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THE
BLOOD EAGLE
AND OTHER MYSTERY TALES

P.A. EMERSON

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THE BLOOD EAGLE
AND OTHER TALES

1st Edition published 1925

**THE
BLOOD EAGLE
AND OTHER TALES**

**BY
P. H. EMERSON**

*Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the
golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be
broken at the fountain, or the wheel
broken at the cistern.*

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TO
MY OLD AND ESTEEMED FRIEND
J. W. PHILIPSON, M.A.(CANTAB.)
THESE CRIME STORIES ARE DEDICATED
BY THE
AUTHOR
AS A SMALL TOKEN OF GRATITUDE
FOR HIS KINDLY HELP IN DECIPHERING
MY CRABBED MANUSCRIPTS
AND IN MEMORY OF PAST DAYS
CONSULE PLANCO

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En sait en effet que tout animal diffère par certain points des animaux qui lui sont le plus semblables ; et ces différences légères, qui l'on recontra communément chez les sujets du même espèce, ont été désignées sous le nom de caractères individuels.

—L. BLANC.

PREFACE

IN offering these crime stories to the public, I want them to understand that I have not in all cases followed the usual methods of the writers of detective stories, whose aim seems to be to hide the real criminal until the last page. Real crime does not as a rule work out that way. The police often have their eye on the criminal long before he is arrested, and their chief work is to collect convincing evidence, sufficient to warrant his arrest and to bring him to justice. Sometimes it happens they get on to the wrong person, and at the very end of their investigations they find the criminal through these investigations, and then they and the usual detective story run on parallel lines. I have written some of this kind ; in others I have shown the murderer early, so that people may follow the usual police methods ; and all through from a varied experience of men and women of all classes, and of many countries, I have been careful to draw the characters true to life. The germ of one of the stories is taken from fact. I have endeavoured to keep the dialect, when used, true to life, and to describe the natural surroundings, in which the crime was committed, true to nature.

P. H. E.

OULTON BROAD.

June 9, 1925.



I

The Blood Eagle

I

IT was Christmas Eve. The fishing fleet had been paid off and had made up. The "foreign" Scots boats with their bright-eyed, rosy lasses in neat serge dresses and shawls had gone. Several smacks had come in so that their crews could spend Christmas in the old town. Seamount, away from the "new front," was as picturesque as ever. The light mist, brought by the S.E. wind, shrouded the rigging of the Norwegian ships, "loaden with deals," and the smoke-stacks of the colliers which brought the sea-borne coal to burn brightly in the grates. A tug panted down the fairway between rows of ships and steamboats to tow in some belated smack, which had been signalled and could not make the harbour.

The endless taverns along the quayside, set amongst ancient buildings opening on to wide brick pavements with large bare trees, shone their lights, showing red and green and blue, filtering through coloured curtains, and all manner of lettering in gilt on the windows steaming with the condensed breaths of those inside. Men's hoarse laughter and the bubbling laugh of girls, and the sounds of gramophone and concertina crept out into the mists. A few heavily muffled fishermen in fur caps, new pea-jackets with gay scarf-mufflers, new duffle trousers and new crotch boots, into which their trousers were tucked, came from the dark, silent "rows," and entered their favourite "pub," to be greeted with cries of welcome, as the door

opened and was as quickly shut. Lights danced on the ships, and here and there the watchman was humming or whistling a tune.

It had been a good fishing season, and the doles were large when it came to dividing the earnings.

Two tall, burly fishermen, dressed in their best, came down the street and entered the *Jolly Dolphin*. The room and bar were packed with fishermen and with women. They were greeted with a cry of welcome.

"Hullo, Frank! Hullo, Mr. Johnson!"—this respectfully to the older man.

The light in the room showed two stalwart, light-haired, blue-eyed men of the sea, with sandy beards and powerful, weather-beaten faces. Their great arms nearly burst their coat-sleeves. They were father and son, the two Johnsons, the cleverest fishermen on the coast. Their boat was always head-boat, they knew the habits of fish and where to shoot their nets, so they wasted no time. Moreover, they were joint owners of their boat and belonged to no company, or rather their boats did not. They were the fiercest fighters too in a quarrel, though generally of a quiet temperament; but when the drink got into them, then they saw red, and had to be pulled off their prey ere they strangled the lives out of them. But they were popular and never sought a quarrel.

They ordered rum, and drank it hot with lemon and sugar. After answering some questions, they went and sat on a settle and watched a couple dancing the step-dance.

A dark, bright-eyed "litha" young woman went and sat by Frank, the son, and he ordered port-wine for her. She chaffed him and took his arm.

"When be you going to marry me, Bor?"

"Aw, Dora, arter the next fishin'. I heven't enough yet to buy the sticks."

"Go on, Bor! I can't stop alone till then."

"You'll have to, Mor, or find another chap."

"Not me. I want you, Frank."

The dance was over, and the call was for Frank and Dora. They grinned at each other, and Frank took off his pea-coat and stood resplendent in new garnsy, placing his fur cap and gay neck-wrap on his coat, and asking his father to mind them. They took the floor amid much clapping and cheers, for they were champion step-dancers.

They faced each other, and began that extraordinary dance which the East Norfolk people love, graceless and exhausting. The perspiration poured down Frank's ruddy face, but neither he nor Dora would give way, though she was hot and flushed. They would stop a minute, mugs would be pushed towards them, and they would drink a sup and go on. At last Dora began to lurch, and Frank stopped and raised her in his arms, and planted three resounding kisses on her face, one on each cheek, and the last on her full lips: and swung her round to her seat amid much clapping.

Frank wiped the streaming perspiration with the back of his great fin-like hand and his handkerchief from his big, finely-formed face, and took up the beer-mug his father had ordered to be refilled, and, after handing it to Dora, who drank deeply, he finished it at a gulp and ordered another. There was a buzz of conversation. An old man was playing on the concertina, *Watching by the Window*, droning out that popular song amongst the fisher-folk. A short, dark, cunning-looking man about sixty was sitting near, round whose neck was a woollen scarf, with two or three guernseys one over the other, reaching almost down to a big, long pair of crotch boots. He said:

“ Frank, Bor, you dance like an elephant.”

There was a laugh.

“ You bally little worrum, you han't nothing to carry.”

“ No, small and good, that's what I am.”

“ All you little warmints say that, and you are all the same a-shooting off your mouth, cause you know no one will hurt a 'bortion like you.”

The little man's dark eyes flashed; he had drunk pretty freely.

"I'm no more a 'bortion than you, Bor, and I sez it," and he stood up and squared his fists. "Come on, I aren't afraid of you, though you be as big as a house."

Frank looked at him contemptuously, and said, "You little lap-dawg," and, turning to Dora, he said, "Here, Dora Mor, do you take him on your lap and spank him." There was a loud burst of laughter and little Owen's eyes flashed.

"Are you going to fight?" challenged Owen.

"No, not along with a mucka little slink like you. What be you? Oirish? You be a 'foreigner,' you be."

"No. I'm Welsh. I am."

"That's worse," said Frank complacently.

"You give in then," said the persistent man.

Old Johnson, a man of forty-five, got up and slapped Owen's face, the blow nearly knocking him over.

"Sit you down, you damned winkle, we don't want no distarbance here."

Owen's eyes flashed, and he looked round. There were heavy spittoons on the sanded floor. He stooped and picked one up and threw it all his might at the older Johnson. The edge of the heavy metal spittoon caught him full on the temple, and he fell back on the settle with a groan, the blood streaming from the wound. Little Owen stole away in the excitement that followed, and, going down to the quays, got into his gun-punt and paddled out on to Breydon, fear in his heart, now that his Iberian temper had exploded.

Someone had run for a doctor, and he came in and examined Johnson, felt his pulse, looked at the wound.

"Go and call the police, someone, he's dead."

"Dead!" And the men looked at each other, and the women screamed, and all hurried out before the police came, except Frank and Dora.

A big policeman entered and, going up to the dead man,

looked at him, and asked the doctor how it had happened. The landlord, a heavy-jowled man, came forward and said, "He and Gaby Owen had a few words, and Owen wanted to fight Frank, his son there, and Frank wouldn't touch such a little warmin as that, and he kept on mobbing Frank, so Mr. Johnson got up and hit him longside the skull with his open hand, and told him to sit down and not kick up a disturbance, and he pick up the spittoon and threw it at Mr. Johnson, and struck him there on the temple, and he an't moved since."

The policeman took it all down, and asked how long ago it had occurred.

"Just ten minutes to nine."

"Where's Owen?" He looked round.

"Done a bunk. He went afore the others," said the landlord.

Then he turned to Frank. "I'm sorry, Frank, werry sorry. What do you say?"

"What Mr. Twilton say be trew. He first began to aboose me and call me names, and said I danced like a elephant. Dora and me had been doing the step-dance. And then he challenged me to fight, and in course I wouldn't fight a mucka little slink like that, and he kept mobbing, and the old man gave him a clout on the side of the head with his open hand, and told him to sit down and behave, and he pick up the spittoon and hulled that at the old man."

Dora confirmed. The policeman turned to the landlord: "Was he drunk?"

"No; a bit fresh. He can't carry no liquor. He only had two rum and milks. He was off arter fowl at ten, when the tide begin to draw off the flats."

"Does anyone know where he be now?"

"I guess he be out there on Breydon in his punt, that be his mark."

"Did he appear agitated? . . . sorry?"

"No, he done a bunk at once."

"Well, Frank, we will have to take him to the mortuary."

Frank looked a bit dazed, and then his eyes flashed fire. The old Berserker rage was on him.

He got up, and Dora looked at him in fear, and they went out after saying good night.

The policeman fetched a hand ambulance, and he and another policeman, assisted by two fishermen, carried the splendid specimen of a man to the mortuary.

Then a policeman with another constable in a punt pushed off and rowed out towards Breydon against a very strong tide.

The mist hid all things, for it had grown thicker, and when they passed the boat-yards on Cobholme Island, they rowed up the channel and round to a post that marked the fairway.

"Can you hear him, George?"

"No, Bor, but he be a gunner, and can paddle right through fowl without them hearing. We shan't cop him except by luck, and I guess he will see us afore we see him."

"What a little varmint."

"The little men be like that, and he be a 'foreigner.' Welsh bain't he?"

"Yes, but a master-gunner. What will he get, sergeant?"

"I dunno. Old Johnson struck the first blow."

"That be trew."

"But he was aggrawated."

"It warn't planned, done in the heat of the moment. Guess it will be brought in inculpable homicide, but you never can tell. Them lawyers be funny folk, there's no telling."

"I wouldn't like to stand in his shoes. Did you see Frank's face?"

"No, Bor, I was too busy writing."

"Well, I never see eyes blaze like them. He would have wrung his neck sartin, if Owen had been there."

The policemen could not find him, though they saw the flash of his shoulder-gun occasionally, and now and then in the foggy stillness heard the clank of a paddle.

"We'd better go up and hang round his house."

"Yes, that's the talk," said George, who was cold.

They pulled through the mist and landed, and pulled out their boat on the yard, and went up the street and took up positions near Owen's house. A light was burning there in an upper window. Men and women passed them singing, and waits were going round with lanterns and music, and numerous street-boys all singing or shouting :

"Hark! The Herald Angels sing . . ."

.

A sorry sop for Mrs. Owen, as well as for Mrs. Johnson.

II

It was nearly five o'clock. The grey light was filtering through the fog when they heard a man in big boots stumping up the street. It was Owen. He had mittens on and a shoulder-gun on his shoulder, and a string of fowl in the other hand.

The sergeant stepped out in front of him, and George came strolling across the road.

"Good morning, Bor, rare thick t' morning," said Owen.

"Yes, but you have got to come along to the station with us."

"What for then?"

"You killed Mr. Johnson."

"Killed him! Good Lord, I never meant to dew that. He struck me alongside the skull and I threwed the spittoon at him, but I didn't mean to kill him."

"I dunno what you meant, but you did."

"I'm real sorry, I am that."

"George, do you take his gun and fowl, and go in

and tell his missus we have took him, and he won't be home to-night. If she want to know anything, let her come to the station in the morning, and the inspector will tell her."

George did as he was bid and asked Owen, "Is that loaden?"

"No, Bor. I doan't carry loaden guns in the streets," said Owen contemptuously.

George called at his missus', and then picked them up.

"How do the missus take it?"

"Wonderful 'cited, wants to know if you have been poaching, arter hares on the mashes."

"She'll know all brendy to-morrow, but I didn't fare to go and put his light out."

They reached the station, the inspector took Owen's statement, and then he was locked in the cells. It was Christmas morning and no Court sat. Owen received a visit from his wife. She was greatly disturbed.

Owen said, "That will be all right, it wor an accident, Mor. I didn't fare to go and put his light out, and he struck the fust blow. I warn't even talking to him."

She left very troubled, and Owen had to spend Christmas and Boxing Day in the cells. He was brought before the bench on Boxing Day and remanded—it was merely a formal business. The Coroner held the inquest the day after Boxing Day, and the simple evidence was soon taken and confirmed by other witnesses, all of whom agreed and confirmed each other, and the Coroner's Court found that "Joseph Johnson died from a blow from a spittoon thrown by Owen Owen."

Then the police formally charged, warned, and arrested Owen for manslaughter.

He was brought up before the magistrate, a *prima facie* case was established, and he was sent for trial at the Assizes. There he was found guilty, and the Judge sentenced him to three years' imprisonment with hard labour. He went back to the cells a convict.

III

The excitement died down as it always does, and the old fishing town resumed its usual life, but the talk was of that fatal Christmas Eve for many a day and the scene was often re-enacted in the *Jolly Dolphin*, and "I lost fifteen pound at the leastest that night thro' the little warmin," said the landlord; that was always his refrain.

"Fifteen pound at least all thro' the little warmin," Frank looked morose, but said little, and nothing at all about the "murder," as he called it. He went on with his trade, taking Dora's brother into partnership, and he married Dora a year after the "murder." They prospered, and Frank began to recover his spirits. One day, about two and a half years after the "murder," as he called it, Frank met Owen in the street, a haggard, white, worn little creature. He had just been released, and, having behaved well, had gained the full possible remission.

Owen saw him, and came towards him as if to speak, but Frank looked the other way, and crossed the street. Owen, broken in nerves and spent, hung his head and, turning round, shouted:

"I'm sorry, Frank, but I hev paid. It was hell there at Portland."

Frank walked on, and Owen got his gunning tools in order, and started his old life. At first his shaking hands and bad nerves made him miss much, but, as he grew stronger with fresh air and exercise, and good food, his spirits rose, and he began to go to the public, but never to the *Jolly Dolphin*. Some of his friends sympathized with him, others gave him the "frozen mit," but his spirits, always good, rose and he soon began to joke and dance, and in his cups to brag how he "once killed his man."

Frank got to hear of this, but said nothing. Whenever they met, they passed each other on the other side.

.

Christmas eve broke fine and clear. There was a nor'-east breeze and a frost. Owen decided to do a bit of poaching on the marshes at closing-in time, an old hare or two would be fine for Christmas dinner, and this was just the weather.

He took his gun as the sun began to crawl down, and walked down to the marsh-wall, and getting into a good place behind a clump of gorse, he waited. It was very lonely out there. Gulls and other sea-birds were calling on the flats and peewits wailing in large flocks and flying in changing figures across the darkening sky. Flocks of starlings flew over from the marshes and settled on the reeds growing at the edge of the water, flying up and alighting, squabbling and chattering and breaking the over-ripe crop down, but there was no watchman there, for the reed bed was poor and thin, and no one protected it: it was not worth harvesting. Once or twice Owen fired at an old hare loping along the wall, and crept up and bagged his game, for he was again a dead shot.

The stars were brightening in the cold winter evening, and the lights of Seamouth began to twinkle across the flats. Owen decided to go home, it was getting too dark. He put his hares in a great inside pocket in his sports-coat, made to carry poached game; loosed off his gun and began to climb the wall. He was looking over to the lights of the town when a huge figure rose by a gorse-bush and seized him, and pulled him down on to the bank. A great hand was placed over his mouth, and, though he struggled and tried to shout, it was all in vain. The life was squeezed out of him. Had anyone been standing near, they might have heard a few tense fierce words before there was silence. After some fifteen minutes the figure stole up the bank and walked quickly towards Seamouth. He was a powerful man, well muffled up, and walked hurriedly, and, after going through several streets without meeting anyone he knew, he

arrived home. He went to the back-house and built a large fire, and changed all his clothes there.

.

Frank Johnson was sitting in the kitchen waiting for his wife who was out Christmas shopping, and when she came in she said :

“Hullo, Frank, where you been ? ”

“No where, dear. I have been home since you went out. I have just been getting into my best clothes, for we will go round and have a bit of a frolic.”

“Right you are, Frank. You look very pleased with yourself.”

“I am that, Mor.”

“Getting over the dad’s loss ? ”

“Yes, Mor. It ban’t no use crying about what’s done. What’s done is done. Life is like that, noathin’ sartin ; what will be, will be.”

“That’s always your talk, Frank. What will be will be. You don’t believe in Gawd nor Devil.”

“No, Mor, I doan’t.”

She tidied herself, and they locked the house and went out, to dance and sing, and drink, and eat pin-patches and stewkey mussshels, and buy presents. They had an enjoyable evening, and returned fresh to their home. Frank was brimming over with spirits, his own, and others imbibed.

IV

Christmas morning broke fine and frosty, and many gunners arose that morning, for Christmas Day is a great day for the needy sportsman. The first to get out was one John Ellen, an eel-catcher with sporting tastes. He was well wrapped up, and wanted to get an “old Sarah” for dinner, that is the great prize for those who shoot for the pot. He knew the likely places to wait as well as Owen, and made for the clump of gorse where Owen lay concealed the night before. He was of the Nordic breed too, blue

eyes, reddish hair and beard, and he had no love for Owen.

He trudged along in the mist, and, when he reached the gorse, climbed down the bank, and there, in the dim, breaking, cold dawn, he saw a sight which curdled his blood.

On his back lay Owen, dead of course, his dark eyes wide open and staring at the waning stars. The clothes had been hurriedly cut away from his torso, and the chest was exposed and a great hole, the shape of a bird with outspread wings, had been cut through the ribs, and the lungs had been pulled through the opening.

John Ellen had no "nerves," but even he stared at the gruesome sight with awe. Then he looked round and saw two hares lying a little distance away; they were dead and stiff. He fumbled in his trouser-pockets, got out some sulphur matches, struck two together, and by the light examined the scene.

Owen's shoulder-gun and game-bag were lying by the hares. He picked the gun up and put a cap on the nipple and snapped it. "That hev been loosed off," he said, and he measured with the ram-rod. "That won't bite now," he said. The day was breaking, and the stars disappearing. He examined the hares. "Bewties they be," was his comment. He put them under his coat, looked round and began to walk back the way he had come. He met no one, and got home with his hares, and, throwing them down on the kitchen table said, "There you be, missus, a double ration."

"But they be stiff, John Bor."

"Yes. They will eat all the sweeter for that."

She looked puzzled. "You found them kilt."

"Don't you mardle, they be bewties, young and fat. Old Father Christmas gave them to me."

He took off his things, skinned and cleaned the hares and hung them up in the larder, and then he walked to the police station. He was, like all Nordics, sagacious and prudent and far-seeing. He did not mind now if the police did come, and he had warned his wife to

say he had bought them in the market the night before, "if anyone axed."

He entered the police station, and a constable asked him what he wanted.

"I came to tell you, Bor, that old Owen lay out there agin the Red Mill down the wall nigh a furze bush. Somebody hev murdered him, and pulled all his lights out on him."

"What is this you are saying?"

"What I sez. I went down the wall t'y morning to look arter fowl, and I found him, and I come back to tell you, Bor. That's all I know."

"Come and see the inspector."

They went into a room lit by gas, and the grey-haired inspector stood at a desk, and looked wearily at the constable and John Ellen, and waited.

John told his story again. The inspector at once became all life.

He asked several questions and got John Ellen to sign his statement, and John Ellen was allowed to go. He had hardly left the station when he saw police hurrying off on their bicycles. It was in pre-war days, and John Ellen went into his favourite "public" and drank his first morning rum-and-milk, but he said nothing of the find.

Police were rushing to and fro all that day, and the remains were brought in, and the police-surgeon examined them.

"The work of a madman," he said. "The hole in the torso looks like a bird with spread wings now you lift the lungs away."

"So it does," said the inspector. "Well, if this don't beat the devil. It must be the work of a madman."

"Did they find any clues, inspector?"

"No, not so far. His gun was loosed off, and there were some sulphur matches near. He had probably lit his pipe, which was lying down the bank. But there isn't a trace of anyone, no signs of a struggle."

“By the look of his lungs and the marks on his neck, he was strangled first,” said the doctor. “But the murderer must have had mittens or gloves, there are no finger-marks.”

“The gun has been fired. The inside is foul and smells of burnt powder.”

“Didn’t he have any game? He was a dead shot.”

“No, sir, no. I think the man rushed at him, and he fired and missed him.”

“A very strange case.”

“It’s bloody murder anyway.”

“Yes. No doubt of that, and by a fiend.”

“The ‘Super’ has ‘phoned the Chief Constable, and they think of calling a man from the Yard down, for if it be a madman, well, we are all in danger.”

The surgeon nodded and said:

“I will come in later and make the P.M. I’d like a Home Officer expert to be present, if the Chief is going to call the Yard men in.”

“I will tell him, sir.”

Mrs. Owen could throw no light on it, and she said she didn’t know he had any enemies unless it was Frank Johnson. But he was a quiet man and he had never said anything to her husband since he came out.

Frank Johnson, when asked to give his movements of the night before, said he came in at four and stopped in making a “trum mat,” whilst his wife was out to shop, and when she came in at six, he tidied up, and they both went out to spend the evening frolicking, and he named the pubs and places they had visited, and they got home at eleven and went to bed.

When questioned as to Owen, he said—No, he hadn’t seen him for ten days, and named the last place where he had seen him. His wife confirmed this, and they both signed their statements.

The inspector came round and informed the surgeon that the Yard had been called in, and that the detectives

and a Home Office expert would arrive by the mail train in the morning. Inspector Henson was coming, one of the cleverest men at the Yard.

The doctor nodded. "Say to-morrow at nine then. Spilikins will want breakfast."

"All right, sir."

v

The next morning a sleepy detective and doctor alighted from the train, went to the *Star* with the wonderful oak panels and pomegranate ceiling, and had a wash and an excellent breakfast, which included bloaters by special request.

"'Tew-eyed steaks,' they call them here," said Henson, "and prime they are."

After breakfast they went to the mortuary. The doctor started when he saw the corpse. Henson looked at it and gave a slight start, and then pursed his mouth to whistle, but did not do so.

"Oh, the work of a madman!" said the Home Office expert.

The local police-surgeon nodded.

"How long do you think he was dead before he was brought in?" asked the C.I.D. man.

The doctors talked together, and the Home Office expert said, "He was murdered some time in the early evening, as he was out after game, and wouldn't stop after dark, just at closing-in time, say five."

The doctors agreed that was about the hour.

The body was now stripped, and they examined it carefully.

"The ribs have been cut with *secateurs*, I think."

"Yes. The man must have known some anatomy," said the local surgeon.

"Was anything found near the body, any knife or instrument?"

"No, sir," said the inspector, who had arrived, "no clues at all."

After a bit the doctor said that he had been strangled by a man either wearing gloves or with a cloth or rag in his hands, and then mutilated, and that's all there was to it.

"Well, I'll go out," said the detective, "and leave you two gentlemen to finish." And he and the inspector walked out. The inspector told all that he knew, and they walked to the scene of the crime.

Henson examined the ground carefully. "The man wore sand-shoes."

"Oh, sir!"

Henson pointed to where a foot had slipped. "See, this is how I reconstruct it. The victim was starting for home. He had lit his pipe and loosed off his gun. He was coming up the bank, and the murderer in sand-shoes jumped from behind this gorse bush and seized him by the shoulders, and twisted him round quick, and put him on his back, his hand over his mouth, and sat on him, and with the other hand strangled him. You see by the mark there where the trigger-guard tore up the grass—that's where the gun fell. He was carrying it at the trail. When he was seized from behind, he dropped the gun to protect himself, and then he was whisked round by a strong man and the gun remained where it fell on his near left side. That's where the fisherman said he found it; the gun flew out when he was seized. Then he cut away the clothes with a very sharp razor edge, and proceeded to mutilate the body, and then slipped off. He did not stop. He walked away down on the marsh so as not to be seen, and to leave no footprints. But persons have been stamping about since, 'and he pointed.' We'll now follow the wall, you go one way, and I the other."

They decided which should take which way, and they walked along the marsh, searching the ground carefully; but there was no soft ground and no footprints, and both failed to find any clue at all. They then returned to

the gorse clump and began to quarter the marsh all round, but there was nothing.

"Here's where he waited for him, behind this gorse bush," said Henson, pointing to a depression in the marsh. "He sat here quite quietly for some time. See, the grass has not recovered yet." . . . "Well, I can see nothing else," said Henson, and the inspector agreed, and they returned.

"Now for blood on clothes, legs, knees, and rubber-shoes. I'll go and see Mr. Frank Johnson," said Henson. He found Frank Johnson in. The tall fine Viking with the shock of light hair and light beard and blue eyes stood up, and asked him to sit down.

Henson remarked mentally: "One of the breed."

"I have to make inquiries about Owen's death, Mr. Johnson, and just to hush gossip I should like to search your house; here's the warrant," and he presented him with a search-warrant.

Frank waved it aside and said, "Go ahead, sir, I know nothing about it."

Henson went upstairs and searched everywhere, and then came down and searched all over the place.

"What clothes were you wearing on Christmas Eve?"

Frank went and got a suit of old clothes, old guernsey and slop and duffle trousers and boots.

Henson examined them carefully, took a glass from his pocket and examined them minutely.

"I changed into my new clothes when I went out with the missus."

"Where are they?"

"Upstairs in the drawers."

"I have examined all those. Now have you a pair of sand-shoes?"

"No, sir, never had no use for them."

"Has your wife got a pair?"

"No, sir," and he called Dora and asked her.

"No!" She had had none since she was a kiddy.

He asked Frank a few questions and the wife a few, and they both confirmed their original statements.

"Let's look at your knife," suddenly said Henson.

Frank drew a short shutting knife from his pocket :
"That's the only knife I got."

"All right," said Henson, "got any shears?"

"No, sir."

"Nor gardening tools?"

"No, sir, we haven't any garden."

"Good. That will do, thanks," and he went out.

"Good God, the Blood Eagle, is it hereditary? Strange. Well, he's a brother Nordic. And Owen killed his father. Strange, strange!"

At the police-station Henson learnt that the doctor had discovered nothing further material to the case. The inquest was held, and the verdict was "wilful murder against some person or persons unknown."

The Press was filled with the case, the strange mutilation. The mystery of it all appealed to the public, but Henson apparently could find no evidence at all. Then the scribblers began to write and abuse the police, and all sorts of wild theories were printed in the Sunday sensational Press. Owen was buried and Henson recalled.

He had reported that it was probably the work of a lunatic, and there was nothing to go upon at all. He had searched and closely questioned Frank Johnson and his wife, who might be counted possible enemies of the deceased, and he had done the same to Sam Cray, the wife's brother, and had searched his rooms with a negative result. He considered he was wasting time by staying on. The case was pigeon-holed, and passed into the class of "unsolved crimes." The police came in for some warm criticism, and there the matter ended. No one was even detained.

VI

Some years afterwards Henson was dining with a great brain-specialist; they were both engaged on a peculiar case.

"Do you think, sir, that old habits, old ancestral habits, can well up from the subconscious?"

"Oh, yes."

"For example, if my ancestors, say in the year 900, were in the habit of cutting a triangle in the palm of the hand of every liar, might I to-day do the same to a liar?"

"Oh, yes. I should say yes. It is perfectly marvellous what millions of exposed plates we carry about and don't know it, and a brain cell that once has had an impression is an exposed plate."

"Yes, I follow that, but are the exposures inherited?"

"I should say undoubtedly, though faint; but a great mental upheaval might bring up the picture, and cause you to act as you say, cut a triangle in the hand of one who had lied to you."

"Thanks, that's what I wanted to know. You are right, I can tell you that, doctor, and I could prove it."

"That's very interesting."

"I, alas! cannot tell you now. I shall leave it in writing."

"Do. Send it to the Medico-Legal Society, but give all evidence, chapter and verse."

"And will they treat it as private during the lives of two persons I shall name?"

"Oh, yes, but if you have any doubts, give instructions it is not to be opened until those two persons are both dead."

"I will do that."

"You can leave it in the hands of the Public Trustee with directions it is to be delivered to the Society when they are both dead."

"I will do that, it is safer."

"You think then I am right?"

"I am perfectly certain of it."

"That's good, that will help me. I don't want details."

Inspector Henson of the C.I.D. went home and wrote the following :—

“ I, Detective-Inspector Olaf Henson, of New Scotland Yard, London, do here record a strange experience which happened to me in my professional work in the year 19—, in England.

“ I had better preface my story by saying I am of Norse descent. My ancestors lived in the Hardanger Fiord in Norway from the remotest times, my pedigree goes back to the year 840, one of the oldest on the records of the college. I have read deeply of Norse literature, including the works of Saxo Grammaticus, the Eddas and the songs of the Scalds. I know the old superstitions, habits and character of my people, the supermen of the earth. We have and had our weaknesses, wine and women, but we loved fighting, we loved adventure: we were never snobs and could turn from the sword to the ploughshare or the yard-measure, as circumstances dictated. I am one of the breed. I think, feel and act like those old boys of the Hardanger Fiord, my ancestors.

“ Now to the story. At the end of 19—, I was sent down to Seamount to investigate an extraordinary murder case. A little black Iberian, he was a Welshman named Owen, Owen Owen too—if my ancestors had killed all Iberians, the world would have been happier and better. This little gunner was found murdered and mutilated on Christmas morning by an early gunner. He had been strangled, and then his ribs had been cut through with a *secateur* or some such instrument, and his lungs drawn through the bird-winged opening so made. I was merely told it was a case of murder and mutilation, and the local police and the police surgeon thought it the work of a lunatic, which was not surprising.

“ I went down and saw the body first and nearly gasped. There was the ‘Blood Eagle,’ a mutilation which my ancestors imposed on every one who killed any man’s father. I was fascinated. Then when the inspector told me the history of Owen, and that the

murdered man had killed a man, and that his son was one who might have a motive for the crime, revenge, I called on the son. An extraordinary fine specimen of the old, *the* breed, by name Frank Johnson (*anglicé*). His ancestors had come to England in the early raids from Norway, and he had kept true to type all through the ages. I at once knew he was the murderer, and I determined it should not be brought home to him. I found sand-shoes in his house and overlooked them, I found the very *secateurs* he had used in the chimney-place, with blood caked on them. His bloody clothes he had prudently destroyed. He was following the law of the tribe, and I determined to protect him, and I did. The local police were ill-informed and are hunting for a lunatic to this day. I could naturally not ask many questions. I should have liked to, but the famous psychologist, Dr. Bernard Fuller, F.R.S., etc., whom I afterwards met, assured me that the renewal of old ancestral memories was possible, and that a man in a great fit of nervous strain might do things his ancestors did hundreds of years before. I assured him this was so, and he was very pleased, but for obvious reasons I was not able to tell him of my dereliction of duty, and I promised him to write out the case and send it to the Public Trustee to be presented to the Medico-Legal Society after the deaths of myself, Frank Johnson and his wife Dora Johnson, and this I have now done.

(Signed) OLAF HENSON,
Detective-Inspector, C.I.D.,
New Scotland Yard.

LONDON.

Jan. 31, 19—"

Henson sealed the "story" in a thick envelope and took it to the Public Trustee, who agreed to carry out the directions on the cover.

II

Algy's Experiment

I

THEY were friends, two young men about town, and two young women about town. They were not crooks. The two young men had done their bit in the war and done it well.

It was the autumn of 1919. The excitements of London were simmering down; even the North Russian Relief Force had returned almost unnoticed, but there was still money to burn.

"Well, Algy, old top, what are you going to do?" asked Flossy, a pretty girl in a *Revue*.

"Be a crook. Be a Raffles."

The other three laughed, and Tony, the other young man, said:

"Raffles, the chap who accepted hospitality and abused it! I wonder what he did in the great war?"

"Oh, I just *love* Raffles," said the girls with one voice.

"Yes, you would," said Tony. "Women always admire crooks, why, the Lord only knows. A rotten fellow to go sneaking about when other people are asleep."

"Oh, he's *brave*," said one of the girls. "I do like *brave* men."

"Well, you should have been over there. There were plenty of brave men; but they were muddy and bloody and badly dressed, and had no stolen jewellery to give to their girls."

"I dunno," said Algy, "that I don't agree with you,

Tony. I only said it for a lark. I needn't steal, I have a good annuity, and to beg I am ashamed, and have no mind to."

"You, Algy, you would be caught in a week, if you were to do a Raffle's stunt."

"I'll bet I wouldn't. I want something to do. I'll bet you £200 of the brightest and best that I pull off a jewel-robbery and get away with it."

"Done with you."

"We'll hold the stakes," said one of the girls, clapping her hands.

"Do you mean it, Tony?" asked Algy.

"You bet I do. But mind, I don't assist. I'm no accessory before or after the fact."

"Right-ho! We'll draw this up formally and stake our cheques. Come on to the flat."

They paid the bill and all got into a taxi and rode off to a small flat in Kensington, which Tony had taken furnished until the end of the year. There the bet was solemnly drawn up in black and white, signed, sealed, and delivered, and each wrote a cheque for £200, and everything was enclosed in an envelope and sealed with Algy's crest.

"We'll deposit this amongst my papers in my tin box at the bank to-morrow," said Algy.

Tony opened a bottle of "bubbly," and they drank and talked. The girls went off to their revue, leaving the two men to talk over the details.

"My great difficulty," said Algy, "is to get at the stuff. Now how?"

"I dunno . . . A night club . . . But one doesn't know the real stuff from the sham."

"Well, I believe in my luck. We'll go to Morning's later and see if anything is to be seen. Will you help? When I have pinched it, I'll pass it to you."

"No, sir, nothing doing."

"Well, it's only a joke. The compact is I am to return the jewels."

"No, *nothing doing*," emphatically.

They went to Morning's later, and the place was fairly full. They sat at a table and ordered supper and wine; a costly supper it was.

At a table near by were a man and a woman. Algy heard the woman say, "She's got the necklace on, Jack."

"Yes. Just our luck."

"£10,000, if a sovereign."

"Yes, all that, and sparklers too and not pearls."

Algy noticed the pretty woman who passed with an elderly man, and he noticed the diamond necklace. He got up and strolled after the pair who were making for the cloak-room.

Tony noticed that the two at the next table looked at him, and then they got up and followed Algy and all disappeared towards the cloak-room.

Some minutes after the man and woman returned.

"Bilked, my God! and wasn't he smart? I was jostling her to look my way for you to snip and collar them, when his nibs does it, scissors all ready, and pushes them in his trousers-pocket and clears off out, leaving us looking like fools."

"Well, we'd better clear. She'll find out when she gets home.

"Yes. You are right, Sal."

He called a waiter and paid the bill, and they went out, and Tony thought he'd take a leaf from their book, and he called the waiter and paid for the supper and strolled out. No one seemed to notice him; though he thought the hall-porter looked at him closely.

He walked back to the flat, a long walk, and found Algy in a smoking jacket with a bottle of champagne and some cigarettes before him.

"Well, old top, easy as rolling off a log," and he took the necklace and held it up in the light, the stones shining like stars.

"Put that away, for God's sake," said Tony, "and

prepare to bolt ; you have to hold them for three months before you have won the bet. That man and woman were after them, and you forestalled them ; said you were very 'nippy,' quite admired you ; said the lady would be back and raise Cain directly she got home ; so they left, and so did I. Now if you take my tip, you will pack a suit-case and clear out of this. I guess you took a cab."

"You bet I did, wanted to put them and me as widely apart as possible."

"Well then—slope. The cabman and the hall-porter will have marked you, and the gentleman who was with her ; if she didn't herself. Change your clothes and hat and get ready to clear, or rather clear at once. Go up somewhere on the moors. Clear out of the way. I oughtn't to advise. Leave an address here, a fictitious one. They will trace you here, as you said you drove straight here."

"I follow ; but where are the stones to go ? "

"In your big baccy-pouch, in with the baccy. No one will think of looking there, only don't pass your pouch to a stranger to fill his pipe."

Algy, rather nervous, went in and changed into a blue serge suit. With an overcoat and a new hat and a pair of chamois-leather gloves he sat down and wrote an address, and shook Tony by the hand.

"Now, we'll see," and he was gone, walking to a tube.

II

It was 12.15 when some one rang at Tony's flat, and he went out.

"Good evening," said a man in tweeds, wearing a homburg hat and a mackintosh.

"Good evening."

"May I have a few words with you ? "

"Certainly. Come in."

The man entered and looked round and sat down. Tony offered him a cigarette and a drink, which he accepted.

" You were at Morning's to-night ? "

" Yes. Just looked in."

" Where's your friend, the light-haired man ? "

" He left me there. He has gone away ; he had to catch a train."

" Ah ! Seen him since ? "

" No," said Tony, hating himself for having to lie, " he hasn't been here since."

" I think he has, because I see he has left his dress-clothes in the bedroom."

Tony ignored the remark and continued : " You see, I stopped on for a bit and walked back ; it was a nice evening. But why these questions ? "

" I wished to ask *him* a few questions, that's all. But as he isn't here, I'll look round, if I may."

" Who are you, then ? "

" There you are, sir," and he pulled a card from a wallet and laid it before Tony.

" Sergeant-Detective Harrison of the C.I.D."

Tony paled a little and said : " I see ; but what's the C.I.D. ? "

The man laughed. " The Criminal Investigation Department. I'm a detective."

" I thought so ; but what has this got to do with my friend or me ? "

Then the man pulled a blue official document from his pocket. " There's my search-warrant. With your permission I'll have a look round."

" Well, I'm damned, this is a game. Go ahead, search where you like."

" Thank you, sir."

The detective disappeared, searched Algy's room and then Tony's bedroom, and then the bathroom and kitchen and linen closet, and then the small dining-room.

" Now, sir, you don't mind my searching you."

" Not at all," and Tony laughed.

The man was very quick and efficient, and soon went

through Tony ; and went through the sitting-room where they were.

"Gone, my sainted aunt ! To think he's travelling round with £10,000 on him, a fair mark for a crook !"

"Well," said Tony. "This is a good joke. I don't believe he has £10,000 in the whole wide world. We ain't crooks, you know, just demobbed officers who have done our bit and are taking it easy for a few months on gratuities and past pay before getting a job."

The sergeant smiled, got up, apologized and went off after a courteous good night.

Tony went to the window and saw him speak to another man similarly clad, and they walked away ; and Tony saw an old match-seller come along and take a stand by a lamp-post opposite. He had never noticed him before, and paid little attention to him now, and, taking up the evening paper which lay unopened on the table, he started to read. When he went to bed, from his window, before he turned the light down, he saw the old match-seller still at his post, and wondered that he expected to sell matches at that time of night.

III

Algy had walked some miles when he took a taxi and arrived at Euston in time to catch the night train to the North. There were few people on the platform. A man dressed as a sportsman with a mac and cloth cap and golf sticks and a big suit-case was the only person of his own class.

He got into a first smoker, and the golfer came up and said: "Room here, isn't there? I hate travelling alone."

"Yes. I agree. Come in and welcome."

The man entered and deposited his golf-clubs and his suit-case on the rack, lit a cigar, and the train started.

They spoke little, rushing through the night, and both were yawning when the day broke and the sun rose.

"Hungry work this, hope we can get some 'tuck' at Preston."

"Yes, I'm peckish, too," and Algy took out his pouch and filled his pipe.

At Preston they got out and sought the *buffet*, where they ordered breakfast. The golfer said: "I have got to see a pal. I'll be back in two shakes."

"All right."

The man returned in eight minutes and gobbled his breakfast, and the bell rang for the train. They stopped at the bookstall and bought the morning papers.

"*Hallo*," said the golfer, "the crooks have been at it again! Lady Devine's famous £10,000 necklace stolen at Morning's last night: there's no catching these people."

"Where?" asked Algy, turning over his paper. "Oh, I see. Here it is," and he read it.

"Not much information," he said.

"No. The cops are too artful to give much away. Well, I don't blame these chaps. If women will carry around small fortunes, needy men will be after them."

"I suppose so. These robberies are as common as blackberries now."

They spoke little, being absorbed in their newspapers. At Carlisle both got out.

"Well, good-bye."

"Good-bye. We may meet again."

"There's no telling," said the golfer.

Algy passed out and took a cab to the chief hotel. A cab-follower was at his elbow and lifted his suit-case and carried it in, until a porter relieved him of it.

Algy went up to his room and went to bed, being tired after his journey, and told the chambermaid to call him for lunch.

He ate a good lunch and then went out. The smiling cab-tout was on the other side of the pavement and touched his cap, and Algy turned off to explore the city; but the cab-tout was near to him with his collar turned

up and a different cap, which he had taken from his pocket.

Algy returned in time for dinner, and when he sat at *table d'hôte*, he saw the cab-tout on the other side of the road watching for cabs as they came up and lending a hand.

Algy had seen enough of Carlisle, and he decided to go to Baslow in Derbyshire the next day.

He scanned the evening paper ; but the accounts of the jewel-robbery were scanty.

After breakfast the next morning he caught a train. A little dark man was behind him at the booking office, and, as he came away, he heard him ask for a ticket to the same place. He thought nothing of it.

He reached Baslow and got a room at the hydro. There was a good sprinkling of people when he went in to lunch, and the little dark man was sitting at the other end of the table.

After lunch Algy sought the billiard-room. He was above the average at billiards, being a five average man, and he played two or three games and won. The little dark man then asked him for a game, and he played as well as Algy, and they had a close match, Algy winning by twenty points. After this the little dark man asked him to have a drink, and he accepted.

" I think you came from Carlisle, sir? "

" Yes, I remember you. You got your ticket next to mine."

" Yes, I thought so. Staying here long? "

" Well, if I like it, a month or six weeks."

" Fine links here. Wish I could stop ; but I'm only able to get away from business for a week at the most. What is your handicap? "

" Six," said Algy.

" Good egg. I'm eight. We'll have a good game. But you have brought no clubs with you."

" No."

" Oh, the pro. can lend you some."

The next day they went on to the links and had an

excellent game. They were very evenly matched. They returned to lunch, and Algy seized a paper and read that the police had a clue to the theft of Lady Devine's diamonds, and hoped soon to effect an arrest.

Algy smiled, and there and then decided to stay there a month or more. The terms were reasonable, the climate wonderful, and the moorland scenery appealed to him.

He played golf with the little dark man, danced with the girls and had a good time. The little dark man left.

"Suppose you are stopping on?"

"Yes. A month or more. I like this place. A friend recommended me Carlisle; but I think it a God-forsaken hole."

"No comparison with this place."

The man got into the hotel-bus and went off, waving his hand. At the station he spoke to the man in tweeds.

"Well, old son?"

"Well, if he's got them, they aren't in his duds. I've been through them three times, and his coat, too. Are you sure we aren't on the wrong track?"

"You never can tell."

"Well, I wish you luck. He plays a decent game of pills and not a bad game at golf; a nice young fellow."

The man in tweeds pointed to his luggage and with his golf-clubs got into the bus with two or three other fresh arrivals, and they rolled off to the hydro. In the billiard-room that night Algy saw his friend of the train.

"Hallo! You have come to Baslow, too."

"Yes. Tried Carlisle, don't like it. I think this place looks more attractive."

"Good egg. What's your handicap?"

"Oh, I'm no player, twelve."

"Play pills?"

"No. Unfortunately I never could get hold of that elusive game."

Algy, who had now made some friends, got a partner and played two games, which he won, and, after having

fixed up a match with the golfer for the next day, he retired to bed.

He and the golfer went to the links, and Algy gave him a bit of a handicap and found he was a poor twelve.

At lunch he saw a tall, dark man, who had arrived a few days before, looking hard at the golfer, and that night in the billiard-room the tall dark man asked Algy for a game.

They played ; but Algy was no match for this man, a seven-and-a-half average man.

There was a dance on, and the billiard-room was pretty well deserted.

When they were having a final drink, the tall dark man said :

" So you have met the golfer before ? " —indicating the man in tweeds. " Know him ? "

" No."

" I saw you meet. Seemed to know you."

" Well, we came up from London together. I went to Carlisle and was bored stiff, so came on here. He got out at Carlisle, says he's been there for a bit and got bored too."

" You remember the little dark man you used to golf and play pills with, is he a pal ? "

" Oh, Lord, no. Picked him up here."

" Well, son, it's none of my business and I dunno what you have been doing ; but, take it from me, they are both 'tecs,' and they are paying mighty particular attention to you."

" How do you know they are tecs ? "

" Old son, ask me no questions and I'll tell you no lies ; but it's gospel. You may be a Raffles, I may be a Raffles ; there's no idiotic *Who's Who?* of the members of our company. But if you are a Raffles, watch it. ' Old Skinner,' as we call him, is one of the sharpest. Nuff said."

" Well, I'm no Raffles ; but I thank you."

" Of course not. But, old son, what I'm telling you is gospel. Well, I'll go and turn in."

They went up to bed, and Algy did not sleep well, for the tecs were on to him ; he was the clue.

He was more careful of his tobacco-pouch than ever, and always kept it fully packed with the fragrant weed. He was cunning, was Algy, and knew now all he had to do was never to let the pouch out of his sight or possession ; so he took to smoking cigarettes and cigars as well as a pipe ; he could accommodate himself to circumstances.

He stayed six weeks at Baslow, received no letters and wrote none, and then decided to move to Cornwall for a change ; so he fixed on Bude.

He parted with his tall dark friend.

" I'm glad you are off," he said, " old Skinner will move now. He'll be on your track, and I can get to work." Algy smiled non-committingly.

" Say, sonny," whispered the tall dark man, " you haven't the goods on you ? "

" You bet."

" Good boy. That's the talk. Good luck. We may meet again. Old Skinner won't get much of a run for his money this go. Young and wily ! " He laughed.

IV

He reached Bude after a terribly long journey and went tired to bed after some supper.

The next day he looked for the golfer ; but he was not visible. If he had followed him, he was not at the hotel. He went out to the links and became a temporary member, and found a partner with whom he had a good match.

Two days after he saw an elderly gentleman and a lady come on to the links. He was in the pavilion, waiting for a partner he had arranged to meet. They came up, and the gentleman said :

" Can you tell me, sir, how one joins this club ? "

" You have only to call on the secretary, and he will put you up as a temporary member."

The lady was staring very hard at him.

"What's the sub?" asked the man.

Algy told him. The lady said:

"Haven't we met before?"

"No, madam, much to my loss."

She laughed. "I thought I saw you supping at Morning's about seven or eight weeks ago."

"You may have. I was there one night."

"With a friend, much your build, only dark?"

"Yes. That's right. I left early because I was off to recruit my nerves. The racket over there was beginning to tell, and my doctor told me to go to the country for three months and play golf. I was recommended Carlisle. Well, a day of that was enough, so I went to Baslow and had a topping six weeks, and then I thought I'd try a bit warmer place, so I came on here."

"Do you live in London, then?"

"Yes, madam, for the time being."

"I know you were at Morning's; I never forget a face. Exactly what date was it?"

"Oh, I am not sure."

"Did anything happen there the night you were there?"

"No, not that I know of; but I left early."

"Do you remember, when you got your coat and hat, a lady and gentleman were standing near you?"

"Yes. Two ladies and two gentlemen; but I did not notice one of the ladies much. She was in front of me, and the other man and woman, they were hardly gentle-people, were pushing me aside rather rudely, so I gave way. There was no hurry."

"Oh, what became of them?"

"I don't know. I don't think they came out. I saw one lady, the lady in front of me, and the gentleman with her get into a motor, as I stood waiting for a taxi; but I saw no one else come out, though some went in."

"Could you describe the man and woman?"

"Well, roughly," and he did so, and told how they were dressed.

"You seem to have noticed them very accurately for so short a time."

"No. It wasn't a short time. They were having supper at the next table to me and left just as I did. In fact, they followed me out to the cloak-room."

"Ha!" said the man, "I always said so; but these rotten detectives think they know everything."

"Well, you know, a valuable diamond necklace was stolen that night and from the lady who was in front of you."

"I saw something about it; but the papers gave no details, and I did not connect it with the lady and gentleman. But that accounts for what I heard the man say to the woman at the supper-table."

"What was that?" she asked excitedly.

"There goes Lady D——. She's got them all on. £10,000 if a penny, or something like that."

"You heard that?"

"Yes, and so did my friend."

"I told you so, Cyril," and she turned to the man.

"Yes, we have been fools."

"Well, you have never seen me before?" asked the lady.

"Not that I know of."

"Or my friend here?"

"Well, now you recall the scene, I do faintly remember this gentleman."

"Well, it was my necklace, and I am offering £2,000 reward," and she looked at him hard.

"I wish I could get them for you, Lady Devine, for I suppose you are she. I saw the name in the paper. I would get them for nothing."

"You can't tell us anything more about the man and woman then?"

"No."

"Would you know them again?"

"If they were in the same clothes or I heard them speak. They were Cockneys, I think."

"What Skinner said," she said, turning to the man.

"Well, we won't keep you any longer and I am much obliged to you."

"You are not keeping me, Lady Devine. I am merely waiting for a partner to play, who is due here at eleven."

"Well, Cyril, I don't think we can do any more."

"No. We were right all through, and Skinner wrong."

Lady Devine offered her hand and Algy shook it, and the gentleman shook hands with him, and they went off.

Algy lit a cigarette and smiled. He was becoming a very cool hand and had played a trump card, and he, inexperienced though he was, knew it.

V

That evening Algy went to the station to meet the train, as he was expecting some new irons made by Vardon ; for he was rapidly improving in his game and was now growing critical about his tools.

As he entered the station, he saw Lady Devine and the gentleman, and, much to his amazement, his friend the golfer ; so he was there too.

He smiled. They looked up and saw him, and he raised his hat to Lady Devine, and the golfer darted towards him.

"Why, I'm always meeting you ; no idea you were here."

"No. I haven't seen you about. Have you been here long ? "

"No, only arrived by the express last night. We are just off back by the express which goes after the down train comes in. Are you going up or down ? "

"Neither. I'm expecting some clubs from town by the down train."

"Oh, getting keen ? "

"Yes. It's coming back. I want Vardon's irons. I say, I meant to ask you, if I ever met you again, who that tall dark man at Baslow was, the good billiard-player."

The golfer affected not to remember him.

" Oh, come, you watched him playing billiards several nights."

" Oh, I remember. Can't say. Why? "

" Mysterious sort of Johnny, wasn't he? "

" Was he? Why? "

" Didn't care much for you, if I'm any judge, and I wondered *why*."

The golfer smiled and asked, " What did he say about me? "

" Nothing much. It was more the way he said it."

" Well, we do arouse likes and dislikes. Say, where did you meet Lady Devine? "

" On the links. She wanted some information."

The golfer smiled. Then the down express came rushing in, and they broke away.

Algy got his clubs and was going out of the station with them, when the golfer ran up to him.

" Going to be down here long? "

" Several more weeks, I guess. Why? "

" Oh, I may come down for a week or so."

" You do move about."

" Yes. I'm a restless person. One of the damned, I guess."

" The dark man would agree to that."

" Now, come, what about that dark man? "

" That's what *I* want to know. I guess you can tell me more about him than I can tell you."

" May be. Did he borrow any money? "

" No, nor tried to. Played straight at billiards. He asked me if you were very inquisitive."

The golfer laughed and asked, " What did you say? "

" I said no. You played a straight game at golf," and Algy laughed.

They stood talking till the up-express thundered in and then the golfer broke away, and got into a carriage with Lady Devine and Cyril. Algy never heard his name.

" So this is a famous detective, is it? Well, I wonder if

he is as clever as they say," and he filled his pipe from his well-filled pouch, and let his fingers feel the valuable stones.

VI

Algy saw an old, crippled sailor hanging about the hotel every day selling boot-laces; but he thought nothing of it, and the man, when he had refused to buy his laces, had paid little attention to him thereafter. Time passed quickly. Algy felt much relieved after his conversation with Lady Devine and the departure of the Skinner. The sands of his three months were running out too. Then one day the dark man turned up. He hailed Algy with much effusion.

"Say, have you brought the Skinner, old son?"

"No, why? He's been here and Lady Devine and a man called Cyril. I had a *pow-wow* with all three."

"Tell us," said the dark man, and he told him and how he had chaffed the Skinner.

"You'll do, my son. You are merely now under observation in case you are wanted. Bet they are looking for the man and woman. But you are under observation. Some nark is marking you."

"What's that?"

The dark man laughed. "A police-informer."

"Well, I've seen no one."

"Well, I'll show him to you before I've been here twenty-four hours."

They parted, and the tall, dark man that evening at *table d'hôte* pointed to the old sailor selling laces.

"There you are, my son. If you try and leave here, he'll go off to the cops and they will go to the telegraph office and say you are off, and the nark will find where you booked to, and it will all go to London and be there long before you are."

"My word!"

"You are a green un."

"I don't understand."

"Well, neither do I. But you told me you had the goods on you."

"Well, so I have. I meant my wallet and money. Not much."

The man whistled and burst out laughing and said :

"And I took you for one of 'the boys.'"

"What boys?"

"Well, this takes the cake. I thought you had pinched Lady Devine's diamond necklace."

"Good Lord, man, you made a big mistake! I'm not a crook."

"Well, old son, if you are speaking truly, don't start on it. I am one; I know you won't give me away; it's hell. You pull off something and are all in a hurry to blue it lest you are copped, and when you are dining comfortably, you are always afraid of the cop's hand coming down on your shoulder."

"By Jove, yes. I shouldn't care for that life."

"Well, never take to it."

"I won't. I've no hankerings that way. I suppose you are on the job now?"

"Well, yes. There's a fat Jewess at the *Beach* and she's got £20,000 worth here, and she's off in two days, and I mean to have them."

"*Whisht!* Don't tell me anything."

"Well, to-night's the night," he said, and went off laughing. "You won't give me away?" he called back.

"Not on your life."

"Good boy."

That evening at bedtime the landlord informed Algy there had been a daring robbery at the *Beach Hotel*. A lady had been robbed of some £50,000 of jewels whilst she was at dinner. A man had entered her bedroom with a skeleton key and opened all her boxes and got away with the loot, and not a soul in the hotel had seen him. A strange motor-car had gone through the

place soon after the robbery, and it was thought the thief might have got away in that.

The next day Skinner arrived. He met Algy.

"Hullo! Still here!"

"Yes. . . . Heard of the great robbery at the *Beach Hotel*, of course?"

"No, what was that?" Algy told him.

"How do you know of it?"

"Oh, half a dozen people have told me. It's all over the place. They say the thief got away in a motor-car."

"Well, I must be off," said the Skinner, "see you tomorrow."

The next day the Skinner came up to him.

"Say, have you seen that tall dark man who was at Baslow?"

"Yes, I met him once or twice, and had a talk with him. Why? He was talking about you and asked if you had been down. You two don't seem very fond of each other, why?"

"Funny you are always meeting both of us."

"Yes. So I'm beginning to think. What hangs to it all? He hinted (this confidential) that you were a bit of a crook."

"The devil he did. Perhaps the boot is on the other leg."

Algy laughed till tears came into his eyes.

"There now. I knew you didn't like each other."

"When did you see him last?"

"Let me think." He thought and told him.

"That will be the day of the robbery."

"Yes. That is right."

"What time did you see him?"

"'Bout three, in the High Street. I was off to the links."

"Did he go with you?"

"No. Said he was down on business. Isn't he all right, or ain't you all right, or what does it all mean? It doesn't matter to me. I've no jewels and not much posh; so I'm not afraid of either of you."

"Young man, always mind your own business."

"I do. But why didn't you tell me this before when you were asking questions about him?"

Skinner laughed.

"Now, I suppose the dark man will turn up next week and ask me if I have seen you and what you said. It's all damn funny, you know."

"I suppose so."

The old sailor with his laces walked past, and Algy saw a glance pass between him and Skinner.

"There, you see that man. The dark man said that was your ghost!"

"My ghost!"

"Yes, your ghost. What did he mean?"

"Oh, he said that, did he?"

"Yes; but it is none of my business," and Algy laughed.

"Oh, I'll go and see what he said to the lace-man."

"So long," said Algy, and he turned and saw Skinner and the lace-man having an animated conversation.

The night arrived when the three months had passed. Algy had won his bet, and he ordered a bottle of champagne and drank his own health.

But being remote from London and the centre of the "Yard" he had not found it difficult. He had the power of putting everything aside and forgetting, that grand power which some minds have of detaching themselves from all cares.

Now he felt it was up to him to get back to town and return the necklace; or should he post it from Bude, addressing with letters cut from a newspaper? Then he felt Skinner might smell a rat, and he knew that it was dangerous to meddle with anything in the writing and paper way. The scientific experts were so sharp these days.

The next day he was walking from the links when to his amazement he met the tall dark man. They stopped and shook hands.

"What! You here again," said Algy, "after——"

"After nothing this time, old son. Ancient history is ancient history. The Jewess has now got old Ike to purchase more baubles, and her baubles are in Amsterdam, and my banking account is fatter, and those of others."

"But your friend, Skinner——"

"Damn Skinner! He is about as good at crime-detection as he is at golf."

"Is that so?"

"Take it from me, old son, he is."

"What are you down for, then?"

"Well, old son, I want to talk to you about a certain diamond necklace that once belonged to Lady Devine, and which a gay young spark took from her at Morning's."

"Do you? . . . And why come to me?"

"It's no use, old son. A friend of mine saw it all, and he and his wife saw you lift the goods."

"The devil he did! Well, he has second sight. Guess he lifted them himself, or his wife."

"It's no use, old son. He couldn't make a mistake over a job like that, old, artful and experienced."

"Well, as a working hypothesis, what about it?"

"Only this, old son. You are not one of us. You did it for a bet. I have found out all about it, you see."

"Carry on."

"Well, I want a com. You have signed to return them. I can't stand waste like that. You are too honourable to touch a penny of the proceeds if I were to sell it; and I can and you can't."

"Can you? What would you get for it? Honest injun."

"Well, receivers are hard and very close, mostly of the wily tribes of Israel. I might get £2,500. I will be honest with you; I might be offered less; but I can get £2,000 sure."

"The reward."

"The reward. . . . You have hit it, old son."

"Well now, I will be frank with you. I don't know your code of honour; but as man to man, if I hand you

over the baubles, curse them ! will you give me your word as a white man that the Lady Devine shall have them back just as they are and within a week—for the reward ? ”

“ Old son, you have put it as a gentleman. I will.”

“ Well, I trust you. It's a go, and, my God, I shall be glad to be rid of the ass's burden. I have splendid nerve and I had no shame over the business because I only did it for a bet, and it wasn't really stealing : but, my God, when I have felt most comfy and happy, my siesta has been disturbed by a stranger coming up, and every new arrival at the hotels I have been staying at has flustered me, and so on.”

“ I tumble. We *never* shake that off, no matter what experts may tell you. That's why we never save ; but blue everything. It's like you plucky young officers in the war ; when you got out of that hell for ten days' leave, you blued every sou, knowing well it might be your last fling.”

“ That's true. . . . Most of us. . . . There were exceptions.”

“ Of course. Of course, there always are. Well now, old son, I'd like to catch the evening express with the goods. Where do you hide them ? ”

“ Where do you think ? ”

“ Oh, belly-belt or secret pocket or some fake like that.”

“ No, old top. Let us walk out to where we shan't be seen.”

They walked out of the town and sat in a secluded hollow. Algy pulled out his pouch and asked the tall, dark man to have a smoke.

“ No thanks. I never smoke a pipe.”

“ Well, tell me what you think of the baccy.”

“ I'm no judge.”

“ Look at it.”

He took out a great pinch, and the glint of the diamonds met his eye.

“ Good God ! Of all the artful places ! Well, I'm

damned. Clever! Clever! Clever! Will you give me the pouch and all?"

"Yes, and welcome."

The tall dark man looked at his watch. "I must be off. Shake, old son. I'll do the right thing, and you shall see in the paper that Lady Devine has recovered her jewels."

"I'll trust you."

"Good. You won't regret it. I should like to have made pals with you; but our paths lie differently. I was a gentleman born and bred; but I was always weak, weak. I disliked work. There you have it."

They shook hands and parted, and the tall dark man turned and said:

"Your pouch-tip is worth £500 to me; so I get £2,500 for the loot."

"Cheerio," called Algy, "and good luck to you."

Algy was more relieved than he had ever been in his life, and, when he heard the express roar in and then whistle and go off, he threw up his cap for joy, and went and had a bottle of champagne with his dinner.

VII

Every morning he scanned the papers eagerly, and five days after he read:

"LADY DEVINE'S DIAMOND NECKLACE

"As in many others of these jewel robberies, Lady Devine has found her celebrated diamond necklace, or at least her maid has done so. She had not worn the dress she wore when she thought she was robbed of it, and, wishing to wear it the other night, her maid, in taking it from her wardrobe found the necklace lodged in the lining of the blouse where it had evidently been all these months. It seems the clasp had got broken and the necklace had slipped down and caught in her blouse, and though the maid alleges that she searched all the clothes carefully on discovering her loss, she saw nothing of it. The

insurance company will be as delighted as is Lady Devine to get her own property back."

Algy put the paper down and smiled serenely.

"I felt sure he would keep his word and he has done so."

That evening he returned to London and walked into his chambers.

"Hallo, old man!"

"What, Algy, back!"

"Yes, old top, with name still good."

"Well, old top, you won the bet, eh?"

"Yes, Tony, I will tell you the story," and he told him the story.

"Well, we'll go and get the envelope to-morrow."

"Yes, and burn the lot. I'm not taking the £200."

"Why not? A bet is a bet."

"No. I have learnt a lesson worth all the £200 and more. I wouldn't be a crook for all the wealth in the world."

Algy told him of his experiences.

"Well, it hasn't left much mark."

"No. The marks are inside. You shall stand me a topping dinner and a box of 100 *Coronas*, and we'll cry quits."

"Well, if you insist."

"I do. I have thought it all out."

The next day they procured the envelope and burnt it without opening it.

And Algy breathed a long sign of content and lit one of the 100 *Coronas* of the finest quality which he had won. And they dined that night at the *Café Royale*.

After dinner they discussed their future plans.

"Well, said Algy, "I'm off with the Revue girls. Don't think me 'pi,' I mean turning 'pi,' but I have seen at close quarters how easy it is to plunge into bad ways, and that means sinking lower and lower. The tall dark man told me all this, and his advice was 'avoid crime like the devil, only more so,' and he knew. So I abide by his advice, the best I ever had."

III

The Mystery of Body's Farm

I

JOHN DEADMAN was a typical Norfolk farmer of good birth. He was a squarson and farmed Body's farm, which really belonged to his father, the Rev. Joseph Deadman of Deadman Hall, which nestled at the top of the upland in a beech wood. These glorious trees did well; the pocket of soil, upon which the farm was situated, favoured them.

The day upon which my story begins broke fresh and crisp. The wind was south-east and the landscape beautiful and veiled with a delicate silvery mist. To a landscape painter it was a gem as seen from the road which John Deadman took, with his clumber spaniel and his gun. He was dressed in dark velveteen shorts, gaiters and shooting boots, and on his head a large wideawake, for all knowing shots and artists wear a broad-brimmed hat. The Stetson fashion of the cowboy was not just fancy.

John Deadman was smoking a good old brier, and carried his single-barrelled 20-bore ready. He would never use a double-barrelled gun except when he was invited to "kills," as he called *battues*, when he was expected to kill for his friends, who counted sport by heads, as the radical counts politics. John Deadman would have no beaters, he shot over his dogs, with a friend or by himself. He was content in a wood to bag a couple of pheasants, and he rarely missed. The light

single-barrelled gun came up like a flash of lightning, and the bird fell like a stone, shot through the head.

He made his way along a path in the beech-wood, bordered on either side with drifts of bronze fallen leaves, whilst the leaves on the beech trees above him shone and gleamed like pure gold Spanish doubloons. The beech sheds its leaves with reluctance, and even John Deadman's latent artistic sense was aroused by the lovely colour scheme all round him—the grey smooth pillars of the beech-tree stems and the old gold foliage, through which the blue sky told bright and clear, with a silvery mist lurking away in the hollows, giving a touch of mystery to the scene. Suddenly three Chinese pheasants came flying down the lane on the hunt for beech-mast. Their emerald necks white-ringed and their bright-coloured spangled feathers told bright and beautiful against the old gold ; they had all the plumage of tropical birds, and their wild notes rang through the bronze and gold wood.

John Deadman swung his gun up to his shoulder, and with both eyes open fired, and a meteor of varied bright-coloured feathers fell to the ground and lay in the brown path amongst the dead crisp leaves. The spaniel, alert, ran forward and brought it back to John Deadman, and he looked at it, a young cock and in good fettle. He placed it in his game-bag and stopped to pat the spaniel.

