Samuel Boyd Of Catchpole Square Vol.III

By

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Freeditorial

CHAPTER XL.

THE SPECTRE IN THE FLASH-LIGHT.

At ten o'clock on this night, Dr. Pye was employed looking over a number of manuscripts, setting some aside and burning others, keeping a jealous eye upon the fire as he watched them moulder to ashes. Upon the table were a bottle of wine and two glass goblets of ancient manufacture and design. There were quaint stems to these goblets, one representing a serpent, the other a satyr, whose upraised face seemed to be trying to reach the rim. Priceless treasures of the antique. That the wine was precious, and that Dr. Pye so considered it, was evidenced by the disposition of the bottle, which lay in a basket lined with thick blue felt; the glasses were Venetian. These and the wine were in harmony with the taste displayed in the gathering together the costly and unique collection of articles which adorned the room. One might have expected to see such an apartment in an old palace, for the beautifying of which centuries of treasure had been collected through many generations, but scarcely in a street in Islington where wealth was not abundant, and where the residents, for the most part, were toilers of the humblest kind. Secluded as was the room--its door closed, its one window so closely shuttered that not a chink of light could be discerned from without--the hum of crowded life from the outer street penetrated it and droned like an exhausted bee. Dr. Pye listened, smiled contemptuously, and gazed around upon the precious bronzes and ivories, the rare bric-à-brac, the exquisite enamels, the books with jewelled bindings, which were so arranged that their beauties were seen at a glance. Not one of these examples was of the new school of art; all belonged to times when form and colour were either better understood and valued than now, or received from the artist that whole-souled and loving labour which in this age of hurry-scurry no artist dreams of bestowing upon his work--and thus misses perfection and immortality. In the world of art to-day it is the merchant-author who displays his wares and touts for patronage.

His task completed, Dr. Pye put into a drawer the papers he had set aside, and with extreme care poured out a glass of wine and held it up to the light. His anticipated enjoyment of the precious draught was heightened by the deep ruby colour which shone through the delicate glass, and he gazed long at it, and at its almost living reflection in a jewel on his white hand. He drank it slowly, and drank a second and a third in the same leisurely manner. Then he rose and went to the window, in the closed shutter of which was a small revolving panel. On a bracket within reach of his right hand was the box containing the flashlight, of which he had spoken in his evidence at the Coroner's Court,

and within reach of his left was a tap which controlled the gas. This tap he turned, and the room was in darkness. Then he turned the revolving panel, and through the exposed circle of glass looked out upon the night. All was dark in Catchpole Square. Its silence, its gloom, the utter absence of movement, were in keeping with the tragedy which had made its name a household word.

Lifting the box from the bracket he opened it, and, pressing a spring which ignited the magnesium wire, threw a flashlight on the house of Samuel Boyd. For one brief moment the walls and windows were illuminated, as though lightning had struck them. Then all was darkness again.

With thoughtful brows Dr. Pye closed the revolving panel and turned up the gas. Placing the box on the table, he took from it a film which he laid flat on a square of sensitised paper, and poured a liquid over it. Holding it up to the light a photograph of the walls and windows of the house he had illuminated appeared. No living face or form was visible in the picture, nothing but lifeless stone and wood and glass.

As he was replacing the box on the bracket, the sound of footsteps on the stairs caused him to look towards the door, which presently opened and admitted Dr. Vinsen.

"According to my promise, my friend," said the visitor; "always faithful, always a man of my word." His eyes fell upon the bottle of wine, and without invitation he filled a glass, and was about to drink when he paused, as if a sudden suspicion had crossed his mind. Dr. Pye smiled, and refilling his own glass, drank, his example being followed by Dr. Vinsen.

"A rare wine," he said, smacking his lips, "but too seductive----altogether too seductive. Am I mistaken in supposing that you have been testing the flashlight?"

"You are not mistaken," said Dr. Pye.

"Without result, of course?"

"Without result."

Dr. Vinsen stepped to the shuttered window, and Dr. Pye, lowering the gas almost to the vanishing point, turned the revolving panel, and peered through the exposed glass at the windows of the house opposite.

"Look!" he whispered, clutching his visitor's arm. "What do you see?"

"Nothing but a mass of shadows," replied Dr. Vinsen.

"Look again--closer, closer!"

"I see nothing," said Dr. Vinsen, testily. "What do you see?"

Dr. Pye did not answer, but bringing forward the small box, opened it, and sent a flashlight straight into the opposite window.

"God in heaven!" he cried, falling back affrighted.

In that brief moment of light he had seen at the window the face and form of Samuel Boyd!

CHAPTER XLI.

HOW A MURDERER MIGHT HAVE BEEN DISCOVERED.

Dr. Vinsen vainly seeking in the darkness for the cause of Dr. Pye's alarm, could not utter a word. In his listening attitude, with the white fear depicted on his countenance, he presented a terror-struck appearance, and seemed to be waiting for advancing footsteps, or for the sound of voices in the street without, demanding admittance. But the silence was not broken.

"Can't you speak?" he then said in a whisper to his companion. "What is it? Is there anybody in the Square? Turn up the light."

His hand was groping for the tap that controlled the gas when Dr. Pye seized his arm and held him back. Dr. Vinsen winced and impatiently endeavoured to free himself, but the fingers that had fastened themselves upon his muscles were more like rods of steel than flesh and bone.

"Let go!" he muttered. "You are crushing my arm."

"Do not stir," replied Dr. Pye, releasing him. Then he masked the shutter, and brought light into the room.

It was characteristic of this man that, short as had been the interval between his startled exclamation and the lighting up of the apartment, he had regained his self-control, and that on his features no trace of his recent agitation was visible. There are moments of unexpected surprise when the fixed habits of a carefully trained life slip their hold, and the mind becomes as unquestioningly receptive as that of a child. Such a moment had come to Dr. Pye when he beheld the vision of the man the mystery of whose death was on every tongue. It held him only for the moment; before the passing of another his dominant will had reasserted itself, and his face resumed his impenetrable calm.

"Now, what is it?" again demanded Dr. Vinsen. His eyes travelled round the room, and colour came into his cheeks when he saw they were alone.

"You did not see it?" replied Dr. Pye.

"See what?"

"The figure of Samuel Boyd standing at his window?"

Dr. Vinsen stared incredulously at his host, and then a long deep breath of relief escaped him. "Only that!" he exclaimed. "I thought it was something worse."

Dr. Pye repeated his question. "You did not see it?"

"I saw nothing. The dead do not rise from their graves. Dead once, dead for ever. But you can convince me by producing ocular proof. Your ingenious device takes an instantaneous picture of any object upon which it flashes its light. Produce me the picture of the dead and buried Samuel Boyd."

"I cannot. The last film has been used, and I omitted to put in others."

"Very unfortunate," said Dr. Vinsen, dryly. "Suppose you supply the omission, and try again."

Dr. Pye acted upon the suggestion. He placed an automatic arrangement of films in the little machine, again turned down the gas, again opened the circular lid in the shutter, again threw the flash light upon the house of Samuel Boyd. The blank walls and windows confronted them, and no sign of life, physical or spiritual, was visible; and when the film was removed and developed it showed no face of man or spirit.

"I did not expect a result," said Dr. Pye; "there was no form at the window."

"You saw none on the first occasion."

"As clearly as I behold you now I saw the shadow, spirit, or reflection of Samuel Boyd. I was not under the spell of a delusion; my senses did not deceive me. My pulse beats steadily; there is no fever in my blood. I saw it."

"And I refuse to believe it. My friend, you do nothing without design, and if I doubt your protestation I but follow the excellent example you set me. I have no faith in diablerie, nor am I a child to be influenced by a goblin tale. Who thinks me so, mistakes my character--mis-takes my cha-rac-ter; and that might lead to more serious mistakes."

There was no indication that Dr. Pye paid heed to these words, or that they produced any impression upon him; he seemed to be absorbed in a train of thought which he was endeavouring to follow to a logical end.

"I recall a singular case," he said, musingly, "of a man who was brutally murdered in his own apartments while he was engaged in making experiments in photography. It

occurred in a foreign country, and the police, investigating the case, had their suspicions directed to a person who had had dealings with the murdered man, and who had been seen entering his apartments within an hour or two of the murder. They followed up the clue, and arrested the suspected man, who energetically proclaimed his innocence. The evidence at the trial was entirely circumstantial, but it was considered conclusive, and the man went to the scaffold, protesting his innocence with his dying breath. Some years afterwards business of a private nature brought me into contact with a man who had but a short time to live, and on his deathbed he confessed to me that he was the murderer. In proof of this he had, by a strange fatuity, carried about with him during all these years a certain piece of evidence which, had it been presented to a jury, would have been fatal to him. The circumstances were these: On the day of the murder he had entered the apartment of his victim at the moment that a prepared plate had been placed in the camera. A quarrel took place between them, which culminated in the murderer suddenly plunging a knife into the heart of the student photographer. Death was instantaneous, and as he fell to the ground his eyes were fixed upon the face of his murderer. There he lay upon the ground, dead, his eyes wide open. The murderer was himself a photographer, and a whimsical fancy seized him to take a picture of those staring eyes, in which a wild horror dwelt. He acted upon it. Focussing the dead face he exposed the plate, and, the picture taken, stole away from the house with the negative in his possession. He subsequently developed the picture and enlarged it, and there, under the lens of a powerful microscope, was the portrait of the murderer upon the pupils of the dead man's eyes. It had been his last living vision, which had fixed itself upon the retina. I have the picture by me now, and since that day have been much interested in the photographic art, in which I have made some curious experiments. Later researches have proved that we can photograph what is invisible to the eye, what is even concealed in a box. The photographs of shadows and the spirits of the dead can be taken. The image of Samuel Boyd being in my mind, found its reflection in a window in a moment of light. Why should we not be able to photograph a vision created by the imagination?"

"Or," said Dr. Vinsen, with a touch of sarcasm, "the thoughts of men."

"Or," said Dr. Pye, with an assenting nod, "the thoughts of men. It will be done; and when it is accomplished it will open the road to greater discoveries."

"Ah," said Dr. Vinsen, shrugging his shoulders, "great discoveries--your great discoveries, ending in visions."

"To you, visions; to me, reality. The age of miracles is not yet past. It is my intention to get out of this country, and return to Italy, where there is light, where the sun shines. This atmosphere, these leaden skies, these black nights, are fatal. I must release myself. My purpose is fixed."

"And mine."

Both spoke in a tone of decision, and both had a motive-spring which had yet to be revealed.

"Let us come back to earth," said Dr. Vinsen, "and above all, let us be practical. There are accounts between us which must be settled--pray do not forget that."

"I will not."

"You were at the inquest to-day," said Dr. Vinsen, rather uneasily, for there was a menace in Dr. Pye's tone. "The papers report you fully. Your warning to the jury not to be led away by a resemblance that might be accidental was a masterstroke. It produced a good effect, but will it assist Mr. Reginald Boyd? We shall see--we shall see. Justice is slow. Were you to formulate a code you would make it swifter, surer--eh, my friend?"

"I would make it swift as sudden death to all who stood in my path," said Dr. Pye, and now there was a cold glitter in his eyes as he looked at his visitor.

"No doubt, no doubt, and no feeling of mercy would restrain you; but we cannot break through the meshes. Sentinels stand at every corner, and slow as justice is in these mean streets, of which you have so poor an opinion, its eyes are never closed. It is fortunate for some that it can occasionally be hoodwinked by a master mind, to which" (here he bent his head, half in mockery, half in sincerity) "I pay tribute. That poor woman, Mrs. Abel Death, has had no news of her husband--singular, is it not? Her strange little child Gracie, I regret to say, views me with disfavour. It is some compensation that her mother regards us as her benefactors; and in some respects we deserve to be so regarded. The expenditure of money in that quarter has not been entirely thrown away--not en-tire-ly thrown a-way. It has assisted me to direct public opinion, and to keep watch upon my friend Remington, whom I would like to plunge to the bottom of the Red Sea, to rot with the bones of the Egyptians."

That a man so mild in voice and so bland in manner should break into sudden malignity was surprising.

"He is better where he is," said Dr. Pye; "his living presence is necessary. People shoot wild when there is no target to aim at, and a chance shot might hit the mark."

"Always profound," said Dr. Vinsen, admiringly, "always, always profound. A target--yes, a target. It is a thousand pities, my dear friend, that you are not in all things more

practical and less imaginative. Take, for instance, these gewgaws by which you are surrounded, these flasks and vases, these jewelled trifles, this curiously wrought work from some Eastern country--of what avail are they for the true pleasures of life?" Dr. Pye was silent. "You may say, perhaps, they feed the artistic sense. As I believe only in what I see, so do I believe only in what I feel. Better to feed the material senses--far more rational. If what you have presented to my view in your character is genuine, and not the outcome of a deliberate intention to deceive--in-ten-tion to de-ceive--it is composed of singularly contradictory qualities. In a certain sense, unique, for who would expect to find Alnaschar dreams floating among the fleshpots of Egypt? Your taste in wine is not to be excelled--I approve of it; it is a passion you carry to an excess which I consider as ridiculous as it is unwise--still, in the main, I approve of it. Good wine nourishes the tissues, helps to prolong life. Hippocrates and many long-headed ancients have something to say on this head. But these lifeless memorials of a dead past, in which there is no vitality, which are eternally the same, dumb and expressionless----My dear friend, I fear you are not listening."

"My thoughts are elsewhere," said Dr. Pye, rising and approaching the window. Dr. Vinsen followed him, with suspicion and discontent on his face. For the fourth time on this night the room was plunged in darkness; for the fourth time the circular lid of the shutter was drawn aside.

"There, there!" whispered Dr. Pye. "What do you see?"

Dr. Vinsen peered into the night. "I see nothing."

"Stand back."

Swift as thought he threw the flash-light upon the windows of Samuel Boyd's house. Then he masked the shutter and turned on the gas. Accompanied by Dr. Vinsen, who jealously watched his every movement, he stepped to the table, withdrew the film from the little machine, and developed it. And there before them came gradually into view the pictured presentment of the face and form of Samuel Boyd, standing at the window of his house in Catchpole Square.

Dr. Vinsen's face was pallid, his eyes dilated, his teeth chattered. Dr. Pye's face was thoughtful, introspective.

"Do you believe now?" he asked in an undertone.

Dr. Vinsen passed his hand confusedly across his brows.

"We had certain plans," continued Dr. Pye; "are they to be carried out to-night?"

"Not to-night; not to-night," replied Dr. Vinsen, turning towards the door.

The next moment Dr. Pye was alone.

CHAPTER XLII.

A FAMILY COUNCIL.

On the following morning Aunt and Uncle Rob and Florence and Reginald sat at the breakfast table, waiting for Dick, who had not been home all night. Although they had had no word from him since he left them on the previous evening, they knew that he would join them at the earliest possible moment. It had been an anxious night with them, and they had had but little sleep. There were dark rims round Aunt Rob's eyes, and signs of unrest were on Uncle Rob's countenance. Singularly enough, the invalid of the party, Reginald, had gathered strength; his voice was firmer, his step more confident, and there was an expression on his face which denoted that he had prepared himself to meet the worst that fortune had in store for him.

"Florence and I have been considering the straight and honest course to pursue," he said, "and we have decided. She wished me at first to be guided by your advice; but she is beginning to find out that she has married a wilful man."

She gave him a tender smile, and put her hand in his.

"It is not that I don't value your advice; but what would be the use of asking for it if I hadn't made up my mind to take it?"

"No use, my dear," said Aunt Rob. "What have you decided to do?"

"To offer a reward for the discovery of the murderer of my father."

Aunt Rob nodded her approval, and would have expressed it had she not observed the grave look on her husband's face. So she held her tongue, and waited for him to speak.

"It is not a plan we generally approve of," he remarked, after a pause, "and it seldom meets with success."

"Has it ever?" asked Reginald.

"Yes. A fifty to one chance."

"If it were a thousand to one chance it would be wrong to throw it away. Much of the evidence that has been given can be so construed as to cast suspicion upon me. How shall I protect myself except by showing the world that I court the most searching

inquiry? Lady Wharton's story is true, and some villain, personating my father, succeeded in imposing upon and robbing her. The offer of a substantial reward will not only quicken the efforts of the police, but will set a hundred people on the hunt. God forbid that I should do anyone an injustice. I cannot conceive that Abel Death is the murderer, and yet in the eyes of the public it lies between him and me. It would be the height of folly to ignore that fact. Here in this paper"--he took up a newspaper, glanced at it, and flung it indignantly aside--"is a veiled allusion to Abel Death and me as accomplices. No names are mentioned, but the inference can hardly be missed. On my way home from the funeral on Tuesday, and yesterday from the Coroner's Court, I saw some of the newspaper bills with their cruel headlines accusing me! I saw the silent accusation in the eyes of the people as I passed. Is it in nature that I should sit idly down under such imputations? They are enough to drive a man mad, and I shall go mad if I do not do something quickly to repel them. The wretch who went down to Bournemouth must have purchased a railway ticket; the clerk who sold it him may have seen his face; passengers travelling the same way must have seen him: he must have been seen by other persons in Bournemouth; he may have taken a carriage there to drive to the Gables; if he went on foot he may have asked his way to the house; when he left Lady Wharton he could scarcely have walked about the town till the trains started in the morning; he must have slept somewhere; a waiter or a chambermaid may have noticed him; there may have been something in his speech or manner to attract attention, however slight. There are a thousand things from which a clue may be obtained and which may be brought to the recollection by the hope of earning money. The offer of a reward will stir people's memories, will cause them to come forward with scraps of information which otherwise would be thought of no importance. Uncle Rob, Aunt Rob--I dare not, and will not, call you father and mother till I am cleared of these vile suspicions--do you not see that I must do this for dear Florence's sake, that it is my duty to make her less ashamed of the name I gave her?"

The sobs in his throat prevented him from continuing. Trembling in every limb, shaking with passion and excitement, he turned appealingly to his wife.

She clasped him in her loving arms, crying, "I am not ashamed of it; I am proud of it, and of you, my dear, dear husband! If there is a stain upon our name you shall wipe it away; you shall make it bright and clean and pure, and men and women shall say, 'The son has atoned for his father's faults, and stands before the world an honourable gentleman who has met misfortune bravely, and silenced the slanderers who dared to breathe a word against him.' Oh, my dear, my dear! I never loved you as I love you now, I never honoured you as I honour you now. Mother, father, stand by us--comfort him, strengthen him!"

She glowed with heavenly pity, with indignant pride, with devoted love. The type of a true, brave, honest English girl, she stood embracing the man whose heart, whose life, were linked with hers, ready to defend him, to suffer for him, to fling back the words of scorn flung at him--if need were, to die for him. It is beneath the stress of a heavy stroke of misfortune that men and women such as she show their noblest qualities.

A great peace stole into Reginald's heart; the sobs in his throat died away.

"I will try to prove myself worthy of you," he said huskily. "I pray to God that I may live to prove it."

Aunt Rob's heart throbbed with exultation.

"Our daughter, father, that I nursed at my breast," she murmured to her husband. "God love and preserve her!"

"Amen!" he answered.

So in that humble home those sweet flowers bloomed in the midst of the darkness, and through the lowering clouds one bright star shone--the star of love and hope and mutual faith.

When the excitement had subsided, and they were all seated again, Uncle Rob said,

"Let it be as you have decided, Reginald, my lad. As an inspector of police I might argue with you; as a man and a father I agree with you. And in the nick of time, here comes Dick."

To Dick, with his cheerful face and voice, that bore no traces of his night's anxious vigil, all was explained. He shook hands with Reginald, and said,

"A good move. I'll go a step farther. Let there be two bills put out and posted all over England, one offering a reward for the discovery of the murderer, the other for giving such information of Abel Death as will lead to his being found. You can tell us, perhaps, Uncle Rob--would that be against the law?"

"I don't think the law can touch it," he replied. "It might not be approved of in some quarters, but the law don't apply, so far as I know anything of it."

"If the law," said Aunt Rob, with fine disdain, "can prevent a son from offering a reward for the discovery of his father's murderer the less we have of it the better. Why, instead

of one man looking for the monster, there 'll be a hundred! Dick, you must see to the printing of the bills, and they should be got out at once."

"I will attend to everything; but before we go into details I've something to tell you. I should have been here earlier if I hadn't met little Gracie Death. What a brick that mite is! Just listen to what she discovered yesterday, Reginald--that there's a way of getting into your father's house without getting through the front or the back door. You may well look startled; it nearly took my breath away. Do you remember that pitiful hoarse voice of hers, uncle, on the night of the fog, when she said, 'You will find father, won't you, sir?'" Uncle Rob nodded. "Well, as nobody has been able to find him, she has made up her mind to find him herself, heaven knows how, but somehow. She thinks of nothing else, she dreams of nothing else, and she's got it into that clever little head of hers that he's to be found in Catchpole Square, the very place, one would imagine, that he'd be likely to avoid. If faith can move mountains, as they say it can, the thing is as good as done. There is such magnetism in her little body that when she speaks she almost makes you believe what she believes. Now, I'm not going to tell you how she got into the house while Uncle Rob is here. As inspector of police he would consider it his duty to make use of the information."

"I certainly should," said Uncle Rob. "I'd best make myself scarce."

"Don't go yet, uncle. I want you to hear something you ought to know. Gracie, talking to me this morning, tells me of a man she saw Dr. Vinsen speaking to last night. She hates that doctor--so do I; and it's because she hates him that she creeps behind them without their seeing her, and hears Dr. Vinsen say, 'You act up to your instructions, and I'll keep my promise.' That's all she does hear, because the doctor, turning his head over his shoulder, sends her scuttling away; but she's certain he doesn't suspect that he'd been followed and overheard. There isn't much in that, you'll say; but listen to what follows. Gracie had just finished telling me this when a man passes us. 'There,' she says, 'that's the man.' I catch sight of his face, and who do you think it was?"

"Out with it, Dick," said Uncle Rob.

"It was the juryman that's been putting all those questions at the inquest about our private affairs, and that's been doing his best to throw suspicion upon Reginald and me and all of us. Queer start, isn't it?"

CHAPTER XLIII.

AUNT ROB PLAYS THE PART OF FAIRY GODMOTHER.

"There's villainy at the bottom of it," cried Aunt Rob. "Dick, you're our guardian angel, and that poor little girl, that I'd like to hug, is another. I knew that wretch on the jury was against us from the first. There was a sly, wicked look in his eyes every time he turned towards us, and when he began to speak I felt as if some one was cutting a cork; he set all my teeth on edge. Ought such a monster to be allowed to sit on a jury?"

"Who's to prevent it?" said Uncle Rob, thoughtfully. "He's there, and has to be reckoned with, though I doubt whether we can do any good. Likes and dislikes, when there's nothing tangible to back them up, count for nothing; and feelings count for nothing. When people shiver and grate their teeth at the squeaking of a cork other people who don't mind it only laugh at them."

"There's nothing to laugh at here, father," said Aunt Rob, impatiently.

"I know that as well as you do, mother; I don't think any of us are in a laughing humour. I'm trying to reason the matter out, and to do that fairly you must take care not to let prejudice cloud your judgment. When little Gracie Death overhears Dr. Vinsen say, 'You act up to your instructions, and I'll keep my promise,' what proof have we that it has anything to do with the juryman's duties on the inquest?"

"No proof at all," said Dick, "but doesn't it look like it?"

"Such an inference may be drawn, but an inference won't help us. It's no good mincing matters. Dr. Vinsen is on the right side of the hedge, and we are on the wrong, and that makes all the difference; he has the advantage of us. Reginald has put it clearly, and we must be prepared. Every hour a fresh complication crops up, and there's no telling what the next will bring forth. You see a man with an open newspaper in his hand; peep over his shoulder to find out what he's reading. It's the Catchpole Square Mystery, and he's running his eyes eagerly down the columns to see if anybody's caught, if anybody's charged. It scares me to think of it."

"What do you mean, father?" asked Aunt Rob.

"Have you ever seen a bull-baiting without the bull?" said Uncle Rob, gravely. "The public's waiting for the bull, and they won't rest satisfied till he's in the ring. That's

where the danger is. They don't care a straw whether it's the right bull or the wrong bull; they want something to bait."

Reginald compressed his lips; he understood the drift of Uncle Rob's remarks.

"Do you mean to say that they don't want to see fair play?" said Aunt Rob.

"I don't mean that. What I'm driving at is that Dick's prejudice against Dr. Vinsen, whatever it may be worth, won't help us."

"It will," said Dick, in a positive tone, "and I'm going to follow it up. Just answer me this. Do you consider that the inquest is being properly carried on? Do you consider it fair that private family affairs should be dragged before the public in the way they have been?"

"I don't consider it fair."

"Well, then, who is chiefly responsible for it? Who but the juryman that little Gracie catches conspiring with Dr. Vinsen?"

"Conspiring!"

"That's the word, conspiring, and I don't care who hears me. The jury on the inquest are sworn, like any other jury, and if it can be proved that, before the inquiry is opened, before any evidence is taken, there is on the part of one of them an arrangement with an outside party to return a certain verdict, that I should imagine is a conspiracy, and the law can be made to touch them." Uncle Rob shook his head doubtfully. "Well, anyway, there's a free press, and the making of such a conspiracy public would influence public opinion, and there would be no baiting of the wrong bull, even though he was in the ring. 'Hold hard a bit,' the public would cry, 'let us see fair play!'"

"Not badly put, Dick," said Uncle Rob, and Florence pressed the young man's hand.

"As things stand," he went on with enthusiasm, "it looks very much like a match between me and Dr. Vinsen--or, at all events, that's the way I view it, and if he were standing before me this present moment I'd fling my glove in his face, and be glad if it hurt him. How does that juryman fellow become so familiar with our private affairs? It's through him you're compelled to tell all about Florence's marriage. It's through him that it's been drummed into the public ear that Reginald is the only man who benefits by his father's death. Bull-baiting is nothing to the way some of us have been treated in court; and the prime mover of it all is Dr. Vinsen, who stands behind and pulls the strings."

"But what has Dr. Vinsen to gain by it?" asked Uncle Rob, bewildered, and yet half convinced by Dick's intense earnestness.

"That's to be found out, and I'm going to, as little Gracie says. If he has given me something to ponder over I've given him something that'll set his wits at work, unless I'm very much mistaken; and I haven't half done with him, nor a quarter. Don't ask me what my plans are; it would be the spoiling of them if I let you into the secret--and I mustn't forget that an inspector of police is in the room, who would do his duty though it should break the hearts of those who are dearest to him." These words were spoken with exceeding tenderness, and caused more than one heart in the room to throb. "If cunning is to be met with cunning, watching with watching, spying with spying, trickery with trickery, Dr. Vinsen will find that I am ready for him. Look here. What makes him start up all at once and go to Mrs. Death, and on the very first night he sees her give her a couple of sovereigns? Benevolence? Charity? That for his benevolence and charity!" Dick snapped his fingers contemptuously. "What makes him tell Mrs. Death a parcel of lies to poison her ears against me? What makes him tell me at your father's funeral, Reginald, that his heart is large, that it bleeds for all, and that it would be better for some of us if we were in our graves? What do I care for his bleeding heart, the infernal hypocrite? I'd make it bleed if I had my will of him, with his fringe of hair round his shining bald head! As for Dr. Pye, that mysterious gentleman keeps himself in the background till he sends a letter to the Coroner, saying he has evidence of great importance to give. We heard what that evidence was, and we've a lot to thank him for, haven't we? Did you notice him as he looked round the court till he stopped at Reginald? Accident? No! Premeditation!" They started. "I repeat--premeditation. I don't know for what reason, but I will know. I don't know what tie there is between Dr. Pye and Dr. Vinsen, but I will know. There's black treachery somewhere, and I'll ferret it out. Uncle, Aunt, Florence, Reginald, don't think I'm mad. I give you my word I am in my sober senses when I say that behind the mystery of this dreadful murder that has brought so much sorrow into this happy home there is another mystery which I'm going to solve if I die for it! I'll leave no stone unturned--for your dear sakes!"

His earnestness, his sincerity, the fervour of his voice, the loving glances he cast upon them, sank into their hearts--but it was upon Florence's face that his gaze lingered, and he trembled when, murmuring, "Dear Dick, you fill us with hope!" she gave him a sisterly kiss.

"Dick," said Aunt Rob, tearfully, "there was a time when I thought you had no stability, and when I said as much to Uncle Rob. I take it back, my lad, I take it back!"

"Don't be too hasty, aunt," he said, with a light attempt at gaiety. "Wait and see if anything comes of it. Reginald, I've something more to say. There's no mistake, is there, about your having got to your lodgings last Friday night week before twelve o'clock?"

"I am certain it must have been before that hour," replied Reginald. "As I told them at the inquest yesterday, I cannot entirely depend upon my memory. It frequently happens that when there's an important subject in one's mind--as there was that night in mine--a small incident which has no relation to it impresses itself upon the memory. That was the case with me. I can distinctly recall taking out my watch when I was in my bedroom, winding it up, looking at the time, and putting it back into my waistcoat pocket."

"Did any person see you enter the house? Think hard, Reginald."

"No person, in my remembrance."

"When you put the latchkey in the door the policeman might have been passing?"

"He might have been. I did not see him."

"No one saw you go upstairs?"

"Not that I know of. The house is always very quiet at that hour."

"I paid your landlady a visit last night," said Dick, "and she does not know what time you came home; neither does the servant, who doesn't seem blessed with a memory at all. It is most unfortunate that we cannot get a witness who could testify to the hour of your return to your lodgings. It would effectually dispose of Dr. Pye's evidence, so far as you are concerned, for he says he threw his flashlight at three in the morning. By Jove!" Dick exclaimed, looking at the clock on the mantelpiece, "it's ten o'clock, and the Coroner's Court opens at eleven. I sha'n't be there till late, unless there's a warrant out against me"--Dick laughed lightly, as though a warrant were the least thing they had to fear. "There's the printing to see to; I don't intend to leave the printing office till the reward bills are out. Now let's settle how they're to be drawn up; we've got just half-an-hour. Aunt Rob, I wish you'd do a kind action for once in your life."

"What is it, Dick?"

"Little Gracie is just round the corner, waiting for me; you won't see the tip of her nose unless you turn the street, for I told her to keep out of sight. She's my shadow, you know, and I haven't the heart to order her not to follow me about. What the child sees in me to haunt me as she does is more than I can understand."

"What we all see in you," said Aunt Rob, tenderly.

"Oh, of course. Well, it's my opinion little Gracie came away from home this morning without any breakfast----"

Aunt Rob broke in upon him. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself for letting a hungry child stand alone in the cold streets all this time." Out she ran to pounce upon Gracie.

"Do you mean to tell me," said Dick, gazing after her, "that the Lord will allow any harm to come to a woman like that, or trouble that can't be cleared away to come to anyone she loves? No, no; the world wouldn't be worth living in if that were so. Where she is, sunshine is, and love, and charity, and hope--and justice. God bless Aunt Rob!"

And "God bless Aunt Rob!" they all said, with something shining in their eyes.

Back she came, holding Gracie by the arm. They all looked kindly at the child.

"Any trouble to get her here, aunt?" asked Dick, cheerily.

"Not a bit."

"It's all right, you know, Gracie," he said.

"Yes, Dick, I know," she answered, solemnly.

There was something so patient and uncomplaining, so piteous and brave, in the child that hearts less susceptible than theirs could not have failed to be touched. Florence stooped and kissed her, and there was a little trembling of her bloodless lips; it was the only sign of emotion she displayed, and it was gone in a moment. The dry, hoarse cough had not left her, and she was not successful in keeping it back. Every time it sounded through the room Aunt Rob shivered.

"You men had best go into the next room and settle your business," she said; "you haven't too much time to spare, and we don't want you meddling with women's affairs." Away they went, meekly. "Gracie, you sit here, and don't be shy with us, my dear, we're only homely people, the same as yourself. Florence, put another spoonful of tea in the pot, and there's the kettle boiling, just in the nick of time. Now, my dear, you make a good breakfast--I want you to drink your tea as hot as you can, it will ease your cough--it's Dick's cup you're drinking out of, you won't mind that, I know--he's told us such a lot about you, and everything that's good--cut some more bread and butter, Florence--are

you fond of jam, Gracie?--but what a question!--when I was a little girl I could eat a pot, only they wouldn't give me so much at a time--this is Dick's favourite jam, raspberry----" And all the time the good woman chattered she was putting food before Gracie, and coaxing her to eat, shaking her head at the child's attempts not to cough violently, and shaking her head more when she put her hand on the bosom of the poor little frock, and discovered how thinly she was clad. And all the time Gracie sat quiet at the table and ate, not greedily but gratefully, her eyes fixed now on Aunt Rob, and now on Florence, with the sweet thought in her mind, "Dick's told 'em a lot about me, and everything that's good!"

Breakfast over, they took Gracie upstairs, Aunt Rob saying, "Dick 'll be here when we come down, my dear "; and in the bedroom above they took off her frock and slipped a warm undervest over the bony chest, and another over that, and found a pair of thick stockings that had once been worn by a child, and a child's flannel petticoat, and other things to match--and there stood Gracie, clothed more comfortably and warmly than ever she had been from her birth. And where did Aunt Rob find these garments so suitable and fitting for Gracie? They had been laid aside in a drawer, with many others, and had once clothed her own darling when she was no bigger than the poor little waif to whom they had been so ungrudgingly presented. To listen to the mother's wistful prattle, to witness the tender handling of this and that garment, to see the fond way she put them to her cheeks and kissed them, to note the loving looks she cast upon them as memory brought back the day and hour when Florence first wore them--true motherhood was never more beautifully expressed. And Gracie submitted without uttering a word--no sign of emotion on her sallow face, no sighs of delight, no tears. But when all was done and Aunt Rob sat down to rest, Gracie knelt before her and laid her head in her lap. Florence sat down too, and her hand rested lightly on the child's shoulder. Somehow or other these sweet offices of sweetest humanity seemed to soften the trouble that hung over their heads. Aunt Rob and Florence thought, "God will protect dear Reginald. He will hold His shield before us. Upon His mercy we will rely. He will see justice done, and we shall all be happy once more." While in Gracie's mind was the thought, "I shall find father, I shall find father, and mother won't be angry with me much longer." For quite two or three minutes there was silence in the room, and when Gracie raised her tearless eyes to Aunt Rob's face the good woman stroked the thin cheek and said,

"There, that's done, and now we'll go down to Dick. He'll be wondering what has become of us."

It was then that Gracie spoke.

"Don't you think mother ain't good to us," she said. "There never was a better mother than she's been--and there's such a lot of us," she added, wistfully. "I'd rather starve than have you think mother ain't good to us!"

"Bless your loving heart, my dear," Aunt Rob returned, kissing her. "I'm sure she must be the best mother in all the world to have a loving daughter like you."

"Oh, me!" said Gracie. "I ain't much good. But, mother!--she worries over my cough so that sometimes I wish I was dead, so that she couldn't hear it, and she sets up all night mending our clothes. I've caught her at it over and over agin. She'd starve herself for us she would. You'd believe me if you knew her."

"I believe you now, my dear. We are all very, very sorry for her!"

"You've been ever so good to me, and so's mother, but she can't do what she can't, can she?"

"No one can, Gracie."

"She'll be glad when she sees me with these things on. There's nobody like her, nobody. I wish I could pick up a pursefull of money to give her; but it'll be all right, you know, when we find father."

"The sooner he's found the better it will be for a good many people," said Aunt Rob, with a pitying glance at the loyal child, and yet with a kind of anger in her heart. Tenderly disposed as she was towards Gracie, deep as was her compassion for her miserable state and her admiration for the noble qualities she displayed, Aunt Rob believed Abel Death to be the cause of all this trouble, believed that he had murdered Samuel Boyd, and had basely deserted his family with the proceeds of his crime.

Meanwhile the men of the family had been having a discussion below which had led to the withdrawal of Uncle Rob from the council. The first point discussed was the amount of the rewards to be offered. Reginald wished it to be large, and, supported by Dick, suggested £500 for the discovery and conviction of the murderer, and £200 for the discovery of Abel Death. Uncle Rob opposed this, and contended that much smaller sums would be sufficient, bringing forward instances where the offer of disproportionate rewards had been the cause of innocent persons being accused. His views not being accepted, he had reluctantly given way. Then they came to the manner in which the bills were to be worded, and Dick had gone to his clothes trunk and had fished therefrom a miscellaneous collection of literature, which he placed before them.

"I once tried my hand at writing a sensation novel," he said, "and I got together a lot of stuff to assist me. I made a muddle of the story, and when I was in the middle of it I gave it up. Do you remember this case, uncle?"

He held up a poster offering a reward of £100 for the discovery of a murderer. At the top of the bill was the Royal Coat-of-Arms, beneath it, in large type, the word MURDER, and beneath that "£100 Reward."

"I remember it well," said Uncle Rob. "That was the Great Porter Square Mystery. It caused great excitement at the time, and the papers were full of it. A long time elapsed before the truth came out."

"And then it wasn't due to Scotland Yard," said Dick; "they made rather a mess of it there. There is one curious point of resemblance between that case and ours."

"I wouldn't speak of that now," said Uncle Rob, with an uneasy glance at Reginald.

"Why not? Reginald is prepared for anything that may happen."

"Quite prepared," said Reginald. "Go on, Dick."

"You were abroad when all England was ringing with it, and that, I expect, is the reason that it didn't reach your ears. I saw in one paper yesterday a comparison between the cases. The curious point of resemblance is that the son of the murdered man was arrested by the police as the murderer----"

"They did not know at the time that he was the son," interrupted Uncle Rob, hurriedly.

"That didn't justify them. The beauty of it is that after going through no end of trouble and persecution he was proved to be innocent."

"I see," said Reginald, composedly.

"What do you want the bill for?" asked Uncle Rob.

"As a literary guide. We will word our bill exactly like it."

"But it is an official bill."

"Couldn't have a better pattern."

"Can't you word it some other way, Dick?"

"No, uncle," replied Dick, almost defiantly. "This is the model I intend to use."

Uncle Rob rose. "God forbid that I should do anything to prevent the truth being brought to light----"

"Why, uncle!----"

"But the position I hold," continued Uncle Rob, firmly, "will not allow me to sanction by my co-operation the use and form of official documents. Besides, if it got to be known it would do more harm than good. My dear lads, I'll wait outside till you've done. I doubt my own judgment in this matter; my heart and my head are at odds."

So saying, he left them. He was not the only one whose heart and head were in conflict during this crisis; Dick alone could be depended upon to pursue a certain course with calm, unshaken mind, and now, when he and Reginald were together, he met with no opposition. The preliminaries, therefore, were soon arranged, and they returned to the breakfast room at the moment that Aunt Rob and Florence and Gracie entered.

"Why, Gracie," exclaimed Dick, his face flushing with pleasure at the improvement in her attire, "you look like a princess."

"She did it," said Gracie, pointing to Aunt Rob; "and oh, Dick, I do feel so nice and warm underneath!"

"Never was a fairy godmother like Aunt Rob," said Dick, and was going on when she stopped him abruptly.

"Where's father?"

"Walking up and down outside till you're ready. He didn't agree to something I proposed, and between you and me he ought not to have a hand in what I'm about to do."

"He's in a cruel position. Florence, its half-past ten; we must get ready. You do what you've got to do, Dick, and don't talk so free before Uncle Rob about your plans; it only upsets him."

"All right, aunt." He hesitated a moment, then went up to Florence, who was putting on her hat. "Florence, dear, you must be brave."

"I'll try to be, Dick."

"Keep a stout heart, whatever the verdict may be. It was very dark last night, and I kept my eyes on a star that was trying to break through the clouds. I put a great stake on that star, Florence. I said to myself, 'If it breaks through and I see it shining bright, Florence, after a little while, will be the happiest woman in England.' A great stake, Florence."

