently.

"The man is no fool, Mr. Phillips. Do you imagine that he was not listening and staring like a hunted beast? A noisy board, a stumble, or a flash of light, and we should have wasted a tiring day."

"Nevertheless he has got clear away."

"I think not."

As we crept forward I saw that a strip of the oak flooring along the walls was gray with dust. If it had been in such a neglected state in the afternoon I should surely have noticed it. In some curiosity I stooped to examine the phenomenon.

"Flour," whispered the little man touching my shoulder.

"Flour?"

"Yes. I sprinkled it myself. Look— there is the first result."

He steadied his light as he spoke, pointing with his other hand. On the powdery surface was the half footprint of a man.

The flour did not extend more than a couple of feet from the walls, so that it was only here and there that we caught up the trail. We had passed the bedroom on the left— yet the footprints still went on; we were at the store-room door, yet they still were visible before us. There was no other egress from the corridor. The tall window at the end was, as I knew, a good twenty feet from the ground. Had this man also vanished off the earth like Silas Ford?

Suddenly the inspector stopped, grasping my arm. The light he held fell upon two footprints close together. They were at right angles to the passage. Apparently the man had passed into the solid wall!

"Peace, what does this mean?"

You, sir, sitting peaceably at home, with a good light and an easy conscience, may think I was a timid fool; yet I was afraid— honestly and openly afraid. The little detective heard the news of it in my voice, for he gave me a reassuring pat upon the back.

"Have you never heard of a 'priest's hole'?" he whispered. "In the days when Meudon Hall was built, no country house was without its hiding-place. Protestants and priests, Royalists and Republicans, they all used the secret burrow at one time or another."

"How did he get in?"

"That is what we are here to discover, and as I have no wish to destroy Mr. Ford's old oak panels I think our simplest plan will be to wait until he comes back again."

The shadows leaped upon us as Peace extinguished the light he carried. The great window alone was luminous with the faint starlight that showed the tracery of its ancient stonework; for the rest, the darkness hedged us about in impenetrable barriers. Side by side, we stood by the wall in which we knew the secret entrance must exist.

It may have been ten minutes or more when from the distance— somewhere below our feet, or so it seemed to me— there came the faint echo of a closing door. It was only in such cold silence that we could have heard it. The time ticked on. Suddenly, upon the black of the floor, there shone a thin reflection like the slash of a sword— a reflection that grew into a broad gush of light as the sliding panel in the wall, six feet from where we stood, rose to the full opening. There followed another pause, during which I could see Peace draw himself together as if for some unusual exertion.

A shadow darkened the reflection on the floor, and a head came peering out. The light but half displayed the face, but I could see that the teeth were bare and glistening, like those of a man in some deadly expectation. The next moment he stepped across the threshold. With a spring like the rush of a terrier, Addington Peace was upon him, driving him off his balance with the

impact of the blow. Before I could reach them, the little detective had him down, though he still kicked viciously until I lent a hand. The click of the handcuffs on his wrist ended the matter.

It was Ford's valet, the man Jackson.

We were not long by ourselves. I heard a key turned in the lock, and Ransome burst out of his room into the corridor like an angry bull. Almost at the same moment there sounded a quick patter of naked feet from behind us, and Harbord, the secretary, came running up, swinging a heavy stick in his hand. They both stopped at the edge of the patch of light in which we were, staring from us to the gaping hole in the wall.

"What in thunder are you about?" cried the manager.

"Finding a solution to your problem," said the little detective, getting to his feet. "Perhaps, gentlemen, you will be good enough to follow me."

He stepped through the opening in the wall, and lifted the candle which the valet had placed on the floor while he was raising the panel from within. By its light I could see the first steps of a flight which led down into darkness.

"We will take Jackson with us," he continued. "Keep an eye on him, Mr. Phillips, if you please."

It was a strange procession that we made. First Peace, with the candle, then Ransome, with the valet, following, while I and Harbord brought up the rear. We descended some thirty steps, formed in the thickness of the wall, opened a heavy door, and so found ourselves in a narrow chamber, some twelve feet long by seven broad. Upon a mattress at the further end lay a man, gagged and bound. As the light fell upon his features, Ransome sprang forward, shouting his name.

"Silas Ford, by thunder!"

With eager fingers we loosened the gag and cut the ropes that bound his wrists. He sat up, turning his long, thin face from one to the other of us as he stretched the cramp from his limbs.

"Thank you, gentlemen," said he. "Well, Ransome, how are things?"

"Bad, sir; but it's not too late."

He nodded his head, passing his hands through his hair with a quick, nervous movement.

"You've caught my clever friend, I see. Kindly go through his pockets, will you? He has something I must ask him to return to me."

We found it in Jackson's pocket-book— a check, antedated a week, for five thousand pounds, with a covering letter to the manager of the bank. Ford took the bit of stamped paper, twisting it to and fro in his supple fingers.

"It was smart of you, Jackson," he said, addressing the bowed figure before him: "I give you credit for the idea. To kidnap a man just as he was bringing off a big deal— well, you would have earned the money."

"But how did you get down here?" struck in the manager.

"He told me that he had discovered an old hiding-place— a 'priest's hole,' he called it— and I walked into the trap as the best man may do sometimes. As we got to the bottom of that stairway he slipped a sack over my head and had me fixed in thirty seconds. He fed me himself twice a day, standing by to see I didn't halloo. When I paid up he was to have twenty-four hours' start; then he would let you know where I was. I held out awhile, but I gave in to-night. The delay was getting too dangerous. Have you a cigarette, Harbord? Thank you. And who may you be?"

It was to the detective he spoke.

"My name is Peace, Inspector Addington Peace, from Scotland Yard."

"And I owe my rescue to you?"

The little man bowed.

"You will have no reason to regret it. And what did they think had become of me, Inspector?"

"It was the general opinion that you had taken to yourself wings, Mr. Ford."

IT WAS as we traveled up to town next day that Peace told me his story. I will set it down as briefly as may be.

"I soon came to the conclusion that Ford, whether dead or alive, was inside the grounds of Meudon Hall. If he had bolted, for some reason, by the way, which was perfectly incomprehensible, a man of his ability would not have left a broad trail across the centre of his lawn for all to see. There was, moreover, no trace of him that our men could ferret out at any station within reasonable distance. A motor was possible, but there were no marks of its presence next morning in the mud of the roads. That fact I learned from a curious groom who had aided in the search, and who, with a similar idea upon him, had carefully examined the highway at daybreak.

"When I clambered to the top of the wall I found that the snow upon the coping had been dislodged. I traced the marks, as you saw, for about a dozen yards. Where they ended I, too, dropped to the ground outside. There I made a remarkable discovery. Upon a little drift of snow that lay in the shallow ditch beneath were more footprints. But they were not those of Ford. They were the marks of long and narrow boots, which led into the road, where they were lost in the track of a flock of sheep that had been driven over it the day before.

"I took a careful measurement of those footprints. They might, of course, belong to some private investigator; but they gave me an idea. Could some

man have walked across the lawn in Ford's boots, changed them to his own on the top of the wall, and so departed? Was it the desire of someone to let it be supposed that Ford had run away?

"When I examined Ford's private rooms I was even more fortunate. From the boot-boy I discovered that the master had three pairs of shooting boots. There were three pairs in the stand. Some one had made a very serious mistake. Instead of hiding the pair he had used on the lawn, he had returned them to their place. The trick was becoming evident. But where was Ford? In the house or grounds, dead or alive, but where?

"I was able, through my friend the boot-boy, to examine the boots on the night of our arrival. My measurements corresponded with those that Jackson, the valet, wore. Was he acting for himself, or was Harbord, or even Ransome, in the secret? That, too, it was necessary to discover before I showed my hand.

"Your story of Harbord's midnight excursion supplied a clue. The secretary had evidently followed some man who had disappeared mysteriously. Could there be the entrance to a secret chamber in that corridor? That would explain the mystification of Harbord as well as the disappearance of Silas Ford. If so, Harbord was not involved.

"If Ford were held a prisoner he must be fed. His jailer must of necessity remain in the house. But the trap I set in the suggested journey to town was an experiment singularly unsuccessful, for all the three men I desired to test refused. However, if I were right about the secret chamber I could checkmate the blackmailer by keeping a watch on him from your room, which commanded the line of communications. But Jackson was clever enough to leave his victualing to the night-time. I scattered the flour to try the result of that ancient trick. It was successful. That is all. Do you follow me?"

"Yes," said I; "but how did Jackson come to know the secret hiding place?"

"He has long been a servant of the house. You had better ask his old master."

11: The Sword of Wood

G.K. Chesterton

1874-1936

The Pall Mall Magazine, Nov 1913

DOWN in the little village of Grayling-Abbot, in Somerset, men did not know that the world we live in had begun. They did not know that all we have come to call 'modern' had silently entered England, and changed the air of it. Well, they did not know it very clearly even in London: though one or two shrewd men like my Lord Clarendon, and perhaps Prince Rupert, with his chemicals and his sad eyes, may have had a glimmer of it.

On the contrary, by the theory of the thing, the old world had returned. Christmas could be kept again; the terrible army was disbanded; the swarthy young man with the sour, humorous face, who had been cheered from Dover to Whitehall, brought back in him the blood of kings. Every one was saying (especially in Grayling-Abbot) that now it would be Merry England again. But the swarthy young man knew better. The Merry Monarch knew he was not meant to make Merry England. If he treated his own life as a comedy, it was for a philosophical reason; because comedy is the only poetry of compromise. And he was a compromise; and he knew it. Therefore he turned, like Prince Rupert, to the chemicals; and played with the little toys that were to become the terrible engines of modern science. So he might have played with tiger-cubs, so long as they were as small as his spaniels.

But down in Grayling-Abbot it was much easier to believe that old England had been restored, because it had never, in any serious sense, been disturbed. The fierce religious quarrels of the seventeenth century had only stirred that rustic neighbourhood to occasional panics of witch-burning. And these, though much rarer in the medieval society, were not inconsistent with it. The squire, Sir Guy Griffin, was famous as a fighter quite in the medieval style. Though he had commanded a troop under Newcastle in the Civil Wars with conspicuous success, the local legend of his bodily prowess eclipsed any national chronicle of his military capacity. Through two or three counties round Grayling-Abbot, his reputation for swordsmanship had quite eclipsed his reputation for generalship. So, in the Middle Ages, it happened that Coeur-de-Lion's hand could keep his head: it happened that Bruce's hand could keep his head. And in both cases the head has suffered unfairly from the glorification of the hand.

The same almost unbroken medieval tradition even clung round the young schoolmaster, Dennis Tryon, who was just locking up his little school for the last time; having been transferred to a private post at Sir Guy's own house, to teach Sir Guy's six hulking sons, who had learned their father's skill with the sword, and hitherto declined to learn anything else. In numberless and

nameless ways, Tryon expressed the old traditions. He was not a Puritan, yet he wore black clothes because he might have been a priest. Though he had learned to fence and dance at College, like Milton, he was plainly dressed and weaponless; because the vague legend remained that a student was a sort of clerk, and a clerk was a sort of clergyman. He wore his brown hair long, like a Cavalier. But as it was his own hair, it was long and straight: while the Cavaliers were already beginning to wear other people's hair, which was long and curly. In that strict brown frame, his face had the boyish, frank, rather round appearance that may be seen in old miniatures of Falkland or the Duke of Monmouth. His favourite authors were George Herbert and Sir Thomas Browne; and he was very young.

He was addressing a last word to a last pupil, who happened to be lingering outside the school— a minute boy of seven, playing with one of those wooden swords, made of two lengths of lath nailed across each other, which boys have played with in all centuries.

'Jeremy Bunt,' said Tryon, with a rather melancholy playfulness, 'your sword is, as it seems to me, much an improvement on most we have lately looked on. I observe its end is something blunt; doubtless for that gallant reason that led Orlando to blunt his sword when fighting the lady, whose name, in the ingenious romance, escapes me. Let it suffice you, little one. It will kill the Giants, like Master Jack's sword of sharpness, at least as well as the swords of a standing army ever will. If you be minded to save the Lady Angelica from the ogre, it will turn the dragon to stone as quick as any sword of steel would do. And, oh, Jeremy, if the fable be false, the moral is not false. If a little boy be good and brave, he should be great, and he may be. If he be bad and base, he should be beaten with a staff'— here Tryon tapped him very softly on the shoulders with a long black walking-cane that was commonly his only ferule— 'but in either way, to my thinking, your sword is as good as any other. Only, dear Jeremy'— and he bent over the child swiftly, with a sudden tenderness— 'always remember your kind of sword is stronger if one holds it by the wrong end.'

He reversed the little sword in the child's hand, making it a wooden cross, and then went striding up the road like the wind, leaving the staring boy behind.

When he became conscious that human feet were following him, he knew they could not possibly be the feet of the boy. He looked round; and Jeremy was still hovering in the distance; but the rush of feet came from a far different cause.

A young lady was hurrying by close under the high hedge that was nearly as old as the Plantagenets. Her costume was like his own, in the sense that it had

the quietude of the Puritan with the cut of the Cavalier. Her dress was as dark as Barebones could have asked; but the ringlets under her hood were yellow and curly, for the same reason that his own hair was brown and straight: because they were her own. Nothing else was notable about her, except that she was pretty and seemed rather in a hurry; and that her delicate profile was pointed resolutely up the road. The face was a little pale.

Tryon turned again to look back on his tracks; and this time saw another figure more formidable than Jeremy with the wooden sword.

A tall, swaggering figure, almost black against the sunlight, was coming down the road with a rapidity that almost amounted to a run. He had a wide hat with feathers, and long, luxuriant hair, in the latest London manner; but it was not any such feathers or flourishes that arrested Tryon's attention. He had seen old Sir Guy Griffin, who still wore his wild, white hair half-way down his back, to show (very unnecessarily) that he was not a Puritan. He had seen Sir Guy stick in his hat the most startling cock's feathers, but that was because he had no other feathers. But Tryon knew at a glance that Sir Guy would never have come forward in such extraordinary attitudes. The tall, fantastic man actually drew his sword as he rushed forward; and offered it like a lance to be splintered as from the end of a long tilting-yard. Such frolics may have happened a hundred times round the 'Cock' of Buckingham and Dorset. But it was an action utterly unknown to the gentry round Grayling-Abbot, when they settled affairs of honour.

While he was still looking up the road at the advancing figure, he found himself breathlessly addressed by the escaping girl.

'You must not fight him,' she said, 'he has beaten everybody. He has beaten even Sir Guy, and all his sons.' She cast her eyes about him and cried out in horror: 'And where is your sword?'

'With my spurs, mistress,' replied the schoolmaster, in the best style of Ariosto. 'I have to win them both.'

She looked at him rather wildly and said: 'But he has never been beaten in swordsmanship.'

Tryon, with a smile, made a salute with his black walking-stick. 'A man with no sword,' he said, 'can never be beaten in swordsmanship.'

The girl stood for one moment staring at him as if, even in that scene of scurry and chase, time were suspended for a flash. Then she seemed to leap again like a hunted thing and plunged on: and it was only some hundred yards higher up the road that she again halted, hesitated, and looked back. In much the same manner Master Jeremy Bunt, who had not the faintest intention of deserting the delightful school in which he was no longer required to do any work, actually ran forward. Perhaps their curiosity ought to be excused. For

they were certainly looking at the most astounding duel the world had ever seen. It was the duel of the naked sword and the walking-stick: probably the only merely defensive battle ever fought on this earth.

The day was full of sun and wind, the two chief ingredients of a glorious day; but till that moment even Mr. Tryon, though of a pastoral and poetical turn, had not noticed anything specially splendid in the sky or landscape. Now the beauty of this world came upon him with the violence of a supernatural vision; for he was very certain it was a vision that he soon must lose. He was a good fencer with the foil in the Collegiate manner. But it was not to be expected that any human being could emerge victorious from a prolonged fight in which he had no means of retaliation; and especially as his opponent, whether from drink or devilry, was clearly fighting to the death. Tryon could not be certain that the wild creature even knew that his sword only struck against wood.

Dennis Tryon took in every glory of the good English land, and the still more glorious English climate, with the corner of his eye; he took it in with that same swift, indirect and casual, yet absolutely substantial way in which Nature is noticed in the old English poets that he loved. For the great poets of England, from Chaucer to Dryden, had a trick that has since been lost, the trick of implying the nature of a scene without apparently even attempting to describe it. Thus, any one reading the line 'Pack, clouds, away,' knows at once it is the kind of clouds called *cumuli*, and could not possibly be meant for level or streaky clouds. Or any one reading Milton's line about the princess's turret 'bosomed high in tufted trees' knows it means partly leafless trees, as in early spring or autumn, when the edge of the forest shows soft against the sky, like a brush or broom, sweeping heaven. With the same sort of subconscious solidity, Tryon realized the rounded and half-rosy morning clouds that curled or huddled in the blue above the downs; and the mute mercy of the forests, that faded from grey to purple before they mixed with heaven. Death, in a hat with black plumes, was shooting a thousand shining arrows at him every instant; and he had never loved the world so much before.

For indeed that one streak of white steel came at him like a shower of shining arrows. He had to make a new parry for every new lunge; and, with each, perversely remembered some episode of College fencing. When the bright point of death missed his heart and slid past his elbow, he saw suddenly a meadow beside the Thames. When he seemed blinded, by the very light on that lightning blade, leaping at his eyes, but passing over his shoulder, he saw the old lawn at Merton as if its grass had sprung out of the road around him. But he began more and more to realize something else. He realized that if he had held a real sword, he could have killed his enemy six times over with the

riposte. When the heart-thrust was turned, he could have put his sword like a carving-knife into a pudding-if it had been a sword. When the parry protected his eyes, nothing else could have protected his opponent, except the unpenetrating quality of a walking-stick. His brain was of the very clear kind that can play two games of chess at once. While still whirling his black walking-stick in a complicated but impromptu clockwork of fence, he saw quite clearly a logical alternative. Either the man thought he was fighting someone with a sword: in which case he was a very bad fencer. Or else he knew he was fighting someone with a stick, in which case he was a very bad man: or (as the more timid modern phrase goes) a very bad sportsman.

He acted suddenly in a way adapted to either case. He introduced into his swordplay a stroke of single-stick, also learned at College, jerking his stick up so as to strike and jar the man's elbow; and then, before the arm could recover its nerve, smote the sword clean out of the hand. A look at the man's black, bewildered expression was enough. Tryon was now quite certain the man's advantage had only been in his sword. He was also quite certain the man knew it. With all the rush of his released romanticism, which roared like the wind, and rolled like the clouds, and blazed like the sun which he had thought to see no more, he sprang forward and pinned the man by the throat, with a shout of laughter. Then he said, with more restrained humour, what he had said to the little boy up the road.

'If he be bad and base,' said Tryon, 'he should be beaten with a staff.' And whirling the walking-stick round his head, he laid three thundering and echoing thwacks across the shoulders of his disarmed enemy, and walked off up the road again like the wind.

He did not notice further what his murderous enemy might attempt, but he was honestly puzzled about the conduct of the crowd. For, by this time, there was a very considerable crowd. The sword-bearing Jeremy was quite prominent in the throng behind him; the lady with the golden curls and the sensitive profile was herself pausing a moment on the outskirts of the throng in front.

As he started up the road again, the mob set up a roar, redoubled and quadrupled, and several gentlemen present whirled their plumed hats and shouted observations he could not hear. What was even more extraordinary, a great part of the crowd (including the young lady, who vanished early) appeared to be disappearing up the road, as if bringing news of some great victory like Agincourt.

By the time he came from Grayling-Abbot to Grayling-le-Griffin, the next village, there were ten heads at every cottage window; and girls threw flowers,

that missed him and fell on the road. By the time he came to the outskirts of the Park, with the stone griffins, there were triumphal arches.

'It seems that I was not a little hasty with Master Bunt,' said Tryon to himself, with a puzzled smile. 'It is plain I have fallen into the Kingdom of Queen Mab. It is I, and not Master Jeremy, who have, in some sense, saved Angelica from the dragon. I was rather more embarrassed in the matter of arms, and she rather less embarrassed in the matter of attire, and there, truly, the difference seems to end. But the strangest thing of all is that, whatever I have done, I have done it with a sword of wood, like little Jeremy's.'

In his academic reflections, he lifted his long black stick to look at it; and, as he did so, the cry of many crowds broke about him like a cannonade. For he had come to the very doors of Griffin Grange, to which he had been summoned on his much milder tutorial errand. And the great Sir Guy himself came out at the entrance. He might even have justified his mythic name, allowing for certain alterations of accident. For a griffin was supposed to be a mixture of the lion and the eagle; and certainly Sir Guy's mane might have been a lion's, but that it was largely white; and his nose might have been an eagle's, but that it was partly red.

His face had at first a dangerous and even dissipated look, and Tryon had one momentary doubt about the reason of his defeat. But when he looked again at Sir Guy's erect figure and animated eye; when he rather timidly accepted his decisive handshake and received congratulations in his clear and comfortable voice, the doubt vanished. And the young schoolmaster felt even more bewildered in receiving the equally adoring, though rather more gaping, congratulations of the six strenuous sons. At the first glance, Tryon felt something like despair about their Greek and Latin. But he also felt an increasing conviction that any of them could have knocked him anywhere with a cudgel. His own triumph began to seem as fantastic and incredible as his triumphal arches.

'Assuredly it is a strange matter,' he said to himself in his simplicity. 'I was a tolerable good fencer at Merton, but not excellent. Not so good as Wilton or Smith or old King of Christ Church. It is not to be believed that men like these could not beat him with their great swords, when I could beat him with a stick. This is some jest of the great gentry, as in the ingenious tale of Master Cervantes.'

He therefore received the uproarious plaudits of old Griffin and his sons with some reserve; but, after a little time, it was hard for one so simple not to perceive their simplicity. They really did regard him, as little Jeremy would have regarded him, as a fairy-tale hero who had freed their valley from an ogre. The people at the windows had not been conspirators. The triumphal

arches had not been practical jokes. He was really the god of the countryside and he had not a notion why.

Three things convinced him finally of the reality of his reputation. One was the mysterious fact that the young Griffins (that brood of mythic monsters) really made some attempt to learn. Humphrey, the eldest and biggest, got the genitive of *quis* right the third time, though wrong again the fourth, fifth, and sixth. The attempts of Geoffrey to distinguish between *fingo* and *figo* would have moved a heart of stone: and Miles, the youngest, was really interested in the verb *ferre*; though (being a waterside character) he had some tendency to end it with a 'y.' Underneath all this exceptional mental ambition, Tryon could see the huge, silent respect which savages and schoolboys feel everywhere for one who has 'done' something in the bodily way. The old rural and real aristocracy of England had not that rather cold and clumsy class-consciousness we now call the public-school spirit; and they enjoyed sports instead of worshipping them. But boys are the same in all ages, and one of their sports is hero-worship.

The next and yet more fascinating fact was Sir Guy. He was not, it was clear, in the common sense an amiable man. Just as the slash he had at the battle of Newbury made his eagle face almost as ugly as it was handsome, so the neglects and disappointments of his once promising military career had made his tongue and temper as bitter as they were sincere. Yet Tryon felt he owed the very knowledge of such an attitude to a confidence the old man would not have reposed in other people.

'The King hath his own again,' old Griffin would say gloomily. 'But I think it is too late. Indeed it might nigh as well be the King of France come to rule us as the King of England. He hath brought back with him French women that act in stage plays as if they were boys; and tricks fit for pothecaries or conjurers at a fair, and tricks like this fellow's that twitched away my sword, and every one else's— till he met his master, thank God.' And he smiled at Tryon, sourly, but with respect.

'Is the gentleman I met,' asked Tryon, rather timidly, one from the Court?'

'Yes,' answered the old man. 'Did you look at his face?'

'Only his eyes,' said the fencer, smiling; 'they are black.'

'His face is painted,' said Griffin. 'That is the sort of thing they do in London. And he wears a pile of false hair out of a barber's; and walks about in it, like the house of a Jack-in-the Green. But his was the best sword, as old Noll's was the best army. And what could we do?'

The third fact, which affected Dennis Tryon most deeply of all, was a glimpse or two of the girl he had saved from the obstreperous courtier. It appeared she was the parson's daughter, one Dorothy Hood, who was often in

and out of the Grange, but always avoided him. He had every sort of delicacy himself; and a comprehension of her attitude made him finally certain of his own inexplicable importance. If this had been, as he first thought, a trick played on him in the style of the Duke and the Tinker, so charming a girl (and he thought her more charming every time she flashed down a corridor or disappeared through a door) would certainly have been set to draw him on. If there was a conspiracy, she must be in it; and her part in it would be plain. But she was not playing the part. He caught himself rather wishing she were.

The last stroke came when he heard her saying to Sir Guy, by the accident of two open doors: 'All say, 'twas witchcraft; and that God helped the young gentleman only because he was good, and—'

He walked wildly away. He was the kind of academic cavalier, who had learnt all worldly manners in an unworldly cloister. To him, therefore, eavesdropping was in all cases, horrible; in her case, damnable.

On one occasion he plucked up his courage to stop and thank her for having warned him of the danger of the duel.

Her delicate, pale face, always tremulous, became positively troubled. 'But then I did not know,' she said. 'I knew you were not afraid. But I did not know then you were fighting the devils.'

'Truly, and I do not know it now,' he answered. 'By my thinking, I was fighting one man, and no such great fighting at that.'

'Everybody says it was the devils,' she said with a beautiful simplicity. 'My father says so.'

When she had slipped away, Dennis was left meditating: and a new and rather grim impression grew stronger and stronger upon him. The more he heard from servants or strangers, the clearer it was that the local legend was hardening into a tale of himself as exorcist breaking the spell of a warlock.

The youngest boy, Miles, who had been (as usual) down by the river, said the villagers were walking along the bank, looking for the old pool where witches were drowned. Humphrey said it would be no good if they found it, for the tall man with the painted face had gone back to London. But an hour later, Geoffrey came in with other news: the wicked wizard had gone out of Grayling, but the mob had stopped him on the road to Salisbury.

When Tryon bestirred himself with curiosity and alarm and looked out of the Grange gates he found fearful confirmation, almost in the image of a place of pestilence or a city of the dead. The whole population of the two villages of Grayling (save for such non-combatants as the wooden-sworded Bunt) had vanished from their streets and houses. They returned in the dark hour before dawn; and they brought with them the man with the magic sword.

Men in modern England, who have never seen a revolution, who have never seen even a real mob, cannot imagine what the capture of a witch was like. It was for all the populace of that valley a vast rising against an emperor and oppressor, a being taller, more terrible, more universal, than any one would have called either Charles I or Cromwell, even in jest. It was not, as the modern people say, the worrying of some silly old woman. It was for them a revolt against Kehama, the Almighty Man. It was for them a rebellion of the good angels after the victory of Satan. Dorothy Hood was sufficiently frightened of the mob to take Tryon's hand in the crowd, and hold it in a way that made them understand each other with an intimate tenderness never afterwards dissolved. But it never occurred to her to be sorry for the warlock.

He was standing on the river bank, with his hands tied behind him, but the sword still at his side; no one feeling disposed to meddle with it. His peruke had been torn off; and his cropped head seemed to make more glaring and horrible the unnatural colours of his face. It was like some painted demon mask. But he was quite composed, and even contemptuous. Every now and then people threw things at him, as at one in the pillory; even little Jeremy Bunt flinging his wooden sword, with all the enthusiasm of the Children's Crusade. But most things missed him and fell into the flowing river behind, into which (there could be little doubt) he himself was to be flung at last.

Then stood up for an instant in the stormy light, that rare but real spirit, for whose sake alone men have endured aristocracy, or the division of man from man. Sir Guy's scarred face looked rather unusually sulky, or even spiteful; but he turned to his bodyguard of sons. 'We must get him back safe to the Grange,' he said sourly; 'you boys have all your swords, I think. You had best draw them.'

'Why?' asked the staring Humphrey.

'Why,' answered his father, 'because they are conquered swords, like my own.' And he drew his long blade, that took the white light of the morning.

'Boys,' he said, 'it is in the hand of God if he be warlock or no. But is it to be said of our blood that we brought crowds and clubs to kill a man who had whipped each one of us fairly with the sword? Shall men say that when Griffins met their match they whined about magic? Make a ring round him, and we will bring him alive through a thousand witch-smellers.'

Already a half-ring of naked swords had swung round the victim like a spiked necklace. In those days mobs were much bolder against their masters than they are to-day. But even that mob gave to the Griffins a military reputation beyond their mere territorial rank; and the parties were thus the more equal. There was no sword in that crowd better than a Griffin sword; except the sword that hung useless at the hip of a pinioned man.

Before the next moment, which must have been blood and destruction, the man with the useless sword spoke. 'If some gentleman,' he said with marmoreal calm, 'will but put a hand in the pocket of my doublet, I think bloodshed will be spared.'

There was a long silence; and every one looked at Dennis Tryon: the man who had not feared the wizard. Every one included Dorothy; and Dennis stepped forward. He found a folded piece of paper in the doublet, opened it and read it with more and more wonder on his round young face. At the third sentence he took his hat off. At this the crowd stared more and more: it had fallen suddenly silent and all were conscious of a change and a cooling in that intense air.

'It would appear,' he said at last, 'that this is a privy letter from His Majesty, which I will not read in entirety. But it advises and permits Sir Godfrey Skene to practise with the new Magnetic Sword which the Royal Society has for some little time attempted to manufacture in pursuance of a suggestion of Lord Verulam, the founder of our Natural Philosophy. The whole blade is magnetized; and it is thought it may even pull any other iron weapon out of the hand.'