Suddenly another shot resounded in the wood, a metallic shot, you could hear the ring of the rook-rifle. John Deadman fell to the ground with a groan. The little spaniel ran round him, exhibiting every sign of distress, then it began to bark, but John Deadman never moved. He, like the many-coloured pheasant, was dead. The spaniel began to whine and run about him, and then it ran up the path and barked, short, anxious barks, and it returned still whining ; when an old labouring man with a bundle of sticks came up the path, it ran to him. The old man looked at the dog, and he looked

up the path, and, throwing down his bundle of sticks, he went as quickly as his "screwomatics" would allow him to the farmer, John Deadman. He looked at him, and noted the small red spot in his temple, and began to mutter and talk to himself. He stopped and looked each way up the beautiful road, and then, mumbling to himself, hobbled off to the "willage."

The village was an "open" one of one long street with cottages on either side of the road: an old Norman church, and the Vicarage close alongside; a public-house, *The Black Horse*, a tin chapel and a parish hall. He reached the public-house first; there was a plain board outside.

THE BLACK HORSE

MORGAN'S
ENTIRE

He halted at the tap-room entrance, hesitated, and went in, and sat down at a table on the sawdust-covered floor. The landlord, a short man in old dirty tweeds and gaiters, came to him.

"Well, Sam, what's ailing you? You look like a mazed willock."

"Ah, Bor, so I be. I fund Mister Deadman shot dead in the beech-wood."

"Mr.—Deadman—shot! You must be crazy, Sam."

"No. I b'an't crazy neither. Dead as nip he lie there, Bor, but draw us a pint. I'm that shook up."

The landlord took a yellow-ware mug with blue bands, and drew a pint for Sam, and placed it before him. He looked at the landlord, "My respects," drained it off, and then wiped the froth from his lips with the back of his great hairy hand, and set the mug down on the rough solid table.

"You wanted that, Bor."

"Ah, Bor, that I did. I'd best go and see t' constable," he said, looking at the landlord.

"Yes, Bor. Go on at once. Did his gun burst?"

"No, Bor. He warn't shot with a shot-gun."

Sam felt for the price of the beer, and the landlord said, "Go on, Sam. Your news is worth the price of the beer. I never liked John Deadman."

The old labourer looked at him curiously, "Why not, Bor?"

The landlord pushed him out of the door, for Sam had risen, and said, "Go to Joe at once."

Sam walked off and knocked at the door of the police-station, a cottage, and that official king of the village came out, reading a newspaper.

"Well, Sam, what's the matter now?" he asked with loud voice.

"Mister Deadman hev' been shot in the beech-wood."

The constable, all alert at once: "Shot! What do you mean? Is he dead?"

"Aye, Bor. He hev' gorn to the mould country."

"What? Did he shoot himself?"

"No, Bor. He was massacred."

"Murder?"

"That's it, Bor. Crool, I call it. Shot clean tro' the head with one of them totty little bullets like they kill rabbits with."

"Where is he?"

"In the long walk, 'bout 200 yards down."

The constable ran in, and got his cap and bicycle, and, without saying any more, wheeled off.

"Come you along, Sam, as quick as you can," he called over his shoulder.

Sam waved his hand and hobbled after the policeman as quickly as his rheumatic twisted legs and his asthmatic breathing would allow.

The constable wheeled into the long walk on reaching the

wood, and saw the body lying in the path, and the spaniel came running to him and jumping up with short barks.

He reached the body, jumped off and propped his bike against a tree, and examined the body and the wound. He felt the pulse and the skin of the face, and then picked the gun up and looked at it. He broke it. There was a live cartridge in the breech, which he took out and put in his pocket. Then he produced a notebook, and began to write. He examined the ground all round, went down the path and found the empty shell which had been used in killing the pheasant. Then he tried to reconstruct the crime.

He then went into the wood, searching for a trail, and he at last came to a beech-tree where the leaves round about had been much disturbed, and there he found the empty shell of a .220 rook rifle.

This he put in his pocket, and followed the trail amongst the disturbed bronze leaves, and found himself on a road, and noted where the person who had fired the shot had got over the earth-bank on to the road, and the tracks of a bicycle which led to the next village. He ran back to the wood, and old Sam had arrived, with him a youth he had met on the way.

"Now, Sam, do you stop here and look arter Mister Deadman's body, and do you, Frank (to the youth), run off and fetch the doctor, and tell him to send a cart or something to fetch the body to the village. I'll go along arter something I have seen." He mounted his bicycle and rode hard away, down the walk, to the road.

Old Sam settled down amongst the bronze leaves, and, taking out a black clay, filled it with shag and lit it with a sulphur match, and sat smoking and patting the spaniel, which had lain down by him. The policeman disappeared down the lovely bronze and old gold aisle.

Sam was knocking out his first pipe and refilling with black shag from a twist of paper when a dark young man, shortish, clean-shaven, dressed in tweeds and knickers,

wearing a cap, approached. Old Sam slowly arose and pulled his forelock.

"Marning, sir."

"Morning, Sam. A bad business this." Then he looked all round, at the gold and bronze against the blue background, at the corpse, at Sam, whom he had ordered to reseal himself.

"A regular film scene. In colours it would come fine."

Sam looked at him in bewilderment.

He walked to the body and examined the wounds, one on the back of the head and one in front.

"Shot from behind," he said.

He looked at his gun.

"That wor loaden, sir. Joe took the cartridge out."

"Live, wasn't it?"

"Yes, he had na loosed off."

"Well, Sam, I can do nothing."

"No, Bor. That fare be trew."

"Lovely day, isn't it? How are the screwmatics?"

"Sadla, Bor, sadla."

"Well, you are better off than him."

Sam looked at him and said, "You warn't wery fond of Mister Deadman."

"No, nobody was. Not even his wife."

"That's a hennapecker."

"That is so, and you know it. Well, I must be off. That Mrs. Child is going to have her tenth," and he laughed.

Sam got up and pulled his forelock, and the doctor returned by the way he had come, admiring the lovely scene.

Presently three labourers arrived, and Sam got up. They had a low conversation together, and then they raised the dead man. "What be here? A pheasant!" They saw its beautiful neck hanging from the game-bag. One of them took the bird out and looked at Sam, and then threw it at him.

"There, Bor. You found un. That's yourn."

"Oh, I darsn't, Bor."

"Go you on, Sam. Take that home and have a good fourses off it. Nobody 'on't know."

Sam looked all round, and then, grunting, pocketed the bird. They again raised the body and placed it in the cart and drove off, the spaniel following. Sam stole off through the wood to his cottage, and began plucking the bird, and, when he had it clean, he burnt all the feathers in the brick-oven, and then drew it and dressed it, and put it in the oven, where bread was baking, to roast; and he smacked his lips, and kept repeating, "Thet will go high, Bor. Thet will go high, Bor. Good for screwmatics, thet be."

II

Joe the policeman followed the fresh bike track to a highway and then he lost it. He got down and examined the road carefully, but, beyond tracing the trail towards Northwitch, he could do nothing. He sat down by the road and asked all who came that way if they had seen a bicyclist, especially one with a rook or rabbit rifle. No. No one had seen such a person. Some chaffed the policeman; "had he been poachin' or robbin' the church-box?" But he could gain no information. He got on to his machine and wheeled towards Northwitch, until he came to some cross-roads, and there he tried in vain to follow the trail. Then he returned, and when he reached the bronze and gold wood and the spot where John Deadman had fallen, he left his bicycle and re-entered the wood, and went to the trees and hunted all round for a clue. All he could find were some wax vestas and some cigarette ends. These he put in an envelope and then went home and 'phoned to his chief.

III

The inspector, a detective in plain clothes, and a constable, drew up before the police-station, the red brick cottage, in a dog-cart, and the inspector, Joe, and the

detective had a talk in front of the same. Children were coming out of school, and stopped and looked at them curiously.

The inspector and detective listened to Sam's story, and then the inspector went off and called on the doctor. He was dispensing medicines in his surgery.

"Walk right in, inspector. Good morning."

"Good morning, sir. Can you help us?"

"Not much. Shot about 10 a.m., shot from behind and from the right behind. Not suicide. Small calibre rook or rabbit rifle. Death instantaneous. A good shot did it. Shooter not near. Murder or accident, can't say which. He wasn't loved, you know, inspector."

"So I hear. Why not?"

"Well, he was a hard man, terrible down on poachers. Strenuous life, not easy. Fond of drink, and temper villainous. An Irish strain."

"Shot about ten, you say?"

"Yes, from what the old labourer Sam told me and from my examination."

The inspector thanked him and went off. He returned to the police-station and ordered the constable to take the trap to the *Black Horse* and take the horse out and get him a feed, and order lunch for four at two.

The man saluted and drove off, and the inspector, the "tec," and Sam went off to the beech-wood.

"Pretty place this," said the inspector.

Sam nodded.

They visited the spot, and the detective and inspector looked all round, and then took them to the tree in the wood.

"Have you measured it, Sam?"

"No, sir. I wor busy pullin' the bacca."

"Well, do it now."

The detective produced a tape and they measured it.

"Ninety-two yards one foot three inches as the crow flies," said the detective.

"Good shootin', Bor," said Sam.

They hunted all round the tree, and the inspector and Sam then went on to the road, and they examined where the bike had been pulled over a low earth wall, and they followed the road.

The detective hunted about, and presently pounced like a hawk on a mouse, and picked up a glittering object. He held it in his palm and whistled, and put it in his pocket. Then he examined the beech-tree with a magnifying glass, took some fibres from the bark, and he noticed slight abrasions on the bark, and measured the height from the ground, 5 feet 3½ inches. The leaves had covered all footprints. Then he followed the trail to the low earth bank, and here he studied the ground very closely, and he found the toe of a boot-mark in a soft place, in under the bank. He measured this very carefully and made a drawing of it. Again he whistled. Then he found a knee-mark where the person had put one knee in climbing over. He examined it carefully and, producing his camera, took half a dozen snaps of it. He intended not to fail. Again he whistled. He took some photos of the bicycle trail, and then walked on until he met the inspector and Joe, the policeman. He said nothing.

"I'm afraid he has got clean away," said the inspector.

"I suppose the road is full of trails?"

"Yes. Any number, no use following them. He didn't go the other way and then turn, no one has turned within a quarter of a mile of where this by-road runs out into the main road. Found anything?"

"Nothing much," said the "tec." "He hasn't left many clues."

"We'll now go to the post-office and see who have gun licences about here."

This they did and took their names and addresses.

"Now we'll go to have a look at him."

They went into a shed and examined the body. The detective examined the wound carefully.

"Now we'll go to lunch."

They had the usual lunch of the country inn: cold beef and pickles, Cheshire cheese and celery, and an apple tart and bottled beer.

After lunch they all three went to old Sam's.

He was very awkward, kept pulling his forelock, and his wife kept dusting chairs with her apron and curtseying.

"Now, Sam, tell the gentlemen what you know."

"Well, Bor, I will if I can. I wor walkin' trew t' wood with a bundle of sticks."

"What time was it?"

"The charch clock just struck ten when I come up onter Mister Deadman."

"Go on," said the inspector.

"Well, I see the dawg comin' on and yappin' and runnin' round and round on t' path, and I thowt he wor drunk. But when I came up ter him, I see he wor dead as nip, and I see a red mark on his forehead, here," and he pointed. "So I dropped my sticks and go off and tell Joe there. That's all I know, master."

"Did you hear a shot?"

"No, sir, I never heard noathing."

"Did you see anyone coming out of the wood?"

"No, sir, no. I'm very deaf. Screwmatics, and my sight an't good."

"Did anyone go through the wood when you were waiting?" asked Joe.

"No, only Dr. Frost. He came and looked at him, and went away, and then tree men off the farm come with a wagon and took him away."

"You saw no one else?"

"No, sir, no."

"What time did the doctor come?"

"Arter eleven. I heerd the charch clock strike eleven afore he come. It warn't half arter neither. Thet don't strike the quarters."

"Good for a deaf man," muttered the detective

sotto voce, and asked, "Was it nearer eleven or half after?"

"Nigher to half arter."

The inspector gave Sam half a crown, and he pulled his forelock, and they went out after making a few notes. At the door the inspector turned and asked:

"Was he liked about here?"

"Thet depend, sir. Some folk liked him, some didna. Thet's how with all on us."

"Had he a particular enemy?"

"Not that I knows on."

"Such a nice gentleman," said Sam's wife. "It's crool, I call it."

The inspector and detective then went to Body Farm and rang.

"I want to see Mrs. Deadman."

"She's all broken up, sir, crying her heart out."

"Well, I must see her."

"Will you come in?"

The inspector and detective were shown into the comfortable parlour. The widow came in with a very red face and streaming eyes. The detective noticed she had on a light silk bodice and a dark skirt, and on the bodice he noted some green mossy marks, such as you see when a person rubs against a tree with moss. He also noticed that her blouse was fastened with a safety pin. She was a beautiful woman, aged about thirty-two, with very dark hair, very marked dark eyebrows, very black long eyelashes and large liquid black eyes. She had a cream and peach complexion, a beautiful neck and bosom which her blouse did not completely hide, and was lissome and well built; no fat, very quick and alert. And the detective, who had a very keen sense of smell, noticed the smell of onions.

The inspector asked her where she had been that morning.

"I went to the village about nine, and walked home

through the wood. It's a favourite walk of mine. I must have passed the place where poor John was shot, half an hour before."

"What time did you get home?"

"I can't tell exactly. I went into the greenhouse to cut some flowers for the table. It was about half-past ten when I got indoors."

"Do you bicycle, madam?" asked the detective.

"I do, but I was not bicycling this morning. I walked to the village and back."

"Did you meet anyone in the village?"

"Oh, yes. I was at the post-office, the butcher's and the baker's, and I passed Dr. Frost in the street."

"What time would that be?"

"About ten. The post-office people could tell you. I know the church clock struck when I was in the village."

"When did you first hear of your husband's death?"

"About 11.15 or so. The doctor came and broke it to me."

"Has your husband a rook rifle?"

"Yes, two. He has several guns. He was very fond of shooting."

"May we see them?"

They went into the gun-room, and the inspector took the rifles and examined them.

"They haven't been fired off lately."

"No. My husband went rabbit-shooting last Friday evening, that's the last time he used one."

"May we see the cartridges?"

"In that box there." She pointed to a box and the inspector examined them and with permission of the wife took one of each.

"Did you hear any shot?"

"I heard a gun fired in the wood about 9.45."

"Where were you?"

She hesitated and replied, "I was nearly out of it."

"Did you look back?"

"No. The path winds, and I thought it was my husband. He went out to get a brace of pheasants for dinner."

"Did you meet anyone in the wood?"

"No."

"How did you go home?"

"By the road."

"Had your husband any particular enemies?"

"No, not that I know of. Poachers, of course, did not like him. He was hard on them, but on no one else."

"Do you suspect anyone?"

"No," and then she started to sob and moan. The inspector apologized, and they went out.

He stopped the maid.

"What time did your mistress go out this morning?"

"About 9.15, sir."

"What time did she come in?"

"About a quarter to twelve."

"Had she any flowers?"

"Yes, sir. She'd been cutting them in the greenhouse."

"Did she go out on her bike?"

"No, sir."

"Did she carry anything when she went out?"

"No, sir. Only her bag what she always takes shopping."

"I want to see her bicycle."

"Yes, sir."

They went to the shed and pulled the bicycle out. It was clean as a new pin, but the tyres fitted the trail: the detective had taken a cast.

"Who cleans this?"

"Tom, the ostler's boy."

"Call him."

Tom came up and pulled his forelock.

"When did you clean the bicycle?"

"About 11.15, sir."

"Who had ridden it that morning?"

"The doctor brought it in."

"The doctor brought it in?"

"Yes, sir."

"Are you sure it was 11.15?"

"Yes, sir. It was time for my bread and cheese and ale, and he told me to clean it slippy and gave me five shillings. I did it afore I ate my grub."

"Did he come riding on it or lead it?"

"He was riding it."

"Had he anything with him?"

"Yes, sir. A rabbit rifle." The inspector looked at the detective.

"What did he do with that?"

"Took it into the house."

"Was Mrs. Deadman there?"

"No, sir. She got home about 11.30 and went straight to the greenhouse."

"What time did the doctor leave?"

"Just afore she came in. He often borrowed Mr. Deadman's rifles. He was fond of rabbit shooting."

"He's pretty friendly here then?"

"Yes, sir. Always in and out. Like one of their-selves."

"Was he on good terms with Mr. Deadman?"

The lad hesitated.

"Come, out with it."

"Well, they had words at times."

"What about?"

"The missus."

"Ever seen them flirting?"

He hesitated.

"Ever seen them flirting?"

"Yes, sir."

"Kissing and that?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where?"

"In the greenhouse."

"Was he in the greenhouse this morning?"

"No, sir. I was about there watering the plants, so I know."

"That will do. Not a word to anyone, mind."

They retraced their steps to the village, talking together in grave voices. The inspector then went alone to the doctor.

"I have a few questions to ask you, doctor."

"Yes! Fire away."

"Would you mind telling me how you spent the morning?"

"Oh, that's it, eh? Well, I walked up to the farm and borrowed a rook-rifle from Deadman, and I borrowed Mrs. Deadman's bicycle and rode down to the warren and waited for rabbits, but had no luck; so I took the rifle and bike back, and came away home and went on my rounds, and was stopped by Sam, and then I got out of my car and went to the murder-scene."

"Did you fire at all?"

"Two or three shots, but hit nothing."

"You cleaned the rifle then?"

"Yes. I always do when I borrow it."

"Do you often borrow Mrs. Deadman's bike?"

"Yes. Mr. Deadman had no bike."

"What time did you arrive at their house?"

"About 9.35. Mr. Deadman had just gone out and also Mrs. Deadman. She passed me in the village."

"Did you speak to her?"

"No. Just took my hat off."

"What time did you get back?"

"About eleven. Then I got my things together, and at 11.15 started on my rounds."

"Were you in the wood at all?"

"No. I went from the farm to the warren by road and went back the same way."

"Where did you dismount?"

"At the warren. I laid the bike down and lay flat and tried to call the rabbits out by sucking the back of my hand, but they would only show their noses."

"Thanks, doctor. That's all."

The inspector went out, and met Joe and the detective, to whom he gave instructions, and then they walked to the *Black Horse*.

"It looks between the doctor and the missus," said the inspector.

"I think the doctor did it."

"Seems so," said Joe. "He's lying, so is she."

The detective said nothing. The horse was put in, and the inspector and constable drove off to Northwich, leaving the detective to investigate.

IV

John Simmonds, detective-sergeant, was a humane man. He felt assured the woman had killed her husband, and he had much evidence, but not enough. So he wrote to her and asked if he might come and stay at the farm; he suspected some of the men, he said.

She told him it was not very convenient, but if he must, he must, and she asked him to come over that afternoon.

He packed his things in his suit-case and took it over. She had told the maids he was the family lawyer. She was too disturbed to have her meals in public, but he ran across her in the garden now and then, and, being a very good-looking and amusing man, he interested her, and noticed she was not grieving a bit, but there was a suppressed excitement about her, a suppressed joy. The doctor never called, and she did not send for him.

The Coroner's Court returned a verdict of wilful murder against some person or persons unknown. Mr. Deadman was buried, the doctor and detective following the hearse with others. Simmonds watched for the doctor blundering, but he was a cool hand and a good actor, and hardly

spoke to Mrs. Deadman, who came downstairs, but was so prostrate that she did not go to the funeral.

The next night she appeared dressed in deep mourning, and after a glass or two of wine, was laughing and joking when there was no servant in the room.

That evening she began to flirt with the detective. He smiled, but was in no way backward, and before they went to bed they were on the best of terms.

"You seem relieved to be a widow," he said.

"I am. Life with him was *terrible*, if you only knew. He was the worse for liquor every night. His temper was awful, and he was jealous of a shadow. How I stood it I *don't* know."

"Well, you have had bad luck. Perhaps next time you will be more fortunate."

"Next time, eh? You seem to take a lot for granted."

"Well, a pretty woman like you will soon be asked again, no doubt."

"Who do you think killed my husband, Mr. Simmonds?"

"Well, that's a thing we never tell."

Simmonds had made careful inquiries and learnt that she never shot, but one day he suggested going down to the warren to look for rabbits. They walked down one evening, and there were plenty of rabbits out feeding, and Simmonds, a good shot, killed half a dozen, and then he asked her to shoot. He watched her carefully, and saw she was afraid of the rifle and shut her eyes when she fired, and he was assured that she could not hit the proverbial haystack.

Then he announced that he had finished his investigations, and left for Northwich.

The constable soon after reported that the doctor and Mrs. Deadman were very thick now. He was always at the farm, and it had become a scandal in the village.

The Chief called Simmonds to him and said, "Well, Simmonds, you have charge of this case. You don't seem to be making much progress."

"Well, sir. I know who committed the murder, but I can't yet prove it."

"Who did?"

"Dr. Frost."

"But Dr. Frost does not wear women's brooches or women's shoes."

"Except upon occasions."

"How's that?"

"*He was dressed in her clothes!*"

"What! How does that fit in with the rest of the story?"

"She did not go out that morning, though she said she did. It was the maid, who is very much like her. It was the maid who went into the greenhouse and cut the flowers. She was locked in her room all the time. I wormed this out of the maid. The maid carried a suitcase to the doctor's. She left her bicycle and the rifle with the doctor the night before. That I have evidence for. He even wore her shoes. He has a very small foot. He changed his things in the wood after the deed, bicycled to their house and the maid met him in the drive, and put the bicycle in the bicycle shed, and he went, in his proper clothes, to the gun-room, and cleaned the gun. I found her brooch by the tree, and green marks on her blouse, which I photographed. I found her toe-print beneath the earth bank, but I have no evidence that he fired the shot, or, if he did, that it was murder and not accident."

"Well, you have done very well. Now write out your report, and I will place it before the Chief Constable."

Simmonds sat down and wrote out the case with his proofs and with all the evidence he could obtain, and it was sent to the Chief Constable.

v

The authorities considered the report carefully. The Public Prosecutor officer in charge said to the other two men working with him :

"The man Simmonds is pretty wide-awake, but lacks scientific training, and we have never had a really accurate medical report. These coroners are not up to their work; all that is revealed in the official shorthand notes of the inquest is that the man was killed by a small calibre bullet from a rifle, and an empty shell was shown, there being no proof at all that the bullet from that shell killed the man. Again, the medical man said the shot was from behind and from the right. Now the man was walking up a hill, no plan showing elevation sent, or what the rise was, but from a 25-inch ordnance map I see it is about one in thirty. It was very remiss of the coroner not to ask the exact direction of the long axis of the wound. Because a shell and some cigarette ends were found under a tree where the leaves had been disturbed, it was at once assumed the fatal shot was fired from there. There does not appear to have been any search for the fatal bullet, which was probably in the ground near or in the trunk of one of the beeches. The work done by Simmonds is worthy of a film detective." All the men laughed.

"Well, we had better advise the Chief Constable to call in a good man from the Yard. Simmonds is all right for a country 'tec,' and with experience would be useful here, but he's no genius. But if his theory that it was the doctor dressed in her clothes be substantiated, well, that was very good for a country detective."

Then, turning to his secretary, he said, "Make a *précis* of all this and add that we advise that a man from the C.I.D. be called in at once."

It was a lovely November evening, the Spanish gold beech leaves gleamed, many of them still clinging to the trees, and the bright jewelled Chinese pheasants flew through the gold and bronze arcade in their hunt for beech-mast. The night was closing in, and Mrs. Deadman, in a dark fur-trimmed coat with a fur toque,

was walking through the lonely wood, when Josh, the young ostler assistant, met her. He had been drinking. He lifted his cap: "Good evening."

"Good evening, Josh."

"I want to show you something, mam. I believe I have found the man who killed Mr. Deadman."

"You don't mean that?"

"But I do, if you will come this way."

A mist was silvering the bronze and gold wood, and she followed him, her fresh-coloured face with dark eyes adding another note of beauty to the wild scene. Josh was in old riding trousers and leggings, and an old tweed coat and cap. He led into the wood, and they crushed the crisp bronze leaves. Squirrels ran from feeding on the mast and sprang up the trees, and vermin could be heard working.

When they came to a big tree, Josh told her to look up into the branches. She did so, close to the tree, craning her neck, and suddenly she felt Josh's arms close around her with an iron grip, and his hot kisses fell on her face. She struggled and panted, but he held her like a vice. "Whoa! quiet, my bewty! If you go telling on me, I will tell all I know about you and the doctor. I hev' seen you tew bewties hunting for coots' eggs many a time, and I know who killed Mr. Deadman. You did. I see you."

He had thrown her on to the thick leafy bed, and they were struggling. "Whoa! my bewty!" Then she got her mouth clear of his hand and cried, "*Help! help!*"

Someone passing in the long lane heard, and came running through the wood. Josh swore. "All right, that will wait," he said: "you can marry the doc, but that won't make no difference, or I'll put the halter round both of your necks."

He got up, and rushed off like a wild beast down into the mist, and was lost.

A big labourer came up: she had hardly risen, and was brushing the leaves off her dress.

"Was that you calling for help, mam?"

"Yes, yes. A footpad attacked me and tried to tear my bag from my hands."

"What was he like, mam?"

"Big dark man with a beard and dirty neckcloth. He ran away that way," and she pointed to a direction opposite to that which Josh had taken.

"Shall I go after him, mam, or see you home? A wood is a bad place for a woman at night."

"Oh, *do* walk with me back to the house. I never had such a fright in my life."

They walked side by side, and, when they reached her gate, she took a note from her purse and handed it to him.

"I'll go and hunt now for the mucka slink."

"Thank you *so* much. Don't tell the constable: it was partly my fault for walking through the wood from the warren to the road."

"All right, mam."

"And thank you *so* much," and she gave him a bewitching smile.

Josh kept out of her way.

This business upset her much more than her husband's murder, and the next morning she walked into the village and told the doctor.

"The young cur! It's always so. He's a boxing man. I have always found boxing men cowards. It was so in the war. The professional boxers mostly got soft jobs as instructors. He pleaded too he was ruptured. Well, I know a young officer who got ruptured out there; his men had to pull him out of the mud with ropes, he got bogged. He went into hospital, was operated on, and went back to fight. Whereas this white-livered cur waited until the war was over before he would be operated on."

"Well, what shall we do?"

"Well, his attack on you, my dear, shows me one

thing. I'll fix him. Don't you worry, but discharge him at once, and give him a month's wages in *lieu* of notice. I know the landlord of the *Black Horse* will take him on. They are related."

Mrs. Deadman went home and discharged him, and paid him the month's wages. He grinned impudently.

"That won't stop me," he said. "You darsn't go to the police. I can wait—if it lay for ten year."

"Your wants will have to be your master," she said, and turning to him she said, "Clear out of this at once."

"I knowed that was a-coming, but I shan't be far off. You will find me at the *Black Horse* when you want me."

She flushed a deep red and went out.

He packed his things in an old portmanteau, and, shouldering it, went off whistling, *The girl I left behind me*.

A new youth was employed. He had served with the Hampshires in the war and had then gone to North Russia, and won the military medal. Mrs. Deadman told him that if the other man, Josh, came near the place, he was to turn him off. "He can box a bit."

"I know all about them scum, mam. Boxers ban't no good. They havn't got any heart. I saw that over there. They are all fooza at the heart. You lave him to me."

She smiled on Jack, and he took up his work with zest. He was pleased at the change—his work was brightened.

VI

One day a man, dressed like a commercial traveller, arrived with the usual cases at the *Black Horse*. The landlord was always civil to these men: they always ran up a big drink-bill and were good company. Mr. Westropp travelled in Belgian lace. He visited private houses and the trade, though of course giving the trade a big discount.

He had a good dinner, and a bottle of port, and asked the landlord in to sample it with him.

"Now, Mr. Grapes, I want the straight tip from you. What houses and farms here have pretty women who are likely to buy lace?" And he produced a note-book.

Mr. Grapes sipped his port. His dark face and black shifty eyes and crooked mouth worked.

"Well, this Mrs. Deadman is a fine piece, purty as a picture."

"Deadman—Deadman? Isn't that the name of the man who was shot here?"

"You are right. A great bull of a man, a hog for liquor. She warn't sorry neither, if you ax me."

"That so?"

"I could tell you some things."

"Well, landlord, business first and pleasure after. Can you brew a good bowl of punch?"

"That I can, sir."

"Well, we'll get these names and addresses off, and then you shall go and brew me a good bowl of punch, and tell me the story."

"That will be a guinea these days."

"Oh, we don't stick at price."

The landlord's eyes sparkled, and he gave Mr. Westropp a long list of names, which the bagman ticked off as "certain, likely, doubtful, no go."

Then Boniface went off to brew the punch, which he brought in. "There's a half-bottle of whisky, a quarter bottle of rum, and a good drop of brandy and liqueur in this, and green tea. It's a prime brew," and he ladled out the glasses.

The traveller tasted it and agreed: "It's top notch."

Then the landlord told the story.

"Mr. Deadman was shooting pheasants in the beech-wood and someone shot him with a rook rifle. There ban't much to tell."

"Who did it?"

"Well, you are axing something now, but if you will be mum, I'll tell you. She did, her wery self."

"How do you know that?"

"Well, my nevvv here, him what brought your bags from the station, see'd it all."

"Did he? I don't remember anything about that in the paper."

"No, that *warn't* in it. He didn't want to be drawed inter it."

"Why did she shoot him?"

"To marry the doctor in course. They was as good as married, if not charched, afore this. My nevvv can tell you."

"Is that so?"

"Sure as I'm setting here. The doctor is allust up there now, and you see they will get spliced when the year is out."

"Where was your nephew that he saw it all?"

"Well, between and betwixt ourselves he was in the wood arter a pheasant. He gets me a pheasant there sometimes, when he knows the keeper is safe abed, for the keepers generally work about at night just now."

"I see. He does a bit of poaching on his own account?"

"That's the size of it."

"He's a good shot then?"

"Dead on a pheasant or a rabbit, but no good with a shot-gun. He can hit the bull at 100 every time onter one of them regulation taygets. The doctor be pretty good, but my nevvv can beat him. They have shot more than one match. You see the doctor likes the heavy rifle, .320 my boy call that: and my boy like the light rifle, .220 he call it. Says he can hold it more firmer like."

"I see. I don't understand shooting, but I can see what he means, and it sounds sensible."

"I'd like to see the spot. I'm rather interested in murders."

"My nevvv will take you there any time you like, sir."

"Well, let us say to-morrow afternoon. It's Wednesday, and the shops will be all shut. Will he bring his rifle along?"

"No. That belonged to Mr. Deadman, he used to borrow it unbeknown to Mr. Deadman. Probably he had taken it to the stables to clean there."

"I see. No flies on him."

"Oh, no. He's all spry and a rare 'un with his dooks."

"Fought in the war I'll bet."

"No, sir. That's where he was unfortunate. He was ruptured mighty bad in the harvest field."

"Well, he could have been operated on."

"He didn't know that then."

Mr. Westropp smiled: "Or he would have been operated on and gone, eh?"

"That's a sure thing. He's as brave as a lion."

"Yes, he must have felt it seeing all his pals going."

"Oh, wery crool, sir."

"I understand," said Westropp smiling. "I'd like to meet him, a fine fellow. . . . I'll try Mrs. Deadman to-morrow. I'd like to see her."

"Purty as a picture and no better than she ought to be. She was a Seamouth lass when he married her, and you know what they say about the Seamouth lasses."

"I have heard it," and Westropp smiled. And the bowl was finished, and they retired to bed.

VII

The next morning he called at Body Farm with samples. Mrs. Deadman received him, took him into her sitting-room, gave him sherry and biscuits, and examined the samples, and ordered some and paid for them.

"You have a nice place here, madam."

"Yes, but tragedy seems to hang over us."

Westropp nodded: "The landlord was telling me."

"Oh, that dreadful man! He's bad, that man."

"Appearances are not in his favour," laughed Westropp; "his nephew is a fine young fellow."

"I thought you men of business were judges of character."

"We are supposed to be. Isn't he a fine fellow? He looks it."

"He's a cur. He shirked in the war on account of a rupture, and, when the war was over, was operated on, which could have been done in 1914, and he could have fought. I hate boxers. He boxes and is a cowardly bully."

"Have you any idea who killed Mr. Deadman?"

"No, but I could make a good guess."

"Could you?"

"I could, but I won't. That Grapes is bad, and he'd be suing me for libel. His conceited nephew thinks I'm an admirer too: came walking quickly after me in the wood the other day. I ran. He'd stick at nothing."

"That so? Well, I expect the police will catch the culprit one day."

"I hope they will," she said with conviction, "but the police here have not great experience. If they would only send a man down from Scotland Yard."

"That would be the thing, but Scotland Yard can't send a man down until the local police ask for it."

"Is that it?"

"Yes, you see their *amour propre* often prevents them doing that."

"I see. I did not know that."

"May I walk in your woods occasionally, Mrs. Deadman? I am very fond of natural history, and they are beautiful. To-day it was perfectly lovely in there."

"Of course."

"The landlord's nephew offered to show me where the murder took place. You don't like him I see, so I won't take him."

"Oh, I don't mind once or twice, if you are *with him*."

"I see. I will be with him. I was going this afternoon with your permission."

"Certainly."

When Westropp got back after a very good morning's work, he had a good lunch, and started with Josh after lunch. They walked into the wood. It was as lovely as ever, and three gay pheasants, burning jewels, flew through the old gold leaves of the beeches.

"It was here the guvener was shot," and he pointed to a place.

Westropp looked round. . . . "Now take me to where the murderer was supposed to be hiding."

They went into the wood and to the beech tree where the empty shell was found. Josh was smoking "gold flakes." "Here's where she stood," and he pointed to the beech tree, "leant up against it." Using his stick as a rifle, "this is how it was done."

"She! Did a woman kill him?"

"In course."

"How do you know?"

"I see'd it all, but mum is the word."

"Where were you then?"

He pointed up the tree. "Setting up there on that branch."

Westropp said nothing, but climbed the tree with his stick in his mouth.

"Now, do you go and stand where the farmer was."

Josh looked at him queerly, but went, and Westropp aimed at him with his stick. There was a clear path over the branch for a bullet. He shouted to him to come back, and examined the tree. There were marks where the bark had been torn and in a crevice was a cigarette stubb. He put this in his pocket and descended.

"Why, man, you must have seen the whole thing, like a cinema play."

"You'm right. It was just like that."

"And the woman was directly under you."

"Yes. I watched the whole thing. I had to wait up there tew, for I was afraid of some one coming along and being drawed inter it. I waited till that was dark."

"She must be a good shot."

Josh stopped suddenly and looked at Westropp as if he had made a blunder.

"How far is it from where the man was to the tree?"

"Ninety yard, the paper said. I han't measured it. Good shooting."

"Who was the woman?"

"Ah! That's telling. I daresn't say, but I know her, the bewty. She war a Seamouth lass, and you know what *they* are, maybe."

"I have heard. Hot stuff, aren't they?"

"Real bewties they be. Do you ax the fishing chaps."

They went down the wood, and at the earth-bank Josh pointed out where she had hidden her bike, and where she had taken it out.

Westropp nodded, and they returned to the *Black Horse*.

"Well?" asked the landlord.

"Your nephew is a bright chap. Smokes too many cigarettes, I think. He was rather jumpy."

"He dew, Bor. I hev' often told him so. I get him them gold-flakes at trade price. But he is allust drawing one of them."

"I noticed, and he inhales too. That's the danger."

"Will you tell him? He won't listen to me."

The next day he took Mrs. Deadman and others their lace.

"Oh, Mrs. Deadman," he said, "I wonder if you could give me a cigarette. I left my case on my dressing-table, and as a smoker I'm in want of one."

"No, Mr. Westropp, you will hear no doubt at the *Black Horse* that I am capable of all the deadly sins, but smoking isn't one of them. My husband smoked a

pipe, and we never have or had a cigarette in the house. I can give you some Northwitch mixture and a new pipe. My husband kept several clays. He preferred a clay indoors."

Westropp thanked her, and she got him a pouchful of the mixture and a brand-new short clay and a box of matches.

"That's why you are such a good shot, I suppose, Mrs. Deadman?"

"Me a good shot! I can't hit a haystack, and I have often tried. I'm timid of a gun."

"That so?"

"Yes, anyone will tell you that. My husband and Dr. Frost used to try and teach me, and we used to have shooting matches, and sixteen is the biggest score I ever made."

"Out of?"

"Thirty-five."

Westropp smiled, and thanked her for her courtesy and left. That evening he called on the doctor.

The doctor had just dined well and was drinking some old port, and asked Westropp to join him.

"It's good to see a man of your job. You always have such a fund of good stories."

Westropp laughed. "Suppose you tell me a story . . . doctor. By the by can you give me a cigarette? I have left my case at the inn."

"I am very sorry, my dear fellow, but I don't smoke. But I keep a box of cigars for friends, and if you will have one——"

Westropp said he would be very grateful, and the doctor unlocked a sideboard and placed a box of Havanas by Westropp, who helped himself.

"Prime they are."

"That's right. I get them at a good shop in Northwitch, and my friends like them. I sometimes wish I did smoke, but I never started it and I shan't now."

"You think it is bad for the health?"

"Well, it's not good, but a little won't hurt, if you don't inhale."

"I never do that," said Westropp.

"Now, doctor, for your tale of the murder. I'm very interested in murders, got a scrap-book full at home, and I always try to spot the loser at the start."

"Have you spotted him in this case?"

"No, it's a very baffling case."

The doctor then told the story of how Sam had called him, and he had gone and examined the dead man.

"What sort of a wound was it, doctor? That seemed omitted at the inquest."

"It was. The coroner was an old legal fool, and the positions of wounds were nothing to him."

"I noticed that."

"Well, the wound was downwards and forwards. Do you follow?"

"I think so. What do you infer from that?"

"That he was shot by some one from behind and to the right of the path, and that the murderer was at an elevation. You see the hill rises there one in thirty, and he was walking *up* the hill."

"I see. Did you notice this deviation when you first saw the dead man?"

"No. I was in a great hurry, had an important case and I was late."

"It was a small calibre bullet, wasn't it?"

"Yes."

"What size?"

"Well, smaller than .320. I always use a .320 myself. I am very fond of a rook-rifle; used to shoot a lot with Mr. Deadman. I only tried his .220 once, but it wobbled more with me. I can hold the heavy one much straighter."

"I suppose Mrs. Deadman is a good shot? Ladies do everything nowadays."

"She can't shoot for nuts. She's afraid of the gun."

"That so?"

"Yes. She's a standing joke about the farm with her shooting."

"The landlord's nephew tells me he's a good shot."

"So he is, but he took good care that the Huns should not get a shot at him. He likes the .220 and does a lot of poaching with it. It wasn't my business to tell Mr. Deadman. He's a young blackguard."

"You mean because he didn't go to the war? He says he was ruptured."

"So he was, and I advised him to go to Northwich and be operated on, when he would have been as fit as possible. But he waited till the war was over for that. But this is private. In a place like this a doctor has to be very careful."

"I suppose so. Well, now it's my turn," and the traveller told stories till midnight. Then he went off, very pleased with the doctor. "But why was he in that wood dressed as a woman? Did he intend to kill Deadman and some one anticipate him? Seems so," Westropp soliloquized.

The next day at 9.30 Westropp went to the wood and climbed the tree and took some photos, and made some marks. He had a trowel in his pocket. When he got down, he walked in a line for a beech tree with a big bole, and then he began to look around him in the leaves by the path, turning the bronze carpet aside with his trowel. He worked assiduously for an hour, and then suddenly he gave a shout of joy and began digging, and turned up a bullet. He examined it with the bullets he had in his pocket, and said, "As I thought—a .220." He had brought a galvanized pin such as is supplied with garden lines, and he pushed it into the ground with his hand, and then drove it in with part of a fallen branch and covered the place with dead leaves, spreading dry leaves on the top, and he went to the path, lit a cigarette and began to return, when he met old Sam. Old Sam pulled his forelock.

"Fine day, mister," said Westropp, "could do with a drop of beer, I'll swear?"

"Ah, Bor, that ah could."

Westropp presented him with half a crown, and he spat upon it, and put it into his pocket.

"This is where Mr. Deadman was killed?"

"No, sir, a bit further away, there by that big tree."

"You found him, didn't you?"

"I did that, sir."

"You heard the shot?"

"No, sir, I'm wery deaf."

Westropp smiled, for he had been talking in quite an ordinary voice.

"Sounded over your head, didn't it?"

"Yes, sir, that it did."

Westropp laughed. Then the old fellow laughed and chuckled. "You Lunnoners fare tew sharp."

"Who shot him, eh?"

"Aw, a still tongue make a wise head, mister."

"You know."

"No, but I ken guess. I ban't no fule."

"Far from it, I should say. Did you see Mrs. Deadman that morning?"

"I did and I didna."

"That's a puzzle, meaning, I suppose, you saw some one dressed like her?"

"That's it, mister."

"Why didn't you tell the coroner that?"

"He never axed me. He be a rare fule."

Westropp laughed. "Why should anyone dress like her?"

"Well, that's no hennapecker ter the likes of me. We sees a lot of the doings of t' quality. Mister Deadman he war a hard man, and wouldn't let nobody shoot his pheasants but hissself, so the doctor used ter dress in the missus' things, and go and get her some pheasants

which she used to send away by train, and he never knowed. Wimmen is thet artful."

"The doctor has done this before then?"

"Many a time, sir."

"Well, the doctor didn't shoot him, did he?"

"Noä, Bor. He did *not*."

"Who did then?"

"Aw, what would Mister Grapes say if I wor to puff?"

"He knows then?"

"He do an' he don't, but he hev' a good idea, a wery good idea. He hev' had many of them gay pheasants up at the *Black Horse* for the quality."

"And his nephew shot them?"

"I an't saying he did. He didn't shoot no Garmans, mucka slink. His heart be like water."

"Did you see him that day?" And Westropp produced a pound note. The old fellow's eyes were glued to the note.

"You shall have that if you tell me."

"Yes, in course I did. He wor setting up in thet tree, and the doctor dressed up like Mrs. Deadman wor stand-in' right andernean him, and as I come along t' loke, I heard t' shot (I warn't so deaf then)"—he grinned with rustic cunning—"and I see the smoke go right up among the branches, and I see the doctor run as if old Nick wor arter him. He was holding his dress up, showing his breeches an' all," and the old fellow laughed.

"You like the doctor?"

"Yes, he be a wery kind, nice gentleman."

"And Mrs. Deadman?"

"Yes, she be rare gude to the missus and me. Coals and porty wine at Christmas, and a blanket now and ag'in, and a rabbit now and ag'in, and vegetables."

"And you don't like young Josh?"

"No, Bor. He be a mucka slink, 'sides he never fit the Garmans."

Westropp handed him a pound note, which he pocketed,

all smiles. "I shall buy some gentleman's bacca with that," he said.

"Can you write, Bor?"

"No, Bor. I never larnt. We warn't sent ter school in my young days onless we paid, and my father hadn't no pennas for thet."

"Well, just make your mark here."

He took the pencil in his twisted finger and made a cross, under Westropp's notes.

"You ban't going ter put this in tha peaper, Bor?"

"No, no. But you'd like to see the man who shot Mr. Deadman swing?"

"Thet I would, the mucka slink."

"I'll buy you some gentleman's bacca, and your missus some tea and that."

"Thank you kindly, sir."

Westropp hurried off to the telegraph station and sent a wire to the Yard in code.

The reply was prompt: "Charge and arrest. Take him to Northwitch."

Westropp went in and packed his things and, getting the village constable, they went to the *Black Horse*, to the stables.

Young Josh was there giving a farmer's horse a feed of mash.

"Joseph Grapes, I arrest you for the murder of John Deadman, on October 2 last, in the Beech Wood. I warn you that anything you say may be used against you."

Young Josh's eyes flashed and his fists went up, but Westropp with a quick ju-jitsu movement had him on his back, and the handcuffs snapped on to his wrists. "Go and commandeer the doctor's car, and tell the doctor I want him to drive us to Northwitch," he said to Joe, the constable.

The policeman returned on the car, and Josh was bundled in, and they drove off, old Grapes cursing Westropp.

After delivering the prisoner to the authorities at Northwitch Castle they returned to the village, and Westropp went home with the doctor.

"Now, doctor, please. A true story of what you were doing in the wood dressed in Mrs. Deadman's clothes."

"Who said I was?"

"Well, the accused was sitting over your head."

"My God, that so?"

"We will try and keep it out of the business, and also Mrs. Deadman, if we can, but you have got to tell me truly."

"Well, I was there, yes."

"With what rifle?"

"The .320. I never used the other but once or twice, years ago, to try it."

"What were you there for?"

"To shoot pheasants. It was a plant between Mrs. Deadman and me. Her husband was very mean about his pheasants, and she very often wanted a brace to send to her relations at Seamouth. Well, if I had shot them, there would have been a row, and Mrs. Deadman was such a bad shot that he gave her leave to shoot at them when she liked with a rifle! So I impersonated her."

"You saw him shot?"

"Yes, of course. The man who was above me shot him, but I never knew who it was. I bolted hell for leather."

"Did you drop the empty shell then?"

"No. I never loosed off that morning. I had only got into position when Deadman came along. I heard him shoot lower down the walk."

"Did you mean to shoot him?"

"Lord, no. If that had been my intention, to put his light out, well, you know I am a doctor, and there are several safer ways."

"Of course," said Westropp.

"I know the police suspected me, and that fellow Simmonds was clever in a way, but gave himself away. . . . Did you suspect me?"

"No, I did not. Now, are you pleased? . . . Where was Mrs. Deadman all that morning?"

"Indoors. Now, I'm going to tell you something, Westropp."

And he told him of the assault on Mrs. Deadman.

"Well, we won't raise a scandal about that. He will hang all right. Old Sam saw it all, and I got it all out of him, and he is willing to come as a witness, if it is made worth his while."

"We'll see to that."

"Yes, you must. We can't move in that way."

"I know an annuity of £50 a year will suit him down to the ground."

"Well, you know these people, but only promise. Don't actually do anything before the trial. Counsel won't upset him, but it might slip out."

Joseph Grapes was brought before the magistrates and sent for trial. He went into the witness box at the Assizes and contradicted himself and lied, and finally broke down, and amid convulsive sobs said, "I didn't mean ter dew it." That finished him. The jury found him guilty, and he was sentenced to death and hanged.

Grapes sold his business and went to another part of the country. And the doctor married Mrs. Deadman and turned farmer, selling his practice. So the old line of Deadman of Body Farm was broken, and a spaniel walks by Mr. and Mrs. Frost in the golden beech-wood where the bright-coloured gay pheasants collect to eat beech-mast in October and November.

IV

The Stark Reader of the Downs

I

THE little village of Podmoor nestled in a hollow in the Downs. It was a characteristic village, when seen from a distance : a grey perpendicular church spire, red-tiled farms and cottages with a few larger houses, an old-fashioned Georgian inn, cattle grazing in some enclosed fields round about, and then all around the Downs with their grasses, their stunted *flora*, their dew-ponds, their little farms, where the ploughing is still done by black and red cattle yoked in the old fashion, and the shepherds and their sheep. A clear chalk stream ran near at the bottom of the dale, a narrow brook which cut through the chalk and flowed to the sea, with a road beside it, along which the smugglers used to take their led horses in the old days laden with half-ankers of brandy, unshipped from luggers on to the beach at Birling. There were trout in the clear water, and the skilled dry-fly fishers followed their sport there.

Birds frequented the Downs: turtle doves, corn-buntings, yellow-hammers, starlings and thrushes, and many mixed migrants in spring and winter ; jackdaws and herring-gulls were seen flying over to their nesting-places on the white chalk cliffs, where their chattering and wailings were always to be heard, mixed with plaintive cries of lesser sea-fowl on the wet sea-beaches. The Downs were lonely. To the artist there was little to attract except the shepherds and sheep, the cattle in the ploughland and the

villages in the hollows. In the distance the uninteresting, straight outlines of the Downs were commonplace and unattractive. The air was fresh and invigorating there in summer-time; but the first touch of winter always showed up there: thin ice on the dew-ponds and other standing water, or by the margin of the little stream. The golden gorse, when in full bloom, was an ever-present attraction, and in summer and autumn the clumps of brambles were covered with flowers, and later, with green, red, and black fruit, which attracted women and children to pick them for jam. Botanists prowled about the Downs, gathering specimens of the stunted *flora* for their *herbaria*; for many rare plants flourished there. In autumn sportsmen looked for birds in the stubble, frequented by flocks of linnets, for they grew corn up there, though in no large quantities nowadays.

In one of the small brick houses, neither cottage nor villa, lived a Mrs. Boniface and her daughter. Mrs. Boniface was a well-preserved dark woman of some thirty-five years of age, with a mass of dark hair, dark eyes, rosy lips. She was strong and well formed, and her daughter Faith, now aged 17, was the spit of her, only with clearer whites to her eyes and a purer colour to her skin; but very stocky, and stronger than her mother. They were both remarkable specimens of womanhood and extremely sturdy for their sex; indeed they were as strong as most men and a good deal more powerful than most women.

Mr. Boniface had died of pneumonia. He had been a small farmer; but he had left enough money for Mrs. Boniface to live in the little red house comfortably on a small annuity, which she had purchased by her lawyer's advice directly the estate was settled. She and her daughter did all the housework, so there was no servant to pay. They had a small vegetable garden, which was worked by an old man who had retired from the army, and where he planted potatoes, beans, peas, beet, bush-

marrows, pot-herbs and cabbages enough to last Mrs. Boniface and her daughter through the seasons. Mrs. Boniface too kept bees, and made a not inconsiderable sum from her honey ; for she was clever at bee-keeping, was not timid, liked and understood them, and her emanations were healthy, and so the bees liked her. For bees are very peculiar folk : they have their likes and dislikes like other folk higher in the animal world. Mrs. Boniface kept chickens, not by any intensive-culture methods which are a misery to the fowls ; but they led a healthy and joyous life, and she gave them all the scraps from her table, and she had enough to live well. She bought poor cast corn or sprouting corn for them and a little maize, and her egg and poultry supply was assured. This was a great saving.

Mrs. Boniface, soon after settling at Podmoor, attracted the attention of middle-aged bachelors ; but she kept herself to herself. She knew she was attractive ; but she had had enough of men, for her husband drank before his death, and so his liver and his temper suffered. The pneumonia killed him, as it does so many drinkers.

In the summer months Mrs. Boniface and Faith used to go down to Birling with prawn nets and bathing dresses. They would lock the little villa, take their lunch in a basket, get their next-door neighbour, the retired sapper, and his wife, to look after their garden and house and bees and chickens, and see that no tramp robbed either of the four ; so their minds were easy on that point.

Mrs. Boniface and Faith had a friendly fisherman, who had taught them all the secrets of prawning.

So that Tuesday morning—and the tragedy dates from that morning—Mrs. Boniface and Faith packed a large basket. There was a cold cockerel, bread and butter and honey, cheese, apples, early potatoes—it was a hot July day—a small kettle, teapot, cups and saucers, two small bottles of ale for lunch, some pastry, rock-

cakes and the like, and some cold hard-boiled eggs. These two athletic women shouldered the paraphernalia, the bathing costumes and towels, the prawn spoon nets, and the large basket of provisions. They locked the small villa, and took the key in to Sergeant Wood, the retired sapper—they had nothing secret on the premises—and started for Birling.

They walked along the pretty stream with its water plants and pellucid water, and the hour was about ten when they started: a warm, sweltering day with a hot white July sun burning down on them.

They arrived on the beach, which was deserted. An old sailor kept a few tents and let them to bathers, and they hired one, and went in and undressed. A man in a bathing suit had already begun prawning; but there was no crowd, as there often was later in the season, when the school holidays began. For this they were thankful: it was freer and pleasanter to have the little beach to themselves.

The great gleaming chalk-cliffs were on their left and at the foot were rocks, pools and seaweed. They could see the jackdaws and great herring-gulls flying up over the cliffs, and hear them very plainly. Some of the gulls were riding on the blue sea, fishing, and some of the jackdaws were feeding amongst the seaweed on the beach.

After undressing they came out in the blazing sun, clad in dark blue bathing dresses showing their perfect bodies. They got their nets and started to fish.

II

The low spring tide had been ebbing for hours, and, when they began, it was an hour before low water. The tide would go out a long way that day, as it always does at low springs, the best time for prawning, from June to October. They knew they had two and a half hours in which to fish, i.e. one and a half hours after low water and an hour till the slack. The Boniface

women could now begin their arduous tasks. For this they had only spoon nets, a 15-inch diameter iron ring with a 15-inch net attached, like a butterfly net, and fastened to a 6-foot pole. It was hard work to push them through the seaweed in the pools; you must push them under the matted weed, for the prawns cling to the rocks under the weed like mosquitos to a wall, and you have to be careful and not cast your shadow on them, or they flick off like lightning.

The water covered Mrs. Boniface's legs and came up to the middle of Faith's shapely thighs. More dark sea-weedy rocks were now appearing and fresh pools were showing, which the Bonifaces fished. They began to break into a perspiration with the hot sun overhead and the really hard work of pushing the short wire-hoops under the matted weed in the pools round the rocks; but when their nets were filled with seaweed and sand, they picked out the brownish-green prawns and put them into their fishing baskets, emptied their nets, and after a breath began again. They had luck, and many "shiners" rewarded them, and "shiners" are the prizes, great beautiful prawns which would delight any *gourmand*, provided he did not know what they feed upon; for they feed upon offal, as do other *crustacea*.

They and the strange man fished till half-past two, when they were all hungry, no doubt from their exertions, and they walked to the shore flushed and perspiring: their skin gleaming white in the bright sunshine. After a rub down in the tent they dressed and, glowing with health, Mrs. Boniface laid the lunch on a pink-patterned cloth spread amongst the bluebells, whilst Faith counted the prawns; for that is the way down there. They never measure them as shrimps are measured; but count them, and the tally was one hundred and twenty, including many "shiners": a mediocre catch but for the "shiners," which redeemed the fishing. She went

down to the sea-marge and washed them, and turned the *débris* from her fishing bag, and replaced the catch, "salt and splendid from the brine."

Lunch was ready, and Mrs. Boniface carved the fat cockerel, and Faith opened beer, and they sat in the sun under the blue sky eating and watching the circling black jackdaws making decorative flights in the liquid blue, and the passing ships on the sky-line, liners and tramps.

So they ate. The stranger who had been fishing came over; he was a middle-aged man of about forty, clean-shaven, healthy-looking. He raised his cap and asked if they would oblige him with a match. He had forgotten his matches, and wanted to make some coffee and have a cigarette.

Mrs. Boniface bowed, searching in her basket for the matches, and offered him a box.

He looked at them, they were safety matches, and said, "If I may, I will take them and return them directly I have my 'primus' alight."

"Certainly. You are welcome."

He raised his cap and went off. They were eating the pastry when he returned and, polite as usual, thanked them.

"What luck did you have?" asked Mrs. Boniface with a touch of the glad-eye.

"Fine for size, though not for quantity; but I don't care for that. I got sixty *bona fide* 'shiners,' as they call them down here. As many as I have got with a 'gin' net before this. I prefer the 'spoon' net."

"That's fine," said Faith, looking up at him archly. "We got some 'shiners,' but not sixty. Forty-two genuine 'shiners.'"

"That's good," he said. "Isn't it a perfect day? I have enjoyed myself. I like the prawn-fishing in this spot."

"I suppose you are a visitor?"

"Yes. I'm staying at the hotel on the Downs. I

generally spend July here and then go away from the holiday-makers. You are staying about here too?"

"No. We live at Podmoor."

"Podmoor, eh? A charming little village. I often walk over there for exercise: and so you live there?"

"Yes. We have a small villa there, and Faith and I are very happy."

"Well, my water must be boiling, if you will excuse me."

"Will you come and have some tea with us? We will give you some 'shiners.'"

"But yes; if you will permit me to supply 'shiners,' I will accept with great pleasure."

"Well, if you like. We shall be charmed."

He raised his cap and went back to his "primus," made his coffee and lit a cigar.

"Damn fine women! Healthy as trouts, and what arms and legs they have! Strong as horses; but they are both dark, and the natives are mostly fair—South Saxons—but of course she was not *née* Boniface—looks Spanish, and all along the coast are a few people descended from Spaniards, who had been cast ashore in wrecks."

After lunch Faith and her mother rested on the grass and slept in the hot sun. And then at four they went into the bathing tent, put on their bathing costumes and went for a dip in the sea. The stranger had gone for a walk. At five they were dressed and cooking the "shiners," when the stranger appeared with his fishing-bag and insisted upon their having his catch. He said he generally gave them to the landlord who allowed him nothing, and they were welcome.

Mrs. Boniface was interested in him. He had, he said, been a mining engineer in South Africa, made a competency, and, having neither kith nor kin, enjoyed himself in a quiet way. He had a little, very little, flat in Queen's Club Gardens in West Kensington, and that was his head-quarters; and he spent his time about the

coast, generally visiting this district in July. He gave her his card.

"Mr. C. Grange, B.Sc. Engineering, x, Milton Mansions, Queen's Club Gardens, W. Kensington," and Mrs. Boniface told him her name, and the address of her little villa at Podmoor, *The Beehive*.

"Boniface is a regular old Sussex name," he said.

"Yes. My late husband was a farmer in South Sussex; but he got a chill and pneumonia, and died, leaving Faith and myself to fight the world."

"Well, you have the strength and the courage; if I am any judge"—looking at her with obvious admiration.

Faith he regarded and treated as a child.

The tea was a great success, and Mrs. Boniface was obviously greatly taken with Mr. Grange, with his stories of South African life and his adventures in the Boer War, in which he had served in a regiment of irregular horse. The upshot was that Mr. Grange was asked to walk over and lunch with them the following day. He accepted with pleasure, and, gathering up their "spoons" and impedimenta, they walked home.

"Mummy, you are making eyes at Mr. Grange. I won't have a stepfather. So I tell you; you will have to choose between me and him. I shall go out and get my living if you marry again."

"What nonsense you are talking, child! Wait until there is talk of such a thing. It is boring never to see anyone but Podmoor people; they are so dull and provincial."

III

The next day Mr. Grange turned up at the *Beehive*, and was taken with the place. Everything was neat and clean, and clematis, purple and white, was in flower, and yellow jasmine and pink ramblers. The place was small, but perfectly kept. The windows were clean, the curtains neat and bright; and when he rang, Faith,

looking very fresh and charming in a cotton dress, admitted him and led him to the little dining-room, where flowers, glass and clean napery made everything look inviting; he got a peep of a bed of pelargoniums and geraniums in full flower, and another bed of verbenas beyond, and felt it was all a little Dutch picture.

They were soon seated at table, and a delicious cockerel, half game, half Dorking, was roasted to a turn and carved by Mrs. Boniface, and vegetables fresh from the garden added: Mr. Grange felt in clover, especially after a glass of excellent sherry, followed by some good burgundy. Mrs. Boniface knew how to do things in a homely and comfortable way: that was certain.

An excellent trifle followed, and some really good coffee, made in his honour.

Then they decided to go for a walk on the higher down, Mr. Grange smoking a cigar. As they reached a lonely part of the down, a great fox loped past, looking like a wolf.

"I have seen foxes before, but never one that size."

"No," said Faith. "Dr. Cummings here, who is a great naturalist, says the higher down foxes are much larger than the foxes on the low land."

"Is that so? But what can he get to live on up here?"

"Oh, all sorts," said Faith. "Voles all the year round, even in the snow they come on the top. I have seen their footings. Now he eats young nestlings, especially meadow pipits, and frogs. He's as keen after frogs as any Frenchman. Then there are beetles."

"Wonderful! I never knew that foxes went for such small fry."

"Oh, they are fond of sheep, and will even dig up a dead sheep which the shepherd has buried, and it's a cunning shepherd who never loses a lamb to the foxes. They creep up and steal them and carry them off to their holes. Of course, up here he gets an old hare occasionally, and some rabbits."

"But how on earth does he catch a hare?"

"He will run them down. I haven't seen it, but old shepherds tell me they have," answered Faith. "I know they will dig down the rabbit-burrows and get the young ones, because I have caught them. . . . He likes blackberries, too, for a change."

"How about your chickens?" asked Mr. Grange.

"He does not come down so low. I don't know why; but except in very hard weather, when there has been a long spell of snow and ice, he won't venture down. But I don't think he likes it. He isn't like the ordinary fox."

"Well, I never knew there were foxes as big as that," said Mr. Grange. "Looks more like a wolf, except he whisks his tail like a cat and does not wag it like a dog. Then are there many of them up here?"

"No. The shepherds trap them because of the lambs, and keep them down; but of course there are always some more cunning than others, like the old cock pheasants who dodge the shooters all the year round."

They returned to tea, and a snipe was whinnying over a marsh by the river; for the down falls there to the marshes, or levels as they are called.

They had tea, at which "shiners" were the chief dish, and prime they were; but cream and honey were pleasant additions.

Faith went out to feed the fowls, and Mrs. Boniface led Mr. Grange on, and they went a long way in a short time; they were mutually attracted, and that is all there is to be said.

When Faith came in, she looked at them sharply. Her young eyes had taken in the situation at a glance.

After tea they walked some of the way with Mr. Grange towards his hotel, and they planned to picnic again on the Downs: he insisting on supplying the lunch.

IV

When two persons of the opposite sex, who are unattached, find themselves attracted to each other, friendship develops quickly ; and when, a fortnight after, Faith found her mother courting Mr. Grange, her blood boiled. She was young, and, like most young people, selfish : jealous that anyone besides herself should pay any attention to her mother. She did not altogether like Mr. Grange, who treated her as a child rather than a young woman ; but she consoled herself with her bird and beast studies. For it requires no great intelligence or brain power to be an observer of the habits of birds and beasts. Plants, except flowers, she ignored. Direct observations may be very accurately made by a quite average person, and most field naturalists are of this kind ; but to interpret these observations is another matter, this requires a much higher intelligence ; and to express these observations in terms of art requires an artist. Old Isaac Walton was an artist, and worth all others put together. Faith was not conceited ; she observed for the love of it, not to scribble about the beasts and birds which came within her ken.

One day she had to go into a town near on an errand for her mother, and at the railway bookstall she saw a gaudy magazine. She had an hour to wait and so bought it ; its price was only sixpence, and she settled herself on a seat to read.

The first story was of a young girl who murdered a man in love with her mother, and the tale made a great impression upon her, as the sentimental author had vividly expressed the horror the young girl felt at being left alone in the world ; for, like Faith, she had decided that her mother must choose between her lover and herself. The mother did choose—the man, as was natural, and the girl in revenge killed him.

The train came in, and Faith read other stories of robberies and so on ; but none of them interested her,

and she threw the magazine out of the carriage window as the train approached the station where she had to alight, and where an old-fashioned wagonette would drive her the few miles to Podmoor.

She was deep in thought: the story held her, and the writer's specious excuses for the girl filled her with sympathy.

Mr. Grange had left some two months; but he and her mother corresponded frequently, and one of these letters fell into Faith's hands and fanned the brooding flame of hate for Grange, a most unreasonable hate; for Grange had a good deal more money than her mother, so she would lose nothing, so far as could be seen, by the alliance.

All the winter she brooded over the matter, and all the spring; then came a letter from Mr. Grange that he was returning to the hotel on the Downs in the middle of June.

Faith brightened up. She was a grim, determined girl and would stop the growing flirtation of her mother and Mr. Grange.

Grange called the day after his arrival, and Faith received him more cheerily than usual. He had brought presents for her mother, and for her a first-rate pair of field-glasses with which to study birds. He had offered her a camera before, but she would have nothing to do with still-life photography, and the kinema was not in those days perfected.

Mr. Grange and Mrs. Boniface met every day, wet or fine, and Faith was not always of the party. But she set her teeth, and one day when Mrs. Boniface told her Mr. Grange wanted to marry her, she tossed her head and said:

"Remember, Mummy, it's me or him. You can't have both."

"Oh, nonsense, Faith."

"No, it's no nonsense at all. You'll see. So I warn you."

v

One day Mrs. Boniface had to go to London to see her lawyer. She refused to let Grange go with her, and left Faith at home to entertain him if he called. She did not want Faith hearing all her talk to her lawyer, which was to consult him about Grange's proposed settlements.

Grange called that morning, and Faith had lunch ready for him. After lunch she proposed they should go for a walk on the marshes. She wanted to study the snipe, and they always bred on a particular marsh she knew, and, though it was late in the year, they might find a nest or two.

They walked across the downs, crossed the small river by a plank and entered by a marsh gate, which she carefully closed and latched after them.

A snipe was drumming above in the blue. They crossed a moist patch of silky-white cotton-grass.

"There's one running along over the bank. Stoop, quick."

She pulled Grange down.