"Yes, dear Dick."

"It glimmered and glimmered. A cloud passed over it, another, another, but its light was never quite obscured. Remember that."

"I will."

"And then at last, when there seemed to be no hope for it, the clouds cleared away, and it shone as bright, as bright!--and the stake was won. That is how it's going to be with the trouble that's upon us. You see, Florence, it wasn't only your happiness that was at stake; it was mine as well."

"Yours, Dick!" And now there was a look of pain in her eyes.

"Yes, mine, for if, working with all my heart and soul, I can realise my dearest wish, you will have a long life of happiness with the man you love." He looked brightly around. "Good luck, my dears. Come, Gracie."

CHAPTER XLIV.

IN THE CAUSE OF JUSTICE

"Now Gracie," said Dick, as they wended their way to a small "jobbing" printer with whom he was acquainted; he himself had spent a few weeks in a printing office, and, as a Jack of all trades, could do something in the way of picking up stamps. "Now, Gracie, pay particular attention to what I'm going to say."

"I'd like to have a word first, please," she said.

"Go ahead."

"Who is that young gentleman with the white face that the young lady's so fond of?"

"The young lady's husband, the son of Mr. Samuel Boyd."

"Mr. Reginald. I thought so. He don't look as if he could have done it."

"Done what?"

"You know. The murder."

"He did not do it, Gracie. I suppose you heard Dr. Vinsen say he did."

"He was talking to mother, but he didn't say it outright----"

"Ah, the coward! I hope you don't believe a word that drops from his lips."

"I don't; but mother does. Don't blame her, Dick; she can't help it."

"No, poor thing. I pity her from my heart, torn this way and that as she is. But she's not the only one whose heart is aching over this affair. There's care and sorrow yonder." He pointed over his shoulder in the direction of Aunt Rob's house. "Gracie," he said energetically, "I'd pour out my heart's blood, drop by drop, if by doing so I could clear that trouble away!"

"You're fond of her, Dick."

He glanced furtively at the sallow impassive face raised to his. "She is my cousin, and Aunt Rob has been a mother to me. I've lived with them longer than I can remember. The last words I said to her just now were that I wanted to see her happy with the man she loved. That's what I'm working for, her happiness--that, and justice. Shall we go into partnership, you and I?"

"Yes, Dick, please."

"Your hand on it."

They shook hands, and he resumed his old bright manner.

"There never was a successful partnership without implicit confidence between the partners. Do you understand?"

"They mustn't be suspicious of one another."

"That's it. There must be perfect trust between them. I believe in you, Gracie, and I'd trust you with my life." Gracie's black eyes gleamed. "You're what I call thorough, and you've got the pluck of twenty men. We're sailing, you and I, in the ship Endeavour for the port Safety. There's only one captain in that ship, as there must be in all properly commanded ships when they're sailing through dangerous rocks. Now, who's the captain?"

"You."

"Good. I'm captain, and you're first mate, and no captain could desire a better. Says the captain to the first mate, 'Mate,' says he, 'I hear as how your father's disappeared, and as how they're saying hard things of him. That's what oughtn't to be, and we'll mend it. He's got to be found, your father is, and brought for'ard,' says the captain, 'so that he may knock them hard words down their con-founded throats.' 'That's so,' says the mate--it's you that's speaking now, you know"-- Gracie nodded--"'that's so,' says the mate, 'and that's what I've made up my mind to do, and what I'm going to do. I've had a dream where he's to be found,' says the first mate----"

"More than one, Dick--captain, I mean," said Gracie.

"Right you are, my hearty, and there's many a dream that's come true, and likewise many that haven't. 'But it isn't because you've had a dream,' says the captain, 'that I shouldn't have a shy at the discovery of him, and that's what I've set my mind on, if so be

as you've no objections,' he says. 'Objections!' says the first mate, 'I've no objections'"--Here Dick broke off. "I suppose he hasn't, Gracie?"

"No, Dick, he hasn't. He thinks it more than kind of the captain."

"Love your heart, I knew you wouldn't have. 'And how are you going to set about it?' says the first mate. 'Why,' says the captain, planting his wooden leg firmly on the deck--did I tell you he had a wooden leg?"

"No, you didn't," said Gracie, quite gravely.

"Well, I just remember that he had. 'Why,' says he, planting his wooden leg firmly on the deck, 'seeing as how that good woman, Mrs. Abel Death, and Gracie, and all the other little ones, are more unhappy than words can express because father doesn't come home, and as how it may be to some persons' interests to keep him from coming home, I'm thinking of offering a reward to anybody that can give information as to his whereabouts--in point of fact to find him and restore him to the bosom of his family.' That's what the captain says to the mate--because he wants to act fair and square by him, and not do anything behind his back as might make him doubt that he wasn't acting fair and square--and he asks the mate what he thinks of the idea."

"To find him, captain, not to catch him," said Gracie, slowly, with a strong accent on the two words.

"That is how the captain puts it. To find him, and restore him to the bosom of his family."

Gracie nodded, and pondered before speaking. "If the mate--that's me, Dick--found father, would he have the reward?"

"As a matter of course."

"Who'd pay it to him?"

"It would be paid through the captain."

"Through you?"

"Through me."

"Then there'd be sure to be no cheating, and the mate could give it to mother."

"Could do what he pleased with it," said Dick, dropping his nautical, and coming back to his original, self, "and we're going straight to the printer to get the bill printed."

"How much is the reward, Dick?"

"Two hundred pounds."

"Oh, my!" Gracie caught her breath. "I don't believe father was ever worth as much as that in all his life. That's a big lot of money, ain't it?"

"A tidyish sum. You don't object?"

"You can't do nothing wrong, Dick."

"Then the partnership goes on swimmingly, and you won't mind seeing it on the walls. There will be another bill, offering a larger reward for the conviction of the murderer. All we want to get at is the truth, so that the innocent may be cleared and the guilty punished. I'm of the opinion it will surprise Dr. Vinsen. The slimy reptile! I'd like to twist his neck for him."

"I'd like to see you do it," said Gracie, not a muscle of her face moving.

"You're something like a partner. Have you any idea where the reptile lives?"

"No."

"You could find out, I dare say."

"Oh, yes, I can find out if you want me to," said Gracie, quite confidently.

"That's your sort. Only don't look for him in the reptile house at the Zoo, where his relations live. I want to know ever so many things about him. Whether he lives alone, or has a wife. Whether he has any children, and whether they have little bald heads with halos round them like their venerable parent. Whether he practises as a doctor, and what his neighbours think of him, etc., etc., etc. It's a large order, Gracie."

"I'll do it, Dick."

"You're a brick. Here we are at the printer's. But you mustn't go away without the needful for current ex's. You might want to jump into a bus, and if you keep out all day

you'll want something to eat. Hold out your hand--one shilling, two shillings, a sixpence, and some coppers. If you've anything to tell me come to Aunt Rob's house any time between six and eight. I've a particular reason for not wanting to be seen with you in Catchpole Square to-night. Here are a couple more coppers for brandyballs for the babies at home. Now, off with you, my little detective. No sleeping partners in our firm. You and I, working together, will make Scotland Yard sit up. We'll beat the Criminal Investigation Department, even if it has a dozen Dr. Vinsens to back it up. Here's a kiss for good luck, Gracie."

"Thank you, Dick," said Gracie, and away she scudded, proud of the task entrusted to her.

Neither of them had noticed that they had been followed in a shambling sort of way by an old man in list slippers with a skull cap on his head, sucking at a pipe which, in his close observance of them, he had allowed to go out. He was blear-eyed, and was cursed with a spasmodic twitching on the right side of his face, which imparted to his features a ghastly mirth; and close as was his observance of them he had so managed as not to draw their attention upon him. During the last moment or two he had shuffled so near to them as to brush their clothes as he passed, and had heard the concluding words of their conversation.

"'Thank you, Dick,'" he echoed, with a half-tipsy lurch, as Gracie flew away and Dick entered the printing office. "Dick! It's the man himself. Who'll give me a kiss for good luck?"

He laughed and twitched, and with his eye on the door through which Dick had passed, proceeded with trembling fingers to refill his pipe.

There was a fair stock of "jobbing" type in the printing office, and the master, a working printer himself, was the very man Dick needed for the job in hand, trade being rather slack. In imitation of the official announcement of a reward in the Great Porter Square murder Dick had placed a Royal Coat of Arms at the top of his bill, but the printer argued him out of it, being doubtful whether a private individual had the right to use it for the detection of the perpetrator of a criminal offence. But for the better publicity of the reward Dick was bent upon a pictorial illustration, and out of a lot of old woodcuts they fished a rough wood-block of the figure of Justice, blindfold, holding the scales, which suggested the line beneath, "In the Cause of Justice." Within an hour the type was set up, corrected, locked in its chase, and on the press, the paper was damped, the "devil," a young apprentice, was wielding his roller, and the master printer, his sleeves tucked up to his shoulders, was pulling off the posters, which read thus:

At the top the figure of even-handed Justice; then--

IN THE CAUSE OF JUSTICE.
MURDER.
£500 REWARD.

Whereas, on the Morning of Saturday, the 9th of March, the Dead Body of Mr. Samuel Boyd was Found on his Premises in Catchpole Square under such circumstances as prove that he was Murdered, and Medical Testimony has been given to the effect that the Murder must have been Committed either on the night of the 1st or the 2nd of March. The above Reward will be paid to any Person who shall give such Information as shall lead to the Discovery and Conviction of the Murderer or Murderers.

Evidence may be given to Mr. Lamb, 42, High Street, N., Solicitor to Mr. Reginald Boyd, Son of the Murdered Gentleman, who will pay the Reward, or at any Police Station in the United Kingdom.

The services of a bill-sticker not being immediately procurable, a large tin of paste had been mixed while the bills were being printed. Begging the loan of a pasting brush, and begging also the loan of the "devil" to carry the paste tin, Dick, now more than ever a Jack of all trades, issued forth to stick the bills himself, leaving behind him the copy of the poster offering a reward for the discovery of Abel Death. He was pasting the first of the bills on a dead wall when he saw the figure of the old man in list slippers and skull cap standing by his side.

"Hallo!" he said, peering down at the twitching face, with its expression of ghastly mirth.

"Hallo!" said the old man, peering up at the flushed, handsome face of the bill-sticker.

CHAPTER XLV.

CROSS PURPOSES.

Dick recognised him instantly, and scented danger. The man who peered up at him, with all the leering muscles of his face at work, was the man of whom he had bought the rope and grapnel. With assumed carelessness he said,

"You'll know me when you see me again, old fellow."

"Shouldn't wonder," said the old man. "My name's Higgins. What may your'n be?"

Dick had not quite finished sticking the first bill. Whether from not being used to the business, or from inward perturbation, he was making rather a bungle of it. Under any circumstances, however, he would have been ready to admit that there is an art even in bill-sticking.

"Let's make a guess, shall us?" said Mr. Higgins, with a cunning look, plunging into doggerel. "Riddle-me-riddle-meriddle-me-ree, first comes a, then b c d; riddle-me-riddle-me-riddle-me-rye, the letter we stop at next is i; riddle-me-riddle-me-riddle-me-rick, a c and a k will make it spell Dick." Mr. Higgins was so enamoured of this impromptu that he chuckled to himself, "Will make it spell Dick, will make it spell Dick."

"Look here," said Dick, an uncomfortable feeling spreading over him, "what do you want?"

"Quartern o' rum," replied Mr. Higgins, suddenly descending from the heights of Parnassus.

"All right," said Dick, "at the first pub we come to."

"Pub over there," said Mr. Higgins, twitching his head at the opposite side of the road. "Throat dry as a bit o' rusty iron."

The bill was stuck, and people were stopping to read it. Even in these days of huge and startling advertisements on the walls--not the least conspicuous of which are the lank figures of blue or scarlet females in outrageous costumes and impossible postures, the product of a mischievous school of impressionists--even amidst these monstrous parodies of art a double-demy poster offering a reward of £500 for the discovery of a

Murderer is certain to command an audience. So it was natural enough that a little crowd should gather, and that eager comments and opinions should be exchanged.

"That's a big reward. £500!" "Ought to have been offered before. What's that picture on the top? Justice, eh, holding the scales? If she's anything like that, I don't think much of her. Anyway I wish I knew where to lay hands on the man that murdered Samuel Boyd. Set me up for life it would." "Murderers you mean. When the truth comes out you'll find there's a regular gang, with Abel Death at the head of 'em." "Well, I don't believe he's in it. I heard a detective say yesterday----" "Oh, a detective. Much good they are!" "I say, don't you consider it a rum go that Mr. Reginald Boyd should be offering the reward? Why, there's any number of people says he did it." "How can that be when he says he's willing to pay £500 for the discovery and conviction?" "Ah, but that might be a plant, you know. They've been that cunning from first to last that there's no saying what they mightn't be up to." "What comes over me is what they've done with Lady Wharton's jewellery. Nice lot the ladies of the upper suckles, borrowing money secretly of such a cove as Samuel Boyd. I s'pose it's their gen-teel way of putting things up the spout. Now, what are they going to do with it when she can swear to every bit of it?" "Do with it? Take it to Amsterdam or New York. Easy to get rid of it there." "Why go so fur? Ain't there plenty of fences in London?" "Never catch 'em, never! There's no clue." "No clue! How about that bullet in the wall, and the blood-stains on the floor?" "But the old man wasn't shot or stabbed. What d'yer make of that?" "Why, that they had a barney among theirselves when they was dividing the swag. Another man murdered, most likely." (Delicious suggestion.) "What did they do with his body?" "Carried it to the river, tied a big stone to it and sunk it. When the reward gets known they'll be dragging the water from Greenwich to Windsor." "Well, of all the mysterious murders I ever heard of this Catchpole Square one takes the cake." "Queer move, ain't it, offering a reward before the inquest's over? What's the verdict going to be? There's a cove on the jury seems to know as much about it as most people."

To this and a great deal more Dick listened, and Mr. Higgins listened, without either of them saying a word. Dick lingered because he wished to find out what would be the probable effect of these bills on the walls; and Mr. Higgins, pulling at his under lip, listened because Dick listened, and watched the young man's face cunningly to see what impression the various arguments made upon him. There was malice in his bloodshot eyes, and Dick did not like the look of things. While thus ruminating and listening, Mr. Higgins touched him on the arm with his empty pipe.

"Fine day, Mr. Higgins," he said, in his free and easy way.

"Beastly day," growled Mr. Higgins. "I'm shaking all over."

"What's good for the complaint?"

"Quartern o' rum, to commence with."

"I have to work for my living," said Dick, brightly, "and if you insist upon my standing you a quartern of rum you'll have to carry the paste pot."

"See you--hanged first," said Mr. Higgins, with a mirthless laugh.

"Think better of it," said Dick, insinuatingly, holding out the paste pot.

After a moment's hesitation Mr. Higgins thought better of it, and took the paste pot, with a grimace, to the imminent risk of the contents. Then Dick dismissed the printer's boy, and with the bundle of damp bills under his arm walked over to the publichouse, Mr. Higgins, carrying the shaking paste pot, and following close at his heels.

"Where will you have your rum," he asked, "at the bar, or in a private room?"

"Private room," said Mr. Higgins. "Better for all parties."

They were soon accommodated, and liquor supplied, bitter ale for Dick, and rum for the old man, which he disposed of in one gulp. He then demanded another quartern, which Dick called for, and disposed of it in an equally expeditious manner.

"You've got a swallow," said Dick. "Now, my Saint Vitus friend, what's your little game? Leave off your damnable twitchings, and begin."

Mr. Higgins fumbled in his pockets, and produced three crumpled newspapers which, after much difficulty, he straightened out upon the table, a corner of his eye on Dick all the time he was thus employed. With tremulous forefinger, long a stranger to soap and nail brush, he pointed to a sketch portrait in an account of the inquest, which Dick recognised as intended for himself. It being evident that Mr. Higgins expected him to offer an observation on the libel, he said,

"Who may this individual be? It's only a head and shoulders. Is it supposed to be a man or a woman?"

"Yah!" was Mr. Higgins's sarcastic comment. "What are you giving us? Can't you read what's underneath?"

"Can't you?" retorted Dick.

"No," snarled Mr. Higgins, twitching, not with shame, but resentment. "Neglected as a kid, jumped upon as a man. But a worm'll turn when it's trod on, won't it?"

"Not being a worm, can't say. Take your word for it."

"And even a man that's been jumped on all his life can see a bit o' luck when it's ahead of him. Look here, young fellow; take the advice of a man old enough to be your father."

"Say great grandfather," interrupted Dick, saucily, "and get it over in once."

"Smart you are, you think--smart; but you'll find that cheek don't pay in this shop, Mr. Dick Remington. D'ye twig the name printed underneath this portrait. 'That's a face I've seen afore,' says I to myself when it meets my eye. I looks at another paper." Mr. Higgins turned over the sheet and brought into view another portrait of Dick--"and strike me straight!' Why, there it is agin,' I says. 'And here it is agin,' I says." He turned over the third sheet, "and underneath 'em all the name of Dick Remington. 'What luck!' says I to myself. 'What a slice o' luck for a second-hand dealer in odds and ends as tries hard to get a honest living, and as everybody puts upon--with trade that bad that it couldn't be wus--taking down your shutters and putting 'em up agin to the tune of two and sevenpence, which won't as much as half pay your rent.'"

"Stop your whining," said Dick, "and cut it short. What is it you want?"

"Quartern o' rum."

The answer seemed to be so settled a formula when a question of this kind was put to him that it mechanically popped out like a bullet from a gun. Pending compliance with his demand, as to which Dick did not hesitate, and the pouring of the liquor down his throat, as if it were the mouth of a vat, there was an interval of silence. Then, with a wandering finger on the portrait, Mr. Higgins "cut it short" in two words.

"True bill?"

"True bill," replied Dick, with an assenting nod, "and what of it?"

"What of it?" cried Mr. Higgins, with venom in his voice. "Rope and grapnel of it!" He thrust his twitching face forward to within an inch or two of Dick's.

"Oh, that's the game," said Dick, concealing his uneasiness. "And what a game it is--oh, what a game it is! Says I to myself, when I gets detective Lambert's evidence read out to

me--'there's a man for you! with eyes all over him, and one to spare'--says I to myself when I hears that evidence, 'rope and grapnel over the wall--by the Lord, he's hit it!' Then I asks the boy that's reading the paper to me, 'And who may that be the picture of?' 'That,' says he, 'is the picture of Mr. Dick Remington, nephew of Inspector Robson, and cousin of the young lady as goes and marries the son of Samuel Boyd on the sly.' He's a sharp little boy, almost as sharp as you, Mr. Dick Remington. 'O-ho!' says I to him, 'and does Mr. Dick Remington give evidence at the inquest?' 'Yes, he does,' says the boy, and he reads it out to me. 'You've missed something,' I says. 'You've missed what Mr. Dick Remington says about the rope and grapnel.' 'He don't say nothing at all about it,' says the boy. 'It must be in another paper,' I says, and I buys 'em all, and has 'em all read out to me, word for word, and if you'll believe me there ain't a word in one of 'em about the use that Mr. Dick Remington makes of the rope and grapnel he bought of a honest tradesman as sweats hisself thin to get a living, and then can't get it. That's what I call a coinci-dence. What do you call it?"

"I call it a coinci-dence, too," said Dick, with a searching gaze at the disreputable figure, "especially when it happens to an honest tradesman like Mr. Higgins." There was a gleam of suspicion and doubt in Mr. Higgins's eye as he twitched up his head at this remark, which caused Dick to add, with meaning emphasis on the words, "To such a very honest tradesman as Mr. Higgins! Something got in your throat?"

"Caught my breath," gasped Mr. Higgins, choking and glaring.

At any other time the contortions he made to recover it would have amused Dick, but just now he was not in the mood for any kind of light diversion. Still it was with a mocking air that he contemplated Mr. Higgins, and in a mocking tone that he repeated for the second time,

"Such a very honest tradesman as Mr. Higgins! Get on, will you? You left off where you'd been having all the papers read to you."

That the doubt as to the success of his enterprise which Dick's independent manner had introduced was not lessened was apparent, for though what he said was pregnant enough his tone lost something of its confidence.

"Yes, I gets 'em all read out to me, and it sets me thinking. 'What call has Mr. Dick Remington got to keep it dark?' says I to myself. 'Why don't he say nothing about it? There's something in the wind. He comes to my shop, and buys a rope and grapnel in a secret sort o' way'--"

"Wrong, my honest tradesman," interrupted Dick, and Mr. Higgins shifted uneasily in his chair, "I bought it openly. Did I ask you to keep it dark?"

"No, you didn't, but did you go out of my shop with the rope hanging over your arm?' O-ho!' says I, 'here's a working man ashamed to carry a rope. He asks for a bit of paper to wrap it up in, he does, and he puts it under his coat, he does. That's a rum sort o' working man,' says I."

"Clever Mr. Higgins," said Dick, patronisingly, "clever Mr. Higgins!"

"Do you mean to tell me," said that worthy, driven to exasperation by Dick's coolness, "that you didn't use it to get over the wall at the back of Samuel Boyd's house in Catchpole Square, that it wasn't you as broke the kitchen winder, that you didn't break open the safe--"

"Hold hard," said Dick, "you've had the papers read wrong. The safe was not broken open."

"What does that matter?" snarled Mr. Higgins. "Broke open, or opened with a key, it's all the same. The man as did it helped hisself to the money and jewels, and made off with the swag--with my rope and grapnel that cost me its weight in gold--how does that strike you, Mr. Dick?"

"You old fool," said Dick, with a broad smile, "if you knock your head against that brick wall you'll knock out the few brains you possess. If you think I can't reckon up an honest tradesman like you, you were never more mistaken in your life." And with the forefinger of his right hand he tapped the side of his nose, and winked at Mr. Higgins.

But though he spoke and acted thus boldly he fully recognised the seriousness of this new danger. Say that this man laid information against him at the first police station; say that it got to the knowledge of Detective Lambert who was searching everywhere for a clue to the mystery. What would be the consequence? A warrant would be immediately issued for his arrest, and a search warrant as well. The rope and grapnel, tied up in brown paper, was now under the bed of his room in Constable Pond's house, and the key of that room was in his pocket. How could he explain away his possession of the rope? He would be asked why he made no mention of it at the inquest; his silence regarding it would be a piece of damning evidence against him. And not the only piece. His prowling about in the neighbourhood of Catchpole Square at an early hour of the morning, as testified by Constable Applebee, was in the highest degree suspicious when taken in connection with his possession of the rope and grapnel. His knowledge of the habits of Samuel Boyd, gained during his employment as clerk in the house, would be against

him. One thing was certain. He would be deprived of his liberty, and the contemplation of this contingency filled him with dismay. Everything depended upon his being free to carry out the plans he had formed, and therefore upon his turning the tables upon the old vagabond who sat leering into his face.

And in the event of his being arrested, what would be said of him in Aunt Rob's home? Was it not probable, aye, more than probable, that they would suspect him to be the murderer? He had woven a net for himself, and if he were not careful he would drag down Reginald with him. Press and public would say "collusion," and the chain of circumstantial evidence be too strong for him to break through.

Admitting all this, he felt that any sign of weakness in the presence of Mr. Higgins would be fatal. There was nothing for it but to play the bold game.

"I've a good mind," he said, slowly and sternly, "to go and give information against you."

"What do you mean?" demanded Mr. Higgins, his features twitching more hideously than ever. Dick hailed these signs of discomposure with delight, and encouraged by the impression his sarcastic references to Mr. Higgins as an honest tradesman had produced he was quick to take advantage of it. He resembled the gambler who stakes his whole fortune upon the last throw.

"Did you ever see the secret books of the police," he said, "with the names of certain men with black marks against them? Why, we can lay our hands upon every thief and fence in London when we want to--do you hear? when we want to." Mr. Higgins winced. "There are some things that lick us for a time, like this Catchpole Square Mystery, but we don't go to sleep over them, though some people may think we do. And when we're playing a high game we don't show our cards. What I mean is, that we'll have your place searched for stolen goods. How will that suit you, my honest tradesman? We can bring one or two things against you that you'll find it hard to explain when you're in the dock. If we let you alone it's because you're not worth the powder and shot, but get our dander up, Mr. Higgins, and we'll make short work of you. How does that suit your book? Take care of your precious self, my man, and let sleeping dogs lie."

It was vague, but effective, and it was Dick's good fortune that the hazardous shot told. Indeed, it had gone straight to the bull's eye. Many were the questionable transactions in which, from time to time, Mr. Higgins had been engaged. Petty thieves in the neighbourhood were in the habit of selling their small spoils across his counter; this modern Fagin was always ready to buy, and no questions asked. He had been in trouble more than once, and was in mortal dread of getting into trouble again. This, of course, was unknown to Dick, and it was only from his familiarity with the nature of much of

the business transacted in some of these second-hand shops in mean streets that he had ventured upon the bold attack. He could have hugged himself when he saw the effect it produced upon Mr. Higgins.

"There is nothing like a good understanding in these matters, Mr. Higgins," he continued, "and I've no wish to be hard on you. I've got my own game to play, and it's keeping me pretty busy. Between ourselves--don't be frightened, there's nobody by--I did purchase a rope and grapnel of you, but is it for you to say whether I purchased it for myself or for another person, and what use I made of it? I might deny it if I chose, and then, my honest tradesman, who would take your word against mine? Is there any magistrate's court in London where your oath would be believed, much less your word? What a blind fool you are! Upon my word I gave you credit for more sense. Perhaps the reporter of 'The Little Busy Bee' used a rope and grapnel, perhaps he didn't. Perhaps it was the one I bought of you, perhaps it wasn't. I'm not going to let you into the know, Mr. Higgins. How would you like to have the papers down on you as well as the police? How do you know I'm not acting under instructions to track and catch the murderer or murderers of Samuel Boyd? How do you know"--here he leaned forward, and tapped Mr. Higgins confidentially on the breast--"that I'm not in the secret service myself? Would you like to hear what is in these bills that you are going to help me stick on the walls? I've just come from the printing office where I've had them printed. You can't read, you say; it is a pity you should be left in the dark, so I'll read it to you." Dick spread one out, and read it aloud, with unction. "It reads well, doesn't it? I'm rather proud of it. That's a figure of Justice on the top. My idea. Rather a good idea, I flatter myself. A pretty fellow you are to come and threaten me with your rope and grapnel! I'll tell you what your game is, Mr. Higgins. Blackmail. That is it--blackmail. A dangerous game, old man, and you've got hold of the wrong end of the stick--perhaps you see that now. If I had anything to fear is it likely that I'd be going about in open daylight sticking up these bills? More likely to be sailing on the open seas for some foreign port. Where are your wits, you clumsy idiot?"

To judge from Mr. Higgins's appearance, they had gone wool-gathering. He literally gasped beneath the volley which Dick had poured upon him, at the end of which he was sitting in his chair in a state of helpless collapse. Dick had turned the tables upon him with a vengeance.

"Now, what have you got to say?" he asked, triumphantly.

"Quartern o' rum," gasped Mr. Higgins.

"When we've finished our confab you shall have it, and another one or two on the top of it as we go along. Lord bless you, Mr. Higgins, I'm not an ill-natured chap, if you take

me easy, and I have the credit of generally being freehanded when I'm not interfered with. Pull yourself together, and listen to what more I've got to say. What we want to do--the secret service, the detectives, the Criminal Investigation Department, and all of us--is to keep this matter as quiet as possible till the thieves and murderers are nabbed. We're working on the strict q.t., and we've got something up our sleeve, I can tell you. And I'll tell you something more. If any outsider interferes with our game by blabbing about ropes and grapnels it will be the worst day's work he
has ever done, and he'll live to rue it. We'll wipe him out, that's what we'll do. We'll have no mercy on him."

This was the finishing stroke. Mr. Higgins lay helpless at the foot of the conqueror.

"I made a mistake," he whined. "Quartern o' rum."

"You would sell your own mother for drink, I believe."

"No, no," protested Mr. Higgins, feebly, "not so bad as that, not so bad as that. Good for my liver. Keeps me alive."

"A nice state your liver must be in," said Dick, laughing. "I think we understand each other. Take up the paste pot, and carry it steady. You shall be paid for your day's work. Tenpence an hour, so look sharp."

Mr. Higgins, completely subdued, had his fourth quartern at the bar, and shortly afterwards the British public had the privilege of seeing Dick Remington stick up the murder bills, assisted by an old man in skull cap and list slippers, in that stage of palsy from his recent experiences that his course was marked by a dribble of paste spilt from the pot he carried in his trembling hands. At every fresh stoppage a crowd gathered, arguing, disputing, airing theories. These chiefly consisted of conjectures as to who the murderer was, how the murder had been committed, how many were in it, who the man was who had been seen by Dr. Pye coming out of the house in Catchpole Square at three in the morning, whether he was the same man who had imposed upon Lady Wharton, how the blood-stained marks of footsteps on the floor were to be accounted for, whether there was any chance of the jewels being recovered, and so on, and so on. At one place there was a conversation of a different nature.

"What I find fault with in that there bill," said an onlooker, a man with a forbidding face, dressed in corduroy, "is that no pardon is offered to any accomplice as didn't actually commit that there murder. Where's the indoocement to peach on a pal, that's what I want to know?"

"A white-livered skunk I'd call him whatever his name might be," remarked a second speaker. "Honour among thieves, that's what I say."

"Oh, come," said a third, "let's draw the line somewhere."

"It's what they put in the bills," grumbled the man in corduroy, offering no comment on these expressions of opinion, "and I don't see no mention of it in that there blooming bill."

"It's what they put in the Government bills," said the second man, "but this ain't a Government bill. It's a reward of £500 offered by a private individual."

"A private individual!" sneered the first speaker. "You don't call Mr. Reginald Boyd a private individual in this here case, do you? He's a interested party, that's what he is. What I say is--and anybody can take it up as likes--where's the indoocement to peach on a pal?"

"Well, don't take it to heart, mate," said another. At which there was a general laugh. "Do you know how it runs in the Government bills?"

"No, I don't; but I know it's alias there, and allus should be there."

"I can give you the words, if you wish to hear them," said a quiet onlooker, who, meditatively rubbing his chin, was watching the crowd and the billsticker.

Dick repressed a start. It was the voice of Detective Lambert, with whom he was acquainted. He turned and accosted the officer, who put his finger to his lips, thus indicating that they were not to address each other by name.

"Good morning," said Dick.

"Good morning," said Lambert. "I did not know you were in this line of business."

"Anything to turn an honest penny, said Dick, cheerfully.

"Give us the words, mate," said the man in corduroy.

"They run in this way. 'And the Secretary of State for the Home Department will advise the grant of her Majesty's gracious Pardon to any accomplice not being the person who actually committed the murder, who shall give such evidence as shall lead to a like result.'"

"You seem to be well up in it, guv'nor."

"Fairly well. I did a turn in a Government printing office once."

"Then you could inform us, perhaps, as a matter of general interest," said an elderly man, "whether the accomplice, who would be Queen's evidence----"

"Yes, Queen's evidence."

"Would get the reward as well as the pardon?"

"In course he would," said the man in corduroy, answering for Lambert. "That's the beauty of it. Only wish I was an accomplice in this here blooming murder, with them words in that there bill orfered by the Government. I'd touch, mates, pretty quick, that's what I'd do. But as it stands, where's the indoocement? It ain't 'arf a bill without the indoocement."

This insistence of the implied merit attaching to an act of treachery did not seem to meet with the approval of many in the crowd, who edged away, with distrustful looks at the speaker. Dick also walked off, and Detective Lambert walked by his side awhile, Mr. Higgins shambling humbly in the rear.

"A bold move," remarked Lambert.

"A proper move," said Dick. "Anything new stirring?"

Lambert rubbed his chin for two or three moments without replying, and few persons would have supposed that he was paying much visual attention to the man at his side or the man in the rear; but Dick knew better. He knew that detective Lambert was one of the shrewdest and the most observant officers in the service, and that nothing escaped his attention.

"Five hundred pounds is a good round sum," he said.

"It is," said Dick. "Why not earn it?" Lambert gave him a curious look, surprised, for one brief moment, out of himself. "If it was a Government reward," continued Dick, who also had his eyes about him, "there wouldn't be a chance for you, for the words would run, 'the above reward will be paid to any person (other than a person belonging to a police force in the United Kingdom) who shall give such information,' etc. Now, this reward

doesn't apply in this way. The reward will be willingly and gladly paid to any person, whether he belongs to the police or not. Is it worth considering?"

"Yes," said Lambert, thoughtfully, "it is worth considering. You asked me whether there's any thing new stirring. Well----" But he paused suddenly, as if he were about to say too much. "One of these days, perhaps, there will be a case in the papers that, for daring and mystery, will beat even the Mystery of Catchpole Square."

"Can't imagine one," said Dick. "It wouldn't be fair to ask if there's any connection between the two cases." He paused; Lambert was silent; Dick turned the subject. "What do you think of my new apprentice? A modern species of Ganymede, carrying the pastepot instead of the wine cup. Nothing like novelty in these days; people run crazy after it. Only you must keep it well advertised; everything depends upon that. Drop your advertisements, and youth grows wrinkled in an hour. Now, what we're aiming at in this mystery"--he flourished his paste brush--"is that, until we get at its heart, people shan't forget it. We'll keep it before them morning, noon, and night. No hole-in-the-corner business. Step up, old man." This to Mr. Higgins, who came shambling forward, his features twitching twenty to the dozen. With the eyes of so sharp an officer as Lambert upon him Dick was not stupid enough to dream of keeping the old man in the background. He knew that any such attempt would end in Lambert's finding means of making himself thoroughly acquainted with Mr. Higgins's business and character before the day was out, so he took the bull by the horns, and introduced his companion by name, giving also his trade and address. "There's a specimen of an honest tradesman for you. Queer sort of assistant for me to pick up?"

"There's no denying it," said Lambert.

"There's a little story attached to the way Mr. Higgins and I struck up a friendship. What's the best thing in life worth living for, old man?"

"Quartern o' rum," replied Mr. Higgins. The answer seemed to be jerked out of him by force of magnetism.

Dick laughed; Lambert made a movement of departure.

"Are you off?" asked Dick.

"Off I am. Take care of yourself."

"I'll try to."

Dr. Pye's countenance during his late interview with Dr. Vinsen was not more inscrutable than that of Detective Lambert. The trained habit of concealing one's thoughts is part of the stock in trade of more than one class of men, and shrewd as Dick was he would have found it beyond his power to divine what was passing in Lambert's mind as he strolled leisurely away, but a quiet smile on the younger man's lips denoted that he was not dissatisfied with the problem he had presented to the detective. "I've given him something to puzzle over," was Dick's thought, "and I'm a Dutchman if I haven't thrown him off the scent in regard to my friend Higgins."

"There's a man for you," he said, as he gazed admiringly after the vanishing figure of the detective. "Have you the pleasure of knowing the gentleman?"

"Can't say as I have," was the answer.

"That's the famous Detective Lambert, who gave evidence at the inquest. And what a ferret he is! Search France and England through, and you won't meet his match. He had his eye on you, I noticed." Mr. Higgins shivered. "If ever you get into his clutches look out for snakes. It's a pleasure to work with a man like that. He and I are on the same lay."

Another hour's steady work, and the last bill was pasted on the walls and the last quartern of rum disposed of. Then he reckoned up what was due to Mr. Higgins, paid and dismissed him, and repeated his caution about looking out for snakes if it should be his bad fortune to fall into the clutches of the famous detective.

"I've about settled your hash," mused Dick, as he saw Mr. Higgins plunge into the nearest beershop. "But how do I stand with Lambert? That's a different pair of shoes. What did he mean about another case of mystery? I thought he was going to let it out, but he pulled himself up short. Never mind, Dick. You've had a narrow squeak to-day, and you've got out of it with flying colours. Go ahead, my lad, and stick at nothing."

Had Detective Lambert followed Dick to the neighbourhood of Covent Garden and overheard what passed between him and certain well known tradesmen therein he would have had another problem to solve, in addition to those which were already occupying his attention.

CHAPTER XLVI.

"THE LITTLE BUSY BEE'S" REPORT OF THE CONTINUATION OF THE INQUEST.

The inquiry into the death of Mr. Samuel Boyd was resumed at the Coroner's Court in Bishop Street this morning before Mr. John Kent. Long before eleven o'clock the usual crowd of persons had gathered round the doors, but so numerous had been the application for seats from privileged and influential quarters that very few of the general public succeeded in gaining admittance. Intense as has been the interest evinced in this extraordinary case, the startling and unexpected revelations made by witnesses who have voluntarily come forward to give evidence have raised it to a level reached by no other murder mystery in our remembrance. It would be idle to deny that the evidence of the last witness examined yesterday has given a significant turn to the proceedings.

So far as we have been able to ascertain, the police have obtained no clue to the man who personated Samuel Boyd and who so successfully imposed upon Lady Wharton in Bournemouth. We understand that it is the intention of her ladyship's advisers to offer a substantial reward for the recovery of her jewels, and a list of them, with detailed descriptions, has been sent to every pawnbroker in the kingdom. To this course we ourselves see no objection, although we are aware that many of the Scotland Yard officials are strongly of the opinion that the offer of a reward in such cases only serves to put the guilty parties more carefully on their guard. For the same reason they may object to the bills that are now being posted in London offering rewards for the discovery and conviction of the murderer or murderers, and for the discovery of Abel Death, of whom no news whatever is as yet forthcoming. The bills are appropriately headed "In the Cause of Justice," and it is to be hoped that they will assist the cause of justice. We make no comment upon the circumstance that Mr. Reginald Boyd, at whose instance this step has been taken, has made himself responsible for the payment of £500 in the one case and £200 in the other. The argument that it will stimulate persons to recall apparently insignificant details in connection with the movements of the guilty parties, and to make them public, is sound, for important results have been known to spring from the revelation of details which in ordinary circumstances would be considered too trivial to mention. In the course of the next few days further developments may be expected.

It was understood that this morning's proceedings would be opened with the examination of Mrs. Abel Death, but before she was called Mr. Reginald Boyd rose and addressed the Coroner.

Mr. Reginald Boyd: "I ask permission to say a few words."

The Coroner: "You have already been examined, Mr. Boyd, and I am desirous not to subject the jury to the inconvenience arising from an inquiry unduly protracted."

Mr. Reginald Boyd: "I can assure you, Mr. Coroner, and you, gentlemen of the jury, that I do not wish to waste your time, but you must see that what has transpired in the course of this inquiry affects me most deeply. In common justice I ask to be heard."

The Juror: "Let us hear what Mr. Reginald Boyd has to say."

The Coroner: "I am in your hands, gentlemen."

Mr. Reginald Boyd: "After the evidence given by Dr. Pye--or rather I should say, after the statement he has made affecting myself--my desire is to declare even more positively than I did yesterday that I reached my lodgings on Friday night within a few minutes of midnight, that I went to bed, and did not arise from it for a week in consequence of my illness. I fear that it is not in my power to offer corroborative evidence. My landlady and her servant went to bed, I understand, between ten and eleven o'clock, and have no recollection of hearing anybody come into the house after they retired. It is my misfortune, also, that I was the only lodger in the house. I let myself in with my latchkey. I have no remembrance of meeting with anyone nor of speaking to anyone, but I can swear to the time because I looked at my watch, and wound it up in my bedroom."

The Coroner: "Very well. Perhaps you had better not say anything more."