He paused a moment, in some embarrassment, and then said: 'It is added that only a weapon of wood or such other material could be used against it.'

Sir Guy turned to him suddenly and said: 'Is that what you call Natural Philosophy?'

'Yes,' replied Tryon.

'I thank you,' said Griffin. 'You need not teach it to my sons.'

Then he strode towards the prisoner, and rent the sword away, bursting the belt that held it.

'If it were not His Majesty's own hand,' he said, 'I would throw you with it after all.'

The next instant the Magnetic Sword of the Royal Society vanished from men's view for ever; and Tryon could see nothing but Jeremy's little cross of wood heaving with the heaving stream.

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12: The Masque of the Red Death

Edgar Allan Poe

1809-1849

Graham's Lady's and Gentleman's Magazine, May 1842

The original title was "The Mask of the Red Death", but by the late 1890s it was being reprinted as "The Masque of the Red Death", and has been reprinted under this name ever since. A Masque is "a form of festive courtly entertainment".

THE "RED DEATH" had long devastated the country. No pestilence had ever been so fatal, or so hideous. Blood was its Avatar and its seal— the redness and the horror of blood. There were sharp pains, and sudden dizziness, and then profuse bleeding at the pores, with dissolution. The scarlet stains upon the body and especially upon the face of the victim, were the pest ban which shut him out from the aid and from the sympathy of his fellow-men. And the whole seizure, progress and termination of the disease, were the incidents of half an hour.

But the Prince Prospero was happy and dauntless and sagacious. When his dominions were half depopulated, he summoned to his presence a thousand hale and light-hearted friends from among the knights and dames of his court, and with these retired to the deep seclusion of one of his castellated abbeys. This was an extensive and magnificent structure, the creation of the prince's own eccentric yet august taste. A strong and lofty wall girdled it in. This wall had gates of iron. The courtiers, having entered, brought furnaces and massy hammers and welded the bolts. They resolved to leave means neither of ingress nor egress to the sudden impulses of despair or of frenzy from within. The abbey was amply provisioned. With such precautions the courtiers might bid defiance to contagion. The external world could take care of itself. In the meantime it was folly to grieve, or to think. The prince had provided all the appliances of pleasure. There were buffoons, there were improvisatori, there were ballet-dancers, there were musicians, there was Beauty, there was wine. All these and security were within. Without was the "Red Death".

It was towards the close of the fifth or sixth month of his seclusion, and while the pestilence raged most furiously abroad, that the Prince Prospero entertained his thousand friends at a masked ball of the most unusual magnificence.

It was a voluptuous scene, that masquerade. But first let me tell of the rooms in which it was held. These were seven— an imperial suite. In many palaces, however, such suites form a long and straight vista, while the folding doors slide back nearly to the walls on either hand, so that the view of the whole extent is scarcely impeded. Here the case was very different, as might

have been expected from the duke's love of the *bizarre*. The apartments were so irregularly disposed that the vision embraced but little more than one at a time. There was a sharp turn at every twenty or thirty yards, and at each turn a novel effect. To the right and left, in the middle of each wall, a tall and narrow Gothic window looked out upon a closed corridor which pursued the windings of the suite. These windows were of stained glass whose colour varied in accordance with the prevailing hue of the decorations of the chamber into which it opened. That at the eastern extremity was hung, for example in blue— and vividly blue were its windows. The second chamber was purple in its ornaments and tapestries, and here the panes were purple. The third was green throughout, and so were the casements. The fourth was furnished and lighted with orange— the fifth with white— the sixth with violet. The seventh apartment was closely shrouded in black velvet tapestries that hung all over the ceiling and down the walls, falling in heavy folds upon a carpet of the same material and hue. But in this chamber only, the colour of the windows failed to correspond with the decorations. The panes here were scarlet—a deep blood colour. Now in no one of the seven apartments was there any lamp or candelabrum, amid the profusion of golden ornaments that lay scattered to and fro or depended from the roof. There was no light of any kind emanating from lamp or candle within the suite of chambers. But in the corridors that followed the suite, there stood, opposite to each window, a heavy tripod, bearing a brazier of fire, that projected its rays through the tinted glass and so glaringly illumined the room. And thus were produced a multitude of gaudy and fantastic appearances. But in the western or black chamber the effect of the fire-light that streamed upon the dark hangings through the blood-tinted panes, was ghastly in the extreme, and produced so wild a look upon the countenances of those who entered, that there were few of the company bold enough to set foot within its precincts at all.

It was in this apartment, also, that there stood against the western wall, a gigantic clock of ebony. Its pendulum swung to and fro with a dull, heavy, monotonous clang; and when the minute-hand made the circuit of the face, and the hour was to be stricken, there came from the brazen lungs of the clock a sound which was clear and loud and deep and exceedingly musical, but of so peculiar a note and emphasis that, at each lapse of an hour, the musicians of the orchestra were constrained to pause, momentarily, in their performance, to harken to the sound; and thus the waltzers perforce ceased their evolutions; and there was a brief disconcert of the whole gay company; and, while the chimes of the clock yet rang, it was observed that the giddiest grew pale, and the more aged and sedate passed their hands over their brows as if in confused reverie or meditation. But when the echoes had fully ceased, a light

laughter at once pervaded the assembly; the musicians looked at each other and smiled as if at their own nervousness and folly, and made whispering vows, each to the other, that the next chiming of the clock should produce in them no similar emotion; and then, after the lapse of sixty minutes, (which embrace three thousand and six hundred seconds of the Time that flies,) there came yet another chiming of the clock, and then were the same disconcert and tremulousness and meditation as before.

But, in spite of these things, it was a gay and magnificent revel. The tastes of the duke were peculiar. He had a fine eye for colours and effects. He disregarded the *decora* of mere fashion. His plans were bold and fiery, and his conceptions glowed with barbaric lustre. There are some who would have thought him mad. His followers felt that he was not. It was necessary to hear and see and touch him to be *sure* that he was not.

He had directed, in great part, the movable embellishments of the seven chambers, upon occasion of this great *fête*; and it was his own guiding taste which had given character to the masqueraders. Be sure they were grotesque. There were much glare and glitter and piquancy and phantasm— much of what has been since seen in "Hernani". There were arabesque figures with unsuited limbs and appointments. There were delirious fancies such as the madman fashions. There were much of the beautiful, much of the wanton, much of the *bizarre*, something of the terrible, and not a little of that which might have excited disgust. To and fro in the seven chambers there stalked, in fact, a multitude of dreams. And these— the dreams— writhed in and about taking hue from the rooms, and causing the wild music of the orchestra to seem as the echo of their steps. And, anon, there strikes the ebony clock which stands in the hall of the velvet. And then, for a moment, all is still, and all is silent save the voice of the clock. The dreams are stiff-frozen as they stand. But the echoes of the chime die away— they have endured but an instant— and a light, half-subdued laughter floats after them as they depart. And now again the music swells, and the dreams live, and writhe to and fro more merrily than ever, taking hue from the many tinted windows through which stream the rays from the tripods. But to the chamber which lies most westwardly of the seven, there are now none of the maskers who venture; for the night is waning away; and there flows a ruddier light through the blood-coloured panes; and the blackness of the sable drapery appals; and to him whose foot falls upon the sable carpet, there comes from the near clock of ebony a muffled peal more solemnly emphatic than any which reaches *their* ears who indulged in the more remote gaieties of the other apartments.

But these other apartments were densely crowded, and in them beat feverishly the heart of life. And the revel went whirlingly on, until at length

there commenced the sounding of midnight upon the clock. And then the music ceased, as I have told; and the evolutions of the waltzers were quieted; and there was an uneasy cessation of all things as before. But now there were twelve strokes to be sounded by the bell of the clock; and thus it happened, perhaps, that more of thought crept, with more of time, into the meditations of the thoughtful among those who revelled. And thus too, it happened, perhaps, that before the last echoes of the last chime had utterly sunk into silence, there were many individuals in the crowd who had found leisure to become aware of the presence of a masked figure which had arrested the attention of no single individual before. And the rumour of this new presence having spread itself whisperingly around, there arose at length from the whole company a buzz, or murmur, expressive of disapprobation and surprise—then, finally, of terror, of horror, and of disgust.

In an assembly of phantasms such as I have painted, it may well be supposed that no ordinary appearance could have excited such sensation. In truth the masquerade licence of the night was nearly unlimited; but the figure in question had out-Heroded Herod, and gone beyond the bounds of even the prince's indefinite decorum. There are chords in the hearts of the most reckless which cannot be touched without emotion. Even with the utterly lost, to whom life and death are equally jests, there are matters of which no jest can be made. The whole company, indeed, seemed now deeply to feel that in the costume and bearing of the stranger neither wit nor propriety existed. The figure was tall and gaunt, and shrouded from head to foot in the habiliments of the grave. The mask which concealed the visage was made so nearly to resemble the countenance of a stiffened corpse that the closest scrutiny must have had difficulty in detecting the cheat. And yet all this might have been endured, if not approved, by the mad revellers around. But the mummer had gone so far as to assume the type of the Red Death. His vesture was dabbled in *blood*— and his broad brow, with all the features of the face, was besprinkled with the scarlet horror.

When the eyes of the Prince Prospero fell upon this spectral image (which, with a slow and solemn movement, as if more fully to sustain its role, stalked to and fro among the waltzers) he was seen to be convulsed, in the first moment with a strong shudder either of terror or distaste; but, in the next, his brow reddened with rage.

"Who dares,"— he demanded hoarsely of the courtiers who stood near him— "who dares insult us with this blasphemous mockery? Seize him and unmask him— that we may know whom we have to hang, at sunrise, from the battlements!"

It was in the eastern or blue chamber in which stood the Prince Prospero as he uttered these words. They rang throughout the seven rooms loudly and clearly, for the prince was a bold and robust man, and the music had become hushed at the waving of his hand.

It was in the blue room where stood the prince, with a group of pale courtiers by his side. At first, as he spoke, there was a slight rushing movement of this group in the direction of the intruder, who at the moment was also near at hand, and now, with deliberate and stately step, made closer approach to the speaker. But from a certain nameless awe with which the mad assumptions of the mummer had inspired the whole party, there were found none who put forth hand to seize him; so that, unimpeded, he passed within a yard of the prince's person; and, while the vast assembly, as if with one impulse, shrank from the centres of the rooms to the walls, he made his way uninterruptedly, but with the same solemn and measured step which had distinguished him from the first, through the blue chamber to the purple— through the purple to the green— through the green to the orange— through this again to the white— and even thence to the violet, ere a decided movement had been made to arrest him. It was then, however, that the Prince Prospero, maddening with rage and the shame of his own momentary cowardice, rushed hurriedly through the six chambers, while none followed him on account of a deadly terror that had seized upon all. He bore aloft a drawn dagger, and had approached, in rapid impetuosity, to within three or four feet of the retreating figure, when the latter, having attained the extremity of the velvet apartment, turned suddenly and confronted his pursuer. There was a sharp cry— and the dagger dropped gleaming upon the sable carpet, upon which, instantly afterwards, fell prostrate in death the Prince Prospero. Then, summoning the wild courage of despair, a throng of the revellers at once threw themselves into the black apartment, and, seizing the mummer, whose tall figure stood erect and motionless within the shadow of the ebony clock, gasped in unutterable horror at finding the grave cerements and corpse-like mask, which they handled with so violent a rudeness, untenanted by any tangible form.

And now was acknowledged the presence of the Red Death. He had come like a thief in the night. And one by one dropped the revellers in the blood-bedewed halls of their revel, and died each in the despairing posture of his fall. And the life of the ebony clock went out with that of the last of the gay. And the flames of the tripods expired. And Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all.

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13: The Revenge

Anonymous

Kalgoorlie Western Argus, 17 Dec 1896

THE RAIN fell relentlessly, the wind that swept in through the Golden Gate was piercingly cold, and the poor wretch toiling painfully up the steep asphalt pavement staggered as he walked, and now and then stopped to steady himself, pressing with his trembling hand against the buildings that he passed. His soiled, ragged clothes were soaking with the wet, and his emaciated features were pale as with the chill of death.

When he had reached the summit of Nob Hill, he paused and wrapped his arm about an electric light post at the corner, leaning against it for the support his feeble frame needed so pitifully. A quick, firm step sounded on the pavement.

"For Heaven's sake give me money to buy food!" said the wretch at the post. The quick step ceased.

"Why don't you say 'drink,' and speak the truth?" said the man, running his gloved hand down into the pocket of his fur-lined overcoat.

The glare of the electric light shone full upon his handsome, florid face. The poor wretch caught his breath sharply, and made a step forward. The money which the man tossed into his outstretched hand gleamed a moment in his trembling t alm, and in another rattled noisily upon the stones far out into the street.

"I want no gold of yours," said the wretch, with an energy that shook his whole frame. "I want no gold of yours, Henry Mason."

The man started; his florid face turned livid.

"Who dares to call me Henry Mason? My name is Derwent— Thomas Derwent," the man said, hoarsely, staring wildly about him into the night.

"You are out of reach of help just now, Henry Mason," said the wretch, with a laugh. "I saw the policeman from his beat running in an opium-soaked Chinaman a few moments ago. I believe that my hour of reckoning has come at last."

"Who are you?"

"You knew me well enough twenty years ago," the wretch answered.

"Howard Scott!" exclaimed the man.

"Oh, I thought you would recall me." And the wretch laughed again.

"What do you want?" asked the man, unbottoning his coat. His voice was unsteady and his hand trembling.

"Neither your money nor your life, Henry Mason," said the wretch bitterly. "That will do me no good now. Listen! You live near here. I know your house.

Why on earth I never spotted you before is a mystery. But I think it was more your hard, cold voice than your looks that betrayed you."

Scott pulled a revolver from his hip pocket. The man caught its gleam in the light and started back.

"Don't move," Scott interposed, calmly. "You are not worth it, and my game is not yet played. Lead on to your house, and dare to budge one inch out of the way at your peril. I want a quiet, warm place to do some writing. Perhaps you do not know that I adopted a different profession after you ruined me and helped yourself to my money? I'm a special correspondent when I've life enough to be anything at all. I haven't made much of my life, as you see, but I can write."

"If you want money, tell me how much," Derwent said, hoarsely.

"I told you I wanted no money of yours," said Scott, moving a step nearer. "I shall he paid enough for my night's job to tide over the few weeks of life that are left me. What I want is revenge and the chance to set myself right in the eyes of the world. You have robbed me of my life; that I cannot get back. You have stolen my money, as you did that of many others, and have saddled upon me a disgrace that should rest on your own shoulders. It was you who forged that draft, and not I, and you know it, though I served my term in the penitentiary for the crime. You call yourself a gentleman now, Henry Mason, and I am worse than a dog, but my hour has come. Lead on home."

The wretch had raised his voice almost to a scream, and now waved the revolver in the air. The man walked on, glancing over his shoulder furtively.

"I told you I shou'd not kill you unless you tried to escape," said Scott, with a sneer. "If you speak to any passer-by, however, you are a dead man on the word. Go on!"

The rest of the way was made in silence. Scott was close upon Derwent's heels when he mounted the marble steps of his stately mansion and turned the latch-key. Within all was silent. The wretch had counted on this; it was well past midnight.

The gentle radiance of the soft lights, the warm air of the elegant house, almost overpowered him, but Derwent heard the click of the revolver in his trembling hand, and pushed open the library door.

"So this is your home, Henry Mason?" said Scott, staring about him.

"Not so loud, man, for Heaven's sake!" cried Derwent.

"So this is your home!" Scott proceeded, unheeding. "Not much like the prison cell that was my home for ten years, thanks to you, Henry Mason; not very much like the ratholes that make about the only home I know now."

"What do you want, man?" began Derwent, his hand finding his pocket again.

"Pen and paper," said Scott fiercely rousing himself and sinking into a chair at the writing table. "Now do you sit there across the room front me. Move or speak at your own risk."

Scott took the revolver in his left hand, and began to write, yet keeping a close eye upon Derwent all the while. By-and-by he read aloud:

"I, Henry Mason, alias Thomas J. Derwent, do hereby certify that I forged the note upon the Goldthwaite Bank of New York City, twenty years ago, for which Howard Scott stood accused. I declare said Scott innocent. I alone am guilty."

"Come now, and sign your name. Straight goods; I know your signature remember."

"I will give you ten, fifteen, twenty thousand dollars-" began Derwent eagerly.

"Sign!"

"Fifty thousand—"

"Sign!" and the revolver clicked. Derwent bent over the paper. "One hundred thousand— anything, everything—"

"Write ' Henry Mason, alias Thomas J. Derwent,' " said Scott.

The man wrote staggering back from the table with a groan.

"Now that part of the business is finished. Resume your seat," said Scott. "I want to do some writing on my own hook, and these are about as cosy quarters as I can find. You are pretty well known at home, Henry Mason, if you did shunt that forgery off on me, and it will add somewhat to the interest of my telegrams to state that they were written in your own handsomely-appointed library. When I have finished I shall use your telephone a moment. The boys at the station know me very well. A special correspondent comes to know a great many people, you know," he said, with a short laugh, "and I shall have no difficulty in getting a man to take charge of you. Whatever else they know about me, they know I am no liar After that my game is played."

He wrote on busily for an hour. At last he picked p the loose sheets and read aloud what he had written. He had told the truth when he said he knew how to write. The story that be told of his own suffering for the crime of another would have made him famous, so full was is of dramatic power and graphic detail. At the first merciless headlines Derwent groaned aloud, but Scott went on pitilessly, telling the whole dark story of the man's crime. Meanwhile he sat with his head bowed in his hands, listening. He did not raise his head even when Scott rang the telephone bell and ordered a man up from the station.

The house of cards which it had taken him twenty years to build had tumbled about his head, and he sat bowed and broken among the ruins. The

passing moments seemed hours of agony and despair. In the midst of it all there was a frou-frou of skirts in the hall and the patter of slippered feet on the hardwood floor. The door opened softly.

"Is it you, father, dear?" a sweet voice asked, and Scott looked up to see a young girl standing in the doorway. She was a beautiful, sweet-faced young thing; and her dead-gold hair was flung loosely back over her shoulder, and a tender look of sleep was in her blue eyes.

"I am so glad you have come, dear," she went on. "I had gone to bed, and was asleep, but heard the telephone and fancied it must be you. I am so glad to see you, you sweet old papa."

Derwent fancied he heard a click of the fevolver, and looked up sharply. But Scott thrdw a newspaper over his left hand and coughed softly behind his palm.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, father!" said the girl, springing to her feet. "I thought you were alone."

There was not even a glance at Scott as she turned and left the room, Derwent uttered a stifled cry as the door closed.

"Lucie!" B

ut Scott had sprang to his feet.

"At your peril!" he said, jamming the revolver under Derwent's nose.

"Your daughter, I suppose?" he went on.

"Yes," Derwent murmured.

"How old is she I"

"Eighteen years."

"Then she knows nothing of your dirty past?"

"Nothing."

"And believes in you?"

"Yes."

And the man groaned.

"Then God help her, poor little girl!" said Scott, fervently. The heavy tread of the policeman was heard mounting the stone steps. Scott hesitated a moment, then, whipping the revolver into his pocket, he snatched the closely-written sheets from the table and tore them into shreds.

"So my game is ended," he said with a laugh as he stuffed the torn bits into the blazing grate. "Open the door and let the man in."

Derwent hesitated.

"Coward!" said Scott between his teeth, but he opened the door himself. The big policemen looked from one to the other in amazement.

"You, here!" he said, staring at Scott. They were friends in a queer sort of way.

"Yes, Mike," Scott answered. "Gentlemen like that one yonder don't like to be troubled with wretches like me, so I guess you'll have to run me in. A berth in your comfortable quarters is not objectionable on a night like this?"

"What is to be the charge?" said Mike, turning to Derwent with no very good grace. The man was silent. He still sat cowering in his chair, dazed and helpless.

"Oh, the gentleman will no doubt be on hand to prefer charges in the morning," interposed Scott, with a laugh. "Let's go, Mike."

"What a horrid wretch that was," said Lucie, coming from the back of the hall and putting her hand through her father's arm when the door closed. "What did he want of you?"

"Money, of course, child," answered her father, hoarsely.

"Well, I'm glad that you telephoned for a policeman to take him away if he was troubling you."

A man was reported dead at police station Number Ten the next morning. Thomas Derwent went into the little, whitewashed room and stood a moment looking into the pinched face of the dead man whose lips were closed for ever. Then, buttoning up his fur-lined cvercoat, he went out again, breathing freely.

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14: The Skeleton Tree

Flora Annie Steel

1847-1929

Collier's Weekly, 28 April 1900

West Australian, 7 July 1900

THE ENGINE was conscientiously climbing to the level plateau which stretches between Bhopal and Bandakui when I heard this story.

Ten minutes before, apparently for no other purpose save to supply the first class passengers with their early cup of tea, the mail train had stopped at a desolate little station, which consisted of a concrete-arched oven-like shed, made a still more obtrusively unfitted for the wilderness in which it stood by a dejected bottle-gourd striving to climb up it.

Here a wistful-faced old man in spotless white raiment had appeared in the dawn with a tray of tea and toast. There were four cups of tea, and only two passengers; myself and a man who had already been asleep on one side of the carriage when I took possession of the other at Bhopal. So we saw each other for the first time as we sat up in our sleeping suits among our blankets and pillows. As the train moved on, in a series of dislocations which sent half my tea into my saucer, we left the wistful old face looking at the two unsold cups of tea regretfully, and I wished I had bought the lot. It seemed such a pathetic group to leave there in the wilderness, backed by a European oven and a climbing gourd.

And it was a wilderness. Miles and miles of it, all the same. Piles of red rocks, blackened on the upper surface, scattered as if they had been shot from a cart among dry bents and stunted bushes; curious bushes with a plenitude of twig and a paucity of leaf. Here and there was a still more stunted tree with a paucity of both. A rudimentary tree, splay, gouty, with half a dozen or so of kidney-shaped lobes in place of foliage— parched, dusty, unwholesome.

Not a level country, but one dented into causeless dells, raised into irrelevant hillocks; both, however, trending almost imperceptibly upwards, so that the eye, deceived by this, imagined greater things on the horizon. But there was, nothing. Only here and there a bigger patch of charred and blackened bents, telling where a spark from a passing train had found a wider field for fire than usual, unchecked by the piles of red rocks. That, then, was the secret of their blackened surface.

It was too still in that hot windless dawn for flame, but as we sped on we added to the dull trails of smoke creeping slowly among the stones and bushes, each with a faint touch of fire showing like an eye to the snaky curves behind. A sinister-looking landscape, indeed, to unaccustomed eyes like mine. I

sat watching those stealthy fire-tipped fingers in the grass till at a curve in the line due to a steeper rise I saw something.

"What on earth's that?" I cried.

"What's what?" returned my unknown companion in such a curious tone of voice that, involuntarily, I turned to him for a moment.

"That— that tree, I suppose it is," I began, "but look for yourself."

I turned back to the sight which had startled me, and gave a low gasp. It was gone. On more level ground we were steaming quickly past a very ordinary dent of a dell, where, as usual, one of these stunted rudimentary trees stood on an open patch of dry bents, seamed and seared by fire trails. I looked at my companion incredulously.

"What an extraordinary thing!" I exclaimed. "I could have sworn that I saw—" I paused from sheer astonishment.

"What?" asked the other passenger curiously

"What?" I echoed. "That is just the question. It looked like a tree— a skeleton tree. Absolutely white, with curved ribs of branches— and there were tongues of flame."

I paused again, looking out on what we were passing.

"It must, of course," I continued, "have been some curious effect of light on that stunted tree yonder. Its branches are curved like ribs, and, if you notice, the bark is lighter."

"Exactly," assented my companion.

Then he told me a long botanical name, and pointed out that there were many such trees or bushes in the low jungle, all distinctly to be seen against the darker kinds; distinctly, but not blindingly like that curious effect of dawn light I had seen. I had, however, almost forgotten my vision, as, thus started, we talked over our tea, when he suddenly said, "Going on to Agra, I suppose?"

"No," I replied, "I'm globe-trotting for sport. I'm going to spend all I can of my return ticket in these jungles after leopard and tiger. I hear it a first class if you don't mind letting yourself go— getting right away from the beaten track, and all that. I mean to get hold of a jungle tribe if I can— money's no object, and—" I ran on, glad to detail plans for what had been a long-cherished dream of mine, when my companion arrested me by the single word: "Don't."

It was in consequence of my surprise that he told me the following story:

"I surveyed this railway ten years ago. The country was very much the same as it is now, except that it was all, naturally, off the beaten track. There were two of us in camp together, Graham and myself. He was a splendid chap; keen as mustard on everything. It did not matter what it was. So that one day, when he and I were working out levels after late breakfast, he jumped up like a shot— just as if he had not been tramping over these cursed rubbish shoots of

red rocks for six hours— at the sound of a feeble whimpering near the cook-room tent.

" 'That devil of yours is at it again,' he said, 'and I won't have it, that's all!' As he went off, I followed, for I did not relish Graham's justice when it disabled the cook.

"But this time I owned that the brute deserved punishment for a more forlorn little tragedy than that which was being enacted among the pots and pans I never saw.

"Mohubbut Khan, chief villain, was seated— naked to the waist, bald as to head after the manner of native cooks at work— on a low reed stool brandishing a knife in one hand, while the other held a scrawking leggy white cock.

"Exactly in front of him was a group more suggestive of monkeys than men. It consisted of a very old man, wizened bandy-legged, bandy-armed, whose white teeth showed in animal perfection as he howled, and a child of the same build clinging to him convulsively, all legs and arms and shrieks.

"Between them and the cook stood Graham. He was a big fellow; fair as you are, in fact you are rather like him. There was a moment's pause, during which the old anatomy's voice rose in plaintive howls of resignation.

" 'Lo! sonling, be comforted. Death comes to all, even to white cocks. It is but a few years. And grand-dad will hatch another. It is a sacrifice. Sacrifice to the *sahib logue* who bring death as they choose:'

"Well, it turned out, of course, to be a case of wanton cruelty. It always is. For hopeless inability to be considerate commend me to a native jack-in-office. There were fifty other fowls in the neighbouring village, but nothing would serve the underling whose duty it was to collect supplies but that this wretched child's pet should serve for the Huzoor's dinner. The old man's joy when it was released was purely pitiable. He would have reared another for his grandson, he asserted garrulously; aye, even to the hatching of an egg from the very beginning, with toil by day and night. But only the Great God knew if the child's heart would have gone out to the chick as it had to the cock; for a the heart was capricious. It was not to be counted upon, since the Great God made some men, yea! even some Huzoors, different from others. He looked from Graham to me as he spoke, and somehow I felt small. So as Graham was evidently master of the situation I slunk back to my work.

"There were sounds of woe thereinafter from the cook-room tent, and Graham himself supervised the dinner that night, in order, he explained somewhat apologetically, that I might not suffer from his conception of duty.

"It was two days after this, and we had shifted camp fifteen miles, when, having occasion to go into Graham's camp after dark, I stumbled over someone

sitting among the corner tent pegs. It was the grandpapa of the white cock, and he explained to me in his lingo— for he was one of the jungle people— that he had come in exchange for that precious bird. One life or another mattered little. Grim Sahib had spared the child's heart's joy, which was now living with him in the maternal mansion. There being, therefore, no necessity for the occupation of hatching eggs, he Bunder— yea! of a surety, it was the same name as that of the monkey people had come to do service to the Huzoors instead of the white cock.

"That was absolutely all I could get out of him. So for days and weeks he followed us. He was useful in his way, especially to Graham, who had a passion not only for sport but for all sorts of odd knowledge."

I remember interrupting here that that was half the pleasure of new surroundings, to which my fellow-traveller replied drily that he had expected I would say so, as I really reminded him very much of Graham.

"This passion of his, however, led him into being a bit reckless, and as the hot weather came on he began to get touched by fever. Still, he continued working during the off days, and seemed little the worse until one evening when he went to bed with the shivers after a leopard hunt. Then old Bunder crept over to my tent.

" 'Grim sahib must go home across the black water at once, Huzoor,' he 'said quietly, ' or his bones will whiten the jungle. He has seen the Skeleton Tree.'

"That was, in essence, all he had to say, though. His explanations were lengthy. It was simply a Skeleton Tree, and it was always seen where fire fingers met; but those who saw it became skeletons in the jungle before long unless they possessed a certain talisman.' There were such talismans among the hill tribes, and those who fell sick of fever always wore; one if they could compass it. That was not often, since they were rare. He himself had one, but what use was it when life, from old age, had become no more worth than a white cock's? So his grandson wore it— wore it as he fed the joy of his heart peacefully in the ancestral home; thanks to Grim sahib! 'But how do you know he saw the Tree?' I asked. 'It was when we had crawled up nigh the end of a dip, Huzoor,' replied Bunder. 'He looked up and said, "what's that?" And when I asked him what he had seen, he: said, "It is gone. It must have been that stunted tree. But it looked like a skeleton; and there were fire fingers. round it." So I knew. Send him home, Huzoor, away from its power, or his bones will whiten the jungle.'

"During the following days I really began— though I'm not an imaginative chap— to feel a bit queer about things. Graham couldn't shake off his fever, and more than once when he was delirious in the evenings he would startle me

by saying, 'What's that?' But he would laugh the next moment, and add, 'Only a tree of course; it was the light.'