"Why, I can hear it chucking from here," she said. She had her new glasses focussed on the bird and watched its green legs running along the marsh. "There, did you hear that? Like that one drumming overhead. I saw it making the noise, its neck stretched out and its throat feathers moving; there, I always said they made their drumming with their throat, though a lot of naturalists say they make it with their outside tail feathers. It held its long bill straight down all the time, too. There it is, spying all about; they are as curious and inquisitive as gipsies. Now it is feeding. In goes its bill into the soft water and mud, worms and duckweed, I expect. I kept a tame one once, and had to spend the day digging worms for it. The quantity of worms they eat is wonderful. There, it's shaking its feathers and preening itself. They

always do that after a feed. . . . There goes an old herring-gull over, and it squats. I have never seen that before. Up it gets and looks all round and then chucks. There it is, walking to a dry patch: expect it has a nest there and the old hen is sitting. We'll go and see."

They stood up and walked towards the spot about a hundred yards away, and then Grange stopped, and Faith went on cautiously. Up jumped a snipe from a dry tuft of rushes and flew off scaping; then the cock flew up and began to circle round and drum. The hen had flown off and was sitting on a gate, looking very solemn with her long bill; and perfectly still she sat, never moving a feather. Faith went to the nest, and there were some broken shells, but nothing else.

Grange came up when she stopped.

"See, they have gone. They clear out of the nest almost directly they are hatched. We shall find them," said Faith.

She looked all about, stepping very carefully, and at last she called out excitedly, "Here are two of them." It was a little deep runnel between tufts of dry rush and grass, and there were the little callow rich ruddy-brown coloured mites flecked with silver, with their bright eyes and short bills, looking up curiously and even inquisitively at that early age.

Grange looked at them, interested, and they walked back and sat on the marsh and watched.

The hen bird just flew down and, finding her charges, chucked, and the cock bird began to descend, drumming, and finally he too disappeared into the stuff near by.

"There, isn't that interesting?" asked Faith, with a curious look at Grange. . . . "That grandmotherly old prattler Hudson wrote a book about all this, but he never saw the fine sights . . . he was no artist. Now you shall take me to tea at Bobbit's tea-gardens, a lovely

old place with the nicest cream and butter and strawberries."

They returned across the marsh, recrossed the plank, following the road by the little stream, and went up into the downs till they came to a *châlet* and a large tea-garden with a showy notice, black letters on a white ground. They went in and sat at one of the trestle tables in a clump of flaming rhododendrons, a gorgeous show. A neat waitress came and took their order.

She brought great pats of yellow butter, chip baskets of delicious-looking strawberries, a jug of rich cream, a brown loaf of bread, and tea.

Faith took the lid off and smelt it. "Yes, it's China all right."

They ate their tea and talked, and the afternoon was closing in when they got up. Grange paid and they went out.

"What's the time?"

"It's a little after six."

"Well, I propose we go for a long walk round by the 'old man of the Downs,' and get home by 8.30, and I'll give you a good supper. Mummy won't be home till 11 or after; the train does not get in till 10.30, and the wagonette is always late at night."

Grange agreed, and they set out. They climbed to the higher downs and reached the "old man," a hummock, an ancient barrow, a long barrow, and they sat down. Grange took out a paper to read, as Faith was looking about for birds with her field-glasses. He lit a cigarette and began to read the *Morning Post*, sitting on the old man of the Downs with his back to her, whilst she skipped about with her field-glasses.

VI

At 11.18 Mrs. Boniface reached the *Beehive*. All the village was asleep. She could not see a light; but it was a clear starlit night, the last night in June, and

this was nothing unusual. Light in a house after 11 usually meant illness or a restless baby. She had told Faith to go to bed and not wait up for her.

When she let herself in and dropped her parcels on the hall table, she went into the sitting-room and lit the lamp. There was a note in an envelope: it was Faith's writing. It rather startled her and she tore it open with nervous fingers.

9.15.

"DEAR MUMMY,—

"I had a ripping day with Mr. Grange. We went and watched the snipe and found some of the young birds, little beauties. Then he took me to tea at Bobbit's gardens, and you know how I love them, and we walked back; and I left him going back to his hotel, and got in about 9, and had some supper and went to bed. I am so tired, Mummy, so please don't awake me. Hope you did your business well.

"Your loving

"FAITH."

"Well, I never knew Faith write a letter like that before; but she is a curious girl, and I suppose I must humour her."

Mrs. Boniface went to the larder and got some food and a decanter of sherry from the sideboard and ate a hearty supper; and then she went up to her bedroom after extinguishing the lights and seeing the doors and windows were properly fastened. She stopped at Faith's door; but she could not hear her moving, so she went to her own room and was soon in bed and asleep: for it had been a very tiring day for her.

She did not set her alarum for the morning, being determined to "sleep in." . . . She awoke and looked at her clock: it was 10.30. She got up and washed and dressed; but was rather surprised not to hear

Faith moving about. She went down and expected to see Faith in the kitchen ; but the grate was cold, and evidently Faith was still asleep. She went up to her room, and opened the door and called her.

There was no answer. Then she entered the darkened room, and drew the curtain and blind ; but Faith was not there. The bed had been slept in, and Faith's clothes were on the chair, those she had worn the day before. Her hat was on the dressing-table, her boots by a chair ; there was every sign that she had occupied the room ; but there was no sign of her. She examined her pockets ; her purse was there with a little money, her keys, everything. Everything was in place except Faith. She went all over the house, and then went across to the sapper.

Yes. He had seen Miss Boniface come in about nine, and had seen a light in the house for about an hour, and then it was put out. He had seen a light in her bedroom last, and had seen no one come in or go out afterwards. He was up at 4.30 that morning in the garden, and had seen no one go in or out.

" Did she come in alone ? "

" Yes. She and Mr. Grange went out about three ; but Mr. Grange did not return with her."

Mrs. Boniface asked the sapper's advice.

" Always best to go to the police, mum. They have the law behind them."

She went over to the constable's cottage, and told him all she knew. He took it all down, and said he would at once make inquiries.

When she left, he surmised that the girl and Grange had bolted together ; so he telegraphed—there was no 'phone—to the hotel where Grange had been stopping. The reply was that Mr. Grange had left the hotel the previous day in the morning, saying he was going over to Podmoor, and had not up to that time returned. They also had informed the police.

The policeman whistled—"Gone away together, if you ask me. What will the old 'un say? She was sweet in that quarter, as every one knows."

He did not wish to worry Mrs. Boniface, so he did not tell her the result of his telegram to the hotel; but went about making several inquiries, and learnt no more than the sapper was able to tell. Several persons had seen her go off with Mr. Grange about three, and several had seen her return alone at nine, and let herself in, and several had seen lights in the house between nine and ten, or a little after. No strange motor had been seen in the village that day, it being a little off the beaten route and not on the main road.

The policeman informed his Chief, and told him the result of his investigations, and left it to him to carry on, or to order him what to do. He was not going to worry himself; for he thought he held the solution: Faith and Grange had eloped.

However, his Chief and a plain-clothes man arrived, and they examined her bedroom and the garden outside, and made some inquiries on their own, and telegraphed the hotel to see if Grange had yet returned; the reply was in the negative. The policeman had heard accidentally that a couple answering the description of Grange and Miss Boniface had had tea at some gardens, and left at six, or about six. The people at the gardens did not know in what direction they had gone. The detective was sent over by the inspector to learn if he could find out anything there, and he ran over on a motor-bike he had borrowed from the landlord of the *Crown*; but he could not trace them after they left the tea-gardens, and he returned and reported the result of his search. None of the railway station people had seen the man and the girl, or anyone answering the description of either of them, go away by train anywhere. The inspector decided they must await events; for none of Grange's things had been removed, every-

thing was just as he had always left it. No communication had been received from him.

Mrs. Boniface was, of course, heart-broken ; for she was an affectionate mother, and she remembered Faith's threat, that she would lose her, if she married Grange. Perhaps she had run away ; but if so, in what clothes ?

Not a thing of hers was missing : even all her underclothes were there, including those she had worn the day of her disappearance. The police scouted the idea that she had been kidnapped. Mrs. Boniface had found the house locked and all the windows secured.

VII

About three weeks, to be precise nineteen days, after Grange and Faith set out for their walk to the old man of the Downs, a round-faced, blue-eyed shepherd-boy came running, red of face and blowing like a steam engine, into the police-station. He was trembling with excitement.

The constable was sitting writing in his office. The boy walked in—all doors were open—and stood perspiring and blowing, trying to regain his wind.

The policeman stretched out a hand and removed his cap, which the boy had forgotten to do, and he waited patiently till the boy had recovered breath sufficiently to speak.

"Please, sir, Mr. Body has sent here to tell you, sir, there's been a murder done on the old man of the Downs. A gent sits there reading a paper, and there is a big hole in his back, made with a knife, Mr. Body do say. And he told me I was to tell you he thinks this is the gent who's missing from the *Downs Hotel*."

"You don't mean it, boy !" said the constable, starting up and reaching for his cap.

"Yes, sir. I found him."

He went out to his wife and told her he must be off, and mounted his bike and started off for the old man

of the Downs. When he arrived there, after a hot, dusty and perspiring ride, he saw the old shepherd, Mr. Body, with his crook and cloak and peakless cap, and rough-haired sheep-dog lying by his side, on the other end of the tumulus, and all around the sheep were feeding: the blue from the sky being reflected from their backs and the bell-wether's bell sounding musically. The old shepherd pulled his forelock and said, "Good morning."

"Morning, Joe. Your boy told me. A bad business."

"Yes, yes. He be the gent you are arter. I should have known him anywhere from the gay in the paper. He was setting here reading, and some varmint stuck a knife into his back."

"Found anything, Joe? Any knife?"

"No, and I sarched all over; but it be nigh three weeks ago. See the paper he's reading. I an't touched it. It's dated the day he went missing."

The constable looked down at the paper closely gripped in the dead man's hands.

"That's right, Joe. . . . I see the sheep have been all over here."

"Yes, master. They went on ahead and went all round him, and the boy went up cause he didn't know why the sheep wasn't afeard of him—timid critters they be—and he hollers out, 'He's dead, got a big hole in his back.' So I come and looked, and sent him off to you, and told him he must run all the way."

"He did that, couldn't speak for some minutes. His bellows was all of a work. . . . Did you see any footprints or anything?"

"No, no, master. The ground be too hard for that. We han't had a drop of rain for over a month; bad for the grass, and that's bad for the sheep. I come up and sat here to keep the warmints off."

The police constable searched all round, looking for any trace; there had been some blood, but that was a dry

crust, and the sheep had nibbled the grass all round there.

“ Well, Joe, I mustn’t waste any time. If you find anything, tell me. Your eyes don’t miss much, I know. . . . Wait, I’ll just feel in his pockets.”

There was silver and copper in his two pockets, his watch and chain in the waistcoat. In a wallet in his inner pocket was £27 in one-pound notes. A good clasp-knife ; two letters from London, business letters from his flat agent about some painting he wanted done ; a pocket handkerchief : these were the contents of his pockets. The policeman catalogued them, and took possession of them, and got Joe to make his mark that they were all the contents of his pockets.

“ Look after him, Joe, till I come back : that won’t be long. I will fetch the doctor up in his car.”

The policeman mounted his bicycle, and was soon coasting down the road towards Podmoor.

Old Joe smoked his pipe, sent a sheep-dog out occasionally to round the sheep off which were straying too far, and looked at the sky, the distant sea, and the sheep. Now and then he would turn and look curiously at the corpse reading the paper, and what his thoughts were he kept to himself. The sheep bells jingled musically.

Presently a cloud of white dust on the rise showed him the doctor’s car was coming ; it arrived and stopped. The doctor stepped out and, acknowledging Joe’s pull at his forelock, looked at the corpse, and then he walked round it as one does round a statue.

“ Wonderful ! I have never seen it before. *Cadaveric spasm !*”

“ What’s that, sir ? ” asked Reynolds, the policeman, who had returned.

“ Well, at the moment of death sometimes the body stiffens at once, and remains in that position. On the battlefield you may see dead soldiers still aiming their rifles. He was stabbed right in the heart, and death was instantaneous.”

He looked at the paper. "The *Morning Post*—well, they will be in the limelight." He looked at the date; then he examined the wound, and, taking a small spring metal tape from his pocket, he measured it.

"Yes. A long two-edged dagger or knife, about two inches wide in the broadest part, driven in with great force and determination; hatred prompted that awful stab. The knife or dagger was withdrawn and disposed of. He was killed the day he disappeared, I infer."

"Would the person who killed him carry away any blood stains?"

"Probably; but not many, mind: there might only be a few drops, or a spurt. You see it was all done in a moment. It's a wonder no vermin have been at him; but they evidently thought he was alive. He looks it. . . . Well, I can do no more. When you get him down into your shed, I will make the P.M.; but I am sure its result won't help you in your investigations. The knife went straight into his heart, probably cutting the aortic or pulmonary artery."

"It couldn't have been suicide?"

"Impossible. . . . Well, can I leave any message for you?"

"No, sir. I have a cart on the way up to take him down." The doctor nodded, and asked the old shepherd how he was.

"Mustn't complain, sir. I'm better off nor he."

The doctor nodded, went towards his car.

The policeman ran after him. "Was there any struggle?"

The doctor smiled. "Oh, no. He was sitting reading the paper, and someone evidently suddenly stabbed him and fled. Which way you will have a difficulty in finding out, as the ground is exceptionally hard this summer . . . isn't that so?" he asked the shepherd.

"Harder than I ever knowed it, and I have knowed these downs, man and boy, for sixty year."

"There, you hear what he says."

He started his car and got in, and a cloud of chalk dust showed his track down the rise.

Presently an inspector in a dog-cart with a plain-clothes man and a constable arrived.

The policeman saluted, and so did the shepherd, half-rising.

"So this is it! . . . What does the doctor say?"

"Says he was killed the day he was missed. It's there on the paper, and that he was stabbed to the heart, and has what he calls cadavering spasms, and he said that started at once."

"No clues, Joe?"

"No, sir."

"It wasn't robbery. I stopped at the station, and your wife showed me what you found on him. . . . Wonder how this is connected with the missing girl; for somehow I think they are connected. Perhaps he was murdered and the girl abducted; but no, I forgot: she was seen to go into her house at nine; that is an established fact. Wonder if *she* did it; but no: what could have been her motive? She was lying anyway; for she said they walked together towards the hotel and parted near her village. She said in the letter to her mother that they had been up here. Wonder if he turned round and came back for any reason, whether he had lost anything? . . . Well, I can't see as there is anything to do except make further inquiries, and this line has been pretty well exhausted. . . . Get the boy scouts all up here, and offer a small reward, when you get home, for anyone finding any clue."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I will 'phone the Chief." And he walked off. The plain-clothes man remained and began to quarter the ground. Reynolds, feeling that he must do something, followed suit.

Then the cart arrived, and Reynolds ran back, and they

got the body into it, and Reynolds went off with the cart, leaving the detective.

The detective returned to the shepherd and asked him about the roads, consulting a local map with all the railway stations very clearly marked and a charabanc table. He made some notes, said good morning to the shepherd and walked off in the direction of the brook. He wished to reach the Head and see if he could pick up anything at the *Downs Hotel*. He had visited Mrs. Boniface; but she knew nothing, and said her daughter and Mr. Grange were the greatest friends. He was to become her stepfather.

“ Did she like that ? ”

Mrs. Boniface faltered and finally said “ Yes ” ; but the detective had noticed the hesitation. He walked on to the *Downs Hotel*, a small hotel in the bungalow style. There he interviewed the landlord and searched Mr. Grange’s things ; there was nothing material to the case at all, and he packed everything and sealed the boxes, and told the landlord he could put them away until things developed. He told him his bill would be all right ; the deceased had plenty of ready money on him, and he had better make out his bill and send it to the inspector.

He had a small bottle of beer ; then he strolled on to the Head, and at the Kiosk produced a photo of a girl.

“ Have you ever seen that before, miss ? ”

“ Oh, yes. I know who it is. She stopped here on the evening of the murder and bought some chocolate, and had quite a long talk.”

“ What time ? ”

“ Well, half-past eight as near as I remember.”

“ Which way did she go ? ”

“ Across towards Podmoor where she lives.”

“ Which way did she come ? ”

“ I am not sure. I have been thinking of that myself ;

but I fancy she came up the hill from Birling Gap. She was puffing rare hard, so I suppose that's why I thought she came up the hill."

"Blowing, eh—was she hot?"

"Yes, and red as a peony; but it was a sultry day."

That was all she knew. She knew Miss Boniface well; she often came and had a chat with her, and bought matches and chocolates when she was passing at times.

"How was she dressed?"

"Just like that; but she was carrying her hat in her hand when she got here."

The London papers spread themselves on the mystery of the old man of the Downs, and the disappearance of the beautiful Miss Boniface. All sorts of hypotheses were started; the journalists had an innings, and photos of all the interesting places appeared, and Podmoor suddenly became notorious, and the *Downs Hotel* packed. The old shepherd's photograph appeared in all the papers with his crook, seated by the dead man who was reading his paper. It was done by composite photography, and the sheep fed round them, and the sheep-dogs ran and rounded them off. Then a brief paragraph stated that the local police had called in the aid of Scotland Yard, and that Detective-Sergeant Carter had been given charge of the case.

VIII

One day a short man with a very pale face arrived at the *Downs Hotel*. He did not tell the landlord who he was, but posed as a journalist for an American paper. He got the landlord to pose for him at the door of his hostelry, and photographed Mr. Grange's room, and he registered in the visitors' book, and then he said:

"Let's have a bottle of champagne, and you shall tell me the story, at least not all of it, but a few pointers the other boys haven't got."

"Come into my private room, sir."

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The champagne was opened, and, after pledging each other, the host said :

" He was right sweet on this Mrs. Boniface. A fine woman."

" You do breed fine men and women here."

The landlord swallowed the compliment and agreed that it was the truth.

" Did Miss Boniface ever come here ? "

" Oh, yes. With her mother and without."

" What did she think of Mr. Grange ? "

" Well, between ourselves, I don't think she liked him. I have seen her make a mouth when he was walking out with her mother."

" I guessed as much."

" I am not sure, you know, sir."

" No. One can be sure of very little ; but you think it."

" I am almost certain ; but I mean I have no proof."

Carter nodded.

" What do you think of the letter she wrote to her mother ? Funny, *I* think."

" *I* have thought that. She didn't seem to want her mother to know she had done a bunk till as late as possible the next morning."

" You are a genius, landlord. That's just how I size it up. Who do you think killed him, landlord ? "

" Well, if you ask me, betwixt you, I, and the lamp-post, I can't size it up."

" It's a baffling case—wonder who did it ? "

" That's what the police have got to find out."

" The question is who would benefit by his death."

" That's so, landlord. You ought to have been a journalist or a detective."

" Well, I dunno. Sometimes I think I ought."

" If anyone came running across the Downs that evening from the old man of the Downs, he could have been seen from here."

" Oh, yes, sir."

"Then he must have come by the river road."

"You mean smugglers' road."

"Yes, this road," and he pointed to his map.

"Yes."

"How deep is the sea down there at Birling Gap?"

"That all depends on the tide."

"Well, at high water?"

"Well, that depends again whether it be spring or neap tide."

"Have you a tide-book?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, let's have it."

They looked the tides up for the last day of June. The landlord said, "About five foot of water inshore."

"Well, landlord, I will now go down to the gap and photograph."

The tide was in, and he chose a stone about the weight of a two-inch-bladed knife, which he had bought before starting, and threw it about eighty yards. "A knife would be more awkward, say forty yards." He looked about for a place where a person in a hurry coming by the smugglers' road would be likely to throw in anything, and, having settled that, he started to walk to the old man of the Downs, timing himself; and then he started to run back the same way, and took the time: it was mostly downhill, and therefore the return journey astonished him.

The next day nothing would do but he must go prawning. The landlord fitted him out, and he worked like a nigger in certain likely pools forty to fifty yards from the place he had selected, where the knife would be cast in.

He was just about to leave off, when the ring of his iron hoop struck iron. The water was very shallow there, and he dropped his net and felt about. His heart jumped as he picked out a long two-edged knife with a wooden handle.

He looked at his prize with great interest. There was

no name on that knife, no owner's name, but only the name of a Sheffield firm.

He went to the shore, cleaned his net, put on his shoes and stockings, and, wrapping the knife up carefully in his handkerchief, returned to the inn. The landlord waited for him.

"Well, sir."

"Oh, fine, 212; but I had to work like a nigger. There you are. Give me some for breakfast and lunch tomorrow, and keep the rest."

"You have got a good haul, sir; a lot of shiners."

"What are they?"

"Big boys; the best you can get."

"That's good. I must write an account of this prawning for my paper. Let me go into the 'phone-box; you are connected with London, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

He 'phoned to his Chief—"No. 400. Got the weapon. Find from Adams of Sheffield who their agents in these parts are and advise. C."

"Good. That's a step on," he muttered as he rang off.

He came out of the box. "Yes. They will take my article on Prawning. And now for dinner. I am as hungry as a hunter, and I think a bottle of bubbly——"

Carter was elated. He had made a very useful discovery. He studied all his times and came to the conclusion that this was the knife which had killed Grange, though he couldn't at present prove it.

The next morning he went up to the scene of the murder and took the knife with him. He had noticed two stabs into the hard earth, though no one else had, not even the shepherd, and the knife just fitted them. He cut one out and took it away in a box; the soil was dry and it caked well.

Two days after, Adams' list of agents arrived, and Carter visited those nearest to him, and at a general shop

across the marshes he found a man who had sold a girl one of the firm's knives.

"Would you know it again?"

"Yes. I have a particular little mark of my own on mine."

Carter showed it to him, and he examined it with a glass.

"Yes. I sold her that one."

"Would you swear to it?"

"Yes, anywhere."

Carter asked him to sign his statement, which he promptly did, and showed him the entry in his books, which Carter photographed. The result he telegraphed in code to the Yard, and then sat down and wrote his first report.

He put in all his test times, and finished by writing the hypothesis that Faith Boniface had killed Grange, because Grange wished to marry her mother, and she didn't approve of it. And she had fled after the murder, how and where was still to be discovered. The authorities thought it good enough to advertise for her, giving her photograph; and it was printed with her description in the Press of the world, and circulated to all stations and to some continental police *bureaux*.

The Coroner's Court brought in a verdict of wilful murder against some person or persons unknown.

IX

Later Carter called on Mrs. Boniface.

"Now, Mrs. Boniface, you must be frank with me; if you don't help us, it is a great handicap. Now I know your daughter disliked your proposed match with the late Mr. Grange."

"Who told you that?"

"Never mind. We never tell; but I *know* it. Why did you conceal this from the policeman who called to see you?"

" I don't know."

" Did she ever express any intention of harming Mr. Grange ? "

" Oh, no, on my oath. She said if we got married, she would run away and earn her own living."

" And she knew you were going to London that day on business about this marriage ? "

" Yes."

" Did you ever notice, had she surreptitiously got in any other clothes ? "

" No. The house is small, and she never kept any of her drawers or boxes locked. That is the mystery to me ; she goes or is taken away, and nothing is taken, even her nightdress."

" Showing that she was supplied with clothes somewhere. Did you ever see her with a knife ? "

" Yes. She had a large two-edged knife ; she bought it to use in the garden."

" Where is it ? "

" It is in the boot-place, where she usually kept it."

" May I see it ? "

" Certainly."

She went and got it, and Carter was surprised. He examined it carefully.

" I will take this, Mrs. Boniface."

" Why ? You don't think Faith killed Mr. Grange ? "

" No, no. I have no definite theory yet ; but this will be useful to show it was not used by her to kill anyone. There is no blood on it."

Mrs. Boniface looked at him anxiously ; but let him have the knife.

He left assured that she was not in secret communication with her daughter ; but he had not elicited who Faith's great pal in the neighbourhood was ; indeed she seemed to have no great pal.

Then he called on the sapper. He liked the sapper at the first glance.

"Sit down, sir," he said. "Will you try a fag?" And he offered a cigarette. Carter accepted.

"Now, sergeant-major,"—the sapper had been a sergeant, and Carter knew the weaknesses of N.C.O.'s and called him sergeant-major; he was not corrected and he noticed a pleased smile in the old man's eyes—"Can you help us in this business?"

"I will, if I can, sir. I was very fond of Miss Boniface; but she was a willed-'un, would have her own way; nothing wrong, there isn't a hint of suspicion of that, and we soon hear these things in a village; but she was a very determined young woman and a plucked 'un. She would have made a good soldier: smart and sharp as a needle, and strong as a horse."

"She ran away because of this proposed marriage of her mother?"

"Yes, sir. There is no doubt of that at all. She told me herself she would go, if that came off."

"Yes, she warned her mother."

"So I understand."

"Well now, sergeant-major, how would she get clothes? Because she did not take a rag of her own, not even a stocking or handkerchief," and Carter looked hard at the sergeant. He met the detective's gaze frankly, and Carter decided he knew nothing of it.

"When do you think she went off?" asked the sergeant.

"Oh, some time after ten. This letter she wrote her mother, to my mind, is conclusive evidence that she intended to go away that night, and wanted her mother to oversleep before she found out—to gain time."

"So I think, sir. I was at the inquest and heard that letter read."

"Was she the sort of person to have committed suicide?"

"Never. She had the nerve to; but she wasn't that sort. No, sir; she was a fighter all through. As I said, she would have made a real posh soldier."

Carter nodded.

"What is your theory, sergeant-major?"

"Well, sir, I have thought a bit about it. I reckon she quarrelled with Mr. Grange, up there at the old man of the Downs, and left him there; and he sat on, vexed and reading, and some one stabbed him. But for why? That I *can't* follow; but then I don't know anything about Mr. Grange, if he had enemies. It wasn't for robbery; for nothing was taken."

"Well, I rather think you are right there, sergeant-major. That is something like my own idea. She took that long walk round by the Head to walk off her anger." The old sergeant nodded.

"She was seen on the smugglers' road running towards Birling by a carter," said the sergeant.

"Who?"

"James Gilbert, he lives in the village; said she was fleeing for her life. He kind of thinks she killed Grange."

"What do you think, sergeant-major?"

"No. I don't think that at all. She certainly had a big knife. I have often seen her use it, and I went over when she was missing. I do the gardening there, and I looked at this knife; but that hadn't been touched, and there was no sign of blood on it. Had there been, I should have throwed it away," said the loyal old sapper.

Carter nodded.

"Has she had this knife long?"

"Oh, yes, bought it in the village soon after they came. I have got one myself: very useful for cutting shrubs and that. She saw mine and then bought one."

"Well, you can't help me further?"

"No, sir, not beyond what I have told you. I wish I could; for I like both Mrs. Boniface and her, and poor Mrs. Boniface has had a rough time. She bear up wonderful well though, she's grit all through; but it must be lonely in there all alone, worrying about Mr. Grange and her daughter. I was hoping, after they

found his body, Faith had come back ; but she hasn't."

Carter thanked him, and put him down as a very loyal and truthful man, which he was, and decided he knew nothing. He had been very frank.

That evening he called on Gilbert.

Gilbert was a hard, cynical man, very shrewd, very independent, and when Carter began to make inquiries, he said :

" Yes, I seed her. She killed him. Her face and eyes showed. She was running towards Birling with her hat in her hand and a paper parcel in the other, and the spy-glasses jogging up and down : running as if she'd seen the devil. I never thought I should see a murderer so soon after she'd done it. Women is worse than men, I know. I never could bide the critters, not even to pass the time with : allust saying soft things and got their hand in your pockets all the time. *I* know 'em and havn't no use for 'em. Warmints they are."

Gilbert gave the hour at which he had met her.

" Do you think, Mr. Gilbert, she could have got from the tea-gardens at Bobbit's to the old man, killed him, run down to Birling and thrown the knife into the sea (if she did it), climbed up to the sweet-stall and stopped there talking a few minutes, and then got across the Downs to her home between six and nine ? "

" Do I think so ? *I know* so. I don't believe in thinking and I walked it the very next day, and done it all in a walk, and twenty minutes under that time. I know how to walk, mind you, sir ; but she was running like old Nick down the smugglers' road, and she could run. She is very powerful, almost as strong as a donkey ; a rare filly for those who like 'em. I doan't. I doan't think much on the police, never did, or they would have taken her."

" They will have to find her first."

" Yes. I was forgetting. That's why she runned away in course."

"But how did she get away? With what clothes? For she didn't take a thing of her own, not even a handkerchief."

"Women is artful. No doubt she had been planning this for a long time and had some clothes hid handy. She can allust get her living. Them false eyes of hers will find the sort of man who is allust fooled by women. The devil made women to torment men."

"Then you are not married, Mr. Gilbert?"

"Married! Do you think I'm married, mister? No, I arn't. I 'avn't no use for them, never had."

Carter gave him five shillings, and thanked him, and went off.

There are always strange men like this who know when a crime has been committed who did it, if you can only get at them. Carter laughed at the man's hatred of women.

The general shop in Podmoor next drew his attention. The shopman said he had sold the knife to Miss Boniface. He would look up his books if necessary.

Carter said it did not matter at present; but asked him not to destroy his old books or the book with the entry, and he promised not to do so.

He went back to the *Downs Hotel* and wrote a long report, and said there was in his opinion but little doubt that Faith Boniface had killed Grange, and he expressly pointed to her having bought a new knife, when she already had one; to Gilbert having noticed her running with a parcel in her right hand, the knife no doubt, and looking wild and scared, and running for her life. Then there was her lying letter to her mother, and her flight. He confessed he could not find any trace of where she obtained her other clothes, but no doubt she had been planning the murder for a long time, and making every preparation, even to putting by a little money unknown to her mother. He intimated he did not see any likelihood of gaining any further information; he had been every-

where and could hear of no girl fleeing that night or the next day ; he had come to a blind alley. She had escaped for the time, that was all he could say.

The authorities read his report, agreed with it and recalled him, and complimented him.

X

The evening after the murder a Jew in Petticoat Lane was putting up his shutters—he was an old furniture and old clo' man—when a smart young fellow came up—and took off his hat.

“Want a boy, strong, willing, cheerful, sleep anywhere? No wages until you find him worth it.”

The old Jew sniggered in his beard and looked the youth over.

“Where do you come from?”

“That's my business, Ali ; but I'm all right. Try me and you will not regret it.”

“Well, I'd like to know something about you. What's your name?”

“Isaac Cohen.”

“Cohen, eh?”

The youth nodded.

“Well, I vill try you. You look honest and strong and willing. Go on putting up the shutters and then come in.”

Isaac did as he was bid, and in no time, and came in, locked the door and brought the Jew the key to his little back room.

He was just going to have a frugal supper of fried fish. He offered Isaac some.

“No, Ali, I have eaten.”

They talked ; but Isaac was very close, and the Jew expected this.

“Vell, I vill try you,” and he took him to a place at the back of the shop. “Go and get a bed from the stock ; there are some blankets in the basement. I get up at five. You too must be moving, and I vill tell you vat to do.”

Isaac rummaged through the stock, second-hand furniture and old clo', got an old camp bed; went to the basement and got an old pillow and three blankets. There was a flock mattress on the bed—and he turned in.

He was up at four-thirty, washed at the tap in the yard, and went into the Jew's sitting-room.

By that night the Jew was delighted with him. If he was honest, he was worth a fortune.

"Can you fight?" he suddenly asked three nights after.

"No."

"Vell, you must learn," and he gave him a dirty card. "Go there. Say I sent you. He vill not make you pay."

Isaac after work went to the boxing man, an old "pug," and was soon amongst the best of them, and after a few weeks he was pronounced finished. "You will soon beat all the Jew boys in the Lane on Sundays when you fight for the pitches."

Isaac saw it all then. This was the Jew's idea in sending him to learn to fight.

Well, on the first Sunday he went and took up a good position with his old clo' and trestle table, and had to fight three boys who tried to jump his claim, and they were beaten. Old Moses rubbed his hands. "He vill do, he vill do, he vill be the champion of the Lane. I must pay him two shillings and sixpence a week."

The months rolled on, and old Moses had found a treasure. He paid him commission then, and young Isaac dressed well, but lived frugally. He was already the champion of the Lane, and he had the best pitch every Sunday. He attracted men and women, and sold well.

After two years of this the old Jew agreed to take him into partnership. He had no relations, and Isaac, always a glutton for work, worked harder than ever, and was making money. Then old Moses died, and he was left sole heir to the business, which had grown astonishingly.

He made a lot of money and spent it freely. Barmaids adored him, and girls threw themselves at him. He was unlike a Jew in that he drank freely ; but always kept his head, and though he flirted with many girls, he never offered marriage, and had no loose ties. He came to be known amongst the women as " the boozing saint."

XI

Some sixteen years after he got a chill and pneumonia. The doctor looked very grave, and, on examining his chest, was surprised to see the development of a woman ; but he kept his counsel.

He or she (whichever you will) passed through the crisis ; but was left very weak. The doctor was very assiduous in his attention, and the patient grew stronger and was on the way to convalescence, when one morning the doctor found him with a temperature. He had a relapse, and things looked very grave, and the doctor told him that he had better settle his affairs.

" They are all settled," gasped Isaac. " I am a business man."

" Is there anyone you would like to see, any relation or friend ? "

He shook his head, and three hours afterwards died.

His lawyer came in and sold up the property, and the proceeds were sent to a Mrs. Boniface of the *Beehive*.

" From an undutiful child," the will said.

Mrs. Boniface received a cheque for £3,400 13s. 4d., with a solicitor's statement of the settlement of the estate.

Mrs. Boniface could not understand it, and Messrs. Cohen and Cohen could not enlighten her beyond that they drew up the will for Isaac Cohen, and carried out his instructions. She cashed the cheque, bought another annuity, and took a larger villa ; but the mystery of it was soon forgotten. She had the money, and never connected Isaac Cohen with her daughter.

Carter was staying at the *Downs Hotel* the following

summer and he called on Mrs. Boniface. She told him of the strange business, and he ran up to town the next day and saw the doctor who had attended Isaac Cohen. Neighbours told him his name. He called and sent in his card.

"What can I do for you?" said the hard-worked practitioner.

"Tell me, was Isaac Cohen a woman?"

"Must a doctor tell? But why?"

"I have been looking for a woman who I am sure was Isaac Cohen for years."

"What? Was she a criminal?"

"Tell me and I'll tell you."

"Yes, she was. I discovered it when she got the pneumonia. Yes, she was a woman. I told her lawyer; but to save trouble I signed the death certificate in her male name."

Then under a pledge of secrecy Carter told of the woman and her disappearance.

The doctor then told of how she had come to old Cohen the day after the crime, dressed as a youth, and got herself taken on; and of her success, her prowess with her fists, her business capacity, her advance to partnership, and her prosperity. She was called "the boozing saint," because she would never have any loose relations with girls, though many were in love with her. It was the drink that killed her: pneumonia on a heavy drinker is a very fatal disease.

"Well, doctor, we detectives and doctors see curious sides of life, and this is one of the strangest."

Carter left and went back to the Yard, and the final notes to the murder of C. Grange were added by Detective-Sergeant Carter. Mrs. Boniface never knew, and Carter returned to his hotel on the Downs.

v

The Raven Cliff Mystery

I

THREE urchins on their half-holiday were walking along the beetling cliffs of the South coast out for loot: bird's eggs, which every normal boy seems to covet. They were natives and agile and as sure of foot as a mule or a goat on precipitous cliffs. They knew that to climb up from the bottom was an error, for they might get stuck and would not be able to go either up or down; so they always clambered down to their prizes. The cliffs were broken there and varied in height. They were after a peregrine falcon's nest, the bird being anchored in the liquid air above them, ready to swoop and cut the head off any unwary bird that crossed its field of view; for, like a smart airman, it sat on air, a beautiful, brave, swift freebooter. The boys lay flat on their stomachs, waiting for the vigilant peregrine to capture some prey and go to find its fierce-looking brood or nest, which nest was somewhere on the cliff. Jackdaws were flying in and out of their nests, the crannies of old red-sandstone being stuffed with them; but the boys had enough jackdaws' eggs, and each one had a pet jackdaw at home, robbed from its white campion and pink thrift decorated nest.

"There be the old raven," said one lad, "I see her flop off her nest as we came up."

"Well, I can't see the nest, and that should show with all them white peeled sticks."

"That's further down along," said the third and quietest boy.

"There he be calling." There was a hoarse croaking on the right. One boy swarmed back and stood up.

"See him, Tom?" asked another.

"Yes; he's there along about a hundred yards away among the bluebells, just by that clump of bramble and gorse and bracken, see, on that little hill. Artful old seed, I reckon, as breathes."

"Maybe there's cadders' eggs."

"Well, he ain't got a young rabbit. He is all looking about. Lie you down, Tom."

Tom fell like a stone and swarmed forward amongst the pretty harebells to the edge.

"We'll go down along," said Tom, the leader.

They rose in a crouching position and walked down the cliff towards the old raven, who was scratching himself to get the insects out, and shaking his purplish-black plumage which shone in the sun. Then he flew down to a ledge in the cliff.

"There it be," said Tom, the sharp-eyed, excitedly, "there, on that ledge. See the white sticks all of a shine, and the old hen sitting and all. They be old birds, nigh bald they be. We'll go down," said Tom. "It's a long way, hundred and forty feet and bad holding. Jim, you stay up. You aren't used to it enough yet. George and I will bring you up a nestling, if they be old enough; rare pets they make."

Jim was nearly crying; but he knew Tom was right, and George backed Tom up.

Both old birds flew up and cut at the jackdaws. A small hawk met them and they attacked it, and it flew off screaming with anger at its impotence. Then they returned to the nest; they had seen the boys. The boys had short sticks and they climbed down carefully, never let go their grip till they had a fast new grip. The old raven flew up as they approached, and darted

about ; but they went on like the young soldiers of fortune they were, and at last stood on the ledge by the evil-smelling nest, when the old hen left her family, who crowded together in the dead peeled sticks, looking wickedly at the boys.

"My, that do stink!" said Tom, sensitive of smell, and he kicked some of the furry remains of the rabbits with their rattling skeletons inside. "Look where his old beak has bit on to the bones," said Tom, pointing to the marked bones.

"My, they get some big rats!" said George, kicking a rat's skin and bones. "Them old birds had no head. How's that, Tom?"

"Easy. The old peregrine cut them off and these old varmints picked their corpses up on the beach."

"Shall us take three?" asked George, opening the old haversack strung round his small body.

"No, George. They bain't old enough. We'll come again. They will keep and the old birds can feed them better than we can."

Tom was obeyed, and they looked all round for the peregrine's nest ; but it was invisible, so a hard and slow climb brought them to the cliff-edge, and Jim helped them over, and they lay panting on the turf, the sea beating on the beach beneath, rolling the gravel to and fro, rounding the pebbles and grinding them into sand. The peregrine was still sitting on air, watching everything.

"Here comes the old cock-bird back," Tom shouted, getting up excitedly, and down the ether came the old cock-raven with big prey in its mouth.

"My, it must be an old hare," said George.

The peregrine saw it and dropped like a stone on to the raven with the plunder. The raven saw and dropped its prey, and turned to meet the peregrine, and there was a battle like so many bird-battles ending in a few flying feathers and cries ; and the old raven flew off, croaking, to seek for other game, and the peregrine swooped down

and got the full-sized young rabbit, flying away high.

"That will be on them high rocks in Dead Men's Cove," said Tom thoughtfully. "Well, I have had enough climbing for one day; let's all down along."

They all swarmed back from the edge of the cliff, and, getting up, started to walk down along. A kestrel was hovering over the green sward, looking for mice.

The boys had gone about a mile hunting the gorse and bracken clumps for eggs, when Jim, the youngest, saw something ahead and ran to it. The boys ran to it, and Jim picked up a fancy basket such as women carry by the sea, and on opening it, found a woman's blue enamelled hand-bag. He began to open it.

"No, Jim. 'Tain't yourn. You let it be."

They looked all about. The cliffs were higher there, and then Tom, the born leader, fell on his stomach, swarmed to the edge of the cliff and peered over on to the beach, where the blue and silver sea was breaking on the grey shingle.

He saw a woman's hat. He swarmed back.

"We must go down. There's a woman's hat down there."

"Can I go this time?" asked Jim.

"Yes, Jimmy; there's a coastguards' path a little way down. Come along." He led the way.

"Now, I'll go first, and then Jim come between us. George and you bring up behind, and keep a look-out, Jim, don't slip. Now, Jim, you must go easy, and, if you slip, fall down on your stomach or back, whichever be handiest, and look at me and don't look down."

The tortuous slippery cliff-path was negotiated safely, and they all stood on the beach and then ran, boy-like, to the hat.

"'Tain't wet, neither, and see here, there's blood here. She must have fallen over the cliff and been killed."

Their six bright eyes scanned the cliff; but there was no sign at all of any body.

"Maybe she was drowned," suggested Jim.

"No, the tide be coming in, and, besides, that will take an hour before that reach where the hat and blood be, and there bain't no footings neither. We'll go and tell the constable. Come we along."

They reclinbed the coastguards' path and walked to the village and told the policeman, handing him the basket and bag and hat.

He opened the hand-bag. There were five shillings and a few coppers, some stamps, and that was all. There were some crumbs of cake in the basket.

He took down what the boys said, and thanked them ; and they went off full of importance and told every one they met, and people collected in little groups and discussed the matter.

II

A few hours afterwards Mr. Stone, a resident, walked anxiously into the police-station, and the constable greeted him.

"Well, sir, what can I do for you ? "

"Mrs. Stone has not come back to lunch. I have never known her miss before."

"Indeed, sir. When did she go out ? "

"She went out about ten, and said she was going for a walk along the cliffs to gather some wild flowers."

"Indeed, sir! What did she take with her? Any lunch ? "

"I really don't know ; but I don't think so, or she would have told the servants. In fact she said she'd be home before lunch, because she wanted to supervise the frying of some fish she had got."

The constable went to a cupboard and unlocked it, and took out the hat and bag and placed them on a table, looking at Mr. Stone.

"Yes, yes, these are her property."

"You are sure, sir ? "

“ Yes ; not the slightest doubt.”

The constable opened the hand-bag. “ Five shillings and sixpence halfpenny, sir, in silver and copper, and seven stamps. That’s all, sir, bar a few cake-crumbs in the fancy basket.” And he opened it and showed some crumbs and sultanas.

“ Some boys found the basket on the cliff-edge there, near the coastguards’ path, and they went down and found this hat on the beach and a pool of blood by it, sir.”

“ Good God ! Do you think she fell over ? ”

“ It’s hard to say, sir. They couldn’t see anything, and I have been down with a coastguard, and we can’t see any body on the cliff-face, and the tide had another hour to flow before it was full ; so she didn’t fall into the sea and get drowned. The boys said that ; and Tom, a smart lad is Tom, he looked for footings in the shingle and found none. The hat and blood was at high-water mark ; you know, sir, where weed and dead jelly-fish and crabs and froth and that collect.”

“ It’s very mysterious. What are you going to do about it ? ”

“ I have ’phoned the inspector of the district and expect him here shortly. I will advise you, if there is anything to tell. I’m very sorry, Mr. Stone, but she was probably dazed and picked up by some one and carried to a cottage. I have sent my boys out to inquire about. I can’t go myself till the inspector has been. Don’t worry, sir, hope for the best.”

III

The inspector and a constable arrived towards evening and went down with the constable and the coastguard and viewed the scene.

“ And no one has found anything else ? ”

“ No, sir, and I had a lot of boys and young fellows out when they left off work, and the coastguard has been busy. Not a sign, sir.”

"Are the boys who found her things truthful?"

"Yes; Tom, the eldest, is one of the best boys in the village, very sharp and brave. He looked for footprints and all, and said the hat and blood were on the high-water mark, and the tide had an hour to flow before full tide. There is the place. He placed those two big white stones, and the flood didn't move them."

"A smart boy. Get him to join the force if he has no other plans."

"He's going for a soldier, sir."

"Well, that's better. Let him go. He will do well. The old 'Bloody Devons' want some new blood and some good blood— How did Stone and his wife get on?"

"Good terms, sir. I have been making inquiries."

"What do you think of him?"

"Oh, he's one of the best, sir."

"Very funny."

"It's all that, sir; but the funniest part is to come. I got a 'phone message that some people on the *Devonia* saw a woman walking into the sea just about here at one o'clock. Then a friend of Mrs. Stone says it wasn't Mrs. Stone, couldn't have been Mrs. Stone, as she was at her house at one."

The inspector whistled.

"Is she a truthful woman, constable?"

"Yes, sir, quite reliable."

The inspector smiled.

"Well, constable, you do speak up for your villagers."

"I can show some of the other brand, sir; but in this case none so far. The Stones, Tom, the boy, and Mrs. Stone's friend are like the Bank of England, safe. I'd trust my life with any of them. If any of the bad 'uns come into it, I will tell you, sir, at once."

"That's all right, constable. I like you for standing up for your crowd. Loyalty is none too common these days."

"That's true, sir. But you will find I am right about these people."

IV

The police decided to wait. In fact, they could do nothing else. They wanted to wait to see if a corpse was cast up by the sea. The cliffs had been thoroughly searched by every one capable of searching them, and those countrymen knew their job.

Mr. Stone, who loved his wife, was patient. He could hear nothing. She had gone to lunch with her friend, who was a rich old maiden lady with a love for gardening and bees and cigarettes. She lived well, and anyone bored with the conventionalities of village life was grateful for one of her lunches, her company and the walk into another world, where no petty scandal breathed, where the outlook was big and generous and broad.

The inspector, a shrewd man, had called on her, and, after the port and sherry decanters and cracknel biscuits were brought in, in the old style, and he had drunk two glasses of excellent old brown sherry, he asked her :

“ Now, Miss Somers, was there anything to cause Mrs. Stone to wish to take her life ? ”

“ Nothing.”

“ Was she fed-up ? ”

“ She was, inspector. Not with her husband, mind you ; but with village life and the narrow waspish society in which she moved.”

“ What do *you* think of it, Miss Somers ? ”

“ She didn't kill herself, I am sure of that. If she had fallen over the cliff, where's her body ? That's all I can say.”

“ You don't think she committed suicide ? ”

“ Not a bit of it, inspector. Trust me, she was the last woman to do that, too interested in things and life ; and it is no theory of mine. She arrived here about one, had lunch and did not leave till after three-thirty. I'll swear to that, if it will help ; but it is true, swear or no swear.”

“ Did you talk of anything particular ? ”

"Well, no—books. She said novelists were fools except Oppenheim and Stacpole, that novelists should amuse people and not photograph horrors and write tracts, and mess about with psychology, of which only a few experts know anything at all. She said we wanted a Mussolini in politics; said the Church was dead and it was a good job. Said people had far too much money and did not know the simple things were best."

"A most sensible woman, I take it."

"She was, and full of beans, though she was past the meridian."

"Well, Miss Somers, I thank you for your information, and I thank you for your conversation, and, lastly, for your very excellent sherry. . . . Who was her greatest friend?"

"Well, I was, I think. I think she would say so."

"And a good friend, too."

He left more puzzled than ever, and then, on taking thought, he returned to the village, and asked the constable:

"Has anyone else been reported missing since?"

"No, sir."

He then went to the post-office and asked the post-master, a painter and decorator, "Did Mrs. Stone have much correspondence with anyone in London?"

"No, sir. She wrote but few letters and had but few letters."

The inspector thanked him and left.

v

The nine days had passed. No body had been cast up from the sea along the coast. Officially the case was pigeon-holed; but constable Aitken, a very intelligent man, did not leave it at that. He decided that there was something very unusual in the case, and he determined to probe it, so he kept his eyes opened. He offered the most noted cliff-climbers and eggers a small reward

if they discovered anything of the missing Mrs. Stone; but none would have claimed his small, though welcome reward, had this been gained.

He read all the Sunday papers at the Institute and all the agony columns of the big papers, and one day he sat up with a start as he read in the *Morning Post* :

“Missing, since June 27, a lady aged about 50, 5 ft. 5½ inches in height. Thin, dark complexion and hair and eyes; good teeth for her age. Dressed in a blue serge dress and light coffee-coloured silk blouse, secured by a small brooch with MIZPAH; black silk stockings, black shoes. Had a gold wrist-watch worn in her belt, a mole on her left arm just below the elbow-joint on the palmar surface. Speaks with a quick sharp voice. Had some £70 when she left London. Apply to Messrs. Reed, Riche and Reed, Solicitors, 45, Lincoln’s Inn, W.C. £100 will be paid to the first person who gives such information as will lead to her identification, dead or alive. Last seen at 8.30 a.m. getting on to a bus at Charing Cross Station on June 26th. No luggage. Laundry mark L.758. Gloves, hat, parasol not identified, as she had several, and it is not known which she took. Initials E. F.”

The constable copied out the advertisement and took the date of the paper, and went home and lit a big meerschaum. He coloured meerschaums and sold them to a tobacconist at the market town.

“£100! Well, it was worth trying for.”

He memorized the advertisement, and had a photo in his mind of the woman E. F. He knew many women were missing every day in London; still, something seemed to tell him that this E. F. and he had some remote connection.

He visited Miss Somers and asked her if Mrs. Stone had any friend with a name beginning with “F.” She knew of none. Nor did Mr. Stone, nor did any of her friends.

“F.—F.—F.—” they repeated, and thought, and then said: “No, there was So-and-so, and So-and-so; but F., no one of that name.”

Then he went to the nearest railway station, a small

one, and Stopher, the stationmaster, recalled that on June 26 a lady answering this description did come by the express from Paddington ; but where she went he had no idea, and the porters couldn't help. He went to a small cottage near the station where the woman sold teas to visitors, and, to his gratification, he found a lady had stayed there the night of the 26th. She answered the description of the missing woman. She had had a chop and some beer and gone to bed, and had breakfast the next morning and insisted on having clotted cream and strawberries, and had gone out about ten and said she wanted to go to the cliffs. She had paid before she left. She had no luggage, and said she might return or she might walk on to the next village and stop. She wore a little toque, dark-coloured, and had some mauve-coloured gloves ; otherwise was dressed like the description. She seemed very tired and haggard. She took a few sandwiches with her and hard-boiled eggs. She left no name, and said : " Life was very stupid."

The constable was hot on the scent now, and he got a pal to write to the solicitors and suggest, if they wanted West Countrymen really to work, £100 was no good, £500 might make people work, and to sign it " Ex-Police Officer."

Sure enough the advertisement was repeated, and £500 was offered a few days after.

The constable took his holiday just then. It was overdue, and a man from the country town was sent to act for him, and he went to London.

VI

London was new to him. He went to a cheap hotel in Kensington, and called on the solicitors.

" I've come about the advertisement in the *Post*."

" Yes, can you help us ? "

" Maybe. I just want you to put my name down as a claimant for the £500."

The solicitor smiled, and took his name and address in his private capacity, and then asked :

“ Do you know anything of her ? ”

“ Well, maybe. I’ve traced her to a certain place.”

The solicitor was much excited, and began to ask questions.

“ No, I’m wanting to ask questions first. Is she rich ? ”

“ Very ” ; and then he bit his lip and said, “ Very comfortably off.”

“ Was she likely to have committed suicide ? ”

“ No, I will answer for that.”

“ Then if she be dead, it was accident or murder ? ”

“ I think we may safely say that.”

“ I’m a blunt man, sir, and if I’m to help, I want the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.”

“ I take you and like your frankness. You shall have it.”

“ Was any man after her ? She was single, of course, at least I guess so ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ What was her name ? ”

“ Emily Francis.”

“ Where did she live ? ”

“ In Berkley Square, No. LX. Owned the house, and had a good income in gilt-edge securities.”

“ Then £500 won’t hurt her ? ”

“ No.”

“ Who was her heir ? ”

The solicitor boggled at this.

“ Ah, well, there are certain matters we can’t well divulge.”

“ I understand ; but remember my saying the whole truth and the rest. If I am to help you, and I think I can, I want everything ; it is private and confidential with me.”

“ Well, her heir is an airman, a Francis Francis, a

young man about town who lives in Inverest Mansions, No. X, St. John's Wood."

"That's the talk; but who was after her?"

"John Pigeon, a middle-aged lawyer of Bedford Square."

"Straight?"

"No."

"What was she worth?"

"Well, I should say £40,000 to £50,000."

"Ah! Make the reward £1,000 and I'll solve it."

"Who are you?"

"Well, is that necessary?"

"Well, it's better. You see, the reward goes to anyone."

"Police-officer or others?"

"Yes, *sub rosa*."

"I don't know anything about 'sub-roses'; but I want it straight."

"Yes."

"Well, write out the promise for £1,000, and put my name in: John Aitken, constable of Willstowe, near Barnstaple, Devon."

The solicitor smiled and did so.

Aitken read it and folded it and put it in his pocket.

"Now I'll get to work."

"Well, we shall be glad to have the matter cleared up."

"Where does Mr. Pigeon live, private address?"

It was given him, in Russell Square.

John Aitken went off to Pigeon's office and was shown in.

"What can I do for you, sir?"

"I'm investigating the case of disappearance of a Miss Francis."

Pigeon was at once alert.

"On whose authority?"

"My own; £500 reward is offered."

" Oh, yes, I forgot."

" Will you tell me when you saw the lady last, sir ? "

" About a week before her disappearance."

" Are you her lawyer ? "

" No."

" Do you think she committed suicide, sir ? "

" No, I don't. I think there was foul play."

" On what grounds, sir, if I may ask ? "

" I have no evidence ; it is only a hypothesis."

" Was there anyone interested in her estate ? "

" Well, the heir-apparent is always interested."

" Who is the heir ? "

" A Francis Francis, her cousin."

" I suppose she had a few hundreds a year ? "

" Yes, a few."

" That is all I want to know, sir," and John Aitken got up and left the amazed solicitor, who stared after the " yokel," as he called him.

John Aitken went to Francis Francis's flat that night about ten. He had just come in from dining. When his man showed John Aitken in, he said :

" Well, old top, what for you ? "

" Nothing, sir ; only a few questions."

" Yes, what about ? "

" Well, your cousin, sir. I hear there is a reward out for finding her, and I make a hobby of these things. £500 is worth working for."

" I understand. Have a drink ? "

" I don't mind if I do. Some cider, if you have it."

" No ; I can give you a whisky-and-soda."

" I don't drink spirits, sir. Some beer ? "

" Yes " ; and he called his man and told him to open some beer. When the beer was opened, John Aitken said :

" When did you see her last, sir ? "

" The night before she disappeared."

" Was she all O.K., sir ? "

"Yes, very bobbish. Talked of going for a holiday away from the giddy haunts of men to some lonely place."

"Depressed?"

"No; only damn funny. Women are alike; old maids, at least."

"Did she say where?"

"She spoke of Devonshire, been reading some bilge about the moors and the Devon coast."

"Say when she was going?"

"Yes, the next morning by the 9.30 from Paddington."

"And that's all you know?"

"Yes. Until I saw the advertisement in the *Post*, I expected her to write and ask me to lunch or dinner on her return."

"And you have never heard from her since?"

"Never."

"Had she any friends down that way?"

"Not that I know of."

"This is very good beer, sir."

"Have some more?"

"No, I'll be off. I've got to see a pal and go and see the sights at a night club."

"Well, I'm afraid you are a gay dog."

"Just want to see a bit of life, that's all. When we come up from the country, we like to see the London sights."

"Of course. Quite right, Mr. Aitken. Good night, and I hope you will earn the £500. My old aunt was a very good sort, but thought me a bit wild. But they all do, these old ladies who have never known a man."

The constable left and went home to his hotel.

VII

The next day he took the 9.30 express home, and he re-read the promissory note. £1,000. He would buy an annuity with that, and with his pension, which would

be soon coming due, well, he would be comfortable for the rest of his days, and he wanted to grow prize peas. He was mad on peas. He liked peas in preference to all vegetables, and it was his ambition to produce Aitken's Sugar Pea, which should be *the* pea, not a wretched big hard pea, but a smallish, sweet as sugar, tender as cress a pea for eating by itself. That pea loomed large in his mental horizon and urged him on.

He went round to the inns about, inquiring if a young man, dark, clean-shaven, about 30, with very white teeth and very black eyes and eyebrows, and a sallow skin with a pinkish colour, had stayed about there in June last.

He could hear of none until he came to an inn, an unpretentious little place in the rock-side, where he heard of such a young man. He had arrived walking in the evening, with a little square leather case, and had slept the night. Said he was on a walking tour. He had got up early and had breakfast and gone out, after having paid, and said he was going to walk down the coast. He was voted a very nice gentleman, had the best of everything, and paid what he was asked, and gave everybody big tips.

The inn was two miles from the little tea-house, where the woman had slept that same night.

The constable now began to smell a rat, or rather he had done that in London, and he began to see the rat's trail. He walked down the coastguards' path and examined the cliff-side. There was a cave near the scene of the spot where the bloodstains and the hat had been found; but, of course, this had been thoroughly searched. But he went in there with his electric torch and looked round.

He could find nothing. At very high springs the tide entered the cave; for the water passed the high-water mark line on rare occasions. He ascertained that the high springs had run into the cave twice since the dis-

appearance of Mrs. Stone. One day he went down with a man, and they dug in the shingle of the cave-bottom, and found the decaying remains of a woman. Her clothes were not decayed, and the constable identified her as Emily Francis. Her head had been dashed in with a stone.

The remains were taken up the cliff to a shed behind the constable's house, and he telegraphed to the solicitor that he had found the body, and asked him to come down, which he did by the express the next day.

There was the greatest excitement in the village. The inspector came over and took many notes, and the Coroner's officer appeared and took notes. The inquest was held a few days after and the solicitor identified the remains; and the woman at the tea-shop told how the lady had spent the night at her place and gone out in the morning, and she had never seen her since.

The cousin, Francis Francis, had an alibi. He had been ill and never gone from his flat for three days. His valet testified to that, and the chemist put in the prescription for which the valet had come and had had made up. The Coroner's Court returned a verdict of murder against some person or persons unknown; for it was discovered that she had drawn £70 from her bank the day before, and it was all gone. She had only a return ticket to Paddington and some few shillings in her pocket. Her jewellery was gone, a valuable gold watch and a valuable diamond brooch and bracelet and two rings, which she always wore. Robbery had been the motive.

"It's as clear as mud," said the inspector. "Some 'needy' knocked her on the head with a stone and robbed her, and buried her in the cave before the boys got down. He may have been there when the boys were outside."

"Tramps and vagrants rarely murder," said the constable, who read all sorts of publications on criminology.

"Who would kill her, then? The only one with a

motive is the cousin who is the heir, and he has a good alibi. Her beau, the solicitor-fellow, wouldn't. He would get nothing by it, as her will leaves everything to her beloved cousin, Francis Francis."

"That is so, sir," agreed Aitken.

The solicitor paid him the £1,000 before he returned to town.

"Are you going to offer a reward for the discovery of her murderer?"

"Well, if I can persuade the heir."

"Oh, he will have a fortune," said Aitken, solemnly.

The solicitor looked at him, and said: "You don't like him?"

Aitken shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, I will put it in the *Post*, if I can persuade him."

They shook hands and parted.

In three days £1,000 was offered for such information as would lead to the conviction of the murderer of the late Emily Francis, who was murdered on the beach at Lee on June 27 of the present year.

"That's as good as mine," said the constable. "Now for the Aitken Sugar Peas!"

VIII

Aitken worked hard. He went down and saw the officers and crew of the *Devonia*, who saw the woman walk into the sea; but they had seen no one else on the beach.

"No," thought Aitken, "because he was concealed in the cave. He watched her coming down the coastguards' path, and descended by some other path, and waited there and killed her."

He scoured the country round and went to every station, and at a station some sixty miles away he got information that a young, dark-haired man had joined the train and had taken a ticket to Paddington; it was the night

mail. The description answered to that of Francis Francis; but he lost all trace of him then. The ticket from the station was collected at Paddington all right, though.

Then one day he was reading a Sunday paper. He always read all the sensational Sunday papers, and he read of a wreck of a steamer on the coast of Samoa. The vessel had been caught in a tornado and dashed on to the coral, and there were only eight survivors, and he read their names. One was Julia Stone.

He rubbed his eyes. Julia Stone! That was the name of Stone's wife. He rushed over to Stone's house.

"What reward for finding your wife, Mr. Stone?"

"Why? Have you found her?"

"Maybe."

"Well, I'm not rich, but I'd give you £300 to hear where she is."

"And if I tell you——"

"You shall have it."

"Write it out."

He did, and then Aitken said: "She's in Samoa. You will pay when it is confirmed."

"I will that. I'll go and fetch her if that is so."

The next day he cabled, at Aitken's advice, to Levuka, the chief town of Samoa, and received a reply. "Yes; Julia Stone, aged fifty, is alive and in hospital. Will recover, wants her husband."

Stone received the cable and started off at once. He returned with Julia to the village. Mrs. Stone looked very shy and kept to the house.

But Aitken went up and saw her.

"Now, mum, I want to know what passed between you and Miss Francis."

"Oh, poor thing! If I had only known! I went to the top of the cliff to think in the morning. I met her wandering there and gathering wild flowers. She said she was tired of life. I said I was fed-up with the life I

led, and she said: 'Go away, go away, go to the South Sea Islands. Here, take this, I'm a rich woman,' and she pulled out £70. 'Take it, and I'll send £200 to you at the English Consul's at Samoa. Go round the world and come back to your husband.' "

Aitken nodded. "What time did you leave her, madam?"

"About 12.30. I had to go and lunch with Miss Somers. I left Miss Somers at 3.30 and went to the station and caught a train, and started for Samoa as soon as I could and got wrecked. You know the rest."

"What was she going to do?"

"She said, 'Stop in the country a bit and go back.' She said she was rich."

"That accounts for everything. And she took your hat and you took hers."

"Yes; that is so. It was her idea."

"Did she seem as if she was going to commit suicide?"

"No; but she was not happy: resigned. Of course, when I read the account of the story of my being missing, I guessed that she had committed suicide."

Aitken nodded.

Stone paid the £300, and did not even grumble.

Then Aitken put an advertisement in various papers:

£50 REWARD.—Any pilot who passed Lee Hill on the Devonshire Coast about 1-2 p.m. on June 27 last, and saw anything on the beach there, will receive the above reward by applying to J. AITKEN, Constable of Lee, Devon. Only the first person applying and supplying the requisite information will receive the £50.

It was some weeks before a reply came from Gibraltar, from the yacht *Viking*:

"DEAR SIR,—

"I saw your advertisement in the paper. I was on watch on the *Viking*, and we passed Lee at about 1.30. I saw a woman with no hat walk into the sea, and a

young gent runs down out of a cave, wades in and pulls her out and takes her to a cave, and that's all.

“Yours respectfully,

“SAM BOWER, A.B.,

“3rd hand, yacht *Viking*.”

“P.S.—I'm coming home to Poole, Dorset, to be paid off. Please send the £50 there. No. 2, Harburgh Street. Mr. Bower.”

Aitken telegraphed to the address given, answer prepaid, and received a reply that the *Viking* was expected the next day.

He got permission to go over to Poole, packed his bag, and went to a small hotel in a beautiful part of the bay.

He saw the *Viking* come in, and when she was made fast, he introduced himself to Bower.

Bower repeated his story, and Aitken confirmed it by the log, and got a signed statement from Bower and from the skipper as to the extract from the log; and he returned to the village and went and saw the inspector. The inspector said:

“If you can prove that was the heir, Francis Francis, he will hang. I will see the Chief Commissioner, and he may get the Yard to take it up. We shall want their help to upset the alibi.”

It was nearly a week after that Aitken was summoned to London, and he laid his evidence before the Public Prosecutor. The official he saw read it and said:

“Good enough. Our man has proved the alibi is a lie, and that he was away on the 26th and 27th, and did not get back till the 28th. He did it all right. I congratulate you, constable. You are too old for promotion, but it deserves some reward. The police medal you will get. What else would you like? I would leave it till after the trial; but you are far away and one may forget.”

“Well, sir, I want to cultivate the finest pea, Aitken's

Supreme Sugar Pea, and my retirement is due in thirteen months on full pension. If I could retire now, as soon as this case is over, on full pension, I've saved a bit, that is what I should like."

"Well, I think I can promise to manage that for you. Is this another sweet pea?"

"No, sir, an eating pea."

The Chief Commissioner laughed. "Hope you will send me some of the basket when perfected."

"I shall be honoured, sir."

Francis Francis was charged with the murder of his cousin, and arrested and tried at Exeter Assizes, and found guilty and condemned to death. He appealed; but the appeal was dismissed, and he was hanged.

Aitken received his £1,000, and the new heir to the property, a well-to-do soldier then serving in Iraq, added another £1,000 in gratitude. Aitken was retired on full pension and took a pretty cottage in a secluded spot at Lee, and was much more proud of the Horticultural Society's First Class Certificate for his new eating peas, Aitken's Supreme Sugar Peas, than he was of solving the Cliff Mystery. He made a considerable sum out of supplying seedlings of his new pea to nurserymen, and he spent some of it in helping Tom to go for a soldier, and he helped George and Jim to learn the trades they wanted. George wanted to be a cabinet-maker and Jim a gardener. And when Jim had learnt his lesson at a good private garden, old Aitken took him into his service, and he left the three boys his fortune when he died, having no near relations. For, he said, it was they who brought him luck, and he was, as the reader will have gathered, great on loyalty and gratitude.