Mr. Reginald Boyd: "Why not, Mr. Coroner? I desire it to be widely known that I court the fullest and most searching inquiry. I cannot avoid seeing that Dr. Pye's statement that the man he saw bore a striking resemblance to myself throws a grave suspicion upon me. I do not impugn his evidence, but I contend that it is only fair that equal consideration should be given to my statement as to his. I will endeavour to make myself clearer. I affirm upon my oath that I was in my bed within a few minutes of midnight, and did not leave it again. Dr. Pye affirms that three hours afterwards he saw a person resembling me leave my father's house in a suspicious manner. To the truth of my statement I can bring forward no witnesses. Can Dr. Pye bring forward any witnesses to the truth of his? If uncorroborated evidence given by me is open to doubt, so should uncorroborated evidence given by him be viewed. A man's honour--to say nothing of a son's innocence or guilt of so awful a crime as the murder of his father--is not to be judged by a stranger's unsupported word. In the sacred name of justice I protest against it."

These words, spoken with manliness and deep emotion, made a marked impression upon the audience, which was deepened when they turned to the glowing face of the witness's wife. A murmur of sympathy ran through the Court.

The Juror (referring to his notes): "But in your account of the incidents of that night you informed us that you could not depend upon your memory. Quoting your own words: 'I was deeply agitated, and my mind was in confusion. The fever from which I immediately afterwards suffered, and which kept me to my bed several days, may have been upon me then.' Do you adhere to that?"

Mr. Reginald Boyd: "I do. In describing my condition my endeavour was to speak the honest truth, and to offer no excuse which could not be accepted by an impartial mind, nor to take advantage of any. But that does not affect my distinct recollection as to the time I wound up my watch in my bedroom."

The Juror: "We must not, however, lose sight of the fact that no suspicion attaches to Dr. Pye, and that it is not his veracity that is here in question."

Mr. Reginald Boyd (with warmth): "Is that a fair remark from one of the jury?"

The Coroner: "It is a most improper remark, and should not have been made in open Court. Call Mrs. Abel Death."

CHAPTER XLVII.

"THE LITTLE BUSY BEE" CONTINUES ITS REPORT OF THE INQUEST.

The public are by this time acquainted with much of the evidence Mrs. Death had to offer. After narrating the circumstances of her husband's dismissal from the service of Mr. Samuel Boyd, and of his going late at night to Mr. Boyd's house in Catchpole Square to beg to be taken back, the examination proceeded as follows:

"What salary did your husband receive from Mr. Boyd?"

"Twenty-two shillings a-week, with deductions for imaginary faults."

"Did he work long hours?"

"From nine in the morning till eight at night. Occasionally he worked overtime, but was never paid anything extra."

"He was not happy in his situation?"

"How could he be, sir, with such a master?"

"They had frequent disagreements?"

"I'm sorry to say they had; but it wasn't my husband's fault."

"Did he ask Mr. Boyd for a loan of ten pounds?"

"Yes, sir."

"He hoped it would be granted?"

"We fully expected it, sir."

"The refusal to grant the loan must have been a great disappointment to your husband?"

"It almost broke his heart, sir."

"May that not have exasperated him, and caused him to speak words to Mr. Boyd which might have been construed into a threat?"

"I am sure that could not have happened. My husband was most particular in telling me everything that passed between them, and he didn't use a threatening word. He did ask Mr. Boyd if he believed in God, and Mr. Boyd said no, he didn't."

"Then there was bad blood between them when they parted?"

"I suppose there was, sir."

"To what do you attribute Mr. Boyd's unexpected refusal to lend the money?"

"To Mr. Reginald's visit in the afternoon. It made his father furious."

"Now, as to the object of Mr. Reginald Boyd's visit in the afternoon. Was it to obtain money from his father?"

"That was what my husband believed."

"And was this the object of his second visit late at night?"

"My husband said of course it must be that, but that he wouldn't get a penny out of the old man."

"After your husband's dismissal, are you aware whether he and Mr. Reginald Boyd met?"

"They couldn't have met, sir, or my husband would have told me."

"No doubt you have heard many of the theories that have been advanced to account for his absence from his home?"

"Well, sir, I have. Some say--the wretches!--that he murdered Mr. Boyd, and has run off with the money. Some say that he has made away with himself, but it isn't possible he could have thought of such a thing. I was a bit afraid of it the last night I saw him when he started up to go to Catchpole Square, but he saw what was in my mind, and he said, 'Don't you think that of me. You've got trouble enough to bear; I'm not going to bring more upon you. I'll do my duty, and fight on to the bitter end.' And that's what he would have done."

"Have you any idea at all as to the cause of his absence?"

"Yes, sir. Foul play."

"Did he have any enemies?"

"Not to my knowledge, sir. He wasn't of a quarrelsome disposition."

"Were there any money transactions between him and Mr. Reginald Boyd?"

"Not exactly transactions, sir. Once, when we had sickness at home, Mr. Reginald saw that my husband was worried, and he asked him if he was in any trouble. Hearing what it was, and that we were frightened to send for a doctor because of the expense, he gave my husband two sovereigns. We thought it was a loan, but afterwards, when we offered to pay it off at a shilling a week, Mr. Reginald said it was only a friendly little present, and that he would be vexed if we didn't look upon it as such. I remember my husband saying, 'I wish I was working for Mr. Reginald instead of for his father.' We were very grateful to him, and I always looked upon him as a model young gentleman till old Mr. Boyd was murdered, and then----"

"Why do you pause? Go on."

"No, sir, I won't. It wouldn't be fair."

The Juror: "But we should like to hear, Mrs. Death?"

"I'm not going to say anything more about it, sir, unless you force me to it. Every man ought to have his chance."

The Juror (to the Coroner): "I think, Mr. Coroner, the witness should be directed to finish the sentence."

The Coroner (to Mrs. Death): "You would rather not say what is in your mind?"

Mrs. Death: "I would rather not, sir."

"Then I shall not ask you to disclose it."

The Juror: "But, Mr. Coroner----"

The Coroner: "I am conducting this inquiry, and I have given my decision." (To the witness). "How long did you remain up on Friday night after your husband went to make a last appeal to his employer?"

"I did not go to bed at all that night. I waited for him till nearly two in the morning, and then I went to Catchpole Square, on the chance that Mr. Samuel Boyd would be able to give me some information of him. I knocked at the door, and hung about the Square a goodish bit, but I couldn't get anyone to answer me. Then I came home again, and waited and waited."

"You went from your house at two in the morning?"

"About that time, sir."

"How long did it take you to reach Catchpole Square?"

"It was a dark night, and I should think it took me half an hour or so."

"So that you would be in front of Mr. Boyd's house at about half past two?"

"Yes, sir."

"You knocked more than once?"

"Several times, sir."

"And waited between each fresh summons for an answer?"

"For the answer that never came, sir."

"And after that, you hung about the Square. Can you say for how long a time?"

"I can't speak with certainty, but I should say I must have been there altogether quite an hour."

"That brings us to half past three?"

"Yes, sir."

The Juror: "I see your point, Mr. Coroner, but the witness did not probably possess a watch."

The Coroner: "Have you a watch or a clock in your rooms?"

"No, sir."

"Then your statement as to the time is mere guesswork?"

"No, sir. When I was in Catchpole Square I heard a church clock strike three."

The Coroner (to a constable): "Do you know if there is an officer in Court who lives near Catchpole Square?"

The Constable: "I do myself, sir."

The Coroner: "Is there a church close by that tolls the hour?"

The Constable: "Yes, sir, Saint Michael's Church."

The Coroner: "It can be heard in Catchpole Square?"

The Constable: "Quite plainly, sir."

The Coroner: "Thank you." (To Mrs. Death). "You heard the hour strike when you had been some time in the Square?"

"I must have been there half an hour."

"And you remained some time afterwards?"

"For as long again."

"Are you certain that the church clock struck three?"

"I am, sir. I counted the strokes."

"You did not move out of the Square?"

"No, sir."

"During the whole time you were there was the door of Mr. Samuel Boyd's house opened?"

"No, sir."

"You did not see any man come from the house, and linger on the threshold of the door?"

"No, sir."

"At about that hour of three did you observe a sudden flash of light from an opposite house?"

"No, sir, it was quite dark all the time I was there."

"You are quite positive?"

"Quite positive, sir."

While these questions were asked and answered the spectators in Court, many of whom had been present while Dr. Pye was giving his evidence yesterday, held their breath, as it were, and an expression of intense relief was observable in the countenances of Mr. Reginald Boyd and his wife and her parents.

The Juror: "Do you think, Mr. Coroner, that the evidence on the point of time is reliable?"

The Coroner: "As reliable as the evidence of witnesses on other points."

The Juror: "It is uncorroborated."

The Coroner: "So is the evidence of Dr. Pye, as Mr. Reginald Boyd remarked."

The Juror: "So is Mr. Reginald Boyd's evidence."

The Coroner: "Exactly." (To Mrs. Death.) "I have no further questions to ask you."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE CORONER'S SUMMING-UP.

"We have now," said the Coroner, addressing the jury, "arrived at the end of the inquiry, so far as the examination of witnesses is concerned, and the duty devolves upon you of carefully considering the evidence, and of giving your verdict. At the opening of this inquiry I made a strong appeal to you to keep an open mind, and not to be influenced by the rumours and theories which have been freely broached by press and public. It is in this way that the interests of justice will be best served. The case is one of the gravest import, and your task one of unusual difficulty. For this reason I feel it my duty to address you at greater length than is usual in inquiries of this nature.

"There are leading points in the case which we may take as established beyond dispute. One is that a murder has been committed, a murder of extreme brutality, and distinguished by features of extreme cunning. Another, that the man murdered is Mr. Samuel Boyd. Another, that the murder was committed on the night of the 1st or the 2nd of March.

"That the crime should have remained undiscovered so long is due to the peculiar domestic habits of the deceased, and to the facts that he kept no servants in his house, that he lived quite alone, and that on the evening of the 1st of March he dismissed the only person whom he kept regularly employed. Had this dismissal not been given, and had Mr. Abel Death, his clerk, gone to his work as usual on the following morning, the discovery of the murder would have been made within a few hours of its perpetration, and the task before you would have been rendered far less difficult. I would not have you attach too much importance to the apparent connection between the perpetration of the murder and the disappearance of Mr. Abel Death. Coincidences as strange are not uncommon in matters less serious, and it is not because this matter is serious that the coincidence should be construed to the disadvantage of a man who is absent. Up to Friday, the 1st of March, his relations with his employer were as fairly satisfactory as could have been expected from the miserable stipend he received and from the character of the murdered man, and, unpleasant as those relations became on that last day, there was nothing in them, so far as we are aware, to supply a reason for the committal of a deliberate and dastardly murder, all the details of which must have been carefully planned. If Mr. Abel Death had been a party to this plan he would hardly have asked his employer for a loan of ten pounds, a small sum for a rich man to grant to his confidential clerk.

"For the purpose of arriving, as far as possible, at a clear comprehension of this part of the mystery let us for a moment follow the probable movements of Mr. Death on that night.

"He is dismissed from his employment, and he leaves the office, a disappointed and unhappy man; he relates to his wife all that passed between him and his employer, and subsequently informs her that he is going to Catchpole Square to make another appeal to his employer. I gather that the time of his arrival at the house would be about ten o'clock, at which hour we may assume that Mr. Samuel Boyd had not retired to rest. At about nine o'clock Lady Wharton left Mr. Samuel Boyd at the door of his house, and from that moment all is mystery. We know, however, that he must have had matters to attend to which would keep him up a couple of hours. Lady Wharton had deposited with him a number of valuable jewels, to which, when she was gone, he would naturally devote attention, appraising them, and probably taking a list of them. The dismissal of his clerk would most likely cause him to pay some attention to the state of the books and accounts, and the jewels had to be put in a place of safety.

"All this would occupy him a couple of hours, and this brings us to eleven o'clock, when he would be ready to seek his bed. But before this hour Mr. Abel Death, according to the theory we are following out, has paid his visit, or rather, has made his attempt to see his employer. He knocks at the door, and in response to the summons Mr. Boyd goes down to see who is there. A man living alone in a house so safely removed from public observation would be scarcely likely to open his street door to casual visitors at ten o'clock at night, nor, the business of the day being over, would he neglect to put the chain on the street door. His probable course of action would be to go down, and, opening the door as far as the chain would allow, inquire who is there. He is answered by Mr. Death, who begs to be admitted to make his appeal; is refused; while standing in the square implores to be taken back; is listened to, laughed at, ordered to go away, and the door shut in his face.

"I do not see how we can carry the matter farther as regards Mr. Death. To assume that he is admitted to the house, and that Mr. Boyd went to bed in his presence, is so wildly improbable that we may at once reject it. If anything can be said to be ridiculous in so awful a tragedy it would be to suppose that Mr. Boyd thus placed himself in the power and at the mercy of a man whom he knew to be embittered against him, and who was in a sense desperate. As to Mr. Abel Death's subsequent movements we are left in mystery. His wife suggests foul play. That a man left in the position to which my argument has carried him should deliberately conceal himself without a distinct motive is not to be thought of, and for this reason I consider the suggestion of foul play tenable. From whom, or from what quarter, who shall say? But we are not here to inquire into this matter; it is not the fate of Mr. Death we have to deliberate upon, and I advise you

therefore to narrow the issue, which is sufficiently wide and perplexing, by setting him aside. There is nothing whatever to connect him with the crime beyond the merest conjectures, and were he alone concerned the only verdict that could be returned would be one of 'Murder by some person or persons unknown.'

"We will now turn to another branch of the subject. In reply to a question I put to Mrs. Death she expressed her belief that her husband had no enemies: but a man carrying on such a business as Mr. Samuel Boyd transacted must have had many. However harsh it may sound, there is in my mind very little doubt that he must have inflicted great wrongs upon a number of persons. The tactics pursued by moneylenders of his class are so tricky and unscrupulous--they are so entirely oblivious of the claims of common humanity--that they must perforce breed animosity and resentment in the breasts of those whom they entrap. I am referring, understand, to that class of moneylenders whose nefarious practices have made them a danger to society, and I am happy to see that the strong arm of the law is being stretched forward to protect the unwary and unsuspecting victims who fall into their clutches. On the other hand, there are, of course, among such a man's customers some crafty borrowers who would trick the moneylender as he would trick them, men with doubtful reputations whose characters are no better than his own. It is for your consideration whether Mr. Samuel Boyd has fallen a victim to a cunningly laid plot on the part of a band of these men; the abstraction of the books and papers in which their names would appear favours this presumption. We have no evidence presented to us that affords a clue to the discovery of such a plot, but it will be as well not to lose sight of its probable existence.

"Returning to my argument concerning Mr. Samuel Boyd's movements within his house on the night in question, we behold him still alone at about eleven o'clock, his office business finished, the visit of Mr. Abel Death disposed of, and he preparing for bed. And here Mr. Reginald Boyd comes into the picture.

"We have heard from his lips his account of what took place during his interview with his father, and we have to accept or reject it. They were alone together, there were no witnesses, and we have only Mr. Reginald Boyd's word to go upon. You must not allow this to militate against him. In the circumstances of the case it is hardly possible that there could have been witnesses to corroborate the account he gave, and I have no hesitation in declaring that his bearing in the witness box bore the impress of truth. It has been objected to that in the course of this inquiry private domestic affairs have been dragged into the light which seemingly had no connection with it, but painful as this must have been to certain of the witnesses, it has established more than one point which, in the opinion of some of you, may be of importance--such, for instance, as the nature of the relations which existed between Mr. Samuel Boyd and his son, and the fact that the latter was in extremely straitened circumstances. I do not think that any blame

is to be attached to the son for having renounced the name of Boyd two years ago, when the strained relations between him and his father led to his leaving, or being turned from, his home in Catchpole Square. It is not an instance without parallel; men have changed their names for motives less powerful than this. Mr. Reginald Boyd's bearing while giving his evidence here, was that of a high-spirited, independent young gentleman, who held in abhorrence the business tactics and practices of his father, and it is not unnatural, when the connection was severed, that he should resolve to be quit of a name which carried with it a disreputable stigma.

"Nor was it unnatural that Mr. Reginald Boyd should have believed himself to have been tricked out of the fortune his mother left him, and that, being now a married man, anxious to provide a home for his wife, he should have made an effort to obtain restitution. In my reference to these matters I am not wandering from the issue, for what you have to consider is, not one incident, circumstance, or act, apart from the others, but all the incidents, circumstances, and acts in relation to each other. What in the former case may seem suspicious may, in the latter case, be robbed of its suspicious complexion.

"And do not forget that there was not a single question put to Mr. Reginald Boyd, whether pertinent to this inquiry or not, which he refused to answer. He evinced, indeed, an anxiety to disclose everything within his knowledge which cannot be regarded in any other than a praiseworthy light. He even went so far as to voluntarily mention small incidents leading to the asking of questions, his answers to which may be unfavourably construed. I observed him narrowly while these questions were being asked and answered. There was no confusion in his manner; he answered unhesitatingly and frankly. His demeanour was entirely that of a man who was giving his evidence with honest intention."

"Interrupting you here, Mr. Coroner," said the Juror, "was not the evidence of Dr. Pye given in a manner which invited entire belief in his honesty and straightforwardness?"

"I was coming to Dr. Pye," said the Coroner. "Yes, there was nothing in his conduct in the witness box that would warrant a belief that he was not speaking truthfully. It cannot be denied that the evidence he gave threw a startling suspicion on Mr. Reginald Boyd, and were it not for the evidence of Mrs. Abel Death which, in point of time, is in direct conflict with that of Dr. Pye, I should be addressing you in different terms, so far as Mr. Reginald Boyd is concerned. Here we are confronted with a most singular discrepancy. Dr. Pye states that he saw a man issue from Mr. Samuel Boyd's house a three o'clock in the morning. Mrs. Abel Death states that she was in Catchpole Square from half past two till half past three on the same morning, and that during the whole of that time the door of Mr. Boyd's house was not opened. I do not see how these

conflicting statements can be brought into reconcilement. The presumption that Mrs. Death may have been mistaken as to the time of her visit to, and her departure from, Catchpole Square is disposed of by her further statement that, while she was in Catchpole Square, she heard the hour of three struck from a neighbouring church clock. And we have evidence that the chimes of Saint Michael's Church can be heard in the Square."

The Juror: "Might she not have been mistaken, Mr. Coroner? It may have struck two. If Mrs. Death reached Catchpole Square at half past one and remained till half past two, the discrepancy would vanish."

The Coroner: "Just so; but it is not for us to alter the statements of witnesses in order to make them fit in with one another. We have to take the evidence as it is presented to us, and draw our conclusions from them. I asked Mrs. Death if she was certain that the church clock struck three, and she answered that she was, and that she counted the strokes. However, gentlemen, there is the discrepancy, and you must place your own construction upon it.

"With respect to the night on which the murder was committed we may safely assume that it was Friday night. Mrs. Death's repeated knocking at the street door would surely have aroused the inmate had he been living. Mr. Boyd was in the habit of going out daily, but from that fatal Friday night he was not seen alive.

"So much of the morbid interest attaching to this case has been centred upon Mr. Reginald Boyd and Mr. Abel Death, that there is a danger of matters being overlooked which have an important bearing upon the inquiry. The disposal of the body in bed and the composing of the limbs after a violent life and death struggle had taken place, the orderly condition of the rooms after the confusion into which this violent struggle must have thrown their contents, direct our minds to a consideration of the kind of men responsible for the murder and the robbery. That so much trouble should have been taken to remove and obliterate all signs of the struggle, and to make it appear that a ruthlesss and brutal deed had not been committed, would seem to point to the probability that the men are not experienced members of the criminal classes; while the skill and cunning of the plot, and the cool and deliberate way in which it was carried out, denote that they are men of infinite resource and daring. I use the plural because I share the belief that the deed and all that followed it were not the work of one hand. A master mind there certainly must be, and I can conceive no greater danger to society than that such a man should be at large, watching this case and guarding against its consequences.

"Undoubtedly the leading motive was robbery, but behind this leading motive were others as to the nature of which we have no clue. For what reason were the books of accounts and the private papers of the murdered man removed? Valueless in a commercial sense, why should the robbers have encumbered themselves with articles of considerable bulk, the carrying of which, by night or by day, would have drawn attention upon them? Some ulterior motive there must have been. The close and secret manner in which the deceased conducted his business, the circumstance that he admitted no man into his confidence, serve, in the present aspect of the case, as a stumbling block to justice. The criminals must have been familiar with the premises and with the habits of the deceased. They must have known where the key of the safe was kept, they must have known that it contained property of value. It is difficult to understand why a sum of money was left in the pockets of Mr. Boyd, but it is only one of many circumstances which it is difficult to understand.

"And mark the hardihood, confidence, and patience with which the plot was carried to issues not included in the original plan of the crime. On Saturday morning Mr. Boyd lies dead in his bed, and the criminals, if not still in the house, have free access to it. I am following this out now because it is quite likely to have escaped you in the multitudinous incidents and circumstances of the mystery which it is necessary for you to bear in mind. On Monday Lady Wharton recollects that Mr. Boyd, when he received the fresh acceptances signed by Lord Wharton and endorsed by Lord Fairfax, omitted to hand back the old bills for which the new ones were given in exchange. She writes to Mr. Boyd, she being then in Bournemouth and he lying dead in London. In her letter she requests him to bring the old bills to Bournemouth, and also requests that the loan of £1,000 already arranged between them, for which she had deposited jewels as security, should be increased to £1,500, promising, for the additional £500, to hand him other jewels as security when they meet in Bournemouth. The letter written and posted, is left by the postman in the post box of Mr. Boyd's house in Catchpole Square. And here we are brought face to face with the unparallelled audacity of the criminals. Having access to the house they obtain possession of the letter, and they conceive the idea of personating the dead man for the purpose of getting hold of these additional jewels. No illiterate, uneducated criminals these; past-masters in forgery as well as in murder, who shall say what undiscovered crimes may be laid at their door? I have no hesitation in declaring that no parallel exists in criminal records to the expedient they adopted and carried to a successful end. You have heard the astonishing story from Lady Wharton's own lips, you have heard it corroborated by her brother, Lord Fairfax. It is an extraordinary revelation, more like a chapter from the dark pages of romance than a chapter from real life. The closer the attention we devote to the many-sided aspects of this mystery, the longer we consider it and turn it this way and that in the endeavour to grasp a tangible clue, the more bewildering does it become. One moment suspicion rests upon one person, the next moment upon another, the next our suspicions fade away;

while behind those whom we already know as being connected--and bear in mind, as likely as not innocently connected--with the awful tragedy lurk others whose identity up to the present moment is a sealed mystery.

"It has been my desire to place the matter before you in as clear a light as possible, and I am fully sensible of the difficulty of your task. Justice demands that this mystery shall be cleared up, but be careful that you do not take a false step, for at the same time justice demands that you do injustice to no man because of some theory or prejudice you may have in your mind."

CHAPTER XLIX.

LITTLE GRACIE DEATH ON THE TRAIL.

While her mother was being examined in the Coroner's Court, little Gracie Death, glowing with gratitude to Aunt Rob and her family, and solemnly impressed with a sense of the importance of the task she had undertaken, set out on the trail of Dr. Vinsen. She clearly understood that she was serving Dick's friends as well as Dick himself, but it was of Dick she thought most, and it was him she most ardently wished to serve. The attachments formed by children, and the ideals they create, are often stronger and more binding than those of men and women; and no stronger attachment was ever formed by a child, and no more lofty and beautiful an ideal created than those which reigned in Gracie's soul for Dick. Her heart throbbed with pride to think that the man she loved best in the world next to her father had taken her into partnership, and had entrusted her with a mission. There was no indication of this on her quiet, sallow face, or in her black eyes. When passion is demonstrative it is far less enduring than when it lies hidden in the soul.

Gracie intended to fulfil the mission entrusted to her. Dick had said that between them they would make Scotland Yard sit up. Well, they would. Inspired not only by the kiss which he had given her for good luck, but by an absolute reliance upon herself, Gracie pondered upon her course of action. She must go somewhere. Where? She had no idea in which direction Dr. Vinsen lived, and she was not the kind of girl to flounder about without something to guide her. Once she set eyes upon him she would stick to him like a limpet to a rock till her purpose was achieved. She turned her face homeward; he might by chance be there.

He was there. She heard his voice as she was ascending the stairs, and she paused to listen. He was asking the children for their mother, and a chorus of voices informed him that Mrs. Death had gone to the "inkage," which was the nearest approach the little ones could make to "inquest." Gracie thought it was a curious question for him to ask, because she had heard him and her mother speaking of Mrs. Death being a witness in the inquiry. She crept up a step to hear what further he had to say.

"And Gracie," he said, "where's our little Gracie--our lit-tle Gra-cie? Has she gone to the 'inkage' too?" Who could doubt that it was out of mere playfulness he gave their pronunciation of the word?

"Oh, no," answered the most forward of the children, "she can't get in, she can't. And mother didn't want her to."

Other questions of no importance were asked and answered, and then the door of the room was opened, and Gracie saw Dr. Vinsen's legs on the landing. Down she slid, as noiselessly as a cat, out into the mews she sped, and from the recess of a neighbouring front door watched him issue from the house. He stopped and exchanged words with a woman whom Gracie knew, and with whom she was a great favourite; they were close to her hiding place, and Gracie heard what passed. He was very gracious, he smiled blandly, spoke in a smooth voice, and pushed his hat to the back of his head to wipe his brow, thereby affording a glimpse of his halo. To Gracie's surprise he was inquiring for her again, and the woman could not inform him where she was.

"She's a busy little thing, sir," said the woman; "she runs in and out as if all the world and his wife was depending on her. We all like little Gracie Death."

"I trust she is deserving of it," said Dr. Vinsen, with a number of amiable nods. "Sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child."

"If that's a dig into little Gracie," said the woman, with spirit, "it's what she don't deserve. Beggin' your pardon, sir, I won't have little Gracie run down."

"One for him," thought Gracie, with a chuckle. "Give it him hot. You're a good sort, Mrs. Thomson."

"Dear me, dear me!" said Dr. Vinson. "Run our little Gracie down--our lit-tle Gra-cie down! No, no, indeed! The sweetest child, the sweetest child!"

"That she is, sir," said the woman, "and I beg your pardon again for speaking so hasty."

"No offence, my good creature, no offence," said Dr. Vinsen; "where none is meant, none should be taken. Is this your little one?" A sturdy blue-eyed toddlekins was tugging at her apron strings, and he stooped and patted the curly head. "Here's a penny for lollypops. Good day--good day!"

He raised his hat, which caused the woman to stare, and strolled out of Draper's Mews. She gave a start when Gracie glided from behind the door.

"I didn't want him to see me," said Gracie. "Thank you ever so much for sticking up for me."

And she, also, strolled out of Draper's Mews, and followed Dr. Vinsen at a distance so carefully and warily, and apparently with so much unconcern, that no one would have

suspected that she was engaged upon the most important task she had ever undertaken. "Now I've got you," was her thought, "and I don't let you go." She kept her sharp eyes fixed upon him. When he stopped she stopped, when he lingered she lingered, when he walked slowly she walked slowly, when he quickened his steps she quickened hers. It appeared as if he were undecided as to the course he should pursue, for now and then he looked about him, and seemed to debate which way to turn. It was evident that he had no definite business to attend to, and no definite goal to reach. Passing a public house of a superior kind, he had gone a dozen yards beyond it when he turned back and entered the private bar. Grace made a rapid survey, to see how many doors there were by which he could leave. In point of fact, although of course it was a corner house, there was only one, but of this she was not aware, so she posted herself on the opposite corner and watched all the doors, and if there had been twice as many she would have had eyes for them all. He remained a long time in the private bar, and when he made his reappearance he was still as undecided as to his course. It may have been out of mere idleness that he entered a chemist's shop and purchased something, which he put into his pocket as he came out. In this aimless way he and Gracie strolled on through Park Street, Islington, at one part of which he crossed the road and looked up at the windows of a house. It was the house in which Reginald had lodged. Gracie noted the number, and would not forget it. So they strolled on, past the Grand Theatre, past Sadler's Wells, through Clerkenwell into Holborn, where he hailed a bus for Charing Cross, and got inside. "It's a good job Dick gave me some money," thought Gracie, as she scrambled to the top without being observed by the gentleman she had been following.

CHAPTER L.

EZRA LYNN, THE MONEY-LENDER.

At Charing Cross Dr. Vinsen alighted, and Gracie descended from the roof in the manner generally adopted by females, with her back instead of her face to the horses, which is by far the more dangerous way of the two to climb down from an omnibus. But, Gracie being a girl of unusual sharpness and penetration, it may be that she got down that way for the purpose of keeping her eye upon Dr. Vinsen, and if this were so she was quite successful, for she did not lose sight of him for a single moment, despite the busy throng of people hurrying in all directions, and the bewildering entanglement of vehicles of every description, which render this part of London at mid-day one of the most marvellous demonstrations of the civilised life of a great city that can be met with all the world over.

It was now one o'clock, and the newsboys were shouting out the early editions of the evening newspapers, for if there is one thing upon which modern journalism especially prides itself, it is that it can take time by the forelock and can hurry the rising and the setting of the sun. In these shouts and cries Dr. Vinsen--still lingering with the uncertain air upon him by which his previous movements had been distinguished--appeared to take great interest, listening to them intently and scanning such portions of the contents-bills carried by the boys as were visible in the midst of the hurly-burly. The familiar cry of "The Great Catchpole Square Mystery!" was as potent a bait as ever to purchasers, among whom Dr. Vinsen was not the least eager. Gracie saw on the contents-bills such headlines as "Emphatic Statement of Mr. Reginald Boyd," "The Coroner's Reproof to the Juryman," and "Mrs. Abel Death under examination," and she herself expended a halfpenny in literature, but did not stop to read the paper, her whole attention being required to watch her game and to elude detection.

At the corner of Parliament Street Dr. Vinsen entered a bus that crossed Westminster Bridge. There was no room on the roof for Gracie, and she dared not get inside, so she ran along the pavement, her breath coming thick and fast; there was plenty of space in this wide thoroughfare for the vehicle to put on a spurt, and the horses galloped smartly on. Luckily for Gracie there was a stoppage at the top of Parliament Street to enable passengers to get in and out, and she could recover her breath; and when the omnibus started again the traffic on the bridge was crowded, so that she trotted along quite comfortably, and had no difficulty in keeping her game in view. At the end of the bridge Dr. Vinsen got out and sauntered on past St. George's Hospital and the shabby old site of Astley's Theatre, haunted by memories of Ducrow and Ada Menken--names strange to the rising generation, though once upon a time they made all London ring--and past a

medley of mean shops, till, on the opposite side of the road, he called a halt before a warehouse where portmanteaus and travelling trunks were manufactured.

Under a verandah in front of this warehouse were a number of trunks, a few of which bore on their lids the names or initials, newly painted in white, of the customers for whom they had been made. Two bore the same name, Signor Corsi, and it was these which had the greatest attraction for Dr. Vinsen. They were of large size and special make, far superior to the ordinary travelling trunk. Entering the warehouse, he came out presently accompanied by a man, either the proprietor or one of his salesmen, who opened one of the trunks and pointed out its exceptional features. It was of peculiar construction; the interior was padded, and there were receptacles lined with soft material, in which articles could be deposited with little fear of breakage. The interest which Dr. Vinsen took in the trunks and the long conversation between him and the salesman, whetted Gracie's curiosity, and she burned to know the why and the wherefore; but being compelled to keep at a safe distance, she could not hear a word that was spoken. Finally, Dr. Vinsen entered the warehouse again, and did not make his reappearance for twelve minutes by a clock in the shop near which she was lingering. He and the salesman stood chattering at the door for another minute or two, and it seemed to Gracie as if he had given an order, for he made an entry in his pocketbook; then he turned his face Kennington way and hailed a tramcar. Gracie scrambled up to the roof, where she opened her paper and read the report of the inquest up to the time of going to press. Folding the paper carefully, she put it in the bosom of her frock.

Dr. Vinsen did not leave the tram till it had reached its terminus. This part of London was new to Gracie, and they were now some miles from Draper's Mews. "If he lives here," she thought, "it's a long way for him to come to us." That he did live there was proved by his stopping before a house of decent pretensions and opening the door with his own private latchkey. There was a little brass plate attached to the side of the door, and creeping past it Gracie read on it the name, "Ezra Lynn," and beneath it in smaller letters the announcement, "Sums of from £5 to £15,000 advanced at a low rate of interest on promissory note alone, without any sureties or security whatever, and without any beforehand charges. The strictest privacy and secrecy observed." Gracie's eyes dilated at the magnitude of the sum, £15,000, and for a moment her idea was that Dr. Vinsen had gone into the house to borrow that amount; the next moment she fell to speculating upon the strange circumstance that Dr. Vinsen should possess a private latchkey to such an Aladdin's Cave. "I wonder!" she said to herself. It was sufficiently expressive for her understanding, but it went no farther in speech.

She felt hungry, it being now past three o'clock, and she went into a baker's shop nearly opposite the house of Ezra Lynn and asked for a penny loaf. Behind the counter was a

motherly woman with a baby in her arms. She gazed kindly at Gracie, and passed the crummiest penny loaf in her stock across the counter.

"You seem tired, child," she said, stopping in the middle of a little nursery song she was singing to her baby.

"Oh, no, ma'am," said Gracie, digging a piece out of the loaf and smiling at the baby. Gracie was fond of babies.

"And hungry," said the woman.

"Yes, I am hungry."

"Wouldn't you like a bun better?"

"This is more filling," said practical Gracie.

"Dear heart, what a sensible little mite! And how dusty! You don't look very strong."

"Ah, but I am; you mustn't go by looks," said Gracie, and encouraged by the woman's kind voice, she asked if she could have a glass of water.

"You shall have a glass of milk," said the woman, going to an inner room and returning with it.

"It's good of you," said Gracie, simply, "I'm ever so much obliged to you. May I eat my loaf here?"

"Certainly, child, and sit down and rest."

The chair she pointed to had its back to the window from which Ezra Lynn's house was visible; Gracie turned it round, so that she faced it. There she sat awhile, munching her bread and drinking her milk. A man came into the shop, poorly dressed, haggard, with distress in his face, and yet with a certain defiant independence in his manner.

"Will you trust me half-a-quartern, missis?" he said, abruptly.

The woman shook her head. "You're deep enough in my books already, Mr. Mildew, and I can't afford to let you get deeper. Charity begins at home."

"And stops there," said the man. "All right. I thought I'd try. My heart's fairly broke trying to get work. It doesn't much matter. The kiddies must starve!" He turned to leave the shop.

This touched Gracie's heart. She knew what poverty was; she knew what it was to want bread. "The kiddies must starve" fell upon her like a blow.

Of the money which Dick had given to her she had only spent twopence in fares and a halfpenny for a paper, and she had more than half-a-crown left. "The kiddies must starve!" Not if she could help it. The price of bread was marked up in the shop window, "Fivepence per quartern, full weight." She put twopence halfpenny on the counter.

"Please let him have the bread, ma'am."

The man stared at her; the woman's face flushed.

"Take your money back, child," she said. "You shall have the bread, Mr. Mildew: it won't break me."

She weighed the loaf, which was short of two pounds; it needed a piece for make-weight, and, the fount of kindness open, she was not particular to an ounce.

"Thank you, missis," said the man, "I'll pay you the first money I earn, though God knows where I'm to get work. And thank you, little 'un; you don't live on the fat of the land, from the looks of you. I've got a girl about your size and weight at home." He repeated the word with savage emphasis. "Home! There'll be none to-morrow. Rent owing, money owing. Out into the streets we go. That's the law."

"It's got to be obeyed, Mr. Mildew," said the woman. "It's hard lines, I own, but it's got to be obeyed. What does Mr. Lynn say? Won't he give you time?"

"Not an hour, not a minute. He's sucked me dry, and sucked the last drop out of me. Him give time!--with the law on his side! I'd like to grind my heel into his face!"

"You're not the only one," said the woman.

"That's no comfort. Look here, missis, just cast your eye over this"--he pulled out a tattered penny account book--"it's all set down in plain figures. Twelve months ago--here's the date--he lent me four pounds, and took a bill of sale on my bits of sticks. I didn't get the four pounds--it was eighteen shillings short, for expenses and inquiries and interest in advance. Three pound two, that's as much as I got, and I had to pay half-

a-crown a week for fifty-two weeks. If I was a week behindhand there was a fine of sixpence, which kept on being charged and put down against me till that week was paid up. It was all a muddle, and I don't pretend to understand it, but a mate of mine that's quick at reckoning has figured it out, and he says it comes to more than six hundred per cent, interest. All I know is that I've paid five pound ten for that three pound two I got from him, and now he makes out I owe him twice as much again. And the law gives him right. What I say is, damn the law, and them that made it, and them that fatten on it!"

It was pitiable to witness the passion and the helplessness of the man.

Gracie, listening to this tale of wrong-doing, and never losing sight of Ezra Lynn's door, saw it opened, and saw a man come from the house, a thin, slinking, sly-faced man in rusty black, whom she supposed to be Ezra Lynn; but she was presently undeceived.

"There's his jackal," said the man in the baker's shop, "that collects for him, and grinds the poor chaps down that's drawn into his mill. Grinds 'em down, blood, bones, heart, and soul. Mr. Lynn's too grand now to do the small dirty work himself. It was different once I've been told, missis."

"Yes," said the woman, "I remember when Mr. Lynn first set up as a money-lender in the neighbourhood; they say he started with a hundred pounds, but a man like that, who wouldn't step aside to save a human creature's life, soon grows rich."

"He's worse than the lowest pickpocket," said the man "I've heard he could set up his carriage, if he liked. He's got big fish to look after now; he leaves his jackal to look after the sprats."

"I warned you, you know," said the woman, "when you told me you were getting a loan from him."

"I know you did, but I had a child to bury, and I couldn't get the money anywhere else. Then my missis fell ill----"

He broke off suddenly. "I've had my share of trouble, I think."

"That you have, and I'm sorry for you. You're not the first by many a score that that man's ruined. And to talk to him you wouldn't believe that he'd pull a leg off a fly."

"If it wasn't for the law," said the man, morosely, "I'd have his blood!"

The door on the opposite side of the road opened again, and Dr. Vinsen appeared on the threshold, buttoning his glove; a look of hate and fear darkened the man's features.

"You'd hardly believe there was so much wickedness under that smooth face of his," said the woman.

"Smooth face, black heart," muttered the man, leaving the shop hurriedly, and crossing over to Dr. Vinsen.

Gracie rose and made a step towards the door; she dared not leave the shop, for Dr. Vinsen stood immediately facing it. Her heart was beating violently, but her face was quite composed.

"Who is that gentleman, ma'am?" she asked.

"That's the man we've been speaking of," the woman replied, "Mr. Ezra Lynn. I don't call him a gentleman myself."

"Would you mind telling me," continued Gracie, "if you know Dr. Vinsen?"

"Vinsen--Vinsen," said the woman, considering. "I never heard the name. I don't think he lives in this neighbourhood. Bless my soul! What's the child after?"

Gracie had dashed out of the shop. She had seen Mr. Mildew approach Dr. Vinsen and accost him; she had seen Dr. Vinsen smile and shake his head; she had seen the man raise his fist, as if he were about to strike, and then, afraid that his passion might carry him too far, turn quickly upon his heel and walk away; she had seen Dr. Vinsen hail a hansom cab and get into it; and it was then that she ran out of the shop. Off rattled the cab, and Gracie after it. A couple of hundred yards, and her breath was gone, and the cab out of sight.

"It's a good job I didn't catch up to it," said Gracie, panting on the kerb. "He might have seen me, and all the fat would be in the fire. I've got something to tell Dick. We'll make Scotland Yard sit up. But what does it all mean--what does it all mean?"

CHAPTER LI.

A DEAD LOCK.