"There was no doctor within miles; and, besides, it was not really' such a bad case as all that. At least it didn't seem so to me or to Graham himself. Only to old Bunder, who, became quite a nuisance with his warnings, so that I was glad when, after a confused rigmarole about white cocks and sacrifices, he disappeared one day and was seen no more, partly, perhaps, because we moved back to a higher camp in the hope of escaping the malaria.

"But we didn't. Graham a grew appreciably worse. He was fairly well by day; it was at night that the fever seemed to grip him. I used to sit up with him till twelve or one o'clock, and then turn in till about dawn when the servants had orders to call me, and I would go over and see after him again.

"But one day, or rather night, it was still quite dark when my bearer roused me with his persistent drone of *'Saheeb, saheeb*!' and I knew in an instant something was wrong. Graham, shortly after I left him, had got out of bed, dressed himself in his *shikar* clothes, taken his gun and gone away from the camp. His bearer, a lad whom he had promoted to the place in one of his impulsive generous fits of revolt against things unjustifiable, had failed to take alarm until his masters' prolonged absence had made him seek and rouse my man. The latter was full of apologies; but what else, he protested, could be expected of' babes and sucklings promoted out of due season. The babe and suckling meanwhile was blubbering incoherently and asserting that he was not to blame. The sahib had called for Bunder, and Bunder had come; and they had gone off together.

" 'Bunder?' I exclaimed. 'Impossible! He hasn't been near the camp for days. Did anyone else see him?' But no one had. And as there was no time to be lost in inquiries I dismissed the idea as an attempt on the boy's part to relieve himself from responsibility, and organised the whole camp into a search party.

"It was a last quarter moon, and I shall never forget the eeriness of that long, fruitless search. At first I kept calling 'Graham, Graham!' but after a time I felt this to be useless, and that he must be either unconscious, or delirious, or determined to keep out of our way. So I pushed on and on in silence, through the bushes and bents, expecting the worst. But after all it was the best. We found him at dawn lying under one of those stunted trees fast asleep. So sound asleep that he did not wake when we carried him back to the camp on a litter of boughs. So sound that it was not until the afternoon, when he stirred and asked for beef tea, that I discovered he wore round his neck a plaited cord of dirty red silk with a small bag attached to it.

" 'How the deuce did that come there?' he asked drowsily, putting his hand up to feel it. How, indeed? He could never explain; and the bag held nothing but a bit of blank paper folded into four. He took the thing to England with him when he went home on sick leave the next month, and so far as I know is no wiser than he was then as to how it came round his neck."

Here my fellow traveller paused, as a whistle from the engine told we were pulling up again.

"Well," I said, a trifle plaintively, "but why should not I?"

"This is my station," he replied, beginning to gather his bedding together, "so I must hurry up. That was ten years ago. Two years after that I had to come over the same ground, doing the alignment. And just about the very spot where I found Graham— I believe under the very same tree— I came upon a the skeleton of an old bandy-legged, bandy-armed man. It may have been Bunder, it may not—" but he was already getting out on to the deserted little platform at which we had drawn up.

"If I were you I would not— Here! Station-master, get out my things, will you?"

A minute after we were steaming on again, leaving him behind, a quaint figure in his striped sleeping suit against the background of another arched oven with a bottle-gourd growing over it.

"Unless you have," came his voice, "a white cock to sacrifice to—" I could hear no more.

Whether the story he told me would have made me think twice before tempting malaria in the jungles I do not know; for when I reached the place whence I had intended starting I found a telegram which recalled me to England. I have not been in India since. But I never think of that railway journey without seeing some quaint visions. First a wistful face, backed by the wilderness, looking at two cups of tea; next that uncanny white tree with its branches curved like ribs; finally, an old man with bandy legs, bandy arms, and a white cock.

As for my fellow traveller whom I left in the wilderness also in his striped sleeping suit, I sometimes wonder if he was romancing or not. There is no reason why he should have been, for India holds many Bunders who are content to be white cocks.

It also holds Skeleton Trees, as anyone can see who travels from Bhopal to Bandakui.

15: The Crinkleton Mystery

Percy Fitzgerald

Percy Hetherington Fitzgerald, 1834-1925
Cassell's Magazine 4 July 1874
Victorian Express (Geraldton) 7 July 1888

OUR GROTESQUE TEAPOT was an article decidedly ugly, wearing a permanent and disagreeable grin, and with a kind of snake arrangement for handle and spout.

The gentle associations— the days labour done, the drawing in round the fire, the family circle, with the cheering and not inebriating results— seem wholly incompatible with the use of such, an article; and the spectacle of the amiable fluid poured from such a vessel by gentle hands, almost a painful one. But I would not part with it for any money; it is held in affection like a cherished heirloom.

Yet it is damaged— indeed, from the network of lines and cracks which covers it, even an unprofessional could see that it had been "smashed " into a hundred pieces at least.

So it has. One day it got a fall— was dropped— and lay on the floor, shivered into a heap of fragments. The restoration, deemed impossible at first, was undertaken for a large sum of money, which was paid with delight, for that fall brought about what what you are now going to hear.

I well recollect the day that my dear father secured it, and when he said it was "a unique." We could see no beauty in it, although we tried hard to do so; and as to its uniqueness, we rather thought that was an advantage for the world, and for the spread of taste.

He was considered a gentle enthusiast, this Mr. Crinkleton, and as I once overheard a brother-amateur whisper to his friend, "like a particular saucer— all cracked and mended," and though I should not say it, still the conviction began to force itself on me of late years that, from over-devotion to this pursuit, he had grown a little odd.

Not that he was one of the reckless, wasteful amateurs, with whom collecting is a passion as impossible to be resisted as drinking, and who devour and swallow everything with a reckless craving. He had the most surprising taste and judgment, and it was admitted that the choicest and most valuable portion of his collection had been gathered very cheaply, when he was a poor man. But I can see I have been assuming a good many things as known, which there has not been time to tell.

I, who have now the grotesque teapot in my hand, and am relating this story, was his son— a son that worshipped him, and sympathised with what friends called his hobby; though I frankly own I never could understand how

this plate was precious, or that jug was rare, or this "bit of Palissy worth more than the number of sovereigns that would cover its surface."

I confess indeed, I had a feeling, but it was one of repulsion, for those known lizards which kept crawling over the green plants. However, he understood these things, and I did not, though he often offered to teach, or rather inspire me. Corner shelves and cupboards appeared and were crowded. Cabinets became choke-full, and the fame of the "Crinkleton Collec-tion" began to spread.

As is usual in each cases, public opinion was divided, one portion of the community laughing at and pitying the poor man who was wasting his own and the family substance in a lot of crockery and gallipots; the other looking knowing, and saying that "little old Crinkleton" knew well what he was about, and would by-and-by sell the collection for ten times the amount it cost him.

It did indeed seem likely— for what he had bought for a few shillings he was now offered pounds. I was all this time what is called "a little thing"— a pet, dividing the affection of my father with his other treasures.

That constituted our united family— that perpetually increasing family— I finding new relations every day, in the shape of China dogs, Chelsea shepherds, Dresden beauties, and Toby jugs. Oh, the Battersea enamel snuff-boxes and wine-labels! the tea-urns of rare Bedlin!— but I must leave this subject, or I shall never get on.

One day, however, there came a surprise, not to say a shock, for me. That queer little Crinkleton, as the neighbours and friends would call him, had brought some new treasures and curiosities.

Alas! a stepmother and her daughter. They were very designing people, and, I believe, frightened him into it. He was shrinking and timorous, he would never have had the courage to carry such a scheme into execution. Thenceforth began a new and, for me, a terrible life.

They brought no money with them, though he was persuaded that he was doing what is called "a good thing." They very soon convinced him of the contrary.

Two more rapacious spoilers could not be conceived. Each moment in the day they were making an inventory of "the property" about them with a questioning eye. An order was sternly sent forth that all buying was to be given up, and that "good money" was no longer to be squandered on rubbish. Yet it could be seen that, with an extraordinary inconsistency, they watched jealously over every article of the property, counting them, and taking good care to ascertain their value. All our life in that house was of a sudden changed. Our poor dear father seemed to shrink and cower away under this despotism.

As for me, I felt that all happiness was gone, and that I was living in a prison under the charge of gaolers. Many were the little furtive walks he took with me— I being no older than eight or ten years— when we would make our way guiltily to the narrow lane or street, to gaze at curiosities which he dared not purchase. It was miserable for me, whose hand was in his, to note his wistful looks, and even more miserable to see that this was but part of his sufferings under this slavery, which grew more and more galling every day. It was on one of these occasions that we spied the grotesque teapot. The sight brought the color to his cheeks, for he had nothing of that pattern in the collection.

It was exposed in a poor, mean little den— not a curiosity shop at all— a kind of huckster's place. Here the teapot was offered with a view of finding some pur-chaser who would use it for the purpose of making tea. He was enraptured with it. He could at least ask the price. Four-and-sixpence— worth, he said, five guineas, and would be worth double by-and-by. As we went out it was offered for three-and-six. It was very tempting, but he resisted it then.

The next day he took me out with him for a walk, but this was for a second inspection. He delayed long before he could make up his mind, but at last the purchase was made. Then it was to be brought home, and then came the difficulty. Where was it to be placed?— for their Argus eyes would detect the slightest change. But they had an instinct that something was wrong. The daughter was in the parlour window, looking up and down the street, while *she*— I always thought of her as though she were a unique, like the teapot— opened the door, and gave a policeman-like glance at his figure.

The grotesque was hidden away under his coat, but a great protuberance revealed its place of concealment. We were both arrested, the trembling victim assailed by both women, and the grotesque confiscated on the spot, as indeed all his treasures had been already. I saw them later inspecting it curiously, and with eager eyes; for they had a suspicion of its value, and after all trusted to his judgment. Indeed, latterly I noticed that this pair were inspecting the cabinets; and more than once I had surprised them with their heads bent down over some little cup or figure. One day, too, I heard them talking earnestly about some one they called "Dimbley's man," and what he had said. This did make much impression, but in a day or two again I heard a remark about Dimbley's man, to the effect that he was coming to-morrow.

In our next little walk, grown curious about the matter, I asked my father— "Who is Dimbley's man, father?"

He started.

"Why?" he said— "what about him?— what do you know of him ?"

These questions were but quickly, and with agitation. I told him what I had heard, when he almost gave a cry, and turned sharply around to go home.

"I see what they are at. I suspected it. They want to sell the things."

We returned hurriedly— he was in a perfect fever, and when he entered flew to inspect his darling treasures, which he found all safe, though he discovered the two women busily engaged in peering into the cabinets, and handling them cautiously. But with them was a gentlemanly and fluent personage, who was giving his opinion, and admiring the collection. He read the whole situation at a glance. The colour flew to his cheeks, and with vehemence that was wholly artificial and unnatural he addressed the party.

"I know well what all this means," he said; "I'll not have it— I'll not allow it. It is robbery. I'll not part with these things but with my life.— Go away, sir," he said to the gentlemanly man; "this is my property. They are not to be valued or sold."

To do him justice, the gentlemanly man was much put out at this incident, and declared truly that he had merely come, as he supposed at Mr. Crinkleton's request. And he took his departure at once. Then my father turned on them.

"Let a finger be laid on my treasures," he cried, "and I will do something desperate. I'll send them to-morrow to some museum— give them away— sooner than have them scattered. Mind, take warning, for they are part of my life!"

The two ladies were much taken aback at this sudden explosion, and even tried to soothe him. But for the rest of the day he was terribly excited, and the following morning was lying ill in bed, with wild eyes and all the symptoms of fever. A doctor was sent for to attend him— an eminent practitioner— who looked grave. Indeed, the two ladies caught the reflection from his face, and looked grave and disturbed. I was the only one whom he seemed to recognise, though instinctly.

Again there was fresh whispering, and inspection of papers and property. And again his eyes peered out wistfully towards the door, as if he could see the spectral images of his collection, floating away in the direction of Dimbley's.

He grew worse and worse. To my inexpressible grief, it one morning passed round the house in a mysterious way that we were to lose him. Some one came running for me, and took me by the hand to lead me to him. There was a piteous intelligence in his eye, and a gleam of light came into it as he saw me. He was moving his arms, and pointing, and trying to speak.

The lady who was his wife kept turning up her eyes and shaking her head, as who should say his wits were gone. But he kept his imploring glance fixed on me, making as though he would clutch something in his hand. I was sure, I could have sworn it was one of his pet treasures, and stole away to rack my little brain with desperate attempts. At first I thought it must be the two

precious figures of Old Bow, representing Kitty Clive and Woodward Martin as the fine lady and gentleman, and I returned with these in my hands.

A fresh eagerness came into his eyes, and he seemed to smile and nod his head, as though it was something near what he desired. Some curious stupidity came over me— or was it my trouble? for I surely ought to have guessed, and gone out to choose some other article, which should be the right one. While I was taking a hurried bird's-eye glance over the collection, they came running to me again, and I was dragged in to see the last friend I had on earth in his agony.

So he passed away; and after a scarcely decent interval, the two women were going about with avaricious eyes, counting up the treasures.

This time there was no one to interfere with "Dimbley's man," and the eminent firm had pronounced that the whole, when submitted to competition at their well-known mart, would bring a vast sum. By the will of the deceased collector, made shortly after his second marriage, the whole of his property was to go to *her*, and a small pittance was kept for us— that is, for me and for my sister who was at a cheap boarding school.

A great fuss began to be made about the Crinkleton Collection, and it was discovered that another portion was at some museum in the country, where it had been exhibited, and which was quite as valuable as that in our house. The whole, it was expected, would bring ten or twelve thousand pounds. They were gloating over their prospect. We— that is, my sister and I— would be beggars, but they did not think about that.

By-and-by the inventory was taken, the catalogue made out, and the prospect discovered to be even more inviting. The men in green baize arrived to pack and carry away. Spring-vans stood at the door.

We saw the whole stripped gradually— there was not to be a relic kept (so I was told) to remind us of the dear old collector who had brought them together. Very timorously I begged that they would let me choose something which I might keep as a souvenir; but an excuse was made that a list had been taken, and that it would be impossible to make any alteration now.

Utterly shocked and almost desperate with rage at such heartlessness, I came to the resolution that I would have what I wanted, and determined to secure what was associated with one of the last acts of my father's life at which I had assisted, namely, the old teapot. That should be mine, and should not bo subjected to the

profanation of a sale. I did not care for the penalties, which I knew would be awful; they might put me to the torture, they should never know where I had con-cealed this relic.

My plans were laid. I chose a moment when they had gone out, and taking no one into my confidence, prepared to execute the daring scheme. It was a nervous task. The teapot was placed, with a few other articles not yet removed, on a high bracket of antique pattern over the chimney-place. Even standing on a chair I could not reach it; still I was not to be daunted. I constructed a sort of ladder formed of chairs, which, with much trepidation, I ascended.

I secured the grotesque teapot, but without ever having heard the Latin quotation, *Facilis decensus*, I found myself cordially endorsing its truth, and stood there on a precarious balance, carefully holding the treasure, and not knowing what to do next. To get down and leave the teapot, it might be thought, would be the simplest course; but with my nervousness, and its own insecurity, the structure now began to totter.

The next instant I heard *her* on the stairs. How it occurred I know not, but there followed a crash, I being left standing up on the insecure construction, whilst the old cherished teapot had slipped from my fingers, and was dashed into a hundred fragments on the hearthstone!

They rushed in— I was dragged down and in a storm of scoldings was hurried off for punishment. It was inflicted with terrible severity, and I bore it without flinching. One thought was even then in my mind, to recovered the shattered fragments, keep them in that condition, and perhaps one day; when I was richer, get them restored.

When they were tired of scolding and beating, they had gone downstairs; then after waiting patiently I watched my opportunity and stole down. They had not thought it worth while to remove the fragments, which lay there in a heap— the carved handle, the leering face, the spout, the lid.

I gathered them up tenderly, and as I did so, saw that a small piece of paper folded up was lying, as it were, partially thrust into the spout. I took it up with the pieces, on the ground that it was a relic of *his* that ought to be preserved and reverently brought the whole mass away to my own room.

It seemed hopeless. I tried myself to put the pieces together in many different ways, but it was not to be done save by a miracle— a miracle however which skilful hands accomplished later.

In a despair I laid it aside, and then carelessly opened the paper. It was signed with *his* name, which was sufficient to give it an interest for me. And yet this only made me feel more acutely the cruel loss of the piece of earthenware, which I felt that nothing could ever restore to us. It was a long time indeed before I set myself seriously to the task of making out what was writ-ten on the slip of paper.

It began, "Codicil to my Will," and stated that it revoked the bequest of a particular date, and left all his personal properly and effects, including the china, which was to be sold off, to his two children. This I did not quite understand at the time, nor did I see the full force and meaning of it. But seizing a favourable opportunity I got away out of the house, and hurried to a friendly Mr. Baker— of course bald and benevolent— to show it. He started as he read.

"This makes a most important difference," he said; "you must leave it with me, and I will call up in the morning."

Everything, as it proved, was ours. The cruel pair got nothing, save the small sum that had been settled on *her* at the time of her marriage. The collection brought a vast sum, much more indeed than any one had ever anticipated. And the teapot, as I have already said, repaired with the most exquisite art, now reposes in a place of honour.

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16: A Dead Finger

Sabine Baring-Gould

1834-1924

In: *A Book of Ghosts*, London, Methuen & Co., 1904

"A Book of Ghosts", by Sabine Baring-Gould, contained some short stories previously published in magazines, the rest were original to the book. This was one of the original stories.

WHY THE National Gallery should not attract so many visitors as, say, the British Museum, I cannot explain. The latter does not contain much that, one would suppose, appeals to the interest of the ordinary sightseer. What knows such of prehistoric flints and scratched bones? Of Assyrian sculpture? Of Egyptian hieroglyphics? The Greek and Roman statuary is cold and dead.

The paintings in the National Gallery glow with colour, and are instinct with life. Yet, somehow, a few listless wanderers saunter yawning through the National Gallery, whereas swarms pour through the halls of the British Museum, and talk and pass remarks about the objects there exposed, of the date and meaning of which they have not the faintest conception.

I was thinking of this problem, and endeavouring to unravel it, one morning whilst sitting in the room for English masters at the great collection in Trafalgar Square. At the same time another thought forced itself upon me. I had been through the rooms devoted to foreign schools, and had then come into that given over to Reynolds, Morland, Gainsborough, Constable, and Hogarth. The morning had been for a while propitious, but towards noon a dense umber-tinted fog had come on, making it all but impossible to see the pictures, and quite impossible to do them justice. I was tired, and so seated myself on one of the chairs, and fell into the consideration first of all of— why the National Gallery is not as popular as it should be; and secondly, how it was that the British School had no beginnings, like those of Italy and the Netherlands. We can see the art of the painter from its first initiation in the Italian peninsula, and among the Flemings.

It starts on its progress like a child, and we can trace every stage of its growth. Not so with English art. It springs to life in full and splendid maturity. Who were there before Reynolds and Gainsborough and Hogarth? The great names of those portrait and subject painters who have left their canvases upon the walls of our country houses were those of foreigners— Holbein, Kneller, Van Dyck, and Lely for portraits, and Monnoyer for flower and fruit pieces. Landscapes, figure subjects were all importations, none home-grown. How came that about? Was there no limner that was native? Was it that fashion

trampled on homegrown pictorial beginnings as it flouted and spurned native music?

Here was food for contemplation. Dreaming in the brown fog, looking through it without seeing its beauties, at Hogarth's painting of Lavinia Fenton as Polly Peachum, without wondering how so indifferent a beauty could have captivated the Duke of Bolton and held him for thirty years, I was recalled to myself and my surroundings by the strange conduct of a lady who had seated herself on a chair near me, also discouraged by the fog, and awaiting its dispersion.

I had not noticed her particularly. At the present moment I do not remember particularly what she was like. So far as I can recollect she was middle-aged, and was quietly yet well dressed. It was not her face nor her dress that attracted my attention and disturbed the current of my thoughts; the effect I speak of was produced by her strange movements and behaviour.

She had been sitting listless, probably thinking of nothing at all, or nothing in particular, when, in turning her eyes round, and finding that she could see nothing of the paintings, she began to study me. This did concern me greatly. A cat may look at the king; but to be contemplated by a lady is a compliment sufficient to please any gentleman. It was not gratified vanity that troubled my thoughts, but the consciousness that my appearance produced— first of all a startled surprise, then undisguised alarm, and, finally, indescribable horror.

Now a man can sit quietly leaning on the head of his umbrella, and glow internally, warmed and illumined by the consciousness that he is being surveyed with admiration by a lovely woman, even when he is middle-aged and not fashionably dressed; but no man can maintain his composure when he discovers himself to be an object of aversion and terror.

What was it? I passed my hand over my chin and upper lip, thinking it not impossible that I might have forgotten to shave that morning, and in my confusion not considering that the fog would prevent the lady from discovering neglect in this particular, had it occurred, which it had not. I am a little careless, perhaps, about shaving when in the country; but when in town, never.

The next idea that occurred to me was— a smut. Had a London black, curdled in that dense pea-soup atmosphere, descended on my nose and blackened it? I hastily drew my silk handkerchief from my pocket, moistened it, and passed to my nose, and then each cheek. I then turned my eyes into the corners and looked at the lady, to see whether by this means I had got rid of what was objectionable in my personal appearance.

Then I saw that her eyes, dilated with horror, were riveted, not on my face, but on my leg.

My leg! What on earth could that harmless member have in it so terrifying? The morning had been dull; there had been rain in the night, and I admit that on leaving my hotel I had turned up the bottoms of my trousers. That is a proceeding not so uncommon, not so outrageous as to account for the stony stare of this woman's eyes.

If that were all I would turn my trousers down.

Then I saw her shrink from the chair on which she sat to one further removed from me, but still with her eyes fixed on my leg— about the level of my knee. She had let fall her umbrella, and was grasping the seat of her chair with both hands, as she backed from me.

I need hardly say that I was greatly disturbed in mind and feelings, and forgot all about the origin of the English schools of painters, and the question why the British Museum is more popular than the National Gallery.

Thinking that I might have been spattered by a hansom whilst crossing Oxford Street, I passed my hand down my side hastily, with a sense of annoyance, and all at once touched something, cold, clammy, that sent a thrill to my heart, and made me start and take a step forward. At the same moment, the lady, with a cry of horror, sprang to her feet, and with raised hands fled from the room, leaving her umbrella where it had fallen.

There were other visitors to the Picture Gallery besides ourselves, who had been passing through the saloon, and they turned at her cry, and looked in surprise after her.

The policeman stationed in the room came to me and asked what had happened. I was in such agitation that I hardly knew what to answer. I told him that I could explain what had occurred little better than himself. I had noticed that the lady had worn an odd expression, and had behaved in most extraordinary fashion, and that he had best take charge of her umbrella, and wait for her return to claim it.

This questioning by the official was vexing, as it prevented me from at once and on the spot investigating the cause of her alarm and mine— hers at something she must have seen on my leg, and mine at something I had distinctly felt creeping up my leg.

The numbing and sickening effect on me of the touch of the object I had not seen was not to be shaken off at once. Indeed, I felt as though my hand were contaminated, and that I could have no rest till I had thoroughly washed the hand, and, if possible, washed away the feeling that had been produced.

I looked on the floor, I examined my leg, but saw nothing. As I wore my overcoat, it was probable that in rising from my seat the skirt had fallen over my trousers and hidden the thing, whatever it was: I therefore hastily removed

my overcoat and shook it, then I looked at my trousers. There was nothing whatever on my leg, and nothing fell from my overcoat when shaken.

Accordingly I reinvested myself, and hastily left the Gallery; then took my way as speedily as I could, without actually running, to Charing Cross Station and down the narrow way leading to the Metropolitan, where I went into Faulkner's bath and hairdressing establishment, and asked for hot water to thoroughly wash my hand and well soap it. I bathed my hand in water as hot as I could endure it, employed carbolic soap, and then, after having a good brush down, especially on my left side where my hand had encountered the object that had so affected me, I left. I had entertained the intention of going to the Princess's Theatre that evening, and of securing a ticket in the morning; but all thought of theatre-going was gone from me. I could not free my heart from the sense of nausea and cold that had been produced by the touch. I went into Gatti's to have lunch, and ordered something, I forget what, but, when served, I found that my appetite was gone. I could eat nothing; the food inspired me with disgust. I thrust it from me untasted, and, after drinking a couple of glasses of claret, left the restaurant, and returned to my hotel.

Feeling sick and faint, I threw my overcoat over the sofa-back, and cast myself on my bed.

I do not know that there was any particular reason for my doing so, but as I lay my eyes were on my great-coat.

The density of the fog had passed away, and there was light again, not of first quality, but sufficient for a Londoner to swear by, so that I could see everything in my room, though through a veil, darkly.

I do not think my mind was occupied in any way. About the only occasions on which, to my knowledge, my mind is actually passive or inert is when crossing the Channel in *The Foam* from Dover to Calais, when I am always, in every weather, abjectly seasick— and thoughtless. But as I now lay on my bed, uncomfortable, squeamish, without knowing why— I was in the same inactive mental condition. But not for long.

I saw something that startled me.

First, it appeared to me as if the lappet of my overcoat pocket were in movement, being raised.

I did not pay much attention to this, as I supposed that the garment was sliding down on to the seat of the sofa, from the back, and that this displacement of gravity caused the movement I observed. But this I soon saw was not the case. That which moved the lappet was something in the pocket that was struggling to get out. I could see now that it was working its way up the inside, and that when it reached the opening it lost balance and fell down

again. I could make this out by the projections and indentations in the cloth; these moved as the creature, or whatever it was, worked its way up the lining.

'A mouse,' I said, and forgot my seediness; I was interested. 'The little rascal! However did he contrive to seat himself in my pocket? and I have worn that overcoat all the morning!' But no— it was not a mouse. I saw something white poke its way out from under the lappet; and in another moment an object was revealed that, though revealed, I could not understand, nor could I distinguish what it was.

Now roused by curiosity, I raised myself on my elbow. In doing this I made some noise, the bed creaked. Instantly the something dropped on the floor, lay outstretched for a moment, to recover itself, and then began, with the motions of a maggot, to run along the floor.

There is a caterpillar called 'The Measurer', because, when it advances, it draws its tail up to where its head is and then throws forward its full length, and again draws up its extremity, forming at each time a loop, and with each step measuring its total length. The object I now saw on the floor was advancing precisely like the measuring caterpillar. It had the colour of a cheese-maggot, and in length was about three and a half inches. It was not, however, like a caterpillar, which is flexible throughout its entire length, but this was, as it seemed to me, jointed in two places, one joint being more conspicuous than the other. For some moments I was so completely paralysed by astonishment that I remained motionless, looking at the thing as it crawled along the carpet— a dull green carpet with darker green, almost black, flowers in it.

It had, as it seemed to me, a glossy head, distinctly marked; but, as the light was not brilliant, I could not make out very clearly, and, moreover, the rapid movements prevented close scrutiny.

Presently, with a shock still more startling than that produced by its apparition at the opening of the pocket of my great-coat, I became convinced that what I saw was a finger, a human forefinger, and that the glossy head was no other than the nail.

The finger did not seem to have been amputated. There was no sign of blood or laceration where the knuckle should be, but the extremity of the finger, or root rather, faded away to indistinctness, and I was unable to make out the root of the finger.

I could see no hand, no body behind this finger, nothing whatever except a finger that had little token of warm life in it, no coloration as though blood circulated in it; and this finger was in active motion creeping along the carpet towards a wardrobe that stood against the wall by the fireplace.

I sprang off the bed and pursued it.

Evidently the finger was alarmed, for it redoubled its pace, reached the wardrobe, and went under it. By the time I had arrived at the article of furniture it had disappeared. I lit a vesta match and held it beneath the wardrobe, that was raised above the carpet by about two inches, on turned feet, but I could see nothing more of the finger.

I got my umbrella and thrust it beneath, and raked forwards and backwards, right and left, and raked out flue, and nothing more solid.

ii

I PACKED my portmanteau next day and returned to my home in the country. All desire for amusement in town was gone, and the faculty to transact business had departed as well.

A languor and qualms had come over me, and my head was in a maze. I was unable to fix my thoughts on anything. At times I was disposed to believe that my wits were deserting me, at others that I was on the verge of a severe illness. Anyhow, whether likely to go off my head or not, or take to my bed, home was the only place for me, and homeward I sped, accordingly. On reaching my country habitation, my servant, as usual, took my portmaneau to my bedroom, unstrapped it, but did not unpack it. I object to his throwing out the contents of my Gladstone bag; not that there is anything in it he may not see, but that he puts my things where I cannot find them again. My clothes— he is welcome to place them where he likes and where they belong, and this latter he knows better than I do; but, then, I carry about with me other things than a dress suit, and changes of linen and flannel. There are letters, papers, books— and the proper destinations of these are known only to myself. A servant has a singular and evil knack of putting away literary matter and odd volumes in such places that it takes the owner half a day to find them again. Although I was uncomfortable, and my head in a whirl, I opened and unpacked my own portmanteau. As I was thus engaged I saw something curled up in my collar-box, the lid of which had got broken in by a boot-heel impinging on it. I had pulled off the damaged cover to see if my collars had been spoiled, when something curled up inside suddenly rose on end and leapt, just like a cheese-jumper, out of the box, over the edge of the Gladstone bag, and scurried away across the floor in a manner already familiar to me.