VI

The Glorious Fourth of July

I

PETE AMBERSON, as he was familiarly called by his schoolmates, was a sharp American boy of twelve years of age. He was cleanly built with really beautiful arms and legs and torso, a fit subject for a sculptor's chisel. He had fair hair and dancing blue eyes when in repose, and flashing, scintillating eyes when angered. Pete was one of the best runners amongst the boys and one of the cleverest base-ball players. He had little use for football, which in those days, 1868, was played by one side *en masse* against the other, a round ball smaller than the modern "soccer" ball being used; and there were goal-posts and no rules except that the side that kicked the ball through the opponents' goal won. Pete was artistic and scientific, though he did not know it, and this rough-and-tumble had no attractions for him. On the other hand, there was skill in base-ball and skill in running and such field-sports as jumping, though this was not then cultivated.

Pete, too, was a born lover of birds and trees and flowers and the water. He would, with sympathetic companions, go after hickory and walnuts, not the English kind, but the hard, white-shelled American walnuts, with their sweet veins of tasty nut. The chip-munks in the woods and the squirrels and the birds always attracted him, but he was no collector. He just liked to watch them, as one watches anything pretty and "clever" in the American sense.

Pete was fond of swimming in the crystal river and of skating upon it when frozen several feet deep in winter; but best of all he liked sledding, coasting down hill for miles in his screw-bolted runner sled—"Ticonderoga." Pete, all the boys called him that, was fond of catching cat-fish, too, and of eating them when cooked. Many a cat-fish has he caught with a bent hook; for Pete disliked expensive tackle and regarded it as useless. Persimmons, after the frost had been on them, he liked best of all wild fruits, and maple sugar he and his friends made by boring the maple-tree with an auger and collecting the sap and boiling it; but their favourite sweet was Iceland Moss-drops, made I know not how, juicy and with a delicious lingering flavour. Pete was fond of playing at soldiers, too; but chiefly at Indians in the woods. He also liked a fight, just for sport. He was a curious mixture was Pete, and his father, a clever engineer, used to wonder what he would be when he grew up.

Pete's father was a clever man and well off, and a splendid specimen of a man, and he just let Pete go his way; he would have money, and he watched closely and knew full well he would take care of it. He saw he always knew when to say "*No*," and the boy who knows when to say that has the key to success. Pete was generous with his friends; he would buy a big ripe water-melon and call his pals, and they would sit round, chewing the rich red flesh, and spitting out the pretty black pips. Or he would buy a peck of luscious peaches and call his friends, and they would gorge. For Pete's father was liberal with pocket-money; it would teach him to take care of money when he grew older. So Pete had grown to twelve, an active, alert, observant, pleasant and popular boy, good to look upon, as the girls thought, and always wanted him to dance with them or play blindman's buff or kiss-in-the-ring.

The fourth was approaching, and Pete, like his friends, was laying in supplies to celebrate the glorious day. They all had small cannon, some of brass and some of

iron, about nine inches long, riveted on metal carriages. These they loaded with powder and touched off with burning bulrushes. They had packets of scarlet Chinese crackers with their light grey prepared fuses, and torpedoes, little packets of fine gravel and powder mixed, which they threw on to the pavements and listened with joy to their explosion. Every boy was preparing his stock for the fourth; but they had no bulrushes. It was a week before the fourth, maybe ten days, and Pete and the other boys were playing rounders on a lot at the school recess hour, 11 to 11.15.

Suddenly from a row of wooden houses on the opposite side of the lot where they were playing, cheapish wooden houses of weather-boarding, loud and angry voices sounded. The boys stopped in their game. The quarrel was loud and noisy in one of the houses painted white with green slatted shutters. The shutters were closed in the hot, July sun; but the voices in anger came through. Two men were quarrelling, fiercely quarrelling. Some of the boys began to walk towards the house, when two men appeared at the top of the steps, a very big stout man, dressed in black, and a mulatto. The mulatto's face was distorted with rage, and Pete and the other boys saw a knife flash in the sun, and the massive big red-faced man shuddered and came like a drunken man down the steps. He went staggering down the brick side-walk, and Pete and the others saw a trail of blood following him and a gaping wound in the black coat, which was drawn very tightly across his back. He had been stabbed. A woman, a pretty Octoroon, came out on the top of the steps in a light muslin dress, her black hair coiled over her head, and looked after him; but the mulatto came out and seized her and pulled her in, and slammed the door.

Some of the boys went following the bleeding, stricken man; but Pete stood his ground. He and the others had seen murder done, actually seen the very deed done;

they hardly realized it, and then Pete suddenly felt in his bones the feeling of law and order well up. He had no morbid wish to follow and look upon the stabbed man. He wanted to catch the criminal. Being a decent-minded boy, he did not understand the cause of the crime; it was, of course, a *crime passionnelle*. The fat hotel-keeper, a very important citizen, a freemason and a member of the Oddfellows and of the various political clubs, and every other local society of any import, was a rich man, and he had been paying a lone visit to the pretty Octoroon; and the outraged husband had no doubt got wind of it, returned to his house unexpectedly, and caught the proprietor of the *Indiana Queen Hotel* and stabbed him after bitter words. Pete never forgot that yellow face distorted with passion, the flash of the knife, and the black-coated fat man with the gaping, bleeding hole in his back staggering along the street, his life-blood dribbling out.

Then suddenly the clanging school-bell rang. Such boys as were left on the lot still playing, the quarrel having no attraction for, ran into the school. Some three were following the stricken man, and did follow him for over a mile, when he turned into a shoemaker's shop, going down some steps and lurching into a chair, where he died. The shoemaker had slammed the door in the boys' faces, and they went running back to school. But Pete stood by a sycamore watching for the murderer. He came out, looked all about; there was no one visible and he did not see Pete, and he ran down the steps and made off by the street in which the school was situated.

Pete followed. He noticed when they met a constable, the police were dressed in ordinary clothes, but wore a brass star, emblem of office, on their chests; the mulatto, a young, active fellow of about twenty-eight, crossed the street and looked at them fiercely. Pete by many short spurts kept up with him. Block after block was passed, and they reached Market Street, the big thoroughfare of the

town ; but it was not market-day, and the mulatto turned the corner quickly to the right and walked agilely along, Pete tracking him like a hound. He could see his light cotton shirt and wideawake grey hat and cotton trousers, and his heaving shoulders, and that agile body walking quickly past dozens of people, who had no idea a murderer was rubbing shoulders with them as he passed.

Across he went, straight for the river, the river with sloping banks where the bulrushes grew and reed birds in numbers bred at the proper season. Then on reaching the bridge, a tubular bridge looking black—it was tarred—bridging the blue water, he turned abruptly to the left and entered the gladen and reed jungles. He broke through them like a wild animal and Pete followed, though his shoes and light drill trousers were soaked with mud and water, and a leech got under his trousers and he noticed the blood. He had to break nothing ; being much smaller than the mulatto he just followed in his wake, and the mulatto never turned to look ; he was fleeing from the law. Pete, like all healthy young things, had no fear ; fear comes from rude experience.

The heat was terrible in the jungle, and the midges and mosquitoes bit Pete's young flesh until his face and hands were covered with blood, and blood from the leech-bite had dyed his trousers. Birds flew up from the gladen bed ; but Pete had only eyes for the bluish cotton shirt, the white cotton trousers, and the wide grey old straw wideawake, the strong brawny shoulders and agile torso.

Then the path opened into a clearing. Pete heard voices as the mulatto disappeared in the opening. This was a new proposition, and suddenly Pete felt he was running into danger. He had heard of negroes who lived in the reed and gladen morasses, and were robbers. All the boys had heard of them, and when they went bulrush-cutting, they were warned not to go far into the gladen beds. Pete hesitated : then he determined to get a peep and he went forward stealthily, and

when he got to where the mulatto's trail ended, he went forward on his hands and knees, getting soaked to the skin with muddy water. But he saw what he had come to see. There was a small clearing and a small nigger cabin. Smoke was coming from the chimney, and the mulatto, with his back to Pete, was talking excitedly to an old nigger and nigger woman; and Pete, who had taken off his little panama, drew his head back quickly and began to retrace his steps. Fear began to grip him; and he regularly raced through the mud and water and broken swamp plants, until he had nearly reached the bridge, when he began to cut a bundle of bulrushes for the fourth. He might as well do it now as come again, and he collected some fifty ripe heads and bound them neatly together with gladen leaves and walked out, a streaming mass of perspiration, blood, mud and water. A constable, with his brass star, was at the edge by the head of the bridge, and he burst out laughing.

"Well, sonny, you must have been swimming the swamps; but you got what you went for. That's what I like, sonny. You would make a good soldier. Who's your father and where do you live?"

Pete told him.

"Tell your father what I say, sonny. How are you going to get home like this? They won't let you into the cars."

"I'll walk, of course."

"And don't mind what people say?"

"No, I have done nothing wrong."

"You have hit it, sonny. That's all that matters. Bunk off home and have a bath and a change, and put your bulrushes out in the sun on the roof to dry, and they will burn well on the fourth."

Pete shouldered his green heavy thick bundle, and walked boldly up the street. People smiled. Some car drivers yelled at him. "A chip of the old block, eh? You won't be late for nothing in life, sonny," and, a

target of good-natured raillery and jokes, Pete proceeded to his home, some three miles distant. He went in at the back, and the pretty Irish maid was in the kitchen.

"Oh, Master Peter, where have you been? Your mother and father are out looking for you. Come along," and she led him up to the bathroom and made him strip and sponged him all over, and then rubbed him down. "What a broth of a boy!" Then she got his clean things and put some arnica on his leech-bites, and dabbed his mosquito bites with ammonia, and said:

"Whist, not a word! It's Eileen will wash your things and put them in the cupboard."

Pete went up to the roof through the trap door. It was like a furnace up there; the beautiful rounded pebbles resting on the tarry bed had become hot to the touch and gleamed white in the fierce July sun.

He laid his bulrushes out in a neat row to sere, then stood looking at the river. He could see the river and the swamps from the roof and the bridge, and he thought of the mulatto and the nigger cabin. He ate his dinner and asked Eileen to go up and collect his bulrushes, if rain came, and hurried off to school. After school he was told to go and see the master.

"Where were you after recess this morning?"

Pete did not answer.

"Did you follow the poor man who was stabbed?"

"No, sir."

"What did you do then? You played truant."

Pete did not answer.

"Stoop down," and Pete got six cuts with the cane; but he uttered never a sound, and went off home with the words "You will also have three demerit marks" ringing in his ears.

II

Eileen, who had won a beauty prize at a church fair, came in that night very excited, and told her mistress,

"There's been a terrible murder. Mr. Smith of the *Indiana Queen Hotel*, killed by a mulatto. It's all over the town, and the police are looking for the mulatto. He has run away. The corpse is to be laid out in the Town Hall with candles. It will be a regular wake."

"What's a wake, Eileen?" asked Pete.

"Ma cushla, when you die in ould Oireland, they lay the corpse out with lighted candles all round, and people come and look at you, and there's eating and drinking."

"How funny!" said Pete. "Was he Irish then?"

"No; but he was a squireen. He was a very big man in the city."

"Why did the mulatto kill him, Eileen?"

"Well, ma cushla, you wouldn't understand. It was a quarrel. They say his widow is offering a thousand dollars for information which will lead to the capture of the murderer."

"A thousand dollars! Where have people to take the information?"

"To the Town Hall, to the police."

"Whose fault was it, Eileen? Who was in the wrong? The mulatto or the other?"

"Oh, the other; but, whist, you must not breathe a word of it, ma cushla."

Pete said no more; but went to school the next day.

The hotel-keeper's son sat at a desk in front of Pete, and Pete watched him making dummy figures from clay and hanging them. He was very intent on the work, and Pete was puzzled. Young Smith did not seem at all sorry, only to want revenge, to hang the man.

A master came along and saw it, and said:

"Smith, you can put your books away and go home until after the funeral."

The boy got up, he was not a friend of Pete's, and the master appropriated the clay and figures, and took them to his desk and put them inside.

At recess the boys got together and looked at the

house, and the Octoroon came out with a besom and cleared them away. A master came out and ordered them all to the playground, which was already overcrowded. No room for rounders there; so they played tops, and ducks and drakes with stones, and some played marbles. Pete preferred tops, and he always carried a splendid large lignum vitæ ribbed top with a very sharp spike, and he was soon conquering cheap tops by knocking them out of the ring.

Then an older boy came along with a top into which he had screwed screws and left the sharp heads clear, and he said: "I dare anyone to pick that up."

Pete, who had never seen this caddish trick, picked it up, and the screws cut the flesh of his hand, and the older boy burst out laughing.

Pete said nothing, but his eyes blazed, and he went to a willow tree growing at the end of the ground and cut a flexible switch and came back with it. The coward bully had just caught a little boy with this fool-trick, and the boy was bleeding and crying. Pete, with blazing eyes, went up to him and cut him across the face with all his might and said: "You great coward!" He was vibrating with anger. Some of the smaller boys cheered him, and the bully, with a red welt across his face, mad with anger, darted at him. Pete, very nimble and quick, dodged; and suddenly a big boy, one of the seniors in the school, came along, and asked what the little fellow was crying about. Several told him, and told him what Pete had done.

The big boy ran after the bully who was chasing Pete, unable to catch him; for he was a heavy clod of a fellow.

"Look here, O'Leary, give me that screw top."

"I shan't then."

The big boy seized him and took it from his hand, and then he turned to Pete.

"Give me your switch, Pete," and he gave the bully a sound thrashing till he blubbered.

"Now if I ever see you doing that game in this school or anywhere, I will thrash the life out of you, you cur! Line up, boys," he shouted. "He shall run the gauntlet now."

Every boy knotted his handkerchief, some put small stones into the knots, and formed a double line, facing each other, and the big fellow took O'Leary by the ear to one end. "Now run, and if you break the line, you will do it all over again." The great brute with fear in his eyes, staring eyeballs and open mouth, ran and was well baisted. And then the big fellow kicked his backside, and the boys all jeered him, and he slunk off.

The big fellow came up to Pete: "Well done, sonny, you won't be bullied in life," and he patted him on the head. And the school-bell rang.

III

The next half, the day after, Pete and several other boys went to the Town Hall to see the murdered man. He was lying dressed in his best on his back in a satin-lined coffin, with silver handles, and all around him were burning candles, and then a rail, and the queue filed past and looked on the bloated sensual features tranquil in death. Pete looked at him and could not understand why he or others had come to see him there. Eileen had said it was his fault, and so had his mother and father; why, then, make all this show and fuss about him? It was too much for Pete, and he came out, and they went to a soda-fountain and had maple syrup, cream, shaved ice and soda, and then bought packets full of pop-corn, and walked off to the other river—the Brandywine River—to bathe in the hollowed rock which they called "the old armchair." Then they roamed in the woods and watched the chipmunks and birds.

There was a great funeral, men in aprons of many colours carrying a big bible, and men with scarves and with banners. Some dressed in green; men and women

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and young servants in black ; a hearse full of flowers and a band playing the funeral march ; and it wended its long way to the cemetery. Pete had no taste for cemeteries ; so he soon gave up following it, and wondered still more why such a fuss was made over a man who had done wrong. Eileen and his father and mother were very emphatic about it, and he had a great opinion of Eileen's opinion in this matter. The following day a great yellow bill with black letters and a black border stopped him. It was posted on the school fence, and was a bill announcing a reward of a thousand dollars for the first person who would give such information as would lead to the capture of Johnny Searl, the mulatto ; and there was a description of the mulatto beneath. When he got home, he tackled Eileen.

" If you knew, Eileen, where he was, would you go to the police and get the thousand dollars ? "

" No, ma cushla, I would not. He has very many friends, and they might kill me. "

" But it wouldn't be wrong ? "

" No ; it would be right. But I don't want to die yet. Men are very wicked, Pete ma cushla. "

Pete said nothing.

On Saturday he refused to come and play Indians. The fourth was on the Monday, and he walked down to the Town Hall and saw a constable.

" Well, sonny, what do you want ? "

" I want to see the boss. "

" You do, sonny ? What for ? "

" I will tell the boss. "

The constable with his brass star grinned. " Something private, eh ? "

" Yes. "

" All right, sonny, I'll be walking you in, if he will see you. I'll just go and see. "

He returned with a smile, and Pete was shown into an office at the back. The Chief was sitting at a roll-top

desk, and a lady-clerk was sitting at a table taking short-hand notes.

Pete bowed.

"Well, sonny, what is it?"

"I can only tell you in private, sir."

"How? Is it important, sonny?"

"I think you will think so."

The pretty stenographer looked up and smiled at Pete's serious face.

"Miss Harper, will you excuse us a minute?"

She smiled, looked at Pete, and got up and went out and shut the door.

"Sit down, sonny," and he pointed to a chair on the opposite side of the desk. "Now, sonny, tell me the secret."

Pete told his story.

The Chief, a noble-looking man with silver hair, watched the boy's face, and grew graver and graver as the tale proceeded.

"And so you saw the murder done?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, it is given to few to see a murder done. But I have heard some of you boys saw it all. Who else?"

Pete named the five boys whom he knew to be near him and who he knew had seen it. The Chief took their names.

"Could you find your way to the nigger cabin?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, sonny, why are you doing this?"

"I want those thousand dollars."

"But supposing he was in the wrong, the murdered man?"

"I am not to judge of that, and I can't see why anyone has a right to kill another. Nobody will tell me now why the mulatto killed him, and if Mr. Smith was in the wrong, why did they give him such a big funeral and lay him out in the Town Hall as if he had been a great man?"

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" Ah, sonny, when you come to know the world, you will understand. Does your father or mother or Eileen know you have come here to tell me what you have ? "

" No ; Eileen said, if she knew, she wouldn't tell, for his friends would kill her."

" And don't you think they may kill you ? "

" I am not afraid, sir. God says, ' Thou shalt not kill.' "

" What are you going to be, sonny ? "

" I haven't decided. My father wants me to be an engineer ; but I don't want to."

" Be a soldier. You would make another General Washington."

" I'd like to be, sir."

" Well, you tell your father and go to West Point."

" Thank you, sir, I will."

" Well, now, I am going to give you a bit of advice. You must tell no other person what you have told me, except the man I shall send with you. And when you get the money, as you will, if he is captured, you must not tell a soul. Just keep it locked up in your desk, and spend it as you want to, only by degrees, and don't appear to have more money than usual. Eileen, whoever she may be, was quite right. The mulatto's friends, a bad lot from what they tell me, would kill you if they knew."

" I will do as you say, sir."

He pressed a bell and a constable appeared.

" Send Sergeant Taylor here."

Taylor appeared with a silver star on his chest, and the Chief pointed to a chair and pushed the cigars towards him. He took one and lit it, and the Chief told him the story.

" Go down with the boy. He will show you. Can you shoot, boy ? "

" Yes, sir. I practise in our waste lot."

" Give him a Smith and Wesson, and go heeled, and take the mulatto and leave the niggers."

" All right, sir. But I expect he has moved on."

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" Well, go and see. Sonny, do you go out now and meet Sergeant Taylor by the bridge. He won't be wearing his star."

" Yes, sir."

The Chief shook hands with him, and said, " Remember West Point."

" Yes, sir."

He walked down the street to the bridge, and Taylor turned up, dressed quite differently, and with no star.

" Now, sonny, you lead. Here's your gun. Put it in your pocket."

They entered the stifling reed-bed. The old trail was visible, and they followed it through water and mud and a host of midges and mosquitoes, Pete leading. At last they came to the clearing, the perspiration rolling down both their faces, smeared with blood from the mosquito bites.

" There, there's the cabin."

" I see. I'll go first now." They ran at the double across the clearing. An old nigger woman was sitting under a thatch of dried reed stewing some fish in an iron pot, which stood on some stones over a fire.

" Where's Johnny Searl? "

She nodded her head towards the hut.

" Anyone else there? "

" Yep, ole Sambo. He won't hurt. He don't like him here, Massa, 'fraid the constable come."

Taylor drew his revolver, a big '45 Colt, and rushed into the reed and gladen hut.

" Hands up, or I shoot! "

The murderer had drawn his knife and jumped at him.

Old Sambo said, " De debble! " and ran out, and Taylor fired, and the mulatto's arm fell shattered at his side and the knife with it.

Taylor seized him, and taking a cord from his pocket, bound his sound arm to his side. He told Pete to pick up the knife, and, taking the leather sheath from the

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mulatto's waist, he put the knife into it and handed it to Pete to carry. "Now, come along."

They were coming out of the hut, Pete first, where Sambo stood with an axe by the door. Pete yelled and jumped aside and shot Sambo, who was coming towards him with the axe; and the shot went through Sambo and entered the old negress.

Taylor laughed. "Best so, sonny. Dead people tell no tales."

Pete was unmoved.

"You should be a soldier, sonny."

"I'm going to."

"That's the talk, sonny. Lead on."

When they got near the bridge, Taylor said, "You hurry on and skedaddle home as hard as you can go. I don't want you seen in this."

The mulatto looked daggers at Pete, who walked quickly and got home to a bath and a wiggling.

Eileen, who had many admirers, had every evening out, and when she came home she said:

"They have got the mulatto. Sergeant Taylor captured him down by the creek in a cabin. It's all over the town!"

"That so?" said Pete.

"Yes, the Lord be praised."

"But you said he was not in the wrong."

"Yes; but he ought not to have killed Mr. Smith."

It was in the papers the next day, and that he had been carried off to Newcastle, the capital, to be tried and hanged. Soon after, Taylor, dressed in a natty suit of clothes, with a false beard and moustache, called on Pete.

"Well, sonny, I want my revolver, and here's your money," and he counted out the bills. "The Chief told you what to do?"

"Yes."

He gave Taylor his revolver, and they shook hands.

"Not a word, you know. It is officially entered that I received the thousand dollars reward. Some of the hobos have found the dead niggers, and they are tracking me. But, sonny, a nigger soon gives it up. It won't last long."

Pete took his thousand dollar notes. They were all of small denomination, five the highest, and he locked them in a little desk. And he told his father that night he wished to go to West Point. His father was pleased, and agreed, and his mother was told, and his studies directed to that end.

IV

The fourth broke fine, and Pete was out with his friends. This was a whole holiday. They fired their cannon and burst their crackers, and threw their torpedoes at each other's feet, and ate Iceland Moss drops and orange candy, and Pete went to a friend's house to supper, where water-melon and ice-cream were the standing dishes. Pete's bulrushes were perfect, dried to a tick, and they burnt like a slow-match, and he gave many away. He was returning about eleven from his friend's, about a mile away. It was a dark night, and he was walking along the deserted street, the street-lamps were out, when he was seized and a cloth put over his mouth, and he was thrown into a cart, and the cart moved off. It did not go very far, and Pete knew he was in the nigger street, just behind his father's lot. He was carried swiftly into a house and into a room, and the cloth taken from his mouth. The room smelt of niggers and was hot and stifling.

A mulatto with a cruel face sat at a table.

The white-faced boy sat looking at the bestial-looking mulattos, unabashed and unafraid.

"Broder Willum, take him outen, and den we'll talk. We will skin him alive first, I t'ink, Broder Willum."

The negroes all clapped their hands.

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Pete was taken into an evil-smelling little room and locked in. The heat was stifling and the smell was terrible. The window was shut and fastened; he tried to open it in vain. He was not afraid, though he wished he had Taylor's Smith and Wesson.

Pete was relieved to hear a banjo and bones start in the big room, and he knew by the hand-clapping and wailing that they were dancing; and some of them were singing, "Way down along de Swannee River."

It was midnight. He heard the Town Hall clock strike, when three negroes entered, and one put a diacolon plaster over his mouth, and they took him out to a light covered market-cart. Stopping at several places they picked up other boys, their mouths covered with diacolon plasters. Presently they arrived at a big empty house on the outskirts, in the direction of the country, and all the boys (Pete counted twelve) were taken through empty rooms into a large room on the second floor. There were old mattresses on the floor, and the plasters were removed, and roughly too, so that many of the boys there cried out with pain.

"Ef Johnny Searl de mulatto hang, yo all die suttinly," said one of the niggers, and they left.

A horrid-looking old negress came in and eyed them glowering, and told them to get to bed.

The boys lay down and were soon asleep.

Many of the parents had already gone to the police, including Pete's father.

When the Chief and Taylor heard that Pete was amongst the kidnapped, they were very uneasy, and read between the lines that it was on account of the capture of the mulatto and the shooting of the niggers in the swamps, and they got busy. But all attempts to find the children were in vain.

The old negress fed them on mush and milk.

Pete found five boys of his own class; for in these American towns the classes were much as they are

here. At one end of Market Street, near the Brandywine, where the battle of that name was fought, lived the rich magnates, some of whom were uneducated. They had built themselves great staring houses, and had carriages and horses, and the type of this class was one magnate who had made a huge fortune out of carriage-building. He went to the Girard House in Philadelphia once and in the visitors' book entered "J. Marrick, two 'osses and one carridge (*sic*)."

In West Street, where Pete lived, the aristocracy of the town lived, the best American class, as it is in England. Officers in the army and navy, clergymen and professional people; all well educated, all with fair incomes, and all refined and with the perfect manners of the American gentleman and lady. West Street is a short street with red brick pavements and large trees, and on one side neat houses with red pressed bricks, white painted window frames with green jalousied shutters and marble flights of steps up to each house. On the other side the houses stood back and had gardens in front. Those who preferred gardens occupied them, and those who cared nothing for gardens occupied the neat three-storied pressed brick, picturesque houses. There of a summer evening all the families sat on the marble steps on cushions and chatted, running to each other's steps to talk. It was the custom, and if you walked up West Street of an evening, you would see all the youth and beauty there on the steps in pretty fashionable evening clothes, and the men in evening dress. These had nothing to do with the magnates of Market Street.

Many of the West Street residents belonged to the oldest families of America, men whose ancestors of good English families had gone to Massachusetts's Bay Colony in 1638, or to Virginia. For here North and South met, and during the war, just over, Wilmington was on the edge of hostilities, and was once even raided by Confederate cavalry, who galloped across the Brandywine Bridge to the Town Hall

and back, doing no damage, however, for the troops had turned out ; but they dared not fire on account of people in the streets. It was in the Market Street on market-day that every one was crying after Lincoln was assassinated. It was down Market Street that Generals Thomas and Smith had great military funerals. It was there that the Federal troops, all battered and ragged, returned bedecked with laurels after the war.

Pete and the others had seen all these sights ; and now in their dark room they thought of their friends and relations sitting out at night on the marble steps and going in to supper, and of ice-cream and water-melons, and of swimming in the Brandywine River, and of roaming through the Brandywine woods, and of base-ball, and all the joys of healthy boys.

One morning the negress came in white with rage, for a nigger goes white with rage or fear.

“Yo all gwine die sure, dat a sure t’ing. Dey hung Johnny Searl yesterday fo’ killing Massa Smith. He bad man, he make lub to his wife when he away, and he kill him. Yo all die now sure.”

The boys looked at each other. Some began to cry, the younger ones ; but others looked very grave, and Pete and a few others got together.

They had examined the shutters. They were fastened with an iron clamp screwed in place, and the glass windows raised on account of the sultry heat. Several of the boys had their knives, that implement which no schoolboy goes without, if he has the means to procure one, at least in the United States, and they had nearly cut through several of the slats in the shutters, cutting out wedges against the face and leaving them so that they just held. From the stuff on their mattresses they had made a rope. The negress never swept the floor and never did anything but fill a water-jar and bring in the mush and milk and salt, and clear away the dirty plates, three times a day. When it got dark, they went to sleep. She never came

near them after she had locked the door after supper, which was nine o'clock. Then she retired to a back room and ate her supper and smoked a corn-cob pipe.

Pete had assumed the leadership without any election, merely by force of character.

That night he and the other boys determined to escape. When the old negress had removed the mush plates and spoons and milk jugs, they waited till the Town Hall clock struck twelve, and then they listened for any sounds ; but, hearing nothing, they broke the slats in the shutter, and one boy, taking the roughly made rope of mattress tick, was let down. When he got on the ground, he held the rope. He was the strongest boy, and Pete had selected him for the job. They then passed the boys down after warning the youngest not to cry or shout out, and finally Pete descended, and they made their way through the woods on one front of the house to the railway, and all climbed safely over and ran down the street, until they came to a constable with his brass star.

"Hallo, sonnies, where have you come from?"

Pete told him and he stared in amazement.

"And the hull lot of you got away?"

"Sure," said Pete.

"Come along," and they marched to the nearest police-station. The officer in charge took their names, and they sat in a room with a gas jet, and then several constables arrived, and they selected Pete and three of the other boys, and went to the house.

They surrounded it, saw the broken shutter and the dangling rope, and knocked. There was no sound. They broke a door down and entered, and found the old nigger woman asleep.

"Get up, you old witch! Was this the woman?" they asked the boys.

"Yes."

They put handcuffs on her, and two of them took her to the police-station. The rest looked all over the house,

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and then they returned to the station, and two constables took the boys in pairs, dropping them at their houses. Pete's was the last house, and when the constables shook hands with him, they said :

" You should be a soldier. West Point."

" Yes, I'm going there."

" Shake," and they shook. And Pete's delighted people got him supper, and Eileen was overjoyed.

They put the old negress through the third degree, and she confessed, and gave away all concerned, and they were all arrested and lodged in the cells under the Town Hall before daybreak.

v

In due course Pete passed into West Point and gained a commission in the cavalry, and was sent out to a fort in the far west to a district where the Indians had been giving much trouble. He made good.

When the Great War broke out, he came to take part in staff work in the war in France, and at a London hotel one day after dinner he was sitting in the lounge talking with more officers, and they were discussing a murder that had shocked the country.

" Funny job to catch a murderer," said a British officer.

" You can never see them do it. No one has ever seen a murder committed."

" Excuse me, sir," said Pete. " I have seen a murder committed."

The British officer looked at him doubtfully, and asked, " Where ? "

" In the United States," and he told the story.

They listened and were convinced.

" Not much really, when you come down to bed-rock."

" No," said Pete. " A face convulsed and distorted with anger ; a flash of a knife in the sun ; a slamming

door, and a big man walking groggily down some steps and away, dropping blood as he went."

"How old were you?" asked the old general.

Pete told him.

An old British colonel, with many decorations, said, "And what did you do?"

"Tracked the murderer through the streets and through a swamp jungle to a nigger cabin, and took the tecs there, and got a thousand dollars, the reward which was offered."

"Good, sonny! You will excuse me calling you 'sonny.' I am a bit older man."

Pete nodded and smiled.

"Well, I hope you will be attached to ours. A boy who could do that off his own bat should make good over there."

And Pete did, and he and the old colonel became great friends.

"It's the blood, the same old blood and breed, and it always tells," said the general in after days when telling the story.

VII

The *Herring-Bus* Tragedy

I

THE *Herring-Bus* is a lone inn by a very muddy little tidal river in the eastern counties. Its name indicates the trade that was done there in old days, that is the crews of the old Dutch "buses," as the Dutch herring-fishing boats were called, frequented the inn. The Dutch buses combined a bit of smuggling, on no great scale, with the fishing. There were two preventive men stationed there; but they stood in and winked at the small peccadillos of the Dutch traffickers with their bluff bowed buses. The Dutch fishermen were good fellows, and were free with their Hollands and cheap cigars, and free with presents of fish; so the little hamlet nestling on the muddy bank was a happy family. There was an old, bearded, vituperative ferryman who ran the ferry, a deep, stout, heavy boat, which could carry a complement of passengers. There was no parson, no doctor, no policeman there. The inhabitants were line-fishermen for codling chiefly, for smelts which they captured in draw-nets in their season, and for anchors when other harvests failed.

On the north side of the river some lush salt-marshes stretched away to the distant town, "an ancient borough," where a policeman, a doctor, a parson, some tradesmen and a few lodging-house keepers lived, with some larger houses, principally of retired officers of that grand service, the mercantile marine. There was a white-

painted flagstaff on each little green lawn behind their houses, where they amused themselves by flying flags on every possible occasion. On the south side of the muddy tidal stream were several fishermen's sheds, and then a sandy waste upon which many recovered anchors rusted amongst the blue and silver sea-holly which flourished there. There were dikes leading to these black, tarred sheds with their dark-tiled roofs, with wooden tarred bridges thrown across them. The high tides found their way up to the ends of these dikes, and at low water they were noisome and seething wastes of mud, spotted with old tins, decaying seaweed and other rubbish. It was a melancholy landscape; but some artists liked to paint there in summer. The sand and gorse and brambles on the south led to some woods where game was preserved, and where a noted poacher made a good living; for this planting was a good way from the bigger woods of the estate and, therefore, not so carefully looked after.

It was a lone spot, this hamlet, and the old-fashioned *Herring-Bus* the centre of life and joy. There the fishermen gathered when there was nothing doing, and drank Hollands and French brandy, or rum in heavy glasses with heavy glass crushers for the sugar which sweetened their grog. There was a decaying wooden quay by the inn, where the Dutch buses lay when they came in from the North Sea; for they had only to sail up some quarter of a mile of muddy river from the entrance, and lay all snug in a gale, a nor'easter or a nor'wester, which usually blew on that coast. Sheep fed on the salt-marshes, looked after by boys and dogs. They could not wander far away on account of the dikes. In fine weather they were even brought down to graze on the green turf of the old landing-stage, or along the green turf inside the sandy beach. On the south side were various rude windlasses and ropes where the men used to pull their boats high and dry at high springs, or when they needed repairing and dressing.

On fine days the fishermen sat there in little groups on old fish-boxes, smoking their pipes and mending, or making new nets ; for the wear and tear of nets was great. The boats were all clinker-built, had a main-sail and a jib and carried small trawls, which were used at the proper occasions. Two men could handle them easily ; one had been known to do so. In some of the dikes low gun-punts painted the colour of water—a dull grey—were kept, and on early mornings or late evenings, some of the sporting fishermen would with their little brown sails go up the river to the more secluded parts after fowl at fighting time, or after some rarity as an avocet, brent geese, and the like. Some had swivel guns ; but they were too costly to buy or fire, and mostly they used shoulder-guns, muzzle-loaders of old pattern ; but the birds killed all helped to keep the pot boiling.

The *Herring-Bus* was kept by an ex-fish-merchant and his wife. The old innkeeper had been a fisherman with cautious, commercial instincts, and used to buy, before he took to keeping a “ public,” the catches of the other fishermen and take them in a donkey-cart to the town across the marshes and hawk them. The keep of his donkey cost him nothing ; gorse and grass were plentiful on the bits of land surrounding the marshes and lying between them and the beach. The population was small, thirty-two families in all. They lived mostly in a small, whitewashed row of cottages on the south side. The hamletites were reticent, honest, excepting as to smuggling, stolid, superstitious and healthy. For though their surroundings were not very healthy, they got plenty to eat from the sea and the tidal river, kept fowls and pigs which ate fish offal, and grew a few of the commoner and more easily grown vegetables, such as potatoes, cabbage and turnips. They had an airy smoke-house, where they in turn cured their bloaters and high-dried at midsummer, when the midsummer herrings swam past the hamlet ; for the midsummer herring is the sweetest

of all, when converted into a bloater or high-dried by the oak-wood fires which cost them nothing ; for they picked up after a storm much wreckage on the beach. You could always see plenty of wreckage there ; but they resented any " foreigner," as the people in the town were designated, collecting the drift-wood. They did not sell their bloaters or high-dried ; they were ear-marked for their own consumption, as were the smoked hams and bacon they got from their pigs, which they hung from nails in their dark kitchens. With all its squalor, Wobbleswick was a picturesque little place, especially when the bluff Dutch buses with their leeboards were sailing in and out of the so-called harbour, or moored to old rusting bollards on the decaying quay.

II

Frank Hobdy and his wife were about fifty years of age, hard-working, sober and intent on making a nest-egg for their old age. He was a kindly man and always glad to do anyone a good turn. He gave good measure, and was not pressing in the matter of payment ; and though there was no real distress in that hamlet, Mrs. Hobdy would take eggs and milk and other things to any cottage where there was sickness or a new child.

They were a quiet old couple, without chick or child, and liked by all. In fact the inhabitants of Wobbleswick were a happy family, and all that worried Mr. Hobdy was his licence ; he must do nothing to endanger that, and when any of the young fishermen were inclined to indulge too much or stay after closing time, he pointed the danger out to them, and they understood and left ; for they did not want any " foreigner " to keep the *Herring-Bus*. Hobdy, curiously, had no prejudices. He got on well with the Dutchmen, and stopped smartly any international arguments between them and the fishermen, so that bad blood should not arise ; and afterwards he would point out to such as were inclined to resent the

“foreigners” that they didn’t interfere with their trade, whatever they did with the Yarmouth fishermen’s deep-sea trade, and “if they didn’t come here, your spirits and bacca would cost you double, and not be so good, neither.” They were sensible, and international politics was taboo in the *Herring-Bus*, and peace reigned and good fellowship; for the Dutchmen were not bad sorts.

Frank dressed as a fisherman always: blue guernsey, duffle trousers, big boots, and wore generally an old black sou’wester, and, of course, in wet weather “oilies,” which were also black. His was a tied-house, therefore he had beer from a local brewery; spirits I have hinted he had a method of his own in obtaining, and his landlord winked at that. His landlord was a small brewer, and so long as Frank took so many barrels of beer a year, he did not care what else he earned. He knew how to be astute and discreet. The single policeman of the town rarely called there: a very conceited and unpleasant fellow; but, like many such, he was also a coward, and knew that the men of Wobbleswick would not hesitate to drop him into the river if he made himself objectionable; and he saw he was not liked there, for if ever he turned up when the *Bus* was full, surly looks and no greetings met him.

III

It was one bitter December day just about Christmas-time. Hobdy had been busy and taken good money. The line-fishing had been good that autumn, and prices had been good; smelts had been plentiful and fetched exceptionally high prices; so they had money to spend in their small way. And the Dutch buses had brought in extra supplies of Hollands and French brandy, and cheap German cigars from Bremen. Mrs. Hobdy was ill in bed with influenza of mild character; but it made her too ill to work, and she had pains all over her, and a bright fisherman’s daughter, Polly Heron, had come in

to help her and look after her ; for Polly often came to help when there was a press of work.

It had been snowing hard for two days. The dikes were all frozen ; there was ice at the edge of the river ; there were no Dutch boats in, they were keeping Christmas across in Holland ; there were no visitors at the town. The district was deserted and few wild-fowlers were out ; but the snipe were nothing but feathers and bones owing to the weather, and the mallard had gone south, and the only hope was wild geese or an old hare for the Christmas dinner. The sea was very rough, too, and the nor'east snow-squalls were blinding. There was no fishing.

The men kept to their sheds, doing the odd jobs always to be found by fisherfolk, dressed in many guernseys and protected by white slops, in sou'westers and oilies and mittens and crotch-boots. Then between work and meals they would collect in the *Herring-Bus* and drink and smoke and yarn. It was Christmas Eve. The last two fishermen had left at closing time, well primed. They wished old Hobdy the compliments of the season and staggered off home in the driving snow ; and he locked the front door.

Polly left Mrs. Hobdy and came down to help clean up the grog glasses and beer mugs, and tidy up. Old Hobdy was in the wood-shed cutting wood from the wreckage for the fire and for the old-fashioned brick-oven, in which the Christmas dinner was to be cooked the next day. For he never opened on Christmas Day, and the day after was Sunday, and there would be little to do, if anything, with that weather and sea.

"How is the missus, Polly?"

"She'd like some hot brandy and water."

"Well, mix it. You know where to get the things. It may sweat the influenza out of her."

"That's what she say," and she set about mixing a grog with sugar and lemon and brandy, and took it up to her.

She returned. "Can I do anything for you, Frank?"

"No; I've cut all the wood we shall want, and everything is ready, and we'll get a rest till Monday, and maybe more with this weather and all. Go you on up to the missus. I'll be up soon arter I have counted the takings. Mor, we have done well."

"Good night," said Polly. "I'll sit with her till I hear you coming up."

"All right, Polly; I won't be long. Night you go."

IV

Frank sat down with his cash-box and cash-book and began to count the takings of the last week and do them up in paper *rouleaux* in pound packets, the pence in shilling rolls. He entered it all in his notebook and replaced the money in the cash-box. There was a loud knocking at the front door. He threw the lid of the cash-box over and shut the cash-book and, taking a lantern from a peg, lit it and went to the door and opened it. Through the driving snow he saw a man with a pack.

"What, old Joe! With this weather!"

"Yes, Bor. Can I come in and have a warm and a sup? That be rare cold."

"In course. Come you in," and he opened the door, and the man, well wrapped up, with his pack on his back, walked in all snow-covered.

He stood and stamped his feet and took off a great-coat and a muffler and scarf and, throwing them on to a settle in the hall, he brushed the snow off the American cloth covering his pack, and followed Frank into the kitchen. There was still a good fire there, and Frank heaped it up with logs, and Joe the pedlar threw the pack with a bang on to the table.

"No luck. I ain't sold a dollar's worth of stuff to-day."

"That so? What be you carrying?"

"Well, cotton and buttons and pins and needles and

beads and ribbons and razors and combs and all. Just the same as ever, only I got some holly-galone this voyage; got that at Seamouth on the quiet."

"What shall I get you? A bit of bread and cheese and some beer?"

"Beer? No. I want sommat warm this weather. You have got some of that old brandy?"

Frank noticed that his speech was thick, that he had been drinking already, and said:

"That fare to go to the head quick this weather."

"Never you mind that, Bor. My head is my own, bain't it?"

"In course, Joe. I was only warning yew."

"I'll have sixpennorth of that old French brandy of yours, Frank."

Frank drew it and put the sixpence in the cash-box, and then locked it and put it with his cash-book in a small cupboard. Joe's eyes followed him.

"Yew hev' taken more than me this week, I bet, Frank."

"Mustn't complain."

"Well, you must do a deal along with me afore Christmas Day. Come on," and he opened his pack.

"I don't want none of them things, Joe."

"Yes, you dew. Look here at these razors, half a crown and cheap at the money."

"Noä, Bor, I ain't no use for a razor. I got a beard."

"Well, you must buy for luck, Frank." And he stood holding the razor with one hand and drinking the neat brandy with the other.

When he had finished the brandy, he did up his pack and put it on the floor; but he still persisted in pressing the razor, which he had left out, on Frank. Frank wouldn't have it, and then the pedlar asked for more brandy. Frank reluctantly drew him another sixpennorth from the keg and put the money in his pocket.

"Well, Bor, I'm going up to bed."

"I'll sit here and sleep afore the fire. I mun sweat right trew and trew. These billets won't last the night. Get some more, Frank, I'll pay."

"That be a rare rough night to go out ter shod, snowin' and blowin' as that is."

"Go you on, Bor, I'll pay. I got money," and he pulled out some money from an inner pocket.

"I shall have to chop some more then, if you be going to keep the fire up all night. That will be worth tree shillin'."

"Well, there you be," and he tossed three shillings on to the table, and then holding up the razor, which he was still gripping in his right hand, the brandy glass in the other, he said: "Yew will buy this now?"

"No, Bor, and if you ax me again, I'll kick you out inter the snow. I have told you, Bor, a dozen times that bain't no use ter me. I got a beard, see," and he pointed to his beard.

"All right, Bor," and he lurched down into the chair before the fire, after finishing his brandy.

Frank lit the lantern again, and put on his oilies and went out into the snow with a fish-basket to cut and get more wood.

The pedlar's eyes were glued to the cupboard where he had seen Frank deposit the cash-box; cupidity was expressed in his dark, cunning eyes.

V

Christmas morning broke stormily; the north-east snow squalls continued. It had snowed heavily all night and had drifted against the front door. The windows were half buried in frozen snow, and the landscape was silent and dead. No sheep on the marshes; they had all been driven to the farms for food and shelter. Not a soul seemed to be stirring. The house looked like a Christmas card. The snow fell silently and the landscape was silent. A few hungry, wild fowl cried on the marshes

and worked down the various runnels for a spring, where they picked up a scanty meal, until the tide began to fall, and then they found food in the ooze. But they were all bones and feathers, and the gunners would not go after them, they "worn't no mander of use."

The fishermen stuck in their houses, helping their wives cook the Christmas dinner, and then they all fell to and gorged, and drank beer and grog until the short winter's day closed. Some went to their black-pitched huts and put a few odds and ends to rights; but the bitter cold drove them back to their comfortable fireplaces, where they ate another big meal and drank and smoked until bedtime, when they all turned in.

"A dirty night at sea," they mostly remarked, as they went to their beds.

It snowed and blew all night, and the waves thundered on the beach close by.

They all got up late and ate their breakfasts, and then had some beer and smoked. Some few went to other men's cottages and mardled; but the driving snow and icy wind kept them close indoors, and so by eating and drinking and sleeping and playing games in some of the cottages, where there were children, that day passed, and every one was glad when bedtime came. Those who looked out said the wind was backing, and it would be south-west in the morning, and a rare old thaw would follow. Then there would be fishing and the wild fowl would cover their ribs and there'd be some fowl worth shooting.

They arose early on the Tuesday, as was their custom on weekdays, and stood by their doors watching the wind. It had backed and the snow had stopped falling, and it was a silent white world they looked upon covered by snow, three, four and five feet deep in places. The sun came out, and the blue sky began to show in large patches. They went into breakfast rejoicing, and after breakfast

they went to their sheds and boats and worked, clearing the snow out of them, and making good any ravages of the storm. They returned tired and hungry to dinner ; and after dinner, two of them said : “ Less us go and see old Frank.”

The snow had already begun to thaw and stick to their boots, as they helped the old ferryman shovel the snow out of his great boat, and they got in and went through the floating ice and landed and walked up towards the *Herring-Bus*.

“ I don’t see no smoke coming out of his chimbley,” said one, “ that fare a hennapecker, cold as that be.” The snow was virgin. Beyond the traces of rats and voles and the feetings of some birds, the virgin snow was untouched.

They reached the *Herring-Bus*. The snow on the windows was melting, and water dripping and slides falling from the roof. But the path up the garden was unsullied except for a hare’s pad.

“ See, old Sarah have been arter the cabbages,” said one, pointing to the hare’s feetings.

“ Or else that be the witch-hare,” said the other, a superstitious man.

“ They don’t appear to be stirring.”

“ They be in the kitchen all right ; come on.” They went to the door and knocked.

There was no answer after repeated knocking and trying the door.

“ They be gone inter Sole.”

“ Never knew Frank leave the ship without a watch. Less us go round to the back.”

They walked through the soft, melting snow along the path and came to the back door. It was locked. They beat upon it ; but there was no answer.

“ There go an old Sarah, come out of the brussels-sprouts there ; look at her loping along to the meshes.”

They stopped and watched the hare loping through the

snow, and saw her disappear down the bank ; and then they returned to the ferry and crossed.

“ Where be old Frank ? ” they asked the ferryman.

“ I dunno. Nobody ain't been over 'cept you Bors.”

“ Have you been robbing them ? ” laughed one.

“ Noä, Bor. I only crossed with you and then crossed to fetch you back ; for though that bain't so cold, it be bad weather for my screwmatics.”

They had dinner and watched the snow melting fast with joy.

Towards evening they determined to go over and see Frank and have a drink and a smoke. He would be back after six.

The ferryman had gone at dusk. Nobody wanted him, and they couldn't get across. So they went home and had some supper and a smoke and some grog and turned in. It was thawing fast and the roofs beginning to reappear, and water was pouring down into the river and dikes. They were up early the next morning, a fine, still day and a warm south-westerly wind. The marshes were showing yellow grass, as the morning sun came up red through the mists, and lapwings were calling on the marshes and feeding hungrily on the then clear spaces. Snipe were bibbling by the runnels, and shore birds flashing white and fishing along the beach. After baling the snow-water out of their boats and mopping them out, and doing other little jobs, they decided to go over and see old Frank. They had not seen him since Christmas Eve, the Saturday before, and this was Wednesday—three days.

They crossed by the ferry.

“ Anyone been over ? ”

“ Noä, Bor. You be the fust. I can't arn no living this way.”

They walked to the house. The garden was a wilderness of blasted things, damp and sodden, and snow-water dripped from the roof. They knocked. There was no reply, and then they looked at each other rather seriously.

“What! Not at home? There must be summat wrong!”

They went to the back. The door was fastened and no sign of life.

“Less look at the shod and stable and all.”

They went to the stable. There was a donkey eating some gorse cut a few days before, and heaped in a corner, and nearly finished now.

The donkey looked at them, its long ears pointing forward. It began to bray; and they laughed and went out, shutting the door.

“But he had tew grass-lions, and I didn’t fare to see his cart.”

“Well, less look in the wood-shod, and we’ll go back and hev’ a look in the stable again.”

Tom Smith opened the door of the wood-shed and stood transfixed. He muttered something and ran in. There lay Frank Hobdy dead, his head almost severed from his body.

“It’s bloody murder, Bor, that’s what it be.”

The other man looked over his shoulder.

“By gorm, poor old Frank! That plain it, and I fear for old Mrs. Hobdy. Pick up that axe and we’ll break in.”

They shut the wood-shed door and a big rat scuttled out. They broke in a small window and climbed into the cold kitchen. On the table was the empty cash-box, in the fireplace was a pile of ashes, and a glass, still smelling of brandy, stood on the table.

“Come along, old pardner, we’ll go up and see how the missus be.”

They unlatched the door leading to the upper chamber, and then the first man started back.

“Lord a mercy, if it bain’t Polly with her weazand cut, poor critter! Some devils hev’ been here.”

They felt her face, and she was cold and stiff, and the blood all congealed on the step down which it had run.

They went up the stairs carefully, not touching her, and

into Mrs. Hobdy's room. She lay in bed with a ghastly cut on her throat, stiff, icy-cold and dead. The drawers had been forced open, and things were pulled out and thrown about the floor, clothes, papers and knick-knacks. They looked all round, went into the other two rooms; the thieves had been there too, and they came down and let themselves out through the broken window, and finding some boards, nailed them over the window.

"We'd best go up to Sole, and tell the policeman."

"Yes, crool, crool, I call it."

"Yes. Poor old Frank and Polly, and the missus, and she with the influenza and all."

They walked fast along the road across the marshes, and got to the police-station. The conceited policeman was reading a paper. He looked up.

"Well, what's wrong?"

"Mr. Hobdy and his missus and Polly Heron hev' been murdered at the *Herring-Bus*. All tree had their weazands cut."

"What?" roared the policeman.

"What I say."

He got a writing pad and took down their statements and asked them to sign them, which they did.

"Go you back and stop there and let nobody go in."

"If you say 'please' I will. I don't take orders from no 'foreigner.'"

"I'll remember you for this, see, if you done it."

"Look here, Mr. Horter, if you say that agen, I'll knock yew down. We have come here to do our dooty and want a bit of civility. No Wobbleswick man would touch a hair of their heads. It's some 'foreigner' like you."

The constable was a coward. He glared at them and then asked them civilly to do as he had bid.

They hurried off, and he went to the telegraph office. The 'phone had broken down or been cut. He informed his Chief at a large town near, and hurried off on his bicycle to the *Herring-Bus*.

The two fishermen were keeping guard, one at the front door and one at the back, and other fishermen were there talking gravely to them. It had spread all over the hamlet, and a few women turned up. Polly's mother was there weeping her eyes out ; and all around was a sodden landscape filled with the cries of wild-fowl : a melancholy picture in the bright sunlight.

The constable looked very officious, and went searching all about the place ; but no clue could he find. He came out.

" The warmints used a razor and they took that and the keys of both doors and old Frank's donkey and cart. Must have been done on Saturday ; they are all tree stiff. And there bain't no feetings all along of the snow. They have broken everything open and took all the money ; not a penny in the place and no joolery, and no doubt the missus had some."

" Yes ; she wore a big brooch with a head cut on that, and some rings. I know them."

" They took over ten pounds from the cash-box 'cording to his cash-book, which he had made up to Saturday night."

A dog-cart was coming along the marsh-road.

" There comes the inspector, and I ain't sorry. This be too big a job for me."

The inspector and a constable in uniform arrived, and the local policeman went over and talked with them when they alighted, and they came to the inn and went in. A key had been found inside which fitted the back door.

The inspector went through the place with a notebook and made several notes, and then went to the wood-shed and viewed the body.

" What was the other donkey like ? "

" I dunno," said the fisherman, " I don't understand donkeys, looked very much like this."

" And the cart ? "

"I dunno. One of them little green spring carts, like the hawkers use."

"Yew fishermen doan't know noathin'," said the local constable.

"Come, Horter, this isn't in their line. They know boats and fish and guns and wild-fowl. They can't know everything. We'll find out all about the donkey and cart at Sole, and that won't help much. They have sold that or let it stray."

The old doctor arrived. The inspector had warned him on the way down. He looked at the bodies and made a few notes, and then he told the inspector that they had been dead several days, and had died almost instantaneously, their main arteries had been cut, their carotids; and he asked a few questions and left.

The inspector then interrogated the two fishermen and left.

"I will send two constables and a plain-clothes man to relieve you, Horter."

Horter saluted, and they drove away.

Later, the plain-clothes man and two constables arrived on bicycles and took charge, and Horter trudged home rather hipped. He felt he had missed a chance, a great chance, and realized he was "thick in the skull," a great and chastening admission for him.

The detective, one of the sharpest on the staff, went carefully over the ground and searched for the razor; but none was to be found on the premises. The two policemen had crossed the ferry and were making a door-to-door inquiry; but no one knew anything. But they got a description of the donkey and cart from an old man who had in his time hawked fish. No one had seen anyone arrive at the inn after closing time. It was snowing and the inn too far away. No one knew anything, and the constables were satisfied they were speaking the truth, and all they gained in the hamlet was a second description of the cart and missing donkey and harness. At Sole, the

police learnt that a pedlar with his pack, well known in the district, had been round to several houses on Christmas Eve. He had arrived by train early that morning; he had eaten some meat and bread and had some beer at a small public, and then some drink in the evening, and he left about closing time. That was all they could find; but they got a good description of the pedlar, who was well known in those parts, and he had not been seen about there since Christmas Eve.

The police all round were, of course, warned to look for the donkey and cart, and to find the pedlar, upon whom some suspicion fell. His description was circulated.

At last the donkey and cart were found on a common near Lowestoft, straying, and was taken to the police station. There was nothing in the cart; but evidently, from the damp condition of the cushions, it had been deserted in the snow. Nothing could be heard of the pedlar, who seemed to have disappeared altogether, though the police were looking for him everywhere.

The inquest was held, and a verdict of wilful murder against some person or persons was returned, and all three victims were buried in the churchyard at Sole, all the hamlet following the three coffins; and the inn was closed for a few weeks, until a new tenant could be found, which was done; but he was a "foreigner" from Seamount, an old naval man and his wife. He had seen a good deal of fighting in the China seas, and had no fear of spooks, and he came in and soon got on with the hamlet-folk, though he was a "foreigner."

One day, three months after, the pedlar was found out Wymondham way. The police interrogated him, and he made a statement.

No, he had never been to the *Herring-Bus*. He had had some drink before closing time at Sole, and started to walk to Lowestoft, and got a lift in a carrier's cart, whom he named; and he went by train to Seamount, for the fishing boats were paid off, and he hawked about amongst

them, and then moved on out Wymondham way. He had read of the murders at the *Bus*, but had seen no notice asking him to come forward, or he should have done so. The carrier who picked him up near Lowestoft was found, and a porter in the station there remembered seeing him with his pack that night, and several people at Seamount saw him selling things and some had bought from him. His story appeared to be true. The local Press began to make a dust and abuse the police, and so the Chief Constable of the county called in the aid of the C.I.D., Scotland Yard, and a very clever young sergeant-detective of the Criminal Investigation Department was sent down to investigate the matter.

VI

Detective-Sergeant Michel read all the notes on the case carefully as he journeyed down to Sole, which he reached by train. There he had a long consultation with the local policeman, whom he wrote down an ass.

“ Has anyone been spending much money about here ? ”

“ No.”

“ Anyone bought a new boat or that ? ”

“ No ; but I am not sure.”

“ Any jewellery pawned or sold ? ”

“ No.”

The local police had tried all the pawnshops on the trail of the pedlar, and in the local Press had been published a description of the jewellery, so far as could be ascertained ; but they were vague. The brooch had been Mrs. Hobdy's grandmother's, also the rings, and one ring, the wedding ring, was plain and had been bought at Lowestoft. Polly had lost a cheap rolled-gold brooch.

If the pedlar had committed the crime, as some thought, though it could not be proved that he had been to the *Herring-Bus* or nearer to it than Sole that night, he would know how to dispose of it secretly ; and so a reward of twenty pounds was offered for anyone coming forward

with the missing jewellery ; but no one applied for the reward.

Sergeant Michel went to every house in the hamlet, but gained no information. He interviewed the carrier who had picked the pedlar up. The man was an honest, straightforward man, and said he met Joe, whom he knew right well ; he was done, carrying his pack in the snow, and he gave him a lift and dropped him at the station at Lowestoft. He did not notice anything particular about him. His breath smelt a bit of brandy. He had admitted that he had drunk too much of it at Sole, and he slept most of the way in the cart ; the brandy and the cold would account for that.

“ Did he talk in his sleep ? ”

“ No, sir, no ; just snored.”

“ Nothing peculiar about him ? ”

“ No, sir, barring he had had a drop too much, and that being Christmas time and all I thought nothing of it. It was certain that he could have walked with his pack in the snow up to where he was picked up in the time he had given. He said he wanted to get to Seamount for Monday, and he could sleep off the booze in the train.”

Witnesses were found who travelled with him, and they stated he slept all the time in the train, and an old woman who kept cheap lodgings at Seamount, said he arrived soon after the train came in from Lowestoft, had some supper, and went to bed. She had noticed nothing peculiar about him, and there was no blood on his clothes that she saw. He slept very late on the Sunday, till dinner time, and had dinner and stopped in all day. On Monday morning, after breakfast, he went out on business. He left three days after when the thaw came. He had often stopped there before, and was as usual.

It was a baffling case, and Sergeant Michel felt that he was up against a very stiff proposition. He determined to find the pedlar, whom he suspected and, by help of the police, he found him at a little village on the Broads. He

was staying at a small inn. He had made it his headquarters, and was walking about the marshes, stopping at mills, cottages, farm-houses, and the villages round, selling his goods. Michel, dressed in very seedy clothes, with an old camera and stand, arrived at the *Horseshoe*, where he was staying; and when the pedlar came in that night tired, after supper, Michel addressed him.

“ Been on the road ? ”

“ I have that. Long walks and little pay; took five shillings and sixpence to-day and walked, I guess, fifteen mile for it.”

“ Well, I only got two and six.”

“ What’s your job, then ? ”

“ Photographs.”

“ They don’t like ’em here. I used to carry some in my pack. But they wanted gays, hand-made gays, or cedar pencil.”

“ Oh, that’s what they want, is it? Well, I’d better move on.”

They drank and smoked after supper. Michel was so generous that Joe the pedlar went to bed intoxicated.

Michel, who had the next room, got in and stole his clothes, and examined them carefully, and took a minute description of them. He had evidently bought them second-hand somewhere. There were no papers except a little account-book of recent date, and in his pack was nothing but his stock with an inventory. Michel had cut a bit of the cloth from the inside of his trousers and put it in his wallet.

Michel bade him farewell the next day, and said he’d try the fishing town where there were sailors and mawthers, and the pedlar advised him to do so.

VII

Detective-Sergeant Michel went to Seamouth and round to all the second-hand clothes shops with his bit of trousering; but he could not trace that anyone at all

resembling the pedlar had bought a suit there at the date of the murder or since. A firm said they had sold several second-hand suits of the same material about then, as it was the fashionable spring cloth of that year, and they all agreed it would be pretty hopeless for him to trace where the suit was bought in Seamouth. Nothing but a very distinctive suit could be so traced, and this was quite an ordinary one.

Michel was very downhearted. It seemed hopeless to find the murderer, and if only he could find something of the pedlar's near the *Herring-Bus*, it would help. But neither razor nor anything had been found. Michel even went so far as to have all the finger-prints he could find on the cart and the harness developed and photographed and compared with the pedlar's finger-prints. The result was in the negative, and though several finger-prints were developed and photographed at the *Herring-Bus*, none fitted the pedlar. He determined, then, to rule him out; there was nothing to go upon. He had been suspected because he had left Sole the evening of the murder, and was a "foreigner." It was really ridiculous. No single person had even seen him walking in that direction. The night and snow-storm had swallowed him up when he left the little public, and his statements of his after movements had all been corroborated by several disinterested witnesses.

Michel had, of course, carefully gone over the statements of the two fishermen who had visited the house twice to see Frank after the murder; but their alibis were perfect and irreproachable. Yet the evidence undoubtedly pointed to the murderer or murderers having driven off in the publican's donkey-cart, and the same way that the pedlar admitted he took. Of course, in that blinding snow no one would be able to distinguish the donkey and cart, even if a person had passed close to it. If this murder was premeditated, a more fitting time could scarce have been chosen. Robbery was, of course, the motive.

But the pedlar bore a good character ; the police had nothing against him, not even a suspicion, before this tragic affair. It seemed opposed to all experience that such a man should plan and carry out such a cold-blooded murder. Certainly he had said he had done badly at Sole ; but then these people always do pretend they have done badly. It is the way of nearly all trades, and the best that they will admit is that " they must not complain." He determined to go and consult an alienist and psychologist he knew, and ask his opinion.

Michel took a day off and ran up to London and put a hypothetical case to him.

" You say the man had done badly ? "

" So he said."

" Was he angry ? "

" Yes, waspish and drank more than usual, spirits, too."

" Well, you may depend he *had* done badly and drank to buck up his low spirits. You say he was not usually a spirit-drinker ? "

" No, he was not ; a bitter-beer man. But remember the weather was very cold."

" Did he have the spirits warm ? "

" No ; drank it neat. Brandy."

" Well, he *was* hipped and reckless."

" Would such a man, on seeing money and a person with it in a lonely place, be likely to go for him ? "

" If he went on drinking raw spirits, yes. The cash-box or cash would suggest robbery. Robbery would suggest murder, if there was no other way of getting it."

" There was not in the circumstances."

" Well, he would in the circumstances not hesitate to kill, especially if he had had no food."

" He drank without eating ? "

" Yes. He could have easily become a murderer, especially if he had had any lethal weapon in his hand. What was the murder done with, what implement ? "

" A razor."

"If he saw a razor or had one in his hand, that is the very weapon he would use."

"What, auto-suggestion?"

"Yes."

"Then the murder was not premeditated?"

"No; in that case it was one thing suggesting another. The bad business and bad weather caused depression; the depression suggested the most potent excitant, raw spirits in quantity. Unless the subconscious was free to act, the primitive instincts would not assert themselves, and the sight of money would suggest robbery, to put all right, and the sight of a razor would suggest the means, and then the man would act at the first opportunity, especially if he kept on drinking."

"Supposing he was in a lonely house with other people in it, and he killed the man for the money, would he kill the others?"

"Not the least doubt of it, as robbery was the motive. After having killed him he would go and kill the others, wishing to have a clear field, and pillage the place. Was he likely to have been disturbed?"

"No, quite unlikely."

"Oh, well, the man killed all the persons, looted the place, and escaped by the swiftest means. The work would sober him, and he'd lock the place up. Was the murder on a Thursday or a Saturday?"

"A Saturday, it is probable. But why do you fix on Saturday?"

"Because most murders are committed on Saturday night between ten and twelve."

"Wonderful! It *was* committed between ten-thirty and probably twelve."

"Yes. Statistics would have fixed the probability of that day and that hour, and attributed it to alcohol, as no doubt this murder, as reconstructed by what you have given me, is a typical case. The man, too, I should say, was probably between twenty and forty."

"Again you have hit it, doctor. He was about forty or just over."

"Was he a homicidal maniac?"

"Not at all. As sane as you or I, when off the drink."

"And you tell me he did not as a rule drink?"

"Yes."

"Well, he was a sane man, and had it not been for the bad business and the bad weather, i.e. the depression, he would not have drunk raw spirits. If he had seen no lethal weapon and there had been no opportunity, he would not have committed it; but drank himself mad. And if he had not seen a cash-box, he would then possibly not have done it. It all depends how far gone in drink he was."

"How can I catch him?"

"It's not a hypothetical case, then?"

"No. I now feel sure I know who committed the murder. How can I bring it home to him?"

"Well, by hypnotism. Hypnotism never lies."

"That is hopeless."

"Well, try this," and the doctor gave him an idea.

"Will you be there?"

"With great pleasure."

"I will wire you 'come,' and the address where I am carrying out the experiment."

"I shall be more than pleased to assist."

So it was settled.

Michel returned to Sole, and went out and saw the new landlord of the *Herring-Bus*, and showed him his credentials.

"Yes, sir; what can I do?"

"If ever the pedlar Joe, you will have heard of him, comes here, just wire me at once, and keep him here as long as you can. Give him very easy terms and free drinks and that. I'll pay for it all."

"Yes, sir."

"And not a word to a soul."

"All right, sir. Mum is the word."