"The Little Busy Bee" and the other evening papers were kept very busy that afternoon. So far as the examination of the witnesses and the Coroner's address were concerned, the inquest was over, and it had been expected that the verdict would soon be delivered; but although the jury had been deliberating (some persons declared squabbling) since three o'clock, and it was now past five, no verdict was yet returned. It was rumoured that there was a serious difference of opinion between them on more than one point, and it was certain that they had obstinately refused to be guided by the Coroner, whose authority they set at naught. In vain did he argue, remonstrate, and expostulate with them; in vain did he draw up the form of verdict which he said it was their duty to deliver; they refused point blank to sign the paper.

Animated discussions took place as to what the verdict would be, and so keen is the love of sport in the British mind that odds were laid on this or that conclusion. A verdict of Murder against Mr. Reginald Boyd was first favourite; two to one on it. A verdict of Murder against some person or persons unknown was second favourite, six to four against it. A verdict of Murder against Mr. Abel Death, fifty to one against it. The names and the odds were freely bandied about, and there were many persons who discussed them with a light, not to say jovial, air; while Reginald and Florence, and Aunt and Uncle Rob awaited the result with feelings it is not difficult to imagine. Quick to take advantage of opportunity, the newspapers poured out edition after edition, seizing upon the most trivial incidents as headline-pegs upon which to hang their ingenious vapourings.

"At half-past four," records "The Little Busy Bee," "the Coroner again asked the jury whether there was any special or knotty point upon which they needed information or direction. The foreman replied that they did not need direction in matters of fact, but that there was a difference of opinion among the jury, who held such strong views upon certain aspects of the case, that it was doubtful whether any definite verdict would be arrived at.

"The Coroner: 'There must be a verdict of some kind I presume there is no doubt in your minds that a murder has been committed?'

"The Foreman: 'None whatever. We are agreed upon that.'

"The Coroner: 'You know the common form. A verdict of Murder against some person or persons unknown would obviate the difficulty.'

"The Juror: 'It would not. I have followed the case very carefully, and have come to a conclusion.'

"The Coroner: 'You are open to reason, I hope.'

"The Juror: 'As open as yourself, Mr. Coroner, and, strange as you may think it, I claim to possess an average intelligence. Throughout the whole of this inquiry it has been forced upon me that there has been far too much dictation.'

"The Coroner: 'At whose hands, sir?'

"The Juror: 'At yours, Mr. Coroner. You have treated us like a flock of sheep, and I, for one, object to be driven.'

"The Coroner: 'I pass over the want of respect you show in your manner of addressing me. Gentlemen, in my long service as Coroner this is an entirely new experience, and I greatly regret it. In view of the serious differences of opinion between you, it is advisable that you take your law from me.'

"The Juror: 'I shall not. I stand upon common sense.'

"The Coroner: 'Gentlemen, this is foreign to the duty you are called upon to perform. Continue your deliberations, and arrive at your verdict as expeditiously as the interests of justice will allow.'

"It would be obviously improper," said "The Little Busy Bee," "at this stage of the inquiry, to make any comments upon this very unusual scene. When the verdict is given we shall have something to say upon the rights and privileges of coroners and juries, which seem to be imperfectly understood."

One of the most conspicuous headlines in the journals now was, "Deadlock among the Jury on the Catchpole Square Murder." It was weary waiting for the parties vitally interested in the result. Florence and Aunt Rob entreated Reginald to leave the Court, but he refused, and Uncle Rob upheld him. "Reginald must remain till it is over," he said. He suspected that Reginald would be followed by the police if he went away.

Meanwhile, news of the rewards offered by Reginald for the discovery of the murderer and of Abel Death had become widely known, and was freely discussed. And upon the

top of this came another piece of news. All over London billstickers were pasting offers of another reward offered by Lady Wharton's lawyers for the discovery of her jewels, of which a detailed list was printed in the bills. Advertisements were also inserted in the evening journals to the same effect. So the excitement was fed and kept up.

Once, when Uncle Rob went from the court to get a little fresh air, Detective Lambert came up and spoke to him.

"A long job," he said.

"A wickedly long job," responded Uncle Rob.

"I saw your nephew this morning," said Lambert, "sticking up the reward bills. He's the kind of chap that nothing comes amiss to; an all-round sort of chap; can turn his hand to anything. Just think of a young fellow like that turning bill-sticker. Not at all a bad move. It's a lumping reward, £500. Do you know what he said to me? 'Why not earn it?' says he, and says it as if he meant it."

"He wouldn't have said it if he hadn't meant it."

"Will it be paid?"

"If it's earned," replied Uncle Rob, "and I hope to God it soon will be!"

"Ah," said Lambert, and gave his brother officer a covert, sidelong look. "See here, Robson. We had a private talk together, and I made you a promise."

"Yes, you did," said Uncle Rob, and accustomed as he ought to have been, as an inspector of police, to strange surprises, there was a flutter at his heart. But then it was a beloved daughter's happiness that was at stake.

"I promised to give you timely notice," continued Lambert, "when something was going to happen."

"Yes."

"I never go from my word. Something is going to happen. I'm only waiting here till the verdict's given, and then----"

"And then?"

"Your son-in-law's in Court, facing it like a man," said Lambert, branching off, "and I admire him for it. Supposing the verdict runs, 'some person or persons unknown,' he'll be coming out with the ladies on his way home when the sheet's signed."

"Yes, he will; and if it runs the other way?"

"Meaning if it's brought against him by name?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, of course he'll be prepared."

"He's prepared for anything, Lambert; he's made up his mind to it: so have we all." Uncle Rob spoke in a sad tone; these two men perfectly understood each other, though the meaning of what they said would not have been clear to a stranger.

"Step aside, Robson," said Lambert, and his voice was friendly, "and let us talk as if it was the weather we were interested in. Cloudy to-day, fine to-morrow; there's no telling what changes to expect in such a blessed climate as ours. So it is with human nature; up to-day, down to-morrow, and the other way round. All's well that ends well, eh?"

"Yes," said Uncle Rob, mechanically.

"Prepared for anything he is," Lambert went on. "I call that sensible and manly; but he's been that all through. So what I say is, to save a scene, wouldn't it be a good thing to get your wife and daughter out of the way?"

"How?"

"Well, by letting them go home by themselves. When two women are together like that, with trouble ahead, they're a comfort to each other. They must be tired out of their lives sitting in that stuffy court all day. A pair of bricks I call them; I should be proud, I should indeed, Robson, if they were my wife and daughter. Proud you must be of them--in a melancholy way, as things are, but that's natural under the circumstances. Wheedle them home, Robson, and let us get the business over quietly."

Uncle Rob knew what was meant by "the business." "It's decided upon, then," he said.

"Yes, and I've got the warrant in my pocket."

"Whatever the verdict is?"

"Whatever the verdict is."

"Is there anything against him," asked Uncle Rob, with a sinking heart, "beyond what has come out in the inquest?"

"Nothing; but that is supposed to be enough to commence with. Get the ladies away quietly, just whisper a word to him, and we'll walk along as comfortably as possible, and no one the wiser. I've kept it snug on purpose for your sake."

"It's kind of you, but there's no getting the women away; they'll not make a scene," said Uncle Rob, huskily; he was thinking of Florence. "We've talked it over among ourselves, and I think it would alter your opinion if you could have heard my son-in-law this morning."

"How do you know what my opinion is?" asked Lambert, in his most leisurely manner.

"I don't know. We couldn't help seeing the way the case was going, and if it could be done in a lawful and legal way, Reginald would not wait to be brought before a judge. He would go himself and say, 'What have you got against me? Here I am, ready to answer it.'"

"But it can't be done that way. There's a settled form to go through, and we must abide by it. Well, I've given my advice, and it's a pity the ladies should be present, but if you say it can't be helped, well, it can't be, and there's an end of it. What do you think about giving them a hint beforehand. It'll break the shock."

"Yes, I might do that," said Uncle Rob.

He looked up into Lambert's face; he could do that, being the shorter man by two inches. He was well acquainted with Lambert's character, and knew that he was kindly disposed towards him, but there was so much more consideration evinced for his feelings than he could reasonably have expected that it seemed to him as if Lambert was keeping something in the background. Lambert returned his gaze steadily and impenetrably, and passed his hand over his chin with more than his customary thoughtfulness, but there was nothing in that action to enlighten Uncle Rob as to what was passing in his mind. Still he was emboldened to say,

"Speaking as we are in confidence, is there anything behind this, Lambert, that would bring hope and comfort to my wife and daughter?"

Lambert's hand travelled from his chin to his under lip, which he softly pinched as caressingly as if he were smoothing a favourite cat.

"Why shouldn't she hope?" he said. "What's going to be done is only what might be expected. If her husband wasn't prepared for it of course it would be different, but as it is----" He seemed to think the uncompleted sentence sufficiently expressive, for he did not finish it.

"You'll wait till the verdict's given?" said Uncle Rob.

"I'll wait a reasonable time; I can't say more than that, because I shouldn't be surprised--and don't you be--if something happens that I can't call to mind has ever happened before in a murder inquest, and that is, that the jury will either give no verdict at all, or will give one that the Coroner will refuse to accept. There's a man among them who's bent upon having his own way, and that will stick out like grim death if he can't bring the others to his way of thinking. He's a kind of animal not often met with on juries, but there he is, and has to be reckoned with. A curious point, isn't it? But you can make up your mind to one thing. So far as justice is concerned there will be no dead lock. I've got hold of the reins, and I'll see to that."

Uncle Rob searched his mind for a clue, and did not find it. Lambert's voice was resolute and stern, and he was about to arrest a man to save whose life Uncle Rob would have laid down his own; and yet here he was unbosoming himself in a friendly and confiding way to the very person against whose happiness he was conspiring. It would have taken a wiser head than Uncle Rob's to solve the enigma. What Lambert said next did not help to make matters clearer.

"And don't take it too much to heart," he said, with a soothing pat on Uncle Rob's shoulder. "I know what I'm about, so don't take it too much to heart. It's the advice of a friend, Robson."

"There's cold comfort in it when the charge is murder, and a man's life is hanging to it," said Uncle Rob.

"Perhaps so, perhaps so, if you look at it only from the outside; but there's another view."

"What is it?"

"That's my secret. When I let it out you'll see what I'm driving at. I've done one or two things in my time, and this will be the climax." He smacked his lips with a relish, and

repeated, "The climax. I put it to you, Robson, old man, whether it isn't better that the arrest should be made by a friendly hand than by the hand of a stranger? I'm not the only one who's itching to get the credit of clearing up a mystery that's set all London ringing; and we're not half done with it yet, not half done. It's a feather in one's cap to be mixed up with it." He rubbed his hands. "No wonder others are keen upon it, but there's only one man in England that's got his finger on the pulse of the mystery, and that's the man that's talking to you now, and taking you, in a manner of speaking, into his confidence."

"Ana that is why you are going to arrest my son-in-law," said Uncle Rob, rather bitterly.

"And that is why," said Lambert, cheerfully, "I am going to arrest your son-in-law on the charge of murdering his father, Mr. Samuel Boyd, of Catchpole Square. Before long you'll be shaking me by the hand, and thanking me for what I'm doing."

"Then you don't believe him guilty?" said Uncle Rob, eagerly.

"Don't ask me for opinions. I've been open with you for old times' sake, but my opinions, for the present, I keep to myself." He looked at his watch. "What time are you due at the station, Robson."

"I must be there within the hour. I wish I'd resigned, or asked to be suspended."

"The worst move you could have made. Duty's duty. There was a Roman father once--I don't remember his name--that sent his own son to execution, and looked on while it was done."

"What do you mean?" asked Uncle Rob. His voice trembled, his fingers twined convulsively.

"It's plain enough," said Lambert, half roughly. "You're on night duty at Bishop Street Station."

"And the charge will be laid there!" cried Uncle Rob, a cold perspiration breaking out on his forehead.

"It's in the district; it's the nearest station. There's no help for it; I wish there was."

"They'll never forgive me, never!" said Uncle Rob. "My own child, Lambert, my own child! To strike a death blow at my own child!"

"Who's talking of death blows? Pull yourself together. It's better so; you can make things easier for him. As for forgiveness, they're not the women I take them for if they harbour a thought against you. They're true grit, that's what they are." "There's something going on in Court."

They hurried in together, and were present at another altercation between Coroner and jury, the leading actors in it being, as before, the Coroner and the recalcitrant juror. From the flushed faces of the jurymen it was evident that there had been a heated discussion. Finally the Coroner proposed to take the verdict of the majority, and another difficulty presented itself.

"There's no majority," said the foreman, who appeared to be the most helpless of the party. "As a matter of fact we are split into three camps of equal numbers, and no one will give way."

"Is there no possibility of your agreeing?" inquired the Coroner.

"If we were locked up for a week," replied the foreman, "I don't believe we should agree."

"Well," said the Coroner, with a motion as if he were giving up the thing in despair, "let me know in plain terms how the matter stands, and I will see what can be done."

"We will put it down in writing," said the foreman.

Thereupon the jury retired, and after a lapse of twenty minutes or so returned with three documents, which were handed to the Coroner. They revealed an extraordinary state of affairs.

The first, signed by four jurymen, was a verdict of Wilful Murder against some person or persons unknown.

The second, signed by four other jurymen, was a verdict of Wilful Murder against Abel Death.

When this was read out a shriek rang through the court, and Mrs. Death, starting to her feet, screamed in wild tones,

"You wicked liars! You liars! You wicked liars!"

With great difficulty she was silenced, and restrained from rushing to the spot where the jurymen were clustered together.

The third document, signed by other four jurymen, was a verdict of Wilful Murder against Reginald Boyd.

"Do you present these to me in all seriousness?" asked the Coroner.

"They are the conclusions arrived at by the jury," replied the Juror. "With eight of my colleagues I do not agree, but for all that I have not hectored them."

"Your conduct during this inquiry is open to severe censure," said the Coroner, "and you strangely misapprehend your duty. Gentlemen, you have presented me with three separate verdicts, which you must have known I cannot accept. The dissensions which have arisen amongst you are deeply regrettable, and I tell you plainly you have not served the cause of justice. I have placed before you a form of verdict which would meet the general view of the case, and leave the matter open to the proper authorities. You have declined to be guided by me, and I am afraid it would be useless to argue any longer with you. What do you say, Mr. Foreman?"

"From the differences that exist between us, sir, quite useless," replied the foreman.

"The position is a difficult one, and I must take time to consider it. I regret, gentlemen, that I cannot discharge you from your labours, but that is no fault of mine. You will attend this court next Thursday morning at eleven o'clock. By that time, perhaps, something may transpire which will settle your doubts--which I trust," he added, "are conscientious doubts."

The announcement that their labours were not at an end was received by the jury with murmurs of dissatisfaction.

"The remedy lies with yourselves," said the Coroner. "In a criminal court where the jury disagree, the case may be put back and tried again before a fresh jury, but this cannot be done in a Coroner's Court. Before I finally discharge you, you will have to return a verdict. You will be here this day week punctually at eleven o'clock in the morning."

The court then broke up.

There were still a great many spectators who had waited in the expectation that a verdict would be delivered, and they filed out slowly, eagerly discussing the position of affairs, one man declaring that the Catchpole Square Mystery, from first to last, was nothing but a series of the most startling sensations, adding, "And I'm greatly mistaken if there's not more to come." He rolled this round his tongue, as if it were a delectable morsel.

Detective Lambert, without seeming to notice Reginald, was almost the first to leave the court, and he stood outside, smoothing his chin, a target for all eyes, for his fame had travelled far and wide, and it was already rumoured that he had "taken up" the Catchpole Square Mystery. Two or three of the jurymen still lingered within the court, and glanced with curiosity at the Robson group and at Mrs. Death, whose state of agitation it was pitiable to witness. Now she beat the air with her trembling hands, now she clasped them convulsively, while inarticulate words of protest dropped from her quivering lips. All these persons moved slowly to the door of the courthouse.

CHAPTER LII.

ARRESTED FOR MURDER.

"A moment, Reginald," said Uncle Rob, in a low tone, laying his hand on the young man's arm.

As the men fell back a pace or two they came face to face with Mrs. Death. In his heart Reginald believed Abel Death to be innocent, and even in the midst of his own trouble he would have addressed a word of comfort to her, but she, distracted by grief and indignant horror, held up her hands as if to ward him off, and brushed past him into the open. She had been present during the whole of the inquest, but her mind was in too agitated a state to pay close attention to any of the evidence except those parts which affected her husband, and she had therefore, until she heard the Coroner's address to the jury, missed the significance of the contradiction she had given to the statement of Dr. Pye as to the hour he had seen a man come from Samuel Boyd's house in Catchpole Square. In justice to her it must be said that even if she had recognised it when she was under examination she would not have withheld it, for she was a fair-minded woman, and was still grateful for the kindness the young man had once shown them. But it seemed to her now that in weakening the case against Reginald she had strengthened it against her husband, and it was this that caused her to reject with horror the advances which Reginald had made towards her.

"She believes me guilty," thought Reginald, as she disappeared through the door of the court; and then, turning to Uncle Rob, he said, "What is it?"

"Detective Lambert is waiting outside," said Uncle Rob in a low tone.

"For me?"

"For you."

Reginald could not help being startled, though he had been all day inwardly preparing himself. Stepping to Aunt Rob's side he said, in a tone of assumed lightness, "We are full of secrets just now. I have one for you; Florence won't mind." Drawing her away he whispered, "Take Florence home."

He had not time to say more, for Florence, although she had not heard what had passed had caught its sense, and she now glided swiftly to his side, and clung close to his arm.

"Go home, dearest," he said. "I am going to walk with your father to the station."

"We will walk with you," said Florence, and then in an imploring tone, "Do not send me away from you till the last moment!"

"Why, Florence, my love," said Reginald, as if in surprise, but here Aunt Rob interposed.

"There must be no more secrets. Don't keep anything from us, father. Tell us the worst; we can bear it."

Uncle Rob looked at Reginald, who nodded, and passed his arm round Florence's waist.

"Lambert has been talking to me," said Uncle Rob; "he has behaved very considerately, and asked me to break it to you." His voice faltered. "He has a warrant for Reginald's arrest. Courage, my dears, courage!"

This little party, at whom so terrible a blow was dealt, now stood apart and alone, and what they said could be heard only by themselves. Aunt Rob drew a long breath.

"It's what we've been waiting for," she said, "and it had to come. Reginald will face it like a man, and will fling the lie into their faces. Keep a stout heart, my lad."

"If I suffer," he replied, "it is because of the grief I have brought into my dear Florence's life."

"It is not a grief of your creating, dear," said Florence, "and you have brought nothing into my life which has not strengthened my love for you. I put my trust in God." She bent down, and pressed her lips upon his hand; the night had fallen, and those at a distance could not see the action. "Oh, my dear, my dear! He will not allow the innocent to suffer."

"Be brave, for my sake, dearest."

"I will be. I am." And in her heart was the prayer, "God shield my beloved! God protect him!"

They issued into the open air, and stood by Lambert's side in silence. The only movement he made was to beckon to a constable, and, whispering a few words to him, to point somewhat conspicuously to the juror who had shown himself so inimical to Reginald. All the other jurymen had taken their departure; this man alone was waiting.

If Lambert's aim was to arouse in him the aggressive spirit of which he had given frequent instances during the inquest, it was gained, for the juror walked up to the detective, and inquired if he had pointed at him with any particular design, and if so, what it was and what he meant by it. Lambert stroked his chin and did not answer.

"The road's free to all, I suppose," pursued the man, nettled at Lambert's silence; his voice was loud and offensive.

"Now you mention it," observed Lambert, slowly considering the proposition, "it is."

"I thought so," said the man, and was at a loss what next to say, for Lambert had fallen into a meditative mood, and to feel for a pimple on his chin seemed to be of assistance to him.

The appearance of another person upon the scene, who halted, however, at a distance of a dozen yards or so, with her black eyes fixed upon the juror, was not noticed by any of them, except perhaps by the meditative detective.

"Move on," said the constable whom Lambert had addressed, and some idlers, who had shown a disposition to linger, sauntered away. The juror held his ground, but was not at his ease, for he felt that Lambert's eye was on him, and to be thus meditatively observed by an imperturbable detective was enough to make any man uneasy. Presently Lambert roused himself from his brown study.

"Which direction are you going to take?" he said to the Juror.

"Why do you want to know?" asked the man.

"Because I will take the other, and I've a hundred things to attend to."

"Who's hindering you?"

"You, Mr. Rawdon. That's your name, I believe."

"I'm not ashamed of it," said Mr. Rawdon, with a slight start.

"Why should you be?" remarked Lambert quietly. "It's the name you were born to. I'm not ashamed of mine; to tell you the truth, I'm rather proud of it. What we've got to do with our names, whether we like 'em or not, is to make 'em a credit to ourselves and our families. And we're born, not only to names that stick to us, but to tempers that stick to us. Now, when I see a man showing a nasty temper, I cast about in my mind for

something that will soothe his ruffled feelings. That's what I've been thinking about. 'What can I do,' says I to myself, 'that will soothe Mr. Rawdon's ruffled feelings?' And it's come over me to put it in the shape of a question, if you've no objection."

"Let's hear what it is," said Mr. Rawdon, upon whom the detective's words did not seem to have a soothing effect.

"'It's a question," continued Lambert, "that I wouldn't put to you publicly if it wasn't that we're playing a sort of game, you and me, a sort of trying to tire one another out, because, you know, Mr. Rawdon, there's many a thing in a man's life he'd prefer to keep to himself. As for tiring me out, you couldn't do it, Mr. Rawdon. It's well known that Detective Lambert is the most patient man in the whole police force, and it's well known, too, that he never mixes himself up with other people's private affairs unless he has the best of reasons for it."

"Aren't you losing sight of your question?" asked Mr. Rawdon sullenly.

"No, I'm not; I'm coming to it; but I'm naturally a slow man--slow and sure. It's happened on occasions that I've been a long time taking aim; but then I never miss; and I never do anything definite--anything definite, mind--or say anything definite (which is what I'm going to say now), without a motive. Now, do you understand that?" No voice could be more persuasive than that in which he explained himself to Mr. Rawdon.

"Oh, I understand it," said that individual.

"And so could a blind dog, if it was put to him forcible. It eases my mind; I give you my word, it eases my mind. Pay particular attention to the question, Mr. Rawdon: there's a lot hanging to it that the present company--my friend Inspector Robson and his good wife, and my friend Mr. Reginald Boyd and his good wife--haven't the slightest understanding of. Which makes it all the more comfortable for you and me, because it's between us. Are you ready, Mr. Rawdon?"

"Quite ready, Mr. Lambert."

"Well, then. What is the amount of the judgment obtained against you by Mr. Ezra Lynn, how much do you owe him altogether, and what arrangement has lately been made between you? And if that's three questions instead of one I hope you'll excuse me."

So saying, Detective Lambert rubbed his chin, and shed a genial smile upon Mr. Rawdon, whose perturbation was so great that he seemed to be deprived of the power of speech.

"If you want time to chew it over," continued Lambert, "take time. There's been many a knotty point raised in this inquiry into the Catchpole Square Mystery; one or two more or less won't matter much. Take your time, Mr. Rawdon, take your time. Go home and chew it over."

In obedience to a motion of his eyebrows imperceptible to all but the constable, that official bustled forward with his "Move on, please, move on"; and as though he were glad of an excuse to set his limbs in motion Mr. Rawdon moved slowly away, in the opposite direction to the Bishop Street Police Station. The other person, little Gracie, who had been watching the group, moved stealthily after him, and in a moment or two the man and the girl had turned the corner of the street.

Lambert smiled in self-approval, and the next moment became grave as he touched Reginald on the arm. "Now, Mr. Boyd."

Florence quivered as though she had been stung, but instantly recovered herself.

"I am at your disposal, Mr. Lambert," said Reginald. "You have a warrant for my arrest."

"I have; and I'll read it to you at the Bishop Street Police Station. I would take you to another, but as I've already explained to the Inspector it is the proper station to take you to, as the charge will have to be heard at the Bishop Street Police Court."

"Will it be heard to-morrow?"

"To-morrow. It will be merely formal, and there'll be a remand, for a week I should say. That is what will be asked for. I am acting under instructions." He turned to Florence and Aunt Rob. "I hope you'll not take it amiss, ladies. Duty's duty, and it's hard to do sometimes. Mr. Boyd and I will walk quietly to the station with Inspector Robson. I'll keep people off while you say good-bye." He turned his back to them, from motives of delicacy, and to serve as a screen.

"Would there be any objection, Mr. Lambert," said Aunt Rob, "to our walking with him as far as the station?" She spoke stiffly and severely: despite the manifest friendliness of the detective she could not forgive him.

"None in the world, if you wish it."

"We do wish it," said Florence, timidly.

"Give an arm to the ladies," said Lambert to Reginald. "The Inspector and I will walk on behind. You would hardly believe it, but at this time every Thursday night I get a singing in my ears that makes me quite deaf. An old complaint; had it from childhood; it comes on suddenly; I've got it now."

He fell back with Uncle Rob, and no person meeting them would have supposed that a man was being arrested for murder. Within two or three hundred yards of Bishop Street Dick ran up to them, and he saw immediately what was transpiring.

"You have come in good time, Dick," said Reginald, pressing the friendly hand. "Florence and Aunt Rob have no one to take them home. You see what is going on." Dick nodded. "Now that the suspense is over I feel relieved. I have something to face, and I can speak out boldly."

"He must have a lawyer, Dick," said Aunt Rob.

"It is being attended to, aunt."

"I would have preferred to defend myself," said Reginald, "but I suppose it would be unwise."

"It would be folly," said Dick. "I saw your solicitor this afternoon, and we have agreed upon the barrister, Mr. Edward Pallaret. He ranks high, and is generally on the right side."

"On the just side, Dick."

"That is what I meant, aunt."

"Did you expect this, that you have gone so far?" she asked.

"I have been expecting it all along. Is Lambert acting on his own responsibility?"

"No, under instructions, he says."

"Ah. Do you approve of Mr. Pallaret, Reginald?"

"Yes. He is an honourable man."

"He is; and a man that judges and magistrates listen to with respect. That is not the case with all lawyers. There are black sheep among them that damn a case the moment their

names appear in it. I have a pair of solicitors in my mind now, a couple of sharp, sneaking scoundrels who never yet have had the handling of a reputable case. Mr. Lamb is not a very eminent solicitor, but he is a respectable man, and it was he who suggested Mr. Pallaret. Don't be faint-hearted, Reginald; we'll pull you out of this with flying colours. Have any of you seen little Gracie Death to-day?"

No, none of them had seen her.

"She'll be at your house to-night, aunt, with news, perhaps. Here we are at the station."

He made a secret motion to his uncle as they entered, and saying to the others that they would join them presently, he and the Inspector retired to a small room at the back of the office, where the latter. kept his accoutrements, which he now proceeded to put on for the sad duties of the night.

"Do you remember the talk we had together, Dick," said the Inspector mournfully, "on the night of the fog, when Mrs. Abel Death came in with her little girl, and told us of the disappearance of her husband. We argued it out together, and the thought of a murder done was in our minds. It's little more than a week ago, and it seems a year. We didn't think it would come to this."

To Dick, also, it seemed as if months had passed instead of days, and as if he himself were a different being. Aimless, purposeless, then, with no object in life to lift him out of the lethargic state into which he had fallen, the hours now were all too short for the strange and desperate task to which he had set his hand, the strangest and most hazardous part of which had yet to be performed.

"Lambert speaks fair," continued the Inspector, "but you are the rock upon which we must lean for safety. Oh, Dick, my lad, save my Florence if you can from life-long misery!"

"I'm bound to do it, uncle," said Dick, "or sink. Something whispers to me that I shall succeed. And now let me tell you--I may not have another opportunity. I'm going to see Florence and Aunt Rob home, where I've asked little Gracie to come and have a chat with me. After to-night it's on the cards that I shall disappear----"

"Disappear!" cried the Inspector, catching his nephew by the arm.

"Hush! They must not hear us. I mean that neither you nor they will know where I am for a few days. There will be a notice stuck up on the house in Catchpole Square to the effect that all inquiries for me are to be made at your house, and that all letters for me

are to be left there. If any inquiries are made, tell Aunt Rob and Florence that they're to say they are expecting me home at any moment, and don't know where I have gone to. Nothing more than that. I must leave this to you, for I cannot confide in them. I am bound to keep my secret, and I could not answer the questions they would put to me in their anxiety."

"But, Dick----"

Dick held up his hand. "There isn't a step I've taken in this affair that hasn't been taken with only one end in view, the end we are all praying for, and perhaps there are things I've kept from you because it would never have done to tell them to a police inspector. There was your duty as a public officer, and there were your feelings as a father. Would it have been right of me to bring these into conflict?"

"I see that, my lad, I see that, and it has been a torture to me."

"Look me in the face, uncle." He moved into the light, so that it could be clearly seen. "Is it an honest face?"

"Yes, my lad."

"A face you can trust?"

"Yes."

"Then trust it, and act as I desire. You ask me to save Florence from misery, and, with God's help and my own wits, that's what I feel I shall do if I'm left free to follow out my plans. If I am hampered in any way Reginald will lose his best defender. I've been in danger once to-day, and my wits saved me. We must get back to them, or they'll be suspecting something. If you are satisfied with what I've said, uncle, give me your hand."

They clasped hands, and returned to the front office. Inspector Robson stiffened himself, and walked to his desk. Then Lambert, who held the warrant in his hand, read it aloud, but in a low tone, and advised Reginald to say nothing.

"I am not afraid to speak," Reginald answered, with a proud, defiant look. "Until my innocence is proved I will proclaim it to all the world."

"Well said, my son," said Aunt Rob.

Inspector Robson did not utter a word, but with a set face entered the charge. Then Detective Lambert bade the Inspector good night, and passed out of the scene. He offered no good-bye greeting to the others, and seemingly took no notice of Aunt Rob's action when she held her skirts aside, so that he should not touch them. It was not in her heart to forgive him for the part he had played.

When all the formalities were concluded Florence and Reginald, clasped in each other's arms, exchanged tender words of comfort and hope.

"God bless you, my beloved husband," said the girl-wife. "He will make your innocence clear."

"I have no fears," said Reginald. "God preserve you?"

"Good night, my son," said Aunt Rob.

There was not a tear in their eyes; each strove by outward calmness to sustain the other in this bitter trial. Inspector Robson never raised his eyes from the charge sheet.

"Take care of her, Dick," said Reginald.

"Trust to me, Reginald," said Dick, with a bright smile.

So they left him, and proceeded through the dimly lighted streets to Aunt Rob's house, and there they found Gracie waiting outside for Dick.

CHAPTER LIII.

GRACIE RELATES THE STORY OF HER ADVENTURES.

"Any news, Gracie," asked Dick.

"Lots," replied Gracie.

"About which one?"

"Both of 'em."

Aunt Rob, with an air of determination, seized Gracie's hand. "Come in, child, and tell us all about it," she said.

Gracie made no resistance, but looked at Dick for instructions.

"The fact is, aunt," he said, "Gracie and I have started on a voyage of discovery, and this is a little matter of business between us."

"The fact is," said Aunt Rob, sternly, "that there's been too many little matters of business between this one and that one, and too many secrets that are kept from them who have the best call to know them, and whose hearts are pretty nigh broken by being kept in the dark. It's time it came to an end. What do you mean by your voyage of discovery? Perhaps you think, because we're quiet and still, and don't break into fits of crying, that we're happy and contented with things as they are. We look like it, don't we?"

"Dear aunt," he expostulated, but was not allowed to proceed.

"No, Dick, I'll not listen to your evasions, and I'm not going to stand this any longer. What is it all about, and what does everybody mean by holding conversations behind our backs, and saying things we mustn't hear, while we're expected to sit mum-chance on our chairs, eating our hearts away? Because we're women, I suppose, and aren't fit to be trusted! Mystery, mystery, mystery, nothing but mystery, and we're to hold our tongues. I wouldn't have believed it of you, Dick. Do you mean to tell me that this little matter of business, and this voyage of discovery, as you call it, doesn't concern us?"

"It does concern you, but I give you my word, aunt, I don't know yet in what way."

"Let us help you. As it concerns us, you've no right to keep it from us. Now, child, tell us your news."

Gracie shook her head, and still looked at Dick for her cue.

"You little brick!" he said, patting her sallow cheek. "Aunt, if you were to beat her black and blue I don't believe she would say one word without my permission.

"I wouldn't," said Gracie.

"That's a nice thing to say to me," said Aunt Rob, sarcastically. "I'm in the habit of beating children black and blue--everybody who knows me knows that."

"Everybody who knows you knows you to be staunch, and brave, and true," said Dick, kissing her, "and to have the kindest heart that ever beat in a woman's breast. You'll bear witness to that, won't you, Gracie?"

"Yes, I will."

"I'm not to be put off with a kiss," said Aunt Rob. "Let us hear what concerns us." The latter part of this conversation took place while they entered the house, and they were now in the sitting-room, with the gas turned up. "Look at that white face." She pointed to Florence, who was standing tearless, with her hand at her heart. Dick's own heart sank at the mute misery in her face. "Do what you can to relieve her anxiety, Dick."

"Let Dick act as he thinks best, mother," said Florence, but she still kept her hand at her heart, and Dick felt that it would be worse than cruel to offer any further opposition to Aunt Rob's wishes.

"You shall hear what Gracie has to tell," he said, "but not a word must pass out of this room. There's a prologue to it."

He spoke of his impressions concerning Dr. Vinsen, and of his conviction that there was a sinister motive to Reginald's prejudice behind that gentleman's unsolicited kindness to Gracie's family; after which he related how he and Gracie had entered into partnership that morning to track Dr. Vinsen and the vindictive juryman down, in the hope of discovering something that would be of service to them.

"It was an odd fancy of mine to call myself the captain and Gracie the first mate of the ship that was going on this voyage of discovery, and it's my opinion there will be high

jinks if we succeed in bringing that ship to anchor. Now, mate, for your news. Have you seen Dr. Vinsen?"

"Yes, Dick, I've seen a lot of him," said Gracie, "but his name ain't Vinsen, and he ain't a doctor."

"By Jove!" said Dick, under his breath. "Who and what is he, Gracie?"

"He's a money-lender, and his name is Ezra Lynn."

"That's the first trick to us," said Dick. "Begin at the beginning, mate, and go right through it."

She did, and did not pause till she came to that part of her story where Dr. Vinsen hailed a hansom cab, and drove off at too swift a pace for her to follow.

They listened in breathless interest. Gracie's skill in the weaving of stories of the imagination for the entertainment of her little brothers and sisters served her in good stead in this story of real life, and, quite unconsciously to herself, she imparted a dramatic touch to the narrative which lifted it above the level of its sordid details.

"Talk of your detectives!" exclaimed Dick, in wonder and admiration. "Here's a little girl that can show them the way to go. Why, the man could be prosecuted for practising without a diploma. But, the motive, the motive, the motive? We're getting hold of the ends of loose strings. How to tie them, how to tie them?" He paced the room in his excitement. "Is that all, Gracie?"

"Oh, no, there's ever so much more. When he was gone I went back to the baker's shop, to see if I could find out anything more about him. I did hear a lot! Oh, Dick, he's a regular bad 'un. He's lived there ever so many years, and there ain't a living soul that's got a good word for him. I saw the man again they called a jackal, and I got his name and where he lives. Here it is. I bought a sheet of paper and a bit of pencil for a ha'penny, and I put all the names and addresses down, for fear I might forget 'em. Here's the man's name that's going to be sold up to-morrow, and here's the baker woman's name and address, and here's the trunk shop, and here's the number of the house in Park Street that he looked so long up at the windows of."

"Reginald's lodgings," said Dick, looking at the paper. "What do you think now of my first mate? Anything more, Gracie?"

"When I got all I could out of 'em I thought I'd come and try to find you, Dick, and I took a tram and two busses to Catchpole Square, but you weren't there. Then I came here, and you weren't here. Then I went back to Catchpole Square again, and who should I see but Dr. Vinsen going into a house in Shore Street. It's down on the paper."

"Dr. Pye's house," explained Dick. "We're getting warm."

"He kept there an hour and more, but I never budged, When he came out he didn't look pleased, and he looked worse when he bought some more special editions of the papers, and read what was in 'em."

"Wanted the inquest over," interposed Dick, "and a verdict of wilful murder against Reginald. Go on, partner."

"It was getting night, and I thought I might have a chance of catching the man Dr. Vinsen was talking to last night, so I went to the place where the inquest was held, and there I saw him. I saw you, too, ma'am, and the young lady, and a good many others, all talking together. I didn't see you, Dick."

"I wasn't there."

"But where were you, child?" asked Aunt Rob. "I didn't set eyes on you."

"I took care you shouldn't. When this man went away--oh, what a black face he had, Dick!--I followed him home. He doesn't live fur off, and he keeps an ironmonger's shop. You'll see the name on the paper, Dick; it's the bottom name."

"I see it, Gracie. P. Rawdon, ironmonger, 24, Wellington Street."

"There's a lot of things outside the shop window on the pavement, pots, and pans, and pails, under a verandah, and a boy was taking 'em into the shop. I sneaks up to the boy, and says, 'Is that the master?' 'Yes,' the boy says, 'that's the guv'nor.' 'Mr. Rawdon?' I says. 'Yes,' he says, 'Mr. Rawdon.' And with that he goes inside with his arms full, and I walks away, for I didn't know what else I could do, when up comes Dr. Vinsen again, almost at the top of me. Lucky for me he didn't catch sight of me. I cut across the road, and watched him go into the shop. I waited a little while, but it was past seven o'clock, and you said I was to be here before eight. That's all, Dick."

"And enough," said Dick, "more than enough for one day. There isn't a man or woman in all England who could have done as much in so short a time. I'm proud of you, Gracie. Now, my girl, you mustn't breathe a word of all this to another living soul in the world."

"I won't," said Gracie, her heart swelling with pride at being addressed by Dick as "my girl."

"I begin to see light, aunt. That man, Vinsen, sham doctor and philanthropist, alias Ezra Lynn, real scoundrelly money-lender, and Dr. Pye have been hatching a plot against us, and have drawn the other scoundrel Rawdon into it. Light--yes, light! And there's more behind it that I'll get at before I'm many days older. You don't like secrets, aunt, but this must be kept from Uncle Rob. He might consider it his duty to make a move, and if he does we are done for. You can't see as well as I can what is hanging to this discovery of Gracie's. I pledge you both to secrecy--for Reginald's sake. We must keep this before us. All that we have done, all that we are doing, is for Reginald's sake. Promise, promise!"

They were aglow with excitement, and they replied simultaneously,

"We promise, Dick."

"That's right. We'll draw those ferrets out of their hole, and it will not be long before Reginald is a free man--freely and honourably acquitted, with every one who knows him, and every one who doesn't, ready and eager to shake hands with him, and give him a word of sympathy."

"Dear Dick!" said Florence, giving him both her hands.

"Dear Florence, dear aunt, I would go through fire and water for you." He turned suddenly to Gracie. "What have you had to eat to-day?"

"A penny loaf at the baker shop," replied Gracie, who was fainting with hunger.

"Nothing more?" cried Aunt Rob.

"No, ma'am."

"Florence, lay the tablecloth; and you, Dick, run down to the kitchen, and fetch the bread and butter--and you'll find a cake in the larder. And bring up the kettle--I'll make the tea here. Tell the servant to cook four large rashers and poach half-a-dozen eggs. Draw up to the table child--why, you must be starving!"

"I'm all right, ma'am. It ain't worth while worrying about me."