I could not doubt for a moment what it was— here was the finger again. It had come with me from London to the country.

Whither it went in its run over the floor I do not know, I was too bewildered to observe.

Somewhat later, towards evening, I seated myself in my easy-chair, took up a book, and tried to read. I was tired with the journey, with the knocking about in town, and the discomfort and alarm produced by the apparition of the finger. I felt worn out. I was unable to give my attention to what I read, and before I was aware was asleep. Roused for an instant by the fall of the book from my hands, I speedily relapsed into unconsciousness. I am not sure that a doze in an armchair ever does good. It usually leaves me in a semi-stupid condition and with a headache.

Five minutes in a horizontal position on my bed is worth thirty in a chair. That is my experience.

In sleeping in a sedentary position the head is a difficulty; it drops forward or lolls on one side or the other, and has to be brought back into a position in which the line to the centre of gravity runs through the trunk, otherwise the head carries the body over in a sort of general capsize out of the chair on to the floor.

I slept, on the occasion of which I am speaking, pretty healthily, because deadly weary; but I was brought to waking, not by my head falling over the arm of the chair, and my trunk tumbling after it, but by a feeling of cold extending from my throat to my heart. When I awoke I was in a diagonal position, with my right ear resting on my right shoulder, and exposing the left side of my throat, and it was here— -where the jugular vein throbs— that I felt the greatest intensity of cold. At once I shrugged my left shoulder, rubbing my neck with the collar of my coat in so doing. Immediately something fell off, upon the floor, and I again saw the finger.

My disgust— horror, were intensified when I perceived that it was dragging something after it, which might have been an old stocking, and which I took at first glance for something of the sort.

The evening sun shone in through my window, in a brilliant golden ray that lighted the object as it scrambled along. With this illumination I was able to distinguish what the object was. It is not easy to describe it, but I will make the attempt.

The finger I saw was solid and material; what it drew after it was neither, or was in a nebulous, protoplasmic condition. The finger was attached to a hand that was curdling into matter and in process of acquiring solidity; attached to the hand was an arm in a very filmy condition, and this arm belonged to a human body in a still more vaporous, immaterial condition. This was being dragged along the floor by the finger, just as a silkworm might pull after it the tangle of its web. I could see legs and arms, and head, and coat-tail tumbling about and interlacing and disentangling again in a promiscuous manner. There were no bone, no muscle, no substance in the figure; the members were

attached to the trunk, which was spineless, but they had evidently no functions, and were wholly dependent on the finger which pulled them along in a jumble of parts as it advanced.

In such confusion did the whole vaporous matter seem, that I think— I cannot say for certain it was so, but the impression left on my mind was— that one of the eyeballs was looking out at a nostril, and the tongue lolling out of one of the ears.

It was, however, only for a moment that I saw this germ-body; I cannot call by another name that which had not more substance than smoke. I saw it only so long as it was being dragged athwart the ray of sunlight. The moment it was pulled jerkily out of the beam into the shadow beyond, I could see nothing of it, only the crawling finger.

I had not sufficient moral energy or physical force in me to rise, pursue, and stamp on the finger, and grind it with my heel into the floor. Both seemed drained out of me. What became of the finger, whither it went, how it managed to secrete itself, I do not know. I had lost the power to inquire. I sat in my chair, chilled, staring before me into space.

'Please, sir,' a voice said, 'there's Mr Square below, electrical engineer.'

'Eh?' I looked dreamily round.

My valet was at the door.

'Please, sir, the gentleman would be glad to be allowed to go over the house and see that all the electrical apparatus is in order.'

'Oh, indeed! Yes— show him up.'

iii

I HAD RECENTLY placed the lighting of my house in the hands of an electrical engineer, a very intelligent man, Mr Square, for whom I had contracted a sincere friendship.

He had built a shed with a dynamo out of sight, and had entrusted the laying of the wires to subordinates, as he had been busy with other orders and could not personally watch every detail.

But he was not the man to let anything pass unobserved, and he knew that electricity was not a force to be played with. Bad or careless workmen will often insufficiently protect the wires, or neglect the insertion of the lead which serves as a safety-valve in the event of the current being too strong. Houses may be set on fire, human beings fatally shocked, by the neglect of a bad or slovenly workman.

The apparatus for my mansion was but just completed, and Mr Square had come to inspect it and make sure that all was right.

He was an enthusiast in the matter of electricity, and saw for it a vast perspective, the limits of which could not be predicted.

'All forces,' said he, 'are correlated. When you have force in one form, you may just turn it into this or that, as you like. In one form it is motive power, in another it is light, in another heat.

'Now we have electricity for illumination. We employ it, but not as freely as in the States, for propelling vehicles. Why should we have horses drawing our buses? We should use only electric trains. Why do we burn coal to warm our shins? There is electricity, which throws out no filthy smoke as does coal. Why should we let the tides waste their energies in the Thames? in other estuaries? There we have Nature supplying us— free, gratis, and for nothing— with all the force we want for propelling, for heating, for lighting. I will tell you something more, my dear sir,' said Mr Square. 'I have mentioned but three modes of force, and have instanced but a limited number of uses to which electricity may be turned. How is it with photography? Is not electric light becoming an artistic agent? I bet you', said he, 'before long it will become a therapeutic agent as well.'

'Oh, yes; I have heard of certain impostors with their life-belts.' Mr Square did not relish this little dig I gave him. He winced, but returned to the charge. 'We don't know how to direct it aright, that is all,' said he. 'I haven't taken the matter up, but others will, I bet; and we shall have electricity used as freely as now we use powders and pills. I don't believe in doctors' stuffs myself. I hold that disease lays hold of a man because he lacks physical force to resist it. Now, is it not obvious that you are beginning at the wrong end when you attack the disease? What you want is to supply force, make up for the lack of physical power, and force is force wherever you find it— here motive, there illuminating, and so on. I don't see why a physician should not utilize the tide rushing out under London Bridge for restoring the feeble vigour of all who are languid and a prey to disorder in the Metropolis. It will come to that, I bet, and that is not all. Force is force, everywhere. Political, moral force, physical force, dynamic force, heat, light, tidal waves, and so on— all are one, all is one. In time we shall know how to galvanize into aptitude and moral energy all the limp and crooked consciences and wills that need taking in hand, and such there always will be in modern civilisation. I don't know how to do it. I don't know how it will be done, but in the future the priest as well as the doctor will turn electricity on as his principal, nay, his only agent. And he can get his force anywhere, out of the running stream, out of the wind, out of the tidal wave.

'I'll give you an instance,' continued Mr Square, chuckling and rubbing his hands, 'to show you the great possibilities in electricity, used in a crude fashion. In a certain great city away far west in the States, a go-ahead place,

too, more so than New York, they had electric trains all up and down and along the roads to everywhere. The union men working for the company demanded that the non-unionists should be turned off. But the company didn't see it. Instead, it turned off the union men. It had up its sleeve a sufficiency of the others, and filled all places at once. Union men didn't like it, and passed word that at a given hour on a certain day every wire was to be cut. The company knew this by means of its spies, and turned on, ready for them, three times the power into all the wires. At the fixed moment, up the poles went the strikers to cut the cables, and down they came a dozen times quicker than they went up, I bet. Then there came wires to the hospitals from all quarters for stretchers to carry off the disabled men, some with broken legs, arms, ribs; two or three had their necks broken. I reckon the company was wonderfully merciful— it didn't put on sufficient force to make cinders of them then and there; possibly opinion might not have liked it. Stopped the strike, did that. Great moral effect— all done by electricity.'

In this manner Mr Square was wont to rattle on. He interested me, and I came to think that there might be something in what he said— that his suggestions were not mere nonsense. I was glad to see Mr Square enter my room, shown in by my man. I did not rise from my chair to shake his hand, for I had not sufficient energy to do so. In a languid tone I welcomed him and signed to him to take a seat. Mr Square looked at me with some surprise.

'Why, what's the matter?' he said. 'You seem unwell. Not got the 'flu, have you?'

'I beg your pardon?'

'The influenza. Every third person is crying out that he has it, and the sale of eucalyptus is enormous, not that eucalyptus is any good. Influenza microbes indeed! What care they for eucalyptus? You've gone down some steps of the ladder of life since I saw you last, squire. How do you account for that?'

I hesitated about mentioning the extraordinary circumstances that had occurred; but Square was a man who would not allow any beating about the bush. He was downright and straight, and in ten minutes had got the entire story out of me.

'Rather boisterous for your nerves that— a crawling finger,' said he. 'It's a queer story taken on end.'

Then he was silent, considering.

After a few minutes he rose, and said: 'I'll go and look at the fittings, and then I'll turn this little matter of yours over again, and see if I can't knock the bottom out of it, I'm kinder fond of these sort of things.'

Mr Square was not a Yankee, but he had lived for some time in America, and affected to speak like an American. He used expressions, terms of speech

common in the States, but had none of the Transatlantic twang. He was a man absolutely without affectation in every other particular; this was his sole weakness, and it was harmless.

The man was so thorough in all he did that I did not expect his return immediately. He was certain to examine every portion of the dynamo engine, and all the connections and burners. This would necessarily engage him for some hours. As the day was nearly done, I knew he could not accomplish what he wanted that evening, and accordingly gave orders that a room should be prepared for him. Then, as my head was full of pain, and my skin was burning, I told my servant to apologize for my absence from dinner, and tell Mr Square that I was really forced to return to my bed by sickness, and that I believed I was about to be prostrated by an attack of influenza.

The valet— a worthy fellow, who has been with me for six years— was concerned at my appearance, and urged me to allow him to send for a doctor. I had no confidence in the local practitioner, and if I sent for another from the nearest town I should offend him, and a row would perhaps ensue, so I declined. If I were really in for an influenza attack, I knew about as much as any doctor how to deal with it. Quinine, quinine— that was all. I bade my man light a small lamp, lower it, so as to give sufficient illumination to enable me to find some lime-juice at my bed head, and my pocket-handkerchief, and to be able to read my watch. When he had done this, I bade him leave me.

I lay in bed, burning, racked with pain in my head, and with my eyeballs on fire.

Whether I fell asleep or went off my head for a while I cannot tell. I may have fainted. I have no recollection of anything after having gone to bed and taken a sip of lime-juice that tasted to me like soap— till I was roused by a sense of pain in my ribs— a slow, gnawing, torturing pain, waxing momentarily more intense. In half-consciousness I was partly dreaming and partly aware of actual suffering. The pain was real; but in my fancy I thought that a great maggot was working its way into my side between my ribs. I seemed to see it. It twisted itself half round, then reverted to its former position, and again twisted itself, moving like a bradawl, not like a gimlet, which latter forms a complete revolution.

This, obviously, must have been a dream, hallucination only, as I was lying on my back and my eyes were directed towards the bottom of the bed, and the coverlet and blankets and sheet intervened between my eyes and my side. But in fever one sees without eyes, and in every direction, and through all obstructions.

Roused thoroughly by an excruciating twinge, I tried to cry out, and succeeded in throwing myself over on my right side, that which was in pain. At

once I felt the thing withdrawn that was awling— if I may use the word— in between my ribs.

And now I saw, standing beside the bed, a figure that had its arm under the bedclothes, and was slowly removing it. The hand was leisurely drawn from under the coverings and rested on the eiderdown coverlet, with the forefinger extended.

The figure was that of a man, in shabby clothes, with a sallow, mean face, a retreating forehead, with hair cut after the French fashion, and a moustache, dark. The jaws and chin were covered with a bristly growth, as if shaving had been neglected for a fortnight. The figure did not appear to be thoroughly solid, but to be of the consistency of curd, and the face was of the complexion of curd. As I looked at this object it withdrew, sliding backward in an odd sort of manner, and as though overweighted by the hand, which was the most substantial, indeed the only substantial portion of it. Though the figure retreated stooping, yet it was no longer huddled along by the finger, as if it had no material existence. If the same, it had acquired a consistency and a solidity which it did not possess before.

How it vanished I do not know, nor whither it went. The door opened, and Square came in.

'What!' he exclaimed with cheery voice; 'influenza is it?'

'I don't know— I think it's that finger again.'

iv

'NOW, LOOK HERE,' said Square, 'I'm not going to have that cuss at its pranks anymore. Tell me all about it.'

I was now so exhausted, so feeble, that I was not able to give a connected account of what had taken place, but Square put to me just a few pointed questions and elicited the main facts. He pieced them together in his own orderly mind, so as to form a connected whole. 'There is a feature in the case,' said he, 'that strikes me as remarkable and important. At first— a finger only, then a hand, then a nebulous figure attached to the hand, without backbone, without consistency.

'Lastly, a complete form, with consistency and with backbone, but the latter in a gelatinous condition, and the entire figure overweighted by the hand, just as hand and figure were previously overweighted by the finger. Simultaneously with this compacting and consolidating of the figure, came your degeneration and loss of vital force and, in a word, of health. What you lose, that object acquires, and what it acquires, it gains by contact with you. That's clear enough, is it not?'

'I dare say. I don't know. I can't think.'

'I suppose not; the faculty of thought is drained out of you. Very well, I must think for you, and I will. Force is force, and see if I can't deal with your visitant in such a way as will prove just as truly a moral dissuasive as that employed on the union men on strike in— never mind where it was. That's not to the point.'

'Will you kindly give me some lime-juice?' I entreated.

I sipped the acid draught, but without relief. I listened to Square, but without hope. I wanted to be left alone. I was weary of my pain, weary of everything, even of life. It was a matter of indifference to me whether I recovered or slipped out of existence.

'It will be here again shortly,' said the engineer. 'As the French say, l'appetit vient en mangeant. It has been at you thrice, it won't be content without another peck. And if it does get another, I guess it will pretty well about finish you.'

Mr Square rubbed his chin, and then put his hands into his trouser pockets. That also was a trick acquired in the States, an inelegant one. His hands, when not actively occupied, went into his pockets, inevitably they gravitated thither. Ladies did not like Square; they said he was not a gentleman. But it was not that he said or did anything 'off colour', only he spoke to them, looked at them, walked with them, always with his hands in his pockets. I have seen a lady turn her back on him deliberately because of this trick.

Standing now with his hands in his pockets, he studied my bed, and said contemptuously:

'Old-fashioned and bad, fourposter. Oughtn't to be allowed, I guess; unwholesome all the way round.'

I was not in a condition to dispute this. I like a fourposter with curtains at head and feet; not that I ever draw them, but it gives a sense of privacy that is wanting in one of your half-tester beds.

If there is a window at one's feet, one can lie in bed without the glare in one's eyes, and yet without darkening the room by drawing the blinds. There is much to be said for a fourposter, but this is not the place in which to say it.

Mr Square pulled his hands out of his pockets and began fiddling with the electric point near the head of my bed, attached a wire, swept it in a semicircle along the floor, and then thrust the knob at the end into my hand in the bed.

'Keep your eye open,' said he, 'and your hand shut and covered. If that finger comes again tickling your ribs, try it with the point. I'll manage the switch, from behind the curtain.'

Then he disappeared.

I was too indifferent in my misery to turn my head and observe where he was. I remained inert, with the knob in my hand, and my eyes closed, suffering and thinking of nothing but the shooting pains through my head and the aches in my loins and back and legs.

Some time probably elapsed before I felt the finger again at work at my ribs; it groped, but no longer bored. I now felt the entire hand, not a single finger, and the hand was substantial, cold, and clammy. I was aware, how, I know not, that if the finger-point reached the region of my heart, on the left side, the hand would, so to speak, sit down on it, with the cold palm over it, and that then immediately my heart would cease to beat, and it would be, as Square might express it, 'gone coon' with me.

In self-preservation I brought up the knob of the electric wire against the hand— against one of the fingers, I think— and at once was aware of a rapping, squealing noise. I turned my head languidly, and saw the form, now more substantial than before, capering in an ecstasy of pain, endeavouring fruitlessly to withdraw its arm from under the bedclothes, and the hand from the electric point.

At the same moment Square stepped from behind the curtain, with a dry laugh, and said: 'I thought we should fix him. He has the coil about him, and can't escape. Now let us drop to particulars. But I shan't let you off till I know all about you.'

The last sentence was addressed, not to me, but to the apparition.

Thereupon he bade me take the point away from the hand of the figure— being— whatever it was, but to be ready with it at a moment's notice. He then proceeded to catechize my visitor, who moved restlessly within the circle of wire, but could not escape from it. It replied in a thin, squealing voice that sounded as if it came from a distance, and had a querulous tone in it. I do not pretend to give all that was said. I cannot recollect everything that passed. My memory was affected by my illness, as well as my body. Yet I prefer giving the scraps that I recollect to what Square told me he had heard.

'Yes— I was unsuccessful, always was. Nothing answered with me. The world was against me.

'Society was. I hate Society. I don't like work neither, never did. But I like agitating against what is established. I hate the Royal Family, the landed interest, the parsons, everything that is, except the people— that is, the unemployed. I always did. I couldn't get work as suited me. When I died they buried me in a cheap coffin, dirt cheap, and gave me a nasty grave, cheap, and a service rattled away cheap, and no monument. Didn't want none. Oh! there are lots of us. All discontented. Discontent! That's a passion, it is— it gets into the veins, it fills the brain, it occupies the heart; it's a sort of divine cancer that

takes possession of the entire man, and makes him dissatisfied with everything, and hate everybody. But we must have our share of happiness at some time. We all crave for it in one way or other. Some think there's a future state of blessedness and so have hope, and look to attain to it, for hope is a cable and anchor that attaches to what is real, But when you have no hope of that sort, don't believe in any future state, you must look for happiness in life here. We didn't get it when we were alive, so we seek to procure it after we are dead. We can do it, if we can get out of our cheap and nasty coffins. But not till the greater part of us is mouldered away. If a finger or two remains, that can work its way up to the surface, those cheap deal coffins go to pieces quick enough. Then the only solid part of us left can pull the rest of us that has gone to nothing after it. Then we grope about after the living.

'The well-to-do if we can get at them— the honest working poor if we can't— we hate them too, because they are content and happy. If we reach any of these, and can touch them, then we can draw their vital force out of them into ourselves, and recuperate at their expense. That was about what I was going to do with you. Getting on famous. Nearly solidified into a new man; and given another chance in life. But I've missed it this time. Just like my luck. Miss everything. Always have, except misery and disappointment. Get plenty of that.'

'What are you all?' asked Square. 'Anarchists out of employ?'

'Some of us go by that name, some by other designations, but we are all one, and own allegiance to but one monarch— Sovereign discontent. We are bred to have a distaste for manual work; and we grow up loafers, grumbling at everything and quarrelling with Society that is around us and the Providence that is above us.'

'And what do you call yourselves now?'

'Call ourselves? Nothing; we are the same, in another condition, that is all. Folk once called us Anarchists, Nihilists, Socialists, Levelers, now they call us the Influenza. The learned talk of microbes, and bacilli, and bacteria. Microbes, bacilli, and bacteria be blowed! We are the Influenza; we the social failures, the generally discontented, coming up out of our cheap and nasty graves in the form of physical disease We are the Influenza.'

'There you are, I guess!' exclaimed Square triumphantly. 'Did I not say that all forces were correlated? If so, then all negations, deficiences of force are one in their several manifestations.

'Talk of Divine discontent as a force impelling to progress! Rubbish, it is a paralysis of energy. It turns all it absorbs to acid, to envy, spite, gall. It inspires nothing, but rots the whole moral system. Here you have it— moral, social,

political discontent in another form, nay aspect— that is all. What Anarchism is in the body Politic, that Influenza is in the body Physical. Do you see that?'

'Ye-e-e-e-s,' I believe I answered, and dropped away into the land of dreams.

I recovered. What Square did with the Thing I know not, but believe that he reduced it again to its former negative and self-decomposing condition.

———————————

17: The Right Thing

A. E. W. Mason

1865-1948

The Argus, Melbourne, 28 Mar 1900

The West Australian, 19 May 1900

IT HAD BEEN the universal opinion that nothing could come of it, since on the one side Mrs. Wildring was extremely ambitious for her daughter, while on the other Sir Henry Mardale lived in a small dowerhouse, and could leave to his son George only an estate mortgaged to its last farm. So that no one was in the least surprised when George Mardale left England for that country of will-o'-the-wisps, South Africa, and Julia Wildring kept her room for a week. The inevitable end had come, and a compassionate shrug of the shoulders was all that the occasion demanded.

From Africa George wrote home to his father, who found that cramped dowerhouse strangely large and solitary, and at the end of each letter turned to his magnum opus on the Labrador sea-fisheries with a sigh of impatience because that fortune from the gold-fields had still only the solidity of an inspiration. At the close of the third year, however, George wrote in better spirits; at the close of the fourth he had acquired a competency. Then, at the beginning of the fifth, occurred the Raid and the Matabele war, through which George Mardale served as a volunteer.

Sir Henry received in March of this year the letter wherein Harley Burke's name was for the first time mentioned. It was mentioned only briefly, for the letter was no more than a reassuring scrawl, written from the Red Cross hospital in Bulawayo. Enough, however, was said to enable Sir Henry to understand that George owed his life to Harley Burke. He heard nothing more of any consequence until October.

But in the month of October Mrs. Aylward, a widow, who was Sir Henry's neighbour, while she sat at breakfast with her daughter, saw her elderly friend capering wildly up her gravel path, with a sheet of paper flourishing in his hand.

"From George!" he cried through the window.

"He is coming back?" said Mrs. Aylward.

"He is on his way," returned Sir Henry.

"I am glad," exclaimed Muriel. Mrs. Aylward looked with approval at her daughter, who had spoken merely from a frank impulse of friendliness for Sir Henry. Mrs. Aylward had her own views and intentions. The mortgaged estate, plus the competency acquired in South Africa, satisfied her aspirations, however insufficient they might appear to the ambitious Mrs. Wildring; and to her daughters exclamation she added—

"We shall all be delighted to see the dear boy again. When may we expect him? Very soon, since he started so close upon his letter. This week, perhaps."

"Not so soon as that, Mrs. Aylward, I am afraid," answered Sir Henry; and, leaning on the window sill, he read aloud his letter of which the following extract is all that need be quoted:—

"Harley Burke is coming with me. Everything is at a standstill in Africa, and is likely to remain so for some while to come, so that there is nothing to keep us. We propose to stop a few days at Madeira. I hear that the Wildrings are there."

Mrs. Aylward's lips tightened. On the other hand, Muriel's relaxed into a smile.

"Now, who in the world told him the Wildrings were at Madeira?" she asked demurely.

"I am sure I didn't," said Sir Henry.

"I am sure Mrs. Wildring didn't," added Mrs. Aylward, with some asperity.

"And since I didn't—" said Muriel.

"The answer is obvious," added Sir Henry with a laugh. "I wish the boy had come straight home, though. Heaven only knows how long he will stay at Madeira."

"Perhaps Mr. Burke is a rich man," said Mrs. Aylward suddenly and with too open a cheerfulness. "In that case—"

"Yes, in that case," said Sir Henry, interpreting the abrupt breaking off of Mrs. Aylwards sentence, "we may expect George sooner, I suppose."

George arrived, in fact, within a fortnight. He had stayed only five days in Madeira, as he informed Mrs. Aylward and her daughter at dinner on the night of his arrival.

"And your friend, Mr. Burke?" asked Mrs. Aylward.

"Oh, he stayed behind," said George curtly.

"But he is coming down to us as soon as he reaches England," interposed Sir Henry.

Mrs. Aylward, however, was not to be diverted.

"I suppose that Mr. Burke," she continued, "has been longer in Africa than you."

"Yes. He has been up and down the world all his life."

Mrs. Aylward was disappointed.

"A rolling stone," said she, with a barely perceptible hitch of the shoulders.

"A rolling stone with a deal of moss," answered George, a trifle bitterly—"the sort of moss that grows in a bank. But he deserves all he can get," he continued, forcing himself to cheeriness. "I should never grudge him anything. I mean,"— and he coloured with confusion as he sought to cover up his slip—

"he saved my life at the risk of his own, and I was a stranger to him. You mustn't forget that."

George Mardale told the story of his rescue that evening as the small party sat round the drawing-room fire. It appeared that he and Burke had gone out from Bulawayo as members of the same patrol. The patrol advanced some miles within the Matopo Hills, and then, turning an angle of a ravine, was received with a scattered fire from the stone hillsides and the long grass in the bed of the valley. The patrol retreated precipitately, leaving half a dozen men dead and George Mardale wounded. Burke saw Mardale fall, and saw, too, that he was still alive. He pushed his way through the grass until he came upon the wounded man, and then sat down upon a boulder, laid his rifle on his knees, and lit his pipe. There was a Red Cross doctor with the rear of the patrol, who would be sure to come to the front. There must be a chance of saving Mardale's life, if Burke could only protect him meanwhile from the tender mercies of the Matabele. Burke did so protect him by the mere act of sitting by his side upon the boulder, with his rifle across his knees. He could see no one, the grass was too high; and the valley was very silent but for one incessantly reiterated explosion. But that explosion came from a spot in the grass some 20 yards from where Burke sat, and with each explosion a charge of potleg whizzed past Burke's head. One Matabele with an antique elephant-gun was somewhere crouched in the grass about 20 yards behind Burke's back. Burke did not dare to leave Mardale. He could not return his enemy's fire, since he was only aware of its vague direction; he could do nothing but sit in that tiny open space, smoke his pipe, and trust to the inaccuracy of the elephant-gun. For 15 minutes he sat there, and then the doctor crawled up to him.

"Here's a man wounded," said Burke. "If you can fix him up, we might together get him out of the ravine."

The doctor cut away Mardale's coat, and began to bandage the wound. The next moment he sprung back on to his feet; then he dropped again on to his knees, ducking his head as he dropped. It seemed to him that the drum of his ear was broken, and he most certainly felt the wind of the potleg. Burke knocked out the ashes of his pipe against the boulder, and remarked quietly—

"I think we ought to be getting along as soon as we can, for I rather fancy that there is some one shooting at us from the long grass."

The remark and the composure with which it was spoken had the designed effect of steadying the doctor's nerves. He bound the wound and the two men, stumbling and crawling through the towering grass, carried their burden out of that valley of death.

"And how old is Mr. Burke?" asked Muriel, who had listened to the story with parted lips.

"Thirty-seven," answered Mardale.

"Thirty-seven," repeated Muriel, with a deprecating droop of the lips. She was at an age when heroism must be never more than twenty-five.

Mrs. Aylward went home that evening very well content with what she had heard, and yet more content with what George Mardale's manner had suggested. Harley Burke had stayed at Madeira; Harley Burke was rich; Harley Burke would have a strenuous ally in Mrs. Wildring. He would return to England engaged to Julia. Nothing could be more likely, and nothing more suitable and appropriate. There would be left George Mardale and Muriel. That, too, would be very appropriate.

Mrs. Aylward was justified of her foresight. A letter from Burke came in due time to George Mardale. It announced his engagement to Julia Wildring, postponed his visit on the ground that he was making arrangements to build a house in Park-lane, and added that he might, however, see George soon, since he would be coming down to the Wildrings' house near by. Mrs. Aylward lost no necessary time. George was pinned, she soothed his wounded vanity discreetly; she led him unconsciously to recognise the propinquity of Muriel.

Mardale acted under the influence of pique and proposed marriage. Muriel had known him from childhood. She felt for him a sincere friendliness, and had felt nothing stronger for any other man. She slid, as it were, into an engagement to him.

It was soon after this that the Wildrings returned to their home, bringing Harley Burke with them. George Mardale walked across to the house the next afternoon, and chanced to find Julia alone. They stood facing one another for a few moments in silence—the girl with her hand pressed upon her heart; the man suddenly grown angry.

"So you are engaged," he began in a hard voice; and the girl lifted her hand and made no other answer.

"You could not wait," he continued "Of course not. I was a fool to expect it."

"There was no use in waiting," she answered faintly. "You know. It would never have been allowed." And the sound of her words seemed to give her strength. For the faintness went from her voice and her attitude "And you?" she said, drawing herself up, "you speak the first word of blame! Surely you have not the right to be so quick."

"It was not until after I heard that you—" he began with something of a stammer.

"Five minutes after, then," she interrupted bitterly, and her brightness brought him to her side in an instant.

"Julia. You know. There's only one woman for me."

"Yes, only one woman," she exclaimed, drawing quickly away from him. "Only one—Muriel;" and at that the door opined, and Burke entered.

Burke walked back that afternoon with Mardale, who, now that he was recovered from his outburst, had become remorseful.

"You will look after her, old man, won't you?" he said. "She hasn't had a very good time, taking all things together."

"No, I don't think she has," said Burke slowly. "But are you afraid that I won't do my best for her? Why?"

"No, not at all," returned Mardale eagerly. "Only, you see, I have known her for a long while, and you don't seem to be very enthusiastic."

"You don't expect me to rave, I hope," said Burke with a laugh. "I take things quietly. As you say, Julia has not had a very good time—"

Burke's placidity jarred upon his companion's overstrung nerves, and he broke in upon him with a view to change the drift of their talk.

"And how is the house growing in Park-lane?"

Burke shrugged his shoulders.

"It will be all right, I think. There'll be cupids on the ceilings, and a winter garden. I don't hanker much after that sort of thing. But I suppose it's the right thing to do, though sometimes I—" and he stopped.

"Well?"

"Well, sometimes I think there's a certain vulgarity in doing the right thing to do— don't you?" and he repeated slowly. "As you say, Julia hasn't had the best sort of time."

