

# **THE UNDISCLOSED CLIENT**

**BY**

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*Free*editorial 

# **The Undisclosed Client**

## **1. — THE UNDISCLOSED CLIENT**

A SNOWY night in early March; underfoot, the stone sidewalk smeared with a film of mud. Yet Mr. Lester Cheyne did not hurry: his walk, the slow pace of a man who was thoroughly enjoying a happy experience which he was loathe to bring to the end, which was marked by the cozy lobby of Northumberland Court and the luxury of a suite that lay beyond.

The snow fell in a picturesque and almost theatrical way, large distinct flakes that fell vertically and showed themselves to the best advantage in the light of the big arc gas-lamps. Along the Embankment the bare arms of the plane trees were marked white; in the dark river that ran at the far side of the granite parapet, two tug-boats were passing, one up and one down river. They were tagged with green and red lights that splashed shivering and grotesque reflections on the water. A span of yellow lamps located a distant bridge...

Lester, his throat enveloped in the upturned lambskin of his coat collar, could admire and absorb and enjoy. He had a wonderful feeling of content, such as any healthy man might experience who had performed a difficult task to his entire self-satisfaction.

It was the rush hour: the offices were emptying and the sidewalk held a triple line of hurrying walkers. He edged near to the railings of the Temple, not desiring to hamper the toilers of the world in their homeward trek. He also was a toiler, but in another sphere. He liked to think of himself as a general who, in the silence of a room aloof from his fellows, planned subtle and successful movements against an enemy, overwhelmingly superior in point of numbers and backed by limitless resources.

He was a slim, good-looking man of thirty-five, who looked ten years younger. When he was revealed to strangers as a successful lawyer, they were politely incredulous; yet he was very successful, and his sleek limousine and the apartment with the waxed walls and the silken tapestries were there to proclaim his prosperity to the world.

It was not a novel experience to be jostled as he strolled: elbows had grazed him, shoulders had lurched against his. A grunted pardon politely waved, and they passed on into the obscurity of the night and the oblivion of their unimportance.

But the Girl in the Brown Coat did more: touched him with her arm, slipped sideways, and was caught deftly by the smiling Lester, and remained everlastingly in his life as a memory never to be expunged.

She fell ungracefully, one foot sliding outward, one doubled beneath her, arms flung violently in an effort to balance.

He caught her as awkwardly under the arm, and she slid forward, so that she became a human wheelbarrow that he was unconsciously pushing.

"Sorry... awfully sorry!"

He must either allow her to sit down in the snow and mud, or she must get up of her own power, for his rubbers had caked up with half-frozen slush and his foothold was precarious.

She recovered herself with the commendable agility of youth.

Twenty... younger perhaps. Or older. He wasn't sure. The white light of the spluttering arc lamp was merciless enough to tell whatever unpleasant truth there was to be told. But the verity was very pleasant. Eyes any color, but big and with little droops at the corners that gave her a certain lure. Mouth very red. Complexion faultless so far as could be judged.

She came erect, gripping at his fur collar: it was not an unpleasing sensation.

"I'm dreadfully sorry—I slipped."

"I noticed that," he said, and laughed.

When she smiled she was rather beautiful. He had not seen any woman... girl, whatever she was... quite so beautiful. At least, not for a very long time. And because they met in the atmosphere and environment of adventure she was almost painfully interesting.

"I knew something was going to happen to me this night," she said in the friendly way of one who shared equal mastership of the situation, if mastership was called for. "I slipped up once this morning at home, and I slipped over a rug in the office; the third trip was sure to come."

She gave him the grim little smile that naturally accompanies a nod of farewell, and quickened her pace to leave him behind. Then her right arm shot out and caught hold of the railings. In a fraction of a second he overtook her.

"You'd better walk with me—I am wearing rubbers. Have you far to go?"

"Charing Cross tube," she said ruefully. "Thank you, I will: I seem rather short on suitable footwear."

She lived in a girls' club at Hampstead and worked in an office on King's Bench Walk. She had seen two of the plays he mentioned...

Shabby? Not exactly. Cheaply dressed described her better. He could price the coat—the bargain stores sold them in saxe, tête de nègre, tobacco, fawn, navy, and black, and the fur collar had been, in the lifetime of its original wearer, attached to a frisky white tail and a pair of lop ears.