"You dear little mite!" Aunt Rob's heart was overflowing with pity, and she bent down and kissed her. Dick was back, loaded with a steaming kettle and bread and butter and cake, and though Aunt Rob was no fairy, the tea was made and a cup placed before Gracie, and bread and butter cut, as quickly as any fairy, though she were light as gossamer, could have accomplished it. "Don't wait for us, Gracie, the bacon and eggs will soon be here--why, here they are! Now, my dear, make a good meal, and you sit down, Florence, and eat. It's easier to meet trouble with a full stomach than an empty one. Here's your cup, Dick; you look famished, too. Things look ever so much brighter, don't they?"

And thus she rattled on to put Gracie at her ease, and under the influence of a spirit so buoyant and hopeful a fuller meal was eaten than would otherwise have been the case, and they were all the happier for it. Then Gracie arose, and thanking them quietly said that her mother would be worrying about her, and if they would excuse her she would like to go home. There was a grave look on Aunt Rob's face at mention of Gracie's mother, for she thought of Mrs. Death's conduct an hour or two ago at the Coroner's Court, but she said nothing except that Gracie ought to go home at once. She would have liked to wrap up what was left of the cake, and give it to the child to take to her little brothers and sisters, but she felt that the kindly act might be misconstrued, and might get Gracie into trouble.

"I will walk a little way with you," said Dick. "Aunt Rob, I have a great deal to do, and I sha'n't be able to come back to-night. Get to bed early, you and Florence, and try to sleep. It will brighten Reginald up to-morrow if he sees you with cheerful faces, which you can't show him without proper rest."

So the good nights were exchanged, and the mother and daughter were left alone. Before Florence went to bed she wrote a long and loving letter to Reginald, and Aunt Rob also wrote a letter, which Florence enclosed in hers; and then the young wife, so sorely tried ran out to post it, and kissed it passionately before she dropped it into the box. She and her mother were to sleep together that night, and Aunt Rob sent Florence up to bed first. Household duties had fallen into arrear in consequence of her long attendance at the Coroner's Court, and these must be attended to before she retired; she was not the woman to neglect her domestic affairs, and she knew that her husband would feel the happier for seeing a tidy home when he came from his office. She was occupied nigh upon two hours, and then there was a little note to be written to her husband, and laid open on the table, telling him that she was sleeping with Florence, and that he was to sleep in Dick's room. Aunt Rob was not what would be considered a very religious woman, but she had an underlying and unconscious religion of her own which she steadily practised--the religion that lies in kind thoughts and deeds, in upright conduct and duties conscientiously performed; and she was not in the habit of reading her Bible

regularly. But this night, when all her household work was done, she took the Book of Consolation from the shelf, and reverently read therein till nearly midnight.

During these hours of work and prayer she had not been unmindful of her daughter; every now and then she stepped softly up to the bedroom and listened at the door; she would not open it, lest the creaking should disturb the young girl. She stood there in the dark, and listened. "My darling is asleep," she whispered to herself as she went quietly downstairs.

For an hour and more she read in the Holy Book, and when she closed it a deep calm rested on her face and a look of peace in her eyes. The feeling that possessed her was the feeling of a woman in affliction who had heard the voice of God. Balm was in her heart. Truly her house was a house of sorrow, but it was also a house of faith and hope. Who shall say that the spiritual links of love that join heart to heart, though miles of space lie between, did not pulse with a sweet and tender message to the innocent man lying in his cell?

Turning down the gas in the sitting room and the passage, and placing her note to her husband in such a position that it would be sure to meet his eye when he entered, Aunt Rob stole upstairs to bed, carrying the candle with her. She started when she saw a white-robed form kneeling by the bedside. It was Florence, who had been lifting her heart to God, and who had fallen asleep with a prayer on her lips.

CHAPTER LIV.

EXTRACTS FROM "THE LITTLE BUSY BEE" OF FRIDAY, THE 15TH OF MARCH, 1896.

The intense interest taken by the public in the progress of the mystery of Catchpole Square was markedly shown this morning by the enormous concourse of people assembled in the vicinity of the Bishop Street Police Court, where Mr. Reginald Boyd was brought before the magistrate, charged with the murder of his father, Mr. Samuel Boyd, on the night of Friday, the 1st of March. In these times of fever and unrest, when scarcely a day passes without some new sensation cropping up to overshadow the sensation of yesterday and drive it from the minds of newspaper readers, it is rare indeed that any one startling incident should continue for so long a time to engross public attention. For this reason, if for no other, this extraordinary mystery will be long remembered; but, quite apart from the morbid curiosity which all murder cases bring into play, there are in this case elements of perplexity and bewilderment which entitle it to the first place in the annals of great crimes. It is not our purpose to offer any opinion as to the probable guilt of this or that person; the matter is now in the hands of justice, and it would be manifestly improper to try the case in our editorial room, but this does not prevent our columns being open to the discussion of abstract matters which may or may not have a bearing upon it.

To the disappointment of the sight-seers in the adjoining wider thoroughfares the accused man was driven to Bishop Street through side streets but little frequented, and so skilfully were the police arrangements carried out that he was conducted into the court by the rear entrance before the general public were aware that he had started from the station. The Court was crowded, and among those assembled were the wife and mother-in-law of the prisoner, who it was understood had had an interview with him before the commencement of the proceedings.

Mr. Marlow represented the Public Prosecutor, and Mr. Pallaret appeared for the prisoner.

Mr. Marlow, addressing the magistrate, stated that it was not his intention to do more than formally open the case, after which, without taking any evidence beyond proving the arrest of the prisoner, he should ask for a remand until that day week. The police had not yet concluded their preliminary investigations, and the interests of justice would be best served by the course he proposed to adopt. Having briefly narrated the circumstances which led to the accused being charged with so horrible a crime, he called Mr. Lambert, detective officer in the police service, who gave evidence of the arrest.

Mr. Marlow: "That is as far as I propose to go, your worship. I now ask for a remand till this day week."

Mr. Pallaret: "I do not oppose the remand, but I have a question or two to put to the witness, and a remark to make to the Court." To the witness: "When you arrested the accused did he offer any resistance?"

The Witness: "On the contrary. Suspecting, or having heard, that I had a warrant for his arrest he came up to me voluntarily, and said he was at my disposal."

"He walked quietly with you to the station?"

"Quite quietly."

"Did he make any statement?"

"No. I advised him to say nothing."

"What was his reply to that?"

"He said, 'I am not afraid to speak. Until my innocence is proved I will proclaim it to all the world.'"

"I have no further questions to ask you." To the magistrate: "The observation I desire to make is this. No one can be more anxious than the accused that the fullest light should be thrown upon this sad affair, and that the murderer of his father shall be brought to justice. He himself has offered a reward of £500 for the discovery of the murderer. But we enter a strong protest to any unnecessary delay in the disclosure of the evidence we have to combat. To arrest a man on a charge so serious without sufficient evidence to support it, and merely because the police deem it necessary that some person should be put on his trial, would be monstrous. I make no complaint against the police, but there have been occasions on which they have erred, and have inflicted cruel injustice upon innocent persons. There was the Great Porter Square case, in which a son, accused of the murder of his father, was brought up at the magistrate's court no fewer than seven times. The police had nothing against him, and he was eventually proved to be innocent. I trust similar tactics will not be pursued in the present case. To any unnecessary delay we shall offer the most strenuous opposition. Will bail be allowed?"

The Magistrate: "No. I have no doubt the police will do their duty. The case stands adjourned till this day week, at eleven in the morning."

CHAPTER LV.

CONSTABLE APPLEBEE ON THE WATCH.

A man may be an easy-going man all his life, and go down to his grave without anything occurring to take him, as it were, out of himself, or to make him, either suddenly or by gradual stages, a different being from that which those most intimate with him believe him to be. We have seen this exemplified in Dick Remington, who, from an easy-going, irresponsible being, with no definite or serious aim in life, and with an apparently conspicuous lack of industry and application, has suddenly become an earnest, strong-minded, strong-willed man, bent upon a task which would tax the most astute intellect.

An experience of this nature, but in a different way, had come to Constable Applebee, in whose mind certain agitating visions had been conjured up by the appearance of the reward bills. The usually calm depths were stirred, and the peaceful current of his daily duties became convulsed. If he could earn only one of the rewards he was a made man, let alone the chances of promotion. The prospect was alluringly disturbing, and it made Constable Applebee restless and watchful. When a dull man gets an idea into his head it becomes a fixture; to argue with him is time thrown away; it is there, and he sticks to it, perhaps because of its novelty; and when that idea carries with it the prospect of a lump of money all the logicians in the world are powerless to remove it until the sterner logic of fact, proves it to be false. And even then he doubts and shakes his head.

Applebee's idea, which had created these visions of fame and a golden future, was that the man who had committed the murder and who had the jewels in his possession, was no other than Mr. Dick Remington. Whether he alone was the culprit, or in collusion with Mr. Reginald Boyd, time would show.

He kept his counsel; not even in the wife of his bosom did he confide. He knew that Detective Lambert had the case in hand, the great detective who had brought so many mysterious crimes to light. What if he, Applebee, could succeed in proving himself Lambert's equal and snatching the prize from him? The prospect of such a triumph was dazzling. Dick met Applebee at the entrance of Deadman's Court, and gave him good evening.

"Good evening," said Constable Applebee.

He was not a man of overpowering intellect, and with this weighty matter in his mind he had not the wit to say good evening in his usual cordial manner. Dick noticed the change of tone, but attached no importance to it.

Now, the duller-wilted a man is, the more suspicious he is, and while Dick noticed a change of manner in Applebee which really existed, and attached no importance to it, Applebee noticed a change of manner in Dick which did not exist, and to which he attached immense importance. "He sees that I suspect him," thought Applebee, "and is afraid. What makes him afraid? Guilty conscience. That proves it." Thus do we jump at conclusions when we have all the argument to ourselves.

He saw nothing more of Dick that night, and great was his chagrin the following day to see pasted on the door of Samuel Boyd's house in Catchpole Square the following notice:

"Absent on business. All communications for Mr. Remington to be addressed to Inspector Robson."

"He's cut and run," was Applebee's first thought. His second thought was that this was a move on Dick's part to put him off the scent. "But I'll be a match for him," he thought.

"He's sure to come back, and the next time I lay hands on him off he goes with me to the station. I'll charge him, and chance it. The thing's as clear as mud. What a fool I was not to have seen it all before! Why did he keep hanging round Catchpole Square night after night while Samuel Boyd was laying dead in bed? Where did he go on the night of the great fog after I parted with him at three in the morning? He didn't keep in the streets all night, I'll take my oath on that. Where was he? Why, where else but in Samuel Boyd's house, packing up the things? He was clerk there once, and knows all the ins and outs of the place. Pond tells me he keeps his room locked, and that his missis is not allowed to go into it even to make the bed. What does he keep it shut up for? Is the property there? A search warrant would settle that, but as things stand there's no chance of my getting one. I shouldn't be surprised if he keeps the jewellery about him. It must be worth a heap of money. I asked Mrs. Pond this morning whether he slept there last night. No, he hadn't, nor the night before. He used to live with Inspector Robson, but he doesn't live there now. Then what has he been doing with himself of a night all this last week? I'll be hanged if I don't go to Mrs. Robson, and ask for him!"

Screwing up his courage he presented himself at Aunt Rob's house, and his knock at the door was answered by that lady herself.

"Is Mr. Dick Remington in?" he asked.

"No, he isn't," replied Aunt Rob.

"Can you tell me where to find him, Mrs. Robson?"

"No, I can't."

"Will he be back soon?"

"I don't know."

Applebee scratched his head; he had come to the end of his resources in that quarter.

"Do you want him for anything particular?" inquired Aunt Rob, anxiously.

"Not for anything very particular."

"Perhaps you'll leave a message."

"No, thank you," said Applebee, feeling as if he was being badgered, and repeated, "It's nothing very particular." Then he walked away.

"They're all in a plot together," he mused. "I don't half like the way she answered me. She never took her eyes off my face. He's gone off to get rid of the jewellery. I'll keep my eye on Catchpole Square. There's a chance of his coming back for something he left behind. If he does, I'll nab him."

The longer he brooded upon it the stronger grew his conviction of Dick's complicity in the crime, and the more firmly was he resolved to make the arrest when he had the chance. Little did he dream of the kind of success that was to attend his zealous efforts and the startling developments which were to follow.

CHAPTER LVI.

EXTRACTED FROM THE DIARY OF DAVID LAMBERT DETECTIVE OFFICER.

Thursday, March 15th, 1896.

Arrested Mr. Reginald Boyd this evening for the murder of his father, Mr. Samuel Boyd, of Catchpole Square. Arrest made at the door of the Coroner's Court. Had a little scene with Mr. Rawdon, the juryman who has been making all this fuss during the inquiry.

Mr. Reginald Boyd bore his arrest very well. So did his good little wife, who agreeably disappointed my expectation that she would break down. So did not Mrs. Inspector Robson, a brick of a woman, who showed me very plainly what she thought of me. I may say emphatically that her feelings are the reverse of friendly, and from a woman of strong opinions it is just what might be expected. But then she doesn't know what is good for her; she would have to be gifted with second sight before she would give me a civil word just now. Poor women! I pity them. They will have a weary night of it.

If things turn out as I anticipate this arrest will be about the cleverest move I have ever made. Reason why? Because I believe Mr. Reginald Boyd to be as innocent as I am myself.

Why arrest him, then?

In the first place, because he had to be arrested, and if I had not done it another officer would. Indeed, it is I who am indirectly responsible for the issuing of the warrant. More correct, perhaps, to say for expediting its issue. I could name half-a-dozen men who were burning to make the arrest. They would have to rise very early to get ahead of me.

In the second place, because I wasn't sorry to be able to do Inspector Robson a good turn. A queer way of setting about it, he would say. But it's true, for all that. And it's as good a thing as could have happened to the young fellow.

In the third place, because, had the arrest not been made by me, I should have no excuse for interviewing Dr. Pye. I hope to have something to tell my French brother-in arms, Joseph Pitou, that will astonish his weak nerves. He writes to me from Milan, where he is making inquiries, he says. Is sorry he can't come over to London, he says. I am not. I don't want him yet awhile. Keep away, friend Joseph, keep away, till I send for you.

There's plenty to puzzle over in this Catchpole Square Mystery without having the other mystery of Louis Lorenz piled on the top of it--that's what most men would think. I'm not one of them. It needs something big in the way of sensation to wake people up in this year of grace. If all turns out well, they'll get it. Besides take Louis Lorenz out of the case, and what becomes of Dr. Pye?

Dick Remington has a plan of operations already cut and dried--I'll take my oath of that. It's humiliating to have to confess that I haven't a notion what it is. Never mind. I'll back what I know against what he knows, and we'll see who'll get to the winning post first. If I had a leisure hour I'd ferret out the connection between him and that old fence Higgins; as it is, I haven't a leisure minute.

Let me see. What have I to do to-morrow? First, the magistrate's court, to give evidence of the arrest. Shall have to remain till the remand's granted. There is sure to be a sharp lawyer on the other side. If they're wise they will engage one of the highest standing.

I don't expect to be free till two or three o'clock, and then I must see if I can hunt up the case of Louis Lorenz. There was a description of the man in the papers, but I doubt if I shall be able to lay hands on it, as there was no suspicion of the man coming our way. Then there was a report that he was found dead in a wood in Gallicia, shot through the heart. It was in Gallicia he was tried and condemned to death, and three days afterwards escaped from gaol. Some said he bribed the gaolers. The property was never traced. Friend Joseph Pitou promises to send a portrait of him, and full personal particulars.

At eight o'clock I present myself at Dr. Pye's house in Shore Street, and send in my card. A welcome visitor? Not much of an open question that. Then will commence the tug of war. Strange that I have never set eyes on him. I was not in the Coroner's Court when he gave evidence. Very good of him to come forward, wasn't it, to drive a nail in Mr. Reginald Boyd's coffin.

One o'clock. I must get to bed.

Friday, March 16th, 1896.

A busy day. I must set things down, or they will get muddled. Nothing like system. Order is nature's first law. It is also mine.

By the first post a letter from friend Joseph. I passed it across the table to my wife to translate. She shook her head. "Why," I said, "you translated his other letters." "They

were in French," she replied; "this is in Italian. I don't understand Italian." And there the rubbish lay on my table, and me staring helplessly at it, exasperating me to that degree----!

Wasn't it enough to put a man out? What the devil does Joseph Pitou mean by writing to me in all the languages under the sun? English is good enough for me; isn't French good enough for him? Does it to crow over me, I dare say, to show how superior the foreign detective service is to ours. But I think we could teach you a trick or two, friend Joseph. Off went a telegram to him in French (written, of course, by my wife), requesting him to send me that letter again in his own native language. And though it is now eleven o'clock at night there is no reply. Do you call that business, Joseph Pitou? And where is the portrait you promised to send?

There is a word in the letter that my wife says means patience. It is repeated three times. Friend Joseph, no one knows the value of patience better than David Lambert; he has exercised it to good purpose in times gone by. But when a man that you would take your oath is innocent is in a prison cell on a charge of murder it isn't easy to exercise it, especially when you get letters written in foreign languages.

Mr. Reginald Boyd's people have engaged the soundest and best counsel in London in a case of this kind--Mr. Pallaret. None of your bullies or cockchafers, but a man that knows the law and will stand no nonsense, and a man that the bench listens to with respect. They could not have done better, and he made it pretty plain that he did not mean to allow this case to drag on at the pleasure of the police. They were all in the magistrate's court, Inspector Robson and his wife, and Mrs. Reginald Boyd, and, of course, the prisoner. Upon my word, it looks like injustice to set the word against him, believing what I believe, and knowing all the time that the case of the prosecution is as weak as water. I did not give them a glance, but I felt Mrs. Robson's eye upon me, and I was downright sorry for them. However, it was soon over. Remanded for a week. That gives us breathing time, but to the devil with your patience, friend Joseph.

I make a mistake when I say they were all there. Dick Remington was absent, and it rather surprised me. So when I left the court I made my way to Catchpole Square, just to give him the time of day and see how he took it. There I met with another surprise. On the door of Samuel Boyd's house is a written notice, saying that Dick Remington is absent on business, and that all communications for him are to be addressed to Inspector Robson.

Now, what is the meaning of that? On my way to Dr. Pye's to-night I met Constable Applebee, on night duty there. When I see there's something on a man's mind that's as likely as not to be of service to me if I can get at it, I encourage that man to talk. I saw

there was something on Applebee's mind--you can see through him with half an eye--and I encouraged him to talk. Glad enough he was, and willing enough. And what do you think he asked me? Why, if I knew where Dick Remington was hanging out? "In Catchpole Square, of course," I answered, quite innocently. "That he isn't," said Applebee, as triumphantly as if we were playing a hand at cards and he had won a trick by fine play. "There's a notice pasted on the door that he's not to be found there; he's gone away on business it says." "Well," said I, "if he's not to be found in Catchpole Square you'll find him at Inspector Robson's house." "No, I sha'n't," he answered, thinking he'd scored another trick. "I've been there, and from what Mrs. Robson said it's my belief she doesn't know where he is." "That's singular," I said, "what do you make of it?" "What do you make of it, Mr. Lambert?" he asked. I considered a moment, and then said I gave it up. "But you've an opinion," said I, insinuatingly. "Let's have it." Upon which he volunteered his conviction that Dick Remington had cut and run. "Why should he cut and run?" I asked, as innocent as any baby. "That," he answered, solemnly shutting himself up, "I must keep to myself." I laughed in my sleeve. He wants to discover the murderer of Samuel Boyd, and collar the reward, and he has come to the conclusion that Dick Remington's the man. It's comic. I give you my word, it's comic.

But I ask again, what is the meaning of Remington's disappearance? It means something. What? Is he hunting for the tiger, and has he got a clue? It seems to me that I mustn't lose time. That £500 belongs to me, and I intend to have it.

At eight o'clock I knocked at Dr. Pye's door, and a young woman opened it, a fine upstanding animal from the country. "Norfolk," said I to myself when she asked me what I wanted in the sing-song voice peculiar to the county. "I want to see Dr. Pye," I said. "Not at home," she answered, without a moment's hesitation. "I think he is," I said. She stared at me helplessly. "That is the answer you've been told to give," I said. "Yes," she said. "To every one?" I asked. "Yes," she said. I slipped my card and a sixpence into her hand. "Put the sixpence in your pocket," I said, "and take my card up to Dr. Pye." Willing as she was to pocket the sixpence I think she would have shut the door in my face if I had left it free, but one leg was inside and one out. "You will get in trouble if you don't do as I tell you," I said. "I am an officer of the law--a policeman." I knew the magic there was in the word to a Norfolk village girl. "Take the card this instant to Dr. Pye," I said, in a tone of authority. She vanished, and I waited five minutes by my watch before she came down again. "You can come up," she said, and I noticed that she had been crying. We went upstairs together, and she opened a door.

A man was standing at a table, holding a glass containing a liquid up to the gas light. Two other glasses containing liquid were on the table; the glasses were long and thin, and the liquid of different colours. With the exception of these glasses, the table, and two wooden chairs, the room was bare of furniture. The mantelshelf had not an article

upon it, there was not a picture on the walls. The house is double-fronted, and must contain a great many rooms; the one I was in faced Shore Street; there was a shutter to the window, partly closed.

"Dr. Pye?" I said.

"I am Dr. Pye," he answered. "Do not interrupt me; I am making an experiment."

I stood still and silent, and waited.

From inquiries I have made no person in the neighbourhood is more than casually acquainted with Dr. Pye. He has a reputation as a scientific man, but I have been unable to ascertain on what precise grounds. It is supposed that he is always experimenting with chemicals and gases, and ignorant people go as far as to declare that he is searching for the elixir of life. He is not on visiting terms with any of his neighbours; all that is known and said of him is hearsay.

A remarkable looking man. There is a stoop in his shoulders, and at the first glance he gives one the impression that he has passed all his life in study. His eyes are the colour of steel, and I should judge him to be possessed of great mesmeric power. His voice is slow and deliberate; his manners, also. A man less given to impulsive action I never gazed upon. I must not omit to mention that his hair is iron gray, and his face clean shaven.

Holding one glass in his left hand he lifted another with his right, and mixed the liquids. Then he placed the glasses on the table, and fixed his eyes upon them.

He had not once looked steadily at me, but I recognised in his actions a magnetic power which, had I been a man of weak nerve, would have compelled me to follow the result of this experiment with an interest as keen as his own appeared to be, and to the exclusion of every other subject. To put it more plainly, he would, in a manner of speaking, have emptied my mind of its own thoughts and replaced them with his. This is what did not occur. I followed the experiment with simple curiosity.

After a silence which lasted two or three minutes he lifted his eyes from the glasses, and they met mine. I smiled and nodded at him. He did not return my salutation, and there was no change in his gray face.

In the matter of expression I never met a man who seemed so utterly devoid of it as Dr. Pye. His features might have been carved in wood, his eyes might have been steel balls, for all the indication they gave of what was passing in his mind. When you have any

business on hand with a man of that kind, beware. I had no need of the warning, having all my wits about me, and having come prepared for possible squalls; and whatever were my feelings regarding Dr. Pye, admiration was certainly one of them. The prospect of a battle royal with such an antagonist exhilarated me.

We continued to gaze at each other for a few moments, and I was careful not to change my expression. That he was disappointed in my manner I did not doubt; I was not exactly the kind of man he would have liked me to be. My mind was my own; he had no power over it.

Presently he turned his attention again to the glasses on the table, timing with his watch some expected change in the liquids he had mixed. If he was the party I was searching for I needed to look to my safety, so, though I showed no fear, and felt none, I did not move from the spot upon which I had taken my stand on entering the room. The handle of the door was within reach of my hand, so was my pretty little revolver, which I can hold in my palm without anyone being the wiser.

Opening a cupboard which, in my swift observation of it, contained nothing but a few sticks and glasses, he took a slender cane from a shelf, and stirred up the liquid. As he did so it burst gradually into flame, in which shone all the colours of the rainbow. Tiny streams of fire ascended fountainlike into the air, and dropped back into the glass; it burnt, I should say, for the space of three minutes, the colours all the time glowing and changing. In a small way I have seldom seen anything prettier. At first I was inclined to regard this little performance as a kind of hanky-panky, but I soon corrected myself, for any person less resembling a vulgar showman than Dr. Pye it would be difficult to find.

The coruscations of colour died away, the spiral threads of fire had spent themselves, the liquid had disappeared, and at the bottom of the glass was a small sediment, which Dr. Pye carefully emptied into a piece of white satin tissue paper, which he carefully folded and put into his pocket. Then he spoke.

"I gave the maid instructions that no person was to be admitted to see me, as I was engaged upon an exceedingly delicate experiment which it has taken me some days to prepare."

"I hope it has been successful," I said, politely.

"I cannot tell," he answered. "The small modicum of powder I have collected is in its present state valueless except as a destroyer."

"As a destroyer?"

"Yes. The minutest portion of it dissolved in a glass of water is sudden death. But these are matters in which you cannot be expected to take an interest."

"Pardon me, doctor. To all men of intelligence such matters are of the deepest interest"--I was proceeding when he waved the subject away.

"It is not of my scientific experiments you have come to speak. I see by your card"--he referred to it--"that you are a detective officer."

"My name is tolerably well known," I said, and he stopped me again.

"To members of the criminal classes, no doubt. I am behind the age, I am afraid."

If he thought to mortify me by implying that he had never heard of me he did not succeed. "It is known to others outside those classes. You have read my evidence in the case?"

"In what case?"

"The Catchpole Square case."

"No," he said, "such cases have no attraction for me. I used to take in the daily newspapers, but I found that they distracted my attention from my pursuits, so now I read only scientific papers."

"But you gave evidence at the inquest, doctor!"

"I know I did. A friend mentioned the matter to me, spoke of incidents connected with it, and said that the murder must have taken place on the night of Friday, the 1st of March. I recollected that I was up late that night, and that, as I stood at my window at three in the morning, some unusual movement in the Square forced itself upon my attention; I recollected that I had used an insignificant little invention of mine, a new kind of flash-light, to ascertain precisely the details of the movement. I spoke of this to my friend, who said it was my duty to come forward and relate what had come under my observation. In consequence of that remark I tendered my evidence, and was glad to be rid of the affair."

"But you are not rid of it, doctor," I said.

"How is that?"

"Have you not heard that Mr. Reginald Boyd has been arrested for the murder?"

"No, I have not seen a newspaper this week, and you are the first visitor I have had. The young man has been arrested, has he? I trust he will be able to clear himself. When did the arrest take place?"

"Yesterday evening. I made it. It is news to you, then, that he was brought before the magistrate this morning?"

"Yes, it is quite new to me. What was the result?"

"He is remanded for a week. It takes some time to get up a case of this kind, and when we take one in hand we don't like to be beaten. I've had to do with many, Dr. Pye, and I've never been beaten yet. I don't mean to be beaten now."

There was the faintest show of interest on his countenance. "Do you believe, in the young man's guilt, Mr. Lambert?" he asked.

"Yes," I answered. "Don't you?"

"How is it possible for me to have an opinion?" he said, and I looked upon it as an astonishing remark for him to make after the evidence he had given at the inquest.

"But you saw him leave the house on the night of the murder, doctor, and under most suspicious circumstances, as if he were mortally afraid of being caught. Is not that enough to base an opinion upon?"

"I must be just, Mr. Lambert. When my eyes fell upon Mr. Reginald Boyd in the Court I was startled by the resemblance he bore to the man I saw in the Square. If attention had not been called to my feeling of astonishment, which I suppose was expressed in my face, I am not sure whether I should have spoken of the resemblance."

"But consider, doctor. You came forward in the interests of justice."

"Undoubtedly."

"Of your own accord. Without being summoned."

"Yes."

"Would it have been in the interests of justice that you should conceal this startling resemblance?"

"It is a fair question. It would not. But still I say I might have reflected upon the matter before I gave my suspicion tongue."

"You would have left the Court without revealing the secret?"

"Secret!" he exclaimed.

"Well, it was a matter known only to yourself. May we not call such a knowledge a secret?"

"You argue skilfully, and have drawn me into a conversation which I would have perferred to avoid. My time is valuable, Mr. Lambert."

"So is mine, Dr. Pye."

There was a pause; each was waiting for the other to speak, and I was determined he should be the first.

"May I inquire," he said, "your reason for evincing so extraordinary an interest in this affair?"

Here was an opportunity for a bit of acting; I took advantage of it. Leaning forward I said in my most serious tone, "Dr. Pye, my reputation is at stake. It is a dangerous admission to make, but we are closeted together in confidence, and may say anything to each other without fear. No one can hear us"--(I was not so sure of that, but it suited my purpose to say it)--"and if either of us were called upon to give an account of our interview--though there is nothing more unlikely--we might say what we pleased, invent what we pleased, put into each other's mouth anything we pleased. That is the advantage of speaking without witnesses."

"You are very frank," he said.

"It pays me to be so. I repeat, my reputation is at stake. I have arrested a man for murder, and I am bound to prove him guilty. There are jealousies in all professions; there are jealousies in mine. I am surrounded by men who envy me, and who would like to step in my shoes. They would clap their hands in delight if I let the man I arrested slip through my fingers. Well, I don't intend to give them this satisfaction. My present visit to you is partly private, partly professional. Of course, if you say to me, 'Mr. Lambert, I

decline to have anything to do with your private feelings,' the only thing open to me would be to keep those private feelings to myself, and to treat you, professionally, as a witness who was not disposed to assist me."

"Justice must not be thwarted," he said.

"Exactly. You hit the nail on the head. May we continue the conversation on the lines that will suit you?"

"Well, continue," he said; "it is rather novel to me, and I will endeavour to work up an interest in a matter so entirely foreign to me. You see," he added, and I was not sure whether he intended to be humorous or serious, "there is nothing scientific in it."

"Not in a strict sense, perhaps, but, allowing a latitude, there is something scientific in the methods we detectives pursue. The piecing together of the loose bits of evidence which we hunt up, a bit here, a bit there, arguing upon it, drawing conclusions from it, rejecting what will not fit, filling up the empty spaces, until we present the whole case without a crack in it for a guilty man to slip through--that is what we call circumstantial evidence, and it is really a science, doctor. Where did we break off? I was contending that it would have been wrong for you to have left the Court without speaking of the startling resemblance between Mr. Reginald Boyd and the man you saw coming from his father's house in the middle of the night. It would have been worse than wrong, it would have been criminal. Now, doctor, a man of your penetration could not be mistaken. He says he was home and in bed at the time, but it is impossible for him to prove it. And why? Because there is not a shadow of doubt that he was the man you saw. There must be no wavering in your evidence on this point; the crime must be brought home to him; he must not escape. Doctor Pye, you must let no feeling of compassion prevent you from stating the honest truth. You see what is at stake in this matter."

I may say, without vanity, that I was playing my cards well, and if I did not laugh in his face--which would have been foolish, though I could have done so with much enjoyment--I am entitled to my laugh at the recollection of the scene.

"Your reputation is at stake," he said.

"I don't deny it; and the ends of justice; a much more important thing to a gentleman of your position."

"Am I to infer that my presence will be necessary in a criminal court?"

"It cannot be dispensed with. You will be served with a notice to appear as a witness."

"When?"

"Next Friday at the Bishop Street Police Court. There is a clever lawyer against us, Mr. Pallaret, and my instructions are to make the case in its initial stages as strong as possible, for he will exert all his powers to break it down."

"I must appear, I suppose," he said.

"And you will maintain that Mr. Reginald Boyd is the man."

"Yes, to the best of my knowledge and belief."

"Mr. Pallaret is a skilful cross-examiner."

"I will be prepared for him."

"He will endeavour to throw discredit upon your statement."

There was just the suspicion of a smile on his lips as he said, "Let him try."

"It will be the more necessary for you to be firm, doctor," I said, and I was curious to see whether he would fall into the trap, "because Mrs. Death's evidence as to the time you saw Mr. Reginald Boyd come out of the house is in direct contradiction to yours."

"Yes, I know."

"She says she heard the clock of Saint Michael's Church strike three when she was in the Square."

"She is mistaken. She might easily be, alarmed as she was for the safety of her husband."

He had fallen into the trap. Here was a man who had stated that I was the first visitor he had had this week, and that he had not seen a newspaper, acknowledging in his last replies to me that he was acquainted with the evidence Mrs. Death had given in the Coroner's Court yesterday. If it occurred to him that he had contradicted himself he did not gather from me that I was aware of it. I rose to go, and kept my face to him.

"I will wish you good night, doctor," I said, and then I lingered. "By the way, might I see that clever little device of yours for throwing light to a distance?"

"I am sorry I cannot show it to you," he replied. "It is being repaired. Good night."

He was anxious to be rid of me, but I still lingered.

"It is from the back windows of your house, doctor, that you can see into Catchpole Square?"

"Yes," he replied, and his voice was not cordial; but that I judge it seldom is. I mean, that it was more guarded.

"Would you mind showing me the window you looked out of when you saw Mr. Reginald Boyd?"

"I cannot show you the room to-night. It is used as a sleeping apartment by one of the females in the house."

"I beg your pardon; but I should like to see it before next Friday."

"There will be no difficulty. Good night."

"Good night," I said again.

He accompanied me to the street door, inviting me by a motion of his hand to precede him down the stairs. I would not be so impolite. I insisted upon his going first, and I followed him, with my right hand in the pocket containing my little revolver. Our last salutations exchanged, he shut the street door upon me.

I walked to the end of the street, and then, on the opposite side of the road, slowly retraced my steps till I was within twenty yards or so of the house, and waited till Constable Applebee came round on his beat.

"You will remain here," I said to him, "and keep Dr. Pye's house under observation, without drawing attention upon yourself, till I return. I shall be back in less than half an hour. Report to me if any person enters or leaves the house during my absence."

When I returned it was in the company of an officer in plain clothes, whom I had instructed to keep watch on the house until I sent another man to relieve him. Applebee reported that Dr. Pye's street door had not been opened.

Well, the train is laid. When it is fired, if friend Joseph Pitou is not following a will-o'-the-wisp, there will be a rare explosion. Even if he is, I think I can promise one.

What annoys me is, that I have been unable to get the particulars of the case of Louis Lorenz.

A postman's knock at the door! The telegram!

Yes, here it is: "Letter, in French, to-morrow. Pitou."

CHAPTER LVII.

DETECTIVE LAMBERT CONTINUES HIS DIARY.

On Monday morning Detective Lambert, as recorded in his diary, received Joseph Pitou's letter from Milan--this time written in French, which, being duly translated by Mrs. Lambert, caused the English detective profound astonishment and delight. It was in keeping with the literary methods he pursued that he did not insert the letter in his diary, and gave no intelligible account of its contents. Neither would it have been in accordance with his methods to have omitted mysterious reference to it:

"Letter from Joseph Pitou, commencing, 'My Very Dear and Very Illustrious Compatriot and Brother-in-arms,' which I look upon as foreign bunkum. I don't object to the 'illustrious,' but we English would have put it differently.

"If I were not so closely mixed up with the Catchpole Square Mystery I should regard friend Joseph's letter as being copied out of a romance. It reads like romance. But it isn't; it is a chapter, or several chapters, out of real life. It is a feather in one's cap to be connected with such a character--not friend Joseph, but the game we are hunting. Big game. The idea of coming face to face with it is enough to scare a timid man, but that kind of risk doesn't scare an Englishman. I won't do friend Joseph the injustice to say it might scare him.

"He sends me the portrait of Louis Lorenz. The mischief of it is that Lorenz's face is covered with hair--a fine crop which in the present instance, I do not admire. When a criminal is condemned to death in Gallicia don't they shave him? A felon loses his rights as a citizen, and his moustachios and whiskers are the property of the State.

"My man is clean shaven, but the blue shade on his chin and cheeks show that he has a fine stiff crop of his own. So have hundreds of thousands of other men. Still it is a link, though not a strong one.

"The point of resemblance is in the forehead and eyes. I took as clear a view as possible of his face, and I did not fail to observe that, whether by accident or design, he sat with his back to the light. True, he did not shift his chair to place himself in that position, but for all that I decide it was design and not accident. He seldom raised his eyes; when he did he found me ready for him. Now, if it had been Applebee who sat opposite him----"

And here, presumably, Lambert broke off to indulge in a laugh.

Near midnight on the same day he continued his diary, but there was no reference to Joseph Pitou or Louis Lorenz.

"At three o'clock called on Dr. Pye. An old woman opened the door. 'Dr. Pye at home?' I asked. 'Not at home,' she answered. 'Take my card up to him,' I said. 'Not at home,' she repeated, and jammed my leg in the door. I remonstrated. 'Take your leg away,' she said. Seeing that she was determined, and having no authority to enter the house, I took my leg away, and she slammed the door in my face. Faithful creature--and well paid for her services, I'll swear. Told the lie with a face of brass, for a lie it was. Dr. Pye was at home. Where is my maid from Norfolk? She was seen to leave the house on Saturday morning. Cab at the door. Small japanned box brought out, containing her wardrobe. Cab drove off with box on the roof and my Norfolk maid inside. I ought to have had more than one man on the watch, for then I should have known where the cab drove to. Most probably to a railway station, to take my maid to her native village. Norfolk has many villages. Why was Dr. Pye so anxious to be rid of her? Answer--because she did not slam the door in my face, as the old woman did.

"With the exception of two visits from Mr. Ezra Lynn (from the description given of the man there could be no mistake it was he) there has been nothing discovered. These visits were made on Saturday night and last night. On each occasion he came at eight o'clock. On Saturday night he remained two hours, last night he remained three. Dr. Pye has not been seen to leave the house. From the tradesmen who call there nothing has been learned. The establishment is carried on on ready money lines. Everything sent home is paid for at the servants' entrance. As a ready money customer Dr. Pye bears a good name in the neighbourhood.

"I was not content with one visit to Dr. Pye to-day. At five o'clock I presented myself again--on official business. The same old woman opened the door. 'Dr. Pye at home?' 'Not at home.' 'I must see him.' 'Not at home.' There was no chance of my putting my leg inside; the door was on the chain. 'I serve this notice upon him,' I said, thrusting the paper into the old woman's hand. 'It is an order for him to appear as a witness at the Bishop Street Police Court next Friday morning, the 22nd of March, at eleven o'clock, to give evidence in the case of the murder of Samuel Boyd.' The woman took the notice, and left me alone once more on the wrong side of the door.

"I have treated Mr. Rawdon, the contentious juryman, to a sight of me on three separate occasions. Not a word have I addressed to him; I have simply given him to understand in a silent manner that he is under observation. He does understand it, and does not appear to be very comfortable.

"Where is Mr. Dick Remington? He has not been seen by any of my people since Thursday last. Has he been spirited away? Is there any connection between his disappearance and the disappearance of Abel Death? To both questions I answer, no. The notice of his absence still remains on the house in Catchpole Square. Applebee informs me that the door of that house has not been opened from the day the notice was posted on it. He is keeping close watch upon the house, and I am keeping close watch upon him. When he makes a move, or discovers anything, I shall be at hand. Things can't remain in this quiet state much longer. Some time this week there will be a flare up. Don't you think so?"

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE DISCOVERY OF THE CRYPTOGRAM.