Mardale construed the remark in his own way.

"Mrs. Wildring is looking after the house, then?"

"Precisely."

Burke stopped and held out his hand. Mardale shook it and walked away. When he had walked twenty yards he ran back again.

"Burke!" he cried, and Burke returned to him.

"You have got to come and stay with us, you know," said Mardale. "When will you come?"

"I can come in a month's time, if I may. The Wildrings will be away on visits. I shall be glad to come to you."

Mardale walked homewards, quite at a loss to account for Burke's passivity, and indignant at it as a slight upon Julia. If he did not care for her, why was he now engaged to her? Mardale found himself considering that question and discovering answers. Burke had spoken of marriage fairly often in

Africa, and had spoken with a sort of abstract desire for the state of marriage. Had he proposed marriage for marriage's sake rather than for Julia's? Certain words he had spoken, too, this afternoon, came quickly back to Mardale—words which Burke had repeated. Had compassion anything to do with his proposal? Mardale communicated his doubts to Muriel Aylward; but since she had not as yet met Harley Burke, she was unable to throw any light upon them.

Muriel, however, met Harley Burke the next evening. She remarked that he looked his thirty-seven years to the full. Anecdotes drawn from the well of his experiences, and stray reminiscences of his varied life, left her to all appearances uninstructed and indifferent. On the other hand, she could not but admit that Burke was no less apathetic towards her. At times, indeed, he seemed to evince an actual reluctance for her company. He was never so much at Julia's side as when Muriel Aylward happened to be of the company. He even made a pretext to excuse himself from his promised visit to Mardale; but the pretext was not allowed, he was pressed by Mardale for the reason of his wish to avoid the house, and he escaped from an answer by agreeing hurriedly to come.

The second evening of that visit he walked into the library about 9 o'clock, and there found Muriel alone. A map was spread out upon the table before her, and as she talked with Burke, she covered it with her arms and hands. Their conversation was interrupted by a footman, who brought a salver to Burke, on which there lay a telegram and a letter. Burke took the telegram and opened it.

"There is no answer," he said, and took up the letter.

"The letter is for Mr. George," said the footman.

"No, for me," said Burke, for he had recognised the handwriting of Julia. The footman, however, was right; the letter was for George Mardale. It did not occur to Burke to feel any jealousy; Mardale and Julia were old friends. Why should they not write each to the other?

He turned back to Muriel as the footman passed out of the door. The map lay now uncovered before his eyes, and upon the map were marks. Burke noticed the marks. There was a town marked at which he had lived for some six months, and he spoke of it. There was a country in the east through which he had travelled, and on the map a line was drawn.

"The line follows my route pretty nearly," he said, and Muriel covered the map again, but not so quickly but that he was able to distinguish that a journey he had taken as first mate upon a coasting tramp had been marked out too. He looked quickly, only for a second, at Muriel, and her face told him what he wanted most of all to know.

He turned away towards the window, and Muriel with an impulse of shame flung the map into the fire. It blazed up, the draught lifted it from the grate on to the hearth. Burke ran to the fire and stamped the flames out.

"That's done with," he said quietly.

Muriel nodded and said nothing. Burke looked at her for a moment, went to the door, and turned back. Muriel was still seated at the table, looking at the black ashes on the hearth. Burke began to walk restlessly about the room, and in a little he spoke. He spoke in praise of his friend at great length, and with extreme earnestness. In the end he said,—

"Did you know that he once saved my life?"

Muriel raised her head towards him.

"How?" she asked, and kept her eyes upon him while he told her again that story of the Matopo. Only this time the characters were reversed. It was he was wounded; it was Mardale who sat on the boulder with his rifle on his knees. Muriel heard the story to the end and then—

"That is not true," she said.

"Then, for God's sake, think it true!" he exclaimed.

He took a step towards her, and that step roused her.

"You must go," she whispered. "You will go?"

"I can go to-night. This telegram will serve as an excuse."

"Yes, please, please!" she cried.

There was a train for London at midnight, and Burke travelled by it. But he was to meet Muriel Aylward again at a dance which Mrs. Wildring gave some three months later. They danced together once, but stopped in the middle of the dance, and coming out of the ball-room found the great hall empty except of one person. The one person was George Mardale. He did not notice them, for he was standing upon a chair adjusting the clock. They did not interrupt him, but watched him curiously from the doorway. Later on during the evening, Burke was asked by Mrs. Wildring to find Mardale. He failed. Attention being once directed to Mardale's absence, it was immediately noticed that Julia Wildring had vanished too. Mrs. Wildring gave one frightened look at the clock, and was reassured. Both Mardale and Julia had been seen within the half-hour, and the clock marked twenty minutes to 1. Mrs. Wildring led the way in to supper, relieved of a horrible fear that the pair had eloped. Burke and Muriel were left alone in the hall, and each drew out a watch, and compared it with the clock.

"They caught the train which you—" said Muriel.

"They might have caught that train," interrupted Burke. He added, "May I take you into supper?"

"I was going in with—" said Muriel, and stopped.

"Yes, and I was taking in—" said Burke, and he stopped too. "Do you know, I think it would be unwise to wait."

They went up the stairs together.

"We may congratulate ourselves upon having done the right thing," said Burke. "You remember that evening in the library. There's nothing like doing the right thing."

"So long as some else does the wrong thing," the girl added, upon a moment's reflection.

18: The Flaw

Beatrice Redpath

1886-1937

The Canadian Magazine, April 1919

Beatrice Constance Peterson Redpath was a Canadian short story writer and poet

ARTHUR DENNISON glanced at the clock, impatient of the slowly-moving hands, then moved to the window and stood staring out into the street, luminous from the brilliance of the arc lamps shining on the snow. And again he commenced a long detour of the room, striving to curb his restless impatience. The door bell sounded sharply and he stood still, his attitude one of eager expectancy.

"Myra," he exclaimed, and the next instant he held the girl's two gloved hands in his, "I was afraid you had changed your mind— oh, you don't know the suspense I've gone through in the last hour. I couldn't have borne it if anything had happened to make you decide differently."

He was helping her off with her furs and her coat while she stood, a little shy, a trifle diffident. It was so strange to be here! She glanced away from him, from his eyes that compelled and sought her glance, to the warm comfort of the room, observing as she always observed the minute details that combined to make up the whole. A shade of perplexity appeared in her face and he was immediately aware of it.

"What is it?" he whispered. "Aren't you glad— glad to be here?"

"Yes— yes, I'm glad," she said with a firmness, as if a strong affirmation would make it true. For she wasn't sure. It was different from what she had imagined, and yet she had imagined it in a thousand ways. He was just as she liked him to be, whimsical, half gay, half serious, and wholly kind. The fault did not lie wholly with him!

The house was just what she had expected. There was colour and warmth, books lying about, a piece of Japanese embroidery just where the walls demanded it should be, while a glimpse of fire pointed long thin fingers of light into the dusk of the halls. She felt as if she were drinking in the warmth, the colour and comfort of it all, through the pores of her skin. But all the time her mind was straining out to find the flaw, the thing that disturbed her, that made her ill at ease. Perhaps she was too tired. She had said that this day, for the last time, she would go to the office in the customary way. She had been very nervous and the incessant click of the typewriter had jarred her nerves, already strained by the mental conflict which she had been undergoing. She had no compunction about what she was doing. She had battled too long, seen too much of suffering and the ruthless manner in which life inflicted pain, to have

any thought for the conventionality that perhaps should have kept her at the office till the divorce was accomplished. But she was too tired to go on, too tired to resist his urging of her to abandon herself to his will. She had a right to happiness, she told herself repeatedly, and a love like theirs was big enough to thrust aside barriers, to break bonds, even to incur the sacrifice of another, if such should stand in the way of its fulfilment. Oh, she had told herself this too often to have any doubts concerning it.

The flaw was nowhere here; she must seek further.

"Where has she gone?" she asked suddenly, her dark blue eyes regarding him questioningly, as she took a chair beside the fire.

"Oh," he said, startled, as if her direct question coming unexpectedly had bewildered him, "Nancy— she's gone to her people till the affair is over. She's going abroad afterwards— I thought I had told you."

"Going abroad," Myra repeated. "That always has such a broken sound. People go abroad when someone they are fond of dies— when they have failed— when they want to be alone to suffer. Do you think she feels that way?"

Arthur Dennison laughed a little awkwardly.

"You have such an imagination, dear," he said. "You are always wondering how people feel. Most people don't feel at all, you know. It's only people like you and I—" and he leaned over the back of her chair and touched the fur about her neck. She stirred a little under his touch and thrust one hand deep in the upholstered side of the chair. She brought it up slowly, a silver point that glittered in the firelight on the tip of her finger.

"Her thimble," she said, and her eyes sought the fire and she stared into the hot coals in silence.

"I've never seen her and you've told me so little about her," Myra said, turning to him. "We've always talked about ourselves, haven't we?"

"What else should we talk about?" he responded, with cheerful egotism.

"About her," Myra insisted. "I feel I want to know about her." And then, after a pause, "Tell me about her, please," she repeated.

Arthur Dennison stared before him reflectively.

"That's so difficult, dear," he said. "There doesn't seem much to tell. I can't analyze people as you do. I can tell you the colour of her hair and her eyes, but that's not what you want to know."

"No, I want to know the woman; what she thinks, feels, and is."

"How can I tell you?" he said, "I don't know myself. We are fortunate if we know anyone in life— few of us do— and when we feel we do— it's the true dream— the great vision— what you and I know— how few others."

Myra rose and moved restlessly about the room.

"I know, dear," she said, "but I want to know about her, and perhaps I can find out by myself. A woman's instinct is surer than a man's knowledge, anyway. This room was hers, wasn't it? These are her books, her pictures. Strange she has left them all here."

She moved here and there, touching things lightly, picking up a book to glance at the title, glancing at a photograph, touching a bowl of flowers, while Arthur Dennison sat following her with his eyes.

"What is this— whose child is this?" Myra asked at length, coming over to his chair with a small white frame in her hand.

An expression of pain crossed Arthur Dennison's face as he took the frame in his hand.

"That is Jamie," he said quietly. "He died when he was a year old— six years ago."

Myra stood staring down at the picture of the child, her eyes wide with pity.

"I didn't know," she said. "You never spoke of him before—" She took the little frame back into her hands. "But she leaves it here," she went on in bewilderment, "when she knows that another woman will be here."

"She has forgotten it. I will send it to her to-morrow," he said, but Myra's hand closed over it.

"No, you won't send it," and now she sat down, her eyes fixed on a point of light on the brasses, her hands folded across the little frame.

"I think I know," she said. "I think I know what I wanted to know. You must bring her back, for I can't stay. Oh, don't you see, dear— she cares. And she has the right. She has borne— she has suffered. It all seems to lie just in that," she went on with wide, staring eyes; "those who have borne— those who have suffered— they have the right."

"Myra," he exclaimed, in startled protest, "it's impossible. You and I— we care. She seems like a stranger compared to you. Myra,— oh, don't be foolish, child. It's destiny— you and I. It was meant, it was intended. She was only an incident. She is a stranger. Most people are— but you and I— the first time we met— your thought was my thought, your vision my vision, your desires were my desires. Oh, you and I are one in a thousand ways. When love comes like ours, everything must be overthrown. It is impossible what you say. You don't know. She is cold, she is not you. Her pride is perhaps hurt, but that is all. I swear to you, child, she doesn't care."

"I think she does," Myra answered slowly, "and now I know why I felt so strangely when I came in here. It was her books lying about, her sewing, her thimble that I picked up in the chair over there. Little ghosts crying out in protest— little ghosts— all the personal belongings that a woman usually cherishes. She does not forget them unless she is dumb with pain, unless

nothing on earth counts but the one thing, unless she is crushed and heartbroken. The picture of her baby— oh, dear, I couldn't. She has borne— she has suffered— she has the right— and she cares. You are wrong."

He looked up to plead with her, to protest with the sole strength of his love, to cry out to her his need. Oh, theirs was the real vision, love intense, the incalculable desire! But in her face he saw the futility of it— she would listen to him, white-faced, as he pleaded, but in her eyes would be her purpose. He saw that she would not flinch from her resolve— and the words died on his lips, as he sat down, covering his face with his hands.

He did not hear her as she moved about the room, so intent was he on this shattering of his desire. Only the dull slam of the door aroused him at last to the void of the reality.

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19: A Motor Cab Mystery

Anonymous

Western Champion and General Advertiser for the Central-Western Districts (Barcaldine, Qld) Jan 1901

EXTRACT from the *Morning Moon*:

A MOTOR CAB MYSTERY

ABOUT ten o'clock last night, just as a heavy storm was subsiding, while Police Constable A.1. was proceeding through Bywater-street, Pimlico, a motor cab was driven furiously past him. It was evidently being steered by a very unsteady hand, for it ran from side to side of the road in a most alarming manner.

Fortunately, Bywater-street is a very quiet thoroughfare, and on this particular night-rough and stormy was practically deserted. The constable blew his whistle and started off in pursuit of the cab, shouting as he went.

Other constables answered to the call, and in a very short time a decentsized crowd gathered round the policeman in some mysterious manner, coming from nobody could discern where, apparently coming from the heavens, or rising from the bowels of the earth, joined in the chase, hallooing in company with the constables.

The cab had reached the end of the street, and was about to turn the corner, when it pulled up suddenly with an alarming jerk. The noise and confusion which the velocity of the vehicle created was probably the cause of this-the driver awakening to a comprehensive sense of the enormity of his conduct.

'What do you mean by driving at such a furious rate!' exclaimed the first constable to reach the cab.

'Wha'd'ye mean by 'unting me 's though I wos a dawg without a muzzle!' responded a hoarse and guttural voice from the box.

'Why, the fellow's drunk!' said another constable who had come up on the other side; 'come down from there!'

'I'm not drunk,' continued the gutteral voice, 'I'm late. Jest like the British p'leeceman, tryin' to do a workin' man out of a bit o' graft.'

As one of the constables took the driver by the arm and pulled him off the bos, a strange thing happened. Several of the crowd had been peering into the cab, when one exclaimed, 'Why, there's somebody inside— lying down!'

A constable threw open one of the doors and revealed the body of a man lying huddled up on the floor of the vehicle. His head was resting against the seat, and blood was flowing freely from a wound in his forehead. He was quite dead. This discovery caused a great sensation, and seemed to completely sober

the driver. The door was shut to again, the driver directed to mount the box and proceed slowly. Thus the cab with its ghastly occupant, and surrounded by a posse of police, was driven to the station.

At present the affair is enveloped in the profoundest mystery.

WHEN the cab arrived at the station the deceased man was thoroughly eearched, but not the smallest trace of his identity could be found. All his pockets were empty, and there was not a mark of any kind upon bis clothing that might lead to the discovery of who he was or where he came from. No weapon was found in the cab, and the body was still quite warm, BO that the murder must have been recently committed.

The driver, whose name was Robert Marshall, and who appeared to be greatly shocked at the discovery, declared he was utterly unable to offer any explanation as to how or when the body found its way into the cab. He confessed he had been drinking a great deal, that be Lad met a lot of pals, and made a good many calls at public-houses. He also admitted that he did very wrong in driving his vehicle at such a furious rate, but attributed it to the demoralizing influence of the potent liquors he had absorbed. A most rigorous questioning failed to elicit the smallest clue from Marshall.

In the end, cab and driver were impounded, and enquires set on foot in all directions. In a short time news reached them which strengthened their suspicions of Marshall.

ii

ABOUT nine o'clock in the morning following the bight on which the body was found a woman, poorly clad, presented herself at the front door of a house in Heddon-street, Pimlico, and knocked. Deceiving no response, she knocked a second time, then a third, and waited, but no answer came. Then she left the front door and went round to the side entrance— it was a corner house— and knocked there.

Still no reply.

"Not up yet, I s'pose!" she muttered, and strolled away.

It was a three-storied house, very dirty and dilapidated. It had an unenviable reputation in the neighbourhood, and vras occupied by an old man of miserly habits. He was reputed to be possessed of a considerable amount of money, and lived a very lonely life. He received occasional visits from bis nearest relation, a nephew. A charwoman came in every day to do odd jobs. She was never trusted with a key, and her master always admitted herself. He lived on the 'early to bed and early to rise' principle, and pottered about a

great deal with a collection of silky plants he had reared in a piece of ground at the back, which a beneficent builder had left for some such purpose. Occasionally he was seen out of doors, strolling round the neighbourhood, and always created a deal of interest on account of his eccentric style of dress. It was popularly believed that the sudden death of his wife, whom he was devotedly attached to, bad turned him into a recluse and misanthrope.

Ten o'clock chimed out from a neighboring clock as the poorly clad female again presented herself at the front door of the House in Heddon-street and knocked. The second attempt to gain admission proved as unsuccessful as the first.

Then the woman became alarmed, and after trying the side entrance again, and peering through the keyhole, she hurried away. In a few minutes she returned with a man, who, after a brief examination of the premises, promptly burst in the side door. They entered and crossed to the kitchen door. It was closed, but not locked. Something about its appearance attracted the man attention.

'Why, the door's been forced!' he exclaimed, 'from the outside.'

He turned the handle and stepped inside. Then recoiled with a cry of horror. There was a pool of blood on the floor!

'Send for the police!" he exclaimed, and ran off himself. The woman stood trembling with fright. Presently the man returned with a constable, and entered the bouse. They thoroughly searched it from roof to basement, but they found nobody. In a email room on the second iloor, which was used" by the occupant as a reading-room or library, was an open book on the table, with a candleslick at the side, the candle having burnt down into the socket. This pointed clearly to one thing: Mr. Belton— that was the occupant's name— instead of retiring early as was his wont, must have remained up reading. Hearing a noise downstairs, he evidently left his book and descended to find out what it was. In the kitchen he must have encountered somebody who had effected an entrance, and been roughly treated. It was a clear case of burglary, for the place was ransacked. Cupboards and drawers were burst open, and their contents cast about in all directions.

At this juncture another constable put in an appearance, armed with the particulars of the motor cab mystery, and it seemed clear that the missing Mr. Belton and the body found in the cab were one and the same person. Mrs. Nicholls, the charwoman, was therefore taken to the mortuary and there identified her late employer.

Now, the police were completely in the dark as to who the criminal or criminals were, but they felt it incumbent upon them to do something quickly, so they fixed upon poor Mrs. Nicholls and subjected her to a severe cross-

examination. The information thus obtained, they afterwards considered, fully justified the course they adopted.

This is what they learned:—

The deceased man's nephew, Reginald Belton, was the cause of much anxiety and annoyance to his uncle, who regularly supplied him with money, which he promptly dissipated in extravagant living. Mr. Belton was very much attached to his nephew, whose conduct would have effectually estranged him from a less indulgent man. This weakness for his dead brother's child made Mr. Belton an easy victim to his nephew's extortionate appeals and demands, which the latter was not slow to perceive and trade upon. But constant quarrels took the form of remonstrance on the one side and bullying on the other. They invariably ended, however, in being adjusted by the passing of some money, and a supplementary promise of reform, which promise, needless to remark, was always violated. This sort of thing continued for some time, till it was clear Mr. Belton's patience at last gave out, and he turned as adamant to his nephew.

Arrived at the day of the murder, Mrs. Nicholle grew reluctant to proceed with her information. This was not lost upon her questioners, who applied the 'screw' with renewed vigour. The result was Mrs. Nicholls confessed in a halting manner, and with many misgivings as to the course she was pursuing, that Beginald Belton had quarrelled violently with his uncle a few hours before the latter met his death. She aho admitted that her belief that Mr. Belton had refused to part with any more money, and that Reginald left in a threatening manner.

On the strength of this information the police felt justified in issuing a warrant for the arreBt of Beginald Belton. But before they had time to act upon it the suspected man saved them a lot of trouble by giving himself up. He had an object in doing this. He had beard of the death of his uncle, and that he was " wanted" for the supposed murder, so he did a wise thing. He voluntarily came forward to prove his innocence, and succeeded. He set up a complete and undeniable alibi, clearly demonstrating that he was miles away at the time the crime was committed, and could not possibly have had a hand in it.

So the murder of Mr. Belton was as profound a mystery as ever. But the mystery was soon destined to be cleared up in a peculiar manner.

iii

DETECTIVE GREGORY was puzzled. The Pimlico murder worried him. He was without a clue, and a British police officer without a clue is a sight pitiful to be behold. He was not accustomed to being thwarted by a common robber

and assassin. Driven to his wit's end, he decided to search the house once more. It had been kept sealed up since the day of the crime and nothing disturbed. Accompanied by another officer, he entered the precincts of the building by the side door, and passing through the kitchen, went straight to the top of the house, and began a systematic search from roof to basement. During the scrutiny he displayed that absorbing affection for details and trifles with no self-respecting detective fails to betray at such a time. He went from room to room and floor to floor, he opened cupboards drew out drawers, carefully examined papers, moved chairs and tables, sounded boards, peeped into crevices, gazed up chimneys and down walls, opened and shut windows, lifted, pushed, crept, sprawled, climbed and listened, but no trace of the truth, no cue of conviction, was to be found.

Arrived at the ground floor he sighed regretfully, and his companion sighed in sympathy. G-regory made way to the kitchen, and thence to the scullev. It was dark, the window being shuttered. He drew aside the shutter and let in a flood of light. The detective gazed round the apartment hopelessly, his eyes Anally settling upon an old table placed against the wall. His face suddenly lightened up, his eyes dilated, and he pointed with his finger to the table, exclaiming.

'Look!'

His companion looked, but at first saw nothing but a thick layer of dust; but looking closer, saw something that made him start. The table had evidently occupied its present position for a long time, being placed there out of the way, probably, and the surface covered with dust. Now, in this dust was clearly defined the impression of a human hand. It was not an ordinary hand— the first finger was missing.

'I've got him!' said Gregory.

FURTHER EXTRACT from the *Morning Moon*:

THE MOTOR CAB MYSTERY EXPLAINED

Yesterday morning the men, Newman and Wildman, who were tried and convicted for the Pimlico murder and burglary, were hanged at New gate. It will be remembered that the capture was effected by Detective Gregory and Howson in the East-end of London, where the men were in hiding. Newman was a marked man, and it was the impression of one of his hands on the dusty table, in the victim's house, that led to the arrest.

Wildman left a confession behind. In this letter he states they had no intention of killing Mr. Belton, but merely pointed the revolver at him to frighten him.

In the struggle that ensued it exploded by accident, the sound of the report being drowned by the storm raging at the time.

Having annexed all they could lay their hands on, they were making good their escape by the side door, when they observed tbe motor cab outside, unattended.

It then struck them to throw the police into confusion and divert suspicion by placing the murdered man inside, while this was being done the driver was drinking at the small public-house a few yards away. Between this hostelry and the house in which the crime was committed runs a party wall, in which tbe side door is situated.

The driver of the cab was fined and his licence cancelled.

20: The Face in the Wall

Val Jameson

Fl 1900-1938

Western Mail (Perth) 10 Nov 1906

The author lived for some time in a gold-rush mining camp north of Kalgoorlie, Western Australia in the 1890s. Gongooli (and Nuggetville) are names she used in tales about this camp. She wrote numerous short stories from 1900 to 1921, and was last mentioned in 1938 as "in poor health" and living in NSW. As she married in 1898, she would have been in her late 60s then.

BROTHER TOM says I am a godsend to Gongooli, not in a complimentary sense, I am sure. Tom's compliments are mostly acidulous, though, like the apothecary's pills, coated with sugar.

Taken literally, I pity all whom God sends to Gongooli. It is a realistic purgatory that attains the temperature of the worst destination of souls after Christmas.

This conviction was more firmly rooted in my mind after a night at Six Miles. My sister Sue turned philanthropist at my expense, and loaned me out gratis to nervous women whose husbands were on temporary absences.

Mrs. Six Miles' husband was a prospector— another word for a lunatic at large. It was not safe to utter the word "Gold" in his hearing. The symptoms of gold mania may be herewith described for the enlightenment of the uninitiated. Wild, excited harangues, accompanied by much gesticulation and lurid speech. Eyes bright and restive, cheeks flushed, sudden dropping to earth and finger-marking of plans in the dirt, like children at hop-scotch. At any moment of day or night prepared to elope from wife and home to join a new rush.

The depressing outlook of flat plains coated with bluish-grey salt-bush, wave upon wave, that gave the weird effect of a still, dead ocean, met the eyes from Six Miles humpy on every side, in hopeless monotony, that was reflect-ed in the pale, joyless face of the prosÎlector's wife. The tragedy of long, onely nights, watched out in fear, was written in her mournful eyes.

"Never marry a prospector, Nancy!" she said, turning on her pillow to gaze solemnly into my face.

"Never!" I replied grimly.

"But," sighed my companion, "when you love a man, you'll go to the world's end for his sake!"

''Don't call it love!" I objected drowsily, "it's suicide."

The boisterous night-wind caught the frail canvas walls of our sleeping apartment, making them flap and swell like the sails of a yacht, then rising in

sudden angry snaps, as if in fiendish effort to tear them asunder. I could have slept like the sea-rocked sailor in the throes of a storm, for thus far I knew not the meaning of nerves. Mrs. Six Mile started and shivered as each fierce gust seized and shook the humpy.

"Nights like these," she said in awed whispers, "I think of the poor man who perished of thirst, some years ago, on this very road, before we came to live here. He's buried close by, and when I'm alone, in these gales, I hear sounds like a human voice calling for aid. My imagination brings him vividly before me! I see him limping, staggering on; black crows hover overhead, and the red dust cleaves to his bleeding feet. Wandering off to a fancied waterhole, turning again with deeper despair to the endless track, appealing with lifted arms to God, then shouting the distraught lavings of insanity, till at last he falls exhaust-ed on the pitiless ground, the crows—"

The conclusion of this gruesome ac-count of a bush tragedy was mercifully confiscated by sleep— sleep that is swift and compelling at the age of seventeen. From the valley of soft shadows and oblivion I was abruptly drawn by a clutch of nervous fingers on my arm.

"What is it?" I asked drowsily, lifting my eyelids with half-conscious indolence. A glance at my companion's face, white and fixed with the strain of terror, eyes dilated and breath suppressed, communicated the impression that some dreadful presence menaced us. She did not or could not reply to my question. In the subdued light of a hurricane lamp, suspended on the wall, I saw glistening beads of moisture on her forehead.

Instantly my eyes sought the cause of such evident terror. The gale had spent its fury, leaving our desert-ark unharmed save for a small triangular gap in the opposite wall, near the low ceiling. Framed in this gap was an apparition that squeezed every drop of courage from my quaking heart. A hideous face, with great globular eyes fixed on us with a comical stare, a huge mouth, and horrible tusks, suggestive of human prey.

"Whatever is it?" I gasped, submerging my head in tho bed-covers, and longing so ardently to be safe in tho despised post-office with Tom and Sue. How freely I could have forgiven my brother-in-law his many offerices in tho black-book of my memory if he had miraculously appeared in the character of protector at that moment.

"Oh, Nancy!" whispered Mrs. Six Mile, "the fright is killing me. Feel my heart!"

"Mine's worse!" I moaned. "Cant you hear it?"

Goaded by suspense, I ventured to peer again at the awful face in the wall, and saw it slowly withdraw, leaving a space of pale moonlight.

Mrs. Six Mile's eyes closed. Her lips moved as if in silent prayer, her hands were clasped together. With me, reason returned when panic fled. A super-natural visitor would have made a professional exit, in accordance with the law of tradition. Would have evanesced, faded, vanished like thin smoke in into atmosphere, whereas I distinctly saw the uncanny face withdraw after the manner of all material entities.

Sounds of stealthy iootsteps on the dust-padded ground without, strengthened my conviction of the mundane nature of the apparition. I glided from the bed. My desperate purpose was visible in compressed lips and wide, solemn eyes.

"Nancy!"

"Rush!" I commanded, evading Mrs. Six Mile's detaining fingers and feeling in my new-born heroism that the six years division in our ages was on my side of the ledger. Then I bent low to whisper, "Where's your husband's revolver?"

"Don't! Nancy!"

"Don't be a fool!" I replied.

"Don't leave me!" pleadingly.

"Where's that weapon?" I demanded. "Unless we show fight, we're at the mercy of whatever it is! I'm not going to leave you, bu? I'll put a bullet through this practical joker or messenger from Mars if I can sight it through that hole!"

"How brave you are!" sighed Mrs. Six Mile.

My teeth chattered, as she drew the revolver from beneath the bolster, but I grasped it with an air in keeping with my reputation for bravely, and proceeded to mount a pyramid of table, chairs, and boxes, to my post of observation.

I peered through the gap, expecting, yet dreading, to find the mysterious Guy Fawkes beyond. Moonlight and silence brooded together in thc " far spaces before the humpy. No stir ui life in form of man or beast. No living target for the weapon in my outstretched hand.

There was a sense of relief mingled with disappointment, for if my aim should fail to kill or maim the mystery, that vague unknown terror whose hideous visage gave no clue to its identity, it would certainly retaliate vengefully on such frail foes housed in calico walls.

Suddenly a soft pat-pat of footfalls close beneath made me tremble with renewed terror. My arm, thrust through the gap, with the clutched revolver, felt the contact of warm flesh. My face was breathed upon, and close to mine arose the awful cannibal glare of those monstrous eyes.

Simultaneously came recognition, but too late to avert a catastrophe. My pyramid collapsed and pitched me head-first on my pillow.