Mr. Lester Cheyne had his private and personal record of past adventures, and these included at least one young lady who had pounded the keys of a typewriter by day, and had grown sentimental in his society after business hours.

But high or low, he could not parallel that face or overcome the irritating sense that he had once met... seen... heard her before. A face in a crowd perhaps, or he had caught a glimpse of her one sunny evening in summer. He often walked this beat before dinner. The river inspired him.

"Have you had dinner?" he asked.

"I? Lord, no! I take supper when I get home—when I'm hungry. I think I shall be hungry enough tonight!"

He seemed to be considering something; his head drooped forward.

"If I suggested that I should give you dinner, would you call the police?"

He had a mock solemn brand of banter that never offended even a chance acquaintance, and seldom failed to bring about whatever lay at the end of it.

"I don't think so. One can't walk between the Temple and Charing Cross six hundred times a year without gathering a few invitations to dinner," she smiled.

"And how many have you accepted?" he asked blandly.

She shook her head. He gathered that these extemporaneous hosts had drawn blank.

"I didn't think you would," he said, "and yet I am most respectably placed. I have a Member of Parliament as my neighbor on the left, and the Dean of Westchurch has the flat on my right—"

There was the slightest tinge of disappointment in her voice. "That would be impossible, wouldn't it—I mean..."

She did not say what she meant, but that hardly mattered. He was not amazed that she had even considered the dinner invitation, because women could not amaze him. He understood them too well. They were made of the very stuff of unexpectedness. But he was a very quick thinker: as a general he struck like lightning at the first weak spot exposed. This quality of his had been of enormous profit to him.

"I almost wish my dean was a bishop and the Member of Parliament a Cabinet Minister," he murmured regretfully, "and that I, instead of being the most humble of lawyers, were the Chief Justice on his bench!"

Here was the parting of her ways. She had either to talk of snow and tugs that went gleaming up and down Thames River, or else she must dovetail a comment to his last words.

"Are you a lawyer? Then I must know you. There isn't a barrister in the Inner Temple I haven't seen."

So he talked lawyers and his own insignificance until they began to slow their paces, the yellow glow of the Underground station being just ahead of them. Before the open booking-hall they lingered, yet nearer to the sidewalk's edge than to the station. She wore a sort of pinky-brown silk stocking, ludicrously inadequate in this weather. The neat ankles were mottled with mud.

"I would not dare ask you to dine and go to a show—you'd hate going as you are. But a grilled pheasant and a spineless sole and a plebeian rice pudding to follow—"

"Don't! You are making me feel like a shipwrecked sailor."

Still she hesitated and shook her head.

"It is awfully nice of you, and somehow I know that you are—right. But I couldn't possibly. Where do you live?"

He nodded towards the railway bridge. Beyond, you can just see the austere corner of Northumberland Court, all gray stone and sedate and statesmanlike windows.

"Where is that?"

"Northumberland Court—next to the National Liberal Club. Its austerity is depressing. My two maids are Churchwomen, and, fearing the worst, peek through keyholes to make sure they are not missing it. At least I suspect them. One goes to church on Sunday morning and one on Sunday night. They are very English and can reconcile their deep religious convictions with a moderate but regular consumption of Pale Ale!"

She was looking at him all the time he talked, a half smile on her face, a kind of reluctant amusement in her eyes. They were gray, turning blue on the slightest provocation.

"You talk like a novelist!" she said, and he was faintly annoyed. There was an inference of plagiarism. "There is no sense in half-adventures," she said. "Produce your roasted pheasants and your Church of England parlormaid!"

She walked more quickly now; seemed to him a little breathless. He hoped that he was not mistaken in this. He thought he could define exactly her point of view. She was crossing a Rubicon—but a shallow Rubicon. One could wade back at the first hint of danger—could even stop in the middle and cogitate upon the wisdom of the passage. So many women had created in their minds this practicable stream, learning later in some pain of soul the unfathomable depth of it, the swirl and fury of its inexorable current.

His flat was on the ground floor. One frosty-faced virgin opened the door to him, and vanished rapidly into the dining-room to set another place. Her counterpart hovered at the door of the little drawing-room, ready to act as guide or vestiare, or to perform whatever service woman can render to woman.

"Put your coat and hat in my room," said Lester. "Mary will show you—"

"Gosh—look at me!"