Michel returned to town and told the Chief of his plan. The Chief listened and agreed.

VIII

It was the following Christmas, a year after the murders, that the pedlar turned up. He slipped his pack down and said: "I han't been this way for nigh two year."

"No? A bit out of your route, I expect."

"It is that. But these fishermen have money at Christmas, and the shops don't have such a hold of them. I will have a bite and a sup and go to bed."

The landlord gave him a surprising supper, drink and all, for a shilling.

"How do you do it?"

"Well, you are a kind of walking advertisement for me. I treat all drummers very easy."

"Dang if I don't stay here over Christmas, then!"

"You will be welcome."

The landlord walked into Sole that evening and gave the postmaster a telegram to be sent off as soon as he could on Monday, and returned.

He received an early reply.

"Keep two rooms. I'm coming down with a friend to do a little shooting."

They were busy getting the two bedrooms ready.

"What, got company coming?"

"Yes, two gents coming for a bit of wild-fowling."

"Well, they won't interfere with me?"

"No. They've hired the sitting-room."

The pedlar went on his rounds, and by the afternoon train Michel and the doctor arrived.

"Now, landlord, we want you to get some one to 'dress up' and follow the pedlar, and rob him. You can assure them nothing will happen to them, only they must use no violence. And you must press raw spirits on him, and

then you must put your cash-box on the table here, and count the money before him, and then go out into the wood-shed to get some wood, and let the girl and the missus stop upstairs. Put this old razor-case on the table where he can take it without your seeing him. He will come out to the shed to kill you with that razor, after he has had some drink. It's made of compo, and you couldn't cut cheese with it for all its looks. He will come up behind you, draw the razor across your throat, and you must fall and groan and die, like an actor."

"I'll fix it, sir. Reminds me of theatricals on the old *Billy Ruffian*," and he laughed.

"We'll look after the missus and your daughter, and tell them what to do."

"I must go out and get some one to hold him up just as he comes into Wobbleswick. That will be closing-in time."

He returned and said he had got a man. "But I had to tell him you were a swell London detective, or he wouldn't risk it; and I said there'd be a pound or two for him."

"That's all right."

IX

A little after closing time the pedlar came in, very tired and dirty and depressed.

"Been robbed by a footpad just outside the village over there; rolled me in the dirt and said he'd cut my throat, if I didn't give him all the money I had. He took nigh five pounds off me. Some brandy, landlord."

"Will you have hot water or cold?"

"No water, neat. I'm done, and I want something to pull me up."

The landlord filled a glass with neat brandy, and he drank it off and ordered another. When this was gone, the landlord got his cash-box and put it on the table, and began to count his money. The pedlar's eyes gleamed, and his glance fell on the razor-case. He softly slid his hand towards it and hid it in his palm.

The landlord looked at the fire.

"I must go and get some more wood from the shed."

"Where's your missus and the girl?"

"Upstairs. The missus bain't well, and the girl is upstairs in her chamber."

He went out, and the pedlar took out the razor. It gleamed in the lamp-light. He suddenly finished up his brandy, and getting up, went out to the hall. He returned in a few minutes, looking wild, and made for the door at the bottom of the stairs, and on the stairs he met the daughter. He seized her and drew the razor across her throat. She shrieked and fell on the stairs, and he went up and killed the landlady in the same way; and then he began to rob the drawers and take what valuables there were and, coming down, emptied the cash-box into his pocket, and went out to the stable after locking, as he thought, both doors. He heard the landlord in the wood-shed, and crept up behind him and cut his throat. Then he put the donkey into the cart, threw his bundles in and started for the road, when he was seized by the detective and the doctor and two fishermen, who were in hiding. He struggled in vain, and was pulled back into the kitchen; one of the fishermen taking the donkey and cart back to the stable.

They gave him a tumbler of neat brandy. He drank it off.

"I warn't caught last time doing it."

Then in walked the landlord. The pedlar shook like a leaf.

"My God, risen from the dead! Be all this a dream? T'other one didn't get up no more."

The detective whistled, and the landlord's wife and daughter came down. They, like the landlord, had red paint on their necks. They all three stood staring like dead people with dropped jaws and staring eyes at him.

He covered his eyes with his hands.

"Ghostesses! God!"

Then three others dressed like the three he had killed

the year before walked in, and stood with the others staring at him.

"Look at the six people you have killed."

"Gawd! I never believed in ghosts," and he drew the razor from his pocket and attempted to cut his throat. But it failed, and he looked at it.

"Gawd! I'm mad. That killed them three; but that won't kill me," and he threw it on to the floor.

"Why did you kill them?" asked the detective, solemnly.

"Money, money and drink. That's what done it. I killed all six of them. There's no use denying it with them staring there."

The detective was taking shorthand notes.

"Sign this," and he laid the notes before him.

The pedlar mechanically wrote his name.

"I charge you with the murders of Frank Hobdy, Mrs. Hobdy, and Polly Heron, and I warn you that anything you say may be used against you. Put out your hands."

He snapped the handcuffs on to his dirty wrists and took him out, he, the doctor and the young fisherman forming an escort; marched him to Sole, locked him in a room, and phoned for the inspector and a cab to take him to the town where the Petty Sessions were held; and the detective handed over the money to the police who took him, the money the young fisherman had taken.

When they got to the inn, it was crowded, and they were cheered, and some of the old fishermen came and shook the detective by the hand.

"So it war that warmin Joe, eh? Lucky for him you got him away quick or they would have hanged him here theirselves."

The detective ordered free beer and smokes for all who came, and sat down to a good dinner with the doctor.

"Well, your idea was right, doctor."

"To a tick. How he must have been horrified to see the six dead people standing before him!"

“ Yes, that was the final touch which made him attempt suicide with that dud razor.”

After dinner a telegraph-boy came on his bike and handed a buff envelope to the detective. It was from the local policeman asking him and the doctor and the landlord and his wife to be at the Petty Sessions the next morning at ten ; and they were asked to bring the pedlar's pack. There were four new razors in the pack.

He was sent for trial, after a brief hearing, to the next Assizes, and sent off to Ipswich at once. A troublesome crowd of people had collected round the court. But the inspector had sworn in several “ specials ” to meet the occasion.

The pedlar confessed his crimes to the full, and owned that he drank because he was depressed and had done very badly. He had seen the landlord counting his takings, and, determined to have them, he said he would sit there all night ; and the landlord went out to get wood to last the night, and he followed him and crept up behind him and cut his throat with one of his own razors, which he had been trying to sell him. Then he came in and locked the door and went upstairs and met the girl in the passage, and he cut her throat, and went up and killed the landlady in her bed, and then ransacked the place. Then he washed the razor and put the things he had taken in the pack, and took it to the stable, locking the back door from the outside. He put the donkey in the cart and drove round Sole by a by-road and nearly to Lowestoft, where he turned the donkey loose on to a bit of common there ; and then he got the carrier to give him a lift, and went to Seamount. He went out the next morning and threw the razor and key into the water, and bought a new suit of clothes ; and came home and changed, and packed the old clothes, which had blood on them, up in a bundle, and went selling things on the quay ; and when the thaw came, he started for Wymondham. He threw the old clothes into a burning lime-kiln he knew of, and then he was all right.

The brooch and rings he sold at some house in a village near Wymondham for a song ; this was the only thing that worried him, when he saw the photo of them in the paper. So he went back and bought them for double the price, and threw them into the burning lime-kiln. Then he felt safe. The woman he had sold them to did not recognize them ; but she had seen the paper, and she was afraid, and asked him what they were worth. He told her double what she had given for them, and she was very pleased.

He was condemned to death and executed.

After the trial the doctor and detective went back to the *Herring-Bus* and had a week's shooting ; and when they left, the fishermen pulled them to the station in a cab and stood cheering as the train moved out.

The landlord often tells the story to guests, and they all ask him how he felt when the razor was drawn across his throat ? And he confesses he didn't like it ; but he trusted the detective and doctor, and actually put his hand up, when the pedlar had gone, and thought he felt blood on his neck ; and he " warn't sure there warn't none, until he had dabbed that with his handkerchief and made sure there was noathin' there, and it war only his fancy."

VIII

The Grasping Spider

I

IT was a warm July evening. The guests of the *Cove Hotel* had just seated themselves in the cool dining-room overlooking the very blue sea, as it was that night. At a table overlooking the drive sat a well-groomed man and a well-dressed woman. They were not over-dressed, as some others were, but in well-cut clothes and not with any mark of brand-newness upon them. The man was a clean-shaven, dark man of some thirty years of age with well-formed features ; but bright, rather restless eyes. He had close lips ; a determined-looking man who had a weather-beaten face ; " might have served in the Great War," the richer people said ; for there were profiteers there. The woman was quiet and lady-like with a round face and brown expressive eyes, a very pretty red-lipped mouth and bright pearly teeth. She had a pleasant smile.

The hotel-bus had just arrived from the station, and a tall big man in grey tweeds, sports-coat and knickers got out with a bag of golf-clubs, which he would not leave to the hotel servants. He waited whilst his portmanteau and suit-case were taken off. There was no other arrival.

They walked to the booking office, and the big man with a grey moustache and blue eyes and light hair, still hugging his golf-clubs, spoke to the girl, after raising his hat.

" I wired you ; Mr. Worsly."

" Oh, yes, sir. From the *Ritz*, isn't it ? "

" Yes."

She took a key from the key-board and handed it to the boots, and then asked the visitor to sign the visitors' book. He did so. John Worsly, from the *Ritz*, London. Nationality, Australian.

The boots stood waiting, and the girl said :

" He will show you up, sir."

They went up in the lift, and the boots opened the bedroom door, showing him into a nice, airy room on the second floor, overlooking the sea.

The boots unstrapped the portmanteau, and a chambermaid entered with hot water and glanced at the big man, after saying, " Good evening."

The servants went out, and the big man unlocked his portmanteau and dressed in seven minutes—he had done it in five before now—locked his door and descended by the stairs, and entered the dining-room.

The head-waiter came to him deferentially :

" What number, sir ? "

" Thirteen."

" This way please, sir."

He led him to a small table against the wall and said :

" I'll get you a better seat to-morrow. Some of the visitors are going. There's that little table by the window."

Worsly thanked him, and he handed the new guest a wine-card.

" I'll have a glass of sherry and a half-bottle of 16 and a half-bottle of 23 with the cheese, and liqueur brandy, any that's good, with the coffee."

" Thank you, sir."

A waiter had placed the *hors-d'œuvre* before the guest.

" Full up ? " asked Worsly of the head-waiter who lingered near.

"Yes, sir. We always are at this time of year. As soon as a place is vacant, it is filled up."

The man nodded.

"Got some young folks I see."

"Yes, sir. Young officers from Plymouth here for a fortnight with their friends."

Worsly smiled.

"Seem fond of champagne."

"Yes, sir. One is the Honourable Jack Bing, worth, they say, £10,000 a year."

"I wish I had half his complaint."

"Yes, sir. Many of us would like that. . . . I can recommend the peas, sir, and the lamb."

"Thanks."

The head-waiter moved off.

Worsly was hungry and thirsty after his journey from Paddington, and he directed his attention to his dinner. The wine was sound and the dishes well cooked, and he was pleased; and that delightful bedroom where the sun would shine in the morning was a relief after his business worries in London.

There was a hum of conversation and the laughter of women and the popping of corks. Some of the men and women had got to the coffee and had lit cigarettes and others very big cigars.

Worsly worked steadily through dinner, and then arrived at this stage of the meal and ordered the cigars and liqueur to come to him.

He had a *fin champagne*, and chose two of the biggest and fattest cigars he could find, lit one and laid the other on the table; and then he looked round on the scene.

Some of the diners were going out on to the lawn with its masses of flowers, and others were looking over the rails down the cliff and over the sapphirine sea.

The man with the brown-eyed girl were still sitting, the man smoking a very big cigar; and at a distant table three men were sitting laughing and joking, smoking very

big cigars ; and Worsly made the fifth big cigar smoker.

The head-waiter came up and asked politely if he liked the old brandy.

Worsly nodded. He noticed the man with the girl and the three other men eyeing him closely. His table was close to the man and the brown-eyed girl.

He smiled, and suddenly let his cigar fall near the man with the girl. It rolled towards him, and the man hastily got from his chair and picked it up, and smiled at Worsly and said :

“ I’ve rescued it alive, sir ; but it is *napoo*.”

“ Yes. It’s a dud now, thank you.”

“ Don’t mention it,” and he retook his place. And then he and the girl went out, and later the three men followed them. As they passed Worsly one said :

“ When I was in Parramatta,” and then he lowered his voice.

“ For my benefit,” thought Worsly.

Then he too got up and followed on to the beautiful lawn.

He noticed the man and the girl were talking to the young officers with their two ladies ; Worsly wrote them down as actresses or *revue* girls. They were laughing and joking. The man smiled to Worsly as he passed and said : “ Pretty spot this.”

“ Yes. But give me little old Sydney,” said Worsly.

“ Perhaps, yes. But this is all right in this weather.”

“ Yes, not so bad. But Gawd’s own country is the spot for me,” and he passed on and took a seat overlooking the sea by the rails. He noticed the man leave the girl and the young officers and their friends and go over to the three men, and he said something to them, and they all glanced in Worsly’s direction. He affected not to see.

The man then returned to the party he had left.

“ What say to bridge presently ? ”

“ You bet. I want my revenge,” said the Honourable Jack.

"You will only lose. Better give it to me," said the pretty little girl with him.

"Enough for that, too."

The dark man came over to Worsly.

"Excuse me, sir. But do you play bridge?"

"Yes, *with friends*."

The man smiled.

"It's only a friendly game. We never play higher than shilling points."

"I will then with pleasure."

He took a card from his pocket. Captain Hardlar.

"Mr. John Worsly, at your service," said Worsly.

"Over for a bit of a jaunt?"

"Yes. Business, with just a little pleasure thrown in."

"I see. Sydney you said, I think, sir."

"Yes, I said Sydney. That's my little place. Nothing to touch it anywhere."

"I agree."

"You know it then?"

"Oh, yes. I've been to most places. There are three of your countrymen over there."

"I guessed it."

"Shall I introduce you?"

He took Worsly over and introduced him to the three men, and they talked of Sydney and Melbourne and Gawd's own country, till the dark man called them all in to the card-room, and they formed two parties of four each.

There were ten of them, the two young officers and their girls, the three men, the dark man and his wife, and Worsly.

"We will cut for places and then partners."

They did, and settled down to play. Worsly was playing with two of the three men and one of the young officers. The other young officer was cut out, sitting with the dark man's wife, who had also been cut out. They were laughing and talking.

Worsly watched the game, saw it was straight, and tested them by proposing higher stakes. All in vain. They pleaded they were not gamblers. They stopped at twelve—that was the invariable rule—and nobody was a big winner or a big loser.

Then they made up a party for golf in the morning, two foursomes and a pair. Worsly's handicap was twelve. It was easily arranged. After breakfast they all walked to the links and Worsly joined as a temporary member, and they had a ripping game. The weather was perfect. None of them were fozzlers. Worsly was one of the least good. But he was better than twelve, and the captain and two of the Australians were quite seven men.

II

A week had passed in this pleasant life, and Worsly had kept his eyes open and watched every man. He saw the captain and his wife were very intimate with the Honourable Jack, and he discovered that there was no attempt to do him down at cards, golf, or billiards. The men all played and behaved like gentlemen of some means and leisure.

It was the week before Goodwood, and one night, after all the women had retired, the talk turned to horse-racing.

"*Tremola* is a cert for the Cup," said the dark captain.

"Think so?" said the Honourable Jack. "Wish I could pull off a winner."

"What do you think, Mr. Worsly?"

"Oh, I agree, *Tremola*. It all depends what the price will be at the call over next Monday, whether it is buying money or no."

"That's what I say."

"Shall we all go over?"

"Not a bad idea, though it isn't in the next street."

"Our cars will do it easy. We have four cars here amongst us. We can give Mr. Worsly a lift."

"Thank you very much. If you are going, I should like it. I like racing."

The women were consulted and thought it "rippin'." So it was agreed, and the manager was given orders for hampers and drinks, and road-maps were consulted and time of starting fixed. Meanwhile they played golf and bridge, and sometimes went out sea-fishing, taking their lunch. Worsly was asked to all these parties, especially after he let drop certain statements which led them to realize that he was a wealthy man. He watched them all closely, and saw that there was no attempt to get a shilling by illegitimate means from the wealthy Honourable Jack.

Worsly they found a particularly reticent man; but he let them into his private affairs enough to make them smack their lips. They decided they had one mug on the string anyway, the Honourable Jack. The other young officer, a friend of the Honourable Jack's, lived on his pay. He was no good to anyone, as they weren't looking for money to buy cigars, or even stamps.

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That evening in the captain's room the three Australians and the captain and his wife were seated, drinking champagne and eating sandwiches at 1 a.m.

"Well, Louie, what do you make of Worsly?"

"Well, a woman's instinct——"

"Oh, chuck that tosh, Louie! Women have no more instinct than men and not so much. What about Worsly? He's a bit of all right. I know the big run he owns. He knows Sydney inside out and Melbourne too, and Gawd knows whom. He's one of us, if you ask me."

"Not him," said Louie.

"Why then, what is he?"

"He's a grasping spider."

"That's frank. Why?"

"Well, you see, he is. Don't you boys know, after

Howard went over to New York and Paris, the cops here rigged up an international web for catching fly-flats like you boys? ”

“ Fly-flats it is now,” grumbled one of the men.

“ Yes. That’s what I mean.”

“ Why do you think that, Louie? ”

“ Well, how did they get on to Blidger and the boys so quick? How did the cops know he had the goods on him? ”

“ How was Tommy, our very sharp and spry Tommy, picked up at Rotterdam the other day with his faked passport? He makes a good get-away all O.K., but directly he steps out of the rattler at Rotterdam, it’s walk into my parlour, says the tec. Tommy was on the run, as we all know here, and Tommy is now doing a three-year stretch. The Yard tipped them ‘Belgiums,’ of course.”

“ Yes. Correct. But, Louie, you don’t tell us how they got old Blidger and his boys.”

“ I know that, too. You know Charley Leech, you have heard of him, though you are an Australian? ”

“ I dunno. I have heard of so many.”

“ Well, there’s a warrant out for his arrest now for that card business in London when he got £15,000 of the brightest and best from a young mug at his flat. They started world-wide inquiries about Blidger and got a fair school-kiddy book of his life. The grasping spider, that’s the Yard, picked up his trail at Madrid, and they have watched him ever since. And when the time was ripe, the *Sûreté* was given the down and, alas! poor Blidger! He has got a stretch of five years, and if he pads the hoof over here after, they will get him.

“ Look at Gentleman John. He’s having the time of his life at *Deauville*; but he daren’t cross the little silver streak, or it will be a stretch.

“ Look at us. We made a quarter of a million in a little over three years and a half. Do you, my dear

ostriches, think the Yard doesn't know about us? I bet, if you could get a peep into the notebooks, the police notebooks of the big four, your hairs would all stand on end. They know we are here now. They know you, captain, are 'nursing' the Honourable Jack. They know about Worsly, more than we do, I guess. It's only the new hands, who haven't left their visiting-cards at the Yard, that they don't know."

"How in the dooce do you know all this, Louie?"

"How do I know? I'm the Intelligence of this little happy family of ours, am I not?"

"You bet you are."

"Why am I the Intelligence?"

"Not because of your instinct, Louie. That tosh cuts no ice."

"No. I will give in to you there, old bean! I guess some men have more instinct than other men, and some women have more instinct than some men; but the men with the best instinct will always beat the women with the best instinct, see?"

"That's so," said the captain. "Bully for you, Louie."

"Well, I'm Intelligence in this job because I'm a woman, and pretty and attractive, though I say it who shouldn't, and tecs are only human."

"Been biting some one's ear, eh?"

"You bet. We say, 'a mug is born every minute,' and 'a mug and his oof are soon parted,' to which we might add, 'and a pretty woman can make a mug of a tec.'"

The men laughed.

"That's all correct. But why don't you like Worsly?"

"Well, I don't; a woman's answer. You are all brainy boys of experience, you should know men; you are as nimble-witted as monkeys, though I don't really know if they are so. You have a *flair* for a mug; you are all of the right age, middle-aged; you are real, top-

hole 'con' men ; and yet none of you suspect Worsly. Now, we'll see who is right. Any tyro could spot the Honourable Jack as a real mug, why don't you get Worsly on ? ”

“ Wait and see. We will land both of them with the same bait.”

“ The gee-gees, eh ? ”

“ Wait and see.”

“ I know, boys. And now we must break up this little talkee-talkee.”

III

The morning after Louie's "lecture," as they called it, they began to study Worsly carefully.

“ Going to back *Tremola* ? ” the captain asked him.

“ You bet, unless I get an inspiration on the course. I do get them, you know.”

“ Know gee-gees ? ”

“ I was in the back-blocks once on a run.”

“ That's good enough,” one of the men exclaimed.

“ Ride ? ” asked the captain.

“ Used to ; but of late years no.”

It was the day before the Steward's Cup. They had decided that they wanted to see the Cup race run, and all were agreeable.

The night before the race Worsly got hold of the Honourable Jack, and they went for a walk.

“ You will excuse me, sir, but I want to introduce myself,” and he presented his card.

The Honourable Jack looked at it and then at him, and asked him what the game was.

“ You know nothing of these people, the three Australians and the captain and his pretty wife.”

“ No. Met them here. D——d good sportsmen.”

“ See nothing funny in them ? ”

“ No. Only they all smoke big cigars, and so do you.”

“ Well, sir, may I ask you on your word of honour as

a gentleman and an officer to keep mum, not to breathe a word until I say so? ”

“ Yes. If it’s on the square. But remember I have no proof you are who you say you are.”

“ That’s true. But if you like to get your car out and run me over to Hagmore to the police-station, they will confirm.”

“ Damn all if I don’t. May Tibby come? ”

“ Certainly.”

A fly-flat, thought Worsly.

However the car was got out, and they soon ran over to Hagmore, ostensibly to get piles of cigarettes.

At the police-station Worsly and the Honourable Jack went in. The inspector saluted.

“ Who am I, inspector? I only want you to identify me.”

“ You are Superintendent Worsly of the C.I.D., one of the cleverest tees in the world.”

“ Sorry, superintendent,” and the Honourable Jack put out his hand and they shook.

They did buy cigarettes, and the Honourable Jack insisted upon Worsly accepting 100 choice *Coronas*.

Then on the drive home, Tibbits drove, and they sat behind, and Tibbits was told to drive slowly.

“ It’s this way, sir. These men are all crooks,” he spoke very low. “ They belong to one of the cleverest gangs of ‘ con ’ men in the world.”

“ What’s a ‘ con ’ man? ”

“ A confidence trick man.”

“ I see.”

“ They are going to play it up on us, you and me. They take me for a mug, too.”

The Honourable Jack laughed and said, “ This will be sport. But as how? ”

“ Racing. Just how they will do it I can’t say. But you fall in with what they propose. You shan’t lose anything, and we’ll get the lot. But you mustn’t back *Tremola*.”

"Why not? Do you know anything about racin'?"

"No. But I get some thundering good tips. *Epinard* is a cert for the Cup; but not a word. They will probably give you the tip on the course, and then we'll see how it will work. I'll be by."

"Right-ho, and thanks for the tip. I'm not such a mug as they think."

"Look here, sir, you mustn't alter your behaviour to them by a hairbreadth."

"I tumble."

"Be more genial and pally than ever."

"Right-ho! This beats the band. This is real sport. Will you want me to help nab the blighters?"

"No. You must know nothing. I'll tell you what to do. That's all."

They arrived at the hotel, the Honourable Jack holding aloft several boxes of cigarettes for all to see.

Worsly held up his cigars and passed the open box round, and they all helped themselves.

"Good of you, Worsly, to think of us," said the captain.

The next day they started in high spirits with lunch and champagne and cigars, all intent upon the day's sport. Worsly stayed behind to talk on the 'phone, and they got a bit restless waiting for him.

When he came out, they asked him, "What was up? Calling up his best girl?"

"No. Some mine-shares to sell. Talking to my broker."

Worsly looked round and then turned to the captain: "Where's your wife, captain?"

"Oh, it's a sell. She's so sorry, got a splitting headache and yellow as a chink. She has a touch of jaundice."

"I *am* sorry," said Worsly.

The three Australians muttered something, and they started. It was a lovely day, and they had a very pleasant drive; arrived on the course and got a good stand.

The bookies were hard at work, the Honourable Jack and Tibbits and the girls, who all had orders to do as Jack did ; and they saw by the way he spoke to them that it was something important, and they were discreet.

The captain came up to them. " I told you I would get the goods. *Tremola* isn't in it. It's *Epinard* for a cert, the best cert ever."

" That so? What are you putting on, you boys? "

" £5,000 between us. It's all we can run to."

" What price did you get? "

The captain named it and added : " But it's shortened—now."

" No matter, I can get you and your friend on at the same I got."

" Well, if you can risk £5,000 between you, I'll go £10,000 at same price."

" The chance of your lifetime."

" Well, £15,000 then."

" That's the talk. And your friend? "

" Oh, he doesn't bet. I'll give him the odds for any little bets he and the girls want to make."

The three Australians and the captain went off with Jack's money in a bag. They had persuaded him before they started that he must bring the ready.

They came back presently : " We have got you the same odds."

The course was being cleared. The usual frightened dog ran down madly, his ears back and his tail out.

Then the horses came on to the course and went up to the starting-place. The three Australians and the captain had not returned to their car ; but Worsly was standing near, and he nodded to the Honourable Jack as much as to say, " All right."

There was a roar and they were off on their grand spurt, and there was another great roar and people shouting, " *Epinard, Epinard, Epinard!* The Frenchy wins ! "

The Honourable Jack was much excited ; so was Tibbits, who had put on a tenner, and the girls had done the same.

Presently the four men came back uproarious.

“ Bubbly, bubbly,” said the captain.

When they had all drunk, the captain said : “ We have a cert for the next race, an absolute cert. We have left the winnings with the bookie. We are so sure of the winner of the next that we are going to venture all our stakes and winnings, and advise you to do the same.”

The Honourable Jack looked doubtful, and just then Worsly strolled up and caught Jack’s eye and nodded.

“ Well, I can be as good a sportsman as you gentlemen. Let her go, Gallagher.”

“ Right.”

“ Hallo, Worsly ! Where did you get to ? ”

“ I lost you men.”

“ Won anything ? ”

“ Yes, a bit.”

“ Are you going in for this ? It’s a cert.”

“ No. I always leave well alone.”

“ Just as you please,” and all four of them went off to book the new bet, and Worsly went, following them, and the Honourable Jack thought he saw other men following Worsly.

The horses came out and started. The Honourable Jack was much excited, until the horse he had backed had lost the race.

He was a good loser was the Honourable Jack, and he had had considerable experience in that line. He set his teeth and opened a bottle of champagne, and they drank solemnly.

A youth came pushing through the crowd and handed the Honourable Jack a note, saying :

“ The superintendent asks you to come at once, sir, when you have read this.”

Jack tore it open and read ;

"It's all right, sir. I have your stake and winnings. Also I have arrested the four. Please follow the boy and bring your friend, not the ladies. W."

The Honourable Jack gave a shout of delight and excused himself to the girls and, taking his friend, they followed the messenger to the police office in the grandstand. There was an inspector in uniform and the four prisoners handcuffed, and several plain-clothes men and constables in uniform about.

"What's all this?" asked the Honourable Jack.

"The old 'con' game, sir. These four 'gentlemen'" (he sneered it) "had a nice little game on. You gave them £15,000 to put on *Epinard*?"

"Yes."

"Well, they put it on all right, and *Epinard* won, and you gained your money and your stake back. They drew it; but they only had a pony on the next race. They meant to divide your money and stake between themselves. They only had a pony each themselves on *Epinard*. They told you they had had £5,000.

"Yes, all that is so. . . . The girls can confirm, and so can you, superintendent, and my friend here. I mean about my giving them £15,000 and their coming back and saying *Kingcrab* was a cert for the next race, and asking my permission to lay the lot on him, and I agreed."

"Quite right, sir. It's an old swindle."

Tibbits confirmed, and both signed statements to this effect.

"We had lots of other things against them, sir. I had warrants for all four in my pocket."

Then Worsly took a little bag and took the Honourable Jack into another room, and they counted the money, and the Honourable Jack gave a receipt.

When this was done, he offered the superintendent a wad. He put up his hand: "No, sir. I can't take it. You can give it to the Police Orphanage, if you feel like that."

"I will, with pleasure."

"I'll write to you, sir. I'm not returning to the hotel. My job there is done. If you will settle my bill for me and send it and my luggage and golf-sticks on to this address, I shall be pleased, and I'll send you the money for the bill in a day or so."

"What did you win, superintendent?"

"£150. This is the biggest amount I ever won. But this is on the Q.T. The boys mustn't know."

"All right, superintendent. Good-bye. If you are ever down at Plymouth, look us up."

"And if ever you want any help, sir, you have my address."

"By the by, what of the captain's wife?"

"She's been arrested before this by one of our men on another charge. You may not have noticed a man who arrived last night."

"Oh, yes, I did. A young chap, light-haired, in a grey suit and soft hat."

"That's it, sir. She's in London by this, I guess, with all their luggage."

"Did the manager know?"

"Not till Sergeant Dapper told him. Mum is the word on our job. You played up splendidly, sir, and I am glad you won."

They went back to the car and had tea, and the two men and the girls drove back to the hotel, stopping at the bank to deposit their notes and get a receipt.

The guests were coming down for dinner; and they rushed up and dressed and came down very excited.

"But where are your friends?" asked some of the guests.

"Oh, they went up to London to have a beano to-night."

"Did you win or lose?" he was asked.

"Oh, I won a bit and had a ripping day."

"Where's Mr. Worsly?"

"He went up with them." A waiter heard this and

looked at the Honourable Jack and smiled. All the staff knew that the four visitors had been arrested with the captain's wife, and their luggage and cars had been taken off to London.

A little man with shrewd blue eyes came and peered into the group.

"I wondered what Superintendent Worsly was doing down here."

The Honourable Jack smiled, and said: "Oh, was that the great Worsly?"

"Yes."

"Reminds me I have got to pay his bill," and he went in and told the manager and said he would go up after dinner and pack his clothes. They were to be sent off to London.

"I understand, sir. So these people were 'con' men."

"Didn't you suspect them?"

"No. They were very quiet, never would play bridge at more than a shilling a point, or billiards at more than half a crown a hundred, or golf at more than a ball the game. I thought they were real gentry."

"I didn't think that," said the Honourable Jack. "But I did think they were on the square and sportsmen, of rather limited means. The last was about the only thing I was right in. It's a funny world."

"I shall know next time," said the manager. "The detective who came to arrest the woman said you can always know them by their big cigars, and that Devonshire and Cornwall are their beats in the summer."

"Well, what price Worsly smoking a big cigar?"

"That is his artfulness. We don't get many Worslys here. A very clever man."

"You bet he is."

"The woman told the 'tec' who took her away she guessed all along Worsly was a cop; but the boys wouldn't listen to her."

"Well, that's that," said the Honourable Jack. "Now for some dinner and a magnum of the boy."

IX

The Sausage-Maker

I

HAVANA or La Habana, as the Spaniards called it, was a picturesque old city in the old days of the Spanish *régime*, when the red and yellow bars of Ferdinand and Isabella floated over the mediæval Moro Castle, and more Spanish than Spain. In the dry season the climate was delightful, though hot at midday ; but there was always a breeze by day from lovely amethystine seas, and a land breeze by night which rustled the sleeping royal palms under the purple skies with their blazing constellations.

There was one street there, a long, quaint street in the back blocks with multi-coloured adobe houses—red-tiled, with their long grated windows with the tiled seats inside. There in the cool of the evening the *señoritas* in cool muslins sat with their tortoiseshell combs in their black coils of hair and flirted their sandal-wood fans and cracked jokes with young gallants in costly panamas, black silk jackets and crimped linen shirt-fronts with immaculate white drill trousers, black patent leather shoes, carrying little canes in their lemon-coloured gloves. For manners were easy in those good old days, and the young dandies often stopped and conversed with strangers or came and sang songs with guitars before the windows of the *señoritas*. It was a quiet street ; there were no bad people there, no people who offered the accommodation of their houses, no red numbers.

There were a few shops of superior class, small and exclusive shops, where everything was of the best, yet artistically hidden, not blaringly blatant like the bigger and more pretentious emporiums in the main streets. There lived the artiste hairdresser, very select pork and sausage and other *delicatessen* shops were there, the most exquisite fruit shops with just a few coloured glass dishes of the choicest fruits in the season; a portly little chemist with his wares, chiefly perfumery, artistically window-dressed; and before these shops striped sunblinds were lowered in the daytime. They had no back entrances, and after dark the stock was delivered into cellars, whose doors formed part of the pavement in the daytime. Idlers used to wander along and, standing on the cellar doors, gaze into the artistic little shop windows and admire the beautifully white dressed sucking-pigs with small corn-cobs in their mouths, or the many-coloured strings of sausages bound with green stuff and flowers. All was fragrant there, all inviting.

The street was a quiet one. There was but little traffic, and the residents were not rich, so they only hired *volantés* on great occasions to take a *pasear* in the public gardens, the girls sitting three together, the prettiest in the middle.

The *Calle Cruz de Mayo* was in a way as remote from the humming life of the main streets with their shops and *cafés* and small restaurants, their theatres and opera-house and clubs, as the Southern Cross is remote from the other constellations of that sub-tropical sky. The inhabitants were small business men, the houses were cheap for Havana and the place secluded and respectable; and there were, as I have said, no *gente malo* there, by day at least and rarely by night, for the simple reason that few *ricos* would be found there by the footpads with their ever-ready knives.

Guardia civiles patrolled it in a sleepy, mechanical way, and the night watchmen with their halberds and

lanterns droned sleepily the hours of the night, *las cuatro y mediá, esta claro*, and walked on. They seldom met anything except a cat or two. The lottery ticket sellers in their big grass hats and blue cotton shirts and cotton trousers and brown shoes droned too, calling *La Lotteria numero dos ciento y dieciocho*. A woman, a girl, or a man, would run out and buy a portion of a ticket, chaff with the seller and run back into the cool seclusion of the house. The orange sellers with their trays of *naranjas de China, dos por medio-dulce y beunas* did a better trade, and the *dulce* sellers with their trays of sweet-meats best of all, for fruits in syrup were much sought after, and far cheaper than they could be made at home.

After business hours, just before sunset, the clerks and business men would come down the street to their houses puffing green cigars or *papelitos*, looking tired and hot and often worried after the day at the office or shop, and glad to get from the bustling dirty main streets into this haven of quiet and have a bath with some florida water in it and a change, before they sat down to their dinners with the *familia* in the cool little dining-rooms.

They were always delighted when Señor Grosser's sausages or pork were served at the meal as a great treat; for there was no pork and no sausages in *La Habana* to come anywhere near Grosser's. He was a German from Bremen and had set up in business three years before, and with his *delicatessen* had made a great name amongst the gourmands of the capital. A big florid man with pale blue eyes and red hair and beard, he was always very clean and spick and span, and very obliging and jocose; and a Spaniard loves a joke of a kind, if the humour be not too delicate or the wit too fine. Don Grosser had just the touch to please this class of half-educated Spanish man or woman, and his jokes often had a Rabelaisian touch which made their

dark eyes flash and their ruby lips open and show their white teeth. But Grosser went no further than a joke. He had no desire to have a dagger between his big ribs, and this was the penalty in *La Habana* for poaching on family preserves. Besides, he had a pasty red-haired frau of gigantic proportions and forbidding countenance. Children he had none. Business men knew he was a man of substance and making money fast, and his only dissipation was iced lager at the *Louvre* and cigars. He always had one of the best green *Vegueros* in his mouth. So life sped in the *Calle Cruz de Mayo*.

II

One morning the Chief of Police in his office was looking over the reports. There were the usual assassinations, robberies, assaults; but there was another girl missing. He looked over to his *Teniente*, a Peninsular Spaniard born in Madrid, where he had served his apprentice days in the Criminal Investigation Department of that city.

"Here is another of these young people missing. What does it mean? Were they all girls one could understand. The bad houses of the city would explain, or they might be shipped to the Argentine or New York; but, though I have consulted with the police there and sent photos and description, one can trace none of them."

The dark, sallow, black Spaniard twisted his black *mostachios* and puffed at his *papelito*.

"It is strange. This makes the tenth this year."

"Yes. Get down the book and let's look at them."

The wiry little Spaniard rose and went to some shelves in a locked bookcase, and took down a large volume bound in black and marble paper with sheets of thick hand-made Spanish paper, and turned up the missing for the year. There were photos of some supplied by their relations, and their description.

“ You see, Juan, they are all under eighteen, the bulk about sixteen : seven girls, three youths ; all reported healthy and in good condition. Now you see six were last seen near the street *Cruz de Mayo*, and the other four were last seen at *cafés* in this town. They are mostly of the middle classes, not workpeople. The last case reported this morning came from *Casa Blanca* across the bay : a well-built girl of fifteen, Pepita Almendares. Last seen down by the quays on this side with a boatman, José Archacha. Archacha, you say in your report, took her to the *Café del Moro* here and left her for an hour, while he went home and washed and put on his *fiesta* clothes. He returns, and she is not there, though she had faithfully promised to remain there for him. The waiter, Francisco Pancho, a good Peninsular, says a big foreign man came and spoke to her, and she went off with him. He thought he was a sailor from one of the ships. He has disappeared.”

The lieutenant said :

“ Señor, I took the boatman and went to *Casa Blanca* and saw her parents, and they corroborated every detail of my report. She went with him to spend the evening, and he had promised to bring her back. But he returned at nine and said he had left her at the *café* for an hour and, when he went there, she was gone ; and the waiter, had told him that she had gone off with a foreigner, an Englishman or American, he thought. She never returned home. The distracted boatman has been all round to the ships in the harbour, and he can hear nothing of her, nothing at all. He told the sailors the story, and they all promised to help him ; for they saw his grief was genuine.”

“ Yes, I know. You said all this in your report. But have you visited all the red numbers ? ”

“ Yes, señor, every one, and they all assure me no such girl came there. You know, my colonel, that the Cuban girls are virtuous and rarely go into these places.

I regret to say most of the girls come from abroad, and many from Spain."

"Yes, Juan, that is so. *Que lástima!*"

"For that reason, my colonel, I ruled the red numbers out. I am at a loss where to search. I carry all their photos about with me," and he pulled a bundle from his pocket in a short elastic band. "I wait at all the *cafés* and watch. I walk all the streets and watch, and I have never seen one. When a body is brought from the bay which has escaped the *tiburónes*, I rush off to the mortuary. No, it is not there. I have, I confess, my colonel, been unable to trace one of them, and I am no fool."

"No, Juan, you are the best detective I have ever had under me. There is something very mysterious in these disappearances. I have ordered the Customs officers for some time to search all the ships carefully, and they have the photos and description; but they have not traced one."

He pressed a bell. A servant in white drill appeared.

"Two glasses of Horchata—iced."

"*Si, señor.*"

The boy returned with the cooling drinks, and they drank.

The Chief, a short portly Spaniard with black beard and moustache and pince-nez, lit a fresh cigar, and pushed the box to his lieutenant.

He thanked the colonel and wagged his head, and took some tobacco and paper from a pouch and rolled a cigarette deftly and lit it.

"What to do is the question," he said.

"I can suggest nothing," said the Colonel. "The *Diario de la Marina* has got hold of the business and has covert digs at us. We who have cleared up every big robbery and several of these assassinations, to say nothing of lesser matters! And you know the *Diario* does not love us Peninsulars and is all for Cuba for the Cubans."

The lieutenant nodded. "If a patriot should disappear, there will be a pretty kettle of fish."

" Yes, Juan. Our hold on this *Siempre fiel Isla* is relaxing. They are slipping from us, and the Americans are helping them. One day the Lone Star will float above the Moro Castle."

" I have long felt that," said Juan, " and so I line them " (patting his pockets) " as fast as I can."

The Chief laughed. " There are no birds in the nests of autumn, eh, Juan ? "

Juan nodded.

" Well now, go, Juan, and look. We *must* stop them or we shan't survive till wild patriots take our offices."

Juan got up, saluted and went off.

III

He knew *La Habana* well by this time. He had several " narks " out. He was sitting at the *Café du Louvre*, having one of its famous water-ices.

A young Cuban passed and stopped and drew a paper from his pocket.

" When are you going to find this girl ? "

" As soon as I can. Can you help me ? "

" No. I'm not paid as you are. When Cuba is free, I shall get your job."

" *Como ?* "

" You will see. You are no good, you Peninsulares. You come here and rob us and bleed us, and fill your empty pockets and do nothing. Look, ten disappearances of young people, and you sit there eating ices ! "

The lieutenant was a cool hand for a Spaniard, and he said :

" Come, *amigo*, and eat here at my expense and enlighten me."

The Cuban was appeased. His aggressiveness vanished, and he said, raising his hat :

" Señor, I accept."

The waiter brought a strawberry ice and some wafer biscuits, and the Cuban asked for a small liqueur cognac

and mixed it with the ice. Having eaten it, he said :

“ Señor, I thank you.”

He rolled a *papelito* and smoked it.

“ Were you at the University, señor ? ”

“ No. I joined the police young.”

“ Well, I was at the University here. I studied logic and science. No man will be a detective of any value without them both.”

“ Possibly, friend.”

“ That cognac was excellent.”

“ Have another ? ” offered the lieutenant.

“ No, many thanks. Now, señor, may I ask you a few questions ? ”

“ Yes, certainly.”

“ Now, I have followed these disappearances closely, logically, scientifically. They are all *Cubans*. Now, señor, you have been in *La Habana* long enough to know that our women are virtuous ; these creatures at the red numbers can never get them.”

“ Yes, I allow that.”

“ For a Spaniard, señor, you are just.”

The lieutenant bowed.

“ Well, by elimination they have not been captured by the ghouls of the red numbers. They have not been shipped away. *Our* secret police know that.”

The lieutenant opened his eyes at this “ our secret police.” So these patriots already had their secret service : that was something to tell the Chief.

“ Their corpses have not been found, and they are not in the bellies of the sharks. We have had many sharks caught and opened.”

Again the lieutenant opened his eyes in amazement at the thoroughness of the work done by “ our police.”

“ They have not been taken into the interior. Our police have ascertained that. They are not in confinement in *La Habana*. Our police have ascertained that. Where are they then ? ”

"Your police are very thorough and active. I congratulate you, señor."

"It is their—our just due. Our police must know everything in these times, and we do know most things. But I confess to you, señor, we can't trace the missing."

"That is an important admission."

"We love truth. We have watched to what a low stage corruption has brought Spain. The punishment for lying and dishonesty with us is *death*, señor. That is why we want to get rid of you. Your system is based on corruption, on bribery. I am bold; but I see you are by nature a just man."

The lieutenant had never been spoken to in this way. It was new to him, appealed to him. To be called just was such a novelty that he was amazed at himself and at his companion.

The Cuban continued: "Señor, if you can trust me, we will work together in this."

"Who are you?"

"Juan Castaña, a native of Cuba and a patriot who, when the time comes, will fight for Cuba's freedom. I have nothing to disguise. I am all for constitutional means; but if your rulers over there in Madrid deny us, it is war. You must know this, señor."

"I do."

"Well, shall we work together in this?"

"Meet me here to-morrow at this hour, and you will have my answer."

"You mean to consult your Chief?"

"No. I mean to see what your character is."

"That is just. I accept and will be here at the hour you name to-morrow, and I prophesy we shall work together in this, and perhaps in other matters later."

He got up, took off his hat with a sweep, walked off and was lost in the crowd.

A big dark Spaniard came up and took off his hat.

"Ah, Pedro: how are you? Sit down and have a *refresco*."

"*Gracias, señor.*"

When the *panatella en agua* were supplied, it was his choice, he lit a *papellito*.

"I did not know the señor knew Castaña."

"I did not till this evening. You are the very man, our chief agent; who is he?"

"A firebrand, a patriot, very clever, very learned, been to college in the United States, full of mad schemes for reformation, etcetera."

"Pedro, is he honest?"

"Señor, he is. *Que lástima!* Nothing can buy him. He does not value money."

"Who are his people?"

"His father was a *majoral* on an American estate, and he picked up mad political ideas from the *Hacendado Americano*, and the *Cabellero* paid for his education and sent him to the States. And then he came back and went to the university here. He has a B.Sc. and a gold medal for law, economics, logic, and I don't know what."

"How does he live?"

"He teaches, is a lecturer at the University."

"Does he talk treason there?"

"No. He is too clever. He talks it; but on general principles, nothing to lay hold of."

"And do you mean to tell me, Pedro, no money will tempt him?"

"No. No money. He has been tested, señor. The Governor-General would like him on his side as a spy in the enemy's camp."

"It is enough. He seems well informed."

Pedro made a grimace and said nothing.

"What is his great ambition? It must be money or power, a man like that."

"The Presidency of this *Siempre fiel Isla de Cuba*," said the agent sarcastically.

“What about women?”

“He has nothing to do with them. The Governor-General thought of that, of course,” and the Spaniard sniggered. “He will be the President,” thought the lieutenant; but wisely did not say so.

“Well, Pedro, no information about the missing people?”

“Nothing, señor, nothing. All my men have been hard at work, and we have spent Government money,” and he rubbed his thumb and forefinger together. “Some sticks of course to the fingers; but much has been spent in looking for them, and the result is nothing.”

“*Lo que ha de ser no puede faltar*,” said the lieutenant sententiously.

After some more talk the agent excused himself and went off.

The lieutenant was drawn towards Castaña. He was a new kind of man for him. He decided to see more of him. He would make no more inquiries.

The months rolled on. More young people were missing. The patriots' paper began publicly to abuse the police and to point out that all the missing were Cubans and not a single Spaniard; though a French girl was amongst the missing.

The lieutenant and Castaña worked hard; but in vain. It was all a baffling mystery. But the lieutenant and Castaña became great friends, and the higher powers winked at it and hinted to him that if he could convert Castaña to the Royalist cause, he might ask for his captaincy.

To do the lieutenant justice, he never attempted it. He had sized Castaña up quite cleverly and correctly.

IV

Then the crisis came. A wealthy American's well-developed and favourite son suddenly disappeared as the others had done.

The Chief was in great mental distress. The Governor-General sent for him and said, if he did not find the boy and that soon, he would lose his job and be sent home to Spain in disgrace.

“ Here is a very influential American writing in the *Diario*, and, seeing the incompetency and corruption of Spanish officials, America is sympathizing with the patriots. This will lead to civil war, they tell me, and this millionaire, who has great influence and much money, will help them with arms, ammunition, money.”

The lieutenant went about haggard. He called on Castaña.

“ If we find the American boy, well, it will be worth while, *amigo*.”

“ Where was he seen last ? ”

“ At the perfumer’s in the *Calle Cruz de Mayo*. His parents are at the *San Carlos*, and he wanted to take back some *cosas de Cuba*, night-blooming cereus scent and that, and was recommended to go to Pasquit’s shop there. He went and gave a large order, which he paid for, and ordered them to be sent to the *San Carlos* that evening, as they were sailing the next morning for New York. And he went out and has not been seen since.”

“ What time was this ? ”

“ Just before sundown.”

“ Did you go into the street ? ”

“ No, señor. I was busy getting the goods together and packing them to send to the hotel that evening.”

The lieutenant went all through the *Calle*, a house-to-house visitation ; but could hear nothing of him.

Grosser, whose shop was not far off, said he saw him pass down the street about the time Pasquit mentioned, and some girls in a house below the German said they had been sitting there, and no one like that passed. No trace of him could be discovered.

Grosser had said to the lieutenant, “ It is only an Americano. You, señor, cannot be sorry.”

"But I am. We daren't for worlds anger the Americans just now. This may mean war."

The German affected to be greatly surprised and hoped not. War was bad for business. He did not like war. That was why he had left Germany.

The lieutenant shrugged his shoulders.

Two days after the Chief had a house-to-house search made in the *Calle Cruz de Mayo*; but no clue at all was discovered.

Castaña was equally unsuccessful, and, to the lieutenant's surprise, he too disappeared from *La Habana*.

v

The following week the Lone Star flag was raised in a big plantation, and civil war had broken out in Cuba. The papers were filled with acts of incendiarism. Houses were burnt down, Cubans and niggers freely shot; troops surrounded and massacred to the last man, and the yellow fever took hold of the young, unseasoned troops, and killed them like flies. America sympathized with the rebels and helped them; arms poured into the country, and at last peace was signed, and Cuba had won her freedom, and Castaña was elected first President of the Republic.

The lieutenant had met him a few times when he arrived in Havana to take office, and the first question he asked him was, "How many disappear now?"

"None, after the early days of the war, when there were many, many missing."

"Did you find where they went?"

"No. The mystery is as big as ever."

"How are our old friends in the *Calle Cruz de Mayo*?"

"Well, Grosser has made a fortune. He closed his shop in the early days of the war and got a job in the Spanish Commissariat, and has made a small fortune, they say."

Castaña looked thoughtful.

“ When was the last disappearance ? ”

The lieutenant opened a notebook and told him.

“ When did Grosser close his shop ? ”

He said he did not know ; but he would advise him.

And when he sent the information it was a week after the last disappearance.

Castaña nodded and said nothing more about the German.

“ And you, lieutenant, what are you going to do ? ”

“ I am going back to Spain.”

“ Made your pile out of poor Cuba ? ”

“ No, señor. I was making a little pile till I met you, and on the honour of a gentleman I stopped then.”

“ Is this true ? ”

“ It is, señor. Ask my bankers. You will find only my pay and not all that, for the Government that was did not pay us towards the end.”

Castaña took his hand and shook it.

“ Will you take a job under our Government ? ”

“ It depends what.”

“ You shall be the Emigration Agent, if you will accept. You know the Peninsula ; you are a detective ; you are an honourable gentleman. Now, all you have to do is to take the oath of allegiance to the republic.”

“ I will do it, and thank you, señor.”

“ Come to my office to-morrow at ten, and I will see to it. We must regulate the white slave traffic too and stop it.”

“ I will help to my utmost. Thank you, señor.”

They shook hands and parted.

One day, a year after, the Emigration Officer met Grosser looking very down-hearted.

“ *Holá!* What’s the matter ? ”

“ I lost all my money in America, speculated in stocks and shares. I have enough to buy back my shop, and I open with *delicatessen* next week.”

"Well, I wish you good luck," and they parted.

The Emigration Officer told Castaña.

He looked very grave, but said nothing. But that evening he had a consultation with an American detective he had got from New York to organize the Cuban police on the American system.

"See here, Sam, there were before the war a lot of mysterious disappearances here. I was working in co. with the chief Spanish detective, now our Emigration Officer, an honest man. We both failed to trace them. We ruled out red numbers, anatomy schools, exportation to interior or abroad, carrying off by Mormons—we ruled out everything. Most of the persons who disappeared were last seen in the neighbourhood of the *Cruz de Mayo* Street. The American boy—you have heard of him?—" (the detective nodded) "was last seen in a shop there, Pasquit's, a scent shop. It is there still; but has changed hands. One Grosser, a German *delicatessen* shopkeeper, saw him pass his shop; and that's all we got, though old Steven Kane, the father, offered half a million dollars to anyone for finding him. He was so enraged with the Spaniards that he came down handsomely for our cause, and helped us at Washington. Well, if there are any more of these disappearances, Sam, I want you to bring whoever is responsible to the *garrotte*."

"I will, sure. I'll go and talk to the Emigration Officer."

"Yes. He knows most about it and has police notes. Of course all the Imperial archives have been carried back to Spain."

"Sure."

Sam Chote was of the original Massachusetts Bay colony stock, and was sharp as a needle: a terror to the New York underworld, and rapidly becoming a terror in Havana.

He had a long talk with Juan Barto, the Emigration Officer, on professional lines, and then he visited Pasquit's

and learnt all he could about young Kane ; and then he called on Grosser and heard his tale.

Grosser was rude at first ; he loathed America and the Americans now that he had lost his ill-gotten gains in Wall Street ; but Sam Chote was unruffled.

It was a month afterwards that a disappearance was reported. The Emigration Officer at once got to work amongst the shipping, and Sam Chote chewed a great green cigar, and when the anxious mother, a Spanish woman this time, came in crying, he was very kind to her. She could speak English, having lived in New York.

“ Well, madam, sit you down. If anyone can find your piccaninny in this almighty globe, it is Sam Chote, and he'll do it, sure.”

She brightened up at this.

“ Now, madam, tell me about it. No guesses, just exactly what happened.”

“ Well, it was Pepita's birthday. She was fifteen that day, and she wanted to buy some scent and a fan. So I gave her four dollars, and she said she'd try Pasquit's, 'and if there is any money over, *madre mia*, I will buy you some of Grosser's sausages.'

“ I laughed, and said if she got all that at an expensive shop like Pasquit's, there wouldn't be much for sausages or *carne puerco* or *chicharron*.” And she began to cry again at the thought of her darling child, so pretty, so strong, so well grown.

“ Wal ? ” said Sam, when she recovered a bit.

“ She went to Pasquit's and bought the fan and some scent for \$3.15. He gave her a little scented sachet for *la contra*, and she said she was going to Grosser's to buy some *chicharron* for her mother. She went out and turned towards Grosser's shop : it is a few doors away on the same side. I went to Grosser, and he said he had seen no such person, and that no such person had even been in the shop at that hour. He was very *sympatico*, and gave me some sausages to console me.”

Chote's eyes gleamed, and he said, "Wal, madam?"

"That's all, sir. No one in the street saw her. She has never been seen since. Do you think she is dead?"

"I hope not, madam. But I'll find out or my name isn't Sam Chote."

The distressed woman thanked him, shook him by the hand, and Sam sat down and bit a fresh cigar. Then he picked up the ex-Spanish detective's typescript and read it, made a few pencil notes on the back, and to himself he said, "been missing now twenty-eight hours"; and lighting a fresh cigar, he clapped his wide-brimmed panama on to his gingery hair and went out. He walked rapidly to *Cruz de Mayo* Street, and the German was in attendance in his shop.

"What a dinky little one-horse two-by-four outfit you have here, Dutchy."

"It ees goot. I have everything very clean, and I supply everything fresh. Do you like sausages, Mr. Chote?"

"So you know my name, Dutchy. I *sure* do like sausages, if you don't kick at serving a gum-shoe."

"No. Business is business."

"I'm scairt of Spanish polognes and I do sure like good polognys and fresh pork."

"I have some just made, excellent flavour. I had some for breakfast this morning."

"I'll have two pound. I ain't had a good pologny since I left little old New York, and the governor told me yours were the best in this burg, so here I come." He paid for them and said, "That leaves me a few cents to buy Bull Durham with. I'll come again, if I like them. I love a fresh pologny."

"You will be always welcome."

"All right, Dutchy. *Buenas tardes.*"

"*Buenas tardes, señor.*"

Sam walked to the municipal laboratory, run by an American scientist, one of Castaña's early establishments.

"Say, sonny, like polognys?"

"You bet. That's a sure thing."

"Well, sonny, I want you to tell me what swine's flesh these are made of, quick. I'm most dying to know."

"You mean it?"

"It's a gum-shoe job."

The young American whistled and took the bag of sausages, and cut one open and examined the contents under a magnifying glass. He uttered an exclamation. Sam was sitting on a heavy stool by a bunsen burner chewing a cigar. He saw him take several pieces of the meat with forceps and place them in some distilled water in a little glass vessel, and then he took one piece and froze it on a microtome, and cut some sections and examined the sections under a microscope; and he turned very white.

"Well, sonny? I'm dying to know."

"Good God! Sam, this is human flesh."

"You swear to that before God."

"I do."

"Save these and make your specimens up. I shall want them," and he rushed into the street and took one of the new American cabs which were running, and hurried to Castaña.

Castaña, though very busy, let him in.

"I've got it, governor. I want a dozen policemen and a warrant of arrest for Albert Grosser."

"So it's Grosser?"

"Yes. He is selling sausages made of human flesh."

"I guessed this when the people disappeared." He went to a speaking tube, and ordered twelve police under an officer from the police-house.

Sam rushed down and told the sergeant he was to make his way to *Calle Cruz de Mayo* and search Grosser's house, and he'd be along. "But go singly."

VI

Sam saw his revolver was in good trim and hurried down to the shop and entered it. The sun was setting and would be gone in a few minutes. Herr Grosser was in his shop.

"Vell, was the sausage goot?"

"Yes, sure. Hands up. Here's my warrant, and he threw an official document on the table, and then took out a small silver whistle and blew it. Men forced their way into every entrance. He left two burly men with Grosser, whom he had handcuffed himself; and two other men secured Frau Grosser, who was cutting up sausage meat, and Sam Chote descended to the cellar with three men and powerful torches.

It was a dimly lighted place; but, on looking round, they found Pepita's remains. They all swore horrible oaths.

"Not a word to the boys upstairs, or they would tear them to pieces."

"No, sir," said the three.

"Now, let's look at this cellar door."

Sam examined it.

"Look here, Jim, what a devil! See this peep-hole?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, you press this button and the cellar door opens and then closes back. We'll try. I've seen this game in little old New York, but only for robbery."

Sam pressed in the nob. The door opened and then automatically closed.

There was an old mattress on the floor doubled up to prevent the falling persons injuring themselves.

Sam and the men went upstairs, and he sent the prisoner off with six men, with a note to Castaña and the Emigration Officer to come and see.

They arrived quickly in cabs, and when Castaña and the Spaniard saw the remains, they were mad with rage.

"It's no use, pardner. They are hull down. The old Frau was using her sausage machine."

"I will go and call a Council of the Government. You stop here, Sam."

"All right, sir."

After a couple of hours the Governor returned.

"We have decided to bury the remains to-night in the *Campo Santo*. I have a priest, who is sworn to secrecy. The casket is on the way. Put everything in. The case will be tried *in camera*, we have decided that, and the girl's clothes with the laboratory specimen will do, and a portion of her hair, which you can take, Sam."

Sam, swearing, cut off a lock of her beautiful hair, and, when the casket came, he himself put all the remains into it and screwed it down. The priest arrived and the parents, and these persons went off to the *Campo Santo*, where the remains were buried.

The case was tried *in camera* the next day and the two Grossers sentenced to the *garrotte*.

A great crowd assembled in the square to see the execution, and when the great negro executioner strapped them in and the *heraldo* announced that they were being executed for the death of Pepita Basar, howls of execration went up. But a strong military cordon was present, and the negro pressed the springs and the iron entered their spinal cords, and the two greatest murderers of history died.

The remains were thrown into shells and put into a cart, and a posse of police took them to the unconsecrated ground in the cemetery and buried them.

The people never knew that they had been eating sausages of human flesh; it was too great a horror for manhood and womanhood to divulge. Many conjectured where the several persons who had disappeared had gone; but only uttered their fears and suspicions in whispers.

Castaña decided not to let Kane the millionaire know. It could do nothing but harrow his feelings. But he read of the Grossers' execution and came down post-haste in his yacht, and saw Castaña.

"You kept it very secret. There is something terrible about this. Tell me."

Castaña told him and he broke down in terrible grief.

"My beautiful boy! My beautiful boy!"

Sam Chote received a cheque for \$50,000, and a few weeks after Kane gave \$500,000 to the Cuban Government to found a scientific police laboratory in *La Habana*; and one of Dr. Locard's (of Lyons) brightest chief assistants was appointed director. And he went to Cuba and superintended the building of it, and it was officially opened with great ceremony, and Sam Chote was director of the detective branch. So good came from evil, as it often does.

X

A Jezebel

I

IT was a dark winter's night in Chelsea, with a fog, a January fog brought by a change of wind from east to south-west. Everything was still: all the lights in the streets, on the Battersea Bridge, and on the river, were surrounded by halos. It was a Whistler night, one that great artist would have loved to paint, and all who know his inimitable *nocturnes* will at once remember the sort of night; for Whistler discovered the artistic possibilities of that side of London, was the first to paint it and teach London its own inimitable beauties.

Still, the King's Road was crowded with buses and taxis and foot-passengers.

In a small public house in Church Street, that narrow and decaying thoroughfare with all sorts of curious by-lanes and passages leading off it, where criminals lurked on such a night to relieve the drunken roysterer of his watch and money, a man and woman sat in the small saloon-bar on high stools: the man was smoking a good cigar, not purchased there, and the woman was drinking port. The man was a short, sandy-haired, clerky-looking person, with a stoop, and, when he walked, he was always looking upon the ground and evidently buried in thought.

He had rather long hair, a long wisp-like moustache of the same colour, and was otherwise clean-shaven. He had shifty black eyes, small and set close together, and not

changing in expression as some eyes change. The nose was small and *retroussé*, and the mouth long with thin, determined-looking lips. But the acute observer could see he was a liar by his eyes, rather beady eyes with thin, flat lids fringed with sparse, but short, eyelashes. He was dressed in an old Homburg, a dirty long khaki-coloured mackintosh and shiny pepper-and-salt tweeds, and black lace-up boots: height about 5 ft. 6 in., age about forty-two. The woman was very dark, with masses of black hair, large dark sleepy-looking eyes framed with black, curling eyelashes, and a sallow complexion; her nose and the shape of her face proclaimed the Jewess. She wore a toque with a heavy dark veil, now turned up, a faded old rabbit-skin fur coat, a dark blue serge dress, and natty boots and black stockings, which encased a pair of short shapely legs. Her chin was prognathous and her face determined. They were both evidently in needy circumstances, to judge by their dress; but he smoked Havana cigars and drank whisky and soda, and paid for her port *ad libitum*.

"Well, have you found the double?"

"Not yet, Kit; it takes some finding. First you have to find the double, then a needy double who will do the job for the money. I think, in these days of fed-up ex-Tommies and out-of-works, that won't be difficult. £500 is a lot of money to a 'needy,' and there are heaps of them who would do the job for that and be only too glad to for their donah or their missus and their kids. Things are not what they were before the war; then life was sacred; now, well, what can you expect from men who have seen thousands killed of a morning or mangled?"

"Yes; we understand, Hector. You have his photo all safe?" He patted his pocket.

The buffet in the bar was crowded by hooligans, drinking, laughing and talking; but the fog had kept most at home except those who had their best girls out on their only free nights, fog or no fog.

"I had some duplicates of the photo made, and have given them to pals in Whitechapel. I guess that's where we shall find the man for the job."

"Well, I hope it will be soon. I'm nearly stony-broke, and you can't be far off."

"I have still enough for working-expenses; but I look forward to that £10,000 and a real good time with you, Kit."

"The sooner the better, my dear," and she pinched his arm. It was strange to watch this ill-assorted couple. What the good-looking, strong, and, in a way, attractive woman could see in the miserable, mean, vain and apparently cowardly Scotsman before her was a mystery. But all sexual attraction is a mystery, and some scientists have said it is a call from fundamentals to fundamentals; we will leave it at that, though others maintain with Goethe it is electrical.

The swing-door opened, letting in a rush of fog and cold; for it was January, and the yellow light from the gas-globes filtered through it and fell upon the pavement. The man who entered had a wild look, and he held the door, letting in the fog, and glaring round.

"Shut the door, please," said the skinny Hector.

He did so, letting the heavy door swing its full.

Kit, who had not really looked at him before, naturally took him in when he pushed up between them to the counter, and she gave a little cry.

Hector was taking stock of him, and his shifty eyes gleamed.

"Have a drink?"

"Yes, a gallon, if you please. I'm down and out; no work through these b—— Unionists. I was never a Union man and never will be; but the river ain't far off, and there I go this night."

"As bad as that?" asked Hector.

"Yes, mate. There isn't a crust at home, and they haven't had a bite or sup all day, and only a little wood I

stole from an old condemned house : went in and cut a bit off an old door."

Hector said nothing and ordered a double dose of rum, the war-tipple, and waited.

He drank it off at one draught when it came, and said :

" I could do with six of them, right on end."

Hector nodded to the barmaid to repeat. When she brought it, he did the same.

" Can you do a third ? "

" Forty thirds. Try me, guv'nor."

Hector nodded to the barmaid, and it was repeated.

He only drank half this time and put his glass down.

" I shall be warmer for the river, take longer to die though. You have shaken me, guv'nor. I don't want to muddle going west, so you must fill me up, just so I can go to the river."

Hector got a stool from the back, and the man sat down. Evidently a peaceful and honest workman caught in the economic follies of the Trades Union : the sort of man who would have got a job at once but for the Union, if his work was as good as his looks and physique.

Hector took a photo from his pocket.

" Is this your brother ? "

The man looked at it in surprise. " Well, I'm danged, it's as like me as like can be ; but I 'avn't got no brother," and he drank up his liquor and said :

" You know the bargain, guv'nor ? "

Hector called to the barmaid, and she refilled the glass with the same medicine.

He seized it and drank half again.

" You don't mean that you are going west ? "

" I do though. I can't stick it any longer seeing the missus shivering and crying for fire and grub."

" Where does she live ? "

" 14, Drury Lane. Top floor."

" What name ? "

"Oliver. John Oliver, that's my monacher. Age forty-two next Valentine's Day."