"Next time you want to get up a sensation," I said severely, when Mrs. Six Miles' hysterical shrieks subsided, "don't take it out of a poor harmless camel."

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21: The Door in the Wall

H. G. Wells

1866-1946

The Daily Chronicle, 14 July 1906

ONE CONFIDENTIAL EVENING, not three months ago, Lionel Wallace told me this story of the Door in the Wall. And at the time I thought that so far as he was concerned it was a true story.

He told it me with such a direct simplicity of conviction that I could not do otherwise than believe in him. But in the morning, in my own flat, I woke to a different atmosphere, and as I lay in bed and recalled the things he had told me, stripped of the glamour of his earnest slow voice, denuded of the focussed shaded table light, the shadowy atmosphere that wrapped about him and the pleasant bright things, the dessert and glasses and napery of the dinner we had shared, making them for the time a bright little world quite cut off from every-day realities, I saw it all as frankly incredible. "He was mystifying!" I said, and then: "How well he did it!... It isn't quite the thing I should have expected him, of all people, to do well."

Afterwards, as I sat up in bed and sipped my morning tea, I found myself trying to account for the flavour of reality that perplexed me in his impossible reminiscences, by supposing they did in some way suggest, present, convey— I hardly know which word to use— experiences it was otherwise impossible to tell.

Well, I don't resort to that explanation now. I have got over my intervening doubts. I believe now, as I believed at the moment of telling, that Wallace did to the very best of his ability strip the truth of his secret for me. But whether he himself saw, or only thought he saw, whether he himself was the possessor of an inestimable privilege, or the victim of a fantastic dream, I cannot pretend to guess. Even the facts of his death, which ended my doubts forever, throw no light on that. That much the reader must judge for himself.

I forget now what chance comment or criticism of mine moved so reticent a man to confide in me. He was, I think, defending himself against an imputation of slackness and unreliability I had made in relation to a great public movement in which he had disappointed me. But he plunged suddenly. "I have" he said, "a preoccupation—"

"I know," he went on, after a pause that he devoted to the study of his cigar ash, "I have been negligent. The fact is— it isn't a case of ghosts or apparitions— but— it's an odd thing to tell of, Redmond— I am haunted. I am haunted by something— that rather takes the light out of things, that fills me with longings..."

He paused, checked by that English shyness that so often overcomes us when we would speak of moving or grave or beautiful things. "You were at Saint Athelstan's all through," he said, and for a moment that seemed to me quite irrelevant. "Well"— and he paused. Then very haltingly at first, but afterwards more easily, he began to tell of the thing that was hidden in his life, the haunting memory of a beauty and a happiness that filled his heart with insatiable longings that made all the interests and spectacle of worldly life seem dull and tedious and vain to him.

Now that I have the clue to it, the thing seems written visibly in his face. I have a photograph in which that look of detachment has been caught and intensified. It reminds me of what a woman once said of him— a woman who had loved him greatly. "Suddenly," she said, "the interest goes out of him. He forgets you. He doesn't care a rap for you— under his very nose..."

Yet the interest was not always out of him, and when he was holding his attention to a thing Wallace could contrive to be an extremely successful man. His career, indeed, is set with successes. He left me behind him long ago; he soared up over my head, and cut a figure in the world that I couldn't cut— anyhow. He was still a year short of forty, and they say now that he would have been in office and very probably in the new Cabinet if he had lived. At school he always beat me without effort— as it were by nature. We were at school together at Saint Athelstan's College in West Kensington for almost all our school time. He came into the school as my co-equal, but he left far above me, in a blaze of scholarships and brilliant performance. Yet I think I made a fair average running. And it was at school I heard first of the Door in the Wall— that I was to hear of a second time only a month before his death.

To him at least the Door in the Wall was a real door leading through a real wall to immortal realities. Of that I am now quite assured.

And it came into his life early, when he was a little fellow between five and six. I remember how, as he sat making his confession to me with a slow gravity, he reasoned and reckoned the date of it. "There was," he said, "a crimson Virginia creeper in it— all one bright uniform crimson in a clear amber sunshine against a white wall. That came into the impression somehow, though I don't clearly remember how, and there were horse-chestnut leaves upon the clean pavement outside the green door. They were blotched yellow and green, you know, not brown nor dirty, so that they must have been new fallen. I take it that means October. I look out for horse-chestnut leaves every year, and I ought to know.

"If I'm right in that, I was about five years and four months old."

He was, he said, rather a precocious little boy— he learned to talk at an abnormally early age, and he was so sane and "old-fashioned," as people say,

that he was permitted an amount of initiative that most children scarcely attain by seven or eight. His mother died when he was born, and he was under the less vigilant and authoritative care of a nursery governess. His father was a stern, preoccupied lawyer, who gave him little attention, and expected great things of him. For all his brightness he found life a little grey and dull I think. And one day he wandered.

He could not recall the particular neglect that enabled him to get away, nor the course he took among the West Kensington roads. All that had faded among the incurable blurs of memory. But the white wall and the green door stood out quite distinctly.

As his memory of that remote childish experience ran, he did at the very first sight of that door experience a peculiar emotion, an attraction, a desire to get to the door and open it and walk in. And at the same time he had the clearest conviction that either it was unwise or it was wrong of him— he could not tell which— to yield to this attraction. He insisted upon it as a curious thing that he knew from the very beginning— unless memory has played him the queerest trick— that the door was unfastened, and that he could go in as he chose.

I seem to see the figure of that little boy, drawn and repelled. And it was very clear in his mind, too, though why it should be so was never explained, that his father would be very angry if he went through that door.

Wallace described all these moments of hesitation to me with the utmost particularity. He went right past the door, and then, with his hands in his pockets, and making an infantile attempt to whistle, strolled right along beyond the end of the wall. There he recalls a number of mean, dirty shops, and particularly that of a plumber and decorator, with a dusty disorder of earthenware pipes, sheet lead ball taps, pattern books of wall paper, and tins of enamel. He stood pretending to examine these things, and coveting, passionately desiring the green door.

Then, he said, he had a gust of emotion. He made a run for it, lest hesitation should grip him again, he went plump with outstretched hand through the green door and let it slam behind him. And so, in a trice, he came into the garden that has haunted all his life.

It was very difficult for Wallace to give me his full sense of that garden into which he came.

There was something in the very air of it that exhilarated, that gave one a sense of lightness and good happening and well being; there was something in the sight of it that made all its colour clean and perfect and subtly luminous. In the instant of coming into it one was exquisitely glad— as only in rare

moments and when one is young and joyful one can be glad in this world. And everything was beautiful there...

Wallace mused before he went on telling me. "You see," he said, with the doubtful inflection of a man who pauses at incredible things, "there were two great panthers there... Yes, spotted panthers. And I was not afraid. There was a long wide path with marble-edged flower borders on either side, and these two huge velvety beasts were playing there with a ball. One looked up and came towards me, a little curious as it seemed. It came right up to me, rubbed its soft round ear very gently against the small hand I held out and purred. It was, I tell you, an enchanted garden. I know. And the size? Oh! it stretched far and wide, this way and that. I believe there were hills far away. Heaven knows where West Kensington had suddenly got to. And somehow it was just like coming home.

"You know, in the very moment the door swung to behind me, I forgot the road with its fallen chestnut leaves, its cabs and tradesmen's carts, I forgot the sort of gravitational pull back to the discipline and obedience of home, I forgot all hesitations and fear, forgot discretion, forgot all the intimate realities of this life. I became in a moment a very glad and wonder-happy little boy— in another world. It was a world with a different quality, a warmer, more penetrating and mellower light, with a faint clear gladness in its air, and wisps of sun-touched cloud in the blueness of its sky. And before me ran this long wide path, invitingly, with weedless beds on either side, rich with untended flowers, and these two great panthers. I put my little hands fearlessly on their soft fur, and caressed their round ears and the sensitive corners under their ears, and played with them, and it was as though they welcomed me home. There was a keen sense of home-coming in my mind, and when presently a tall, fair girl appeared in the pathway and came to meet me, smiling, and said Well?' to me, and lifted me, and kissed me, and put me down, and led me by the hand, there was no amazement, but only an impression of delightful rightness, of being reminded of happy things that had in some strange way been overlooked. There were broad steps, I remember, that came into view between spikes of delphinium, and up these we went to a great avenue between very old and shady dark trees. All down this avenue, you know, between the red chapped stems, were marble seats of honour and statuary, and very tame and friendly white doves...

"And along this avenue my girl-friend led me, looking down— I recall the pleasant lines, the finely-modelled chin of her sweet kind face— asking me questions in a soft, agreeable voice, and telling me things, pleasant things I know, though what they were I was never able to recall... And presently a little Capuchin monkey, very clean, with a fur of ruddy brown and kindly hazel eyes,

came down a tree to us and ran beside me, looking up at me and grinning, and presently leapt to my shoulder. So we went on our way in great happiness…"

He paused.

"Go on," I said.

"I remember little things. We passed an old man musing among laurels, I remember, and a place gay with paroquets, and came through a broad shaded colonnade to a spacious cool palace, full of pleasant fountains, full of beautiful things, full of the quality and promise of heart's desire. And there were many things and many people, some that still seem to stand out clearly and some that are a little vague, but all these people were beautiful and kind. In some way— I don't know how— it was conveyed to me that they all were kind to me, glad to have me there, and filling me with gladness by their gestures, by the touch of their hands, by the welcome and love in their eyes. Yes—"

He mused for awhile. "Playmates I found there. That was very much to me, because I was a lonely little boy. They played delightful games in a grass-covered court where there was a sun-dial set about with flowers. And as one played one loved....

"But— it's odd— there's a gap in my memory. I don't remember the games we played. I never remembered. Afterwards, as a child, I spent long hours trying, even with tears, to recall the form of that happiness. I wanted to play it all over again— in my nursery— by myself. No! All I remember is the happiness and two dear playfellows who were most with me... Then presently came a sombre dark woman, with a grave, pale face and dreamy eyes, a sombre woman wearing a soft long robe of pale purple, who carried a book and beckoned and took me aside with her into a gallery above a hall— though my playmates were loth to have me go, and ceased their game and stood watching as I was carried away. 'Come back to us!' they cried. 'Come back to us soon!' I looked up at her face, but she heeded them not at all. Her face was very gentle and grave. She took me to a seat in the gallery, and I stood beside her, ready to look at her book as she opened it upon her knee. The pages fell open. She pointed, and I looked, marvelling, for in the living pages of that book I saw myself; it was a story about myself, and in it were all the things that had happened to me since ever I was born...

"It was wonderful to me, because the pages of that book were not pictures, you understand, but realities."

Wallace paused gravely— looked at me doubtfully.

"Go on," I said. "I understand."

"They were realities— yes, they must have been; people moved and things came and went in them; my dear mother, whom I had near forgotten; then my father, stern and upright, the servants, the nursery, all the familiar things of

home. Then the front door and the busy streets, with traffic to and fro: I looked and marvelled, and looked half doubtfully again into the woman's face and turned the pages over, skipping this and that, to see more of this book, and more, and so at last I came to myself hovering and hesitating outside the green door in the long white wall, and felt again the conflict and the fear.

"'And next?' I cried, and would have turned on, but the cool hand of the grave woman delayed me.

"'Next?' I insisted, and struggled gently with her hand, pulling up her fingers with all my childish strength, and as she yielded and the page came over she bent down upon me like a shadow and kissed my brow.

"But the page did not show the enchanted garden, nor the panthers, nor the girl who had led me by the hand, nor the playfellows who had been so loth to let me go. It showed a long grey street in West Kensington, on that chill hour of afternoon before the lamps are lit, and I was there, a wretched little figure, weeping aloud, for all that I could do to restrain myself, and I was weeping because I could not return to my dear play-fellows who had called after me, 'Come back to us! Come back to us soon!' I was there. This was no page in a book, but harsh reality; that enchanted place and the restraining hand of the grave mother at whose knee I stood had gone— whither have they gone?"

He halted again, and remained for a time, staring into the fire.

"Oh! the wretchedness of that return!" he murmured.

"Well?" I said after a minute or so.

"Poor little wretch I was— brought back to this grey world again! As I realised the fulness of what had happened to me, I gave way to quite ungovernable grief. And the shame and humiliation of that public weeping and my disgraceful homecoming remain with me still. I see again the benevolent-looking old gentleman in gold spectacles who stopped and spoke to me— prodding me first with his umbrella. 'Poor little chap,' said he; 'and are you lost then?'— and me a London boy of five and more! And he must needs bring in a kindly young policeman and make a crowd of me, and so march me home. Sobbing, conspicuous and frightened, I came from the enchanted garden to the steps of my father's house.

"That is as well as I can remember my vision of that garden— the garden that haunts me still. Of course, I can convey nothing of that indescribable quality of translucent unreality, that difference from the common things of experience that hung about it all; but that— that is what happened. If it was a dream, I am sure it was a day-time and altogether extraordinary dream... . H'm!— naturally there followed a terrible questioning, by my aunt, my father, the nurse, the governess— everyone...

"I tried to tell them, and my father gave me my first thrashing for telling lies. When afterwards I tried to tell my aunt, she punished me again for my wicked persistence. Then, as I said, everyone was forbidden to listen to me, to hear a word about it. Even my fairy tale books were taken away from me for a time— because I was 'too imaginative.' Eh? Yes, they did that! My father belonged to the old school... And my story was driven back upon myself. I whispered it to my pillow— my pillow that was often damp and salt to my whispering lips with childish tears. And I added always to my official and less fervent prayers this one heartfelt request: 'Please God I may dream of the garden. Oh! take me back to my garden! Take me back to my garden!'

"I dreamt often of the garden. I may have added to it, I may have changed it; I do not know... All this you understand is an attempt to reconstruct from fragmentary memories a very early experience. Between that and the other consecutive memories of my boyhood there is a gulf. A time came when it seemed impossible I should ever speak of that wonder glimpse again."

I asked an obvious question.

"No," he said. "I don't remember that I ever attempted to find my way back to the garden in those early years. This seems odd to me now, but I think that very probably a closer watch was kept on my movements after this misadventure to prevent my going astray. No, it wasn't until you knew me that I tried for the garden again. And I believe there was a period— incredible as it seems now— when I forgot the garden altogether— when I was about eight or nine it may have been. Do you remember me as a kid at Saint Athelstan's?"

"Rather!"

"I didn't show any signs did I in those days of having a secret dream?"

HE LOOKED UP with a sudden smile.

"Did you ever play North-West Passage with me?... No, of course you didn't come my way!"

"It was the sort of game," he went on, "that every imaginative child plays all day. The idea was the discovery of a North-West Passage to school. The way to school was plain enough; the game consisted in finding some way that wasn't plain, starting off ten minutes early in some almost hopeless direction, and working one's way round through unaccustomed streets to my goal. And one day I got entangled among some rather low-class streets on the other side of Campden Hill, and I began to think that for once the game would be against me and that I should get to school late. I tried rather desperately a street that seemed a *cul de sac*, and found a passage at the end. I hurried through that with renewed hope. 'I shall do it yet,' I said, and passed a row of frowsy little

shops that were inexplicably familiar to me, and behold! there was my long white wall and the green door that led to the enchanted garden!

"The thing whacked upon me suddenly. Then, after all, that garden, that wonderful garden, wasn't a dream!"...

He paused.

"I suppose my second experience with the green door marks the world of difference there is between the busy life of a schoolboy and the infinite leisure of a child. Anyhow, this second time I didn't for a moment think of going in straight away. You see... For one thing my mind was full of the idea of getting to school in time— set on not breaking my record for punctuality. I must surely have felt *some* little desire at least to try the door— yes, I must have felt that... But I seem to remember the attraction of the door mainly as another obstacle to my overmastering determination to get to school. I was immediately interested by this discovery I had made, of course— I went on with my mind full of it— but I went on. It didn't check me. I ran past tugging out my watch, found I had ten minutes still to spare, and then I was going downhill into familiar surroundings. I got to school, breathless, it is true, and wet with perspiration, but in time. I can remember hanging up my coat and hat . . . Went right by it and left it behind me. Odd, eh?"

He looked at me thoughtfully. "Of course, I didn't know then that it wouldn't always be there. School boys have limited imaginations. I suppose I thought it was an awfully jolly thing to have it there, to know my way back to it, but there was the school tugging at me. I expect I was a good deal distraught and inattentive that morning, recalling what I could of the beautiful strange people I should presently see again. Oddly enough I had no doubt in my mind that they would be glad to see me... Yes, I must have thought of the garden that morning just as a jolly sort of place to which one might resort in the interludes of a strenuous scholastic career.

"I didn't go that day at all. The next day was a half holiday, and that may have weighed with me. Perhaps, too, my state of inattention brought down impositions upon me and docked the margin of time necessary for the detour. I don't know. What I do know is that in the meantime the enchanted garden was so much upon my mind that I could not keep it to myself.

"I told— What was his name?— a ferrety-looking youngster we used to call Squiff."

"Young Hopkins," said I.

"Hopkins it was. I did not like telling him, I had a feeling that in some way it was against the rules to tell him, but I did. He was walking part of the way home with me; he was talkative, and if we had not talked about the enchanted

garden we should have talked of something else, and it was intolerable to me to think about any other subject. So I blabbed.

"Well, he told my secret. The next day in the play interval I found myself surrounded by half a dozen bigger boys, half teasing and wholly curious to hear more of the enchanted garden. There was that big Fawcett— you remember him?— and Carnaby and Morley Reynolds. You weren't there by any chance? No, I think I should have remembered if you were . . . . .

"A boy is a creature of odd feelings. I was, I really believe, in spite of my secret self-disgust, a little flattered to have the attention of these big fellows. I remember particularly a moment of pleasure caused by the praise of Crawshaw— you remember Crawshaw major, the son of Crawshaw the composer?— who said it was the best lie he had ever heard. But at the same time there was a really painful undertow of shame at telling what I felt was indeed a sacred secret. That beast Fawcett made a joke about the girl in green—"

Wallace's voice sank with the keen memory of that shame. "I pretended not to hear," he said. "Well, then Carnaby suddenly called me a young liar and disputed with me when I said the thing was true. I said I knew where to find the green door, could lead them all there in ten minutes. Carnaby became outrageously virtuous, and said I'd have to— and bear out my words or suffer. Did you ever have Carnaby twist your arm? Then perhaps you'll understand how it went with me. I swore my story was true. There was nobody in the school then to save a chap from Carnaby though Crawshaw put in a word or so. Carnaby had got his game. I grew excited and red-eared, and a little frightened, I behaved altogether like a silly little chap, and the outcome of it all was that instead of starting alone for my enchanted garden, I led the way presently— cheeks flushed, ears hot, eyes smarting, and my soul one burning misery and shame— for a party of six mocking, curious and threatening school-fellows.

"We never found the white wall and the green door . . ."

"You mean?—"

"I mean I couldn't find it. I would have found it if I could.

"And afterwards when I could go alone I couldn't find it. I never found it. I seem now to have been always looking for it through my school-boy days, but I've never come upon it again."

"Did the fellows— make it disagreeable?"

"Beastly... Carnaby held a council over me for wanton lying. I remember how I sneaked home and upstairs to hide the marks of my blubbering. But when I cried myself to sleep at last it wasn't for Carnaby, but for the garden, for the beautiful afternoon I had hoped for, for the sweet friendly women and

the waiting playfellows and the game I had hoped to learn again, that beautiful forgotten game...

"I believed firmly that if I had not told— I had bad times after that— crying at night and wool-gathering by day. For two terms I slackened and had bad reports. Do you remember? Of course you would! It was *you*— your beating me in mathematics that brought me back to the grind again."

FOR A TIME my friend stared silently into the red heart of the fire. Then he said: "I never saw it again until I was seventeen.

"It leapt upon me for the third time— as I was driving to Paddington on my way to Oxford and a scholarship. I had just one momentary glimpse. I was leaning over the apron of my hansom smoking a cigarette, and no doubt thinking myself no end of a man of the world, and suddenly there was the door, the wall, the dear sense of unforgettable and still attainable things.

"We clattered by— I too taken by surprise to stop my cab until we were well past and round a corner. Then I had a queer moment, a double and divergent movement of my will: I tapped the little door in the roof of the cab, and brought my arm down to pull out my watch. 'Yes, sir!' said the cabman, smartly. 'Er— well— it's nothing,' I cried. '*My* mistake! We haven't much time! Go on!' and he went on...

"I got my scholarship. And the night after I was told of that I sat over my fire in my little upper room, my study, in my father's house, with his praise— his rare praise— and his sound counsels ringing in my ears, and I smoked my favourite pipe— the formidable bulldog of adolescence— and thought of that door in the long white wall. 'If I had stopped,' I thought, 'I should have missed my scholarship, I should have missed Oxford— muddled all the fine career before me! I begin to see things better!' I fell musing deeply, but I did not doubt then this career of mine was a thing that merited sacrifice.

"Those dear friends and that clear atmosphere seemed very sweet to me, very fine, but remote. My grip was fixing now upon the world. I saw another door opening— the door of my career."

He stared again into the fire. Its red lights picked out a stubborn strength in his face for just one flickering moment, and then it vanished again.

"Well", he said and sighed, "I have served that career. I have done— much work, much hard work. But I have dreamt of the enchanted garden a thousand dreams, and seen its door, or at least glimpsed its door, four times since then. Yes— four times. For a while this world was so bright and interesting, seemed so full of meaning and opportunity that the half-effaced charm of the garden was by comparison gentle and remote. Who wants to pat panthers on the way to dinner with pretty women and distinguished men? I came down to London

from Oxford, a man of bold promise that I have done something to redeem. Something— and yet there have been disappointments...

"Twice I have been in love— I will not dwell on that— but once, as I went to someone who, I know, doubted whether I dared to come, I took a short cut at a venture through an unfrequented road near Earl's Court, and so happened on a white wall and a familiar green door. 'Odd!' said I to myself, 'but I thought this place was on Campden Hill. It's the place I never could find somehow— like counting Stonehenge— the place of that queer day dream of mine.' And I went by it intent upon my purpose. It had no appeal to me that afternoon.

"I had just a moment's impulse to try the door, three steps aside were needed at the most— though I was sure enough in my heart that it would open to me— and then I thought that doing so might delay me on the way to that appointment in which I thought my honour was involved. Afterwards I was sorry for my punctuality— I might at least have peeped in I thought, and waved a hand to those panthers, but I knew enough by this time not to seek again belatedly that which is not found by seeking. Yes, that time made me very sorry...

"Years of hard work after that and never a sight of the door. It's only recently it has come back to me. With it there has come a sense as though some thin tarnish had spread itself over my world. I began to think of it as a sorrowful and bitter thing that I should never see that door again. Perhaps I was suffering a little from overwork— perhaps it was what I've heard spoken of as the feeling of forty. I don't know. But certainly the keen brightness that makes effort easy has gone out of things recently, and that just at a time with all these new political developments— when I ought to be working. Odd, isn't it? But I do begin to find life toilsome, its rewards, as I come near them, cheap. I began a little while ago to want the garden quite badly. Yes— and I've seen it three times."

"The garden?"

"No— the door! And I haven't gone in!"

He leaned over the table to me, with an enormous sorrow in his voice as he spoke. "Thrice I have had my chance— *thrice!* If ever that door offers itself to me again, I swore, I will go in out of this dust and heat, out of this dry glitter of vanity, out of these toilsome futilities. I will go and never return. This time I will stay... I swore it and when the time came— *I didn't go*.

"Three times in one year have I passed that door and failed to enter. Three times in the last year.

"The first time was on the night of the snatch division on the Tenants' Redemption Bill, on which the Government was saved by a majority of three. You remember? No one on our side— perhaps very few on the opposite side—

expected the end that night. Then the debate collapsed like eggshells. I and Hotchkiss were dining with his cousin at Brentford, we were both unpaired, and we were called up by telephone, and set off at once in his cousin's motor. We got in barely in time, and on the way we passed my wall and door— livid in the moonlight, blotched with hot yellow as the glare of our lamps lit it, but unmistakable. 'My God!' cried I. 'What?' said Hotchkiss. 'Nothing!' I answered, and the moment passed.

" 'I've made a great sacrifice,' I told the whip as I got in. They all have,' he said, and hurried by.

"I do not see how I could have done otherwise then. And the next occasion was as I rushed to my father's bedside to bid that stern old man farewell. Then, too, the claims of life were imperative. But the third time was different; it happened a week ago. It fills me with hot remorse to recall it. I was with Gurker and Ralphs— it's no secret now you know that I've had my talk with Gurker. We had been dining at Frobisher's, and the talk had become intimate between us. The question of my place in the reconstructed ministry lay always just over the boundary of the discussion. Yes— yes. That's all settled. It needn't be talked about yet, but there's no reason to keep a secret from you... Yes— thanks! thanks! But let me tell you my story.

"Then, on that night things were very much in the air. My position was a very delicate one. I was keenly anxious to get some definite word from Gurker, but was hampered by Ralphs' presence. I was using the best power of my brain to keep that light and careless talk not too obviously directed to the point that concerns me. I had to. Ralphs' behaviour since has more than justified my caution... Ralphs, I knew, would leave us beyond the Kensington High Street, and then I could surprise Gurker by a sudden frankness. One has sometimes to resort to these little devices... And then it was that in the margin of my field of vision I became aware once more of the white wall, the green door before us down the road.

"We passed it talking. I passed it. I can still see the shadow of Gurker's marked profile, his opera hat tilted forward over his prominent nose, the many folds of his neck wrap going before my shadow and Ralphs' as we sauntered past.

"I passed within twenty inches of the door. 'If I say good-night to them, and go in,' I asked myself, 'what will happen?' And I was all a-tingle for that word with Gurker.

"I could not answer that question in the tangle of my other problems. 'They will think me mad,' I thought. 'And suppose I vanish now!— Amazing disappearance of a prominent politician!' That weighed with me. A thousand inconceivably petty worldlinesses weighed with me in that crisis."

Then he turned on me with a sorrowful smile, and, speaking slowly; "Here I am!" he said.

"Here I am!" he repeated, "and my chance has gone from me. Three times in one year the door has been offered me— the door that goes into peace, into delight, into a beauty beyond dreaming, a kindness no man on earth can know. And I have rejected it, Redmond, and it has gone—"

"How do you know?"

"I know. I know. I am left now to work it out, to stick to the tasks that held me so strongly when my moments came. You say, I have success— this vulgar, tawdry, irksome, envied thing. I have it." He had a walnut in his big hand. "If that was my success," he said, and crushed it, and held it out for me to see.

"Let me tell you something, Redmond. This loss is destroying me. For two months, for ten weeks nearly now, I have done no work at all, except the most necessary and urgent duties. My soul is full of inappeasable regrets. At nights— when it is less likely I shall be recognised— I go out. I wander. Yes. I wonder what people would think of that if they knew. A Cabinet Minister, the responsible head of that most vital of all departments, wandering alone— grieving— sometimes near audibly lamenting— for a door, for a garden!"

I CAN SEE NOW his rather pallid face, and the unfamiliar sombre fire that had come into his eyes. I see him very vividly to-night. I sit recalling his words, his tones, and last evening's *Westminster Gazette* still lies on my sofa, containing the notice of his death. At lunch to-day the club was busy with him and the strange riddle of his fate.

They found his body very early yesterday morning in a deep excavation near East Kensington Station. It is one of two shafts that have been made in connection with an extension of the railway southward. It is protected from the intrusion of the public by a hoarding upon the high road, in which a small doorway has been cut for the convenience of some of the workmen who live in that direction. The doorway was left unfastened through a misunderstanding between two gangers, and through it he made his way...

My mind is darkened with questions and riddles.

It would seem he walked all the way from the House that night— he has frequently walked home during the past Session— and so it is I figure his dark form coming along the late and empty streets, wrapped up, intent. And then did the pale electric lights near the station cheat the rough planking into a semblance of white? Did that fatal unfastened door awaken some memory?

Was there, after all, ever any green door in the wall at all?

I do not know. I have told his story as he told it to me. There are times when I believe that Wallace was no more than the victim of the coincidence

between a rare but not unprecedented type of hallucination and a careless trap, but that indeed is not my profoundest belief. You may think me superstitious if you will, and foolish; but, indeed, I am more than half convinced that he had in truth, an abnormal gift, and a sense, something— I know not what— that in the guise of wall and door offered him an outlet, a secret and peculiar passage of escape into another and altogether more beautiful world. At any rate, you will say, it betrayed him in the end. But did it betray him? There you touch the inmost mystery of these dreamers, these men of vision and the imagination. We see our world fair and common, the hoarding and the pit. By our daylight standard he walked out of security into darkness, danger and death. But did he see like that?

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22: Pichon & Sons, of the Croix Rousse

Joseph Sheridan le Fanu

1814-1873

"*Tinsley's Magazine*" Christmas, 1868.

GIRAUDIER, *PHARMACIEN, PREMIERE CLASSE*, is the legend, recorded in huge, ill-proportioned letters, which directs the attention of the stranger to the most prosperous-looking shop in the grand *place* of La Croix Rousse, a well-known suburb of the beautiful city of Lyons, which has its share of the shabby gentility and poor pretence common to the suburban commerce of great towns.