The girl's eyes were wide opened—she pointed a white finger towards the photograph that leant limply against a vase on the mantelshelf.

His first emotion was of anger at his stupidity in leaving the photograph lying about. It came that morning; he thought he had locked it away in the drawer. Possibly the dyspeptic Mary had propped it against the Chinese candlestick.

Followed a thrill of wonder. There certainly was a distinct likeness between Lady Alice Farranay and Miss Brown Coat. A likeness and yet not a

likeness... that of course accounted for the strange sense he had had of meeting a familiar face. He explained the dissimilarity.

"Don't be silly!" She had the lofty contempt of an elder sister. "I'm shingled and she isn't—that's the only difference. I don't know"—she was suddenly dubious—"the nose... These studio photographers retouch so... but I am like her."

She had pulled off her hat with a shake of her head, and now the likeness was not so apparent.

"She has a fringe... I haven't. If I grew a fringe and allowed my hair to grow, and dressed it in that blobby way over the ears..."

Mary at the door was stepping from foot to foot impatiently—the girl became aware of her ingratiating smirk—a painful grimace which at once beckoned and inquired and went out.

Lester took up the photograph, examined it coldly, and laid it away in a drawer. After dinner it must go into the safe, with the photograph of Lady Alice that the butler took the day Johnny Basterby went to India, and the letters he wrote to her, vulgarizing in the crudity of words a something which had brought Alice Farranay into the splendid haze which is God.

A difficult proposition.

That is why Lester looked so coldly on the picture. The stuff of unexpectedness was here. A fighter, and yet she did not have the appearance of a fighter. Would she go down battling?—that was a question which very nearly concerned Lester Cheyne. Never before had he felt a qualm of misgiving or had the shade of a desire to back out, or recognized the depth and strength of his own private Rubicon. The letters? Could they be interpreted in any other than the obvious way? The butler's photograph... a back view, though unmistakably her ladyship. But might not a second cousin be permitted the liberty of an encircling arm as they paced towards Gollards Covert? He was leaving for India the next day, remember. These problems Mr. Cheyne had taken to the Thames Embankment and had settled to his complete satisfaction, when the brown-coated girl had executed pirouettes in the snow.

She would not fight. That kind of woman never fought, especially when they had money to burn. Not intelligent women. Alice could draw a check for twenty-five thousand pounds as easily as for ten. And the Undisclosed Client would benefit as usual.

Lord John Farranay was immensely rich. If he lived to inherit his father's dukedom he would be even richer. There was some doubt as to whether he would live. His father was ninety, Lord John a little over fifty, nearly thirty years his wife's senior. But John Farranay had lived—not nicely, it is true, and he was an older man than his father, who had sown his wild oats in the hunting-field.

A tap at the door.

"Oh, there you are!"

He was relieved to see her. That word was revelation. Relieved. Never before in all his life had he welcomed diversion from the business at hand.

"You look awfully nice. What have you been doing to yourself?"

"Nothing. I tried to work down a fringe. What have you done with the picture? What a shame! You have put it away!"

"Pheasant!" he smiled. "And rice pudding!"

She admired the furnishing, the taste, the quiet luxury of everything. In the hall she stopped to look at the etchings, and before she sat down at the polished table must inspect the Corot over the sideboard.

"Soft... and air and breeze in it, isn't there!"

The lace mats on the table were rather fascinating. She fingered their texture with a sure, understanding touch.

"I suppose you are married? There's a sort of woman atmosphere which can't be your Pale Ale—"

Entered Mary with plates and dishes on a dumb waiter, and comment continued along these lines would have been embarrassing.

She was immensely pretty; not skinny either, as so many of these poor-eating typists are. And rather beautiful hands. Her throat too—he was a connoisseur in the matter of throats. The line of them should incline a little forward and have as their capitol a peculiarly rounded chin.

"Wine you won't have, of course. Water is good for the young. I think I will take water too, Mary."

When the white-aproned servitor woman had gone:



"Do you know, this is very unreal? It is rather like one of those day- dreams that wanders on under its own power and brings you into such strange places. My name is Lois Martin. I suppose you are entitled to know that."

"Mine is Lester Cheyne... I'm sorry, I should have told you that before."

She took up the glass of water and drank slowly; put it down, patted her lips with the serviette.