"Got any papers on you to prove it?"

"I 'aven't got nothing on me, guv'nor, nothing at all; sold my muffler what I take my grub to work in, nothing but these old rags."

"Feel in your pockets and see."

"You don't believe me then," he said aggressively. He began one by one to turn every pocket out. There was nothing but dust and bits of string.

"Lumme! Can I have a smoke, guv'nor?"

"Certainly." Hector ordered a clay pipe, shag and matches. The man loaded his pipe and lit up and smoked greedily, breathing it through his nose.

Hector took Kit aside and whispered to her.

She went out, and the man drank up and had another.

It was near on closing time, so the landlord did not mind. The man seemed to stand it and not get drunk. Kit returned after a time and handed Hector a parcel done up in brown paper, about eighteen inches by eight, and a long envelope.

Hector took it, put the big envelope on the counter, and, taking out a stylo, addressed it to Mrs. Oliver, 14, Drury Lane. Top floor. London, W.C.

Oliver sat, drinking all he wanted, and he was getting head-drunk, but not noisy.

The landlord came and turned them out. "Closing time!"

Kitty said good night, waited, and Hector whispered to her: "I'll be round during the evening. Don't go to bed, and have some supper. What devil's luck!"

Hector and the man wandered through some streets.

"T' river's just within view. I'll go and do it."

"Do you mean it?"

"As Gawd sees me, and He will forgive me."

"See! Listen! There's £100 in this envelope," and

they went under a gas-lamp on the embankment and crouched there.

"Well?"

"Directly you've done it I'll post that to your wife; see, I have addressed it."

The man read it.

"No, post that first. You're a stranger to me."

They went down a dark lane behind a deserted garden where there was a pillar-box, and Hector sealed it—it was stamped—and posted it.

"Now, do you mean it?"

"Yus, all the more. She'll have a bit."

"But why drown, why not hang? It's quicker."

"Never thought of it, got no rope."

"I have. Come in here," and he opened the old gates of a deserted garden, shut them after them, and walked into the bushes where many trees grew.

The rope was of new hemp. The plan had been in preparation long, and the rope too. He threw it over a strong branch of an oak and fastened it to another securely so that the man would be a foot off the ground, and, getting a big stone with the help of the man, he told him to stand on the stone.

Oliver was now beginning to feel the effects of the liquor and was depressed. Hector told him to put the rope round his neck, and pulled it tight, and then kicked the stone away. There was a sudden drop and twang of the rope as it drew tight, and the man literally danced in air, and the mean and callous creature watched it all quite coolly.

When he was still and purple in the face, with protruding tongue, a hideous sight, Hector got the stone, stood on it, and felt carefully in all his pockets; there was nothing but the pipe, tobacco and matches, just bought. These he took, and slipped a cheap dirty envelope into the man's pocket; it was not sealed. Could you have read it, you would have read: "Down and out. Missing, starving;

all through the damned Union. God forgive me. Francis B. Mayo."

Then he took off the man's coat and trousers—he had no vest—cut them off hurriedly and with difficulty put on him an old suit which he had brought in the parcel. The man's clothes he did up in the wrapper with some heavy flat stones.

Hector then crept out and made for the river, and there he leant over the parapet and, when the policeman had passed a good distance, he dropped the pipe and tobacco and the matches—he had opened the matchbox—into the black swift-running water, and then the heavy bundle, and walked back to Kit in Bramerton Street.

"Well?" she asked.

"You are a widow, my dear, and mine," and he seized her and pressed her to him. She gurgled with joy and kissed him eagerly, panting, and he went to a cupboard.

"Now for the bottle of champagne that has been waiting so long," and he took it out and opened it; and they sat down to supper in the highest spirits.

II

The deserted garden was a very lonely place: the gate was generally locked, but certain persons of the underworld had had keys made, and Hector had bought one for £5. A local locksmith made a good business in keys to that deserted place. There was a high wall all round it, and a grotesque house at one corner covered with rococo, cheap plaster decorations. There were many stories attached to it: that a man was giving a wedding-breakfast there, a sumptuous one, and that the bride had an accident coming to the church and was killed, and he had lived on there, a recluse, and locked the wedding breakfast-room, which no one had entered since that fatal day. He too had died, and the executors found the wedding feast deep in dust and the room full of cobwebs. Then the two young estate-agents, who had

found this, washed two of the dirty glasses at a tap and drank so much champagne that they fell asleep in the room, and did not awake until early the next morning, when they stealthily buried the silent witnesses of their orgies in the grounds, and relocked the door. However, nothing was done, and the deserted house and garden remained untenanted for years, the grounds full of cells of marble and stone, where the eccentric owner had built shelters and pyramids and all sorts of mad things.

The underworld used the lowest rooms for secret meetings, for orgies and for gambling; and it was discovered afterwards that murders had been committed there, to judge by several skeletons.

The underworld, however, did not as a rule go near the tangled garden, and how long the corpse would have hung there is doubtful; but the new owner gave a firm the job to survey it, and two young men, told off to do the work, found the body.

They stared at it. "God! Here in the heart of London, as you might say: wonder how long he's been hanging there!"

"Wonder if he was put there or if it was suicide! Well, we'll go and fetch a copper."

They found a policeman in Globe Place and told him.

He stared at them and followed, and they took him to the dead man.

"A working man."

"Is it suicide?"

"Yes. He put the rope up, stood on that stone and then kicked it away. Let's see what he's got on him."

The policeman got a stone, stood on it and felt his pockets, and pulled out the envelope and read it.

"Yes, suicide. Out of work, man name of Mayo; wrote like a scholar, blames the Union, like a good many more," and he handed the letter to them to read.

"Poor chap!" said one, "bet he's done that through this unemployment. I suppose the Union was to blame."

"Them and the Labour Party," said the policeman. "A workman isn't free in this country; the feeble wants as big wages as the best. . . . How did you gents come here?"

"Surveying the property for the owner," and they pointed to a theodolite standing in a vista between the bushes.

"Well, I must take your names and the name of the firm."

These details were soon given him.

"Will you be here all day?"

"Oh, yes, and to-morrow, too."

"All right, sirs, I'll go to the station and tell the inspector," and he walked off with the letter, and the youths returned to work.

III

P.C. Hogan arrived at the police-station and reported, and gave the letter to the inspector.

He read it. "No address, I see."

"No, sir."

"Was this all that was on him?"

"Yes, sir. Nothing else at all."

"Suicide, evidently, from what you tell me."

"Seems so. There's the stone he stood on and kicked away."

"Well, I'll 'phone the surgeon to see him, and then you can take him to the mortuary. I'll get the doctor to pick me up, and go with him. Carry on."

"Yes, sir."

About an hour after the police surgeon and inspector entered. They found the young men there still and listened to their story, asked a few questions, and went and viewed the body. The doctor said, "Yes, with that

letter, it looks like suicide. I must make a P.M. before I can be sure."

The inspector examined his pockets, made a few notes, looked carefully round the place, and they went off. Later a hand-ambulance and three constables arrived, and they undid the rope and let the body down, leaving the rope still round the neck, as the doctor had ordered; they placed the corpse in the ambulance, and carried it off to the mortuary.

When the mortuary-caretaker had removed the clothes, the police searched them for identification; but they were old clothes, evidently cast-off clothes, bought cheaply or given to the man. There was no name on them, only a fashionable West End tailor's, who identified them as clothes made long ago for Mr. Mayo, an old customer of theirs, who had not been near them lately, but owed them nothing.

Then Kit saw the account of the finding of the body hanging from a tree, and went to the mortuary and identified it as her husband, who had run off with another woman more than a year before. She had no idea who the woman was, nor where he had been; she had heard nothing from him from that day to this. She was much distressed and burst into floods of tears at the gruesome sight, the swollen, purple features, now black and livid. She identified the clothes as his amid sobs, and she identified the writing as his; but could not explain the reference to the Union. He must have been mad, or lost all his money and gone out to work as a workman. She left much distressed, and returned to Bramerton Street and told Hector with much laughing:

"But he's very like him, mind you."

"Yes. That's why his wife got £100; it saved us £400."

"You are clever, Hector," and she kissed the slimy beast.

IV

The Coroner's inquest was held. The police surgeon said he had no doubt it was a case of suicide owing to being out of work, and that the stomach still showed he had been drinking hard just before he did it. Hector had squared the barmaid not to say anything of the man who drank with them that night, as he and the widow did not wish to be drawn into it. £50 fully satisfied her. The landlord had scarce seen him at all, or anyone else who could be found. The wife, Kate Mayo, gave her evidence, which was corroborated by witnesses where they had lived. The tailor identified the old clothes as clothes once supplied to Mayo, a former customer of theirs, and produced their books. He wore no vest, only an old soldier's singlet, and no socks; his boots were old army boots.

Kit identified the writing on the letter, as did some others. The surgeon gave his evidence clearly, the constable whom they called, and the inspector; and the jury soon found a verdict, "Death by hanging from a tree whilst temporarily insane"; and the burial order was issued, and the parish buried him in a pauper's grave. The insurance people had a solicitor representing them, and when Kitty claimed the £10,000, they paid her without demur, and she and Hector fitted out anew and sailed for the Cape, where they were married at Cape Town and went up to Jo'burg. They started a saloon bar which they bought from a drunkard, who had ruined the business. Kitty in her fine dress was attractive to the men and soon drew custom, and the business prospered beyond their expectation, and Hector got some tips on mine-shares, and made a bit that way.

Mrs. Oliver had notified the police that her husband was missing; but, as her description was so vague and she had no photo, they could make nothing of it, and concluded he had gone abroad or gone away somewhere. She was silent about the £100 and had burnt the envelope,

fearing lest the lawyers should get that. But she was a capable woman and good with her needle, and the £100 enabled her to buy some decent clothes and take some decent rooms, and to go out and get a job at a lady-outfitters', which she carried out to the satisfaction of her employers. She was soon earning good money; and a handy *crèche* looked after her children by day.

v

One day, about five years afterwards, the real Mayo met a mining engineer, an old school friend, who had returned from South Africa. He went to stay with Mayo at his little house in St. John's Wood, where he had lived with the woman he had run away with, until she died of acute bronchitis and pleurisy. He had spent much money with her and was on reduced income now.

"Do you know, Frank, where Kitty is?"

"No."

"She's in Jo'burg, married to a swine called Hector McLean, a dirty sneaking dog, if ever there was one. But they are rolling. She got £10,000 for your death."

"My what! Oh, don't pull my leg, John."

"But you read the papers?"

"Yes, generally."

"Well, I remember the case; a man she identified as you, her husband, was found hanging in some old deserted garden out Chelsea way, down and out; and he had nothing but a letter on him signed Frank B. Mayo, that's you, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Well, the writing was identified by several witnesses as yours anyway, and the clothes were identified by your tailor, and—well—you were brought in to have committed suicide whilst in a state of temporary insanity."

"When was this?" asked Mayo excitedly.

His friend told him.

"Good Lord! I was in Switzerland, at Murren for

the winter sports, with Fanny. I never saw it or heard of it."

"Well, they do say truth is stranger than fiction, and I know it is. This isn't the first funny case I have met with in my travels."

"Lord! I must go to the B.M. and look the papers up; it's the very first I have heard of it."

"But didn't your tailor say anything?"

"What was his name?"

"Denby & Denby, 14, Regent Street."

"That explains it. I left Denby's long before that happened. I go to Mercer & Son now, and have ever since I ran away. I did not want my missis to get on my trail."

"I see. I thought it was something like that. Well, there you are, Frank: rum position; you ran away from her; you hang yourself according to the official records, and your wife, a married woman, marries a scamp, and she gets £10,000, and they must have a pile."

"Well, I'm damned! What ought I to do?"

"Ask me another. This is a lawyer's job, if ever there was one. Go and see your lawyer and see what he says. I don't see any way out, unless you wish to spoil her life for revenge, and you ran away, you know; or blackmail, and you aren't built that way."

Mayo was silent.

"Life is a funny game," said his friend.

"You bet it is." Then he began to ask several questions about Kitty, her appearance, her conduct, and about her husband.

"Oh, you can find evidence enough for a divorce, if you want it, I guess. I think Mr. Hector and Mrs. Kitty do a bit of blackmail on the Q.T. She looks very taking the way she gets up now; dinners and all, you bet. I think you would find plenty of mugs who have been bitten, and don't love either of them, especially her husband. I expect to hear of his violent death any

day ; but he's a cautious chap, very, looks after his darned skin, you bet. But then she can bring a cross action for divorce against you for running away with Fanny. Oh, it's a nice mix-up. *I should let sleeping dogs lie.*"

Mayo changed the conversation, and they talked of South Africa, and arranged for some dinners and theatres and sight-seeing. The mining engineer was wealthy, having speculated with knowledge, and he had retired and was looking for a little place in the country, and a wife ; but he wished to get a posh outfit in town, and get a bit civilized before he settled in the country. He was as straight as any mining engineer ever is, and some are straight. He had worked hard, kept off the drink and other vices, and was hale and sound in wind and limb.

Frank, who knew all the ropes of town life, and he put in a good three months together. He lived with Frank, insisting on paying his whack of the housekeeping, and they became real pals.

Frank had, meanwhile, consulted his lawyer, and the lawyer's advice was the same as John's, to let it alone and not touch it. "There is nothing but blackmail for you, and that would mean fifteen years' penal servitude at least, and, you know, you broke away first. You would only want a divorce in case you wished to marry. Do you?"

"No."

"Well, be advised by me ; don't move ; lie low and say nuffing."

Frank said he would, and left him.

VI

At the end of three months the mining engineer said he was satiated with town ; he knew now all he wanted to know about it, and he had been to an agent's and found a little property in Welwyn in Hertfordshire,

which would just suit him, and he invited Frank to come down and look at it.

They hired a motor and drove down on a beautiful summer day with an order to view.

It was a compact little place: a good Queen Ann house, a fine large well-laid-out garden with wall fruit, two good paddocks, a tennis lawn, and shooting could be hired.

The mining engineer knew enough of sanitation and building to know that the property was in good condition. He had sent down a good architect and valuer beforehand, and the next day he went to the agent's and bought *The Green Bays*, which was the name of the house, paid down and was allowed to take possession at once, pending the legal formalities; and nothing must do but Frank must lock up his little place in St. John's Wood and go down with him to help furnish and fit out the place. He hired an experienced old gardener; a housekeeper with three servants, which she said would be required; and he sent down a vanload of handsome furniture to fit up one sitting-room, the dining-room, and two bedrooms for the party, and they stayed at the local inn for a day or two, until the apartments chosen were cleaned and furnished.

John and Frank went into residence, and then they went to and fro to town in John's motor-car, which he ran and tended himself, and furnished the rest of the house.

"You must be rolling, John."

"I made a bit. I'm well within the margin, old friend."

"That's good."

John and Frank, old Cranleighians, were now bosom friends again as of yore, when they played rugger for the school and cricket on the beautiful ground on the common, and ran the paper-chases to the "hills," swimming canals and panting through copses and over ploughed fields, scattering paper and relieving the pressing weight on their backs.

John had saved all his old group-photos and hung them in his den with other groups, soldiering and hunting and prospecting groups from South Africa. For he had fought in two wars, the Kaffir and the Boer War, in irregular horse. To Frank's surprise he bought two saddle-horses and hired some rough shooting; but never hinted what his income was.

When shooting came in, they went out with an old sportsman who lived near, a regular officer who was through the Boer War, and also an old Cranleighian, and he showed John the ropes. John had made Frank practise hard at clay pigeons in the summer; but Frank soon proved to be a crack shot and could kill a rocketing pheasant, a darting snipe, and a lark, most difficult of birds to shoot.

The house was now completely furnished and in thorough working order. People began to call, recommended to by the old colonel, and they had a nice little society of men and women. No widow or prim female had entry there, and there were few old maids to gossip in that country district.

Frank preferred the house to town, and John insisted upon his coming to live at *Green Bays* till he married, as he was fully entitled to do when he met the right girl, who considered him the right man; and this got about, and worldly-wise matrons with a plethora of daughters were very gracious.

Frank sold his little establishment in St. John's Wood, warehoused his furniture, barring a few precious *objets d'art*, and went down to live with John, who refused to receive a penny; but asked him to do secretarial and other work on the little estate if he wished to make it up to him. Local people all knew Frank had next to nothing, and they were not quite so gracious to him; but such is the way of the world. Frank Mayo did not complain; he liked country life and was happy.

Within a year, John was engaged to the colonel's eldest

daughter, a charming and really beautiful woman of thirty-two ; but John wanted no chicken : he was well over forty-five himself ; and Frank had fallen in love with a doctor's daughter, a nice girl of twenty-six. Before he declared his passion and proposed he told the doctor everything.

" Well, you must get a divorce before you speak to her."

" Certainly, sir. I would not think of doing anything else."

" Of course. Of course."

He consulted with John.

" Go out to Jo'burg. I will give you plenty of ' intros ' and one to my old lawyer. Go straight to her and tell her you are alive, and suggest a divorce to smooth the business. She'll fall to it and can re-marry McLean if she wishes."

" Yes. Frankness is best. I'll start directly after your marriage."

" No, a month after, old man, if you don't mind. We want to go to the Italian lakes for a holiday."

" Of course." And they fixed a date when he might depart. The wedding came off with great success, and Frank stood best man, and they went off to London for the Continent. Frank saw little of his inamorata and asked the doctor to keep his memory green, which he promised to do.

When the happy couple returned, Frank sailed in the *Briton* for Cape Town.

VII

Frank was a glad man when he alighted at the dusty city of Johannesburg. A friend of John's was at the station to meet him and took him to his " digs." John had advised the friend that Mayo was of very limited income according even to English ideas ; but in Johannesburg he was as a pauper, for in Johannesburg vulgar

prodigality and show were the fashion: quick come, quick go. This friend took him to the *Carlton* and filled him up, put him up for the club and paid his subscription, introduced him to many men, including Mr. Michelson, John's old lawyer.

Michelson was a very pleasant, astute man, and with his old friend's and client's special recommendation he went out of his way to be nice to Frank Mayo. He asked him to dinner at his house and after dinner, when the family had retired, he took Frank to his den, and, after they had lighted cigars and got long drinks with ice chinking in the glasses, he took down Frank's case.

When he had asked a number of questions, he took the documents Frank had been advised to bring and examined them, with a typewritten account of the suicide and report of the Coroner's inquest, obtained from official sources, and he said:

"Now, give me a week. You want a divorce, isn't it?"

"Yes, I want to marry."

Michelson nodded.

"Come and dine with me this day week, and don't go near the *Golden Nugget*, McLean's and Kitty's saloon; and in fact show yourself as little as possible in Jo'burg. Go off in the veldt; you can hire a Cape-cart; find a pal and go off and shoot spring-bok or guinea-fowl or anything. Got your gun, I suppose?"

"Yes."

He did as Michelson advised. His friend was game, and business was struck, and they went off for a week's shooting in a Cape-cart.

Michelson took counsel with a shorthand reporter whom the firm usually employed, and they decided to send for Kitty on urgent business; they specified that she should come alone and that she would hear of something which she might consider to her advantage.

The bait was gorged and Kitty in her best turned up. The reporter was sitting hidden behind a heavy screen with a book and pencil. Michelson had opened the window so that the roar of the traffic in the streets would drown the reporter's shorthand writing.

Mrs. McLean, looking very neat and fascinating, well groomed and coiffured and manicured for the occasion, looked at Mr. Michelson after the preliminaries.

"Well, Mr. Michelson, what is it? Has one of the boys left me ten thou?"

"We will come to it, Mrs. McLean, slowly but surely. Now pray give me your best attention, for your whole future may depend on your decision; and I want you to understand that I do not think it will be wise to tell your husband anything until I suggest the time has arrived for doing it."

"'It's all so sudden,' as the girl said."

"Please don't joke; this is a very grave matter."

"Well, fire away. I will stand up to it."

"When you married Mr. McLean, you no doubt thought you were a widow."

"*Thought*, indeed! I knew it. My husband and his writing were identified by me and several other witnesses, if you have read the case."

"Yes. I am quite up in the history of *most* of the business." He emphasized the *most*. "Still, prepare yourself for a shock: your husband is not dead; but alive and well." Her slightly rouged complexion paled and her eyes sought Michelson, to see if she could read anything there; but he was well trained in "keeping face."

"I don't believe it," she shouted in a rage.

"Now, Mrs. McLean, please keep your temper. You will want all your caution and wit to steer through this mess. . . . I will at once tell you that I have evidence of it which will satisfy any court of justice here or in England."

She saw he was in earnest and again paled.

"What is it? Blackmail? I suppose he wants money to keep silence. How much?"

"Now, Mrs. McLean, I must ask you not to bring the tone and atmosphere of the *Golden Nugget* into this office. You must know, if it were anything of that sort, I would not touch the case with a barge-pole. Anyone in this city, any reputable person will tell you that. No. He wants a divorce."

"Another woman, in other words. I thought he had a mistress. I never knew whom. He ran away from me with a *revue* girl."

"She is dead and has been dead for some years, and he has had to do with no other woman since."

"You seem well up in all his doings."

"I am. I am his legal adviser."

"But a divorce would disgrace me even in this place, and then there's the insurance, £10,000. I suppose I'd have to pay that back to the company with accrued interest?"

"You would; but you would be free and you could marry McLean legally at once, and there would be no charge of bigamy against you for having married him illegally. The presumption on the evidence, *as it stands*" (emphasized), "is that you were innocent of the knowledge that the man who hanged himself was *not* Francis B. Mayo."

"I see; but wouldn't there be a scandal?"

"Well, no. On the evidence, *as it stands*, people would believe that you were innocent when you married him."

"Meaning I did know?"

"I never said so."

"But you think so."

"You have no right to say that; you cannot know my thoughts."

"I'm a bit of a thought-reader, you know."

"Well, please excuse me, this is idle talk in so grave a

matter. I have told you that your husband wants no money; *olet*, wouldn't take a penny; what he wants is a divorce."

"What is this word *olet*?"

Michelson smiled: "Only a legal term. I beg your pardon."

"Right-ho! I could stick the scandal; but the £10,000 and the uncertainty whether Hector would really marry me a second time? He's no white man, as I have found out long ago, and he's sweet on Flo, my head barmaid; I could divorce him any day."

"And he you," said the solicitor dryly.

"Well, perhaps it's six of one to half a dozen of the other."

"Yes; but please don't let us get off the track. Will you acknowledge Francis B. Mayo as your husband and let the divorce proceedings go on? He is quite willing for you to bring the action against him and will not bring a cross-suit against you. He is really very chivalrous about it. I could soon get him enough evidence in this place to divorce you without going back to old matters."

"You are very polite."

"This is business, grave business for you and for him."

"But there is the £10,000 and interest. Will he pay that?"

"Bless me, Mrs. McLean, he hasn't £10,000 to bless himself with; he is a poor man."

"Going to marry a rich girl, I suppose?"

"Far from it, a small professional man's daughter."

"A love-match," she sneered.

"Well, he married you for love, did he not? You had nothing at all except the clothes you stood up in, I am informed."

She hung her head. . . . "Where is Mr. Mayo?"

"I cannot tell you at this moment."

"You mean you know; but won't say."

"No. I mean that I do not know."

"But you are in communication with him."

"Of course. I am acting for him; that does not connote knowing all his movements. When I want to produce him, he will be there."

"You are sure it is Mr. Mayo?"

"Of course I am. What would an impostor want only a divorce from you for? He would want money."

"Do the insurance people know of it?"

Michelson was not prepared for this question, and he hesitated for a moment and replied:

"There are some things I cannot, in the interests of my client, tell you."

"Well, I can't give you an answer right here. How much time will you give me?"

"Until Saturday at ten, will that do? This is Wednesday."

"Yes."

"I advise you not to tell your present husband."

"I'll go to my solicitor for advice."

"As you please," he said haughtily.

He pressed a bell; an office-boy appeared, and he said:

"Show Mrs. McLean out."

"Yes, sir."

She bowed and left.

Mayo was expected back on Saturday afternoon; he had told Michelson so, and Michelson had agreed and had said that by then he would be able to discuss matters.

He went to the reporter behind the screen. "Now type that with carbon copy and take a copy over to Mr. Andrews, and bring me the other, and ask him to send a clerk over and fix an appointment for to-morrow."

"Yes, sir." The reporting clerk went to his office, and the typewriter was heard clicking.

He returned in a short space of time with a copy which he handed to his employer, and took one in a sealed and

addressed envelope to Mr. Andrews, the barrister. He returned twenty minutes after and said: "Mr. Andrews will see you at three to-morrow, if convenient. He has a short case in the morning at the Courts."

"Certainly. Go and tell him, please, with my compliments."

And so it was settled.

VIII

On Friday night a horseman, a young Boer, came galloping to the chief surgeon's house in Johannesburg. He was hot and breathless and perspiring. He vaulted off his horse, rang the surgery bell, and a page came out.

"I want the doctor, quick."

The boy was in no way perturbed; he was accustomed to such experiences. There were always accidents at the mines and urgent summons for shooting cases and the like.

The boy disappeared, and the doctor came out.

"Hallo, it's you, Meyer!"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, what is it?"

"There's an English gentleman badly shot out near our farm. We have got him into the farm, and Mr. Craig, the gentleman who has been shooting with him, asked me to ask you to come at once. He will pay all fees; he says it's urgent, as the bleeding is bad."

"Where's he shot?"

"In the thigh," and he put his hand over the femoral artery.

"Have you done it up?"

"The best we can; but he bled a bit before we got him."

"I'll come."

"Take my horse, sir; it's one of the fastest."

The doctor ran in and got his surgical case, which

always stood ready, and mounted the horse, and started off at a gallop for Meyer's farm.

When he got within sight of it, he saw black boys and the old bearded Boer at the gate. This was a usual experience for a doctor called to a grim and urgent case; it was diagnostic.

He rode up breathless, the poor horse bathed with sweat and its nostrils blowing and dilating like a steam-engine.

"Too late, Baas. He's dead."

The doctor, a good horseman, vaulted off.

"What's that you say? Too late?"

"Yes, Baas. He died over ten minutes ago."

"What's his name?"

"Mayo, Mr. Craig says; but he will tell you. Come you in. Franz, take the horse and look after him."

Franz, a typical Boer boy, patted the horse and led him off to attend to him behind in the yard where the stables stood.

Dr. Simon entered the parlour. The little girls were called out by the Baas. Craig came in, very white and haggard-looking.

"Come and see him, doctor, and we'll talk after. He's gone, poor chap."

The doctor seized his case and went into another room, where on a couch, his face covered with a rug, was Mayo. He examined him, looked at the wound, now exposed, listened to his heart, held a mirror over his mouth.

"M'yes, he's gone past recall." He covered the face up, and they went back to the room and sat down, and lit cigars which Craig produced.

"It's this way. We started in a Cape-cart for a week's shooting, and had good sport and enjoyed ourselves immensely. He had an appointment to-morrow with Mr. Michelson at three, and we decided to outspan here for to-night and get some shooting in the morning, and

then go leisurely into town. I said to him, 'You go and look round. I will do the needful here.'

"He took the '320 and started off towards the kopje on the north. The black boys were working on the fields, and you know what black boys are, doctor, when sport is about. They watched him like a hawk. Suddenly, when he got near to the kopje, he threw up his hands and the rifle and fell on the veldt.

"Several black boys ran off to him, it's about a mile, and the idiots never came and told either Meyer or me; but they picked him up and carried him home, bleeding like a pig, and then they told Meyer, and one ran to me.

"Meyer, who went through the Boer War, got busy at once with a pad and a tourniquet, cut his clothes away and lost no time, and, when I came up, the bleeding had stopped; but poor Mayo was all blue and collapsed. I tried to pour some brandy down him; but he was too far gone. Meyer wrapped him up in all the rugs and blankets he could lay hold of, and sent his son off full gallop for you. He died ten minutes before you arrived."

"But who shot him?"

"Ah! It looks, doctor, like murder. Meyer at once, when he was brought in, sent off two black boys, who are good trackers; they are still out. He was shot from cover on the kopje; what happened the other side you can't see from this side, and not a single idiot of all those niggers, who ran to fetch him, either tried to stop the bleeding or had the savvy to go up the kopje and look who had done it."

"Kaffirs, I suppose?"

"Yes. Now, a Zulu would have been all there."

"Yes. . . . Who is he?"

"He is a Mr. Mayo from England: came out on the *Briton's* last trip on some law matter, heaps of 'intros' from John Stetson, you remember him, the American mining-engineer. Well, he and Stetson are old school-pals. Stetson was taken to England by his mother, an

English woman and a widow, and he was educated at home: one of the public schools; I forget which. Stetson gave him a special 'intro' to me, and I put him up; he's what we call poor, a little man. Michelson, for some reason of his own, did not want him seen about Jo'burg till Saturday, and told him to go away for a week's shooting on the veldt, and he asked me where he could find a pal. Well, I was at a loose end and always like a week on the veldt, so I said I'd come with pleasure; and so it was fixed up, and, my God, this is the end. I don't know what old Stetson will say; but it wasn't my fault."

"Was his rifle loaded when they brought him in?"

"Yes, and besides the wound could never have been made with a .320, and he was shot from a long distance; it was a real good shot, a Boer I should say."

"Were all the lot here in?"

"Oh, yes. Old Meyer and his son are O.K., white men. That's why I stopped here."

"Do you know what this law business was?"

"No. I guess only Michelson knows that. Stetson sent him to Michelson, his old lawyer here and one of the best."

"That is so. . . . Is he married?"

"I don't think so. He has been chaffing with me, never heard him talk of a wife or kiddies."

"It's the law business of course. He was on to some one who knew they were in a tight corner and just blotted him out."

"Looks like it; I never thought of that."

"I hope the black trackers will find him."

"Amen to that."

"Well, I must be off. I'll send the police out to fetch the body. There will have to be a p.m. and inquest and that. We'll leave all that to them."

"Can I drive you in? My trip is finished, if you will give me half an hour."

"And welcome. I'm a bit sore after that gallop."

The housewife brought in coffee and corn-cakes. Craig had gone to inspan and pack.

The doctor then filled his pipe with Magielesburg tobacco and sat puffing. Every one except the old frau and the little girls seemed to be out.

Craig, when he had finished, drove up with the cart, and the doctor came out with his surgical case, and they drove across the veldt to Johannesburg. They had asked the Boer if they should hitch a horse on behind for his son.

"No, no. He will come back with the trackers. He said he was going to look round."

When Craig reached the doctor's house, he said, "Send the bill to me."

"No, my boy, I did nothing. If you like to give me a dinner at the *Carlton* later when we know more, I shall be pleased."

"Consider it ordered, doc, free list."

They shook hands.

Craig went and cabled to Stetson. "Mayo shot to-day, dead, writing."

Then he sat down and wrote a full account of the matter to his old friend. He went out and posted his letter, as midnight was the making-up hour for the next mail for England; and then he called on Michelson, who was at dinner. He came out rather cross as he hated being disturbed at dinner.

"Mayo was killed to-day on the veldt."

"Good God! Craig, what are you saying?"

"What I am. He was murdered by some one."

"Murdered! No!"

"Yes, sir. The black trackers and young Meyer are on the trail." Then he told him briefly of what had happened, why the doctor arrived too late.

"What luck!"

"I must be off," said Craig. "But I thought it

right to tell you, as you are his lawyer. I have cabled Stetson and written him a full account of the whole business."

"That will save me the trouble. Thank you, Craig. It's horrible, if you knew what I know."

Craig said nothing, but left.

IX

The next morning's *Star* was full of the business. A hustling Australian reporter had hired a motor and been to the farm before bed-time, and by backsheesh had got the full story from Meyer, all except what his son and the black trackers had discovered, and he made John Crawford swear he would not refer to that, and he kept his word. He had visited Craig and got his story out of him at the *Carlton* bar under the influence of champagne, and he went to Michelson and humbly asked him what he should say; he had the full story, he assured Michelson, and came to know how he should deal with it.

Michelson liked the Aussi; he had been in the first batch to enlist in Australia, was therefore a "picked man," and had done well, gaining a commission and two decorations.

"Can I trust you?"

"You bet. Tell me and you shall read the proof, if I may bring it at 2 a.m., and not a word you don't like shall show."

"And you will keep it a secret?"

"Yes."

Michelson told him the story roughly, and told him he was to throw into the article a grim suspicion of foul play, and hint at more intimate knowledge, and then descant on the disgrace to Johannesburg if an honourable English gentleman was to come out there to gain his right and be shot down like a dog.

"I tumble. I will be here at 2 a.m., if you will allow me?"

"Yes, and I'll have a little supper if you can stop. You may be able to help."

"I'm all there," and he hurried off to write his front page article. The photographic department had been looking up blocks, and Michelson gave him one of the victim. At 2 a.m. the cases were closed and locked, and the Aussi went off to Michelson and showed him a lot of proof he had had pulled.

"Now quick, sir. I can alter for the next thirty minutes."

Michelson read it. "That's the ticket."

He ran out ; a boy was there.

"O.K. Carry on, sonny," and he returned.

A nice little supper with bubbly was laid in Michelson's den, and they sat down, and Michelson opened.

"It's the McLeans. Can McLean shoot ? "

"Not for nuts, sir."

"Well, my boy, find whom he hired to kill Mayo and I'll give you £100, and you are my friend for evermore."

"I'll try. No, I won't : *I'll do it.*"

"That's the talk."

"I can't trust the police graft."

"I know something of that."

"More than most of us, I expect." The Aussi boy smiled.

Then they discussed the case.

"Say, sonny, was it a rifle ? Of course it was."

"Oh, yes. He was quite a thousand yards off the kopje, and Doc. Simon says it was a rifle bullet : a ghastly wound. Says he must have been awful tough and curses the Kaffirs."

"Oh, those sheep! . . . What about the black trackers ? "

"The Boer said I was not to refer to them, and I haven't. I haven't heard anything."

"Well, first thing in the morning see the Boer, and try and get at that ; the McLeans have a big pull here

with the authorities; tell him to send the trackers to me. Do you measure with a line the distance the shot was, and be prepared with another to swear to it in court."

"I'll do that with pleasure."

"Then go to the *Golden Nugget* and hang round and see if you can pick up anything; that's the storm centre, and if you can get on the track of the hireling, do."

They talked till four, when Michelson said, "I must turn you out now. I have a lot to do here, a long court-case."

The Aussi thanked him and rolled home on his bike, well pleased with a good day's work.

X

The *Star*, the next morning, was sold out at once and had to be repeated, a double edition. The editor would have taken the Aussi out to lunch, but he was away on the veldt measuring with a professional surveyor. The Boer would not say a word about the black trackers' report. "I'll tell the police; why you? I tell Mr. Michelson, lawyer."

"That's the talk. When will you take them in?"

"This afternoon at three, if this will suit."

"Yes. He told me to tell you he'd be free after lunch."

The Aussi sent the surveyor back to take a message to Michelson, and rode over to the kopje. He tethered his horse to a big stone with a natural hole in it, such as are common in limestone, and began to explore the kopje from the part whence he and the architect had decided the shot was fired. He kept eating sandwiches as he searched, and then his sharp eyes suddenly fell on an empty shell. He picked it up. "Ah, a *Mauser*! A Boer, eh?" he said to himself: "1,013 yards 2 feet, good shooting, like the old Boer shooting." He pretty nearly fixed on the mark. "The artful beggar lay on the naked rock

so as to leave no spoor. I guessed that ; I wasn't in Gallipoli and France for nothing."

He took out his flask and had a pull: cold tea and brandy. He went backwards. " Ah, here's where he climbed up on the stand " ; some loose stones had been moved by a boot.

He followed the trail through the kopjes, but lost it on the veldt ; his tracking instincts were neither trained nor acute enough. But there were the marks of a horse's hoofs and marks where the tethered horse had cropped the grass, and the first few hoof-marks where the horse had started off at a gallop ; but the ground was very hard and sun-baked, and, as I have said, he was done—he could not follow farther. He looked towards the tailing heaps and mine-chimneys and gear and steered for them, riding slowly, shortest cut. He took the Green Rock Mine, that told bright as a mark, and rode for that, ambling along and walking at times, and eating sandwiches with an occasional pull at his flask.

Suddenly something shone on the green before him. He pulled up and vaulted off and picked up a spur: an old one had broken. He whistled and gave a shout of joy and put it in his pocket, and continued his ride to the Green Rock Mine until he struck the road, and then broke into a trot to his stables.

He went to his room and examined the spur, and photographed it and developed the film and printed from the quickly-dried negative ; fixed it and dried it quickly and put it in his pocket. The *spur* he locked in his trunk, wrapping it in a pair of trousers.

Then he went to the *Golden Nugget*. There was the usual crowd. Some gay young sparks were flirting with Mrs. McLean, who, he thought, looked very pale and white under her rouge. McLean's hands were nervous and trembling, and he dropped two glasses of beer whilst the Aussi was there. At the Boer's table, so-called, were a collection of Boers, as was usual ; they

were cattlemen, employées of the slaughter-house, horse-dealers and general bad characters, to be hired for just anything, especially for shooting niggers. The table was well set out from the wall, and they were drinking coffee with Cape brandy.

The Aussi walked around the party and he saw a big Boer with a red beard and tangled hair had two different spurs on. He went to one of the Boers he knew and asked him if he had any news to spare him.

The man shook his head, "Not to-day," and he went off.

The Boers resumed their execrable conversation in the taal, and he asked a man he knew who the big man was.

"Bozman."

"Can he shoot?"

"Could I do forty glasses of bubbly? He's the best shot on the Rand."

"I don't remember him in the competitions."

"No. He doesn't advertise much. Many of our folk had this old devil's bullets through the head in the war. I have heard all sorts of rumours of his cruelty to prisoners; but it may be only hearsay."

"Looks a brute."

"He's all that and more."

"I suppose one could hire him for anything?"

"Anything from cattle and horse stealing to murder, if you ask me, and pay him enough. What do you want? Your Baas killed?"

"Get on, old son! Jokes can be carried too far."

"Sorry; but you seem keen on him."

"Well, he fascinates me. He looks like a palæolithic man."

"I dunno what that is; but if it's anything approaching the devil, he's all that and more."

"You seem to know a lot about him."

"There's a reason. He killed a pal of mine, since the war; but I can't prove it."

"Come, let's go to the *Carlton* and have a bottle. I'll stand, and you shall tell me."

They had a bottle in the *Carlton* bar. The man told him of his friend having been shot in much the same circumstances as Mayo.

The man wound up, "If he can't account for his time that evening, well, I should bet 1,000 to 1 in sovereigns Mr. Bozzy did him in for some one."

"That so?"

"Yes. Let's go and put it in your paper."

"Don't be hasty, old son. There's a law of libel."

"Oh, yes. I forgot. You Johnnies have to be careful of that snag."

"You bet we have."

They parted, and the Aussi went to dinner and then to the office and wrote another long article on the *Veldt Mystery*, with sundry views of the kopjes and more speculation as to where the shot was fired from, very neatly and cleverly done; for he had set the people guessing which was the kopje or what part of the kopje the shot had been fired from, and a competition started on the subject. Ah, a clever journalist was the Aussi and earned all he got.

XI

The next night, a little before 2 a.m., Crawford, the Aussi journalist, turned up at Mr. Michelson's house, as arranged, and was received with all kindness.

"Well, we'll sit down to supper and talk as we eat. The Baas and black trackers have been here."

After being served and filling his glass, and when Michelson had helped himself, Michelson, between eating and drinking, began his story.

"Well, I had the Baas in first. Meyer, you know, is like the old Boers, slim, fond of money, did his best for his country in the war and did it well, and has accepted the peace without rancour. Well, he had little to say :

said the black boys would tell me themselves the results of their tracking, and I could rely upon what they said; he was very emphatic about that. He seemed not to want to talk about the affair much; in brief, I got little out of him. Then I had the black boys in one at a time. The Baas said he wouldn't wait and went off after his short interview with me. Well, the black boys were either telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, or they were lying. They had got their story up perfectly; for I found no flaws in the second man's story; it agreed with the first man's, and I cross-examined them very thoroughly and searchingly. So I will tell you the story of the two as one.

"They say that they found the place where the shot was fired, from a smooth stone on the kopje; they would show me the place, and the man had disturbed some loose stones at the bottom in climbing the rock. He had, they said, tethered his horse to a loose rock with a natural hole in it, and the horse had fed whilst he was up on the kopje. After the shot he had climbed down the rock the same way and untied his horse, mounted, and gone off at a gallop a long way to the north in a large semicircle; they had followed the spoor; and he had struck the Johannesburg road some miles north of the mines, and gone round them and entered the town from the East Rand Street; and they lost the trail in the main street here down by the *Mines Hotel*. They stated that they found no clue at all. They discussed the horse in technical language, which I took down, as I do not know much about horses; but if it interests you, I will show it to you. They said the rider was a light man, about nine stone, and that's all. I questioned them, asked all sorts of things; but I do not know the veldt and its secrets, so that was rather a superficial questioning on my part."

Crawford said little but "So that was their story?"

"Yes. You may print it, if you think fit."

"Oh, thanks, I will, with photos. I will go and see them

to-morrow and get the Baas to let one of them take me over the course and get their photos."

After the meal Michelson gave Crawford the black trackers' description of the horse.

Crawford looked at it, studied it carefully and compared it with some private notes he had made on the horse whose track he had followed ; they did not agree at all. He had found Bozman's horse and taken a full and accurate description of it ; for he knew horses well, had been on a ranch in Australia before the war, and, as a cowboy, was well versed in horses and their ways.

He left Michelson at twenty minutes past three.

The next day he rode out to Meyer's farm and got permission to take a black boy to show him the trail. Meyer demurred at first, and was with difficulty persuaded to let the boy go ; but money talks ; the *Star* paid well. Then, whilst he was waiting, he asked Meyer to show him his stud.

Meyer was a lover of horses, proud of his nags and only too pleased to show them, and he and Crawford went round to the stables and looked over the gees.

Crawford examined them carefully, and pointed to the son's horse and said, " I like that one. He's a goer."

" Yah. He is the best."

Crawford turned up his feet and examined him most carefully, as if he wanted to buy him.

" Will you sell, Baas ? "

" No. No. That is my son's."

A black boy came to announce that the black tracker was ready, and Crawford paid the Baas an exorbitant sum for the hire of the horse, *Star* money ; and they started, the black tracker heading at a slow trot for the kopje. He led Crawford to the place he had himself spotted, showed him the loose stones where the murderer's foot had slipped in ascending or descending, and the place where the horse had fed. Then he cunningly edged off, pretending to look for the spoor, explaining

that it had grown very cold and faded ; about a hundred yards off to the north-east he found it and pointed to the ground. They then were able to follow the long semi-circular *détour* to the north-east ; it was clear enough, and then they came to a soft place. Crawford called to the boy to wait. He reluctantly did so. There in the soft stuff were very clear-cut imprints of the horse's hoofs. Crawford photographed them, shooting many films to make assurance doubly sure. The black boy was fidgeting and evidently did not like it. Then Crawford mounted, and they went a terrible way round and behind the mine-buildings, and got into Johannesburg ; the boy stopped at the *Miners Arms* and said there they lost the trail.

He gave the boy something for himself, and went and developed his films, and compared them with those of the horse on the trail he had followed, then with the notes he had made on Meyer's horse, or rather that of his son. It was evident to him that Meyer's horse had made that false trail, and the description given by the black boys was that of Meyer's horse, though of course they did not think that that would be spotted ; for, though wonderful trackers, they had no brains for reasoning.

Crawford sat down and wrote a front-page article. He gave in detail the results of the black trackers' work, photos of the hoof-prints of the murderer's horse and of the two black trackers, and enlarged on their wonderful powers, and wound up with a hint that the police should now be able to lay their hands on the murderer of the Englishman.

The paper sold like hot cakes. Three large editions were printed, and the editor came to Crawford and said :

" This pays better than Robinson's deep " ; and he patted Crawford on the shoulder. " You are a *star* of the Jo'burg *Star*."

Meyer's son, who had English, read the account, and he went to his father in a great rage.

"What's all this? These are my horse's hoofs; some one here is sure to be suspected."

The old man gasped at him in surprise.

"Can't you see?" he said. "Every man who knows a horse will know that was my horse, and our trackers have told the lawyer the exact description of the horse. Has anyone been here examining the horse?"

"Mr. Crawford," he said, "he wanted to buy him."

"You are an old fool," said the son, "he wanted to write that newspaper article, hang him! He hasn't any money for that; and he knows horses as well as we do; he was on a cattle-ranch in Australia before the war."

Meyer swore horridly in the taal and was in a great fright, expecting the police to ride out every moment.

XII

About a month after the murder several notices offering £500 reward were posted all over Johannesburg, to be given to anyone who first gave information which would lead to the arrest of the murderer or murderers of Francis B. Mayo. It was signed John Stetson, and there was a note that such information was to be taken to the firm of Messrs. Michelson & Co., solicitors, Johannesburg.

Michelson smiled when Crawford came in excitedly.

"Well, come to claim the reward?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, there's £700: Stetson's £500, my £100, and the *Star's* £100; it's a good scoop for the man who takes it."

He sat down and drew a writing pad and paper towards him. The sheet of foolscap was headed, "*In RE* murder of F. B. Mayo. Claim for reward. I."

"I am the first then?"

"Yes, and I hope you will draw it."

He wrote the date, looked at the clock, put down the time, and said, "Now, fire away."

"The murder was committed by Hendrik Bozman."
(The solicitor looked up, surprised; but continued to

write.) "Bozman has a Mauser rifle, and this shell fits the ammunition he uses. I found it just below the kopje from which Mayo was shot. I followed the trail, and at some three miles from the kopje in a direct line for the Green Rock I found this, Bozman's spur, with this, the broken strap, and, see, there is a rude B scratched on the inside of it. Here are hoof-prints of Bozman's horse. I have photographed its hoofs; they tally, and I can show little marks on the hoof-prints of both sets of photos which tally, proving them to have been made by Bozman's horse. These hoof-prints were taken on . . ." and he gave the date. "I went into the *Golden Nugget* on the same date in the afternoon, and saw Bozman wearing one of that pair of spurs and this odd spur belonging to another pair. Bozman has, since the murder, bought a small farm at Magielesburg for tobacco-growing. I find he had a very small account standing to his credit before the murder. Meyer and the black boys are lying: that false track given you by the black trackers was made *after* the murder by young Meyer's horse. Here are photos to prove it. These hoof-prints of Meyer's horse were taken on the route suggested by the black trackers. Bozman, in his real route, was riding that horse of his, a big horse. Bozman is a heavy man, over sixteen stone. The false trail of Meyer's horse begins over 100 yards away from the kopje. The horse was led there with muffled hoofs from Meyer's farm, and then the mufflers were removed and the false trail started. That's all."

"Please sign this, Mr. Crawford."

Crawford did so. Michelson rang for a clerk, and they both witnessed it.

When the clerk had gone, Michelson locked the sheet in his safe, took another headed in the same way and marked II, and put it on the writing-table. Then he looked at Crawford. "Crawford, you are a wonder. That will hang Bozman."

"And a good job too."

“ So say I.”

A clerk came in and whispered to Mr. Michelson.

“ Show him in—in five minutes.”

“ You were only just in time, boy. Here’s No. 2 Claimant.”

“ Who ? ”

“ Ah, well, that can keep,” and he got up and held out his hand, and Crawford shook it and went out.

Michelson’s office was so arranged that his private room opened directly on to the stairs, so Crawford saw no one. He went straight down the stairs and out.

Then young Meyer came in, very excited.

Michelson had had to do with him before, asked him to take a seat, and then asked him suavely what he could do for him.

“ First, has anyone been in to give information about that murder for which the reward is offered ? ”

“ Yes. A man was in this morning, and I took his information, and it is signed and witnessed by myself and a clerk, Mr. Barnes.”

“ Well, I wish to claim that reward.”

“ All right, sir. You will be Claimant No. 2,” and he took up the sheet of paper.

“ Name in full, please, age, residence ? ”

“ Young Meyer rattled it off. Then the lawyer placed the date clearly at the head and looked at the clock, and put the time down to a minute.

“ Now, Mr. Meyer, if you will make your claim, I will take it down.”

“ To start with, my father and his black trackers were lying to you.” (Michelson looked up, surprised.)

“ Yes, that trail they told you of starts 100 yards or more from the kopje. My horse, he’s outside (a black boy is holding him), was taken with muffled hoofs to the spot about a hundred yards from the kopje where they said the trail started, and then ridden by Sam, one of our stableboys, a light weight, eight stone one, on the trail

they made, not followed. The real trail of the murderer began at the very place his horse fed, and goes in a straight line for the Green Rock mine, where he struck the Johannesburg road. That trail was lost ; too many cars and bikes and traps and horses and cattle. That was a big heavy horse made the real trail, and a big heavy man was riding him. I'd know the horse again if he hasn't been reshod or his hoofs pared."

Michelson waited.

"There is nothing more I can tell."

"You have no idea to whom the horse belonged?"

"No. There are several about of that size and several big heavy men ; but he was a *good shot*. There aren't many in Jo'burg now who could shoot like that."

Michelson put this conversation down and asked :

"Anything more, Mr. Meyer?"

"No, sir."

Michelson pressed a bell, and Barnes appeared. "Please witness Mr. Meyer's signature. He is the second claimant for the £700 offered for information that will lead to the detection of the murderer. Will you please sign your full name there, Mr. Meyer?"

Meyer did so ; and Mr. Michelson and Barnes witnessed it.

The lawyer blotted it and handed it to Meyer to read. He read it slowly: "That's all right. May I have a copy?"

Michelson laughed at the slimness of the Boer slipping out, and said "Certainly," and he rang his bell, and when Barnes appeared, he gave him the document to copy in full. When Barnes had gone, he said to Meyer :

"What evidence have you of all this? You need not tell me."

"Why, the boy, Sam, confessed. I told him I'd flay him alive if he did not tell the truth."

"When did you discover all this?"

"The very next day in the afternoon. I saw Mr.

Crawford looking about and ride off towards the Green Rock. I guessed what he was up to, and went to look for myself. I heard about the black trackers' trail, and thought it genuine at first ; but, like Mr. Crawford, I saw the real trail, and then looked for the black trackers' trail, and recognized on some soft ground my own horse's trail, and I knew Sam would know, and got it out of him."

" Does your father know ? "

" I'd rather not say."

" Why didn't you tell anyone ? "

" Well, when that article appeared in the *Star*, written by Mr. Crawford, I knew at once we should be suspected, and had a terrible row with my father, and frightened him out of his life, telling him one of us would be arrested for the murder, and he caved in and said I might come to you."

" I see. Well, that is all, Mr. Meyer."

Meyer got up and left when the copy was handed to him, for which he paid on the spot, after reading it and comparing it with the original.

Mr. Michelson locked the original No. 2 Claim in his safe, placed the sheet—No. 3—on the desk, and went on with his work.

XIII

Michelson waited a week ; there were no further claims, and then he saw a few influential men, and they went to the chief police authority with the evidence which Michelson had marshalled. He had collected affidavits from the Baas, Sam, the two black trackers, and young Meyer ; but he did not tell the chief police officer.

That individual had to act, and a Dutch detective in the force was sent to get a statement from Bozman as to where he was that afternoon. He said, in the *Golden Nugget*, and Mr. and Mrs. McLean would bear him out, and they did. He did not name any other friends ; he said

he was there all the afternoon, and the stableman alleged that his horse never left the stable that afternoon, or indeed that day.

Crawford was busy and at last found six people prepared to swear that they saw him riding out to the Green Rock Mine after dinner of the day of the murder. They swore affidavits to that effect before a commissioner of oaths, and, after much pressure and several delays, Bozman was charged, and warned, and arrested for the murder of Francis Brian Mayo.

Then the *Star* spread itself. Crawford wrote one of the best articles he had ever written ; there were copies of the men's affidavits, a photograph of the lost spur, photographs and maps of the true trail and of the false trail, and of the two horses and their hoof-prints, with the indentation of Bozman's horse's footprints and those of his horse, with the particular depths in the horseshoes printed side by side with the photographs of the footprints on the trail. Altogether it was a most interesting crime-document and beat anything an English Sunday newspaper had ever produced. The sale was enormous. Drinks were pressed on Crawford everywhere ; but he was, as a rule, sober, only took one here and there, which in Jo'burg was most exceptional for anyone, let alone a journalist. Bozman's trial was a *cause célèbre*. Some one had found money for the best Counsel to defend him ; everything possible was done, false witnesses suborned, chiefly shady Boers and all friends of the McLeans.

But all in vain ; Bozman alienated the sympathy of the Court ; he was rude and offensive to the Counsel for the Prosecution, lied freely and never moved a muscle when caught out.

The verdict was guilty. The usher and others could not stem the tempestuous cheers. When order was restored, the judge passed the death-sentence without comment, and that night when the *habitués* of the *Golden Nugget* went to their favourite haunt, two fresh people

were in charge, people who had been hitherto employed in the *Carlton* bar.

When asked where McLean and his wife were, they said, "Gone to Cape Town for a holiday."

Crawford heard of this, of course, and when he had written two long pages on the trial, he went to Mr. Michelson very excitedly.

"Say, Mr. Michelson, the birds have flown. The McLeans left Jo'burg this evening for Cape Town."

"Ah! Guilty consciences. Bozman will give them away, if I know anything of character, before the three weeks' respite are up."

"Yes. Good; I'll wire to a friend on the *Cape News* to watch for them and keep me in touch with their movements. The *Kinfauns Castle* sails on Saturday."

Crawford rushed away to the telegraph-office. Bozman, two days after his sentence, asked to see Mr. Crawford of the *Star*.

The authorities permitted it, and Michelson went with him, and saw that two stout warders were in attendance.

Bozman looked pale and haggard. He spoke fair English, having lived in Jo'burg since the Boer War.

"You are Mr. Crawford. I know you; you brought me to this," and his eyes flashed.

"Your own wickedness brought you to it."

"No, my own foolishness; that is what I want to tell you; you can write in the quick way. Now, I will tell you," and he sat down.

"Mrs. McLean came to me a few days before I shot the rooinek, and she said, 'Bozzy, do you want to earn £3,000?'

"I would not believe, and then I said, 'Yah.'

"Well, there is a verdommed rooinek, Mr. Mayo; he has gone shooting on the veldt with Mr. Craig; he will be back on Saturday. When he is dead, I will pay you £3,000.'

"£3,000, for shooting a verdommed rooinek! Why, I

have shot many for nothing! So I said, 'I will do it; give me a bit of paper.'

"She wouldn't at first; but I said, 'I will not shoot without the paper,' and she wrote it on one of the *Golden Nugget* billheads and signed it. James Bischoff has that paper, and, if you let me write him a note, he will give it to you.

"Well, I rode out to Baas Meyer, and asked him if he had seen the two rooineks, Mr. Craig and another.

"He said, 'Yah, and they will be back on Saturday, outspan there on Friday and go into Jo'burg on Saturday afternoon.'

"I said I wanted to see Mr. Craig on business; but it could wait. Well, I sent a black boy out to come and tell me where they outspanned, and to find out when they would come in. His name was Pompey. He came that night and told me they would inspan early the next day, Saturday. I rode out about the right time, and got on the kopje, and it was just when the other rooinek came to the kopje alone. I took a long shot because I was afraid young Meyer would follow, and he can ride.

"I shot him. I don't often miss a rooinek," and he laughed hoarsely. "I galloped back to the *Green Rock* and struck the Jo'burg road, and home. That night Mrs. McLean paid me in money. I put it in the South African Bank, and told them it was left me by some uncle. That is all."

He finished with a grim smile.

"Did the Meyers know what you were up to?"

"Na."

"Why did he help lay that false trail?"

"Ask Mrs. McLean."

"Think she'd know?"

"Yaas. She's a very bad woman."

"What about McLean?"

"He is a white-livered verdommed rooinek. He know all; but do nothing; very slim, a snake."

"Did he approach you at all about the shooting?"

Michelson was delicate and choice in language.

"Na. He too slippery. She do it all; but he agree."

"Does she like him?"

"She like herself and no one else. She the devil without a tail."

The men smiled, and the Boer chuckled.

Crawford took some flashlight photos of the prisoner in the condemned cell. Regulations there and here differ.

Crawford and Michelson consulted in a low tone. They decided there was nothing else to ask the man; so he was asked to sign the statement.

He could not write; but made his cross, and the two warders and Michelson and Crawford witnessed it.

"Now, Bozman, have you any family? Can I do anything for you?"

"Na. I have only my farm at Magielesburg, and that bought with the blood-money, and the lawyer say the Government will take that. Na. I die. I am content. I have killed many rooineks, and now it is my turn."

The men went out and consulted in the lobby of the prison. Michelson went to the authorities, and Crawford went home to write another startling article with an abridged text of the confession, which he had rapidly copied, and with flashlight photos of the condemned man in the condemned cell, and a brief biography of the man, which he had paid one of the warders to extract from him.

The *Star* again made a huge scoop, and rival editors began to make Crawford tempting offers; but his editor got to know of this and at once raised his salary, and promised him the sub-editorship when the present tenant vacated, which would be in eighteen months.

A wire reached Crawford on the Friday: "The pair have booked by K—; names, Mr. and Mrs. Cohen.—D." But Michelson had been busy, and the authorities wired to Cape Town, and they were both arrested in bed, the first thing on Saturday morning and charged with being

accessories to the murder of Francis B. Mayo. Johannesburg police left the next day to bring them up.

Michelson told Crawford, and Saturday's *Star* was another great scoop. Crawford, now that they were arrested, told of the early history of Mrs. McLean, of her interview with Mayo's lawyers, of her refusal to allow him to obtain a divorce; and he said the £10,000 which she had drawn from her life-policy on the bogus Mayo would have had to be repaid, and that was the motive of hiring Bozman to do the dirty work. He gave photos of the *Golden Nugget*, of Mr. and Mrs. McLean, extracts from the inquest on the bogus husband, who was found hanging from a tree in Chelsea; a photo of the *Kinfauns Castle*, which every Johannesburger knew well, of the cabin booked by the McLeans, *alias* Cohen, of Cape Town Prison, of the police officers sent to fetch them back. Johannesburg was amazed at his knowledge, and when he entered a public bar, they cheered him, and men crowded round, offering to put drinks up.

Crawford had been paid the £700 in three cheques; these he photographed and kept for a fresh article, banking the originals.

The McLeans arrived after the long and dirty journey from Cape Town, looking very haggard and pale. McLean's hands twitched. They were finally brought up, identified, and remanded for a fortnight. The police, knowing how unpopular they were, strained every nerve to collect evidence against them.

Bozman's execution was postponed, as he would be wanted as a witness, and the authorities saw that he was very bitter against both and would help to convict them.

The insurance agent of the *Star*, in which Mayo's life-policy had been taken, put in a claim against Mrs. McLean for £10,000 with interest for every year she had had possession of it.

When the fortnight had passed, the prisoners were again brought up, and again remanded. The authorities

were searching for evidence against McLean, the man. Bozman could not help. The Baas said Mrs. McLean had paid him £500 for laying the false trail. The prosecution wanted some evidence that McLean knew of all this, and it was only by diligent search that they obtained two witnesses, who had overheard the McLeans discussing the whole business after Mrs. McLean's return from Michelson. They were both reputable citizens of good character, who had been sitting unobtrusively in a corner of the saloon and heard it all. Their statements were taken; and when the prisoners were next brought up, they were both charged with the premeditated and wilful murder of Francis Brian Mayo.

Bozman grinned when he heard it, and said:

"I shall have company in this dance on air."

The Baas was arrested and charged with obstructing the course of justice as an accessory after the fact. Crawford kept up the interest in the business with journalistic acumen and photographs.

They were sent for trial, all three. It was hinted to the Baas by the warders that the length of his sentence would depend on his evidence against the prisoners. He was no fool and intended to conceal nothing. Mrs. McLean had no chance from the first; but the issue about McLean was doubtful. The Baas, of course, had no chance of escaping a verdict of guilty.

The best Counsel was briefed for the McLeans; they were rich.

All went well for McLean until Mrs. McLean elected to go into the box, and then she quickly gave him away; that she hated him was evident. Counsel for Prosecution elicited damning evidence against McLean. She realized that her own case was hopeless, and was determined he should perish with her.

McLean then went into the box and denied everything; but Counsel for Prosecution caught him in lie after lie, and he only pulled the rope tighter about his own neck.

The verdict was a foregone conclusion, and the jury brought both prisoners in guilty after twenty-five minutes' deliberation. Bozman never, Crawford said, enjoyed himself more. He grinned maliciously at them, and told all he knew and much that was not pertinent to the case of a damning nature against the prisoners. Counsel for Defence tried to stop him ; but the judge let him go on, as he wanted to learn all he could about the nefarious practices of the accused, so he took liberties, and there was none to stop him. The Baas pleaded guilty and threw himself on the mercy of the Court.

The judge then sentenced the two prisoners to death, and made a very bitter speech against them before doing it. Then he gave Baas Meyer a lecture ; he was an old man ; and finally sentenced him to one year's imprisonment on account of his age.

There were storms of cheers, and you could hear the cheering picked up and carried along the streets to the remotest part of the town. An attempt was made to seize and lynch the prisoners when they were brought from the Court to go to the condemned cells ; but a very strong posse of police was present.

Bozman asked to be hanged with them, and this request was acceded to, and all three were hanged on a beautiful Friday morning.

Crawford had three pages in the *Star*, and again the *Star* printing press was busy all day and all night.

XIV

The business was over, and the editor said to Crawford :

" Well, my son, the company is going to vote you a bonus at their next meeting. It's all over now."

" No, sir. I can make one more big selling issue."

" You can ? "

" Yes."

" Well, get to it."

Crawford sat down and wrote his biography from the cradle, his experiences in Australia, his war experiences, his researches in connection with the three celebrated cases (he had several blocks from photos in his possession), and the three cheque-photographs were reproduced life-size with a large amateur portrait of Captain Crawford, M.C., of the Australian Force.

The editor looked at it and grinned all over.

"Well, Crawford, I'm damned! Did you begin journalism in the cradle?"

"Yes, sir. I started with a rattle, and this is a rattle to please the public babes."

"By Jove, you take the biscuit! Excellent!"

Crawford was right. The *Star* sold three big issues of the Crawford number. He was far the most popular man in Johannesburg.

XI

A Message from the Dead

I

IT was a foggy November day. John Algernon Everett, a medium-built young man, attired in Harris tweeds and knickers, with a cap on his head and a stick in his hand, walked a foot or so away from the side of a dark, slim girl, dressed in a blue cape fur-trimmed, a serge dress and a small velvet toque with a veil covering her highly coloured face. The air was sharp. On the thorn-trees in the lane, now bright with a rich red crop of haws mellowed by the night frosts, blackbirds and missel-thrushes were fighting and gobbling down the luscious mealy berries. The blackbirds showed all their skulking habits, stealing round the hedges and flying up and darting at a big missel-thrush, and then chortling in that vulgar voice which the blackbird assumes at the closing of a winter's day.

"Lovely, isn't it?" she said. "Red, blood-red, and black and green and silver and blue. I wish I could get it. I try so hard, but I can't even catch a reminder of the fleeting beauty of a scene like this."

"You are not practical enough, Eily. I have induced you to go and cast your vote to-day, true blue, but your thoughts were not on the election. You were thinking of colour schemes and that."

"Well, it's a free country. I did my duty by pencilling a piece of paper with a cross like an illiterate, placed it in a tin box, like a lawyer's deed-box. Why should I

think and worry about it, man? *I* can do no more. I have no faith in politicians, in none of them. They are mere seekers after jobs and honours. They don't deal in realities, they are not scientific. They talk and mander like untrained persons, and yet you are obsessed with their doings; you dream and think of nothing else; you are serious and dull."

"I am so sorry, Eily. You must teach me to be otherwise."

"I fear that is hopeless."

He drew nearer to her. "Don't say that, Eily."

"But I do. We could never live together—happily. It's no use blinking the truth. I have long been satisfied that it is so."

"Then my case is hopeless."

"Yes, hopeless. Propinquity made us acquainted. We have nothing in common, nothing at all. You are proud of family, of wealth, of honours: I care only for beauty. How *can* there be anything in common between us?"

They walked on silently, and she would stop at times and look at the blackbirds eating the blood-red haws against the bronze-green leaves.

She sighed, "If I could only get that one phase of it, but my hand has not the skill."

He said in a suppressed rage, "Then you don't care a bit for me?"

"No, not a bit, you are as dull as the ballot boxes."

He flushed crimson, stopped stock-still, and, looking at her with blazing eyes, said in a solemn voice:

"Good-bye then," and, swinging off his cap, he turned and walked back.

She just turned and looked at him with her beautiful eyes, and watched him walking fast, obviously angry by the way he was swinging his stick along the field, flushing the chortling blackbirds and the big missel-thrushes, who flew to other trees and resumed their feast.

She turned and walked on, shrugging her pretty shoulders.