Giraudier is not only *pharmacien* but *propriétaire*, though not by inheritance; his possession of one of the prettiest and most prolific of the small vineyards in the beautiful suburb, and a charming inconvenient house, with low ceilings, liliputian bedrooms, and a profusion of *persiennes, jalousies*, and *contrevents*, comes by purchase. This enviable little terse was sold by the Nation, when that terrible abstraction transacted the public business of France; and it was bought very cheaply by the strong-minded father of the Giraudier of the present, who was not disturbed by the evil reputation which the place had gained, at a time when the peasants of France, having been bullied into a renunciation of religion, eagerly cherished superstition. The Giraudier of the present cherishes the particular superstition in question affectionately; it reminds him of an uncommonly good bargain made in his favour, which is always a pleasant association of ideas, especially to a Frenchman still more especially to a Lyonnais; and it attracts strangers to his *pharmacie*, and leads to transactions in *Grand Chartreuse* and *Creme de Roses*, ensuing naturally on the narration of the history of Pichon and Sons. Giraudier is not of aristocratic principles and sympathies; on the contrary, he has decided republican leanings, and considers *Le Progres* a masterpiece of journalistic literature; but, as he says simply and strongly, 'it is not because a man is a marquis that one is not to keep faith with him; a bad action is not good because it harms a good-for-nothing of a noble; the more when that good-for-nothing is no longer a noble, but *pour rire*'. At the easy price of acquiescence in these sentiments, the stranger hears one of the most authentic, best-remembered, most popular of the many traditions of the bad old times before General Buonaparte', as Giraudier, who has no sympathy with any later designation of *le grand homme*, calls the Emperor, whose statue one can perceive--a speck in the distance--from the threshold of the *pharmacie*.

The Marquis de Sénanges, in the days of the triumph of the great Revolution, was fortunate enough to be out of France, and wise enough to remain away from that country, though he persisted, long after the old *régime* was as dead as the Ptolemies, in believing it merely suspended, and the

Revolution a lamentable accident of vulgar complexion, but happily temporary duration. Be Marquis de Sénanges, who affected the *style régence*, and was the politest of infidels and the most refined of voluptuaries, got on indifferently in inappreciative foreign parts; but the members of his family--his brother and sisters, two of whom were guillotined, while the third escaped to Savoy and found refuge there in a convent of her order--got on exceedingly ill in France. If the *ci-devant* Marquis had had plenty of money to expend in such feeble imitations of his accustomed pleasures as were to be had out of Paris, he would not have been much affected by the fate of his relatives. But money became exceedingly scarce; the Marquis had actually beheld many of his peers reduced to the necessity of earning the despicable but indispensable article after many ludicrous fashions. And the duration of this absurd upsetting of law, order, privilege, and property began to assume unexpected and very unpleasant proportions.

Be Château de Sénanges, with its surrounding lands, was confiscated to the Nation, during the third year of the 'emigration' of the Marquis de Sénanges; and the greater part of the estate was purchased by a thrifty, industrious, and rich *avocat*, named Prosper Alix, a widower with an only daughter. Prosper Alix enjoyed the esteem of the entire neighbourhood. First, he was rich; secondly, he was of a taciturn disposition, and of a neutral tint in politics. He had done well under the old *régime*, and he was doing well under the new--thank God, or the Supreme Being, or the First Cause, or the goddess Reason herself, for all--he would have invoked Dagon, Moloch, or Kali, quite as readily as the Saints and the Madonna, who had gone so utterly out of fashion of late. Nobody was afraid to speak out before Prosper Alix; he was not a spy; and though a cold-hearted man, except in the instance of his only daughter, he never harmed anybody.

Very likely it was because he was the last person in the vicinity whom anybody would have suspected of being applied to by the dispossessed family, that the son of the Marquis's brother, a young man of promise, of courage, of intellect, and of morals of decidedly a higher calibre than those actually and traditionally imputed to the family, sought the aid of the new possessor of the Château de Sénanges, which had changed its old title for that of the Maison Alix. The father of M. Paul de Sénanges had perished in the September massacres; his mother had been guillotined at Lyons; and he--who had been saved by the inter-position of a young comrade, whose father had, in the wonderful rotations of the wheel of Fate, acquired authority in the place where he had once esteemed the notice of the nephew of the Marquis a crowning honour for his son--had passed through the common vicissitudes of

that dreadful time, which would take a volume for their recital in each individual instance.

Paul de Sénanges was a handsome young fellow, frank, high-spirited, and of a brisk and happy temperament; which, however, modified by the many misfortunes he had undergone, was not permanently changed. He had plenty of capacity for enjoyment in him still; and as his position was very isolated, and his mind had become enlightened on social and political matters to an extent in which the men of his family would have discovered utter degradation and the women diabolical possession, he would not have been very unhappy if, under the new condition of things, he could have lived in his native country and gained an honest livelihood. But he could not do that, he was too thoroughly 'suspect'; the antecedents of his family were too powerful against him: his only chance would have been to have gone into the popular camp as an extreme, violent partisan, to have out-Heroded the revolutionary Herods; and that Paul de Sénanges was too honest to do. So he was reduced to being thankful that he had escaped with his life, and to watching for an opportunity of leaving France and gaining some country where the reign of liberty, fraternity, and equality was not quite so oppressive.

The long-looked-for opportunity at length offered itself, and Paul de Sénanges was instructed by his uncle the Marquis that he must contrive to reach Marseilles, whence he should be transported to Spain--in which country the illustrious emigrant was then residing--by a certain named date. His uncle's communication arrived safely, and the plan proposed seemed a secure and eligible one. Only in two respects was it calculated to make Paul de Sénanges thoughtful. The first was, that his uncle should take any interest in the matter of his safety; the second, what could be the nature of a certain deposit which the Marquis's letter directed him to procure, if possible, from the Château de Sénanges. The fact of this injunction explained, in some measure, the first of the two difficulties. It was plain that whatever were the contents of this packet which he was to seek for, according to the indications marked on a ground-plan drawn by his uncle and enclosed in the letter, the Marquis wanted them, and could not procure them except by the agency of his nephew. That the Marquis should venture to direct Paul de Sénanges to put himself in communication with Prosper Alix, would have been surprising to any one acquainted only with the external and generally understood features of the character of the new proprietor of the Château de Sénanges. But a few people knew Prosper Alix thoroughly, and the Marquis was one of the number; he was keen enough to know in theory that, in the case of a man with only one weakness, that is likely to be a very weak weakness indeed, and to apply the theory to the *avocat*. The beautiful, pious, and aristocratic mother of Paul de

Sénanges--a lady to whose superiority the Marquis had rendered the distinguished testimony of his dislike, not hesitating to avow that she was 'much too good for *his* taste'--had been very fond of, and very kind to, the motherless daughter of Prosper Alix, and he held her memory in reverence which he accorded to nothing beside, human or divine, and taught his daughter the matchless worth of the friend she had lost. The Marquis knew this, and though he had little sympathy with the sentiment, he believed he might use it in the present instance to his own profit, with safety. The event proved that he was right. Private negotiations, with the manner of whose transaction we are not concerned, passed between the *avocat* and the *ci-devant* Marquis; and the young man, then leading a life in which skulking had a large share, in the vicinity of Dijon, was instructed to present himself at the Maison Alix, under the designation of Henri Glaire, and in the character of an artist in house-decoration. The circumstances of his life in childhood and boyhood had led to his being almost safe from recognition as a man at Lyons; and, indeed, all the people on the *ci-devant* visiting-list of the château had been pretty nearly killed off, in the noble and patriotic ardour of the revolutionary times.

The ancient Château de Sénanges was proudly placed near the summit of the 'Holy Hill', and had suffered terrible depredations when the church at Fourvières was sacked, and the shrine desecrated with that ingenious impiety which is characteristic of the French; but it still retained somewhat of its former heavy grandeur. The château was much too large for the needs, tastes, or ambition of its present owner, who was too wise, if even he had been of an ostentatious disposition, not to have sedulously resisted its promptings. Be jealousy of the nation of brothers was easily excited, and departure from simplicity and frugality was apt to be commented upon by domiciliary visits, and the eager imposition of fanciful fines. That portion of the vast building occupied by Prosper Alix and the *citoyenne* Berthe, his daughter, presented an appearance of well-to-do comfort and modest ease, which contrasted with the grandiose proportions and the elaborate decorations of the wide corridors, huge flat staircases, and lofty panelled apartments. The *avocat* and his daughter lived quietly in the old place, hoping, after a general fashion, for better times, but not finding the present very bad; the father becomang day by day more pleasant with his bargain, the daughter growing fonder of the great house, and the noble *bocages*, of the scrappy little vineyards, struggling for existence on the sunny hill-side, and the place where the famous shrine had been. They had done it much damage; they had parted its riches among them; the once ever-open doors were shut, and the worn flags were untrodden; but nothing could degrade it, nothing could destroy what had been, in the mind of

Berthe Alix, who was as devout as her father was unconcernedly unbelieving. Berthe was wonderfully well educated for a Frenchwoman of that period, and surprisingly handsome for a Frenchwoman of any. Not too tall to offend the taste of her compatriots, and not too short to be dignified and graceful, she had a symmetrical figure, and a small, well-poised head, whose profuse, shining, silken dark-brown hair she wore as nature intended, in a shower of curls, never touched by the hand of the coiffeur--curls which clustered over her brow, and fell far down on her shapely neck. Her features were fine; the eyes very dark, and the mouth very red; the complexion clear and rather pale, and the style of the face and its expression lofty. When Berthe Alix was a child, people were accustomed to say she was pretty and refined enough to belong to the aristocracy; nobody would have dared to say so now, prettiness and refinement, together with all the other virtues admitted to a place on the patriotic roll, having become national property.

Berthe loved her father dearly. She was deeply impressed with the sense of her supreme importance to him, and fully comprehended that he would be influenced by and through her when all other persuasion or argument would be unavailing. When Prosper Alix wished and intended to do anything rather mean or selfish, he did it without letting Berthe know; and when he wished to leave undone something which he knew his daughter would decide ought to be done, he carefully concealed from her the existence of the dilemma. Nevertheless, this system did not prevent the father and daughter being very good and even confidential friends. Prosper Alix loved his daughter immeasurably, and respected her more than he respected anyone in the world. With regard to her persevering religiousness, when such things were not only out of fashion and date, but illegal as well, he was very tolerant. Of course it was weak, and an absurdity; but every, woman, even his beautiful, incomparable Berthe, was weak and absurd on some point or other; and, after all, he had come to the conclusion that the safest weakness with which a woman can he afflicted is that romantic and ridiculous *faiblesse* called piety. So these two lived a happy life together, Berthe's share of it being very secluded, and were wonderfully little troubled by the turbulence with which society was making its tumultuous way to the virtuous serenity of republican perfection.

The communication announcing the project of the *ci-devant* Marquis for the secure exportation of his nephew, and containing the skilful appeal before mentioned, grievously disturbed the tranquillity of Prosper, and was precisely one of those incidents which he would especially have liked to conceal from his daughter. But he could not do so; the appeal was too cleverly made; and utter indifference to it, utter neglect of the letter, which naturally suggested itself as the easiest means of getting rid of a difficulty, would have involved an act of

direct and uncompromising dishonesty to which Prosper, though of sufficiently elastic conscience within the limit of professional gains, could not contemplate. The Château de Sénanges was indeed his own lawful property; his without prejudice to the former owners, dispossessed by no act of his. But the *ci-devant* Marquis--confiding in him to an extent which was quite astonishing, except on the *pis-aller* theory, which is so unflattering as to be seldom accepted--announced to him the existence of a certain packet, hidden in the château, acknowledging its value, and urging the need of its safe transmission. This was not his property. He heartily wished he had never learned its existence, but wishing that was clearly of no use; then he wished the nephew of the *ci-devant* might come soon, and take himself and the hidden wealth away with all possible speed. This latter was a more realizable desire, and Prosper settled his mind with it, communicated the interesting but decidedly dangerous secret to Berthe, received her warm sanction, and transmitted to the Marquis, by the appointed means, an assurance that his wishes should be punctually carried out. The absence of an interdiction of his visit before a certain date was to be the signal to M. Paul de Sénanges that he was to proceed to act upon his uncle's instructions; he waited the proper time, the reassuring silence was maintained unbroken, and he ultimately set forth on his journey, and accomplished it in safety.

Preparations had been made at the Maison Alix for the reception of M. Glaire, and his supposed occupation had been announced. Be apartments were decorated in a heavy, gloomy style, and those of the *citoyenne* in particular (they had been occupied by a lady who had once been designated as *feue Madame la Marquise*, but who was referred to now as *la mère du ci-devant*) were much in need of renovation. The alcove, for instance, was all that was least gay and most far from simple. The *citoyenne* would have all that changed. On the morning of the day of the expected arrival, Berthe said to her father:

'It would seem as if the Marquis did not know the exact spot in which the packet is deposited. M. Paul's assumed character implies the necessity for a search.'

M. Henri Glaire arrived at the Maison Alix, was fraternally received, and made acquainted with the sphere of his operations. The young man had a good deal of both ability and taste in the line he had assumed, and the part was not difficult to play. Some days were judiciously allowed to pass before the real object of the masquerade was pursued, and during that time cordial relations established them selves between the *avocat* and his guest. Be young man was handsome, elegant, engaging, with all the external advantages, and devoid of the vices, errors, and hopeless infatuated unscrupulousness, of his class; he had naturally quick intelligence, and some real knowledge and comprehension

of life had been knocked into him by the hard-hitting blows of Fate. His face was like his mother's, Prosper Alix thought, and his mind and tastes were of the very pattern which, in theory, Berthe approved. Berthe, a very unconventional French girl--who though the new era of purity, love, virtue, and disinterestedness ought to do away with marriage by barter as one of its most notable reforms, and had been disenchanted by discovering that the abolition of marriage altogether suited the taste of the incorruptible Republic better--might like, might even love, this young man. She saw so few men, and had no fancy for patriots; she would certainly he obstinate about it if she did chance to love him. This would be a nice state of affairs. This would he a pleasant consequence of the confiding request of the *ci-devant*. Prosper wished with all his heart for the arrival of the concerted signal, which should tell Henri Glaire that he might fulfil the purpose of his sojourn at the Maison Mix, and set forth for Marseilles.

But the signal did not come, and the days--long, beautiful, sunny, soothing summer-days--went on. The painting of the panels of the *citoyenne*'s apartment, which she vacated for that purpose, progressed slowly; and M. Paul de Sénanges, guided by the ground-plan, and aided by Berthe, had discovered the spot in wlyich the jewels of price, almost the last remnants of the princely wealth of the Sénanges, had been hidden by the *femme-de-chambre* who had perished with her mistress, having confided a general statement of the fact to a priest, for transmission to the Marquis. This spot had been ingeniously chosen. The sleeping-apartment of the late Marquis was extensive, lofty, and provided with an alcove of sufficiently large dimensions to have formed in itself a handsome room. This space, containing a splendid but gloomy bed, on an *estrade*, and hung with rich faded brocade, was divided from the general extent of the apartment by a low railing of black oak, elaborately carved, opening in the centre, and with a flat wide bar along the top, covered with crimson velvet. The curtains were contrived to hang from the ceiling, and, when let down inside the screen of railing, they matched the draperies which closed before the great stone balcony at the opposite end of the room. Since the *avocat*'s daughter had occupied this palatial chamber, the curtains of the alcove had never been drawn, and she had substituted for them a high folding screen of black-and-gold Japanese pattern, also a relic of the grand old times, which stood about six feet on the outside of the rails that shut in her bed. The floor was of shining oak, testifying to the conscientious and successful labours of successive generations of *frotteurs*; and on the spot where the railing of the alcove opened by a pretty quaint device sundering the intertwined arms of a pair of very chubby cherubs, a square space in the floor was also richly carved.

The seekers soon reached the end of their search. A little effort removed the square of carved oak, and underneath they found a casket, evidently of old workmanship, richly wrought in silver, much tarnished but quite intact. It was agreed that this precious deposit should he replaced, and the carved square laid down over it, until the signal for his departure should reach Paul. The little baggage which under any circumstances he could have ventured to allow himself in the dangerous journey he was to undertake, must be reduced, so as to admit of his carrying the casket without exciting suspicion.

The finding of the hidden treasure was not the first joint discovery made by the daughter of the *avocat* and the son of the *ci-devant*. The cogitations of Prosper Alix were very wise, very reasonable; but they were a little tardy. Before he had admitted the possibility of mischief, the mischief was done. Each had found out that the love of the other was indispensable to the happiness of life; and they had exchanged confidences, assurances, protestations, and promises, as freely, as fervently, and as hopefully, as if no such thing as a Republic, one and indivisible, with a keen scent and an unappeasable thirst for the blood of aristocrats, existed. They forgot all about 'Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality'--these egotistical, narrow-minded young people; they also forgot the characteristic alternative to those unparalleled blessings--'Death'. But Prosper Alix did not forget any of these things; and his consternation, his prevision of suffering for his beloved daughter, were terrible, when she told him, with a simple noble frankness which the *grandes dames* of the dead-and-gone time of great ladies had rarely had a chance of exhibiting, that she loved M. Paul de Sénanges, and intended to marry him when the better times should come. Perhaps she meant when that alternative of death should be struck off the sacred formula; of course she meant to marry him with the sanction of her father, which she made no doubt she should receive.

Prosper Alix was in pitiable perplexity. He could not bear to terrify his daughter by a full explanation of the danger she was incurring; he could not bear to delude her with false hope. If this young man could be got away at once safely, there was not much likelihood that he would ever be able to return to France. Would Berthe pine for him, or would she forget him, and make a rational, sensible, rich, republican marriage, which would not imperil either her reputation for pure patriotism or her father's? The latter would be the very best thing that could possibly happen, and therefore it was decidedly unwise to calculate upon it; but, after all, it was possible; and Prosper had not the courage, in such a strait, to resist the hopeful promptings of a possibility. How ardently he regretted that he had complied with the prayer of the *ci-devant*!

When would the signal for M. Paul's departure come?

Prosper Alix had made many sacrifices, had exercised much self-control for his daughter's sake; but he had never sustained a more severe trial than this, never suffered more than he did now, under the strong necessity for hiding from her his absolute conviction of the impossibility of a happy result for this attachment, in that future to which the lovers looked so fearlessly. He could not even make his anxiety and apprehension known to Paul de Sénanges; for he did not believe the young man had sufficient strength of will to conceal anything so important from the keen and determined observation of Berthe.

The expected signal was not given, and the lovers were incautious. The seclusion of the Maison Alix had all the danger, as well as all the delight, of solitude, and Paul dropped his disguise too much and too often. The servants, few in number, were of the truest patriotic principles, and to some of them the denunciation of the *citoyen*, whom they condescended to serve because the sacred Revolution had not yet made them as rich as he, would have been a delightful duty, a sweet-smelling sacrifice to be laid on the altar of the country. They heard certain names and places mentioned; they perceived many things which led them to believe that Henri Glaire was not an industrial artist and pure patriot, worthy of respect, but a wretched *ci-devant*, resorting to the dignity of labour to make up for the righteous destruction of every other kind of dignity.

One day a gardener, of less stoical virtue than his fellows, gave Prosper Alix a warning that the presence of a *ci-devant* upon his premises was suspected, and that he might he certain a domiciliary visit, attended with dangerous results to himself, would soon take place. Of course the *avocat* did not commit himself by any avowal to this lukewarm patriot; but he casually mentioned that Henri Glaire was about to take his leave. What was to be done? He must not leave the neighbourhood without receiving the instructions he was awaiting; but he must leave the house, and be supposed to have gone quite away. Without any delay or hesitation, Prosper explained the facts to Berthe and her lover, and insisted on the necessity for an instant parting. Then the courage and the readiness of the girl told. There was no crying, and very little trembling; she was strong and helpful.

'He must go to Pichon's, father,' she said, 'and remain there until the signal is given. Pichon is a master-mason, Paul,' she continued, turning to her lover, 'and his wife was my nurse. They are avaricious people; but they are fond of me in their way, and they will shelter you faithfully enough, when they know that my father will pay them handsomely. You must go at once, unseen by the servants; they are at supper. Fetch your valise, and bring it to my room. We will put the casket in it, and such of your things as you must take out to make

room for it, we can hide under the plank. My father will go with you to Pichon's, and we will communicate with you there as soon as it is safe.'

Paul followed her to the large gloomy room where the treasure lay, and they took the casket from its hiding-place. It was heavy, though not large, and an awkward thing to pack away among linen in a small valise. They managed it, however, and, the brief preparation completed, the moment of parting arrived. Firmly and eloquently, though in haste, Berthe assured Paul of her changeless love and faith, and promised him to wait for him for any length of time in France, if better days should be slow of coming, or to join him in some foreign land, if they were never to come. Her father was present, full of compassion and misgiving. At length he said,

'Come, Paul, you must leave her; every moment is of importance.'

The young man and his betrothed were standing on the spot whence they had taken the casket; the carved rail with the heavy curtains might have been the outer sanctuary of an altar, and they bride and bridegroom before it, with earnest, loving faces, and clasped hands.

'Farewell, Paul,' said Berthe; 'promise me once more, in this the moment of our parting, that you will come to me again, if you are alive, when the danger is past.'

'Whether I am living or dead, Berthe,' said Paul de Sénanges, strongly moved by some sudden inexplicable instinct, 'I will come to you again.'

In a few more minutes, Prosper Alix and his guest, who carried, not without difficulty, the small but heavy leather valise, had disappeared in the distance, and Berthe was on her knees before the *priedieu* of the *ci-devant* Marquise, her face turned towards the 'Holy Hill' of Fourvières.

PICHON, *mâitre*, and his sons, *garçons-maçons*, were well-to-do people, rather morose, exceedingly avaricious, and of taciturn dispositions; but they were not ill spoken of by their neighbours. They had amassed a good deal of money in their time, and were just then engaged on a very lucrative job. This was the construction of several of the steep descents, by means of stairs, straight and winding, cut in the face of the *côteaux*, by which pedestrians are enabled to descend into the town. Pichon *père* was a *propriétaire* as well; his property was that which is now in the possession of Giraudier, *pharmacien, premiere classe*, and which was destined to attain a sinister celebrity during his proprietorship. One of the straightest and steepest of the stairways had been cut close to the *terre* which the mason owned, and a massive wall, destined to bound the high-road at the foot of the declivity, was in course of construction.

When Prosper Alix and Paul de Sénanges reached the abode of Pichon, the master-mason, with his sons and workmen, had just completed their day's

work, and were preparing to eat the supper served by the wife and mother, a tall gaunt woman, who looked as if a more liberal scale of housekeeping would have done her good, but on whose features the stamp of that devouring and degrading avarice which is the commonest vice of the French peasantry, was set as plainly as on the hard faces of her husband and her sons. The *avocat* explained his business and introduced his companion briefly, and awaited the reply of Pichon *père* without any appearance of inquietude.

'You don't run any risk,' he said; 'at least, you don't run any risk which I cannot make it worth your while to incur. It is not the first time you have received a temporary guest on my recommendation. You know nothing about the citizen Glaire, except that he is recommended to you by me. I am responsible; you can, on occasion, make me so. The citizen may remain with you a short time; can hardly remain long. Say, citizen, is it agreed? I have no time to spare.'

It was agreed, and Prosper Alix departed, leaving M. Paul de Sénanges, convinced that the right, indeed the only, thing had been done, and yet much troubled and depressed.

Pichon *père* was a short, squat, powerfully built man, verging on sixty, whose thick dark grizzled hair, sturdy limbs, and hard hands, on which the muscles showed like cords, spoke of endurance and strength; he was, indeed, noted in the neighbourhood for those qualities. His sons resembled him slightly, and each other closely, as was natural, for they were twins. They were heavy, lumpish fellows, and they made but an ungracious return to the attempted civilities of the stranger, to whom the offer of their mother to show him his room was a decided relief. As he rose to follow the woman, Paul de Sénanges lifted his small valise with difficulty from the floor, on which he had placed it on entering the house, and carried it out of the room in both his arms. The brothers followed these movements with curiosity, and, when the door closed behind their mother and the stranger, their eyes met.

TWENTY-FOUR HOURS had passed away, and nothing new had occurred at The Maison Alix. The servants had not expressed any curiosity respecting the departure of the citizen Glaire, no domiciliary visit had taken place, and Berthe and her father were discussing the propriety of Prosper's venturing, on the pretext of an excursion in another direction, a visit to the isolated and quiet dwelling of the master-mason. No signal had yet arrived. It was agreed that after the lapse of another day, if their tranquillity remained undisturbed, Prosper Alix should visit Paul de Sénanges. Berthe, who was silent and preoccupied, retired to her own room early, and her father, who was uneasy

and apprehensive, desperately anxious for the promised communication from the Marquis, was relieved by her absence.

Be moon was high in the dark sky, and her beams were flung across the polished oak floor of Berthe's bedroom, through the great window with the stone balcony, when the girl, who had gone to sleep with her lover's name upon her lips in prayer, awoke with a sudden start, and sat up in her bed. An unbearable dread was upon her; and yet she was unable to utter a cry, she was unable to make another movement. Had she heard a voice? No, no one had spoken, nor did she fancy that she heard any sound. But within her, somewhere inside her heaving bosom, something said, 'Berthe!'

And she listened, and knew what it was. And it spoke, and said:

'I promised you that, living or dead, I would come to you again, And I have come to you; but not living.'

She was quite awake. Even in the agony of her fear she looked around, and tried to move her hands, to feel her dress and the bedclothes, and to fix her eyes on some familiar object, that she might satisfy herself, before this racing and beating, this whirling and yet icy chilliness of her blood should kill her outright, that she was really awake.

'I have come to you; but not living.'

What an awful thing that voice speaking within her was! She tried to raise her head and to look towards the place where the moonbeams marked bright lines upon the polished floor, which lost themselves at the foot of the Japanese screen. She forced herself to this effort, and lifted her eyes, wild and haggard with fear, and there, the moonbeams at his feet, the tall black screen behind him, she saw Paul de Sénanges. She saw him; she looked at him quite steadily; she rose, slowly, with a mechanical movement, and stood upright beside her bed, clasping her forehead with her hands, and gazing at him. He stood motionless, in the dress he had worn when he took leave of her, the light-coloured riding-coat of the period, with a short cape, and a large white cravat tucked into the double breast. The white muslin was flecked, and the front of the riding-coat was deeply stained, with blood. He looked at her, and she took a step forward--another--then, with a desperate effort, she dashed open the railing and flung herself on her knees before him, with her arms stretched out as if to clasp him. But he was no longer there; the moonbeams fell clear and cold upon the polished floor, and lost themselves where Berthe lay, at the foot of the screen, her head upon the ground, and every sign of life gone from her.

'WHERE IS the citizen Glaire?' asked Prosper Alix of the *citoyenne* Pichon, entering the house of the master-mason abruptly, and with a stern and threatening countenance. 'I have a message for him; I must see him.'

'I know nothing about him,' replied the *citoyenne*, without turning in his direction, or relaxing her culinary labours. 'He went away from here the next morning, and I did not trouble myself to ask where; that is his affair.'

'He went away? Without letting me know! Be careful, *citoyenne*; this is a serious mattter.'

'So they tell me,' said the woman with a grin, which was not altogether free from pain and fear; 'for you! A serious thing to have a *suspect* in your house, and palm him off on honest people. However, he went away peaceably enough when he knew we had found him out, and that we had no desire to go to prison, or worse, on his account, or yours.'

She was strangely insolent, this woman, and the listener felt his helplessness; he had brought the young man there with such secrecy, he had so carefully provided for the success of concealment.

'Who carried his valise?' Prosper Alix asked her suddenly.

'How should I know?', she replied; but her hands lost their steadiness, and she upset a stew-pan; 'he carried it here, didn't he? and I suppose he carried it away again.'

Prosper Alix looked at her steadily--she shunned his gaze, but she showed no other sign of confusion; then horror and disgust of the woman came over him.

'I must see Pichon,' he said; 'where is he?'

'Where should he be but at the wall? he and the boys are working there, as always. The citizen can see them; but he will remember not to detain them; in a little quarter of an hour the soup will be ready.' The citizen did see the master-mason and his sons, and after an interview of some duration he left the place in a state of violent agitation and complete discomfiture. Be master-mason had addressed to him these words at parting:

'I assert that the man went away at his own free will; but if you do not keep very quiet, I shall deny that he came here at all--you cannot prove he did--and I will denounce you for harbouring a *suspect* and *ci-devant* under a false name. I know a de Sénanges when I see him as well as you, citizen Alix; and, wishing M. Paul a good journey, I hope you will consider about this matter, for truly, my friend, I think you will sneeze in the sack before I shall.'

'WE MUST bear it, Berthe, my child,' said Prosper Alix to his daughter many weeks later, when the fever had left her, and she was able to talk with her father of the mysterious and frightful events which had occurred. 'We are utterly helpless. There is no proof, only the word of these wretches against mine, and certain destruction to me if I speak. We will go to Spain, and tell the

Marquis all the truth, and never return, if you would rather not. But, for the rest, we must bear it.'

'Yes, my father,' said Bcrthe submissively, 'I know we must; but God need not, and I don't believe He will.'

THE FATHER and the daughter left France unmolested, and Berthe 'bore it' as well as she could. When better times came they returned, Prosper Alix an old man, and Berthe a stern, silent, handsome woman, with whom no one associated any notions of love or marriage. But long before their return the traditions of the Croix Rousse were enriched by circumstances which led to that before-mentioned capital bargain made by the father of the Giraudier of the present. These circumstances were the violent death of Pichon and his two sons, who were killed by the fall of a portion of the great boundary-wall on the very day of its completion, and the discovery, close to its foundation, at the extremity of Pichon's *terre*, of the corpse of a young man attired in a light-coloured riding-coat, who had been stabbed through the heart.