"Who is she?—is that a very impertinent question?"

"Who? You mean the photograph? She's—er—just an acquaintance... a friend of a friend. I don't know much about her except that she is married to a very rich man who is rather jealous, rather mean, and desperately unwholesome. He is thirty years older than she."

"Why did she marry him?"

"He is very rich."

Lois Martin sighed.

"I suppose one ought to have a contempt for women who marry rich men. But money means an awful lot: it comes into everything. It keeps you out of crowds, and you can't get into crowds without having something rubbed off—polish or bloom. And it keeps other people—people you love—out of crowds and queues. The divine thing that money buys is—isolation."

Curiously he looked at her. She spoke with a strange earnestness.

"And whom do you love?" he asked.

She was thinking of something, for she started at the sound of his voice.

"Nobody—yet. I love dreams and the beautiful things that come in dreams."

Her left hand rested on the table. Sure of her agreement, he reached out and covered it with his, and she did not draw her hand away. So far and no farther he went. This almost resemblance to Lady Alice was rather amusing—added a piquancy to the situation. To make love to one woman and to blackmail her twin ... it was amusing.

"I rather like you," he said. "Do people worry you who have immediate likings and dislikings?"

"No. An interest which has to be flogged or coaxed is a pale substitute for the real thing. People either magnetize you and you jump an awful long way towards them, or else they belong to the crowd."

He was encouraged.

"My view entirely. I like to jump right into the grand salon of friendships—I loathe giving my name at the door and being handed on through the antechambers, my virtue explained at every stage. By the time you've got to the middle of things there is nothing to be learnt about you and you're a bore exposed!"

When she said, as she did at eight o'clock, that she must go, he offered no objection.

"But I do hope that you will come to dinner one night—soon. I have an idea at the back of my head that we may be awfully useful to one another—I am shamelessly utilitarian, aren't I? But I feel that way towards girls—especially girls who are working for their living, and who aren't just looking for a good time and hang the consequence."

The paternal note seldom failed him, but for once there was a serious purpose behind his little speech. But how she might be employed, or whether he could employ her at all, were questions that tomorrow must answer.

She was hesitant again.

"I don't know... I should like to come, awfully."

Her scrutiny of his face was searching: she seemed baffled at the end of it. Not that his face was inscrutable to the student of physiognomy. Superficially he was handsome in a dark, pinched way. There were pictures of notable Florentines in the National Gallery that were of his type without his glossy little moustache. He was thin-lipped, blue-chinned, deep-eyed. Giovanni Bellini painted a Doge of Venice who was not unlike Lester Cheyne, though he was darker than Loredano.

"I don't know—would you like me to come, really?"

Here was the conventional surrender.

He drove her home to Hampstead in a taxi and they held hands lightly most of the way.

She was quite different in most respects from the average pick-up, ladylike if not a lady. Though this quality was not essential, he had found. One pair of red, warm lips differed only from another in respect to the soul and the imagination back of the caress they offered.

Therefore he had every reason to be pleased with himself when he returned to Northumberland Court to the contemplation of Lady Alice Farranay, that beautiful but stiff-necked lady who might go down fighting but probably would not.

Mr. Cheyne's office was in the city of London, near Aldermanbury. It was like and yet unlike a lawyer's office. The appointments and furnishings reflected his own luxurious tastes. His staff was restricted to a girl who typed with two fingers and got through life with half a brain. She came in to him when he rang his bell, a dumpy young lady in an artificial silk jumper and a string of imitation amber beads.

"Mr. Mortlake has been waiting half an hour," she said in a hushed voice.

In two years of service she had learnt only this: she must not shout.

"Show him in, Clarissa."

His mood was gay and friendly. Her homely face was distorted in a smile of respectful reproof, for her name was Annie, but she was usually called Miss Synes.

A dapperish man, with a head too big for his thin body and an unhealthy white face, tiptoed into the room, holding a derby hat in his hand. He sat down in the chair which the girl had placed, and laid his hat on the floor.

"Anything?" He drooped his head on one side—a gesture of interrogation.

"Nothing, Mortlake."

Mr. Cheyne had already run through the letters: there was none bearing the Melton Mowbray postmark.

"Ah—she'll write. Her ladyship is very obstinate, but she won't... you don't think she will?"