While Detective Lambert was making these entries, events of which he had no suspicion were progressing in another quarter. Some premonition of startling incidents soon to happen must have been very strong within him, or he would not have been out of bed a couple of hours after midnight, prowling, in a safe disguise, in the vicinity of Catchpole Square and Shore Street. Constable Applebee came across him twice without recognising him, although Lambert gave him every opportunity, asking him on both occasions the way to Holborn. Lambert apparently was the worse for drink, and Applebee would probably have had more to say to him, and might indeed have "run him in" as a suspicious character had it not been for the interest he took in the immediate neighbourhood of Samuel Boyd's house, to which particular spot he devoted more attention than was consistent with his duties on the space of ground covered by his beat. The second time Lambert asked him the way to Holborn, the constable proffered a sensible piece of advice, to the effect that the man would be better in bed, to which he was advised to go if he did not wish to get into trouble. "Is that your advice?" asked Lambert, with a tipsy lurch. "Yes, it is," replied Applebee, "and if you're not a born fool you'll take it." "I'd have you know," retorted Lambert, "that I'm a respectable mechanic, and my advice to you is not to be so cocky. I'd make as good a bobby as you any day in the week." This angered Applebee, but did not move him to retaliatory action, and Lambert walked off, laughing in his sleeve. His light mood did not last long. Dark clouds were coming into the sky; a few drops of rain fell. There was a flash of lightning and a clap of thunder. "We shall have a storm," he muttered.

At that very moment Dr. Vinsen and Dr. Pye were closeted together, and events were approaching a climax. On the afternoon of that day Dr. Pye had received a note from his friend, announcing that he intended to pay him a visit at midnight. It was a strange hour to choose for a friendly call, and Dr. Pye was not pleased, but these men were in a certain sense dependent upon each other, and neither could just now afford to open up a quarrel; therefore, when Dr. Vinsen's summons at the street door was heard by Dr. Pye he went down himself and admitted his visitor. The interview was held at the back of the house, in the room with shuttered windows, from which a view of Samuel Boyd's house could be obtained.

"It is a dangerous time for a visit," were Dr. Pye's first words.

"By daylight," said Dr. Vinsen, "the danger would be greater. I took care to see, before I knocked, that there was no person in the street. Besides, I trust you as little as you trust me."

"You have a reason for the remark," observed Dr. Pye.

"I have, or I should not have made it. But let us be amicable--be a-mi-ca-ble. I am willing to converse in a spirit of confidence. You have wounded me by your suspicions, and you have a design which you are hiding from me--from me, your best friend. Has your spectre appeared again?"

"An hour ago I saw it at the window."

Dr. Vinsen looked at his host incredulously. Dr. Pye placed a portrait before him.

"I took this negative last night; I developed it this morning. Do you recognise it?"

Dr. Vinsen's face grew pale as he gazed at the portrait of Samuel Boyd.

"Are you mad?" he asked, "or am I?"

"Do not be alarmed," said Dr. Pye, calmly; "the man is not there. It is the picture of a vision, and is one step farther in our knowledge of the power of the human will. When I received your letter this afternoon I determined that I would search the house to-night in your company; or, if you prefer it, I will search alone."

"No; it shall be in my company. I am not afraid of ghosts."

Dr. Pye smiled scornfully.

"You turned white at the sight of the picture."

"A momentary discomposure, nothing more. I do not deny that I have not your iron nerve. I am very human, my friend;--ve-ry hu-man."

"Drop the mask," said Dr. Pye, sternly. "I am sick of your whining. Will you have some wine?"

"Something stronger than wine."

"To fortify yourself for a meeting with our spectre?" Dr. Pye laughed in derision, and produced a decanter of brandy, to which his visitor helped himself liberally. From the bottom of a cupboard he took a cobwebbed bottle of wine, which he handled and opened very carefully. He smiled as he held the glass up to the light, and then drank it slowly, as if it were really the elixir of life which popular rumour credited him with searching for. "I would give much," he said, "for that store of old wine which Samuel Boyd left behind him. Had it not been for you I would have had every bottle in this house."

"And so risked discovery," said Dr. Vinsen. "As it was you courted danger by taking two bottles to gratify your insane tastes."

"I have courted greater dangers and escaped them. You are too cautious, my friend. All my life I have found safety in boldness. You accuse me of withholding from your knowledge a design which I have in view. What design?"

"In good time, my very dear friend. There are other matters first. Before we go into them, a question. Does your patient remain in the same state?"

"There is no change in him."

"He will disclose nothing?"

"His mind is a blank."

"That is the result of your fine plan," said Dr. Vinsen, with a sneer. "Perhaps you will acknowledge that my plan was the best--to silence him and leave him in the cellar."

"I acknowledge nothing. The reasonable presumption was that he could have given us a clue. Time enough then to have silenced him. As it happens he has failed to be of service to us."

"How will you dispose of him now without drawing suspicion upon you?"

"Upon us, you mean." Dr. Vinsen shifted uneasily upon his seat. "I will find a way, and you shall share the risk." He smiled as he added, "I will insure your safety for a small premium, so we will not waste time in recrimination. Come to the 'other matters' you have referred to, and of which I am as yet in ignorance."

"Not quite in ignorance, my friend. Surely I have prepared you, surely I have been patient. I decline to be placed in a false light." He took out a pocketbook and laid it on

the table, guarding it with his hand. "I have a conscience; I must justify myself even in your eyes."

"Is it worth while to make the attempt?"

"I think so; I really think so. I must lay my head upon my pillow with my mind at ease--my mind at ease. You, with your lofty notions and your wild search for the unattainable, you with your spectres and visions, know little of the sufferings of a sensitive spirit such as mine."

"Faugh! Is this worth while?"

"You have your ways, I have mine," said Dr. Vinsen, with a sly smile. "I must trouble you to listen while I go over the ground."

"So be it. And if my suspicions are correct--and they generally are--I may trouble you to listen while I go over the ground."

"It will be a pleasure. I think it is three years since you and I became acquainted. Correct me if I am wrong."

"It is immaterial. Say three years--or thirty."

"No, my friend; let us be exact. This is an affair of figures. It is three years since you wrote to me in acknowledgment of a circular you received from me. I had money to lend, you required a loan. I advanced you five hundred pounds."

"Four."

"Five, my friend, five. The odd hundred was deducted as payment of interest in advance."

"Part payment."

"You have an excellent memory. I need not go into the details. In the course of a few months you required more money and I advanced it to you."

"Spare me the details of each transaction. Come to the point."

"I will. Up to the present day you have had from me, in various sums, at various times, a total of three thousand pounds----"

"In actual money, not half that."

"Which, with interest added," continued Dr. Vinsen, alias Ezra Lynn, not troubling himself to argue the point, "amounts now to a trifle over five thousand pounds. Will you oblige me by looking over these figures and verifying them?"

"No, I will take your word that they are correct, according to your reckoning."

"I thank you for your confidence," said Dr. Vinsen, who did not, however, seem to appreciate this indifference. "It is not to be supposed that I advanced my hard-earned capital without some sort of security. You gave it to me in the shape of a bill of sale over these art treasures of yours, for which you have an absurd passion, and which I do not deny have a marketable value, and over every piece of portable property in this house. From time to time I have urged you to discharge the debt, wholly or in part, and my appeals have been disregarded. My dear friend, there is a time when one's patience becomes exhausted. Need I say more?"

"Yes. You are only in the middle of the chapter. Samuel Boyd has to be introduced. Proceed."

"At your wish," said Dr. Vinsen, with evident reluctance. "Some six weeks ago, when I was pressing you for repayment, you made mention to me----"

"Stop. When you were pressing me for repayment and threatening to sell me up--you left out the latter clause."

"You made mention to me of a plan, which would not only enable you to repay me what you owed me, but would result to our mutual advantage. You had, you said, secret access to the house of Samuel Boyd, who was in the habit of keeping there considerable sums of money, of which it would be easy to obtain possession. Without risk, without danger. You laid particular stress upon that."

"I did," said Dr. Pye, and the inscrutable smile which accompanied the words did not add to his confederate's composure.

"You needed a partner in the execution of your plan, a sleeping partner, you said, who would have nothing to do but to assist in removing the cash and valuables from his house to this, for which assistance he was to receive half the proceeds."

"Say spoil."

"The proceeds. I objected, not being willing to be a party to an act of personal violence. I am a peaceable man, and have made my money by peaceable means."

"By peaceable fraud."

"Why use harsh terms? All my transactions are legal, and protected by the law. In reply to my objection to a deed of violence you told me that you could in a moment render a sleeping man so utterly insensible and oblivious to all that was passing around him as to utterly remove every possible chance of risk. We were to enter the house when Samuel Boyd was asleep; you were to go into his chamber and render him insensible and unconscious."

"While you remained outside," said Dr. Pye, still with the inscrutable smile on his lips, "in happy ignorance of the sleeping man's fate."

"I object to these interruptions," said Dr. Vinsen, sulkily. "Finish the story your own way."

"I will. I informed you that Samuel Boyd, for an unknown purpose of his own, had been for some weeks past withdrawing large sums of money from the bank, and had been selling securities, and that I expected he would have in his safe on the night of March the 1st several thousand pounds, of which I offered you half for the tame part you were to play in the robbery. Your cupidity was aroused; you could not resist the bait, and you consented to become my partner in the crime. You do not like the terms I use; they are the correct terms. I am no canting psalm-singer; when I commit a crime I accept the responsibility; I do not shirk and whine; and as for the penalty, trust me for evading it. It was arranged that out of my share of the spoil I was to pay you what I owed you, so that you had a double interest in the success of the plan. The night arrived, and you were here, jubilant, expectant, greedy for the gold, but yet with a craven cowardice for which I despised you. However, you screwed your courage to the sticking point, and when all the lights in Samuel Boyd's house were extinguished I showed you how I obtained access to the premises. We entered in silence, and undetected; we made our way up the stairs and entered the office which contained the safe. You shook like an aspen, and I left you in the office and went alone into the bedroom, carrying a light. At that very moment Samuel Boyd awoke and started up in bed before I had time to press upon his face the handkerchief which I had prepared to render him unconscious. He sprang from the bed, and the handkerchief fell from my hand. One cry escaped his lips--only one, for my hand was on his throat. But he was strong, a more powerful man than I had conceived him to be, and he struggled with me so determinedly that we stumbled together into the office, where you stood, white-faced and trembling. By some means he got hold of a pistol, and

fired two shots. One bullet went into the wall, where it was found by our good friend Remington, evidence of which was given by him and Lambert the detective at the inquest. Where the other bullet went has not yet been discovered. I thought I was struck, and for a moment my hold on Samuel Boyd relaxed. His eyes fell upon you, and your name escaped his lips, which was the first intimation I received that you had had transactions with him. That roused you to action, for you knew that if he were left alive you were doomed. You sprang upon him, and bore him to the ground. Then it was two to one. Our hands were at his throat. Whose fingers gave him the coup de grace?"

"Yours," said Dr. Vinsen, in a hoarse whisper.

"Yours," said Dr. Pye, calmly, "as I am ready to testify on my oath. However it was, there lay Samuel Boyd, dead before our eyes. We came to commit a robbery; we had committed murder. As we stood gazing upon the dead body we heard a knock at the street door, and I thought you would have fainted, you were so terror struck. In a whisper you suggested flight; had your advice been followed we were lost, for there was no time to mask the means by which we had obtained access to the house. The knocking continued, and it was then that the opportunity was afforded me of displaying one of my talents. As a mimicker of voices I am unrivalled, and you are aware of my skill in another histrionic achievement. It was imperative that the summons should be answered, or the neighbourhood might have been aroused. I seized your hand, my dear accomplice in crime, and we descended to the street door. Mimicking Samuel Boyd's voice I inquired who was there. The reply was, 'It is I, sir, Abel Death. For God's sake let me speak to you!' Fearing the result if the demand was not complied with I drew the bolt and the chain, and dragged the man in; and as he entered you struck him with such force that he fell to the ground senseless. I have never inquired why you struck him."

"It was an impulse of passion," said Dr. Vinsen, in a faltering voice.

"Foist those subterfuges upon weaker men. I did not inquire because I knew. You held the candle above your head, and Abel Death saw your face, as the man we had murdered had done, and recognised you, as he had done. Why do you wince? We did murder him, comrade in crime, and are both 'liable to the law for the deed." Quietly as he spoke he seemed to take delight in associating Dr. Vinsen with himself in the ruthless work. "Your thought, when you struck Abel Death down, was that if he were allowed to go free he would be able to give evidence against you."

"And against you."

"Thanks for your consideration of me, but I can see to my own safety without aid from such as you. When yours is imperilled there is something of the savage in you; I give you credit for so much manliness. You would have killed him where he lay."

"Had you made an end of him," said Dr. Vinsen, morosely----

"Or had you done it," interrupted Dr. Pye. "Why give me all the honour of the task we were engaged upon?"

"His tongue would have been silenced for ever," concluded Dr. Vinsen, "and we should have been safe."

"I am not so sure of that. Anyway I deemed it prudent that he should live till we had made search for Samuel Boyd's treasure. If that search had been successful I might have handed the poor clerk over to your tender mercy. But it was not successful. In the safe we found a paltry two hundred pounds, and bills, and documents, and books of accounts. The books were valuable to us, for if they had fallen into other hands, it would have been seen that we were both indebted to the man we killed. Among the bills were many of mine, and some of yours. It was not till then that I learned you owed him money; and your motive for joining me in the robbery was partly explained. The books and bills destroyed, and the man dead, your indebtedness to him was cancelled. You are a cunning dog, Ezra Lynn. There were also Lord Wharton's bills, which, I fear, are valueless to us."

"You have not kept them!" cried Dr. Vinsen.

"I have, and every document we took away."

"But they implicate me!"

"It is perhaps for that reason I have not destroyed them," said Dr. Pye, coolly. "We sink or swim together, Ezra Lynn, so long as we remain in England. Among the documents was the list of Lady Wharton's jewels, and a statement of how Samuel Boyd became possessed of them, with other statements which informed us that he was expected to present himself at Bournemouth on the following Wednesday, with the fifteen hundred pounds he had arranged to advance to her. But where were the jewels? We hunted for them in vain, and to this hour have been unable to lay hands upon them, although we know they must be there."

"They may not be. The burglar who broke into the house on the night you went to Bournemouth may have found them."

"No. What we could not find he did not find. On the night I went to Bournemouth!" said Dr. Pye, and for the first time a laugh escaped him. "Tell me another man who could have so successfully imposed upon her ladyship, who would have had the audacity to carry out a deception so hazardous? Do you not feel proud in having a partner so bold and daring? Judge by that of what I am capable, and whether I am fitted to hold command. After what I have seen these five nights past, the image of Samuel Boyd, who lies dead in his grave, would any other man have the hardihood to enter that house? I am a stranger to fear, Ezra Lynn. When our conversation is ended we make search for the lost jewels; it may be the last chance we shall have. To finish the story of that Friday night before you disclose what is in your mind. I made Abel Death secure by plunging him into a state of insensibility from which it was impossible for him to recover till late the following day, and then we removed the books and papers, leaving behind us one document which fixed the guilt of the murder upon Mr. Reginald Boyd."

"How is it," asked Dr. Vinsen, "that that accusation has not been produced?"

"There are more ways than one of accounting for it. The man who made the burglarious entrance into the house may have seized the papers we left upon the table, in the expectation that he could turn them to profit, to discover later that to produce them would be putting himself into the criminal dock; or it may be that Mr. Richard Remington appropriated the document and destroyed it, out of regard for Inspector Robson's family, and probably also because he believes in Mr. Reginald Boyd's innocence. Hark! Do you hear the thunder? A storm is approaching. All the better for our purpose. It is two o'clock, and we have little time to waste. I will make short work of the conclusion of that night's proceedings. At your suggestion we placed the body of Samuel Boyd comfortably in its bed, and cleared away all traces of the struggle. Your argument was that, as it would become known that Mr. Reginald Boyd visited his father that night, it would be supposed he had adopted the expedient to make it appear that the murdered man died a natural death, and so avert suspicion from himself. It was a lame argument, for the marks of our fingers were on his throat, but I humoured you, as we humour a child who asks a harmless question. The last thing we did was to carry Abel Death from the house. Some days afterwards we learned that Mr. Richard Remington was taking an active interest in the disappearance of the clerk, and for the purpose of ascertaining to what extent he was in communication with Mrs. Death you introduced yourself to her under the false name, by which you are known to her and to him. I raised no objection to the plan; the risk was yours, and I was willing that you should run it. You used my name without my authority, and I understand why you did so. It was to make me a partner in the risk, was it not?"

"Yes," replied Dr. Vinsen, sullenly.

"An honest confession. You feared that I should shirk the consequences of our crime--let us call it by its usual name--to which you attach so much importance. You are mistaken; I am ready to meet them, always, always ready. I have overcome greater dangers, have steered my way safely over rocks and quicksands far more perilous. Shall I recapitulate the particulars of a later incident in this affair? That it chanced that one of the men summoned on the jury was a person who owed you money which he could not pay; that you held him so completely in your power that you could bring worldly ruin upon him; that you entered into a conspiracy with him to use his influence with his brother jurymen in order that a verdict of wilful murder against Reginald Boyd should be returned; that you----"

"Enough of that," interposed Dr. Vinsen. "Surely it is not necessary to go into these details."

"A statement of them refreshes the memory; it is important not to lose sight of the smallest incident in this complex matter--but as you will. And now, my worthy partner, before we proceed to the house that faces this window, explain what you mean by saying that your patience is exhausted, and by your threat with reference to the art treasures I have gathered, which I value as I value my life?"

"You have had a large sum of money from me," said Dr. Vinsen, doggedly. "I claim my own. The debt must be discharged."

"And if payment is impossible just now?"

"I cannot wait any longer."

"Shall we say you will not?"

"You goad me to it. I will not."

"But it happens that you must wait my pleasure--aye, must! Ezra Lynn, you little know the man upon whose fate yours depends, and who would have no more compunction in striking you dead where you sit than in plucking the leaves from a rose. You would rob me of my treasures--the treasures I have purchased with blood. Not while I live--not while I live. Here is beauty that I can worship, the work of the great masters of the past, exquisite colour and perfect form, in the production of which genius toiled with a divine end in view. If my history ever becomes known the world will read the story of a man who greatly dared, of one who loved beauty in its every shape and form, of one who, unblessed with wealth, stopped at no crime to gain it, in order to follow his star, and

who, when all was lost--if such a fate befall him--defied his enemies and defeated them in the moment of their victory. You start at the word crime. It is a common word, and I use it in the common sense, but not in the sense in which I view it. All things are justified to men who dare as I have dared. What is the sacrifice of a human life in the endeavour to wrest nature's sublime secrets from her breast? Man wars with man, and strews the battlefield with the slain. Is that called a crime? We glorify it, we sing hymns to it, the church cries 'Hosanna!' and its priests praise the Lord of Hosts who crowned our banners with victory. If victory crown mine--and it may yet, in the teeth of all obstacles--so shall I be praised and glorified. Crime! There is no such word to the victor. I laugh at the law that would make a criminal of a hero. Not for the first time shall I have successfully defied it."

He paused, and smiled scornfully as a flash of lightning pierced a chink in the window, which he instantly unshuttered.

"We may be seen!" cried Dr. Vinsen, catching his arm.

He took no heed of the warning, but stood at the window, and smiled again at the peal of thunder at the lightning's heels. Whether the words he had uttered were or were not the ravings of a madman, it was clear that he was terribly in earnest.

"It is but a commencement of the storm," he said presently, in a calmer tone, turning from the window. "There is still something further to explain. You accused me of concealing a design from you."

Dr. Vinsen fortified himself with brandy before replying. His nerves were shaken, and the liquor gave him courage.

"Why have you had two travelling trunks made, and inscribed with the name of Corsi?"

"Ah, you have discovered that. It is the name I shall assume when I leave these shores for another country. The trunks, as you have doubtless observed, are specially constructed for the safe transport of works of art."

"I forbid you to remove them," cried Dr. Vinsen. "They no longer belong to you."

"How so?"

"How so?" echoed Dr. Vinsen. "You will not deny your signature?"

"No, I will not deny it."

"By this document," said Dr. Vinsen, taking a paper from his pocket-book, "which I had duly stamped on the day you signed it, they became my property if, in six months from that date, you had not discharged your debt to me. The six months expired to-day."

"Pause a moment before you open it. When did you read it last?"

"Yesterday, and put it in my pocket-book to bring here to-night."

"If my memory does not play me false, the date was the 18th of September, 1897. I did not approve of the document you asked me to sign, and you wrote another at this table, worded somewhat differently. One hundred and eighty-three days have elapsed since then. I am curious to see if I timed it correctly. Open the paper."

Dr. Vinsen unfolded it, and started in amazement. The paper was blank, nothing appearing on it but the red Government stamp.

"It was a vulgar trick," said Dr. Pye. "You wrote and I signed, not in ink which gradually fades, but which suddenly disappears at an appointed hour. Content yourself, my worthy friend, and thank me for saving you from a danger which would have sent you to the hulks. Had you attempted to dispose of these gems to a dealer in any European city you would have been immediately arrested. They have been bought with blood, and there is not a police court that has not a list of them. Priceless treasures! Here are vases, medallions, and bronzes of Benvenuto Cellini, for which collectors would give thousands of guineas, and every one known throughout the civilised world. That wondrous artificer saw visions, as I do, and his progress was marked with blood, as mine has been. Content yourself, I say; when I make my fortune you shall be paid, and if we discover the jewels to-night you shall have the lion's share. Now, follow me, if you have the courage."

* * * * *

Noiseless footsteps on the dark stairs, noiseless footsteps in the passages--the footsteps of men in their stocking feet. They reach the landing on which Samuel Boyd's bedroom and office are situated.

The storm rages without, tearing through the Square with fierce, shrieking moans and cries, like a forest of wild beasts in pain. There is a leak in the roof of the house, and the men within it, when there is a lull, hear the raindrops falling, pat, pat, pat. One of the

men shudders at a terrifying thought, born of the memory of a night when a murder was committed there. If a human being were on the roof, stabbed to the heart, so might his life's blood drip through the aperture. In the terrified man's fancy he sees the red stains on the floor, sees them spread through the air, though nothing is visible in his actual sight. A muffled cry escapes him.

"Hush!" From the other man. "Do not raise your voice above a whisper."

"Why not?" From the trembling man. "There is no one here but ourselves."

"Fool! The house may be watched. Why do you shrink from me? Are you afraid?"

"No." But the speaker's lips and face are white. "Can we not have a light?"

"Not here. I have matches and a candle with me. There is a screen in the office--here is the door--step in, softly, softly! Now, help me move the screen before the window. Come, ghost, spectre, or vision, show yourself!"

"For God's sake, stop!"

"Coward! Ah, that lightning flash! And now the thunder! Listen to the rain. It is a deluge."

They stoop and light the candle, crouching by the writing-table.

"Keep the light near the ground. The window is masked, but if the candle is raised its glimmer might be seen from the Square. Move this way. Nearer to this dumb image of wax in its hooded chair. It would be a rare achievement to breathe life into it, to compel it to speak, and reveal where the treasure we seek is hidden."

So low are their voices that it would be impossible for any person acquainted with the speakers to recognise them by that sound. They are standing at the back of the hooded chair, and the waxwork figure of the Chinaman, with its fixed and pallid face, stares straight at vacancy.

"Speak!" whispers the bolder of the two, in savage derision, and shakes the chair--so violently that the Charles the Second cane it holds in its hand slips and falls to the ground.

"I recall a story," he continues, picking up the stick, and still in a whispered voice, "of a treasure of great value being concealed for generations in a cane like this. If this were

hollow it could be used for just such a purpose. What are these protuberances round the rim? Hold the light closer, closer! A circlet of old English letters."

By accident he presses one of the letters, and as he does so is conscious of a movement in the silver knob at the top of the cane. Bending over it he sees that the letter he pressed is B, and that the pressure has caused the figure 2 to spring up on the surface of the knob.

"B, the second letter in the alphabet, stands for 2," he whispers excitedly. "The last words written by Samuel Boyd on the memorandum which would send his son to the gallows if it were found, were 'Notation 2647.' The sixth letter in the alphabet is F." He presses the letter, and the figure 6 appears on the knob. "Ha, ha! The fourth letter, D." He presses that, and the figure 4 appears, the figures now ranging 264. "The seventh letter, G. The notation is complete--2647!"

Such perfect control did the speaker have over himself that even in that moment of excitement his voice does not rise above a whisper. Both men are now in a standing posture, the discoverer of the simple cryptogram holding the cane.

"Now for the test," he says, and with the ball of his broad thumb he presses hard upon the four figures. A click is heard. The silver knob springs up.

"The jewels!" he whispers, exultantly. "They are here--they are here! See!"

In the utterance of the word a vivid flash of lightning illumines the room, and one man utters a startled exclamation, the other a frenzied shriek, for in that momentary flash they see the figure of the Chinaman rise suddenly from its chair. The candle is dashed to the ground, enveloping them in black darkness, and the cane, with its concealed treasure, is plucked from the hand that held it!

HAPTER LIX.

CONSTABLE APPLEBEE DISTINGUISHES HIMSELF.

Constable Applebee, seeking shelter from the storm beneath the roof of Deadman's Court, kept his face and his thoughts in the direction of Samuel Boyd's house, for such complete possession had the mystery taken of him that lightning, wind, and rain were powerless to drive it from his mind. Besides which, as he afterwards informed his wife, he had a presentiment that "something was going to happen." The latest flash of lightning caused him to clap his hand instinctively upon his eyes; the crash of thunder that followed caused him to drop his hand. Then, as though the elements had exhausted themselves, there was a sudden hush, for the sound of the fast-falling rain was faint in his ears after the deafening thunderpeal. So faint, indeed, that, in the belief that the storm was spent, he stepped into Catchpole Square and looked around, distinguishing only the outlines of the buildings because of the darkness of the night. Almost on the instant the door of Samuel Boyd's house was violently opened, and a man rushed out, slamming it behind him. With such frantic haste did he run that he came into collision with the constable, and both were nearly upset. . They recovered their equilibrium simultaneously, and before the man could get his breath Applebee proved himself equal to the occasion.

"Easy, there!" he exclaimed, and with one hand caught the man by the throat, while with the other he raised his whistle to his lips, and blew a loud and vigorous summons for assistance.

"Let me go!" cried the man, struggling to get free. "Come into the house with me--quick, quick, or the murderers will escape!"

"You don't escape," said Applebee. "Keep still, or I'll knock you on the head." And he tightened his hand on the man's throat.

At this moment his summons for assistance was answered by the respectable mechanic who had twice inquired the way to Holborn. "What's up?" he inquired.

Applebee pulled out his bull's eye lamp, and turned its light upon the new arrival. "Oh, it's you," he said. "I call upon you in the Queen's name to assist me in arresting this man."

"Right you are," replied Lambert, in the half tipsy voice of the mechanic.

"Are you mad?" cried the man. "They will escape, I tell you! Come with me into that house!"

"Keep still!" growled Applebee, shaking his captive roughly.

"What do you charge him with?" asked Lambert, keeping up the fiction.

"Murder," said Applebee. "The murder of Samuel Boyd!"

"That's a find," said Lambert. "Let's have a look at him." And to the constable's astonishment he also pulled out a bull's-eye lamp.

"Who are you?" demanded Applebee.

"My name is Lambert," said the detective, dropping his disguise.

"I might have guessed it; but don't forget that I made this arrest."

"You shall have the credit of it." The light of two bull's-eye lamps was thrown upon the man's face. "By George! It's Dick Remington."

"Absent on business," observed Applebee, sarcastically. "The murder's out. What's that he's dropped?" Lambert picked it up. "A mask!"

It was the mask of a Chinaman's face; and moreover, Dick's outer garment was that of a Mongolian, resembling the garment of the wax figure in the office from which but a few minutes ago he had escaped.

"Look here, Mr. Lambert, look here, Applebee," said Dick, eagerly----

"Stop, Dick Remington," interrupted Lambert. "Don't you think you had better shut your mouth? We're bound to take you to the station, and charge you. When you're brought before the magistrate you can tell your story if you like. Take my advice."

"So far as my story is concerned I will," said Dick, "but in that house are the murderers of Samuel Boyd. For heaven's sake don't leave the place without arresting them!"

"If he gets us into the house," remarked Applebee, "we're done for."

"We shall be three to two," urged Dick, despairingly.

"If your story's true," corrected Applebee, "we shall be two to three. What's this in your hand? A sword-stick?"

"No," said Dick, and his heart fell; he was beginning to realise the danger he was in, "it is not a weapon. I will explain everything at the proper time. Mr. Lambert, I implore you to search that house."

"Constable Applebee has spoken like a careful and sensible man," said Lambert, "but we'll see if we can equalise matters." Taking his police call from his pocket he sent his summons through Deadman's Court. "Blow yours, too, Applebee."

The first to answer the call was Constable Pond, to whom the affair was hastily explained; and presently they were joined by another officer.

"I see no harm in humouring Mr. Remington," then said Lambert. "Pond, you and this officer keep watch in the Square while we go into the house. There's only one way out of it, and there's only one way out of the Square."

"There's the wall at the back," said Dick.

"Which they've got over before this time----"

"Supposing," Applebee put in, "there was anyone to get over it."

"Yes, supposing that. When daylight comes we shall be able to ascertain if there are any fresh marks of a grapnel there." Dick set his teeth; his rope and grapnel were under the bed of his room in Constable Pond's house. "You wish to go into the house with us, Mr. Remington?"

"Yes."

"We must handcuff you. Give me the stick." He took possession of it, and Dick, with a groan, held out his hands. "Behind your back, Mr. Remington. I am sorry for the necessity, but there's no help for it. There, that's comfortable. Have you the key of the street door?"

"In my trousers' pocket."

Lambert put his hand beneath Dick's outer garment, and took the key from the pocket. Then he showed his revolver. "If we're attacked, Applebee, I'll account for the two men.

Now, then." He opened the door. "You go first, Mr. Remington. Applebee, keep behind me, and be prepared."

Throwing light upon their way with their bull's-eye lamps the two officers, preceded by Dick, ascended the stairs to the office. No person was there, nor in the bedroom. They went through all the rooms in the upper part of the house, with the same result. Lambert's experienced eye sought diligently for some sign of the presence of the men Dick had spoken of, but without success.

"A trumped-up story," said Applebee aside to him, "but I knew that all along."

Lambert made no reply, but turned to Dick, "Anywhere else, Mr. Remington?"

"The bottom of the house," replied Dick. Hope was dying within him. He knew that he would be searched at the police station, and that, in addition to other incriminating evidence, there would be found in his pocket the last words written by Samuel Boyd, the production of which would be fatal to Reginald. "Fool!" he thought. "Why have I kept it about me? Why did I not destroy it?"

"Is there a cellar?" asked Lambert.

"Yes."

"I draw the line at cellars," objected Applebee.

"We will go there," said Lambert curtly, and the constable was compelled to accompany them.

"There is a trap door leading to the cellar," said Dick, hopelessly, when they reached the kitchen, for he saw that it had not been disturbed since he had last lifted it himself. Lambert raised it, and let himself down; ascending, he shook the dust from his clothes.

"A regular rat hole," he said. "There's no one there."

"Nor anywhere else," said Applebee, sulkily. "We're only wasting time. Let's get to the station."

Caught, as it were, in a trap of his own preparing, Dick conveyed to Lambert, in one of those secret glances which to an intelligent mind are as good as speech, an entreaty for a private word.

"Remain outside a minute, Applebee," said Lambert, as they stood in the passage leading to the street door. "There's something I wish to ask Mr. Remington."

Applebee would have refused if he dared, but Lambert's standing in the force was too high, and the part he had played in the mystery too conspicuous, for him to venture opposition, so, with a dissatisfied mind and a discontented face, he walked slowly forward, and waited in the Square by the street door.

"This is a bad business, Dick," said Lambert, becoming familiar. His kind tone brought tears into the young man's eyes.

"It is even worse than it appears," said Dick, "as you will discover when we reach the station. You might take the handcuffs off, Mr. Lambert. I'll go quietly." Lambert instantly released him. "Thank you. Handle that cane gently, and carry it upright, if you don't care to entrust me with it. You will know why soon. It is worth more than its weight in gold. Do you think I have been lying?" Lambert stroked his chin. "It is an unfair question, perhaps. Ill answer it myself. As I hope for mercy from our heavenly Judge I have spoken the truth."

"Who were the men you left in the office? Don't say unless you like, and don't speak one word that will tell against yourself. Understand me--I sha'n't use anything to your disadvantage unless I have the best of reasons for it. And don't misunderstand me. I intend to do my duty without regard to consequences. After all, the proper course is silence."

"I must speak. I don't know for certain who the men were. You see my dress and the mask I dropped. I had it made in Covent Garden, and partly helped to make it myself. I have been in this house since Friday night last, and have sat in that Chinaman's chair whenever I heard a sound outside the room, made up to resemble him. I acted another part, too--I could smile at it if it wasn't for what I see before me. There's new misery in store for those I love best in the world, and it is I who will bring it home to them."

"Be a man, Dick, be a man."

"It is because I am a man that I feel it as I do. I have been working to save them, and as likely as not I have brought destruction upon them. I waited for my chance in this house, and to-night it came; and it has been spoilt at the last moment by a----"

"By a man who was doing his duty," said Lambert, persuasively. "I am sure that is what you were going to say. Did you not see the men?"

"I could not. They were at the back of the hooded chair all the time, and of course I didn't dare to turn my head, or they'd have stuck a knife in me. Do you think I'm clever enough to have invented the story?" he asked pathetically.

"I think you are clever enough to invent anything," replied Lambert. He had great admiration for the young fellow, and great sympathy with him; notwithstanding which he would not commit himself. "Be quick. I've no time to listen to a long story; Applebee will be getting impatient. Didn't you hear their voices?"

"I could not distinguish them. They spoke in whispers, and I only caught a word here and there. But I suspect--I suspect----"

"Yes?"

"I more than suspect. I believe them to be Dr. Pye and the wretch Vinsen, who is no doctor, but a money-lender named Ezra Lynn, in league with that scoundrel of a juryman, Rawdon."

"I know all about Ezra Lynn and Rawdon. How did the men you suspect get out of the house?"

"I cannot tell. There is some awful mystery yet to be brought to light. I hoped to do it, but now I shall be deprived of my liberty----" He groaned, and clasped his hands convulsively. "Mr. Lambert, our only hope is in you. You want to see justice done, don't you?"

"I will see it done," said Lambert, sternly.

"Don't be misled--don't be thrown off the right track! However strong appearances may be against me, and against Reginald Boyd, I swear, by all we hold most sacred, that we are both innocent!"

"Isn't it time we were moving, Mr. Lambert," called Applebee, from without.

"In one moment, Applebee."

"Must I be taken to Bishop Street Station?" asked Dick.

"We daren't take you to another," replied Lambert, gravely. "It will be a terrible shock to Inspector Robson."

"My poor uncle! I would give my right hand if it could be spared him. What will he think--what will his dear wife and daughter think?" Dick was suffering physically as well as mentally; he had not tasted food for twenty hours.

Again Applebee's voice was heard from without.

"A last word," said Lambert, hurriedly. "My duty will be performed, whatever happens; no consideration will be allowed to interfere with its proper performance. There will be a search warrant. I don't ask you if there is anything in your room in Pond's house that will tell against you--don't speak; I will not listen--I don't ask you that. If anything is found it will be brought forward without fear or favour, and evidence given in a straightforward manner. But it may console you to know, quite privately and confidentially"--Dick nodded--"that I am working up a case against the men whose names you mentioned, and that if I succeed you may not be the worse off for it. Give me your word that you will keep this to yourself. Enough said. We're ready, Applebee."

Pond and his fellow constable, reporting that no person had passed through the Square, received instructions to keep watch, one in the front, the other at the back of the house until they were relieved, and to arrest all suspicious characters. Then Lambert, Applebee, and Dick, walked to the Bishop Street Station.

Inspector Robson's face was worn and anxious, and when he saw Dick and heard the charge it became haggard. He held up his hand, as if imploring a short respite of silence, and they averted their eyes until he spoke. Raising their heads, a dead white face confronted them, its lips sternly compressed. He did not avoid their glance, but it was noticeable that not for a single moment did his own rest upon his nephew. "That is a man," thought Lambert, "who would go straight to his death at the call of duty. It makes one proud to be an Englishman." They were all very grave as, without faltering, he took down the charge at the dictation of Constable Applebee.

"Before I am searched," said Dick, "I may be allowed to speak, I suppose."

"I would not," advised Lambert.

"But I will, if I am not prevented by force. To be silent would be an admission of guilt, and I am innocent. I wish all in this place to hear my story, every word of which is true."

There was no one in the office except those immediately concerned, Lambert, when they entered, having taken the precaution to order the constable in attendance outside. In a voice shaken by emotion, but weak from want of rest and food, Dick related as briefly as

possible the particulars of the part he had played in the mystery. He himself emptied his pockets, and handed the document falsely incriminating Reginald to his uncle.

"I kept these matters to myself," he said, "because I saw that there was a strong case of circumstantial evidence against Mr. Reginald Boyd, and that the knowledge I had gained would strengthen it. Had I revealed at the inquest what I knew nothing could have prevented a verdict of wilful murder against him being returned. Convinced of his innocence my aim was to spare him and those he loved the agony which this additional evidence would have caused them. I felt that time was required to bring the guilt home to those who had committed the crime, and to that task I bent all my energies. I may have erred, but I acted for the best, as I believed, and as I still believe; for even now I do not despair that the truth will be made known. As to what that hollow cane contains I am as ignorant as yourselves, except that before I snatched it from the hands of the men who were searching the room I heard one of them say, 'The jewels! They are here--they are here!' If I had been left at liberty I should have hunted the wretches down, but now-----"

He had spoken under the influence of intense excitement, but sleepless nights, hunger, and the consciousness of the torture which his uncle Rob was undergoing, overpowered him here, and with a pitiable endeavour to continue, he broke completely down. A long deep sigh escaped him, and he sank into the arms of Lambert, who had expected and was waiting for the collapse. In this state he was conveyed to a cell.

An examination of the contents of the cane made Applebee open his eyes wide with astonishment. Lambert had in his pocket a list of the jewels which Lady Wharton had given Samuel Boyd on the night of the murder, and he ticked them off as Inspector Robson entered them on the charge sheet.

"You will understand, Constable Applebee," said Lambert, when the business was concluded, "that what passes in Inspector Robson's office is not public property. The arrest is not to be spoken of outside. I have heard it said in high quarters that there is too much babbling and boasting among certain members of the force. If it continues severe measures will be resorted to."

"I understand, Mr. Lambert," replied Applebee, with the air of an injured being. Before they reached the police station he had been inclined to regard himself as a hero, but his reception had not pleased him, and he returned to his beat in a state of mind not exactly amiable. He soon consoled himself, however. "It's jealousy, that's what it is," he said to himself. "He's riled because he didn't make the arrest, and can't claim the reward. If it belongs to anybody it belongs to me, and if they try to do me out of it I'll go to law with them. There's nothing that I know of in the regulations to keep it from me. Anyway,

there's the reward for the jewels, and it's me that found them. Her ladyship wouldn't be mean enough to go from her word." Thus did Applebee muse, and thus does Mammon poison many a man's nature. For Applebee had always been an inoffensive, harmless, kindly man, but the glare of gold had brought into play the baser part of him.

Despite Lambert's warning, which had been given partly out of consideration for the feelings of Inspector Robson, a whisper of the arrest, and, more or less true, of the incidents connected with it, did get about, and the excitement in the neighbourhood of Bishop Street Police Station, where great numbers of people congregated in the hope of catching sight of Dick, was no less than on the preceding Friday, when proceedings against Reginald were commenced.

CHAPTER LX.

FROM THE DIARY OF DETECTIVE LAMBERT.

Tuesday, March 19th, 1896.