Berthe Alix lived alone in the Château de Sénanges, under its restored name, until she was a very old woman. She lived long enough to see the golden figure on the summit of the 'Holy Hill', long enough to forget the bad old times, but not long enough to forget or cease to mourn the lover who had kept his promise, and come back to her; the lover who rested in the earth which once covered the bones of the martyrs, and who kept a place for her by his side. She has filled that place for many years. You may see it, when you look down from the second gallery of the bell-tower at Fourvières, following the bend of the outstretched golden arm of Notre Dame.

The château was pulled down some years ago, and there is no trace of its former existence among the vines.

Good times, and bad times, and again good times have come for the Croix Rousse, for Lyons, and for France, since then; but the remembrance of the treachery of Pichon and Sons, and of the retribution which at once exposed and punished their crime, outlives all changes. And once, every year, on a certain summer night, three ghostly figures are seen, by any who have courage and patience to watch for them, gliding along by the foot of the boundary-wall, two of them carrying a dangling corpse, and the other, implements for mason's work and a small leather valise. Giraudier, *pharmacien*, has never seen these ghostly figures, but he describes them with much minuteness; and only the *esprits forts* of the Croix Rousse deny that the ghosts of Pichon and Sons are not yet laid.

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23: The Mystery of the Jade Spear

B. Fletcher Robinson

1871-1907

The Lady's Home Magazine, Jan 1905

"ARE YOU Inspector Peace, sir?"

He looked what he was, a gardener's boy, and he stood on the platform of Richmond Station regarding us with a solemn, if cherubic, countenance. The little inspector nodded his head as he felt in his pocket for the tickets.

"I have a cab waiting for you, sir."

"Are you from the Elms?"

"Yes, sir. Miss Sherrick sent me to meet you, having heard as you were coming."

We walked up the steps to the roadway, climbed into the cab, and, with the boy on the box, dragged our way up the steep of the narrow street, past the Star and Garter (the hostelry of ancient glories), and so for a mile until, at a word from our youthful conductor, the cab drew up at a wicket-gate in a fence of split oak. As we stepped out a girl swung open the gate and stood confronting us.

She was a tall and graceful creature, with the delicacy of the blonde colouring a beautiful face. There was fear in her blue eyes, a fear that widened and fixed them; and a tremor of the full red lips that told of a great calamity.

"Inspector Addington Peace?"

"Yes, Miss Sherrick."

There was that about the little inspector which ever invited the trust of the innocent, and also, to be frank, no inconsiderable proportion of the guilty, to their special disadvantage. I have noticed a similar confidence inspired by certain of the more famous doctors. So I was not surprised when Miss Sherrick walked up to him, and laid her hand on his arm, with a confident appeal in her eyes.

"Do you know they have arrested him?" she said.

"I had not heard. What is his name?"

"Mr. Boyne."

"The man who found the body."

"Yes. The man I intend to marry."

I liked that sentence. It was stronger than any protestations of his innocence that she could have made. Peace marked it, too, for he smiled, watching her with his head to one side in his solemn fashion.

"You cannot think he is guilty," she said quietly. "You are too clever for that, Inspector Peace."

"My dear young lady, at two o'clock I heard that a Colonel Bulstrode, of The Elms, Richmond, had been stabbed to death in a road near his house. That was the single fact telegraphed to Scotland Yard. Taking my friend here, I caught the 2.35 from Waterloo Station. It is now half-past three. As you will observe, my work has not yet commenced."

"I sent the boy to meet you. I wished you to hear my story before you saw— the police up at the house. I should like to tell you all I know."

"That will, doubtless, be very valuable," said the little inspector. "Can you find us a place where we shall not be disturbed?"

For answer she led the way through the wicket-gate. A couple of turns and the winding walk brought us to an open space in the laurels and rhododendrons. On the further side was a garden-bench, and there we seated ourselves, waiting, with great anxiety on my part at least, for further details of the tragedy.

"My father was a widower," said Miss Sherrick, "and when he died he left as my guardians and trustees my mother's two brothers, Colonel Bulstrode and Mr. Anstruther Bulstrode. Colonel Bulstrode, who had been in the Indian Staff Corps, had retired the year before my father's death, and taken this house. It was with him that I went to live. Richmond suited him, for he could spend the day at his London club and yet be home in plenty of time for dinner.

"My uncle Anstruther was also an Anglo-Indian. He had been for many years a planter in Ceylon. It was on the Colonel's advice that he took a house near us when he came home this spring.

"I first met Mr. Boyne last Christmas, when we were skating on some flooded meadows by the Thames. He is a lawyer, and, though he is doing well, is by no means a rich man. Unfortunately, I am an heiress, Inspector Peace."

"I understand, Miss Sherrick."

"Colonel Bulstrode expected me to make what he called a first-rate marriage. Mr. Boyne and I had been engaged for two weeks, and at last we decided to tell the Colonel. We knew there would be trouble, but there was nothing to be gained by continued postponement. Mr. Boyne made an appointment with him for one o'clock to-day.

"The morning seemed as if it were never to end. As the hour approached I could wait in my room no longer. I slipped out of a side door into the upper garden, which lies at the further side of the house. I wandered about for some time in great misery. When I heard the stable clock chime the half-hour, I started back to the house. It must have been decided between them one way or the other."

"I had reached the drive and was walking up to the front door when I saw Cullen, the butler, come running out of the Wilderness— as we call the

shrubberies where we now are— and so across the lawn towards me. He was in an excited state, waving his arms and shouting. Cullen is so stout and respectable that I could only conclude that he had gone mad. When he was some twenty yards off, he caught sight of me, and slunk away towards the front door as if trying to avoid me.

"'What is the matter, Cullen?' I called to him.

"He slackened his pace, and finally stopped, with his eyes staring at me in an odd fashion.

"You come in with me, miss,' he stammered. 'It's no mischief of your making. Eh, eh, but it's ugly work— black and ugly work.'

"'What do you mean, Cullen?' I said as boldly as I could, for his manner frightened me.

"The colonel has come by an accident, miss, down by the wicket-gate. I was going for a doctor.'

"I did not wait to hear more. I was very fond of my guardian, Mr. Peace. He had a hot temper, but to me he had ever been kind and considerate. As I started, however, Cullen came panting up and tried to turn me back, waving his hands. Lunatic or not, I did not mean to let him frighten me. So I avoided him, and set off running across the grass to the Wilderness gate— the one through which we have just come. I had almost reached it when I met Mr. Boyne. I was surprised, for I thought he had already gone home. Beyond him I could see the gate, with two of our gardeners standing on the further side and talking earnestly together.

"I asked Mr. Boyne what was the matter, and for answer he took me by the arm and led me back towards the house. He looked very white and ill. I still begged for an explanation, and at last he told me the truth. My uncle, Colonel Bulstrode, had been found lying in the road stabbed to death with a spear. They had no idea who the murderer might be.

"They brought up the body to the house. Afterwards they let me see him. Even in death his face was convulsed with passion. Oh, it is dreadful, dreadful!"

Her reserve gave way all in a moment, and she burst into a fit of sobbing, hiding her face in her hands. It was some time before she regained her self-control, and when she spoke again it was with difficulty and in detached sentences.

"It was about three o'clock," she said. "Mr. Boyne came into the room where I was. He told me that my uncle had spoken very bitterly to him in their interview, and that there had been a quarrel between them; but Mr. Boyne's sorrow was sincere. I am sure it was sincere. Afterwards he begged me not to believe any rumours I might hear about him. Then he went away. Afterwards, as I was looking from the window, I saw him walking down the drive with a

policeman. Several of the servants were gathered at the front door watching and pointing. I don't know how— but the suspicion came to me— perhaps it was through what Cullen had said. I ran down the stairs and ordered them to answer. At last they told me— he had been arrested— for the murder."

We waited for a while, and then the little inspector rose, and, in his courteous manner, offered her his arm. She took it, looking at him through her tears.

"He is innocent, Mr. Peace," she said.

"I trust so, Miss Sherrick."

They moved off up the walk, I following behind them. We emerged from the shrubbery on to a broad lawn. The house, a sprawling old mansion of red brick, was before us. We crossed the grass, and, turning an angle of the house, came to the porch, from which a drive curled away amongst the foliage of an avenue of elms.

The central hall was better fitted for a museum than a habitation of comfort-loving folk. Bronze gods and goddesses glimmered in the corners, dragons carved in teak glared upon the Eastern arms and armour that lined the walls, the duller hues of ivory and jade contrasted with the brilliant turquoise of old Pekin vases. It was here, among these spoils of the East, that Miss Sherrick left us, walking up the stairs to her room, as fair a figure of beauty in distress as a man might see.

As she disappeared, a tall, thin fellow in plain clothes stepped out of a door on our right and saluted the inspector.

"Good afternoon, Sergeant Hales," said Addington Peace. "So you have arrested Boyne?"

"Yes, sir."

"Upon good grounds?"

"The evidence is almost complete against him."

"Indeed. I shall be pleased to hear it."

"Well, sir, it stands like this. Mr. Boyne called upon Colonel Bulstrode about one o'clock. He was shown into the library and—"

"One moment," interrupted the inspector. "Where is the library?"

"That is the door, sir," answered Hales, pointing to the room from which he had emerged.

"Perhaps it would be easier to understand if we go there?"

The library was a long, low room, lined with shelves that were in a great part empty. It projected from the main building— evidently it was of more recent construction— and thus could be lighted by windows on both sides. To our right were two which commanded the drive; to the left two more looked

out upon a plot of grass dotted with flower-beds, upon which several windows at the side of the house, at right angles to the library, also faced.

"Pray continue," said Inspector Peace.

"About ten minutes later, Cullen, the butler, heard high words passing. A regular fighting quarrel it sounded— or so he says."

"How could he hear? Was he listening in the hall?"

"No, sir; he was in his pantry, cleaning silver. The pantry is the first of those windows at the side of the house. The library windows being open, he could hear the sound of loud voices, though, as he says, he could not distinguish the words."

The inspector walked to an open lattice and thrust out his head. He closed it before he came back to us, as he did to the second window on the same side.

"Mr. Cullen must not be encouraged," he said gently. "He is there now, listening with pardonable curiosity. Well, Sergeant?"

"Presently there came a tremendous peal at his bell, and he hurried to answer it. When he reached the hall, he found the colonel and Mr. Boyne standing together. 'You understand me, Boyne,' the colonel was saying, 'If I catch you lurking about here again after my niece's money-bags, I'll thrash you within an inch of your life; I will, by thunder!' The young man gave the colonel an ugly look, but he had seen the butler, who was standing behind his master, and kept silent. 'Show this fellow out, Cullen,' said the colonel. 'And if he ever calls slam the door in his face.' And with that he stumped back into the library, swearing to himself in a manner that, as the butler declares, gave him the creeps, it was so very imaginative.

"With one thing and another, Cullen was so dumfounded— for he thought that Boyne and Miss Sherrick were as good as engaged already— that he stood in the shadow of the porch watching the young gentleman. Boyne walked down the drive for a hundred yards or so, looked back at the house, and, not seeing the butler, as he supposes, turned off to the left along a path that led towards the fruit gardens. Cullen did not know what to make of it. However, it was none of his business, and at last he went back to his pantry. Sticking out his head, he could see the colonel writing at that desk"— the sergeant pointed a finger at a knee-hole table littered with papers that was set in the further of the windows looking out upon the grass-plot— "and so concluded that he could not have seen Boyne leave the drive, having had his back to it at the time.

"About twenty minutes later Cullen and Mary Thomas, the parlour-maid, were in the dining-room, getting the table ready for lunch. This room looks out upon the lawn at the front of the house. All of a sudden they heard a shout, and the next moment the colonel rushed by and made across the lawn to the

Wilderness gate. He had a revolver in his hand, and was loading it as he ran. He dropped two cartridges in his hurry, for I found them myself when I was going over the ground. Cullen had been with him for years; he is an old soldier himself, and at the sight of the revolver he dropped the tray he was holding, climbed out of the window, and set off after his master, who had by then disappeared amongst the shrubberies.

"He is a slow traveller, is the old man, and he reckons that he was not more than halfway across the lawn when he heard a distant scream, which pulled him up in his tracks. It put the fear into him, that scream. He told me that he had seen too much active service not to know the cry that comes from a sudden and mortal wound. It was no surprise to him, therefore, when at last he reached the wicket-gate, to find his master lying dead in the road.

"Above him, tugging at the spear that had killed him, stood Boyne.

"There was no one in sight, and though the road curves at that point he could see it for fifty yards and more either way. He had no doubt in his own mind as to who had done the thing. Boyne must have seen the suspicion in his face, for he jumped back, Cullen says, and stood staring at him as white as a table-cloth.

" 'Why do you look at me like that, Cullen?' he says. You don't think—'

" 'If you can explain that away,' says Cullen, pointing to the body, 'you will be, sir, if you'll forgive me for saying it, a devilish clever man.'

" 'You're mad,' says Boyne. 'I found him like this.'

" 'And where did you spring from, if I may make so bold?' asked the butler. Very sarcastic he was, he tells me.

" 'I had been in the upper garden, and as you very well know, Cullen, I wished to avoid the colonel,' says the young man. 'I came round the back of the house and entered the Wilderness at the upper end. I was walking down the centre path towards the wicket-gate, when I heard some one scream, and set off running. I could not have been here more than half a minute before you.'

"The butler did not argue the matter, but left him standing beside the body, and went to get assistance. On the lawn he met two of the gardeners, and sent them back. I believe he also saw Miss Sherrick near the porch. It was upon those facts, sir, that I arrested Boyne."

"I don't think said the inspector, shaking his head at him, "I don't think that I should have arrested him, Sergeant Hales."

"It looks very black against him, you must allow."

"Which affects his guilt or innocence neither one way nor the other. Has a doctor examined the body?"

"Yes, sir, and extracted the spear."

"Why did you let him do that?" asked the little man, sharply.

"I knew you would be vexed about it, but it was done while I was out of the house, examining the road and lawn. He was very careful not to handle it more than was necessary, he said; but he had to saw the shaft in two."

"And why was that?" .

"He said that the force used by the thrower must have been very great."

"Very great?"

"Yes, sir, gigantic— that is what he said."

Addington Peace walked to the window and stood there staring out at the elm avenue that swayed softly in the breeze.

"Is the doctor still in the house?" he asked over his shoulder.

"No, sir."

"We have none too much light left. Have you the spear?"

The sergeant opened a side cupboard and drew out two pieces of light-coloured wood. The polished surface was dulled by stains that were self-explanatory. The head was broad and flat, formed of the finest jade, microscopically carved. It had been fashioned for Eastern ceremony, and not for battle. That was plain enough.

Peace returned to the window and examined it with the closest attention. Presently he slipped out a magnifying glass, staring eagerly at a spot on the longer portion of the shaft.

"Do I understand you, Sergeant Hales, that you found Boyne endeavouring to pull out the spear?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who else touched it?"

"No one that I know of, save the doctor."

"And yourself?"

"Of course, sir."

"Let me see your hands."

The sergeant thrust them out with a smile. They had plainly not been washed that afternoon.

"Thank you. Have you discovered the owner of this spear?"

"No, sir; I wish I could."

"Have you tried Cullen or Miss Sherrick?"

"No, sir," said the sergeant, looking blankly at the inspector.

The little man walked to the fireplace and touched the electric bell. In a few moments the door opened and a fat, red-faced man walked in. There is no mistaking the attitude and costume of a British butler.

"Colonel Bulstrode was a collector of jade?" said the inspector, in his most innocent manner.

"Yes, sir."

"I noticed the specimens in the hall. Well, Cullen, have you ever seen this spear amongst his trophies?"

The man glanced at it, and then shrank back with a shiver.

"It's the thing that killed him," he stammered.

"Exactly. But you do not answer my question."

"There may have been one like it, but I couldn't swear to it, sir. The colonel would never have his collection touched. He or Miss Sherrick dusted 'em and arranged 'em themselves. He was always buying some new thing."

"Would Miss Sherrick know?"

"Very likely, sir."

"Thank you. That is all."

As the butler closed the door, the sergeant stepped up to the inspector and saluted.

"I should have noticed those collections," he said. "I have made a fool of myself, sir."

"A man who can make such an admission is never a fool, Sergeant Hales. And now kindly take me upstairs to the colonel's room. You can wait here, Mr. Phillips."

It was close upon the half-hour before they came back to me, and I had leisure enough for considering the problem. When Peace had walked into my rooms at lunch-time, mentioning that he had a case with possibilities at Richmond, if I cared to come with him, I had never expected so strange a development. Nor, I fancy, had he.

This Colonel Bulstrode had served many years in India. Had the mysteries of the East followed him home to a London suburb? The gigantic force with which this spear had been thrown— there was something abnormal there, a something difficult to explain. Yet, after all, it might be a simple matter. Boyne was presumably a strong man, and the deadly fury that induces murder in a law-abiding citizen is akin to madness, giving almost a madman's strength. I was still puzzling over it when the door opened and the little inspector walked in.

"The story of Sergeant Hales?" I, asked him. "Is he exaggerating— was the spear thrown with unusual violence?"

"Very unusual. It is the crime of a giant or—"

He did not finish his sentence, but stood tapping the table and staring out at the gold and green of a summer sunset. At last he turned to me with a slow inclination of the head.

"Hales is waiting," he said, "and we must get to work. The light will not last for ever."

The sergeant led us over the lawn to the Wilderness and through its paths to the wicket-gate. Showers in the early morning had turned the dust of the road into a grey mud that had dried under the afternoon sunshine. The surface was scored into a puzzle of diverging lines by the wheels of carts and carriages, cycles and motors. Yet Peace hunted it over even more closely than he had hunted the paths in the grounds. He was particularly anxious to know the position in which the body had lain, and finally the sergeant got down in the drying mud to show him.

Apparently the colonel had walked about ten yards from the gate when the spear struck him. He had fallen almost in the centre of the road, which at that point was broad, with stretches of grass bordering it on either side. His revolver had not been fired, though he had been found with it in his hand.

We walked on down the road, Addington Peace leading, his eyes fixed on its surface, and the sergeant and I following behind. For myself, I had not the remotest idea of what he hoped to effect by this promenade, nor do I believe had the sergeant. We circled the outside of the gardens, the road finally curving to the left, and bringing us to the entrance-gates. Here we stopped at a word from the inspector. The little man himself walked on, and finally dropped on his knees close to the hedge. When he joined us again, it was with an expression of satisfaction. He beamed through the gates at the old elm avenue, that rustled sleepily in the gathering dusk.

"What a pretty place it is," he said. "Thank Heaven that these old houses still find owners or tenants who dare to defy the jerry builder and all his works. Hello, and who may this be?"

He had turned to the toot of the horn. The motor was close upon us, for a steam-car moves in silence as compared to the busy hum of a petrol-driven machine. It stopped, and the chauffeur jumped down and ran to open the gates. Of the driver we could see nothing save a peaked cap, goggles, and a long white dust-coat.

As it disappeared up the avenue towards the house I heard a faint bubble of laughter in my ear. I turned in surprise.

"Why, Peace," I said, "what is the joke?"

"There is no joke, Mr. Phillips," he answered. "It was fate that laughed, not I."

There were moments when, to a man of ordinary curiosity, Inspector Addington Peace was extremely irritating.

We walked up the avenue in silence. The motor was standing at the front door, the chauffeur, a bright-faced youngster, loitering beside it. Peace greeted him politely, entering at once into a dissertation upon greasy roads and the dangers of side-slips. Was there nothing that would prevent them? He had

heard that there was a patent, consisting of small chains crossing the tyres, that was excellent.

"It's about the best of them, sir," said the lad. "Mr. Bulstrode uses it on this car sometimes."

"So this is Mr. Anstruther Bulstrode's car?"

"Yes, sir. He was the brother of the poor gentleman inside."

"The roads are fairly dry now," continued Peace, "but if you had been out this morning—"

"Oh, Mr. Bulstrode had the chains on this morning," he interrupted. "I did not go with him, but when he came back he told me he was glad to have them, for the roads were very bad."

"And Mr. Bulstrode thought the roads were dry enough this afternoon to do without them?"

"Yes. He told me to take them off. He—"

"I am glad to see the police interest themselves in motoring," broke in a high-pitched voice behind us. "I was under the impression— false as I now observe— that they were confirmed enemies to the sport."

A yellow husk of a man was Mr. Anstruther Bulstrode, as I knew this stranger must be. Years under the Indian sun had sucked the English blood from his veins and burnt their own dull colour into his cheeks. He stood on the step of the porch with his hands behind him and his little eyes glaring at the inspector like a pair of black beads. His mouth, twitching viciously under his straggly moustache, proved that the poor Colonel had not been the only member of the Bulstrode family possessed of an evil temper. Over his shoulder I could see Miss Sherrick's white face watching us. And now she stepped forward to explain.

"This is Inspector Peace, uncle," she said nervously.

"I know, my dear, I know. Do you think I can't tell a detective when I see him. So you have caught your man, eh, Inspector?"

"If you will come into the library, Mr. Bulstrode, I will answer what questions I may."

It was now close upon eight o'clock and the pleasant twilight of the long summer evening was drawing into heavier shadows. There was no gas in the old house, but Miss Sherrick ordered lamps to be brought in. We all seated ourselves about the big fireplace save Peace, who stood on the hearth-rug with his back to the flowers that filled the empty grate. The shaded lamp dealt duskily with our faces. There was a strain, a vague anxiety in the air that kept me leaning forward in my chair, nervous and watchful.

"Well, Inspector," repeated Mr. Bulstrode, "what is your news?"

For answer, Peace walked up to the lamp and laid beneath it the jade spearhead, now cleaned and polished, with its four inches of broken shaft.

"Do you recognize that, Miss Sherrick?"

The girl bent over it without alarm. She had no idea what part it had played in that grim tragedy.

"Certainly," she said. "It is a unique piece of stone, and Colonel Bulstrode prized it more than anything else in his collection. I know it was hanging in the hall this morning, for I was at work with a duster. How did the shaft come to be broken?"

"An accident, Miss Sherrick."

"My poor uncle would have been dreadfully angry about it, and so must you be, Uncle Anstruther, for I understand you claim it to be yours."

"We did not come here, Mary, to talk about jade collecting," snarled the old planter.

"But does the spear really belong to you, Mr. Bulstrode?" asked the inspector, blandly.

The man stiffened himself in his chair with his fists clenched on his knees, and his beady eyes staring straight before him.

"That spear is mine, Mr. Detective. My brother having practically stolen it from me, threatened me with personal violence if I attempted to reclaim it. It was the most perfect piece of workmanship in my own collection. I shall take legal steps to claim my rightful property in due course."

"Your brother seems to have acted in a very high-handed manner with you, Mr. Bulstrode. I wonder that you did not walk in here one day and recover your property."

The planter rose with a twisted laugh.

"I'm not a housebreaker," he said. "Also, I must point out that I don't intend to sit here all night. Can I do anything more for you, Inspector?"

"No, Mr. Bulstrode."

"Or for you, Mary?"

"No, uncle. I have my maid, and there is Agatha, the housekeeper."

"So that's all right. Let us thank Heaven the criminal is no longer at large. It didn't take long for our excellent police to make up their minds. Gad! they're clever beggars. They had their hands on him smart enough. It is a pleasure to meet such a man as you, Inspector Addington Peace. A celebrity, by thunder, that's what I call you."

He burst out into a peal of high-pitched laughter, rocking to and fro and clutching the edge of the table with his hand. Then he bowed to us all very low and swaggered out of the room. Peace stepped out after him, and I followed at his heels.

A lamp hung in the roof of the porch, and Mr. Bulstrode stopped beneath it. In its light he looked more fierce and old and yellow than ever.

"It is no good, Mr. Bulstrode," said Addington Peace.

"Exactly; can I give you a lift?" he said quite quietly as he pointed to the car.

"It would certainly be most convenient."

Mr. Bulstrode laughed again, leering back at me over his shoulder, as if my presence afforded an added zest to his merriment. There seemed an understanding between him and the inspector. Frankly, it puzzled me.

"You do not make confidants of your assistants, Mr. Peace," he said.

The little inspector bowed.

"At the same time," continued the old planter, "I should like to make a statement before we go. There is no necessity to warn me. I know the law."

"It is just as you like, Mr. Bulstrode."

"If I sneered at the police this evening I now make them my apologies. You have managed this business well. I still do not understand how you come to accuse me. Remember, I did not know he was dead until I received a telegram from my niece after lunch. It was rather a shock; perhaps at first I was of a mind not to confess. It would have saved me much inconvenience."

"And endangered an innocent man," said the inspector.

"Well, well, you couldn't have proved it against him, and I might have escaped. The whole affair was an accident. I had no intention even of wounding him."

"Exactly, Mr. Bulstrode— no more than the excursionist who throws out a glass bottle intends to brain the man walking by the line."

The truth was clear enough now. In some strange fashion this man had killed his brother. I stepped back a pace instinctively.

"You see," he continued, "brother William had, under circumstances of no immediate importance, appropriated my jade spear. I made up mind to get it back. I knew the hour at which he lunched, and leaving my motor in the road I walked down the avenue, hoping to find the front door open and no one about. I had a successful start. The front door was ajar. I went in, took the spear from the wall, and set off back to my car. I was some fifty yards down the drive when I heard a yell, and there was brother William tumbling out of the porch, revolver in hand.

"It startled me, for he had the most devilish of tempers; but though I was the elder man I knew I had the pace of him, and set off running. When I reached the entrance gates and looked back he was nowhere to be seen. I took it that he had thought better of it and gone back to lunch.

"I was driving the car myself, having left the chauffeur behind, as I did not wish him to know what I was about. I started up the engines, jumped into the seat, put the spear beside me, and let her go. We came round that corner at a good thirty miles an hour, and there was brother William in the road, waving his revolver and cursing me for a thief. He had run down through the Wilderness to cut me off.

"I give you my word I was frightened, for I knew him and his tempers. I took up the spear, and as I passed I threw it at him anyhow. Let him keep it, and be d— d to him, I thought. I wasn't going to have a hole drilled in me for any jade ever carved. I never saw what happened, for in that second I was off the road and only pulled the car straight with difficulty. The spear must have struck him end on, and I was travelling thirty miles an hour.

"My niece sent me a wire. When I received it I understood what had happened. I was in a blue funk about the business. I meant to get out of it if I could. You see I am hiding nothing. I told my man to take the chains off the motor— I had a thought for the tracks I might have left— and came back to find out how the land lay. Well, you know the rest."

"You have done yourself no harm, Mr. Bulstrode, by this confession," said Inspector Addington Peace.

"Thank you. And now, if you will jump in, I will drive you to the police-station. You will want to get Boyne out and put me in, eh, Inspector?"

He was still laughing in that high-pitched voice of his when the car faded into the night.

IT WAS NOT until next day that Peace gave me his explanation over our pipes in my studio. It is interesting enough to set down, if briefly.

"There were many points in the favour of Boyne," he said. "Miss Sherrick's story not only coincided with that told us by Cullen, but it also explained much that the butler considered suspicious. The young man left the drive hoping to meet Miss Sherrick. Cullen told me that Boyne asked where she was as he left, and was informed somewhere in the upper garden. He failed to find her, however, and probably concluded she had gone in to lunch. Boyne said he was walking down through the Wilderness when he heard the scream. Suppose this were a lie, then how could he have obtained the spear? Was he a man of such phenomenal strength as to use it in so deadly a fashion? You observe the difficulties.

"It was when I was upstairs examining the body that the idea occurred to me. The force used in throwing the spear was abnormal. Either the murderer must have been a man of remarkable physique, or he must have thrown the spear from a rapidly moving vehicle. You remember the notices that are

displayed in railway-carriages begging passengers not to throw bottles from the window which will imperil the lives of plate-layers. It is not in the force of the throw but in the pace of the train that the danger lies. It was a possible parallel.

"And here I made a remarkable discovery. On closely inspecting the shaft of the spear, I found a smear of lubricating oil such as motorists use. It suggested that a man who had been lately attending to the machinery of a car had been handling the weapon. Had one of the group under possible suspicion anything to do with motors or machinery? Not one.

"I had noticed the jade collections in the hall. This spearhead was of unusual beauty. Could it have come from the colonel's own collection? He had not taken it with him when he ran towards the Wilderness, loading his revolver. Why did he so run thus armed? Had he been robbed?

"Yet the thief had not passed that way. Cullen would have seen him if he had done so. Was the colonel endeavouring to cut him Off?

"I found the motor-tracks in the drying mud— unusual tracks, mark you, for the driver had run off the road circling the place where the colonel had stood. I traced them easily by the chain marks on the tyres. They led to the front gate, and just beyond it the car had stopped for some time close to the hedge. Lubricating oil had dripped on the road while it waited. The case was becoming plainer.

"My talk with Bulstrode's chauffeur made it self-evident. The information of Miss Sherrick and her uncle's own explanation as to his quarrel with his brother over the spear swept away my last doubt. Do you understand?"

"Yes," I said. "It seems simple now. Bulstrode has had bad luck, though. Things look black against him."

"I think he will be all right," said Addington Peace. "His story has the merit of being not only easily understandable, but true."

"And Boyne?"

"I saw him meet Miss Sherrick. It was enough to make an old bachelor repent his ways, Mr. Phillips. Believe me, there is a great happiness of which we cannot guess— we lonely men."

End