"He had to know. I *had* to tell him. He isn't even intelligent; boring me at lunch with the *probable* forecast of the election; if he would only wait a couple of days, he'd know for certain. What fools these people are! I fear I encouraged him a little, but I never saw the emptiness of his mind until to-day. What *does* he know of politics? He is only afraid of capital levy, and that he will have to work instead of shootin' and fishin' and huntin' and dancin'. He is too lazy even to pronounce the 'g's,'" and she laughed softly.

A blackbird, a mass of black with a yellow beak, flew from the hedge ahead of her and chortled.

"Why, you blackbirds interest me more," she said, walking on and gaining the road. She soon was walking up the drive of the Hall, and, taking off her outdoor things, she went into the cosy tea-room, where her silver-haired mother sat.

"Well, Eily, done your duty?"

"Yes, dear."

"And how is Mr. Everett?"

"I have dismissed him. He bores me to distraction. He's just stupid!"

"*Stupid*, my dear, it's *you* who are stupid. Mr. Everett is very rich and may succeed to the title, his elder brother is not expected to live long——"

"It's about all he will ever succeed in excepting huntin' and fishin' and shootin' and dancin'," and she mimicked his pronunciation.

"Was he angry?" asked the mother.

"Furious! Kept swinging his stick as if he'd like to lay it about me. A violent man, and oh! so dull, so deadly dull! Let's drop him, mummy."

The mother smiled, and Eily got her portfolio of sketches and looked at her attempts to paint the birds on the thorn trees.

"If I could only get the beauty of it, mummy!"

"Come, every one says you are very clever. Look what the great painter, Sir John Savage, the Royal Academician said."

"He can't paint, mummy."

"*Can't paint*, Eily! Are you getting conceited?"

"No. I have known it for years. Now, Whistler might have got the effect, but I don't think even he would. A Jap would understand. Hiroshige would, but he's dead."

"Well, Eily, I give you up."

"Yes, mummy, you had better. I may get the effect one day. I will spend all day at it to-morrow. I will start afresh and block it in the morning and put the finishing touches in the evening."

"Well, you are persevering, at any rate."

"It's the only way."

II

The next day she packed her lunch in a satchel, with a good-sized thermos flask, and with her walking-stick-stool and paint-box she made her way to the field.

All the morning she spent in making notes of the actions of the blackbirds; she did not draw the big missel-thrushes. She had some fine thorn-trees roughed in by lunch, which she ate sitting in a hedge on her mac. After lunch she re-started. It was two, and a mist was already creeping up and filling the hedges and fields with silver-grey. Mixing her paints she re-started, and it began to come as she wished. She painted hard as the light waned, and presently her picture began to look a picture indeed. She had got the effect at last, and her joy was exquisite. Still in the grey evening she added the finishing touches, until the last blackbirds left the trees, and with many vulgar chortlings sought their beds in the thick hedges. A clear sickle-moon was visible in the sky, and she began to pack her things, when she heard a step behind her. She turned: Mr. Everett.

She gave one look at his face and said simply :

“ I have got it—at last.”

“ I didn't come to talk of that rubbish.”

She looked at his angry, heavy face, and then an idea seized her. Taking a broken pencil from her mouth she wetted it between her beautiful lips, and wrote in a corner of the drawing, and then, replacing the drawing in its case, she locked it.

He was looking, glaring at her.

“ Are you going to marry me ? ”

“ No, Mr. Everett, I am not.”

“ By God, no other man shall have you,” and he approached her and seized her to kiss her.

She brought the painting-box down on his head with all her might.

An oath escaped him and then there was silence until a belated blackbird flew past jeering. He hurled his oak stick at it and missed it, and the bird went on jeering down the hedge. Then he buttoned up his coat, pulled his cap over his face and walked quickly to the gate. Walking very fast along a deep lane he came to a road, where he walked a little slower and lit a pipe. He met an aged labourer carrying a bundle of sticks.

“ Good evening,” the man said, touching his cap.

“ Good evenin’,” grunted Everett and passed on until he arrived at Somers Court. He went in and called his man.

“ Pack our things. I've to go to London at once. We will catch the 9.30. Tell James to give me a bit of dinner in here and a bottle of port, and excuse me to Lady Everett.”

“ Yes, sir. How long shall we be away, sir ? ”

“ We'll take things for a month, and tell the chauffeur to be here punctually. We mustn't miss the train. I've got to be in the City at 9.30 sharp in the morning.”

“ Yes, sir. Would you like anything particular for dinner ? ”

“ No, no. Anything that's going. Look slippy, and

oh, bring a bottle of champagne as well as the port, and get some food yourself."

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir."

He took a suit-case from a corner and packed some pipes and cigars and cigarettes, and two or three sporting novels, and, going to the sideboard, mixed a strong brandy-and-soda and drank it.

After dinner he and his man started in the car, and caught the 9.30 London express.

III

The morning broke still and foggy. An old labourer was walking along the field, munching a cold bacon-and-bread sandwich and spelling out from a paper the results of the election, as he tramped along. The trees were covered with birds feeding on the blood-red haws, and they got up and flew to other trees ahead as he came along, and suddenly his heavy boot kicked against something.

He stopped, put his paper aside, muttering, "We be getting on. Labour over forty-two. Good Lardy Jargy hev' done thet!"

He looked down and saw the stick which was a seat as well.

"That fare funny!" Then he looked around and saw a dead girl in the ditch.

"Lor' a mercy, what be this?" And he climbed down and looked at her. "Dang me if it ban't Miss Warren, poor critter! Wonder what's amiss with her," and he called her:

"Miss Warren! Miss Warren!" No answer.

He then felt her face and drew his hand back as if it had touched fire.

"Dead, she be. Dead as nip. Poor mawther, and she such a purty kind mawther tew." He looked at her, her paint-box was still firmly gripped in her right hand. "Allust paintin' she be, allust paintin' t' gays as purty as herself, but she on't paint no more neow."

He got out of the ditch, mumbling, and looked all round. There was no one in sight, and he began to toddle back to the village, stuffing the paper in his pocket. When he reached it he went to a small house where the constable lived, and rang the bell.

The policeman came out, still chewing part of his breakfast.

"Well, Bob, what's amiss? You look as if you had seen the devil."

"May be I hev', Bor, for it wor a devil killed thet purty mawther, Miss Warren."

"Miss Warren! Good God, man, what do you mean?"

"Wot I ses. She lay thar in ter deek agin them thorn trees in Joe Baker's ten-acre field."

"*Dead!* Are you sure?"

"Sure. Yes, Bor. An' she be dead since last night cause the dew was all over her. Cold as nip she wor. I felt her face. Been making gays, she was allust makin' gays, purty gays tew, not the lead-pencil gays, but real paints."

"See anybody about?"

"No, not a sign of nobody."

"Been any trampling or struggle on the path?"

"No, not thet I could see. Fare ter me she wor standin' and sudden-like fell inter deek."

"You didn't move anything?"

"No, Bor, I daresen't dew thet."

"Good for you. Now, Bob, do you go down and ax the doctor to come along there as quick as he can, and I'll go along now. And then go you back there, Bob. I'll pay you your day's work."

Old Bob nodded. The policeman went in and appeared in his great-coat and helmet, and mounted his bike and rode off, and Bob went on and told the doctor.

"Right. I'll be along in a quarter of an hour. Are you sure she's dead?"

"Dead, yes sir, as nip. She've gone tew the mould country. Such a purty rare lady tew."

"She was all that, Bob."

"Could you give me a lift back, sir? The constable want me ter go back."

"Why, of course. Go round and tell Jack to bring up the car and get in, and tell him to bring her round as quick as he can."

"Yes, sir, yes."

The car came round and the doctor got in, and they arrived at a gate, and the doctor and old Bob descended and opened the gate and walked in. They saw the policeman examining the ground all round. He saluted when the doctor came up.

"Terrible business this, Sam."

"Yes, sir."

"Have you moved her?"

"No, sir. I don't in no case of sudden death, so I haven't moved her."

The doctor got down into the ditch and examined her face, and then he raised her head and felt the scalp all bloody behind, and he noted the stone upon which the head rested. He got out an electric torch as the sky was dark and foggy, and looked into her eyes.

"Fracture of the base of the skull." The policeman was down in the ditch, too.

"Think she fell on that stone, sir?"

"It may be," said the doctor guardedly. "Don't touch that stone. I'll take it back with me. Better call the chauffeur and take her body to the car."

He put on his gloves and took the big stone up. He looked at the bottom, which was all clogged with mud, and there was a worm in the mud. Then he looked at the place where the stone lay, and, taking the stone to the car, he locked it in his "medicine cupboard," the men very carefully carrying the body, which they placed in the car. The doctor put the hood up, and he and the policeman

went back to the scene, whilst Owd Bob stood talking to the chauffeur in a low voice.

“ What do you make of it, doctor ? ” asked the policeman.

“ Can't say for certain. That stone is a funny thing. It was taken from there,” and he pointed to a place by the path marked by worms. “ She wasn't killed with that. I think she was struck at the back of the head with a stick or bar of iron by some strong man. It's murder right enough. After I make the p.m. I shall be certain. Have you found any clues ? ”

“ No, sir. The ground was bone-hard, and there don't seem any signs of a struggle.”

“ No, I don't think there was any struggle, for she was still gripping the paint-box with the death spasm. She was very suddenly and unexpectedly struck down. I will take the body back to the shed in your yard, and I'll start the p.m. at once. This case is going to make a dust, and I shall be all the better prepared to give evidence if I do the job at once. I have no urgent case this morning, luckily. Will you tell Mrs. Warren ? ”

“ I will, sir.”

“ I'm glad. It's a job I should hate.”

“ When do you think she was killed, doctor ? ”

“ Well, within eighteen hours. I shouldn't like to go closer now, not till I have made the p.m. I will start at once.”

“ Thank you, sir.”

Old Bob joined the policeman, and the doctor and chauffeur drove off with the body. Luckily they carried it into the shed at the back of the police-station without anyone seeing them. They had hardly got it in when a pageboy from the Hall peddled up, with white anxious face.

“ What's the matter ? ” asked the doctor.

“ Miss Warren is missing, sir. I came to tell the policeman. She started out to paint yesterday morning and never came home for dinner. Mrs. Warren thought she

might have gone to her aunt's, where she go sometimes, and expected to get a card by post this morning, and as nothing came, she sent me on here. I've got to go on to her aunt's, and see if she be ill there."

"That's right. Get along."

"When did you say she went out yesterday?"

"'Bout ten. She took her dinner and tea with her, she was going painting in Joe Baker's ten-acre field, she was arter them thorn-trees."

"I see. Well, cut along."

The doctor went over to his house and got his instruments, apron, etc., and returned to the shed which Mrs. Somes, the policeman's wife, had prepared. They stripped off her clothes, and Mrs. Somes cut her hair closely, and the doctor examined the head and felt the skull bones.

"Yes. Fracture of the base. She's had a very severe blow with a stick or bar of iron just across there." He had freed the paint-box from her death-grip, and examined it carefully with a powerful magnifying glass.

"Hallo! What's this?" He noticed a greasy spot and two or three hairs, black hairs. He took them carefully up with forceps and put them into an envelope, and smelt the bottom of the case where the little grease-spot was.

"Bay rum and brilliantine, for a sovereign," he said, and he put the case aside and finished his work. Mrs. Somes had collected everything out of her pockets and her jewellery. There was some £3 and silver in her purse.

"Not robbery."

"No, doesn't seem like it, Mrs. Somes."

Just as they were finishing the policeman came in, looking very red. He was portly and the excitement and exercise had flushed him.

"There's been a pageboy from the Hall for you, constable."

"Yes, sir. I met him and sent him home."

“ I sent him on to the aunt’s, so as to give you time to break the news.”

“ That’s right, sir. Thank you, sir. Mrs. Warren took it terrible. Never see anyone so upset. I couldn’t get nothing out of her ’cepting that her daughter went out alone to paint and said she’d be in after dark. She said she was going to paint all day at the thorn-bushes, took her dinner and tea along.”

“ Yes. The things are in that bag, and the thermos flask is empty and everything eaten, so she had tea no doubt. She was killed soon after she had eaten the tea by the contents of the stomach, which I have placed in a jar and sealed it. I should say she was killed about closing-in time or soon after.”

“ That’s valuable. Thank you, sir.”

“ Here is the paint-box. She struck some one on the head with that,” and he pointed to the grease-spot. “ Smell it.”

The policeman smelt it. “ Can’t make it out.”

“ It’s brilliantine and bay rum. The hairs of the head she hit were black,” and he showed two hairs he had found adhering to the case.

“ Then the person must have been shorter than her.”

“ No doubt, and she hit him, I should say, fair and square on the top of the head, where perhaps it’s going thin.”

“ But his cap or hat, sir? ”

“ Wasn’t on when she hit him. I’ll tell you later if the hairs are those of a boy or old man. Let’s see if there is anything in the paint-box.”

They opened the paint-box and examined everything, and then the doctor held the picture up.

“ A lovely bit of work, poor girl! She would have done great things.” He held the picture to the big lantern in the shed and said :

“ No robbery, I think, constable, and no attempt at outrage. That’s a sure thing.”

“ Thank you, sir.”

The doctor picked up the picture and his bag and apron, and said: “ Don’t touch the glass jars, constable, and don’t let anyone else do so. You had better lock them up. She was killed within two hours of eating her tea, that’s a sure thing.”

The policeman was noting all this down.

“ You will let the Coroner know? ”

“ Yes, sir. I’ll warn you where the inquest is, but I’ll come up in the morning and see what you make of the hair and that.”

“ All right, do. We must be very careful. This is going to cause great public excitement, so I have been very careful. Did you find any stick or anything? ”

“ Noathin’, sir, but I’m going to have another look. Owd Bob is hunting, and he have a sharp eye.”

The doctor nodded and went out, thanking Mrs. Somes for her help.

IV

Dr. Strong was a very able young practitioner, a young man who had taken a brilliant degree, and was in addition a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons. He had had much surgical experience in the war, and was a keen medico-legal student. He meant to make his mark over this case; he was angry too that such a fine young lady should be so brutally murdered, and he determined to bring the criminal to justice.

When he reached home, he locked up the painting and went on his rounds, his head full of the foul crime. When he had finished the day’s work and had a good dinner, he went to his surgery and first examined the stone for fingerprints. He could discover none. There was some blood which had oozed from the wound, but by a very careful examination of the stone he was assured that the stone had not caused her death. No hairs were adhering to it: it was put under her head after the fatal blow was given, he

concluded, to throw the police off the trail and to make them think she had fallen back on to the stone, and smashed her skull, by accident.

“Cunning, yet stupid,” was the doctor’s comment, and he locked the stone up. Then he took the drawing. He set it up on the mantelpiece and admired the delicacy and beauty of the scene, the life-like movements of the black-birds and the exquisite colouring of the whole thing, a little decorative masterpiece of perfect composition.

Then he examined the hairs, and soon pronounced them to be those of an adult person. He mounted some specimens of the hairs permanently, and then went to bed, well satisfied with his work.

The next morning the policeman arrived.

“Well, sir, found anything?”

“Yes. The stone had nothing to do with it, that was put there after she was killed. There were no finger-prints on it, therefore the man wore gloves. The hair is that of an adult in the prime of life——

“Well, constable, she was murdered soon after tea, hit across the back of her head with a heavy stick or bar, fell into the ditch, and the murderer fetched that stone and put it under her head to mislead you. Before that he had said or done something to offend her, and she had struck him with the full force of her drawing-box, holding it by the two handles. The man was shorter than she was, had black hair and uses bay rum and brilliantine to dress his hair with. He is probably slightly bald at the top, but a powerful man in the prime of life. He vanished when his foul work was done, and fled into the night.”

The policeman took it all down and went off. He went to the Hall and was able to see Mrs. Warren, who was calmer.

“Do you know anyone who wanted to marry her, Mrs. Warren?”

“Several gentlemen did.”

“Has she refused any of them?”

" Yes, several."

" Might I ask who ? "

She rattled off a string of some six names, and the constable took them down.

" Was she afraid of any of them ? "

" No, not that I know of."

" Who was the last ? "

" Mr. Everett, I think."

" Of Somers Court ? "

" Yes."

" When was that ? "

" On election day. They went together to vote, and she came home alone and said she had refused him."

" Did she say whether they had quarrelled ? "

" No, and she would have told me, if they had done so."

" Did she quarrel with any of the six ? "

" No, it takes two to make a quarrel, and she was not the quarrelling sort."

" Do you think any of them would have done her any harm ? "

" No, I don't. I'm sure they would not have done so."

" Have you any idea who could have done so ? "

" No, it was some tramp or unemployed."

The constable asked if she had gone alone to the thorn-bushes.

" Yes, so far as we know."

He left Mrs. Warren, who at once broke down again.

At the police-station was the inspector and a plain-clothes man. P.C. Simes showed the inspector his notes, and the inspector said, " Your doctor seems a sharp chap."

" He's all that, sir."

" Well now, of the six gentlemen who were refused, how many have dark hair ? "

" Four of them, sir."

" How many are short, shorter than her ? I see her height is 5 feet 6½ inches."

" Four of them, sir," and he named them.

The inspector made some notes, and then said, " I will go round and look them up. Come along and show me the way."

The three got into the trap and drove round to the houses. Two of the four were away. One had been away a week, shooting in Yorkshire, the other, Everett of Somers Court, had been called away to London on business the night before and had gone to the *Savoy*. The other two gave satisfactory accounts of their movements on the day of the murder, which the inspector took down, asking them to sign their statements, which they did.

After this he told P.C. Somes to go round with the detective and verify these statements. A telegram to the north brought back the reply that Mr. Courtney had been up there shooting for eight days and was still there. The detective could find no flaws in the statements of the other two men—Everett was in London, at the *Savoy*.

The detective hurried up to London, and caught the Hon. Algy Everett at lunch. Detectives are very fond of meal and bed hours to capture their quarry. He waited by the dining-hall door, and when the Hon. Algy came out, rather flushed after a bottle of champagne, he said in a discreet voice, " I'd like to speak to you, sir, in private."

" What about ? "

" Business, sir."

" Well, come up to my suite."

They went up in the lift and the Hon. Algy sent his man down to have lunch.

" Sit down. Have a cigar ? "

" No thank you, sir."

" Well, what is it ? Go ahead, I'm sleepy, too much of ' the boy ' : had a hard day in the City."

" I would like to know, sir, what you did between the hours of two and midnight on the 16th, the day after the election."

" The dooce you would ? Damn if I know, shootin' or

huntin' or fishin', I expect, never do anything else except dancin', and don't do that in the afternoon, not at home."

"Try and think, Mr. Everett, it is important."

"Gad, is it? Let me see, day after the polling. Oh, yes, went into the committee-room in Somers to see the returns, etc. Had lunch at the County Club and walked home, got there about 4.30, had tea with the mater. Read my mail, got a letter from my brokers in the City to say 'Come up at once,' put a few things together, had a bite, caught the 9.30 express and came straight here and had a bit of supper, and went to bed and slept. There you are."

"Have you the brokers' letter?"

"Yes, at home."

"Who are they?"

"Elkin & Elkin, Austin Friars. Damn good brokers."

"What time did you leave the club to start home?"

"Let's see, had lunch with Idy Noble and Pat Pope, and then 100 up at pills, guess I started at 'half arter tree,' as the rustics say."

"Did you meet or pass anyone on the way?"

"Only an old labouring man, 'Old Bob,' they call him. Of course I passed several in the village before I got to the Court, but no one I knew."

"You took the short cut across the fields, I suppose?"

"No, I didn't, I went by the road. I guessed Miss Warren would be there painting and I avoided it, as she had refused me on election day. I popped the question and got let down, like all the others. She isn't taking any man, 'wedded to art' and all that tommy-rot."

The detective arose and, in doing so, stared at the top of his head, but the Hon. Algy had still the cap he took from his pocket after lunch in the hall, and he did not seem inclined to remove it. He had given a very straightforward account, and he would return to the village and the Court and see if it was correct.

He thanked him; the Hon. Algy got up and said, "That's all right, but you don't tell me what it's all about."

"Poor Miss Warren was murdered that afternoon."

"Good God, you don't say so!"

"Yes, I do."

"And you are a 'tec,' I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I'm damned! Such a nice bit, too. Some tramp, I suppose. I always told her it was dangerous to go sittin' about, paintin' pictures all alone."

"We have clues."

"I suppose so . . . you always have."

"Yes. We particularly wanted to know if you met anyone, especially if you had gone the short cut by the fields."

"Well, the only person I met before I got to the village was 'Owd Bob.' He'll tell you, if you 'ax him, Bor,' as they say down there," and he laughed.

The detective returned to the village, and at the Court he learnt that the Hon. Algy had returned about 4.30, had tea with Lady Everett, and hadn't gone out afterwards, until he went by the car to catch the 9.30 express.

Coming out of the hall he noticed the walking-sticks in the rack. They were ash sticks and Malaccas, but not heavy. There was no heavy stick there. He came out of the Court, and 'phoned the result of his visit to his chief.

"See old Bob," was the order.

He found old Bob's cottage and that old standard in. When he knocked, old Bob's wife showed him in and curtsied.

"Good arternoon, sir," said old Bob. "Be you seated."

"You remember election day, Bob?"

"Yes, sir."

"You remember the day after?"

"Yes, sir. I'd been doing a bit of hedging down at Baker's."

"Exactly. What time did you get home that night?"

"Half arter five. I had a glass o' ale and a mardle in the kitchen with the gels 'bout t' election."

"Did you pass anyone that night?"

"Yes, sir. Mister Elogy Everett, but none in the willage."

"What time did you pass him and where?"

"I passed him nigh the ten-acre field 'bout quarter-past five."

"Sure?"

"Sartin' shure, the charch clock jest struck the quarter."

"Did he speak?"

"I said, 'Good night, sir,' and he grunted out summat. He wor walkin' wery quick-like."

"Where was he making for?"

"The Court."

"And you?"

"Going home."

"How long would it take him to reach the Court from where you met him?"

"'Bout ten to twelve minutes."

"Then he'd get in about half-past five?"

"You be right, Bor, that's just when he would get home, half arter five."

"You are sure of your time?"

"Sartin' shure. . . . Well, sir, thet's the truth, the royal truth and nothing like the truth."

"No, no, Bob. Them aren't the words," said the detective, laughing. "The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

Old Bob repeated them solemnly.

"Will you kiss the book on that?"

"I will, Bor. I doan't tell no lies. I doan't live in thet street."

" Well, here's half a crown for you, Bob, for a glass of ale and some bacca. You can always do with that, I know. How was he dressed, Bob, by the by ? "

" Light suit like he allust wear, them knickers ; cap pulled right down over his face ; gloves, them dawg-skin gloves, and he carried that old oak stick of his, some say there be lead in that. He allust carry that of a night."

" I suppose you could knock a tramp over with that ? "

" Aye, sir, fell a bullock thet stick would."

" Who do you think killed that poor girl ? "

" I 'aven't no idea, sir, or I'd soon tell you. I'd like to catch him in the dark. I'd cut his head off with my chopper : crool that was."

" Seen any strangers about ? "

" No, sir, not since t' election. Thar wor a lot of gippos makin' for Hurstmere afore t' election, with their carawans and swing-boats and thet, but I 'aven't seen none since. They must have gone to Chipling, there was a fair thar on Saturday."

" I see. Well, good day."

" Good day. Thank you kindly, mister."

v

The detective went up to the Court again and interrogated all the servants, and they all agreed that Mister Everett had come in at 4.30, and had tea with Lady Everett in the boudoir. Nothing could shake this, and Lady Everett confirmed it.

" He had a heavy oak stick, hadn't he ? " he asked the butler.

" Yes, sir, in the gun-room. He always kept it there."

" I'd like to see it."

They went into the gun-room, and there was the stick in a rack with two heavy ash sticks. He produced his powerful magnifying-glass, but there was nothing on any of the sticks. If there had been any incriminating evidence, it had been carefully washed off, and the oak

stick appeared to have been recently oiled or rubbed with an oily cloth. He pointed this out to the butler.

"Oh, yes, sir. He often give that a rub after cleaning his guns, he's rare proud of that stick. He carry that at night, for some tramps once held him up."

The detective went away, thoughtful and not over-pleased with his investigations. He returned to Owd Bob.

"Are you quite certain, Bob, about your times?"

"Yes, sir, sartin shure," and he repeated his story.

The detective went up to Baker's Farm, and there found Owd Bob's story was corroborated in every detail.

"They are all lying at the Court, that's the long and short of it," he concluded, and he went about the village trying to find some one who had seen Mr. Everett pass through on the evening of the murder, but all were mum. They shook their heads, knew nothing about it, "never see'd him."

He spent days trying to find some one who had seen him pass about 5-5.30 that day. He found at the County Club Everett had done as he alleged, and left at the time he had said he did.

And then he reported to the Yard, for assistance had been asked from the Yard, and was called up to London. There he laid the results of his investigations before the Chief Commissioner, who consulted with the Public Prosecutor, and they decided there was not sufficient evidence to proceed at present against Everett, whom they all suspected.

The inquest was held at the Parish Room, and a verdict of "Wilful murder against some person or persons unknown" was returned, and an order for burial issued, and the funeral took place with much solemnity and sadness, for Miss Warren was very popular with every one.

A few days after the funeral Mrs. Warren sent for the doctor, and she said:

"You have been very kind, doctor, would you like poor Eily's last sketch? I can't keep it, it makes me so sad."

“ I would like it above everything, it is a most charming piece of work. I see those blackbirds and those blood-red berries and the bronze hawthorn leaves and the silver-grey background wherever I go ; it’s a haunting picture and shows very great promise. She would have made a great name.”

“ Yes, she was wedded to her art and lost her life through it.”

The doctor said nothing, took the drawing and went off. He was busy at that season : there was an outbreak of influenza. He put the lovely drawing in a portfolio on a shelf in his bookcase, and went about his work.

The Public Prosecutor and other high authorities decided not to proceed against the Hon. J. A. Everett, the evidence was not strong enough. They determined to watch and wait.

The Hon. J. A. Everett showed no uneasiness. He went about as usual huntin’, fishin’, shootin’ and dancin’. He was a cool, callous person. His father had risen from the ranks. The father had started life as a railway worker, rose by force of character and merit to become a ganger. His fists and his use of them had much to do with this. Then he had started in a small way as a contractor and eventually made a large fortune, and retired when he obtained a baronetcy for subscribing to the party funds. A further huge subscription had bought him a higher title, and he was a Lord and bought Somers Court, a splendid old Elizabethan mansion, with very extensive grounds, farms, and the like. At his death his younger son set up as a country gentleman, and became a Conservative, though his father was a staunch Liberal all his life and in his youth hated the “ gentry.” The elder son, now Lord Everett, who was phthisical, was living in Switzerland.

VI

Months passed ; a winter of much sickness had kept the doctor busy. It was summer time before his work became

easy, and one evening he decided to have the lovely water-colour drawing of the blackbirds, blood-red berries, bronze leaves and silver-grey background framed. It lay on his desk. He had a little beaker in which he was washing his stylographic pens ; he kept two or three in commission, and the beaker was half filled with a weak solution of ink and water. He dried his pens and was going to remove the beaker when he knocked it over, and some of the weak ink and water ran over a corner of the painting. He rushed to the beaker and lifted it and with a cloth began to dab the ink and water on the desk. He did not like to dab the drawing, but went hunting for some clean blotting-paper to sop up the solution. It had not injured the painting, for the ink had fallen across a blank space at the bottom of the right-hand corner of the drawing. He could find no blotting-paper in his surgery, and went to his wife's room to see if she had any, and when he returned with it to the drawing and had sopped up the ink, he gave a sudden start, for there on the paper darkened by the spilt ink he read : " Everett proposed, refused, threatens, if killed E. did it.—E. W."

" A message from the dead," he said. " Good God ! " He got his camera and photographed it, and allowed the drawing to dry, and the damning message stared from the paper in the neat writing of the poor murdered girl. He went to his bookcase and looked up his books. " God, she wrote that in saliva. I wonder where she heard of its use for secret writing. But there it is, and it puts the rope round the Hon. J. A. Everett. I wonder what he would give for that work of art ! " And a dream flashed through his mind of how easy it would be to sell it to the Hon. J. A. for a huge sum and go to Harley Street and set up, which was his ambition. But he put these thoughts aside, he was agnostic and truthful, and went out and called on the policeman, locking his surgery door.

The policeman was in his shirt-sleeves reading the paper.
" Somes, I have something to show you."

“ Indeed, sir ? ”

“ Yes.”

They returned to the surgery, and he showed the policeman the drawing with the damning words.

The policeman read them and looked at him, and said :

“ I don't understand, sir.”

“ She wrote them in saliva just before he killed her, and by accident I spilt some weak ink-and-water on it, and it developed. Saliva is one of the best secret inks there is.”

“ You don't say so, sir ! I never heard of that. Well, that puts the rope round his neck, and serve him right.”

“ It does.”

“ Where could she have learnt that ? ”

“ In France, I guess, in the war. She was a nurse out there, and she told me so.”

“ That's right, sir. Well, I'll be off and 'phone the chief.” He went off excitedly, and the doctor locked up the drawing.

It was nearly midnight when the inspector arrived, and he examined the drawing and was amazed. He did not know of saliva as a secret ink.

“ This is too big a business for me. I'll ask you, doctor, to keep that locked up, and I'll go back and see the chief and get instructions.”

“ Right you are. It is safe here.”

The next day about 2.30 the inspector and a C.I.D. officer arrived, and they looked at the lovely drawing and the damning words. “ I have orders, doctor, to take this back to the Yard. Will you kindly write down a statement as to how you came to find the writing ? ”

“ Certainly,” and he sat down and did so, and signed it.

The inspector and the detective went off with the drawing of the blackbirds and the blood-red hawberries and curled bronze leaves against a silver-grey background, very carefully wrapped up and locked in a dispatch case. It was a week before the doctor heard any more of the matter, when the policeman called on the doctor.

"They have taken him, sir."

"Who?"

"The Hon. Algernon."

"Have they?"

"Yes, sir. We went and arrested him at the Court this morning, and they took him off to Northwich."

"How did he take it?"

"Bluffed and laughed."

"Did they tell him of the drawing?"

"No, sir."

"It seems that several writing experts in London say it is her writing, and that it was written just about the time of the murder. Mr. Mitchell is on the job. I never heard of him."

"He's the great expert on that. There is his book," and he pointed to his library. "Clever, *I* call it."

The village was all in an uproar that afternoon. The news had leaked out that the squire, as the Hon. Algernon was called, had been arrested for the murder of Miss Warren.

Owd Bob was drinking in the "Jarge."

"I allust said he done it," he said very solemnly.

"You will have to go up, Bob."

"Sartin shure I will, and if the mucka slink hang, well, that's what I want. Crool, crool, that wor."

VII

Most distinguished counsel was engaged for the prisoner and the Attorney-General appeared for the Crown, but the evidence was so damning that there was no chance for the prisoner. He fought for his life in the witness-box. Old Bob and the doctor came in for severe cross-examination, but their evidence was unshaken. John Algernon Everett was found guilty, sentenced to death and, though he appealed, was executed.

And after the trial the doctor wrote asking for the return of his drawing.

The authorities wished to claim it for the museum at the Yard, but the doctor was adamant, and he was asked to go to London and interview the authorities.

The Chief Commissioner tried to talk him over, but he wanted the drawing and said so, it was his property.

"Why, I could have sold it for a fortune to the brute, and could then have set up in Harley Street, which is my ambition."

"What would you have set up as?"

"A forensic medicine specialist."

"Well, I have a proposition to make to you. We have gone into your qualifications. We shall be wanting a good and keen man for the job as Streeter is retiring. I will make you a proposition. We will appoint you as specialist assistant at once, you shall then start drawing pay, but we want you to spend a year at Dr. Locard's laboratory in Lyons and at Dr. Reiss's laboratory in Lausanne, and then you shall succeed Dr. Streeter. My price is the drawing for the museum, it's unique."

"I accept."

"Good. I will see to the matter at once, you will receive notice of your appointment at once. Now go and sell your practice."

The doctor was overjoyed, and was within three weeks on his way to Dr. Locard, Director of the Lyons Police Bureau. His wife stayed in London and got the house ready for his return. He had obtained a fine flat in Westminster.

And in the Museum of Horrors hangs the lovely drawing of blackbirds feeding on blood-red haws from curling bronze-leaved hawthorn trees against a silver-grey background—with the damning "message from the dead" staring from the right-hand corner.

XII

The Lone Inn on the Marshes

I

IT stood alone, just within the low, green, marram-topped sandhills, which gleamed like distant snow-covered peaks on a bright day with a south-east wind when the mists were rising from marsh and river, forecasting a hot, sweltering day in late spring. Red-legs were flying over the marshes, calling; gulls were bathing at the Broad-edge upon which two great divers were lazily fishing; peewits were tumbling and calling their weird cry of "three bullocks a week, week after week"; an old harrier was beating the young colts and old reeds for coots' and water-hens' eggs and young; cattle and horses with young foals were feeding on the dewy lush green grass of marshland. Sedge and reed warblers, swaying in the reeds, sang joyously as the mists rose, and linnets flew with their curious flight athwart the amber air, gathering young caterpillars and young peas for their nestlings; and lesser redpolls were on the same business. The call of water-hen and the wild call of coots could be heard on the broad near by.

The *Dogfish* was the rude sign on the inn advertised as kept by one Hartling, a dark-hued, black-haired young man of about 38. He was not a native; but had come from the "sheers." He kept himself to himself, was a reticent man with dark eyes and regular features. His eyes were sleepy and looked like those of some dog, rather like a retriever's, only not so kindly; he went

about his job with an inane smile. His was merely a small beer-house to catch marshmen when mowing, or sportsmen, or people fishing on the beach, a small house run by a small and apparently unambitious man. For had he been a sporting publican, shot, fished and boated, he might, if of a philosophical turn of mind, have become contented ; but he did none of these things. He did not even think it worth while to catch the shrimps a few yards from his door, or the fish in the sea, though there was a coble in the gap belonging to the inn, which he used to let and earn money. This was the curious side of his character ; he was after the elusive sovereign and shilling and sixpence and eke the copper coins, yet he would not raise a hand to earn money on truck, and was content with the poorer earnings of the *Dogfish*.

Some of the knowing old marshmen and others who " used " the house when it served their purpose, that is when they were too far from the better-class *Black Dog* or *White Horse*, shook their heads and said :

" There must summat hang tew it. He be only licking the steam off a cookshop window here."

Shrewd old judges of character these men were, for all they were " rustics."

Hartling kept a stuggy, plump, strong, hard-working young woman who did for him ; he was unmarried. Of course the gossipers could not resist drawing inferences, especially as she too came from the " sheers."

" She've a wild eye," said one old sandy-haired, bearded man. " I have seen mawthers like her on the wherries at Seamouth with the gutting gels what come down with the Scotch warmin. I hate all furriners, and them Scotchmen and mawthers most of all. What do they come here for ? They 'on't let you go inter their harbour, if you go herrin-fishing up there ; they put a boom acrost the harbour oncet."

" Goⁿon," said the landlord, " I don't believe that."

" Be you Scotch then, Bor ? "

“No.” . . . That was all he would say, no more. He was as sparing with his words as with his money, and gave short measure with his beer. The marshmen swore he mixed hot water and mustard with the beer. He was not popular, as the reader will have gathered; in fact, he was unpopular; it was only his outlandish position far away from the public in the village that ensured him any custom. He got all his kindling from the beach, from the worn and withered pieces of old wreckage; he grew a few potatoes and cabbages and got his manure from the seaweed at low spring tides.

But he may have been excused for not pushing his gardening pursuits more determinedly, for every nor'-west and westerly and sou'-west gale drenched his plot with sand and kept the soil poor.

Occasionally the wild-eyed Molly would be paid to cook eggs and bacon for sportsmen or tourists and make bad, strong, cheap Indian tea, if they would not have beer or pop, and his charges were 25 per cent. higher than the village inns; because, as he said, he had to carry everything by hand from the village, a long walk across the marshes.

The old gunners and marshmen, turning grey, wondered what Molly thought of the life and what kept her there, for their wise old eyes saw she did not like Hartling any more than they did, and occasionally her wild eyes would flash, and her generally bovine-looking fat face would screw up and her lip pout out, and she would look at him with hate, when he spoke crossly to her over some business mismanagement.

“That’s a henapecker why she stay there.” It had come to that; they had scented a mystery, but could not solve it.

“But them furriners were all alike; nobody fare to onderstand ’em, the warmin!”

So they accepted the situation; but always hoping that some stray remark or a “mobbing” would clear up

the cloud of mystery that hung over the twain who ran the *Dogfish*.

II

Molly was much improved when she wore her best clothes, for, though she was coarse and powerful, she had very good taste, and chose neat dark clothes and a picture-hat with pretty tasteful ribbons, and avoided the garish oranges and purples and hideous colours so beloved by country-village lasses. The dark clothes hid her *embonpoint* too, and she had a good carriage, and her red, hard-working hands were hidden in tasteful, if cheap, gloves.

She had her day out, once a week, and every other Sunday. She went off to the village on her day off and used to go into the *Black Dog* and talk to the landlord, and sit in the tap-room with the men, many of whom she knew as her own customers. She was fond of port, cherry brandy and sloe gin, and not above a flirtation with any likely young half-and-halfer home from the fishing with the fat doles in their pockets. She had a pretty wit which none would have suspected who saw her slaving at the *Dogfish*, and her wild eyes would light with merriment. She liked the Norfolk humour, for she had a true sense of humour of her own.

Amongst her chief pals was a young ginger-headed marshman, a dreamy sort of fellow, a champion with his fists. He had taken lessons from a Seamouth ex-boxer who had been one of Mace's satellites in the old days and kept a low boxing saloon in a basement in Seamouth for such as he.

The old pug took to Joe ; he was an apt pupil, and the old big-punch boxer let him down easy in the way of payments.

Joe was a master of clog-dancing, and he set to teach Molly this exhausting and graceless dance. She had a good natural ear for music, and quickly picked

it up, and Joe and she were soon among the prime fascinators in the *Black Dog* festivities.

Hartling of course heard of it all, but paid no heed.

It cost him nothing, and might bring custom to his lonely inn; that meant money, and that was what he was after.

Joe used to walk home with her when the moon was shining bright, and at other times too, when he was at home from fishing (drifting) or smacking with his pockets full of money.

So the summer passed. Joe and Molly were friends; but neither had any matrimonial projects. They were following the Norfolk custom; though Molly was not Norfolk, she knew the law of the tribe, that Joe must wed her if she had a child, or lose his native "old England," as they fondly call Norfolk.

Some said Joe would never marry anyone, and would go for a "sodger" if the worst came to the worst. What Joe himself thought no one knew, of course. Joe could hold his tongue even in his cups, for fortunately his legs and stomach gave out before his head, and so sobered him before he began to babble. He went away in the autumn for the herring-fishing and promised Molly a good time when the fishing boats "made up" and he drew his dole. She took it quietly; she was of a philosophic temperament; "noathen riffled her," the amphibians said.

III

One dark night in early November a nor'-easter was blowing, bringing snow-squalls and bitter winds across the North Sea. The dikes were laid with ice, "sheer as glass"; the Broad was laid, and icers in battered old wherries were collecting the thin ice, muffled up in garnseys and scarves and crutch boots and oilies and sou'westers; for the oilies were necessary for the wet work of icing, to keep the bitter packing snow out, and above all to keep

out the shrewd bitter nor'-easter, which would penetrate garnseys.

The *Dogfish* stood, as I have said, at the foot of the sandhills on the marsh side. The river came up to within a hundred yards of the inn and then turned off to the right, passed through marshes to end in an artificial dike cut for drainage purposes. For the old riverbed was now "wet-marsh"; the river in the old days used to flow through the gap in the sandhills into the sea.

Hartling, with a heavy black oily and black sou'-wester and big rubber-boots, went out into the night, the sea roaring and pounding on the beaches behind him; and the wind howled and whined over the dunes, speeding across the marshes, whizzing the mill-sails round and making that hideous hoarse hoot like a foghorn as it blew into the holes where the shafts lay. Clouds were tearing across the sky, and the stars shone and twinkled brightly in the frosty air. The marshes were covered with white; the icers had evidently stopped their work and gone to their roaring fires in their small but cosy cabins, and were frying fish; and the kettle was boiling all ready for the tea and sugar and milk to be put into it when the fish was done, as they do on their fishing craft. Great dumplings were boiling in a huge saucepan, and an icer would prod one occasionally with a sharp stick and replace the lid; their supper would soon be ready.

Suddenly a light gleamed down the river; a lantern swung to and fro, and Hartling swung his to and fro. Both lanterns were extinguished.

Hartling returned to the inn; Molly was reading a penny novelette.

"Now go to bed, Molly. I am just going to smoke a pipe and do up my accounts. It's an awful night."

Molly's eyes flashed; but she went up to bed, and

Hartling in stockinged feet crept up after her and turned the key in the lock : it was well oiled.

" Here, what are you locking me in for, Mr. Hartling ? "

" To keep you safe. These icers are a rough lot ; they come from Seamouth and will be sure to come here after their suppers to get some beer."

" I aren't afraid of no Seamouth blokes."

" No ; but I am for you, and you must do as I say. That won't hurt you, the door being locked, will it ? "

" No ; but I don't like it."

Hartling said nothing ; but crept down and drew off his rubber-boots, and, going to a big stone set in the floor under an old-fashioned corn-bin, which he had pulled out as soon as Molly had disappeared, he raised the stone with a crowbar and placed it on one side. A deep dark hole, smelling of spirits, was disclosed in the brick floor.

There was a knock at the door, and he went to it. A big muffled man with a great white beard, a splendid specimen of a man, said :

" Here we are. Six of them coming. All clear ? "

" Yes."

" The gel ? "

" Locked in."

" That's all branda."

" Bring them in here. Her window overlooks the back."

" Aye, aye ! "

" How many you got ? "

" Sixty kegs and twenty tins of bacca. Douse that glim."

Hartling put the light out and opened the door, and the snow-covered men walked in. One went down the short ladder and lit his lantern and hung it up, another stood on the middle of the ladder, and the third took a keg and handed it to him, and he passed it to the man below, who stored it. The six kegs were soon stored, and the

muffled men spoke no word, but went off to their boat and kept coming to and fro with the kegs, and then with the tins of bacca.

They said "Last loaf under the knife," as they deposited their tins. They were quickly passed down, all but one keg and a tin of bacca. The lantern below was extinguished, the stone replaced and the old-fashioned carved corn-bin replaced over the stone.

Then the men had all crowded into the kitchen, and Hartling now lit the great swinging oil-lamp. The men began to remove their oilies, streams of melting snow trickling on to the brick floor. They sat down, and the old man with the white beard broached the brandy keg by taking out the bung, and cut open a tin of bacca with a big knife-opener which Hartling had provided. There was a roaring fire in the big old-fashioned fireplace, where old wreckage with boltholes were burning brightly.

They were a grim, determined, fine body of men, these thirteen. Hartling began to lay the table quickly, and then he went to a huge blackened kettle hanging from a hook over the fire and filled an old pewter tureen with peasoup in which were great hunks of fat bacon.

The old man they called the "skipper" ladled it out into the old cracked soup-plates, and Hartling filled a great bedroom jug with brandy and filled their glasses.

He tasted it. "Prime stuff that, skipper."

"Yes. The wery best ; the master of the Coper have writ the name of that on the bill."

The men ate the soup and picked up the fat hunks of bacon and chewed them, throwing the rinds into the roaring fire, where they blazed.

Then Hartling produced great Norfolk dumplings from another kettle and a saucepan full of gravy, and poured some gravy into each man's plate, and then ladled out the steaming dumplings. The men helped themselves to brandy from the jug as they wanted it, and fell on to the dumplings. A few now began to make remarks

and crack a joke ; for they were so cold and hungry at first that few words were spoken. When the last dumplings were finished, Hartling asked whether they wanted cheese ; one or two signified their wish for this, and he put a Norfolk cheese on the table, and they cut what they wanted. Some were sampling the perique from the tin, which was hidden in the corn-bin after every man had helped himself to a package neatly sewn in sailcloth, the genuine article, as the men said.

“ Well, Bor, I feel better,” the old skipper said.

“ Aye, aye, old skipper, guess we all feel like that. Rare gude wittles, Mr. Hartling.”

“ Glad you like them. I have got a big ham and some hard-boiled eggs afore you go.”

“ Lumme. I have eat enow to last me till next smuggle,” said one man.

Hartling was busy carrying the dirty dishes and plates out to the washhouse, and he put the sugar and lemons on the table, and glasses, and they mixed grog, each man according to his taste, passing the kettle round, which Hartling refilled and put on, hanging it on the hook in the fireplace.

“ Now for business, Mr. Hartling. Here be the bill.”

Hartling looked at it, said nothing, sat down and wrote a cheque in the name of Charles Stewart, payable in Seamouth. The old man took the cheque, looked at it, nodded, and, after manipulating his various garnseys, he found a pocket and a purse, and put the cheque into it and replaced it.

“ They dew say money talk, Bor. Hope that won't talk tew loud so the gobs hear that.”

“ Oh, those swine ! ” said Hartling. “ They are all at home a night like this.”

“ I don't blame 'em for that, Bor,” said the old man.

“ 'Tain't fit for a dorg tew be out in, a dirty night at sea.”

Several of the tangled-haired men nodded.

The men were now warm and comfortable. Their circulation was restored, their hearty appetites satisfied, and they were smoking prime bacca and drinking prime grog free. What more could a sailor want ?

The men got drowsy with the heat, their full stomachs and their severe exercise up from the port and the nerve-tension ; but the old skipper was all wide awake. He looked at his watch : " Three o'clock. We mun start at four. The tide will be ebbing then."

Hartling got a large ham, a tin of butter, new bread, a pile of plates and knives, and a soup-tureen filled with hard-boiled eggs.

The old skipper woke the sleeping men. " Now, boys, if you want a thumb-piece, now's your chance. You will want it to take along, and some of the eggs. Here, Jim, you seem wide awake, dole the eggs round. We'd like a mug of tea afore we start, Mr. Hartling."

" All right," and he put a lot of tea and sugar and milk into the boiling kettle and took it off, and went to the cupboard and took beer-mugs out which he filled and placed round. The men awoke and cut great thick pieces, which they wrapped in newspaper and slipped into their pockets, and each one slipped his dole of hard-boiled eggs into the same receptacle. A few cut another thick piece and ate. Then they poured out the tea and drank it scalding, some lacing it with brandy.

The time passed quickly and little was said. Then at four the skipper got up and began to put on his oilies, and others followed. When all were ready, he said :

" Night you go, Mr. Hartling. Thank you kindly for the wittles and bozzle."

" Welcome."

" Good-bye, night you go," and this was repeated, and the men slipped out and went off ; it was snowing fast.

Hartling promptly locked and bolted the door and, taking a large kettle of boiling water, went into the back-house and began to wash up the glasses to get the smell of

spirits out, and the ewer in which the brandy had been poured. He put the remaining brandy into the brandy-keg and locked it in the corn-bin, and then with a mop he mopped up the dirt and mud left by the men. Then he sat down and ate some ham and bread and butter and had some tea with it, and, looking all round, put the light out and went up to bed.

A bitter morning it was when he unlocked Molly's door at six and went down to light the fire in the cold kitchen and put the big kettle on the hook. Then he went up and called Molly at seven. She was soon down, and said:

"Mercy, you must have had them icers here."

"Most of them I guess. They ate all the soup and dumplings and took all the eggs, and made a nice hole in that ham. Never saw men eat like it, and the mugs of tea they drank!"

"Mercy, all these dirty things be enough to craze a donkey's heart."

"Well now, you wash. There will be five shillings extra for you for this set-out."

"Thank you, sir; but I hope they 'on't come every night."

"No. They are off with their wherries soon after day-break; they just want to fill up. They won't come here no more. The broads lower down will be laid now, and they'll soon be cutting thick ice on Oulton Broad. I wish they'd come every night; I have took some money to-night."

Molly set her teeth, and, when the water was boiling, began to wash up, and by eight the place was clean and tidy, and she began to cook breakfast.

"Yes, a dirty night and a dirty day." He saw a big snow-powdered wherry-sail on the river through the window. "There they go."

"How many of them are there?"

"Four. There they go. They have a good tide and a good wind ; they'll soon be down with their ice."

"Well, they deserve all they get. They have arnt it," she said.

"They have. It's hard, cold, dirty work. Guess they took a few fish along tew ; trust 'em, pike and bream go high this weather."

"You mean caught them ? "

"Nets, just a dinner or tea for theirselves, not for sale, to take home to the missus and the kids ; it wouldn't be them if they didn't ; expect that is why they came late."

"They were very quiet ; but I heard 'em."

"Yes, frozen and tired when they came in, and the heat and grub made them sleepy."

"I suppose so. Well, I'd rather them than me."

"Well, it ain't an everyday job, and they'll get a good dole for this first load ; but the price will fall quick, if this weather keep on."

"Why ? "

"Well, Oulton Broad and other places will be frozen thick, and they'll be cutting block-ice, and the merchants won't look at this thin stuff they've been getting ; besides, you can't get thick stuff with their dydles."

After breakfast Hartling dressed warmly with scarf and mits, said: "I shan't be back afore closing time. I have got to go out on business and see if that beer be come, and I want to see two or three men."

"All^rright, I'll watch it."

"You won't get many here to-day, a goby or two maybe, and a gunner maybe arter spiced ale."

Hartling went off and had a quiet talk with the landlords of the *Black Dog* and the *White Horse*, with a man who dealt in Gilby's wines, a grocer, with two well-to-do farmers, and sundry others.

He had dinner at the *Black Dog*, and came home

just as the flight-shooters were starting out ; for a lot of fowl were over, pink-footed geese, Bewick swans, poker-duck, tufted-duck and mallard, and snipe were scaping on the ronds.

“ Well ? ” said Molly.

“ Anyone been ? ”

“ Two gobies and Sharman, the gunner. He had some spiced ale and a thumb-piece, and the gobies had some bacca and beer.”

On the following Thursday Molly put on her finery and went off to the *Black Dog*, and a farmer drove up in his cart soon after she left. He came in, burly and red, and he gave Hartling some money, and Hartling went to a back room and brought out three kegs and a tin of tobacco.

“ There you are, Bor. Prime stuff and cheap.”

“ Yes, it's that. Can you give me a sample ? ”

“ Oh, yes, on the Q.T., ” and he got a brandy bottle, labelled “ ale ” without, and told him to help himself.

He half filled a tumbler. “ Ah, Bor, that's the stuff, up to the nine score. I'll take two more kegs, ” and he felt for his purse and paid. Several carts stopped there that Thursday and all went away satisfied. Hartling had a pile of money in his box under his bed : golden sovereigns. He had made huge profits ; but of the sixty kegs only five remained by seven o'clock, and all but two tins of bacca had gone.

It was dusk when a small black cart drove up. The men hitched the horse to a ring by the front door and came in, after covering the horse with rugs.

“ Can we have summat to eat ? ”

“ Nothing hot, ” said Hartling. “ I can give you cold ham and bread and butter and tea.”

“ Tea ! ” said one in disgust. “ Can't you get any brandy ? We have got to drive to Seamouth.”

“ No, I haven't a licence to sell spirits. You can have beer and pop.”

“ Well, George, beer, ain't it ? We don't want tea.”

“ All right, guv'nor, beer.”

Hartling set the ham out in the dining-room, and bread and butter, and put plates, knives and forks out and drew two mugs of “ bitter.”

They ate their meal and talked to each other in low voices when he was out of the room.

“ What time dew she come back ? ”

“ Ten or arter.”

“ Plenty of time.”

When they had finished, they pulled the old-fashioned bell-pull.

“ What's the damage, guv'nor ? ”

“ 4s. 3d.”

One of the men opened a purse and pulled out a ten-shilling note. “ I ain't got no silver, guv'nor.”

“ That will do ; I'll get you change.”

He went out and returned with the money.

One of them counted the change and said, “ All right, guv'nor ; good night.

“ Good night ; it's snowing. A rough drive you will have.”

“ Oh, we're used to that. Oh Lord, I forgot, have you got any fags ? ”

“ Yes, Woodbines.”

“ Two packets, please,” and he placed sixpence on the table.

Hartling turned to go and get them from his case in the tap-room.

The men in the cart reached the Acle road and went bowling along to Seamouth, not sparing the fast pony. At Seamouth they drove to some small houses and took a tin box in and locked it in a cupboard, and then drove off to a wine-store and left four kegs, and were paid a good price for them.

IV

Molly and an admirer arrived at the house white with snow at 10.23. She knocked.

"Funny there beant lights," she said.

"Yes."

They waited, and no one answered. Then the admirer went round to the back and knocked, and Molly knocked at the front door.

No answer. All was silence.

They threw gravel up at the windows.

"Well, you can't sleep here, Mor. Come along to the village and tell old Sam, the policeman."

"No, do you break a window."

"No, I daresen't."

"Well, I suppose you must have your way," and they started back in the cold and thick-falling snow; but the wind had greatly abated.

It was eleven when they arrived at old Sam's house. They knocked, and he came out, smoking a pipe.

"I see'd Molly home, and we can't make no one hear."

"Where?"

"The *Dorgfish*."

"Did you try the doors?"

"Yes, them and all the windows was fastened. I threw gravel up; but there was nobody there, quiet as the ground that was."

"You be Molly what work there, bain't you?"

"Yes, it's my afternoon out. I went out about seven, leaving Mr. Hartling there."

"Alone?"

"Yes, there's nobody else there, not when I go out."

"What time did you get back?"

"Ten twenty-three. Joe have looked at the time."

"Was there any light inside?"

"No, and I thowt that wery strange."

"Where have you been since three?"

"At the *Black Dog* with Joe here."

"What? All the time?"

"Yes, that was tew bad snowing and blowing to go out."

"Was he there all the time?"

"Yes, Mrs. Grapes will tell you if you ax her."

"Yes, I was there from arter three till I left with Molly at ten, and I see'd her home."

"Were there any feetings about or cart-tracks?"

"No, noathin; but that was snowing fast and had been all day."

"Funny. Well, what will you be doing, Molly? 'Tain't fit for you to go trapesing back. I reckon some 'un have called him away on business. I'll go along, wonder if you will walk with me, Joe?"

"Sartinly; but what about Molly?"

"I ken give her a bed; the missus is used to that. I'll just go tell her. You come in and sit down, Joe, and get warm."

Joe went in awkwardly with Molly and sat by the fire, and Sam the policeman came back.

"It's all right, Molly. The missus will put you up. Had your supper?"

"Yes, thank you, at the *Black Dog*, Joe and all."

The policeman put on his cap and overcoat and put his truncheon in his trousers truncheon-pocket, lit his lantern, and they started, he and Joe, for the *Dogfish*.

It was snowing heavily, and, though they turned their coats up, the snow got in and melted and trickled down their backs; but fortunately there was no wind.

Across the marshes they went; Joe knew the way better and walked ahead, and they went crunching over the snow-covered liggers, and at last the *Dogfish* stood black with white roof like a block-house against the snowy background of the marram hills. The big waves beat upon the beach and a great barn-owl flew across hooting, going to some wheat-stack to hunt for mice. They put up some fowl on the river feeding, for the tide

kept that open at present, though there was a layer of ice on either side.

They reached the *Dogfish*. Sam pulled out his lantern which he had under his cape over his coat, and looked all round.

“ No footings or cart-marks here ; only yours and Molly’s. My, thet dew snow ! ”

Then he knocked loudly. No reply.

He walked round to the back door, examining the snow with his lantern. There were some footprints there going towards the sandhills, big nailed boots with plates such as labourers wear. He followed them over the sandhills. Joe was standing at the front door, beating his chest, as he had been told to wait there. The footprints led across the sandhills and then to the beach and across that, and then were lost. The man had evidently gone to the sand by the water to avoid the snow ; but the tide was coming in and had washed his footprints on the sand away. Sam returned on the same trail, examining the snow carefully with his lantern to see if he could find anything dropped by the man ; but there was nothing, not even a match. He found Joe, who asked :

“ Well, seen anything ? ”

“ Yes, there’ve been some one here quite recently, and he went away—to the back door.”

“ A goby, I expect.”

“ Yes, I dare say. He must have just left afore we came, ’cause his footings are nigh fresh. He went down to the sand and along there, easier walking ; but the tide have washed his footings out there, and that was tew thick to see anyone a hundred yards off, and the sea was hollering so loud I couldn’t hear noathin’.”

“ Well, we must get in. It’s going to be a funny job this.”

He held his lantern to the keyhole. “ There bain’t nobody inside there, and he have took the key with him. Well, we must bust this open. Come on, Joe.”

They put their shoulders to the door, and both pushed; but the old lock held.

"Now, Joe, a running shove," and they both went back and with a rush pushed at the door: something cracked, and, by giving another running shove, some wood split and the door flew in.

The policeman picked his lantern up and walked in first, Joe following with open mouth.

He cast his lantern all round. "Nothing here." Then he opened the sitting-room door and started back as his lantern showed Hartling lying on his face, his head clotted with blood. He peered down and held his lantern to his face and felt it.

"Cold as nip; he's gone; he's dead, murdered; bloody murder, that's what it is."

"Good God!" said Joe, peering, "that's why he didn't answer them knocks."

The policeman was looking about. "See, two people have been eating here; ham, bread, butter, and beer," as he looked into the mugs. "Don't you touch anything, Joe, not with your hands; we may get some fingerprints."

This was all Greek to Joe; and he nodded, but couldn't keep his regard from the dead body. That awful sight was new to Joe: dead men he had often seen; but a man with a battered-in head, all bleeding, some one he knew, well, it was horrible.

"Come on, Joe," said the policeman. "We'll look all round."

They went into the tap-room and the back-house and all the ground-floor rooms. There was nothing apparently moved, and then they went upstairs into his bedroom. The policeman looked about, and there was a box, a box such as schoolboys take their tuck back to school in. He pulled it out, the lock had been broken, and he opened it. There were some sheets, nothing else.

"They was arter money." Then he went into Molly's

room, looked round and said, "Nothing here," and went into two other spare chambers. He tried all the windows; all were securely fastened. The back door was locked and bolted, and all the downstairs windows securely fastened.

"They came in at the front. I'd like to know who had that tea."

The policeman examined Hartling's pockets and got his keys, and then he opened the corn-bin.

He saw the tin tobacco-boxes, one open, and the keg. He whistled.

"Do you draw the bung, Joe, and see what's in her."

Joe did so and said, "It smell like brandy what the Frenchmen drink on their fishing-boats."

"Pour some out in a mug and let's see."

Joe went and got a mug, poured some out and smelt it.

"Yes, Sam, this be brandy."

Sam smelt it and tasted it. "Yes, you are right, Joe, and prime stuff," and he looked very grave. He smelt a rat, the smuggle-rat, but he said nothing, put the keg back, looked at the other things in the chest and then locked it.

They examined the cash-box in the tap-room. It was intact, and Sam counted the money: £2 12s. 3d. He saw Hartling's watch had not been taken, and there was some silver and copper in his trousers pockets.

"Well, that's rum; it don't *look* like robbery; but you can never tell, you know. Now, Joe, we'll light the lamp in the dining-room where he lay, and would it be axing tew much of you tew go to the village and tell the doctor, and ax him to come and bring you back along with him? And tell the missus I shan't be home to-night and ax her to 'phone the inspector at Smallboro' and tell him there's been a bloody murder committed at the *Dogfish*, Mr. Hartling murdered; and ax Molly where he kept his money, the big lot that wasn't in the cash-box in the bar."

" I will in course, Bor."

" I'll make a fire time you are away ; see, that's out, so he was killed four or five hours ago. We'll have a thumb-piece when you come back."

Joe went off filled with excitement. He was in good wind, and, though the snow was deep, he went at a dog-trot. There was plenty of starlight.

Sam was a cool fish ; his nerves were in the best condition, and he started to light a fire in the grate in the dining-room, and getting a small kettle full of water he filled it. Then he thought of the brandy and he went to the corn-bin and the keg, and poured out a glassful and cut himself a piece of ham and bread-and-butter, and sat down, as the fire picked up, and ate and drank brandy. Then he went to the tap-room and got a packet of fags, gold-flake, and sat smoking. It was nearly one o'clock ; he never looked at the corpse at all. Time seemed to go slowly ; but the excellent brandy had bucked him up, and he had plenty of fags.

Presently he heard steps outside, and Joe and the doctor came in. He put his brandy-glass behind a curtain and went out to meet them.

" Good evening, night or morning, Sam, whatever you call it. This is a bad business. Where is it ? "

" In here, sir."

The doctor went in and at once examined Hartling's head.

" Oh, all smashed in ! Some very heavy weapon did that. Death was instantaneous, not the slightest doubt of it. He was struck from behind."

The doctor looked at the way he had fallen. " The man who struck him was standing here, and he had his back to him and was walking to the door when the man felled him ; one blow did it. My word, what a cold night ! "

" No struggle, sir ? "

" Oh, no. That's how it happened, you may depend."

The doctor kept sniffing. "I smell some uncommon good brandy."

Sam laughed and asked him if he would like some.

"Well, I should." He sat down by the fire.

"Well, Joe, what does Molly say?"

"She say he kept his money in a box up under his bed in his bedroom, and from her description it's the box we saw."

Sam whistled. "What in?"

"A tin, a black cash-box with gold lines round it."

"Well, that spells robbery. Now, Joe, I promised you a thumb-piece; sit you down. There's plenty of ham and bread and butter; and if you will get a teapot and find the tea and sugar, then you can make yourself some tea."

"Perhaps, doctor, you would like a bite?"

"Yes, of that brandy, and yes, I think I could do with a meal, supper or breakfast, whichever's best to call it."

"What you like, sir."

The doctor drew to the table and cut himself a good plate of ham and began to eat, and Sam appeared with the keg and three tumblers. He took the bung out and poured as much in each glass as each person wanted, and took a small one for himself and replaced the bung.

"But the house isn't licensed to sell that." (The doctor was a magistrate.)

"No, sir, it's smuggled. A lot will come out of this murder."

"Have you examined his papers yet?"

"No, I thought I'd wait for you; I have got them all collected, Molly's, too," and he pointed to a roll-top desk in the corner.

Joe turned white at Molly's name.

"There bain't noathin' of Molly's, Joe; only a few letters from her mother at Manchester, no love-letters, Joe," and he laughed. Joe was more comfortable.

"That's rare brandy. I'd like a keg of that."

"Well, doctor, we may find some; he has a hiding-place; but I thought it would keep till the inspector come."

The doctor looked wistfully at the brandy.

Sam joined them at table; they all ate a hasty meal and had tea afterwards.

When they had finished, Sam produced gold-flake fags, and he said, "Now, doctor, I want you to look at some footprints, and then my job with you is over till the inquest."

He took the doctor out behind, and Joe followed; he did not like being left with the corpse, brandy or no brandy. Sam took some branches off the footprints he had covered.

The doctor felt about him for a tape and measured them. Sam had his notebook out and took them down; the doctor measured every one that Sam had covered.

"You know, Sam, it is not so much the footprints as the *gait*. Now, Sam, I should say this man had been drilled, is a sailor. You see how his foot rolls outwards; he's been used to ships, hasn't left his ship so long. I should say he was a naval man, a coastguard perhaps; they do come along here."

"That's what I think," and Sam told the result of his following the track.

"That will be out on the way to the station at Lothing, wanted a drink. The murder was done long before he got here, and, not being able to make anyone hear, he got tired and cleared off. You will find they call here, perhaps after hours, for a glass or some tobacco."

Sam nodded, recovered the footsteps for the inspector to see, and they returned to the house.

The doctor looked at his watch, put on his great-coat, seized his thick ash-stick, and said:

"Well, Sam, I'll do the p.m. to-morrow at three."

"All right, sir. Would you mind stopping at the *White Horse* and asking them to send a cart for the body directly

it is light, so we can get it into my shed before the people are about ? ”

“ Certainly I will. Well, good night.”

“ Good night, doctor,” said Sam, and Joe said, “ Good night, sir,” and the doctor went off. The snow was abating a little ; it was getting on for five o’clock.

“ There, I forgot to ask him to help me look over the papers ; drat it ; but the inspector will be here in the morning. Are you in work, Joe ? ”

“ No, I’m here for a holiday.”

“ Well, I’d like a wink of sleep. We’ll barricade the front door, and go upstairs and have a lie down.”

They barricaded the front door and went up to Hartling’s bedroom and lay down, pulling the clothes over them after having removed the sheets, and slept till six.

Joe awoke first, looked at his watch and got up, went down and made up the fire, which was still burning, and then he went and looked for bacon and eggs and a frying-pan, and placed them on the corn-bin in the hall ; he wouldn’t go back to the room, and he sat down and smoked fags, the first time he had ever had free smokes *ad libitum*.

At six a cart arrived, and Joe went up and told Sam. He was up like a shot, and they removed the barricade, and Sam superintended the removal of the body to the cart.

“ Take it to my shed ; the missus has the key.”

The men had evidently been told ; they asked no questions and went off.