"Dick Remington brought before the magistrate this morning. Court crowded, proceedings very brief. Formal evidence of the arrest only was given, and Dick remanded till Friday, when he and Reginald Boyd will be brought up together. Mr. Pallaret was in court, and made a point of insisting that the case shall be fully gone into on Friday. He is hurrying the prosecution on, and doesn't intend to allow it to lag. Am not sure whether it is quite wise of him, but I could no more teach him his business than he could teach me mine. Dick looked better, and fairly self-possessed. The only time he seemed on the point of breaking down, as he broke down in the station, was when he looked in the direction of Mrs. Inspector Robson and Mrs. Reginald Boyd. They almost broke down, too. They were very white and miserable. Inspector Robson looked ten years older, but held up bravely. Mrs. Abel Death was there. When the case was over saw her talking excitedly to the Robsons. To my surprise she came up to me, and asked if I knew where her little daughter Gracie was. I did not know. She seemed in great distress. Mrs. Inspector Robson and her daughter avoided me, and I did not intrude myself upon them. Of course they regard me as their enemy. As it happens it may turn out I am their best friend. Don't you think so?

"Coming away from the court played some good cards. One, a subp[oe]na on Dr. Vinsen, summoning him to appear as a witness on Friday. Left it at Dr. Pye's house. Asked to see Dr. Pye. 'Not at home.' Detailed two men to shadow the pair of them there. Travelling trunks were delivered at the house at eleven o'clock. My man caught sight of the name painted on them. Signer Corsi. Good. Preparing for a foreign trip. Not without my consent, Dr. Pye.

"Second card. A subp[oe]na on Ezra Lynn, summoning him to appear as a witness. I can't help laughing. He will be scratching his bald pate to get at the meaning of it. Let him scratch. Detailed a man to watch his house, and follow him wherever he goes.

"Third card. A subp[oe]na on Stephen Rawdon, requesting his attendance at the magistrate's court on Friday. I can see the sweat running down his face. Can't you? Did not detail a man to watch his movements. He won't run away.

"Three good shots.

"Letter from friend Joseph Pitou in reply to mine of Friday last--this time in English. He is well up in languages, is friend Joseph. Says my man is his man, he believes. Expects to be in London on Thursday night or Friday morning. If so, he will be present in the magistrate's court on Friday, and will have a good view of our gentleman. Gives me a piece of information. Says that he had our gentleman in his custody once, and allowed him to slip through his fingers. Very stupid of you, friend Joseph. Says our gentleman is the kind of man who never forgets a face, and that when he sees friend Joseph we shall know from the start he will give what impression this meeting of old friends has upon him. I doubt it, Joseph. Our gentleman is the kind of man who never gives a start. A modern Sphinx, and, according to Joseph, as desperate a character as one would wish to put the darbies on.

"Forgot to say that Lady Wharton was not in Court this morning. Her ladyship is in the country. She will present herself on Friday, to identify the jewels. Applebee expects to get the reward. Now, it was Dick Remington who found them. I mentioned this to Applebee, and made him uneasy. What a plucky chap that Dick is! As for his story, I believe every word of it. Friday will be a regular field day."

CHAPTER LXI.

FROM "THE LITTLE BUSY BEE" OF THURSDAY, MARCH, 21st

In view of the surprising turn the Mystery of Catchpole Square has taken, considerable interest was manifested in the proceedings at the Coroner's Court this morning, a large share of public attention being bestowed upon the juror who has taken so prominent a part in the inquiry. All the jurymen were in attendance at the appointed hour, and the Coroner, in a brief address, expressed the hope that a sensible and just verdict would now be returned. He would make no comment, he said, upon the singular differences of opinion between them, nor upon the no less singular and unusual form in which those differences were presented to him--contrary, he was bound to add, to all precedent and established modes of procedure. It would be obviously improper to make any comment upon the altered position of affairs; such alteration was not for their consideration, and should not be allowed to influence them. The verdict they returned should be strictly in accordance with the evidence that had been presented to them. He would now dismiss them to their duties.

Upon this occasion, contrary to the general expectation, the jury remained in deliberation but a very short time. After a lapse of twenty minutes they agreed upon the verdict of Wilful Murder against some Person or Persons unknown, which, being received by the Coroner, the inquiry came to an end.

In connection with this extraordinary case (new developments of which may be expected to-morrow at the Bishop Street Police Court), we may mention that no light has yet been thrown upon the disappearance of Mr. Abel Death. And in this connection we may further add that Mrs. Death is in deep distress at the disappearance of her young daughter Gracie, who has been absent from her home since Tuesday. Any person who can give information concerning her may address themselves to our Office, or to Mrs. Death, 7, Draper's Mews.

We understand that some portion of Lady Wharton's jewels has been found, and that her ladyship will attend at the Police Court to-morrow to identify them.

CHAPTER LXII.

AT THE MAGISTRATE'S COURT.

There was an unusual bustle in the Bishop Street Police Court on Friday morning, every person who could gain admittance and every person in the crowds outside being on the tiptoe of expectation. Mr. Mallandaine, the magistrate, was in attendance early, and half-a-dozen minor cases of drunkenness were disposed of by eleven o'clock, before which time every seat was occupied, and there was not a vacant inch of standing room. If there had been any intention on the part of Dr. Pye and Mr. Ezra Lynn not to present themselves it was frustrated by the vigilance of Detective Lambert, who had stepped outside the boundary of his duties to secure their attendance. There was not a trace of discomposure on the countenance of Dr. Pye. In marked contrast to his composed demeanour was that of Mr. Ezra Lynn, who, while assuming an air of amused benevolence, was not entirely successful in concealing his inward agitation. No information had reached him as to whether he had been subp[oe]naed as a witness for the prosecution or the defence; he knew that this was irregular, but he did not dare disobey the summons. No token of recognition passed between him and Dr. Pye, although Lambert had man[oe]uvred that they should be seated next to each other. Immediately behind Dr. Pye sat an individual who might have been French or Italian; his swarthy complexion and curled moustache proclaimed him to be certainly not an Englishman. He took his seat, the position of which had also been arranged by Lambert, after the entrance of Dr. Pye, so that the former, who did not once turn his head, was not aware of his presence. Mr. Rawdon, the recalcitrant juror, was within hail, and manifestly as little at ease as Mr. Ezra Lynn. Near them sat Mrs. Abel Death, worn and haggard with anxiety, all her efforts to find Gracie having failed. Uncle and Aunt Rob and Florence were on another bench, and the eyes that rested on their suffering faces were filled with pity and kindly sympathy; and near them were seated Lady Wharton and her brother, Lord Fairfax. Mr. Higgins, in skull cap and list slippers, was also present.

There was scarcely elbow-room at the long narrow table below the magistrate's chair. Mr. Finnis, Q.C., representing her ladyship, was there, and Mr. Marlow for the prosecution, and Mr. Pallaret for the defence, with the solicitors engaged in the case, and the newspaper reporters, who were so numerous that accommodation could not be found for more than half of them; those who could not obtain seats stood at the back, and plied their pencils industriously.

A buzz of excitement ran through the Court as Reginald and Dick appeared in the dock. They were ushered in separately, and this was the first time they had met since

Reginald's arrest, but messages had passed between them through friends and solicitors, and their first action now, as they stood side by side, was to hold out their hands in token of hearty friendship and confidence. Upon some of the spectators this friendly greeting produced a favourable impression; upon others the reverse. Of the two young men, it was clear that Reginald felt his position the more acutely; Dick had recovered his bright and cheery manner, and it was hard to believe that he stood charged with a horrible crime.

Upon the case being called, Mr. Pallaret rose and said that he appeared for both the accused. "In expressing the hope," added the learned counsel, "that the case for the prosecution will be fully disclosed, and in such a comprehensive manner as to enable your worship to decide to-day whether you will discharge the accused or commit them for trial, I am carrying out their strong wish, with which my own view of what is just and right coincides."

Mr. Mallandaine: "It is certainly advisable that a charge of this nature should not be kept hanging over the heads of the accused for an unreasonable length of time, but we have to be guided, to some extent, by the counsel for the prosecution."

Mr. Marlow: "There is no desire on our part for delay. In a matter of this grave import every opportunity for defence should be given to an accused person, and in our proceedings to-day I say frankly that I do not intend to hold anything back. At the conclusion of the evidence it will be for your worship to decide whether the facts disclosed are sufficient to warrant the committal of the prisoners. I venture to say that there have been few cases of the kind in which the circumstantial evidence is so strong and direct. I would point out to your worship that the case assumes a different complexion from that which it presented this day week. Then there was only one person charged, now there are two, and I shall be able to prove collusion in the committal of a murder as brutal as any which can be found in the whole calendar of crime. The arrest of the second prisoner, Richard Remington, cousin of the first, Reginald Boyd, instead of complicating the issue, has cleared it, for much that was mysterious is now capable of explanation. The medical evidence will establish that the murder was committed on the night of Friday, the 1st of March----"

Mr. Pallaret: "Or on the night of Saturday, the 2nd. My learned brother will see the point."

Mr. Marlow: "Yes, I see it, but I shall contend that it was committed on Friday, on which night Reginald Boyd visited his father, for the purpose, as he has himself admitted, of obtaining money from him, he being then, upon his own confession, in an impecunious state. The notes of his evidence at the inquest will be read to you----"

Mr. Pallaret: "It will shorten the proceedings by my admitting the visit and its purpose. Mr. Reginald Boyd gave his evidence of his own free will."

Mr. Mallandaine: "Nevertheless, Mr. Pallaret, the evidence had better be read from the Coroner's notes, in which you may possibly find discrepancies."

Mr. Pallaret: "There are parts which I wish to be read, in proof of the ingenuous part played by Mr. Reginald Boyd."

Mr. Marlow: "We will read the whole of it. There will also be submitted to your worship proof of identification of the body, with the Coroner's notes, and the evidence of the two prisoners on that point."

Mr. Pallaret: "We admit that. There can be no possible doubt that the man murdered was Mr. Samuel Boyd, and I may state explicitly that there is not the least intention on our parts to dispute matters of fact."

Mr. Marlow: "On the night in question three incidents occurred of which we have positive knowledge. The first was the summary discharge by the murdered man of his clerk, Mr. Abel Death, whose singular disappearance has yet to be accounted for; the second was the visit of Lady Wharton to Mr. Samuel Boyd, and her depositing with him certain articles of jewellery which her ladyship will be called upon to identify; the third, the visit of Reginald Boyd to his father under the circumstances I have mentioned. I name these incidents in the order of their occurrence. From the first discovery of the murder suspicion pointed to Reginald Boyd as its probable perpetrator, but the disclosures made up to a certain point of the inquiry in the Coroner's Court were not considered sufficiently conclusive by the police to warrant his arrest. But he was kept under observation. Towards the conclusion of the second day of the inquiry an important witness came forward in the person of Dr. Pye, a gentleman who, we understand, has devoted his life to scientific pursuits. This gentleman resides in Shore Street, a street running parallel to Catchpole Square. The windows at the back of Dr. Pye's house directly face the front of the house occupied by Mr. Samuel Boyd. It has been his habit for years to keep up late at night for the purpose of making scientific experiments, and on the night of Friday the 1st of March he was so employed. At three o'clock on that night--that is to say, on the morning of Saturday, the 2nd--he was standing at the window of the room in which he was at work, when his attention was attracted by an unusual movement at the door of Samuel Boyd's house. It will be necessary to bear in mind that Catchpole Square is a cul de sac, and that it is very rarely indeed that any person enters there, and none, unless it be an entire stranger, with the intention of passing through. The entrance to the Square is through a hooded passage

bearing the ominous name of Deadman's Court. As I have told you, Dr. Pye was standing at the window--as he will tell you aimlessly, and as I submit in the abstracted mood habitual to students after some hours of secluded work--when he dimly observed the opening of the street door. An incident so unusual and suspicious made a strong impression upon him, and for the purpose of ascertaining the cause he brought forward an ingenious contrivance of his own invention by means of which he is enabled to throw a flashlight a considerable distance upon any desired spot, while the operator remains in shadow. The flashlight revealed the figure of a man standing at the door in an attitude of fear; Dr. Pye distinguished quite clearly the features of this man, who at that time was a stranger to him. The man remained at the door in his fear-struck attitude for several moments; then, the flashlight extinguished, Dr. Pye observed the shadow of a man--the night was dark, and he could distinguish no more than the shadow--slink cautiously and stealthily out of the Square. This was the end of the incident. During the inquest Dr. Pye properly conceived it to be his duty, in the interests of justice, to make the incident public, and he addressed a note to the Coroner, stating that he had evidence of more or less importance to tender. He was called and examined, and the statement he made was to the effect I have described. His examination over, a remarkable incident occurred. Glancing around the Court his eyes fell upon Reginald Boyd, and he was instantly struck with the resemblance he bore to the man he had seen in Catchpole Square; and his further examination elicited this fact. It is a proof of his fair-mindedness that he warned the jury not to be led into a possible error by attaching a too great importance to this resemblance, which he suggested might be accidental. If so, it was a remarkable accident. While offering this warning against a possible miscarriage of justice--of which I admit there are instances on record--he was not to be shaken from the positive fact of the extraordinary resemblance. Observe that he was not aware that the man whom he pointed out in the Coroner's Court was the son of Samuel Boyd. Now, in this connection, there will be found a discrepancy between Dr. Pye and another witness, Mrs. Abel Death, as to the hour at which the man emerged from the house. Dr. Pye says it was three o'clock, while Mrs. Death avers that she was in Catchpole Square from half-past two till half-past three, during which space of time the door of the house in Catchpole Square was not opened. Dr. Pye fixes the time by his watch, which he says he consulted, while Mrs. Death fixes it by the striking of the hour from St. Michael's Church, which is in the immediate vicinity of Catchpole Square. Stress will no doubt be laid upon this discrepancy to discredit Dr. Pye's evidence, but it should not be allowed to weigh with you. Either of these witnesses may be reasonably and blamelessly mistaken, and the strong probability is that it is Mrs. Death, who does not possess a watch or a clock, and whose agitation at the disappearance of her husband may easily have led her into error. But anyway this discrepancy is of small significance. Whether it was at three or two o'clock does not affect the fact that a man was seen coming from the house----"

Mr. Pallaret: "I beg my learned friend's pardon. The unsupported evidence of a witness in relation to the important incident he describes does not establish the fact, and such a word should not be used."

Mr. Marlow: "I withdraw the word. You will have the evidence, and will judge of its value. It is not conceivable that Dr. Pye had any personal interest to serve in coming forward----"

Mr. Pallaret: "Again I beg pardon. What is conceivable and not conceivable will probably be made clear before we finish."

Mr. Marlow: "I will pass over the incident. The presumption is that the man was either the murderer or an accomplice. Now, how does the prisoner, Reginald Boyd, stand in relation to what took place on that night? We have his own statement that he left his father's house and was in his lodgings by midnight, and if he could produce a witness or witnesses to confirm his statement, and to prove that he did not leave his lodgings again during the night, it would effectually dispose of the peril in which he stands in regard to the resemblance between him and the man whom Dr. Pye saw. But such a witness has not been, and I venture to say will not be, produced, and we have only his bare word to fall back upon. Remember that he had a latchkey, and could let himself into the house without the knowledge of the inmate. We may take it for granted that Samuel Boyd, before he retired to bed, chained and bolted the street door, and in these circumstances the latchkey would be useless.

"I come now to the other prisoner, Richard Remington. No suspicion was entertained of his complicity in the crime, and there was no evidence connecting him with it until Monday night of this week. When Reginald Boyd was arrested Richard Remington was acting as his cousin's attorney, and on that very day he was seen posting up bills of large rewards, as stated therein, for the discovery of the murderer and Mr. Abel Death. On the face of it this simultaneous posting up of the two bills would go some way to directly associate Mr. Abel Death with the murder. I do not say that this was the intention, but it is open to that construction. If such an intention existed the design was artful and wicked, and Richard Remington's personal participation in the bill-posting--bill-sticking not being his trade--is open to another construction, that it was done for the purpose of averting suspicion from himself. On the following day, Friday, a notice appeared on the street door of the house in Catchpole Square, which stated that Richard Remington was absent on business, and that all communications for him were to be left at a certain address. Inquiry was made for him at that address by a witness who will be called, and nothing could be learned about him. I mention this incidentally, as indicating that he wished it to be supposed he was living at that address. If this were so, for what reason did he make it public, when he was not to be found there? Saturday, Sunday, and the

daylight of Monday, passed without anything being heard of him; but late that night an incident of a very startling nature occurred, in which he was the principal actor.

"Constable Applebee was on his beat, which embraced Catchpole Square, and during the storm which came on suddenly at two in the morning, he took refuge in Deadman's Court, which you will recollect is the only approach to the Square. During a lull in the storm the constable stepped from his shelter to reconnoitre the houses in the Square. He had not been there a minute before the door of Samuel Boyd's house was flung open, and a man ran out, almost into the constable's arms. This man was Richard Remington."

CHAPTER LXIII.

CONTINUATION OF THE TRIAL.

"His outer garments were such as a Mongolian wears, and in his hand was the mask of a Chinaman's face. He carried also in his hand a hollow cane of the reign of Charles the Second, in which, as you will presently hear, a singular discovery was made. It is not for me to say why this disguise was assumed; it is sufficient to state the fact. In response to Constable Applebee's calls for assistance Detective Lambert came up, and afterwards Constable Pond and another. The prisoner gave no explanation of his singular disguise, but made some rambling statement to the effect that the murderers of Samuel Boyd were in the house. In compliance with his urgent and reiterated requests the officers Lambert and Applebee accompanied him into the house, and made a thorough search, from top to bottom, without discovering any person there. Remington was then taken to the police station, and charged. When he was searched a document was found upon him of a nature so incriminating, and so direct in its terms, as to furnish the strongest proof of the guilt of the prisoner, Reginald Boyd. The defence will probably call this evidence presumptive; I call it conclusive. The document runs as follows:--

(Mr. Marlow here read the Memoranda made by Samuel Boyd on the night of Friday, March 1st, with which our readers are already acquainted.[1])

"You will perceive that the document is dated the 1st of March, and there can be no doubt that it was the last writing made by Samuel Boyd before he was cruelly murdered. That he was in dread of violence at the hands of his son is clear. No reference is made in the document to the prisoner Remington, but there is a presumptive accusation against the missing man, Abel Death, of being in a conspiracy to rob him. Observe also the reference to the latchkey possessed by his son, and the words, 'If he does not get in through the front door he will find some other way; he is better acquainted with the ins and outs of this house than I am myself.' In this voice from the grave--for so it may be aptly termed--is revealed a deplorable state of feeling between father and son which strengthens the case against the prisoner Boyd. They were at enmity; each accused the other of robbery or attempted robbery, and matters thus were ripe for violence. Is it too wild a presumption that Remington removed the incriminating document for the purpose of shielding his confederate, and, by implication, himself? The document informed them, also, that Samuel Boyd had not yet made his will, and that if he died that night his son would become heir at law. A strange feature in the case is that the paper was not immediately destroyed, but there are numbers of instances in which criminals have been brought to justice by over-confidence and by their neglect to attend to small matters over which they believed themselves to have absolute control. In

addition to this document another remarkable discovery was made at the police station. On the night of the murder Lady Wharton had deposited with Samuel Boyd certain valuable jewels as security for an advance of money to be made to her, and up to last Monday night no trace of these jewels had been discovered. Now, the Charles the Second cane carried from the house by the prisoner Remington was hollow, and in it were found the missing jewels. Lady Wharton will be called to identify them. Against Remington a search of his lodgings furnished further evidence. Under his bed was found a rope and grapnel, which he purchased on Friday the 1st of March----"

Mr. Pallaret: "Will the date be proved?"

Mr. Marlow: "The shopkeeper from whom he purchased it will give evidence of the date. It may be asked, what object could there have been in Remington purchasing a rope and grapnel to get over the wall at the back when Reginald Boyd, with whom we accuse him of being in collusion, possessed a key to the front door? The answer to that is that they deemed it necessary to be prepared, in case the street door was chained and bolted. Or it may have been done, and the rope and grapnel used, to divert suspicion from themselves, and to make it appear that burglars unacquainted with the premises had effected an entrance and committed the crime. It is most suspicious that in Remington's evidence at the inquest he made no allusion to the rope and grapnel, although the statement of Detective Lambert was before him. For what other reason than to screen himself could he have been guilty of the suppression? Another piece of evidence will be forthcoming. Before either of the prisoners was arrested Detective Lambert, during his examination of the house, took photographs of the bloody footprints leading from Samuel Boyd's bedroom to the small window at the back, through which the person or persons effecting an unlawful entrance had passed. Since Remington's arrest photographs have been taken of the soles of his boots, and they exactly correspond with those of the bloody footprints. As to another startling incident in this remarkable crime--the visit of the man disguised as Samuel Boyd to Lady Wharton in Bournemouth--we have only conjecture, and I make no comment upon it other than that it is a mystery which has yet to be elucidated.

"I have now gone through the principal features of the murder and its attendant circumstances, and I think your worship will agree with me that there is no course open to you except to put the prisoners on their trial at the Criminal Court."

At the conclusion of this address the general opinion of the disinterested persons in court was that the accused were guilty, and that there was no escape for them. There were, however, seated at the solicitors' table a few more experienced who judged from Mr. Pallaret's manner that he by no means despaired of an acquittal. A twisted note had been handed to him, on which was written, "He is the man. Call Joseph Pitou."

Witnesses for the prosecution were then examined, of whom the first was Lambert, whose evidence was similar to that given at the inquest, and who testified to the execution of the search warrant in Dick's lodgings. Mr. Pallaret asked him but few questions.

"You have been engaged in getting up this case?"

"Yes, under instructions."

"From time to time you have come into communication with Mr. Richard Remington?"

"Yes."

"Has he assisted or retarded you in your inquiries?"

"He has been of material assistance to me."

"At whose suggestion were photographs of his boots taken?"

"At his. Since his arrest I received a message from him saying that he had a communication to make to me. He then related the circumstances of his breaking into the house in Catchpole Square, and gave me his boots. He also showed me traces of a scar on his hand, caused by a wound he received when he broke the window at the back of the house, from which the blood had dropped as he walked through the passages and rooms."

"Did it appear to you as if he wished to conceal anything?"

"It did not. He was quite frank and open with me."

"In pursuance of your duties you served subp[oe]nas upon certain witnesses?"

"Yes."

"Among others, upon Dr. Pye?"

"Yes."

"In an interview with him you asked him to show you the flashlight device by means of which, according to his statement, he saw a man come from the house in Catchpole Square in the middle of the night?"

"Yes."

"What was his reply?"

"That it was under repair, and he could not produce it."

Then followed the evidence of the reporter of "The Little Busy Bee," and that of Constable Applebee, neither of whom was cross-examined by the defence.

At this point of the trial it was observed that a communication was made to Detective Lambert, who hastily took his departure, but not before he had passed a piece of paper to Mr. Pallaret, upon which was scribbled, "If you do not see me in Court delay the proceedings as long as possible. If Dr. Pye's examination is over before I return do not allow him to leave the Court. Most important."

Lady Wharton was next called. She narrated the circumstances under which she had entrusted her jewels to Samuel Boyd, and identified them. Among the questions put to her under cross-examination, which was purposely prolonged by Mr. Pallaret, were the following:

"Are any of the jewels you gave the deceased on Friday, March 1st, missing?"

"No. They are all here."

"Have you a list of the jewels you gave the person who personated Samuel Boyd in Bournemouth on the following Friday night?"

"Yes."

"You could identify them?"

"Certainly I could. I wish I had the opportunity."

Mr. Higgins then appeared in the witness box, shaking visibly, his features twitching spasmodically. From him the prosecution elicited that Dick had purchased a rope and grapnel at his shop on March 1st, and had paid half the purchase money at the time, promising to pay the balance in the course of the following week, which promise had not

been kept. Dick could not understand what his object was in giving this false evidence as to the date of the purchase, unless it were that he conceived himself injured by not obtaining the blackmail he had hoped to gain. He was subjected to a long cross-examination, in the course of which he became hopelessly involved, and contradicted himself so repeatedly that he was warned by the magistrate. He finally retired from the witness box utterly discredited and demoralised.

Dr. Pye's name being called, he took his place in the witness box. His face was calm and composed, and he cast his eyes around with a sense of power which produced a profound impression among the spectators. In a passionless voice he repeated the statement he had made at the Coroner's Court, not deviating by a word from his description of the events of the fatal night. His statement finished, the examination proceeded:

"When you gave your evidence at the inquest you expressed some doubt as to the prisoner Reginald Boyd being the man you saw come from the house?"

"There came to my mind instances of mistaken resemblance in past trials of importance, and I conceived it my duty to warn the jury not to be led into error."

"You suggested that you might be mistaken?"

"I made the suggestion. No man is infallible."

"Have you carefully considered the matter since you appeared in the Coroner's Court?"

"I have."

"Has that consideration strengthened or removed any doubts you may have had?"

"It has removed any possible doubt that may have been in my mind."

"Look at the prisoner, Reginald Boyd. Can you say now with certainty that he is the man you saw?"

"I can say he is, with certainty."

"You are positive?"

"Quite positive. The resemblance is so startling that there is only the barest possibility of my being mistaken."

"Now, as to the hour. You looked at your watch?"

"The incident was so unusual that I instinctively took my watch from my pocket. It was within a minute of three o'clock."

"You are aware that another witness, who will probably be called for the defence, states that she was in Catchpole Square at that hour, that she heard the clock of Saint Michael's Church strike three, and that the door of the house of the deceased was not opened?"

"I am aware of it. She is mistaken."

"Did you hear the clock of St. Michael's Church strike?"

"I did not."

"That is all, Dr. Pye."

Mr. Pallaret then rose and commenced his cross-examination, which had been looked forward to with some eagerness.

"Your name is Pye?"

"That is my name."

"Christian name?"

"Charles Stuart."

"Charles Stuart Pye. Have you ever passed under any other name?"

"The question is an insult."

"I do not intend it as such. I am defending two men who are accused of an atrocious crime, one of them the son of the man who was murdered. Have you ever passed under any other name?"

"Never."

"Are you English born?"

"My parents were English. I was born in Switzerland. If I speak with a slight foreign accent it is to be ascribed to the fact that my childhood was passed away from England, and that in my youth I travelled much in foreign countries."

"Your English is very good. You speak more than one language?"

"I speak French, German, and Italian."

"How old are you?"

"Forty-eight, I think. I cannot say with certainty, as my parents did not keep up my birthday."

"In what part of Switzerland were you born?"

"In Geneva, I believe. My parents never informed me, and I did not inquire."

"It was a matter of no interest to you?"

"None whatever."

If you were born in Geneva the record of your birth will be found there?"

"Probably."

"You call yourself Dr. Do you hold a diploma?"

"I do not. I am called Dr. by courtesy."

"Whose courtesy?"

"General courtesy. It has grown into a fashion. I regard it as a compliment."

The Magistrate: "Are these questions relevant, Mr. Pallaret?"

Mr. Pallaret: "Quite relevant, as your worship will see farther on. I shall not ask a question which does not affect the issue." (To the witness.) "I understand that you volunteered to give evidence at the inquest in the interests of justice?"

"Simply that."

"And had no personal interest to serve?"

"None."

"Are you acquainted with a person of the name of Ezra Lynn?

"I am."

"He is a money-lender?"

"Yes. My acquaintance with him results from that."

"I am sorry to hear it. Are you acquainted with a person of the name of Vinsen--calling himself Dr. Vinsen?"

"Yes."

"Have you seen him lately?"

"Not within the last few days."

"We were anxious to have him here to-day, but I do not see him. We issued a subp[oe]na demanding his attendance. Not being able to ascertain his address we left it at your house. You are aware of that?"

"Yes."

"Has he received the summons?

"I am not aware that he has."

"Can you inform us where he lives?"

"I cannot."

"Nor where he is at the present moment?"

"I cannot inform you."

Upon Dr. Pye's countenance there was not a trace of discomposure, and there was not a tremor in his voice; but the experienced lawyer, as skilful a judge of character as the man he was examining, knew that if a look could kill his minutes were numbered. There was one person in court, Mrs. Abel Death, who listened in bewilderment to the answers given by the witness with reference to Dr. Vinsen. This man, who had presented himself to her as Dr. Pye's viceroy, who had given her money, who had poisoned her ears against Reginald Boyd and Dick Remington, was sitting within a few yards of her, and yet Dr. Pye denied all knowledge of his whereabouts. What was the meaning of this falsehood? Looking at Dr. Vinsen she saw that his eyes were wandering around, as though seeking a means of escape. His face was pallid, his lips were quivering, his hands trembled as they wiped the moisture from his forehead. Gracie had hated him from the first, and it was this, perhaps, that had caused her to absent herself from home. The mother's heart was wrung with anguish, with doubt, with despair.

Mr. Pallaret continued his cross-examination.

"Now, about this flashlight of yours, which revealed the face of the man you say you saw. A contrivance or device of your own, I understand?"

"Yes."

"Have you brought it into court?"

"I have not."

"Is it in your house?"

"It is not."

"No person connected with this inquiry has seen it. You refused to show it to Detective Lambert, saying it was under repair. Is it still under repair?"

"Yes."

"Give me the name of the tradesman who is repairing it?"

"I decline to give it. The device is a secret invention, and I will not run the danger of losing the benefit of it."

"The question is one I cannot compel you to answer, so I will not repeat it; but if the men whom I am defending are put on their trial in a higher court we will see that this

so-called flashlight is produced. I gather from you that on the night of the 1st of March you were induced to use it by seeing with your naked eye a man standing at the door of Samuel Boyd's house. The night was very dark. How did you know it was a man?"

"Dark as it was I distinguished the figure of a man."

"On that night there was no suspicion that a murder had been committed. What made you regard as suspicious so simple a circumstance as a man coming out of the house?"

"I had never before seen any one in Catchpole Square at that hour of the night."

"Shall we call it a kind of instinct that whispered of a foul deed done?"

"Call it what you please. You are drawing upon your fancy; I am stating facts."

"Very well; we will stick to facts. You saw the figure of a man, and your suspicions were aroused. How long a time elapsed before you had recourse to your flashlight?"

"I used it almost immediately."

"Your process of reasoning was almost as swift as your flashlight. Do you keep your device in the room in which you were standing?"

"Yes."

"How far from the window?"

"Within reach of my hand."

"Before it was ready for its work some little time must have elapsed. How is the light produced?"

"By an arrangement of magnesium wire."

"Which requires to be ignited?"

"Yes."

"By means of a match?"

"Yes."

"It is, I suppose, necessary that the device be opened before you can light the wire?"

"Yes."

"You saw the figure of a man, your suspicions were aroused, you brought forward the flashlight, you opened it, you found the match box, you took from it a match, you struck the match, you applied the flame to the magnesium wire, you threw the light upon the door in Catchpole Square. That is how it was done?"

"Yes."

"To strike a match requires two hands, one to hold the box, the other to hold the match. You admit that?"

"Yes."

"So that, having brought forward your flashlight device, you had to set it down before you could strike the match?"

"Yes."

"And then you had to lift the box again before you could apply the flame of the match to the magnesium wire. Do you expect us to believe that all these operations were executed simultaneously and instantaneously?"

"No, I do not."

"Good. Timing these various processes of thought and action, we may assume that they occupied a couple of minutes?"

"Not so long."

"A minute and a half? I don't think I can accept less than a minute and a half for the accomplishment of the work I have described?"

"Say a minute and a half."

"I accept it. And all this time the man was standing at the door, waiting for you?"

"Again, these are your words, not mine."

"Do you realise how long a minute and a half is to a murderer under these circumstances? It is an eternity. Place yourself in the position of the man, and time it by your watch. How slowly the seconds pass! Between each there is a thrill of agony. I put it to you that it is incredible that a murderer, in fear of momentary detection, eager to make a swift escape from the scene of his horrible crime, standing in a place so lonely and deserted as Catchpole Square, would remain for so long a time at the door in suspense?"

"He must have done so, for I witnessed it."

"I pass to another subject. I am anxious, like yourself, to adhere to fact. Cast your eyes around the court; let them rest upon the seat you vacated to take your place in the witness box. Close to that seat do you see Dr. Vinsen?"

"I do not." Not a muscle in Dr. Pye's face moved as he gave this answer.

"You see the man I am pointing at, the man next to whom you have been seated these last two hours. Is not that man Dr. Vinsen?"

"He is not."

"Who is he, then?"

"His name is Ezra Lynn."

Unable to control herself, Mrs. Death rose and exclaimed,

"It is not true! It is Dr. Vinsen!"

A wave of excitement passed over the court; the spectators craned their necks, exclamations of astonishment escaped their lips, and for a few moments all was confusion. When order was restored, Mr. Pallaret said,--

"I have done with you for the present, Dr. Pye. I must ask your worship not to allow the witness, or any of the witnesses, to leave the court."

The Magistrate: "They will all remain. The officers will see to it."

Apparently unmoved and unruffled, Dr. Pye returned to his seat. Those of the spectators who were in a position to see observed a smile on his lips.

Mr. Pallaret, turning to the magistrate, then said that it was not customary in such cases as the present for the defence to make a long speech in a police court, but he was induced by special circumstances to deviate from the usual custom, and he was influenced also by the accused, whose earnest desire it was that all their proceedings should be made public with as little delay as possible. The only important witness brought forward by the prosecution against Mr. Reginald Boyd was Dr. Pye, and he should be able to prove that this witness was utterly unworthy of credit. Evidence of a startling nature would be presented which would suggest the gravest doubts in connection with him. (At this moment a slight bustle took place in court, caused by the hurried entrance of a messenger bearing a note for Mr. Pallaret. The learned counsel paused to receive and read the note, and then wrote a line in reply, which was handed to the messenger, who immediately departed.)

"I do not disguise from your worship," continued Mr. Pallaret, "that my object is to obtain the immediate acquittal of the accused at your hands, or, in the event of their being committed for trial, to show that the case against them is so flimsy and unreliable, that to refuse bail would be a distinct injustice. Stripped of the defence which I am in a position to make, I admit that the circumstantial evidence would be sufficiently strong to render their detention necessary, but even without the defence it would not be strong enough to prove their guilt. I take the opportunity of emphasising the extreme danger that lies in evidence of this character. One of our greatest writers has said, 'Circumstances may accumulate so strongly even against an innocent man, that, directed, sharpened, and pointed, they may slay him.' Such might have been the issue of the charge brought against the men I am defending, but happily they are in a position to meet it in a conclusive manner, and, I do not hesitate to say, to prove their innocence. Although not quite relevant to the issue affecting themselves, I cannot refrain from saying that in establishing their innocence they will also establish the innocence of an absent man against whom the finger of suspicion has been pointed. I refer to Mr. Abel Death. With respect to one of the accused I shall unfold a story which has in it many of the elements of romance."

Mr. Pallaret then described the part which Dick had played in the Mystery. With breathless interest the spectators listened to the recital, the effect of which was heightened by the eloquence of the narrator.

"Mr. Richard Remington" (proceeded Mr. Pallaret), "convinced of the innocence of his cousin's husband, recognising the dangerous position in which he stood, and with a certain suspicion in his mind, conceived and carried out a plan as novel, as ingenious, and as bizarre, as has ever been disclosed in a court of justice. On two nights, when he was in the house of the murdered man, he had observed that a flashlight had been

thrown upon the windows from the back room of the house inhabited by Dr. Pye. He resolved to present a problem to that person. As skilful in disguise--I may mention that he had been a short time on the stage--as the villain who personated Samuel Boyd, and robbed Lady Wharton of her jewels in Bournemouth, he dressed himself in a suit of Samuel Boyd's clothes, and, in theatrical parlance, 'made up' his face to resemble that of the murdered man. Thus disguised he stationed himself at the front window of Samuel Boyd's house, and upon more than one occasion experienced the satisfaction of having the flashlight thrown upon him. He put into execution another and a bolder idea, the successful result of which led to his arrest under circumstances which you have heard described by Constable Applebee and Detective Lambert. He was convinced that persons found access to the house by some means and in some way unknown to him. If his suspicions were verified the natural conclusion would be that those persons (I use the plural advisedly) were the murderers. He determined to set watch for them, and to remain hidden in the house for several days and nights. In order to carry this out successfully, and to throw dust into the eyes of the suspected persons, he affixed a notice to the street door, to the effect that he would be absent from the house for some time.

"In the room on the first floor which had been used as an office there is, among other singular articles, the wax figure of a Chinaman, suitably attired. This figure is sitting in a hooded chair, what is called, I believe, a grandmother's chair. Mr. Remington had procured from a theatrical costumier in Covent Garden the mask of a Chinaman's face and a costume similar to that which clothed the wax figure. His design was, when he heard sounds of any person or persons moving in any part of the house, to place the wax figure in a cupboard in the office, and take its place. It was a bold and hazardous design, fraught with danger to himself, but, determined if possible to bring the miscreants to justice, he allowed no considerations for his personal safety to stand in his way. He entered the house on the Thursday night of last week, and did not leave it until the Monday night of this week. Animated by his high resolve, stern and fixed in his purpose, behold him in that lonely house, on the watch! Thursday and Friday nights passed, and nothing occurred. Neither was he disturbed on the nights of Saturday and Sunday. He remained there in absolute darkness, confident that the time would come.

"And here let me offer my tribute of praise and admiration for the courage, the patience, I may say the heroism he displayed during this long vigil, this arduous and almost sleepless watch, undertaken out of affection for the family to which he is related, and to prove the innocence of a man falsely accused of a horrible crime.

"On Monday night, or rather at about two o'clock on Tuesday morning, his patience was rewarded. He heard sounds in the passage below which, faint as they were, denoted that he was not now alone in the house. He had already assumed his disguise and removed the wax figure of the Chinaman from the chair. All he had to do was to take its place. The

back of the hooded chair being towards the door he could not see who entered when it was softly opened. Nor could he distinguish the voices of the men, for they spoke in whispers. They moved about the room in their stocking feet, and from the few words that reached his ears he gathered that they had come once more to search for the jewels which Lady Wharton had given Mr. Samuel Boyd on the night of her visit to him. Now, I call your attention to the last words of the document written by the unfortunate man on that fatal night--'Notation 2647.' Mr. Remington did not dare to turn his head to watch the movements of the men as they moved about the room. Disappointed in their search one of the men, in his passion, shook the hooded chair so violently that the cane in the hand of the supposed wax figure--which Mr. Remington also held, in order to completely carry out the deception--slipped from his grasp to the ground. The man who picked it up pressed, by accident, one of the raised letters in the knob of the cane. This pressure caused the figure 2 to spring up In a state of intense excitement the man drew his companion's attention to the circumstance, and made a reference to the notation, thus proving that he was familiar with it. He had pressed the letter B, the second in the alphabet, and it had released the figure 2. He pressed the sixth letter, F, and the figure 6 was released, the fourth letter, D, and the figure 4 was released, and the seventh letter, G, releasing the figure 7, the notation was complete, 2647. Mr. Remington, his sense of hearing preternaturally sharpened, heard the whispered comments of the men as figure after figure was released, and heard the click of the silver knob as it sprang up and revealed to the delighted eyes of the conspirators the jewels which had been concealed in the hollow of the cane. Thanks to Mr. Remington's prompt action their delight was short-lived. You will recollect that at this hour on Monday night a storm was raging, and that the lightning was very vivid. What followed was the work of a moment. Mr. Remington started to his feet, and as he did so a flash of lightning illumined the scene. One of the conspirators held in his hand a lighted candle, the other the cane containing the treasure. He seized the cane, and dashed the lighted candle to the ground, thereby plunging the room in darkness, all the blacker because of the lightning flash that had passed through it, and flew into the passage and out of the house, to fall into the hands of Constable Applebee. It is unfortunate that in that brief moment of rapid and resolute action he did not see the faces of the conspirators, but he has his suspicions who they were, and has communicated them to me. Before these proceedings are ended we may see those suspicions verified. I have now related the true story of Mr. Remington's adventures, with all its strange and remarkable episodes, and with the trite remark that truth is stranger than fiction I will call the witnesses for the defence."

The first witness was the costumier in Covent Garden, who testified to Dick's purchase of the Chinese mask and costume. He thought they were for the stage. Such purchases were made of him every day.

The next witness was Mrs. Abel Death, who, despite her distress, gave her evidence of the disappearance of her husband and her search for him in a fairly clear manner. When she was questioned as to the disappearance of her daughter Gracie, the counsel for the prosecution intervened, and contended that these private domestic matters had nothing to do with the case. Mr. Pallaret, answering that before he was done he would show that they had a direct bearing upon it, was allowed to proceed.

"Now, Mrs. Death, on the day on which you made your application in this Court respecting your husband's disappearance you were visited by a person who introduced himself as a doctor. What name did he give?"

"Dr. Vinsen, sir."

"He spoke of Dr. Pye as his intimate friend?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you see Dr. Vinsen in Court at the present moment?"

"Yes, sir, I see him."

Mr. Pallaret: "Let the man seated next to Dr. Pye stand up."

With evident reluctance, and vainly endeavouring to conceal his agitation, Dr. Vinsen stood up.

"Is that Dr. Vinsen?"

"Yes, sir, that is the gentleman."

"But Dr. Pye, his intimate friend, declares he is not Dr. Vinsen?"

"I can't help that, sir. He is Dr. Vinsen."

"You swear it?"

"I swear it, sir."

"Is there the slightest doubt in your mind?"

"Not the slightest, sir."

"Can you give me any reason why Dr. Pye, Dr. Vinsen's intimate friend, should say he had not seen him for some days past?"

"No, sir, I can't make it out."

"In his visits to you did you have any conversation about the murder?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did he make any reference to Mr. Reginald Boyd and Mr. Richard Remington in connection with it?"

"Yes, sir. It was his opinion, he said, that Mr. Reginald Boyd did it, and that Mr. Remington was mixed up with it, and that, to keep off suspicion from themselves, they were trying to throw it on my poor husband."

"Did you believe it?"

"I didn't know what to believe, sir, I've been that distracted."

"I sincerely pity you; but do not lose heart. Did your daughter Gracie believe it----but stop, I must put it another way. Did your daughter Gracie say anything to you on the subject?"

"Yes, sir. She said she didn't believe it. The poor child didn't like Dr. Vinsen."

"That is all, Mrs. Death."

No questions being asked by the counsel for the prosecution, Mrs. Death's place was taken by Mr. Rawdon, whose face was very white when he stepped into the box.

"You were one of the jury at the inquest held upon the body of Mr. Samuel Boyd?"

"I was."

"You are acquainted with Mr. Ezra Lynn?"

"I have had business dealings with him."

"Borrowed money of him?"

"Yes."

"I will trouble Mr. Ezra Lynn, or Dr. Vinsen, to stand up again. Thank you. Is that Mr. Ezra Lynn?"

"Yes."

"Not Dr. Vinsen?"

"I don't know Dr. Vinsen."

"The inquest extended over a period of eleven days. Now, I ask you whether, during those eleven days, you had frequent communication with Mr. Ezra Lynn?"

"I saw him once or twice."

"Be careful. Did you not see him six or seven times?"

"Probably."

"You owe him a large sum of money?"

"I owe him money."

"He holds an execution over all your goods and furniture which he can put into execution at any moment? No evasions, sir!"

"Yes."

"On those six or seven occasions on which you saw Mr. Lynn while the inquest was in progress what was the subject of conversation between you?"

"The money I owe him."

"Nothing else? Not the murder?"

"It was mentioned. Everybody was talking of it."

"Now, there is no obligation upon you to answer the question I am about to put, but if you reply I warn you to bear in mind that you are upon your oath. In the course of your

conversations with the man who could sell you up at a moment's notice, did he express a wish that a particular verdict should be returned, and did he supply you with any information concerning Mr. Reginald Boyd to guide you in furthering that wish? You are silent. Do you decline to answer?"

"Yes, I do. It has nothing to do with the case. Everybody has an opinion about the murder."

"I am not asking you about his opinion, but about his wish, and about certain information with which he supplied you. You are still silent. We shall know what construction to place upon your refusal to give a plain answer to a plain question. You can return to your seat, Mr. Rawdon, unless counsel for the prosecution desires to cross-examine you."

Mr. Marlow: "I have no questions to ask the witness; and I may add that I fail to see the drift of several of the questions my learned friend has put to the witnesses."

Mr. Pallaret: "When I have finished it will be seen that there is not a question I have put which is not justified. In all my experience I have never known so foul a conspiracy as that which I hope to lay bare. Call Joseph Pitou."

The foreign gentleman with the curled moustache who had been stationed behind Dr. Pye left his seat, and made his way to the witness box, and for the first time Dr. Pye had a full view of his swarthy face. They gazed steadily at each other, and for so long a time that it seemed to be a challenge which should drop his eyes first. This strange and steadfast gaze drew upon the two actors the attention of every person in Court. At length, with a gesture expressive of satisfaction, Joseph Pitou turned to Mr. Pallaret, who had watched the scene so earnestly that it almost appeared as if he were also playing a part in it.

CHAPTER LXIV.

A STARTLING DENOUEMENT.

"What is your name and calling?"

"I am of the Criminal Investigation Department in Paris. Joseph Pitou, a name well known."

"We are familiar with it in England. You have come to London on special business?"

"In association with my esteemed confrère, Monsieur Lambert, I have come to make the arrest of a notorious criminal."

"You speak excellent English?"

"You are pleased to say so. It is to me as my mother tongue; as is also Italian, German, and various dialects of the Turkish and Polish languages."

"What is the name of the notorious criminal you have come to arrest?"

"Louis Lorenz."

"Do you hope to be able to lay hands on him?"

"I can lay this hand on him at any moment."

"What is the nature of his crime?"

"Permit me. Of his many crimes. Many robberies, attended with extreme brutality. And worse than robberies. One positive murder in Gallicia; another probable murder in Vienna; another in St. Petersburg."

"Up to this day he has escaped?"

"Yes, he has escaped, always escaped. Condemned to the galleys in Vienna; a week afterwards, flown. Sent to Siberia in Russia; disappeared on the road. Sentenced to death in Gallicia; his cell empty the day after he was put into it."

"A man of rare talent?"

"Of immense talent. His plans laid with the brain of a master; money ready for bribes; confederates ready to obey orders. Nothing has been too difficult for him to accomplish."

"What was the principal motive for his crimes? Money?"

"It is curious. Money sometimes, but never money alone. In every case his victim was possessed of some rare treasures of art which Lorenz coveted, and would have trodden through blood to obtain. As it happens, he trod through much blood. In this way many valuable antiques have disappeared. I have a record of them. Search has been made for them throughout the wide world, and they are still undiscovered. For years I have been on the track of them. A clue fell into my hands, and I followed it up. I hold a warrant for the man's arrest, and soon justice will be satisfied."

"Louis Lorenz can be no common criminal?"

"My faith, no! Louis Lorenz is a prince, an emperor of criminals. I have hunted for him in every city in Europe and America, and for the art treasures he has stolen. Not one has seen the light; not one has been offered to dealers or connoisseurs. He has been known here, and known there, as a man who dabbled in science. It has been said he is in search of the Philosopher's Stone, of the elixir of life. He has imposed even upon savants, who have been seduced into believing in the miracles he declared he would one day accomplish."

"But if he presented himself in his own proper person how is it that he has not been caught, that he is still free?"

"Never did he present himself in his own proper person. Always so disguised that it was impossible to identify him. He is an actor of the first class, a match for the Evil One himself. But for the powers of darkness man is sometimes a match."

"'Be sure thy sin will find thee out?'"

"Ah, monsieur, it is true."

"You say it would be impossible to identify him with his clothes on. Would it be impossible to identify him with his clothes off?"

"'Ah, no, that is a different matter. He is branded on the back, on the breast."

Mr. Marlow: "Is not my learned friend wandering from the case we are investigating--the murder of Samuel Boyd of Catchpole Square?"

Mr. Pallaret: "No. Be patient, and you will understand; I will not keep you long in suspense." (To the witness.) "You say you can lay hands on Louis Lorenz at any moment. At this moment?"

"At this moment."

"Here in this court?"

"Here in this court."

"Then he must be in attendance?

"He is in attendance."

"Point him out."

The witness extended his arm dramatically, and pointed to Dr. Pye.

"That is the man!"

A scene of indescribable excitement ensued. Exclamations of astonishment were heard on all sides, and everyone, with the exception of the French detective, the counsel for the defence, and Dr. Pye, was in commotion. They remained unmoved, the two former silent and watchful, the latter exhibiting not the least trace of agitation. In the midst of this excited scene loud exclamations were heard outside the court, where the people appeared to have caught the contagion, and presently the policemen near the door leading to the public thoroughfare were seen to be busily forcing a passage for the entrance of two persons, one a little girl, carried in the arms of detective Lambert, the other a man, white and emaciated, reclining in the arms of two constables. As they came into view a shriek from Mrs. Death resounded through the Court.

"Abel! Abel!" she screamed, and her frenzied cry was followed by an interval of dead silence.

Abel Death raised his head, and looked at his wife with a wan, affectionate smile; and Gracie, with a strange glitter in her large black eyes, cried in a hoarse voice,

"It's all right, mother! It's all right, Dick! I said I'd find father, didn't I?"

Mr. Pallaret: "Let these witnesses be brought forward to this table, where they will have more breathing space. I must ask your worship to excuse me while I speak privately to them."

Abel Death, who was very weak, was accommodated with a seat at the table, where he reclined, with a cushion at his back; Gracie, holding his hand, sat by his side; and between them and Mr. Pallaret and Lambert, a whispered conference was held, lasting several minutes. The conference over, Mr. Pallaret addressed the magistrate:

"The proceedings in this case have been somewhat irregular, but not less irregular than I anticipated when I opened the defence. My object, as I informed your worship, was to obtain, not an adjournment of the case, but the immediate acquittal of the accused. I made the observation that the only evidence against Mr. Reginald Boyd was that given by the person who calls himself Dr. Pye, and it will not be disputed that his evidence is entirely discredited. Nay, I will go farther and say that it was fabricated for the purpose of weaving so strong a case of circumstantial evidence against two innocent men as to practically ensure their conviction of a crime which they did not commit. With respect to Mr. Richard Remington, you have heard the strange but true story of the part he has played in this mystery. When he was caught last Monday night in Catchpole Square his appeals to his captors to hurry into the house for the purpose of arresting the two men who were searching for treasure there while, disguised to resemble the wax figure of the Chinaman, he was seated in its chair, was doubtless regarded by many in this court as a mere invention; but I shall now be able to prove that it was no invention, and at the same time to establish the truth of the story I have related to you. The proof will be forthcoming in the evidence of this brave little girl, Gracie Death, who has played a part in this strange mystery as adventurous and romantic as that of Richard Remington himself. After she has given her evidence I shall call her father, Mr. Abel Death, if he is strong enough, to relate what he knows. He has, as it were, risen from the grave, and thanks to his brave little daughter, is enabled to make his appearance here to-day. I shudder to think what might have been his fate had the vile conspiracy I am unmasking been allowed to proceed, and had the conspirators been allowed to leave the court. In a charge so serious, and in circumstances so strange and unprecedented, I am confident that your worship and my learned friend for the prosecution will allow me every latitude; and in furtherance of this appeal I ask to be permitted to suspend the examination of Monsieur Joseph Pitou, for the purpose of examining the two new witnesses who are manifestly unfit to remain for a long time in the air of this Court."

Mr. Marlow: "I have no objection to offer."

"I thank my learned friend. Let Gracie Death go into the witness box."

But before this could be done Gracie was seized with a fit of coughing which terribly shook her slight frame. There were few among the spectators that did not pity the child, who made brave efforts to check the cough, and who, when it was over, looked lovingly at her mother, and said,

"It's all right, mother, don't you worry about it; only I've had to hold it back so long!"

Then, all eyes upon her, she was assisted into the witness box, and a stool placed for her to stand upon, Detective Lambert stationing himself by her side to render her assistance if she needed it. When the Bible was handed to her the magistrate asked if she understood the nature of an oath; she replied that she was to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and that she didn't mean to tell anything else. This being deemed satisfactory she was sworn, and her examination proceeded with.

"What is your name?"

"Gracie Death."

"How old are you?"

"I shall be thirteen soon, sha'n't I, mother?"

"You left your home last Tuesday morning?"

"Yes, sir, I did, and I was sorry for mother because I knew she'd worry. But I had to."

"Why?"

"Because of Dick."

The Magistrate: "Who is Dick?"

"Dick Remington, my lordship."

The magistrate was not the only one who smiled at the form of this reply.

"What had Dick to do with your leaving your home? Tell us as much as you can?"

"Well, sir, Dick and me had gone partners to find father, and to find out who murdered Samuel Boyd. I was sure father didn't do it, though a lot of people was wicked enough to

say so, and Dick was sure Mr. Reginald didn't do it, and I believed what Dick believed, so I was sure, too. Dick was the captain of the ship, and I was first mate. He gave me things to do, and I did 'em as well as I could. I found out that Dr. Vinsen wasn't Dr. Vinsen at all, but Ezra Lynn, a money-lender. I always knew he was no good--yes, I did, mother! And I caught the sham doctor talking to Mr. Rawdon, the ironmonger, the man that was on the jury, and I saw him go into his shop. Well, when I saw the notice posted up in Catchpole Square that Dick had gone away, I couldn't make it out, though I knew that Dick was doing the right thing--he always does, you know--but I didn't like to be left out of it. I went to Mrs. Inspector Robson, who's been I can't tell you how kind to me--and so has Mr. Inspector Robson and that poor young lady there--but she couldn't say where Dick was, and I was that worried you'd hardly believe. Wait a bit, please--there's that cough of mine coming back again." After a silence of a minute or so, except for the hollow, rasping sounds she made, she said, with an odd kind of pathetic resignation, "It's taking it out of me now because I wouldn't let it have its way when it wanted to. I didn't dare, you know. Well, I worried and worried, and last Monday night I had my dream again."

"What dream?"

"About father. I've had it I don't know how many times, and every time father's come crying out to me to save him and to look for him in Catchpole Square. When I woke up on Tuesday morning I kept on thinking and thinking about it, and then I heard that Dick was taken up for the murder, and I had him to save as well as father. He'd been caught coming out of the house, where he'd been watching since Friday, so I says to myself, 'What Dick can do I can do,' and I makes up my mind to watch as he'd done, on the chance of catching the murderers. Dick said they'd been there, you know, and if they come once they might come again, all the more now that Dick was out of the way. That's where I've been from Tuesday night up till now."

"How did you get into the house?"

"Didn't Dick tell you? It's through the next house, where you can push open the door at the bottom of the steps. Then you go down to the cellar, and there's some bricks in the wall that you can take out and put back again. That's the way you get into the cellar of Samuel Boyd's house. There's a trap door in the ceiling that you can reach by standing on a broken chair; you push it up and scramble through, and there you are in Samuel Boyd's kitchen. I showed it to Dick, and perhaps he made use of it when he didn't want anybody to know how he got in and out of Mr. Boyd's house. And you can put everything back that artful that it'd take a clever one to find it out. So there I was in the house, with a loaf of bread that I bought with some money Dick give me. The water was on, and with that and the bread there was no fear of my starving for a little while. Nobody come on

Tuesday night, and I kept myself snug. And nobody come on Wednesday. But I wouldn't give it up as a bad job, and I kept on watching and listening all day yesterday. Well, I don't know how late in the night it was, but I think it must have been two or three in the morning, when I heard somebody talking to somebody else in the downstairs passage. They talked very soft, but I heard 'em, and then they crept upstairs, and I slips into my hiding place, and watches through a chink. For I says to myself, 'If they come anywhere they'll come into the office.'"

"Where was your hiding place?"

"You'd never guess. There's a large pianner in the office where father worked, and would you believe it, there's nothing inside it? It's hollow, and it stands against the wall of another little room at the side. Oh, it's artful, I can tell you! You go into that little room, and you push a sliding panel in the wall just at the back of the pianner, and you creep in. Then you push the sliding panel back, and there you are, shut up in a box like. And if there's a light in the office you can peep through a chink, and see all that's going on. I hadn't long to wait; the trouble was that my cough was tickling my throat, but I kept it down, though it almost choked me. If I hadn't you wouldn't have seen me here. The door opens, and two men come in, without a light. 'What's the good of that?' I thinks. But presently they strike a match and light a candle, and they keep it close to the ground. I knew why they did that--so that the light couldn't be seen through the window outside in the Square. What with their backs being to me I couldn't catch sight of their faces, but I kept my eye glued to the chink, waiting for my chance. And all at once I saw them."

"Did you know them?"

"One of 'em I did, but not the other. I guessed, though."

"We will make sure. Look around the court, and tell me whether you see the other man?"

Gracie's sharp eyes had lighted on Dr. Vinsen the moment she was in the witness-box, and they kindled when they rested on Dr. Pye, but with rare self-control she had restrained herself from crying out, the dramatic instinct within her assuring her that the right moment would come for denouncing him. Being now directed, it was her turn to ask a question.

Gracie: "Who is that next Dr. Vinsen?"

Mr. Pallaret, hesitating in his reply, some person called out, "It is Dr. Pye," whereupon an officer cried, "Order in the court!" But, irregular as was this proceeding, neither the counsel for the prosecution nor the magistrate intervened.

Gracie: "That is the other man."

Mr. Pallaret: "Take time. Look again. Be absolutely certain."

Gracie: "I am. The other man in Dr. Pye."

Mr. Pallaret: "Still you may be mistaken?"

Gracie: "I can't be. I'd pick him out of a thousand. There ain't another man in the world like him."

Mr. Pallaret: "Well, you saw them. What happened next?"

Gracie: "They searched about the room a good deal, and I think they were disappointed at not finding something. After that they began to talk louder. Dr. Vinsen--I wouldn't call him that, because it ain't his proper name, but it comes easier--he said it was madness to come into the house, where they were in danger of being caught any minute. He looked very frightened: His face was as white as chalk. Dr. Pye called him a coward. There's a lot of wine in the office--father used to tell of it--and Dr. Pye took up a bottle, and opened it with a corkscrew. Then he went to the bedroom, and brought out a glass, and poured the wine into it. Dr. Vinsen wouldn't drink, and Dr. Pye laughed and said something about eating and drinking to-day and dying to-morrow. 'Look,' he said, 'it was just on this very spot you squeezed the last breath out of Samuel Boyd.' 'It's a lie!' Dr. Vinsen cried, 'it was you that did it.' 'You are a liar,' Dr. Pye said. 'Your knee was on his chest, and your hands at his throat.' Then they began to quarrel, Dr. Vinsen speaking loud and Dr. Pye soft, and laughing and drinking all the time. 'You've been the ruin of me,' Dr. Vinsen said. 'If I escape with my life I shall think myself lucky.' 'To be hanged by the neck till you're dead,' said Dr. Pye, laughing again, 'and the Lord have mercy on your soul. You blubbering fool!' I couldn't catch everything they said. 'What are we to do if things don't turn out well to-morrow?' Dr. Vinsen said. 'I am prepared,' Dr. Pye said. 'Perhaps when I get home I'll set fire to the house, and vanish in the smoke. Only I'd like to have a settling first with Mr. Dick Remington.' Take care of yourself, Dick, he looked like a devil! Soon afterwards I heard father's name--I don't know which one spoke it--and my heart beat so I was afraid they'd hear it. In a little while they said it was no use stopping any longer, and I heard them leaving the room."

Mr. Pallaret: "Stop a moment or two, and get your breath."

Gracie: "Let me go on, please--I'm all right. How's poor father? Is he feeling any better?"

Mr. Pallaret: "Yes. With your permission, your worship."

A kind person had sent out for some hot coffee, a cup of which was given to Gracie, and another to Abel Death. Mrs. Death rose, and implored the magistrate to allow her to stand in the witness box with her child, and, permission being given, a score of willing hands were stretched forward to assist her. This was the commencement of an affecting scene. She had to pass her husband, and she stooped and kissed him, sobbing,

"Oh, Abel, my dear, dear Abel!"

No one in the court spoke, and presently he whispered,

"Go to Gracie. She has saved my life!"

In the witness box her maternal feelings were not to be restrained; she clasped Gracie in her arms, and wept over her, and kissed her again and again.

"You don't mind my running away, do you, mother?" asked Gracie, in a low tone. "If I hadn't, father might never have been found."

"My darling, my darling!" sobbed Mrs. Death. "It was I who was wrong--you were right all through."

"Never mind that now, mother," Gracie said. "Let me go on, or the gentlemen will be angry. Oh, but I am glad to be back!"

Many strange scenes have been witnessed in the Bishop Street Police Court, but none so strange and moving as this. Not one of the officials made any effort to stop its progress. The magistrate made a pretence of being busy with his papers; eyes were dimmed by tears; and even when Lady Wharton, in her hearty voice, said, "I should like to do something for that little heroine," the ushers forgot to cry, "Silence in the court!"

Gracie (turning to Mr. Pallaret, one hand hanging down in her mother's tender clasp): "May I go on, now, sir?"

Mr. Pallaret: "Yes, child. Your last words were, 'I heard them leaving the room.'"

Gracie: "I remember, sir. After they were gone I couldn't stay where I was, could I? I crept out of the pianner as quiet as a mouse, and through the door of the little room into the passage. They were downstairs by that time, and lucky for me had blown out the candle; so down I slipped after them. First I thought they were going out by the street door, and I hoped a policeman would be in the Square to catch 'em; but they didn't go that way; they went down to the kitchen. Then I thought they knew of the trap door, and how to get in the cellar of the next house. But I was wrong again. I heard Dr. Pye say, 'Give me the matches,' and a minute afterwards, 'You clumsy fool--you've spilt 'em!' I peeped through the keyhole of the kitchen door, and there they were picking up the matches. I guessed that, you know, because everything was dark, but when they began striking the matches I saw what they'd been at. There's a large dresser in the kitchen, and a shelf on the floor where people put saucepans and things; and if you'll believe it, at the back of this shelf there's a sliding panel in the wall, just the same as there is in the pianner upstairs. I saw the panel move, and saw Dr. Pye and Dr. Vinsen creep through the hole. Then the panel was shut, and everything was dark. I didn't lose a minute. I made up my mind to see where that hole led to if I died for it, so I went into the kitchen and crept under the dresser as they'd done, but it was so dark that I might have been there till now if they hadn't left some matches behind them on the floor. Then I soon got the panel to work. It opened on a flight of rickety stairs. Down I went, without caring what happened to me. I thought there might be a well of water at the bottom of the stairs, but there wasn't. It was solid ground, and I was in a sort of a tunnel that runs right under Catchpole Square from Mr. Boyd's house to Dr. Pye's house. When I got to the end of the tunnel I had only two matches left, but I made them do. There was another sliding panel in the wall, and I pushed that aside, and there I was in Dr. Pye's house, but without a light. I didn't know which way to turn, but I felt about with my hands, and my blood run cold when they touched a face, and I only kept from screaming out loud by the fear that if I did I should be murdered. At first I thought it was a dead face, but I remembered what I'd read, that if it was dead it would be stone cold. I felt again, and it was warm. Then I heard a voice say, 'Whose hand is that?' And, oh, sir, though he spoke almost in a whisper, I knew I had found my father. 'Father!' I said, and I put my face close to his. 'My God!' he answered. 'It's little Gracie!'"

Up to this point Gracie had told her thrilling story with extraordinary composure, and every one who heard it wondered at the lack of passion in her voice and gesture. But now she broke down. Her lips trembled, her eyes wandered around, and with a long shuddering sigh she sank fainting in her mother's arms. Many of the spectators gave utterance to cries of sympathy, and ready assistance was tendered by the officials, while a hurried consultation took place between the counsel for the defence and the prosecution, at the end of which Mr. Pallaret addressed the court:

"Your worship will perceive that the witness is not in a fit condition to conclude the story which must have inspired every person here with pity and horror--except, I am constrained to add, those who will soon be called upon to answer for their misdeeds. No words of mine can heighten the effect of a recital which has stirred every sympathetic heart. It is to me a marvel how this little heroine, as she has been properly called, could have sustained her courage through three long sleepless days and nights, with only cold water to drink, and a small loaf of bread to eat. The indomitable spirit which sustained her is indeed remarkable, and I venture to say that a tale more thrilling has never been heard in a court of justice, and that the heroism displayed by this devoted child is unparalleled in the annals of noble deeds. Neither is Mr. Abel Death in a fit condition to give evidence. Your worship will doubtless agree with me that what we have heard has established the innocence of Mr. Reginald Boyd and Mr. Richard Remington, and that we have sufficiently laid bare the particulars of one of the vilest conspiracies on record. But before asking for the discharge of these gentlemen, and in view of the proceedings to be taken against Dr. Pye, alias Louis Lorenz, and his confederate, Ezra Lynn, alias Dr. Vinsen, for whose arrest on the charge of murdering Mr. Samuel Boyd I shall apply for warrants, I propose, with the concurrence of my learned friend, the counsel for the crown, to call Detective Lambert, who will give information of the discoveries he has made in the house of Dr. Pye, and will narrate the circumstances under which he has been enabled to bring Gracie Death into court."

The Magistrate: "Let it be so. Detective Lambert can go into the witness box. In the meantime let Mr. and Mrs. Death and their child be taken into my room, and every attention paid to them."

When these three persons were conveyed to the small room at the rear of the courthouse, accompanied by a doctor who happened to be among the spectators, Lambert stepped into the witness box, and was sworn.

Mr. Pallaret: "We wish to hear from you an account of your proceedings this morning in connection with this case."

Detective Lambert: "From information received shortly after the case was opened I proceeded to the house of Dr. Pye in Shore Street, which has been for some time under the observation of the police. The man stationed there took me to Catchpole Square, where I saw Gracie Death, who told me hurriedly what she had just given in evidence. From the night of Friday, the 1st of March, when Mr. Abel Death went to Mr. Samuel Boyd's house to beg to be taken back into his service, he has been imprisoned in the cellar of Dr. Pye's house. Upon leaving his home to make his appeal he wandered about the streets for some time, and it was not until midnight that he went into Catchpole Square. An untimely hour, but he was in a distracted state, and was scarcely accountable

for his actions. He informed me that when he knocked at the door of Mr. Samuel Boyd's house he was answered in a voice which he believed to be his late employer's; that the door was suddenly opened, and he was dragged into the passage; that he saw the faces of two men whom he can identify; that one of the men struck him so violent a blow that he fell to the ground in a state of insensibility; that when he recovered he found himself in the cellar in which he was discovered by his little daughter; that he was tied to a bench fixed to the ground, and his arms fastened behind him, so that he could not release himself; that from time to time Dr. Pye visited him, and endeavoured to extract information as to where Mr. Samuel Boyd had concealed the jewels deposited with him by Lady Wharton, and as to other hiding places his late employer had for concealing treasure; that as he could not give the desired information he was threatened with death; that no person visited him except Dr. Pye; that insufficient food was given him; that he was regularly drugged into unconsciousness, and had passed nearly the whole of the time in a state of stupor; and that he was so weak and enfeebled by this treatment and from the effects of the violent blow he had received, that he could scarcely raise his voice. I now take up the story from the point at which Gracie Death left it.

"She remained with her father all night, being afraid to leave him because Dr. Pye, when he passed through the cellar shortly before she entered it, had threatened to come back and force him to take something which would send him into a sleep from which he would never wake. In daytime very little light can penetrate the cellar, and by this dim light Gracie Death saw the door which led to the upper parts of the house. She tried it, and found it was locked from the outside. She knew that Dr. Pye had to attend the police court to-day to give evidence in this case, and she thought it best to wait till he was gone, and then to get back to the house in Catchpole Square through the tunnel, and go for assistance to release her father. He was so securely tied, and the ropes that bound him were so thick, that she could not undo them, and there was nothing in the cellar with which she could cut them. No food was brought to Mr. Death this morning, which perhaps was fortunate, as it would have led to the discovery of Gracie. The little girl had to judge the time at which Dr. Pye was due in this court, and it happens that she did so very accurately, for the detective who was watching Dr. Pye's house informed me that it was a little after eleven o'clock when he saw her running up and down Shore Street in search of a policeman. He went up to her and told her who he was, and having heard her strange story, first sent me a note which was delivered to me in court shortly after I had given my evidence, and then endeavoured to obtain admission into Dr. Pye's house. To all appearance it was empty, for no one answered his knocks at the door, and matters were at a standstill until my arrival. As we could not break open the front door I obtained a ladder and set it against the back window that looks out on Catchpole Square, the window through which Dr. Pye said he threw the flashlight. There was a shutter to the window which I forced open; Gracie had followed me up the ladder, and I assisted her into the room, in which I observed two new travelling trunks. I did not stop to

examine them, but ran down to the street door, and admitted two constables I had sent for. I may state here that there were no servants in the house. Then we hastened to the cellar, the door of which we forced, and found Mr. Abel Death, as his daughter has described. When we got him into one of the better rooms, and took the ropes off him, he was so weak that it was impossible to bring him to the court, and I despatched a line to the counsel for the defence giving him certain information, and saying I hoped to be in attendance with the two new witnesses in the course of an hour or two. While restoratives were being given to Mr. Death I searched the house, and found a mass of account books and documents which had belonged to Mr. Samuel Boyd. I found also some articles of clothing which I believe will be found to have been worn by him. There was one complete suit of gray, and an overcoat with a fur collar. Lady Wharton will perhaps be able to say whether the man who visited her in Bournemouth wore a suit of that colour and a coat of that description."

Lady Wharton (from the body of the court): "He did." Detective Lambert: "One of the trunks was packed and locked, and it appeared to me that preparations had been made for flight. The other trunk was only partly packed, and was not locked. This I opened and searched. At the top, in receptacles which must have been made expressly for them, were a number of works of art in bronze, ivory, and porcelain, which I should judge were very valuable. At the bottom of the trunk was a packet which I unfastened. It contained deeds and acceptances of various kinds, some signed by Lord Wharton and Lord Fairfax, also some jewels answering to the description of those which were obtained from Lady Wharton by fraud at Bournemouth. By the time I had made this cursory examination Mr. Death was sufficiently recovered to be brought to the court with his daughter Gracie. I left two constables in charge of the house, and hastened here at once." Mr. Pallaret (to the magistrates): "Upon the evidence presented to you I now apply for the discharge of Mr. Reginald Boyd and Mr. Richard Remington."

The Magistrate: "Has the counsel for the Crown anything to say?"

Mr. Marlow: "I offer no opposition. There were circumstances of grave suspicion against the accused which warranted their arrest, but the light thrown upon the case appears to leave no doubt of their innocence."

Mr. Pallaret: "I thank my learned friend."

The Magistrate: "The accused are discharged."

Florence and Aunt Rob rose from their seats in joyful agitation, the tears streaming from their eyes, and their arms stretched forth to embrace the young men, whose progress was impeded by the throng of sympathising spectators eager to shake hands with them.

In the midst of the confusion the piercing voice of the French detective, Joseph Pitou, was heard, calling for a doctor. A sudden hush fell upon the Court, and all eyes were turned upon the detective, who had resumed his place behind Dr. Pye. Upon leaving the witness box Detective Lambert had stepped to the side of Dr. Vinsen, and had laid his hand upon the miscreant's arm. Detected, and in the power of the law, the wretch now stood in an attitude of abject fear.

One of the spectators recalled that while Detective Lambert was giving his evidence he noticed that Dr. Pye gave a sudden start, and that a moment or two afterwards he shuddered and drooped his head. He ascribed this to the agitation caused by the revelations that were being made.

"A doctor--a doctor!" screamed Joseph Pitou.

The physician who had been attending Abel Death and Gracie pushed his way with difficulty to the French detective, and raised Dr. Pye's head. There was a faint smile on his lips, expressive both of triumph and contempt.

"Well? Well?" cried Joseph Pitou to the doctor.

The physician unclasped the silent man's fingers, and took from his hand a small bronze instrument in the shape of a ball. A pressure on one end of this ball released three needles, still slightly damp with the liquid which had flowed to the points. With a grave look the physician smelt the liquid, and, with his hand upraised for silence, placed his ear to the heart of the man. An examination of his wrist showed several minute punctures, caused by the needles. In this way the deadly poison had been injected into his veins.

"Well, well?" cried Joseph Pitou again.

"He is dead," the physician replied.

* * * * *

Despite this tragic incident there was a scene of unparallelled enthusiasm when the principal actors in the day's proceedings were leaving the Court. The news had spread with the rapidity of lightning, and crowds of people flocked to the spot; it was with difficulty the police kept the approaches from being congested. As regards Gracie the enthusiasm assumed the proportions of an ovation. Cheers were raised for her, men and

women stood on tiptoe to obtain a glimpse of her. Lady Wharton stooped and kissed her, and pressed a bank note into her hand. Gracie lifted her eyes gratefully, and gave the note to her mother. Aunt Rob and Florence, the happy tears still in their eyes, with Uncle Rob and Reginald and Dick, fluttered about her.

"Will you come home with us, Gracie?" asked Aunt Rob, with a tender caress. "And you, Mr. and Mrs. Death?"

"No, thank you, ma'am," said Mrs. Death. "We must go to our little ones."

"They haven't seen father for ever so long, ma'am," added Gracie. "Did they ask for me, mother?"

"Yes, my darling, every day, over and over again. How glad they'll be! How happy and grateful I am!"

"I will take you home in my carriage," said Lady Wharton, and then energetically to her brother, "Fairfax, what do you think of her?"

"Little brick," said Lord Fairfax.

Lady Wharton turned to the men and women who were pressing round them. "Do keep off, good people, and let the child have air. You'll be the death of her with your kindness."

"Dick!" said Gracie, putting her hand in his.

"God bless you, Gracie!" he said, kissing her.

"You'll come and see us, Dick."

"I am coming to-night, Gracie."

With her arms round his neck he carried her to the carriage.

A beautiful light shone in her eyes.

CHAPTER LXV.

FROM "THE LITTLE BUSY BEE."

"The sensational incidents in the Bishop Street Police Court to-day, where two innocent men were charged with the murder of Samuel Boyd of Catchpole Square, were in keeping with the startling developments of this monstrous crime which we have recorded from day to day. A full report of the proceedings appears in our columns, and we challenge the masters of sensational fiction to produce a story so remarkable and extraordinary. Writing at high pressure, we have neither the time nor the space for a careful consideration of all the features of this Mystery-murder--no longer a mystery, thanks to the doings of the child-heroine, Gracie Death, and of Richard Remington, who, with the son of the murdered man, almost fell a victim to one of the vilest conspiracies in the history of crime. To-morrow we shall go fully into all the details; to-day we must content ourselves with supplementing the report of the police court proceedings and incidents by such further particulars as have come to our knowledge.

"Mr. Ezra Lynn is in custody, and will be brought before the magistrate on Monday. There are rumours that he intends to make confession, with the view of showing that he was not the actual perpetrator of the horrible crime. We make no comment upon this rumour, confident that justice will be done.

"Dr. Pye, otherwise Louis Lorenz, is dead. Upon his body were found the brands mentioned by Pitou, proving him to be the notorious criminal, Louis Lorenz. Of this monster's character it is difficult to speak; from the little that is known of it a strange study is presented to the psychologist. Undoubtedly a man of high attainments, it seems to be certain that he was an earnest student in the science of alchemy, which, vague and imaginative as it has been proved to be, is the parent of that higher and positive science of chemistry, to which mankind owes so much. The times are past when astrology, magic, and alchemy were seriously considered. Religion and philosophy once acknowledged them, but does so no longer. But there are still in the world dreamers with diseased imaginations, and one of these appears to have been Louis Lorenz, who, with his love for ancient art, regarded even the most horrible crimes as but a means to further his visionary ends. We shall at present say no more of him except that it is to be deplored that he has escaped justice, and does not live to expiate his crimes on the scaffold.

"What shall we say of little Gracie Death? History supplies no sweeter and more touching example of courage and devotion. In saying this we but echo the public voice, for so great was the enthusiasm when she issued from the police court that the people

would have carried her through the streets on their shoulders. This was sensibly avoided, and she and her parents were taken to their humble home in Lady Wharton's carriage. All honour to this brave child, at whose feet we lay our tribute of admiration. Let some recognition of the noble qualities she displayed be made in our modern manner. Let us lift her family from poverty. We are already in the receipt of letters anticipating our wishes in this direction. The correspondence will appear in our to-morrow's issues, but we append a list of the donors, their contributions ranging from the modest sixpence to the regal sovereign. We esteem it a privilege to head the list with a contribution of five pounds."

CHAPTER LXVI.

JOY.

There was joy almost too great for utterance in two London homes that night. After partaking of a wonderful meal provided by Lady Wharton, Gracie's little brothers and sisters had the treat of sitting up late to look at father, who, weak as he was, would not go to bed, but reclined in an armchair lent by a sympathising neighbour--ah, how sweet and beautiful is the kindness of the poor to the poor!--and with Gracie's hand in his, gazed with gratitude upon the dear ones to whom he had been almost miraculously restored. It seemed as if the dark clouds which had hung for so many weary years over his life had vanished, and that there lay before him the sure promise of better times. Lady Wharton had asked him if he would not like to live in the country with his wife and children. There was, she said, a cottage large enough for them all, and a garden, and she offered to find employment on her estate for the poor London clerk. A vision of paradise--fairy scenes, with good food, and decent clothes, and flowers, and grass, and trees, and heaven knows what wonders. In fancy they heard the birds singing, and saw the white lambs in the meadows. But nothing was settled, it was only talked about.

"And if you don't care to live in the country," said the kind-hearted lady before she left them, "we'll find something for you here in London."

Then, with a silver shilling to each of the children, she and her brother bade them a merry good night. The treasure was now hidden in six little hot palms, which every now and then were opened just wide enough for a peep--to make sure that it had not spread its wings and flown away.

* * * * *

There was a prayer in the hearts of Aunt Rob's family as they sat round the tea table, and joyful tears that would not be repressed. For here was Aunt Rob singing and crying at the same time, and breaking down, and kissing Florence and Reginald and Dick and Uncle Rob, and then singing again with a happy sob in her throat, and saying in the midst of it all.

"Oh, Dick, Dick, how shall we ever repay you!"

If Gracie was the heroine in her humble home, he was the hero in Aunt Rob's, but both of them were inclined to rebel against this hero-worship, and made little of what they had done.

Certain things had been discussed, and certain plans laid, by Aunt Rob's family, which needed to be carried out that night, and carried out they were. At eight o'clock they walked up the stairs in Draper's Mews, and being admitted were gladly welcomed by Mr. and Mrs. Death and the children. Not because of the store of food and wine and jellies they brought with them, but genuinely for their own sakes. Where they all found room to sit is one of those wonders which are never to be explained, but find room they did, and they talked and talked, and the children listened and listened, and Gracie sat by Dick's side on the poor bed, and wine was drunk by the elder people and tasted by the younger, and Abel Death's eyes brightened, and Dick, suddenly recollecting, pulled out a bag of brandyballs, which he gave to the youngsters. And then Reginald put a piece of paper into Gracie's hand.

"What is it?" she asked, and looking at it, trembled so that she had to hold Dick tight. "Mother--father--look!"

"It will be paid at the bank to-morrow," said Reginald. "Dick will go with you to get the money."

"Two--hundred--pounds!" gasped Gracie.

"For finding Mr. Abel Death," said Reginald. "And, oh, Gracie, how thankful I am to pay it!"

Gracie hid her face on Dick's breast. When she raised her head there were no tears in her eyes, but the same beautiful light in them that Dick had seen once before that day.

"You'll be all right now, father," she said, giving him the cheque.

"God is very good to us!" murmured Mrs. Death, and then all the foolish women in the room began to sob.