Sam watched them away, then he went in and sat down by the fire, and Joe proceeded to fry bacon and eggs and make tea, and they ate a hearty breakfast and had a glass of the prime brandy afterwards. Then Sam lit a cigarette and went with Joe all round the house and into the sheds ; but all seemed apparently right. The snow had stopped, and the sun came out and the snow carpet gleamed. It was still, but very cold. Sam began to examine the papers. There were two account-books, and in one was an account of his smuggling operations. “ October 30, 60

kegs of French brandy, 20 tins of perique. Nov. 7, had 55 kegs of brandy this day and 10 tins of perique. Profit, £605. The profit on the 10 tins of tobacco was £61 = £666."

Sam whistled.

"Well, that's why he stuck here, eh? Well, I shall be in the soup for this; but dooty is dooty. No names neither, artful owd seed!"

Joe was looking about outside.

"Here come the inspector, Sam, and another man."

Sam jumped up and went out to meet the inspector, a plain-clothes man with him.

"Well, Sam, you have a case here—bad."

"Yes, sir."

"I've seen the body; your wife told me it had come, and we examined it. This is Detective Childs." Sam saluted.

"Found the weapon, Sam?"

"No, sir, that bain't here. I've looked everywhere, and so have Joe, he have a sharp eye."

"Who's he?"

Sam explained and said he had nothing to do with it. "He and Molly was at the *Black Dorg* all the arternoon and evening till he brought her home; and they couldn't make anyone hear, and so they came to me; Molly is with the missus now."

"Yes, I've seen her. She seems to know nothing, and is, I think, speaking the truth. She said some nights he used to lock her up and rough men came, and she had to cook a rare lot of victuals; and she heard them. They would come late and go long before there was light. The last lot came about ten days ago; he told her they were icers."

"Icers! They were smugglers."

"Smugglers!"

"Yes, sir, though I have to confess it. He've been smuggling wholesale, brandy and tobacco, making a small fortune. He kept his accounts, but no names."

“ And you never smelt a rat, or rather a brandy bottle.”

“ No, sir. I’ll be honest, I never did. He bested me proper ; but he didn’t sell none over the counter or I should have heard of it.”

“ He’d outside customers, eh ? ”

“ Seem so.”

“ Well, now we begin to see daylight. It’s some one who knew about it all and knew he would be having a lot of money from the proceeds. Of course you have had no time to see anyone and make any inquiries.”

“ No, sir.”

They reached the inn, and Joe was introduced and touched his cap. The inspector asked a few questions and thanked him for having done what he did. They went into the fatal room, and the inspector and detective looked all round. Then they went up and saw the wooden box.

“ Forced with a jemmy or cold chisel,” said the detective, as he examined the marks with a magnifying glass with his glasses on. He pushed the box back under the bed. They looked all round.

“ Where’s the smuggle ? ” asked the inspector.

Sam opened the corn-bin.

The detective examined the keg. “ Yes, French, and so is that tin box, perique.”

“ But according to the books there should be more kegs, four, counting this, and ten boxes of bacca.”

“ We’ll find it,” said the detective.

“ Well, sir, will you look at his papers now ? ”

“ Yes ; but I’d like Molly here. Will the man go for her ? ”

“ And be only tew glad, sir.”

Sam sent him off for Molly.

The inspector sat down with Sam and proceeded to examine the documents.

“ These all ? ”

“ Yes, sir, every one in the place onless some be hidden.”

The detective was looking about in the tap-room and

kitchen and washhouse, tapping the walls and floors. He then came to the corn-bin and pulled it aside, and there was the ring in the stone. He had seen an old crowbar in the tool-shed and went for it, and prized the stone up, went down the ladder, struck some matches and looked round. There were four kegs and nine tins of tobacco. He lifted a keg; it gurgled, and was full. He came back, replaced the stone and drew the corn-bin back to its place, and went in and said to the inspector:

"I have found the *cache*, four kegs and nine tins of tobacco."

"Where?"

"In a cellar: entrance under the corn-bin."

"Well, we can't proceed against him for that; but it may be useful to lead on to the murderer or murderers. I think the two who had a meal here did it; take their finger-prints on their mugs and plates." Sam had carefully left them where he found them.

After an hour and a half's work the inspector did the papers up in a bundle and tied them together.

"No use, Sam, no names—an artful dodger—only dates which may be useful. I'd just like to see the cave and the goods."

Sam pulled out the corn-bin, lifted the stone, and the inspector went down and lit matches and saw the goods, noted them and came up.

"Yes, a fine place. The corn-bin was an artful game, so simple. This is an old game, I expect, that has been going on for years. It's all I can see to make anyone live here, unless he's fond of sport."

Then Sam showed the footprints; the inspector glanced at them. "I don't think they are anything. From what you tell me the man called long after the murder or his footprints would have been buried, as Joe's and the girl's were. No, I go for the two who had the meal. We must find them."

Joe and Molly arrived, and the inspector sat with Sam

at the table, and the detective sat by the fire, affecting to read a paper.

Molly was given a chair and was quite cool, though rosy and panting from the walk.

"Well, Molly," said the inspector gravely, "did Mr. Hartling ever drink brandy?"

"Yes, sir; he kept it in a brandy bottle."

"Did he ever sell any?"

"No, sir; he had no licence. I've known him give a small glassful away now and again, especially to farmers and sporting gents; but he would never take any money for that, always said he had no licence to sell spirits."

"That the truth? It doesn't matter, now he's dead. We only want some information."

"Yes, sir. That's the truth. He was very particular, he never broke no laws as I know of."

"Tell us, you at times had to cook a lot of food, and he locked you in and said rough men were coming."

"Yes, sir, that's right."

"Was that often?"

"No, sir; now and again; always in the winter-time and nearly always rough nights."

"When was the last time?"

"About ten days afore he was killed."

"How many used to come?"

"About twelve to fourteen mostly; I knew when I washed up."

"Did they drink brandy?"

"Not that I know of. None of the glasses or china smelt of that, always of beer."

"You are sure?"

"Yes, sir. I never see no brandy except what I told you."

"Did he have many bottles?"

"No, sir; only one at a time. He said he bought them at the *Black Dog*, and he used to come in carrying a bottle in newspaper now and again."

“ What’s under the floor in the hall ? ”

“ Nothing, sir.”

“ Isn’t there a cellar there ? ”

“ Not that I know of. I never see Mr. Hartling go down there if there be.”

“ Did you ever see any old kegs ? ”

“ No, sir.”

“ Old long tin boxes like this ? ”

“ No, sir.”

“ What did he keep in that bin ? ”

“ I doesn’t know. He never opened that afore me. He said he had some old curios in that.”

“ And he never showed them to you ? ”

“ No, sir.”

“ You think he was conducting a legitimate business ? ”

“ Oh, yes, sir.”

“ Now about his money ? ”

“ He used to empty the takings in a big cash-box like the cash-box in the tap-room, only four or five times bigger. He put this in a box under his bed, and sometimes he’d lock his bedroom door, and I couldn’t get in to clean it ; then he said he had taken the money to the bank, and then the door was left unlocked.”

The inspector questioned her as to the takings and she told him.

“ Did any strangers come here yesterday before you went out ? ”

“ No, sir. Nobody at all came ; it was snowing.”

“ Who did he say those rough men were ? ”

“ Icers from Seamouth, come up in wherries. There was four went off the broad the morning arter they came in here to supper.”

“ Did he sell perique, the tobacco done up in sail-cloth ? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ Where did he keep it ? ”

“ He used to go into the willage to get that and bring it home in a paper.”

"How much at a time?"

"Three or four pound."

The inspector smiled and looked at Sam.

"Was he a moral man?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"Ever try anything on with you?"

"No, sir. I should soon have told him the time of day if he had."

"Where did he come from?"

"Manchester, sir. I am from there and he got a friend of his to engage me."

"Did you know anything about him before you came here?"

"No, sir; but it was good wages, though the work was hard, much better than I got anywhere else, and he lived well."

"Who's your friend at Manchester who engaged you, I mean his friend?"

"A Mrs. McQuin, she lived at 105, Chester Street. She got my name from Mrs. Partridge's registry office in Castle Street, No. 25."

The inspector stopped and looked at the detective.

"Did you know if Mr. Hartling had any enemies?"

"No, sir, not that I know of. He wasn't liked much, because he spoke so little and was so solemn-like; but I never knew him quarrel with anybody here."

"You say farmers and sportsmen came to see him often, and he'd give them a glass of brandy. Can you tell me their names?"

"Farmer Gray, he was rare fond of the brandy: Farmer Blake: Farmer Neil: Mr. Currigan at the Hall, he's often shooting about the meshes: Mr. Stuart, who has a big house in the village, and at times the landlords of the *Black Dog* and the *White Horse*."

"Can you remember anyone else?"

"Yes, Mr. Elton what live at Wroxham."

"How did they come?"

"In carts and boats and walking sometimes."

"Ever seen them take anything away?"

"No."

The inspector looked at the detective and he wagged his head.

"Well, Molly, we won't trouble you any more. You had better pack your things and get Joe to take your box away. What wages are owing to you?"

"This week and a week's notice and my fare back to Manchester."

"What will that be?"

"£6 13s. 4d."

The inspector opened the cash-box and paid her, and made her sign a receipt, which he dropped into the cash-box. The detective had replaced her letters in her box.

Joe then went up and came down with the box. It was not too heavy for Joe, and with ropes he tied it on to his back and started.

The inspector ran out. "I forgot to tell you, Molly, you must stop till after the inquest. It will cost you nothing; Sam's wife will put you up. You will be paid for your lost time and your expenses."

"Thank you, sir." Joe grinned; this was all clover for him.

When they had left the inspector turned to the detective.

"Well, sergeant?"

"My opinion is she's straight and speaking the truth all through."

"Same here," said the inspector, and Sam nodded.

"But what an artful chap this Hartling was!" said the inspector.

"Yes, sir, lots of them about; but you mustn't shoot them."

They laughed, and the inspector got up.

"Sam, old pet, just a bit of lunch and a taste of the old brandy." The inspector smiled,

Sam hurried off and the detective came to his assistance. There was plenty of food in the larder, and Sam and the detective made up a decent lunch with a jug of old brandy ; and they ate and talked of the murder.

“ Have you got the finger-prints all safe, sergeant ? ”

“ Photos of them, sir, on the china, on the box. I think they were after the cash and must have got over £600.”

“ And five kegs of brandy and two tins of tobacco ; but you haven't seen the books. He had been paid for fifty-five kegs and ten tins of tobacco ; but five had not been delivered, and they took them.”

“ My word, that's an eye-opener and artful : means a boat or a cart.” The inspector nodded.

After some fags they finished the brandy, and the inspector said, “ You sleep here, Sam. The sergeant and I will go, and he will get busy. I will send down a couple of constables to relieve you and take charge, and you can go after the footprint-man.”

“ Yes, sir.”

The inspector and detective started off to walk through the snow. “ What a God-forsaken place, Dick ! ”

“ Yes, I wouldn't care to live my life out here, smuggling or no smuggling. But who was he in with ? An artful devil ! My view is one of the smugglers told a pal all about it, and they guessed there would be a lot of money from sales, and they slipped in when Molly was away and nobody likely to be about, and cleared off. That they took the brandy and tobacco shows they knew all about it.”

“ Yes, and it was a cart, I'll bet.”

“ It's an interesting case.”

V

Joe was asked by the inspector (he found him at Sam's) to go back and keep Sam company till the two constables arrived, “ and tell Sam to pay you for all the time you've lost.”

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"That's all right, sir. Sam and I are old pals."

The inspector nodded.

The doctor had made his p.m. and said there was nothing fresh, no scratches or bruises except where he fell; nothing new.

The inspector drove off in his dog-cart with the constable he had left in the village, and the detective went about the *Black Dog* and *White Horse* making inquiries. He verified that Joe and Molly had been there from three-thirty to ten, when Joe saw her home. He was astounded to find that no one knew of the murder. The men who had removed the corpse had kept the secret, and the weather had prevented people from calling at the *Dogfish*, and Molly had kept indoors, as advised by Sam and the inspector, until after the inquest, and as Joe was allowed to visit her, this did not trouble her.

Then jurors were called for the inquest, and then the story of the murder leaked out. The two constables had arrived and were in charge of the *Dogfish*, and crowds walked there and gaped as crowds will at a place where a murder has been committed. Snow did not stop them, and the men in blue stood on duty to keep them out of the garden; for they would have come and peered into the windows. And the police were glad, when evening closed in, to smoke and fry bacon and keep warm. They were shown the brandy keg by Sam with a wink and the cigarettes and the grub, and they made themselves comfortable: there was plenty of beer and pop. The police had put up a notice, CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE, on a big card over the front and back doors and in the window, so *bona fide* customers were turned away.

The snow was still deep when the inquest took place at the *White Horse*. It was very formal: Hartling was identified by several people; the doctor gave his evidence, brief and to the point; Sam gave his of finding the body, and Joe confirmed, and the police asked for a remand for a

fortnight. Molly was delighted. She was in clover and well-fed and had plenty of time to go out with Joe, who, now that the constables had come, was not required by Sam. Sam had quickly traced the man who made the footprints ; it was a coastguard, who owned up at once and said he was on his round and wanted a thumb-piece and a quart of spiced ale ; he gave the exact time. He could make no one hear, so he went on to the station and told several of his companions. So the police decided to keep his name out of it, lest he should get into trouble with the authorities. It was clearly a common practice of the " gobies " to drop in there on their patrols and have some tippie and get something to eat, and was winked at by the coastguard officer ; but they never got any *brandy*, that Sam elicited.

Sam found an old poacher ; Sam always went to a poacher for information of mysterious doings on the marshes ; for he knew well they were about at all hours and in all weather, and he was friendly with all the local poachers, for he turned a blind eye to their misdemeanours. Sam argued that rabbits and hares and wild pigeons and wild fowl were wild things and them as got them had a right to them. The same with fish if they only fished for the pot or in small quantities. For those men who came up in wherries and drew the broad Sam had no mercy ; they were furriners from Seamouth, they were spiling the fishing ; but with the natives it was different, and he told them plainly, " Don't you Bors throw a net or I'll pull you," and they didn't, and many a hare and rabbit and perch and mess of eels found their way to Sam's, left as anonymous gifts.

Old Ben Johnson was the cleverest poacher, and he went to him.

" Ben, I doan't ax you what you were doing last Thursday arternoon. Did you see any traps stop that arternoon at the *Dorgfish* ? "

Ben looked at him and grinned.

" A heap, guv'nor, and that aren't the fust time, and

allust of a Thursday," and he grinned, " of an arternoon."

" Well, Ben, you know ; what were they arter ? "

" Dorg mustn't rob dorg, guv'nor."

" You know them ? "

" I know noathin', Bor. Innocent as a babe I be."

Sam laughed. " It's allright, Ben, we know. French brandy and perique tobacco."

Ben closed his eyelids together and smiled.

" Well, Ben, we don't want tew go into that. Hartling is dead as you know, as everybody knows, and we want to catch the warmin what killed him."

" Yes, I don't hold with bloody murder ; but I did see tew chaps there of the evening."

Sam gave a start.

" Well, yew won't mind helping me ? "

" I will that, owd Sam, that was crool. But I won't tell yew noathin' 'bout the smuggling, so don't ax me."

" All right, Ben, that's a bargain."

" I wor setting looking-glasses on the warrant nigh the *Dorgfish* for them black and grey rabbits, and I see a small spring-cart with a fast pony come up and tew rough-looking young chaps in it. They got out and hitched the horse to the ring and went in. They stopped there nigh an hour, and then they brought four kegs of summat, it may be was water " (and he laughed) " and put into the cart ; right loaden up she wor. Then they brought some tin cases and put in, that might have been bacca and it mightn't. Then one brought a heavy box out wropped up in a noospaper, and he put that in front, and locked the front door and put the key in his pocket and got up, and they drove off as fast as they could tew Seamount, I reckon ; they looked like Northenders. Well, owd Sam, I allust mind my business, so I thowt no more about it."

" What time was that, Ben ? "

" They came 'bout seven and went 'bout eight. It was snowing right hard ; but I warn't far off. Well, when I'd

looked round my looking-glasses, think I a jug of spiced ale and a thumb-piece would go high, that *was* cold, master. I go to the back door and knock. There warn't nobody at home. I swore, for I wanted that ale and thumb-piece bad, a did, Bor. Well, think I, owd Hartling know his business. I'll stop time he come back. Nobody come and I was working right hard, and then I see a goby go to the back door and knock. He kept knocking and kicking and could make nobody hear, so he like me go acrost the sandhills and down tew the beach where the walking wor easier, and off he go tew the station. Think I thet fare a rum 'un, I wonder what's o'clock. Then I see'd a mawther and a chap come athwart the meshes, and when they come close I see'd it wor Molly and Joe. So I say now I shall get in and hev' that hot spiced ale and that thumb-piece; but no, they couldn't make nobody hear, and they went round to the back, leastwise Joe did, and they couldn't make nobody hear and off they go back.

"Well, then I sensed there wor something wrong, so I finished my work quick and off I go. I didn't want to be drawn inter it."

"What time did Molly and Joe get there?"

"Afore half arter ten. I heard the charch clock strike the half-hour; so I ain't never had that jug of hot spiced ale and that thumb-piece," and he laughed.

"Can't you recollect what these Northenders were like?"

"Well, like Northenders. Dirty caps, no collar, but their scarfs and dirty owd grey clothes."

"Both of them?"

"Yes, like as tew mavishes' eggs they wor, short, 'bout 5 feet 4 or 5 inches, darkish, clean-shaved, black boots, smoking fags. They talked like Northenders tew."

"What, were you as close as that? But how was it yew didn't leave no feelings?"

"Ah, Bor, if I wor to tell yew all I know, well, yew wouldn't hev' no time to be doing police-work."

"I'd like to know about the leaving no feelings."

"No, Sam, yew 'on't never hear that from me. That's part of my trade, Bor."

Sam could not make out whether he was pulling his leg or what, and he knew it was no use trying to pump Ben. But he was very well satisfied and walked back to the village, where he imparted all his information to the detective, who was delighted.

The authorities had for various reasons called off all attempts to find who had received smuggled tobacco and brandy, so Sam went round trying to find anyone besides Ben who had seen the Northenders that day, but in vain.

The detective had received orders to go on to Seamouth at once and try and trace the two roughs with the assistance of the Seamouth police.

VI

Carlson worked very hard at Seamouth. He instinctively decided from Ben's description of the roughs and the light cart and pony that it was a general dealer's cart, and that the two men were general dealers or had borrowed or hired it. With the help of the Seamouth police he got a list of all the general dealers in the town, and he and a Seamouth plain-clothes detective, told off for the purpose, shadowed them. The unfortunate thing was that there were several of these hooligan youths who answered Ben's description of the two men, even to the clothes. So many wore old, turned, grey-tweed suits and caps and mufflers; grey suits had been the vogue during the two previous years, and the soiled and worn-out suits had come down to these general-dealing hooligans, and there was nothing else to go by.

Try as they would, the two detectives could not find any horse and cart which had been out of Seamouth or had arrived in Seamouth on the day of the murder. No one had seen such a conveyance with two youths; but, as it was snowing hard all day and few people were out except those compelled to be, it was not surprising.

The fortnight of the remand had nearly passed when the Northwitch detective reported they could not get on the track of the men or of the cart. Sam had worked hard in the village and round about ; but he could gain no information whatever of such a pony and cart or such youths. They must have avoided the villages and kept to the by-roads.

Carlson was recalled, and it was decided to hold the inquest : there was sufficient evidence to prove Hartling had been murdered. Nothing was said of the robbery of the cash-box or of the brandy and tobacco, or of the youths and the pony and cart. The police wanted all this kept quiet, so that the criminals should never suspect they were known. Ben the poacher was not called—to his relief.

The usual routine was gone through. Witnesses identified the body, Molly being the chief witness. Then the doctor gave his evidence and fixed the time of death approximately at seven, and stated it could have been neither accident nor suicide. Joe and Molly gave their evidence clearly, as did the coastguard who was subpoenaed.

Sam and Joe then gave evidence of finding the body ; the inspector and detective added their evidence.

Molly said Hartling kept money in the box under the bed upstairs, and Sam and Joe testified that the box had been forced, and there was neither the cash-box which Molly alleged belonged to the deceased, nor any money. Molly said there might have been £20 to £25 in it, and that Hartling generally took the money to the bank when it reached that amount, and the bank confirmed this, putting in several entries of sums ranging from £20 to £30.

Directed by the coroner, the jury had no difficulty in returning a verdict of wilful murder against some person or persons unknown, and the burial order was signed by the coroner. Hartling, it seems, had one relative, a married sister. He died intestate and she paid for his funeral. He was buried in the village churchyard, and her solicitor claimed the estate for her as next of kin. The authorities

had removed the brandy and tobacco, and said nothing about them. They did not want it to leak out that they knew anything of the smuggling : the Customs authorities took charge of that and were quietly making investigations at Seamouth.

The owner of the inn, a small brewer in Northwich, re-let the place to a retired sporting publican, who knew his business, was a jovial honest man, and had taken it chiefly for the sport. He liked the peasantry and their humour, made the place more comfortable and attracted a considerable trade.

Hartling's estate was wound up, and the balance, a small one, paid to the sister. His Seamouth account under the name of Stewart went to the long list of unclaimed bank-balances ; for the banking people did not know his other name, and, though from the photographs, they suspected Stewart was Hartling, they stood mute.

VII

The Customs authorities worked hard and silently ; but without avail. Sam went and talked to the jovial new landlord of the *Dogfish*, who supplied good beer ; he did not mustard-and-hot-water it, and gave good measure and often an allowance for odd jobs. But he had not told him of the smugglers' cave.

One morning as they were talking of the murder, the landlord, Groome, said, " Sam, I forgot to tell you."

" Yes, Bor."

" Did you ever have smugglers here ? "

" In time past no doubt. I've heerd so."

" Well, Sam, there is a smugglers' hole underneath here."

" Indeed. Where ? "

Groome had bought all the good furniture and much of the crockery and glass from Hartling's sister, including the old and valuable corn-bin.

" Come along."

He proceeded to the corn-bin and with some help

removed it, and, getting the old crowbar, he prized up the stone.

"There, Sam, enough to bury a small boatload of brandy. I was moving this thing when the woman came to clean; she couldn't move it, and I saw that, and I'm curious. There you are, Sam. I've been down it. Nothing there, not a thimbleful; but, unless I am much mistaken, there has been some there not so long ago."

"Indeed. May I go down?"

"By all means. Here's a box of matches. There's a lantern there, oil and wick and all, and that's how I know it isn't so long ago that lantern was used."

Sam feigned to be much excited. He took the matches, went down and lit the lantern, and looked very carefully all round, and then he came up with the lantern.

"Well, it be a henapecker." He examined the lantern: "Looks as if his nibs had been there lately."

"Yes, and did you notice the recent marks in the dirt? Sand that is, dirty sand."

"Yes. Well, I would never have dreamt of such a thing. Thank you for telling me."

"That's all right, Sam," and they replaced the stone and the corn-bin.

"Found anything else, Mr. Groome?"

"No, except a lot of dirt. He was a dirty beggar this Hartling, and his maid Molly, too."

"Ah, she had tew much to do."

"I suppose so."

"Hard-worked she wor. You have the missus and a girl, and you get a chairwoman in once a week. . . . You read all about the murder, of course?"

"Yes, every word I could get hold of; but you police kept a lot back. I'm not blaming you."

"What dew you think he was killed for?"

"Money. What else? If you ask me, there was a sight more money in that big cash-box upstairs than £25 to £30. I read it this way: that lantern and those

footmarks downstairs show he had a lot of smuggle here quite recently. One of the gang knew his ways or the girl told some one, and they waited till he had sold most of it, and then came for that, and killed him and robbed him. That's the sign of it ; it was one of the smugglers or some one in co. with them."

" But if he played that game afore, where's the money ? He didn't leave much, according to the bank."

" My dear Sam, you have never lived in a town. Did you never hear of secret banking accounts ? "

" Well, I hev'. How do that work ? "

" Well now, Sam, just suppose I was playing Hartling's game, do you think I'd bank the illicit profits where I banked my takings ? Not on your life, Sam. I'd have a private account for the smuggle, business-account at Seamouth : that's where the smuggle came from, no doubt. He had to pay a lot for the brandy and tobacco. He wouldn't trust men like that with a lot of money here and they knowing it. He'd pay by *cheque* ; he'd sell to his customers round him for cash ; they wouldn't give cheques. Now I'm a publican, been over forty years in the trade and been in all sorts of houses in London. Well, no publican would take on this beer-house for the profits, unless he was very old and needy, or unless the doctor sent him here for the climate, or unless he had a bit put by and took it for the ' sport ' as I do : it's as plain as your nose on your face to one of the trade. He was here for the smuggle, because they tell me he never shot or fished or sailed. I wonder your Northwitch ' tec ' who knows towns didn't tumble to that."

Sam said it was funny ; but he never suspected any smuggling, thought that had all died out.

" I think, Sam, I could tell you a lot of his customers."

" Indeed, sir."

" Yes, I have had, when I first came, a lot of men asking if I hadn't a drop of good brandy, or some *good genuine* perique. I told them I had a few bottles of brandy for my

own consumption and to give a friend a glass ; but that I had no licence to sell spirits. They looked at me in an old-fashioned way, and I tumbled and began to look for the smugglers' hole, and when I found that and the lantern, all in working order and recently used, and the marks of kegs down there, I knew, Sam, just as well as if I had helped in the smuggling."

"How dew you think they brought it here?"

"Boats, of course, wherry or a big vegetable-boat such as I have seen on the river, 'cabbage-boats' you call them. They'd come up the river and stop just at the bend there, about a hundred yards off, choose the right day and tide and that, send on a messenger to warn him, and come in the middle of the night and run it in. He'd put out all lights, and then, after the smuggle was hid, they'd have a beano, pretend they were becalmed wherrymen or icers, anything ; as travellers they have a right to use the house after closing hours ; see, Sam ? I have heard of this game before in London ; but never in this part of the country ; further north, yes, and it was done just like that, *always* of a winter-time."

"You ought tew have been a detective, Mr. Groome."

"I should be no use for that, Sam. Every man to his trade. I can see how it was all done and read it all, now I have had so many inquiries after brandy and tobacco, and found that hole ; but I couldn't no more find who killed Hartling than I could find a gold-mine on this marsh."

"I see, sir."

Sam admired Groome and liked him, as did every one else, and now Sam decided he was an honest man, as he was. It was a relief for Sam ; it meant less work and no late dreary watches of winter-nights to catch the smugglers ; for Sam had received an awful wiggling from his superior over the smuggling business ; indeed he came very near to being discharged ; but he knew now promotion was not for him. They were very exacting in their inquiries and decided Sam had not "stood in," and so he

was not dismissed ; they obviously took a lenient view. After all Sam was very useful in his place, he knew the people and their ways and was liked by them, and he had been really smart over the murder for a village policeman. That also had helped to save his skin. Sam of course cursed the smugglers ; they had nearly ruined him and had effectually blocked all chances of promotion ; but he was stolid and philosophical, and so did not worry.

He reported what the new landlord of the *Dogfish* had told him to his chief, and the chief said, " Well, he's probably O.K. ; in fact I should say he certainly is. But keep your eye on him and see if he does sell any brandy. You needn't go lying about the marshes looking for smugglers of winter-nights ; but just keep your eyes and ears open. Never mind the tobacco ; he has a licence to sell that."

" All right, sir. I'll watch it." Sam did ; but Groome noticed it at once and smiled to himself. He was a joking man, this landlord, and he thought of doing tricks to pull Sam's leg ; but Sam's misery over the smugglers having nearly ruined him made him hold his hand ; luckily for Sam, or the landlord would have made him a laughing-stock, and Sam instinctively felt this, so his weather eye soon ceased lifting, and Groome spotted it.

VIII

The Press made such a dust about the undiscovered murderer of Hartling that the authorities called in the assistance of Scotland Yard.

Harrison, who had worked some cases in the district, especially at Seamouth, was selected to go down and see what he could do.

He was given a copy of all the documents relating to the case and studied them closely, and then decided to go and view the scene. He had a long interview with Sam, whom he put down as straight and mediocre.

Then he went to the *Dogfish*. He had read all the notes of Sam's interview with the new landlord about the finding of the smugglers' hole; he was prepossessed in his favour, and, when he met him, he liked him very much, a bright intelligent man and a good sort. He asked the landlord if he had heard any whisper of anyone having called at the inn that day in a trap or car.

"Well, inspector, I have heard many whispers. I have heard several carts and traps called here the day of the murder."

Harrison opened his eyes and said, "You didn't tell Sam that?"

"Not I. It would be buzzed all over the village. I have lived in London over forty years; well, I have been here a few months, and, my word, they call rustics fools! They are the cunningest, cutest devils you ever saw, about as fly as street arabs, and in some ways flyer, and all the *natives* hang together like a swarm of bees, and close as an oyster they are. Sam is a good fellow; but his headpiece has no great value, though as village bobby, he's the right man in the right place here; he's a *native*, knows their little ways and they like him; but when it comes to artful Northenders and smugglers, well, Sam isn't in it. There's an old poacher here in a small way who could give him 90 in 100 and leave him standing; but he won't puff about the smugglers; "dorg mustn't rob dorg," that's his cry. You must promise not to hunt him out and question him, do you agree?"

"Certainly."

"Well, he does not often drink too much; but one night in here, when he thought none of us were listening, he let out that a lot of carts and that called here the afternoon of the murder. 'What were they arter?' asked one man. 'Praise the pigs, what were they arter?' He sneered. 'What you be arter, booze, only tisen't mild ale,' and he went off into a guffaw of laughter. Just then a man knocked his pint pot on the table and the girl went in

to serve him, and the poacher left. Well, that was enough for me. They were carrying off the smuggle, his smuggle-customers, them as kept asking me when I first came here if I hadn't a drop of good brandy to spare."

"Of course that was it. There must have been a pile of money in the house."

"Not the least doubt, hundreds of pounds if a penny, I should say. The marks show there was a big lot of kegs in there recently."

"You mean the cellar?"

"Yes, I showed it to Sam. You can see it if you like."

"Well, I must just have a look at it."

The landlord went to the back-house and returned with a lantern and lit it. "You see this was all in commission in the cellar, where I found it."

Harrison went down with his torch and looked carefully all round; but beyond the marks of several kegs there was nothing but old cobwebs drooping from the ceiling. "A snug place," he said as he came up.

"You bet it is, and I'd like to have all the stuff that has been through that cellar. I'd build a house in the village and a big 'un, and start a car, and put up for the County Council."

Harrison laughed.

"Them two general dealers did it, of course," said Groome. "They were in co. with the smugglers, or with one of them; that's enough, and he will no doubt get his 'coin.' They studied Hartling and his ways, and learnt how he let the girl go out every Thursday at three, and she didn't return till after ten. They were about somewhere and saw the customers taking off the loot, and knew the spondulacks would be in the place somewhere."

"What do you think of the girl Molly?"

"Never saw her; but there was a photograph of her when I came. It was in her room under the bed. She looks an artful dare-devil; but that ain't much to go on, photographs lie, well, like a mining-engineer."

Harrison smiled and said, "The solution is in Seamouth." Groome nodded. "Hartling's private banking account is there, too."

Harrison nodded. "You never saw Hartling, of course?"

"No, never, except in the Sunday papers. Didn't like the cut of his jib."

"No. . . . Well, if you hear anything, Mr. Groome, drop me a line at the Yard. I will treat it as confidential."

"I will certainly. . . . If you ever want a bit of sport, come and stop with me."

"I will certainly and should enjoy it."

Harrison went back and said good-bye to Sam, and went on to Seamouth.

He had the local plain-clothes man who was told off to go with Carlson, and they went to all the hooligan-looking general dealers.

"As you say, as like as two mavishes."

"Yes, that's so."

Harrison went about and tried to find from the stables where the general dealers kept their ponies and horses if anyone had been out that day; but all in vain. Then Harrison went to a printing office and had some big bills printed.

PROFESSOR HAFIZ ABDULLAH

THE

GREAT MYSTIC AND THOUGHT-READER

WILL GIVE AN

ENTERTAINMENT FOR POOR MEN AND

EX-SOLDIERS AND SAILORS

AT THE

SEAMOUTH YOUNG MEN'S CLUB

MONDAY NIGHT AT 8.30 SHARP

NO CHARGE FOR ADMISSION

PRIZES TO THE VALUE OF £25

WILL BE GIVEN FOR A NEW EXPERIMENT

The police were of course in the know, and on Monday the room was filled. Well-dressed people were all turned away without mercy, and so were many women and children; only young men were admitted. There was a large sprinkling of young hooligans belonging to the general-dealer class. A small stage had been erected.

When the curtain was drawn, Harrison, dressed as an Arabian magician, all dyed and true to type, sat before a large crystal. On the stage was a curious instrument with a clock-dial.

A man in dress-clothes said that the great mystic only spoke Oriental languages and he would act as interpreter. Harrison whispered to him.

"The professor wishes to please you all and asks me to ask you whether you would like the prize-competition first and the thought-reading with some magic after, or whether he shall begin with the thought-reading."

"The competition," roared the audience.

"Good," said the interpreter. "The professor has decided to award the prizes for classes. He wants to see which are the sharpest and quickest of various workers. He will give prizes for the following groups:

"1. Ex-soldiers and sailors (young men) who belong to the other classes.

"2. Fishermen.

"3. Dock-labourers.

"4. General dealers.

"5. Boat-wrights and other tradesmen.

"That makes five groups. He will give £5 to each group; a first prize of £2, a second of £1, a third of 15s., a fourth of 10s., and three 5s. prizes.

"He will add another £5 to go to the group who does best.

"Now we will begin."

The professor, dressed in a long black gown, a black silk fez with gold stars all over it and a long white beard, came forward to the machine and spoke to his assistant.

“ He will take the general dealers first. Will they walk this way and line up at the back of the stage? And he trusts to your honour to keep to your class, and if anyone in the audience detects a man not belonging to the class he is in, to tell me, and I will tell the professor.”

The professor went to the machine with the clock-dial face and sat on a low stool, sitting sideways to the audience, with a roll of papyrus paper and a stylo. There were twelve general dealers, and the first file came forward, beginning at the left, and they kept to that order.

A typical young hooligan came forward and took the seat by the machine, and the professor strapped his arms and connected them with the machine, and his assistant then said:

“ Now, all you have to do is when I read out a name like ‘ box,’ say ‘ box,’ and the machine will record the quickness of your reply.”

The professor nodded, and the assistant began reading out the words, and the professor took the time and entered them. There were 110 words as follows :

- | | | |
|--------------|------------------|------------------|
| 1. Wood. | 21. Horse. | 41. Black hair. |
| 2. Tree. | 22. Flour. | 42. Copper. |
| 3. Coat. | 23. Carpet. | 43. Tin. |
| 4. Snow. | 24. Box. | 44. Lead. |
| 5. Wine. | 25. Play-box. | 45. Silver. |
| 6. Tar. | 26. Chest. | 46. Gold. |
| 7. Tea. | 27. Floor. | 47. Gold-mining. |
| 8. Bread. | 28. Teeth. | 48. Sovereigns. |
| 9. Butter. | 29. Bed. | 49. Piece. |
| 10. Cream. | 30. Counterpane. | 50. Shirt. |
| 11. Sugar. | 31. Bedroom. | 51. Tie. |
| 12. Fire. | 32. Tout. | 52. Scarf. |
| 13. Lane. | 33. Bun. | 53. Trousers. |
| 14. Foot. | 34. Man. | 54. Corpse. |
| 15. Shoe. | 35. Eye. | 55. Murderer. |
| 16. Nail. | 36. Ear. | 56. Salad. |
| 17. Mug. | 37. Nose. | 57. Cress. |
| 18. Beer. | 38. Head. | 58. Lettuce. |
| 19. Meat. | 39. Blood. | 59. Celery. |
| 20. Biscuit. | 40. Hair. | 60. Suet. |

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61. Peppermint.	78. Brandy.	95. Spring-cart.
62. Chocolate.	79. Bung.	96. Cold.
63. Fag.	80. Glassful.	97. Circuit.
64. Woodbine.	81. Stud.	98. Horse cloth.
65. Gold-flake.	82. Shirt.	99. Ring.
66. Jug.	83. Tin case.	100. Iron ring.
67. Bacca.	84. Perique-tobacco.	101. Cocoa.
68. Lantern.	85. Matches.	102. Cheese.
69. Club.	86. Sea.	103. Ham.
70. Crowbar.	87. River.	104. Bacon.
71. Window-weight.	88. Broad.	105. Tomatoes.
72. Newspaper.	89. Marsh.	106. Beans.
73. Tin-tack.	90. Ice.	107. Peas.
74. Log.	91. Long road.	108. Crime.
75. Ash stick.	92. Short road.	109. Change.
76. Oak stick.	93. Snowy road.	110. Blow.
77. Keg.	94. Pony.	

The assistant took the competitor's name and address, and the next was called, and in an incredibly short time the dozen were done.

The professor and assistant ran through the lists, and the first prize went to William Stopes, the second to George Field, third to Bob Gray, fourth to Sam Howell, fifth, sixth and seventh, Brown, Gibson and Giles. And the assistant paid them, and they went down.

The professor looked at his watch and spoke to his assistant.

"I fear it will take too long to take 110 words for each person; we will say fifty, if you agree."

There was stamping, and the fishermen were called up next, and the prizes awarded, and so with all the groups.

Then the professor and assistant consulted, and the £5 was given to the fishermen's class. There was prolonged cheering. Then the professor and his assistant gave some thought-reading, old, sham Eastern tricks, and conjuring. They received a tremendous ovation, and the men sang "For he is a jolly good fellow," and so ended the entertainment.

Harrison threw off his disguise, and went and washed

off the cork-black, and with the local plain-clothes man went off to his hotel with the chronoscope and the records.

"*William Stopes* and *George Field*, didn't they boggle and flounder at 'window-weight'? That was the longest. 'Corpse' came next; 'Blow' next; 'Keg' next; 'Brandy' next; 'Iron ring' next; 'Horse' next; 'River' next; 'Woodbine' next; 'Play-box' next; 'Sovereigns' next; 'Bed' next; 'Counterpane' next.

"Well, just look at the prolonged times for them, and they were all included in the words given to the other groups, and yet they never hesitated at all, nor did the other general dealers."

"Say, that was a wonderful stunt!" said the local detective.

"Yes, from U.S.A., like so many new stunts. Well, now, we'll just follow *William Stopes* and *George Field*."

"Say, did you notice some of the young fishermen fumbled at Keg, Brandy, Tin, Perique?"

"Yes, I will give their names to the Customs authorities."

The Seamouth public were rather puzzled over the professor's entertainment, and though the papers were paid to give no account of it, it leaked out and excited curiosity.

IX

Harrison, disguised as a rough from London, for-gathered at the *Marsh Arms*, which the general dealers "used."

The first day they looked suspiciously at Harrison and began to test him, talking shop.

He was all there with the Whitechapel argot; he showed them he knew the ropes. *Stopes* and *Field* were there.

“ What do you come up here for, matey ? ” asked Field.

“ Well, matey, sometimes it’s best to keep out of sight of the cops, ain’t it ? ”

“ Oh, that’s the talk, eh ? Have a pint along with me.”

Harrison accepted. Stopes came over: their guilty consciences were most interested in his movements, he noticed.

“ Come to the London Palace, matey ? ”

“ I am down and out ; only a medaza.”

“ What’s that ? ”

“ A sixpence.”

“ Oh, stow that ! Stopes and me made a bit lately, at some good deals. We’ll stand Sam.”

Harrison went to the London Palace and watched the orgies there, and wondered. Talk about Whitechapel !

They then went round and had drinks, and Harrison bought some chips and fish for sixpence and ate this as he went along.

“ Say, we want a partner, a Lunnoner—fly like you, who don’t want the cops to see you ; don’t we, George ? ”

“ We do, Bor. Come to a little pub in here and have a proper blow out ; we’ll stand Sam ; eh, George ? ”

“ Yes, old pardner.”

They went to a low-looking pub and tapped at a little window behind and were admitted, after a whispered consultation.

“ He’s all right, Joe. The cops be arter him.”

“ Is he a tec ? ”

“ No, knows the trail like a book.”

“ All right.”

The landlord, a dark, saturnine-looking, fat little man, eyed him all over and seemed satisfied. Harrison put on the hang-dog look of the loafer and spoke in the argot of the Commercial Road and its purlieus. There was a room filled with the underworld, gaudy girls and roughish-

looking men. A long table was in the middle of the room with a dirty cloth, and on the table was a cold collation: hams, rabbit-pies, cold dumplings, bread, butter and cheese; pickles, red cabbage; a cold round of beef which had been heavily punished; and bottles of rum, whisky, gin, and glasses, and bottled beer.

"Sit you down, matey, and pitch in. Eat and drink all you want, and then we'll talk. Help yourself; all free drinks and all. But Joe will put you out if you get bosky or kick up a row."

Harrison needed no bidding, for he had eaten nothing since morning, to do the needy game right, and he ate all he wanted and drank beer.

Stopes and Field were talking to various shady-looking men and women, and they looked at Harrison with interest. He noticed three or four fishermen there with girls.

After supper they drew off to a table in a corner, and George got hot rum and water. The kettle was on the hob, and tobacco and cigars on the table.

"Feel better, matey?"

"Yuss, foine, gaine for anyfing now."

"That's the talk. Do you know these parts?"

"No, never was here before; but I heard 'twas a good place for me, so I came by the rattler with a medaza in my kip."

"Are you game for anything?"

"Yes, 'cept murder," and he looked at them.

They both paled, and George said:

"You wouldn't stick at that for £600?"

"Well, I dunno. That's a lot."

George was now full-up and vainglorious.

"Easy, ain't it, Sam?"

Sam kicked him under the table.

"Who be you kicking on, Bor?"

"Shut up. You mardle a damn sight tew much, Bor. He's a bit of orlright, anyone can see; but there's some

here would cut your weazand for a tanner and go to the cops for a fiver, blimey, narks ; there's two here."

George sobered and went and got a bottle of ginger-ale.

"Well, what's the gaine?" asked Harrison, whose pseudonym for the occasion was Mike.

"Ever done any smuggling?" asked Bill.

"No."

"Well, there's a cargo to be run to-day week. Are you on?"

"What's the posh?"

"£25 and a bellyful."

"Where?"

"Ah! That's telling! Are you on?"

"Yes, I must have money to start in the monkery."

"Well, I like you. Come to the skipper."

A big man, with white beard and whiskers in sailor's clothes, was sitting toying with a young and dissolute-looking flapper.

"Here, skipper, here's a volunteer."

The old skipper looked him through and through.

"Know anything of boats?"

"I can sail and I can row, learnt them down at Wapping; try me."

"Look here, Bor, come you to mine to-morrow arternoon to tea, and we'll talk. I'm busy now," and he turned to the flapper, who pulled his beard and called him Nickey. They went back to the table in the corner.

"He'll fix you up."

"Right-ho! I'm much obliged to you, mates. This is a bit of orlright."

"Will I introduce you to a Poll?"

"No, no money. That will keep. Where can I get a doss?"

"Come along, we'll show you; eh, George?"

"Yes, matey."

They took him to some stables and showed him the hayloft.

“ There ; but no smoking. Here’s where we keep our prads. I’ll speak to Jim, the groom here ; and that will be all right, and I’ll pay him ; 1s. 6d. that is, and you can pay me after that run. Good luck ; we are backing a winner.”

He found the skipper’s house ; the flapper was there to do the honours, and they had a high tea, bloaters and toast, cakes, tea and bread and butter.

After tea they went into a private room ; the flapper being left to wash up.

The skipper produced some brandy and glasses and cold water, and they drank and pledged each other.

“ What are you running from the cops for ? ”

“ Lifting silk from a warehouse.”

“ Oh ! ” . . . The old man was really a bit shocked. Smuggling he considered legitimate business ; but stealing, that was another matter. He thought a bit and said :

“ You’ll do. . . . Well, it’s this way. We go up the river in a cabbage-boat. Plenty of that ” (pointing to the brandy) “ undernean the cabbages. Then we stop at a public and run the stuff in. ’Tain’t far, ’bout eight miles. You can pull, you say, Bor ; well, there you are. They will give us a beano arter the job.”

“ Where is it ? ”

“ The *Green House* ; but you wouldn’t know if I told you.”

“ I didn’t mean that. I meant where do we start ? ”

“ North End, Carter’s boat-yard. The stuff is stowed in a big old boat-shed. You ax for Carter’s yard and be there at eleven sharp, and go right up to the second-sized boat-house and knock three quick : then count sixty and knock again.”

Harrison nodded. “ What will the weather be like ? ”

“ Muzzy, if you ax me ; but what’s ondone is very onsartin.”

“ I’ll be there. What’s the dole ? ”

“ £25, to be paid next day when I cash the cheque.”

“ Good. I’m on ; thanks for the chance.” He drank up his brandy and left.

He helped Bill and George, attended the horses and did odd jobs ; he helped the groom clean the stables, and the days passed on. He had had many talks with Bill and George and learnt the whole routine of the smuggling, and they had hinted there were more ways of making money if he had the nerve.

At eleven on Thursday, after a good meal and dressed warmly in garnsey and oilies, he arrived at the “ shod,” as they called it down there. He knocked as directed, and the door was silently opened, and he entered. The skipper peered into his face. “ He’s all chena. I didn’t fare to know him at first on account of his new togs.”

There were numbers of kegs and baccy tins, all sealed, and some dozen men there who were sitting, smoking. Some had dropped off to sleep.

The time went slowly and a clock struck three.

The skipper opened the door. It was a dark, drizzling night with heavy black clouds and a nor’-east wind, cold and raw. He walked into the darkness and presently came back.

“ All clear,” he said. “ The watchers say ‘ all clear.’ Come along.” He opened the door, and each man shouldered a keg and went down to the boat, and two men got in and packed the kegs. A heap of cabbages gleamed ghostly on the bank. The tide was running up sharply, a spring tide. They went to and fro and filled the big boat with kegs and tins, and then packed cabbages on the top ; and Harrison was shown his seat, and all got in, the skipper taking the tiller. The wherries had all left Seamouth on the spring flood, and they rowed with muffled oars, easy work with that tide.

The cold rain fell on their backs and trickled down their necks. They all wore mittens, which were sodden, and the skipper was peering over the dark marshes. Blurred

lights occasionally flickered past on the road a little way off and a dog barked at a marsh farm. A train thundered through the marshes, the furnace where the stokers were shovelling in coal shed a great light.

Some duck feeding in a dike near by on duck-weed flew up with whirring wings, a restless curlew wailed plaintively; the cold nor'-east wind was rising.

Suddenly a low whistle came from the bank and a cry of an owl, well imitated.

The skipper took the boat nearer to the shore, and there was another low whistle and a red cigarette-end gleamed. He reversed the tiller and said, "Pull starboard, easy port," and the great boat shot into a cutting in the marsh. He threw a rond-anchor ashore, and a man dug it into the earth and said, "All ready."

The oars were quickly taken in, and men jumped out on to the bank; they threw the cabbages out on the bank in a heap.

"All clear," said the skipper. "Start up."

Kegs were passed to the men on the bank; they placed them on the ground, and then, shouldering them, walked some 200 yards to the back of a gloomy-looking inn. There was a garden and a man standing there, and they filed in through a back door to an opening like that at the *Dogfish*, and down they went. The kegs were soon deposited and they returned, and so on until all the kegs and tobacco tins were safely stored; and then they put the cabbages back, and these quite filled that big boat.

They covered them with tarpaulins and returned into a big room in the inn, and there was a hearty supper, and a large jug had already been filled with brandy, and by each plate lay a package of perique. The meal was much like that at the *Dogfish*, and the proceedings much the same; but as they had a short distance to go in the morning, many turned up, replete, and went to sleep. Harrison kept awake and learnt all he could. Two hours

before daybreak they were all awakened and had breakfast, and then a glass of brandy, and they started back on the ebb, and arrived at daylight at a small landing-stage, where most of the men got out. The skipper and Harrison and two others were kept, and they moored to the timber and unloaded the cabbages, and took the boat back to Carter's yard, and walked home.

"The *Dolphin* at twelve, boys."

Harrison tramped back to his bed in the stables and slept till eleven, when he went and got some breakfast and tea at an eating-house which George had introduced him to; at twelve he entered the *Dolphin* and was directed to a room upstairs. The skipper was there and paid them all £25 a piece, and then ordered drinks round; and then the men began to shift off.

"How do you like it, Bor?"

"Foine. I'm on to this game."

"Well, I will let you know when I want you next."

Harrison thanked him and went and paid off his small debts to George and Bill and the eating-house and the stableman, and then he went round with George and Bill, standing drinks.

"Easy, ain't it, Bor?" asked George.

"Yuss."

"But that's noathin'; old Martin will be selling that, Saturday be his day, and they will sell the lot. They be on the Acle road, it's a free house, and he'll have a lot of posh there Saturday night; now, if you have the nerve, we could get that."

"How?" (George was partly drunk.)

"Knock him on the head, like we did the man at the *Dorgfish*, and take it away, and some brandy and bacca. Are you on?"

"So you and Bill done that, eh?"

"Yes," he said vaingloriously. "Over £600 of the brightest and best, and kegs of brandy and a lot of tins of bacca."

“ Sounds tempting ; but it’s a hanging job.”

“ They ’on’t cop us ; it’s easy. He be all alone, and his gal go to her mother in Seamouth Saturday night till Monday. ’Tain’t quite so easy as the *Dorgfish* job, since that was out of the way, and there’s often some one passing on the Acle road ; but if we are nippy——”

“ Well, I’ll think on it.”

They loafed about and picked up some girls. Harrison had to feign illness to get away.

He had made an arrangement with the local police where to meet him when he wanted to consult with them ; there was to be a plain-clothes man disguised as a sailor at a certain spot between eleven and twelve each night.

He walked along the quay to this meeting. It was now past eleven, and the sailor was lolling against a bollard.

“ Well, matey, looking arter fish ? ”

“ No, Bor, heaving ahead.”

These were the words arranged.

“ Come to mine and have a drink,” said the sailor.

“ Ah, Bor, that I will,” and they walked together to a hired room, where the sailor changed. Then Harrison told him he had Stopes and Field all right.

“ But I don’t want to arrest them. They are going to rob the *Green House* on the Acle road on Saturday night, and knock out Martin as they did Hartling. They got over £600 there.”

“ Did they, though ? ”

“ Yes. They want me to join ; but I won’t. I’ll stick at murder, and they will go there. £600 has whetted their appetite for more. You must fix them and arrest them, and then I’ll take a hand.”

“ Right. This will be a scoop.”

They had a drink and Harrison went out and looked all round. There was nobody about, and he tramped off to a doss he had found now that he possessed money.

The next day he met Stopes and Field. They had drinks and loafed, and Field especially tried to press Harrison into the adventure ; but he wouldn't. He said he didn't mind smuggling ; but not burglary and the rest. Field was angry at first until Stopes said, " All the more for us."

" That's true." So Harrison was out of it.

Harrison loafed about trying to find out how the liquor was got ashore and into Carter's shed ; but so far without success.

He got grains of information from George and Bill.

" Look here," said Harrison, " couldn't we buy the stuff and run it in a steam-launch ? "

" You have got to pay the Coper cash down ; no cheques pass there. They be Dutch Jews."

" Well, the Coper must supply the smugglers."

They fell into the trap ; they were both rather drunk.

" You see, the *Wenus*, she be private-owned. She go out a-fishing with her crew, like any other boat ; but she don't pay no regard to any admirals. She go when she please, fish when she please, and come home when she please. That's private-owned wessels do that. They meets the Coper by agreement, latitude and longitude on sartin days. They buys the stuff and hides that undernean the fish, and come into port all chena. The Customs gobs looks down and sees the fish, and then they search the small cabin for a few boxes of cigars and holly-galone and that. Sometimes they smuggles a few bottles of holly-galone or a few boxes of cheap cigars as a blind, and they are fined. She allust lay up at the end of the wharf ; then of a dark night they run the kegs up to where you was, Carter's."

" I suppose they square the right people ? "

" What do you think, Bor ! "

" Who owns the *Wenus* ? "

" Now you are talking ! A man you'd never guess, a real toff, has a big place out at Ranmore, a wery big toff ;

but Mr. Pinney, the fish-merchant, pretend to own her, he do all the biz ; but this here toff, he's the banker."

" Who be he ? Can't we bleed him ? "

" Ah, I never thowt of that. He be Miles Currigan, Captain Miles Currigan, of Ranmore Hall, 'orses and carridges and motors."

" Married ? "

" No, he keep a harem there."

" Well, I'll go round and have a look and see what can be done. This is Friday. You will be on your job tomorrow : will you be free Sunday ? "

" No, Bor. We want some of that brandy, and we drive that to a public down Lowestoft way, the *Red Eagle*. They won't have no dealings with the smugglers, only with us, and only eight to ten kegs. That's where we took the lot from the *Dorgfish* ; stowed it in the stables undernean the hay, and drove it out the next day undernean some old seines for garden-netting we was selling, to put on the strawberry plants and currant and goose-berry bushes. We dew a good trade in that."

The next morning Harrison, dressed in cheap tweeds and a white shirt and coloured tie, went out to Ranmore. He soon found the Hall, an imposing structure, Elizabethan and beautiful, with gardens running down to the broad. There were large boat-houses, and the girls were playing tennis on asphalt courts, comely girls, too. Everything smelt of money ; everything was opulent and in perfect condition, and, though it was winter, the gardens were a picture. What they were in spring and summer he could not imagine.

He went to the local inn and had lunch, and a bottle of port which he invited the landlord to share with him.

" What a beautiful place Ranmore Hall is ! "

" Yes, sir. It's a show place. Captain Currigan spends a lot of money on it, and the ladies," and he grinned.

" Fond of them, I hear ! "

“Lives for nothing else. He’s as bad as a Turk.”

“What do the neighbours say?”

“They don’t say nothing now, they have got used to that; but they said a lot when he first bought the Hall, four years back.”

“A wealthy man?”

“Not the least doubt of that.”

“What sort of a man is he?”

“Oirish, short dark chap about forty-two, clean-shaven, bar a black moustache. Dresses well, bar a lot of jewellery. I don’t like him.”

“Why?”

“Well, he’s a wrong ’un, though I say it. There bain’t no Captain Currigan in the Army List. I’m an old soldier, a sergeant in the Rifle Brigade.”

“Perhaps he’s retired.”

“No, sir. Once he came in here for some rum, and I asked him about his regiment, and he said, ‘Oh, I have done with that!’ He didn’t want to talk about a regiment he never belonged to. I’ve met ’em before. He’s no more a captain than you are, sir.”

Harrison grinned. Harrison had done his bit and come out with a majority and a D.S.O. and M.C.; but he said nothing.

“Where did he come from?”

“I’ve heard from London; but nobody don’t really know.”

“Do the gentry about have anything to do with them?”

“No, sir. Well, how could they with all these women? He gets pals down from London mostly, and rum old beans they be. Some of the gals in the willage have been in service there, and they tell all sorts of stories; some lies no doubt; but a lot of truth tew.”

“Not married?”

“Married; but not charched, very much married. Brigham Young ain’t more married.”

“ Well, I am much obliged to you. I must come again in the spring.”

He paid him, and walked about, talking to a stone-breaker, a hedger and ditcher, and then thought of Stopes and Field. He decided to return to Seamouth; he wanted to know results.

It was quite dark when he returned to the stable and asked where Bill and George were.

“ Gone out Acle way with some herring-nets. Where have you been? ”

“ I promised them I'd go and look over Ranmore Hall. I've been there all day, just got in by the 6.36.”

“ Well, what do you make on it? ”

“ I reckoned something can be done.”

“ That's the talk.”

“ I want to tell George and Bill. When will they be back? ”

“ Afore nine sartingly.”

“ Well, I'll go and get a bit of grub, and come back. Ask them to wait, and we'll go to the Circus.”

Harrison started out and went to a restaurant he frequented now that he was in money. He ordered a heavy dinner and a bottle of champagne. He dawdled, ordered out-of-the-way courses that took a long time to prepare, then coffee and liqueur and an excellent cigar; and he dawdled till it was nearly half-past nine. Then he paid and tipped the waiters handsomely, and walked leisurely to the stable. Jack was in his box, reading the evening paper; it was then ten minutes to ten.

“ Well, Jack, are they back? ”

“ No, sir, never knew them so long. Hope noathin' ain't gone wrong.”

“ When did they say they would be back? ”

“ Half arter eight or nine at latest.”

Harrison looked grim. “ I hope nothing ain't gone wrong.”

“ So dew I ; but they be rare devils, stick at noathin’. Bill be the worst ; he don’t talk much ; but when his blood be up, he’d kill yew as quick as if yew were a fly.”

“ That so ? ”

“ Yes. Don’t yew get acrost him.”

“ I can take care of myself, Jack. Thanks all the same.”

Harrison started out. “ Tell them I’ll be at the Palace when they come along.”

“ All right, I will.”

Harrison made his way to the police-station, and, looking all round, went in by a back way. He went straight to the Chief Constable’s room.

“ Well, my boy, we’ve got them : locked in the cells below.”

“ Tell us.”

X

“ Well, on Saturday afternoon, six of our men in disguise, all armed, went out and dropped in. They went into the tap-room, and the landlord looked uneasy. A lot of traps stopped and the men went in to drink ; but nothing was brought out. They passed the word to others that the coast wasn’t clear, for we had watchers all up the road, either way.

“ About 6.30 the two boys drove up with a lot of lint, old herring-net for gardening purposes. These general dealers sell a lot of that in the winter after the fishing. They went into the tap-room, after hitching up their horse. Dick Brown and Joseph Lollard were in there behind curtains. They ordered tea and ham.

“ He brought it, and they ate it, and came and asked for the bill. He went out to make it up and took it back, and they gave him a pound, said they had no other change. Brown and Lollard had them covered.

“ Just as he turned Bill Stopes took a parcel up from

the table, it was a window-weight in newspaper, and he took a quick step to get nearer to Martin who had turned, and was raising the weight when Brown fired. He had orders to ; he hit him in the arm, and the weight dropped on the floor. Out Brown and Lollard rushed and the men in the tap-room were all ready ; one got in front of the window and others at the door. Brown yells, ' Hands up ! '

" Up they went and the bracelets were on them. They were charged and warned and arrested for attempted murder, both of them, and here they are, driven back by Brown in their own trap.

" Martin was flabbergasted. They told him that they were wanted for the murder of Hartling, and that they were just going to murder *him*. He shook like a leaf in a storm and had to have brandy before he came round.

" All our party cleared off by order ; we didn't want to know too much," and he winked and said :

" Another feather in your cap, Harrison. We aren't jealous, but glad it is cleared up. You will stay till the hearing before the magistrates ? "

" Yes, of course. I've other work."

" Of course. I had forgotten."

The Chief Constable shook hands heartily, and Harrison went out and down to the private house of the Director of Inland Revenue.

He was a short, jovial man from Devonshire.

" Well, inspector, any more news ? "

" Yes, a whole three-volume novel."

" I fegs, you don't say," and he opened a desk and got out a writing-pad and some official paper. He had just dined, and was reading the evening paper, latest edition.

" Well now, inspector, Volume I ? "

" The brandy was bought at sea from a Coper by the fishing-smack *Venus*, a private-owned smack which

belongs to Pinney, the fish-merchant. Pinney does all the business, with another man's money. Pinney's chief man is Skipper Henson, skipper of the *Venus*, and all her crew are smugglers. The brandy and tobacco are brought in generally late at night, if possible, under a cargo of fish. It is transferred to boats as soon as possible and stored in the second big shed of Carter's yard. Then Skipper Henson and his men go and take the cargo under cabbages and deliver it, have a beano, and come back early in the morning. They all assemble at the shed an hour before starting, and have scouts out all around. Each man receives £25, a big roll of perique, as much brandy as he can drink and all he can eat. Skipper Henson takes a cheque from the purchaser, Pinney cashes it, and they meet at the *Dolphin* the next day at twelve and receive their doles, have a drink, and separate.

"You have some corrupt searchers. It is a big business and behind it all is a wealthy adventurer, a Captain Currigan of Ranmore Hall, Ranmore. He keeps a harem there and lives in opulence on the fat of the land. He is a bogus British officer, an Irishman, aged about forty-two."

"I know, pays taxes on £6,000 a year."

"Well, there is your man. Ranmore is his; he bought it four years ago. I have verified all. He pays Pinney cheques and for expenses Pinney pays his cheque-profits. The London and Shire Bank will show you the accounts; I have seen them. Pinney is a Jew; Currigan an Irishman."

"How do you know all the details of the delivery, etcetera?"

"I was one of the crew in one running expedition and drew £25 and a pound of perique in sailcloth, and had a regular beano, coarse but plentiful; and I drew it at the *Dolphin* the next day at twelve, and have learnt that is the custom."

The little stout man sat back in his chair and roared with laughter and joy, and ejaculated:

“ Well, I’m dashed ! This takes the biggest biscuit ever baked ! . . . Well, how is your other job ? ”

“ The two murderers of Hartling were arrested to-night and are in the cells.”

“ My boy, a bottle ! ” He rang a bell and told the maid to ask the missus for a bottle of champagne and two glasses. He uncorked, filled, and then he said :

“ To the greatest detective since Vidoque ! ”

“ Why drag in Vidoque ? ” asked Harrison plaintively.

They chinked glasses and drank. “ Have a cigar, and I’ll ask you then to leave me. I’ve got to get busy. I shall ask you to sign some papers another day. You will be on the other job until after the magistrates’ sitting.”

“ Yes. Now I shall sleep and enjoy myself.”

“ You must dine with us before you go.”

“ With pleasure,” and Harrison departed.

He went to his doss and packed his things, and told the shady landlady he was off.

“ Why ? ”

“ The cops has got George and Bill, and they will be after me.”

She raised her hands and shouted out in surprise.

“ George and Bill ! What for ? ”

“ I dunno ; but it’s right.”

He went to the police-station, where his proper clothes were awaiting him, and he dressed, went off to the *Bull* and booked a room as Mr. Lacey of London, and again returned to civilized life.

XI

There was consternation in the underworld the next day when George and Bill were brought up and charged with the murder of Hartling, and remanded for a week.

Before the week was out there was more consternation when Captain Currigan, Pinney the fish-merchant, the skipper and several smacksmen were arrested for smuggling, also some of the Customs searchers for corrupt

practices, taking bribes, dereliction of duty, etc., etc. Harrison slept well and ate well. New Scotland Yard was delighted with his work and thought the manipulation of the chronoscope and the way he had worked it very clever. Indeed no praise at that moment was too high for him. He had brought two foul and wanted murderers within shadow of the gallows where they would presently end their vile lives. He had stopped a very large loss of revenue to the country, and exposed one of the most profitable and audacious smuggling schemes of late years ; and they told him to stay and enjoy himself until the magisterial inquiries were all over. And he did.

The tonic air suited him ; his hotel was a good one, the food excellent, with plenty of the best fresh fish and salt-marsh mutton, and game, and snipe ; a good cellar and good service. And, when he went to bed, his room overlooked the wild North Sea, and the cry of the sea called him up in the morning ; and there were his dreams, he had all the pleasant dreams of a successful man. It was an oasis in his Sahara of sordid and often dull work, and he began to read poetry. He happened to pick up a volume of Swinburne, which some visitor had left in the lounge, and *By the North Sea* entranced him. He began to read it aloud and it held him spellbound. From that day he started a little library of select poets, not what the critics considered good but what he felt was good, and his choice showed he had natural good taste. He had hated poetry hitherto because the stupid masters of his school had made him get up selections from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Spenser's *Faërie Queene*, from Cowper, and from the preaching and unpoetic Browning.

The Counsel for the Crown made out a *prima facie* case of wilful murder against Stopes and Field, and they were sent for trial to the assizes, assured of dancing in the air in the course of some weeks. The Inland Revenue

authorities were casting a very wide net : endless arrests were made all over East Norfolk. The prisoners were brought before the benches of magistrates in different parts of the county and remanded : the Inland Revenue authorities wanted to get to the bottom of the whole business, and the Radical and Labour papers protested at the delay ; the authorities took no notice. Some of the arrested gave others away, as is always the case, and so the various strands in the rope were provided.

Harrison had had three weeks' holiday, and gave evidence in the case of the skipper, which was all required of him. Butlers and others gave the damning evidence against " Captain " Currigan. And then Harrison was recalled ; a big jewel robbery in a London Hotel. He paid his bills, packed his small poetical library ; he had bought the Swinburne with *By the North Sea*, Shelley, Marlowe, and a Longfellow for his sea-pieces ; and he returned to London bronzed and hard, keen in brain and good in spirits.

Stopes and Field were hanged ; but both confessed before they died. And they wanted to see " Mike " before they died, but " Mike," the authorities informed them, could not be found. He had run away from the cops when they were arrested, his landlady had informed them. The smugglers could not find out how their organization was discovered, and they decided that of course Stopes and Field " puffed," and the officials encouraged that idea. They, too, learnt that " Mike " had run away from the cops when Stopes and Field were arrested, and this they thought only natural.