Mr. Cheyne shrugged his shoulders.

"You know her ladyship best," he said. "I am rather worried about the business—in fact, I am almost sorry that I agreed to act for you. The case is so very peculiar; in fact, it has almost the appearance of blackmail."

The peculiarity of Mr. Cheyne's operations was that there always came a moment in his relationship with his Undisclosed Clients when he expressed the wish that he was not acting for them and when their "cases" bore some verisimilitude to the crime of extorting money by threats. And yet invariably he went on to the bitter end, until, in fact, a check or a sealed packet of banknotes enabled him to write "finis" to the episode.

There was sometimes an unpleasant aftermath. His clients had been known to complain in bitterness of the inadequacy of their reward.

There was the valet of the Honorable Arthur Keverling, who found a bundle of letters from the young wife of the Minister of Justice; and Millie Winston, the lady's maid, who brought to Aldermanbury the stupidly indiscreet diary of her mistress'; and that wretched wastrel, the brother of Fay Lanseer, who thought that five thousand was a mighty poor share of the seventy thousand pounds which Lord Charholm had paid rather than hear his letters read in open court—Fay being his wife's best friend. But in the end they had been glad enough to avoid the alternative which Mr. Cheyne had offered—the return of money and documents under cover of a letter in which Mr. Cheyne would express his pain and indignation that he had been unwillingly and innocently the agent of blackmailers.

Mortlake was visibly alarmed.

"I don't see how you can say that, Mr. Cheyne. When I came to you first, you told me that I was to sue her for money lent and for damages... my being kicked out at a minute's notice and all that."

Which was true.

Mr. Cheyne was a blackmailer, but no vulgar blackmailer. He might very properly threaten to sue for the return of mythical loans; that is part of a lawyer's business. He might take into his possession documents of a most compromising character, letters such as men and women have written to one another since the art of writing was invented, but he only did this to prove that the mere possession of such letters by his client was proof of his trustworthiness. For who would give letters of this kind to a servant for safe custody unless he or she was on such terms of friendship with the hireling that the loan, for the recovery of which action was taken, might very well have been solicited and granted? And if the victims of the Undisclosed Client retorted that the letters had been stolen, that was a very serious charge indeed, and Mr. Cheyne over his own signature suggested, nay demanded, that the pilfering servant should be prosecuted.

"You left Lady Alice's employment six weeks ago—were you with her long?"

"Eighteen months," said Mr. Mortlake. "His lordship engaged me soon after the marriage. I must say she's the best of the pair. His lordship is a swine in every way."

"Jealous?"

Mr. Mortlake smiled.

"Of his own shadow! He used to be, anyway, till he took up with Miss Wenbury. He'd give his head for a divorce and her ladyship knows it. He's poisonous...."

He explained just why Lord John Farranay was poisonous, and Mr. Cheyne listened. He was not at all squeamish.

"The letters might get him the divorce—the photograph is worthless. We want something more. I wonder..."

His brows met in a disfiguring frown.

The Girl in the Brown Coat beautifully arrayed and with that fringe manipulated, might very well be Lady Alice But exactly how he might use this resemblance was not clear.

"All right—don't come tomorrow. Say Friday, or, better still, next Monday."

Miss Synes' answered the bell and stood imploringly at the open door until the visitor passed her.

Another letter, thought Mr. Cheyne. He dipped his pen in ink.

Dear Madam,

Yourself and an Undisclosed Client

We are surprised that we have not had a reply to our letter of the 13th inst. You will, we feel sure, appreciate our desire to spare you unnecessary trouble and expense, nor is it our wish to place on record the name of our client, since we feel sure that it would be painful to you to have thus emphasized a financial transaction which might not be regarded as consonant with your dignity.

Briefly we restate our claim: in October last you borrowed from our client the sum of fifty thousand pounds, giving him as security certain letters which passed between yourself and Captain John Basterby, now on the staff of H.E. the Viceroy of India. The statement in your brief note of the 3rd to

the effect that the letters were stolen by our client, who had never possessed so large a sum as fifty thousand pounds, constitutes a very serious charge. We feel in the circumstances that we must challenge you to prosecute our client for his alleged theft. In so far as concerns his ability to command so large a sum, we have our client's assurance that he inherited a considerable fortune from an uncle in America. We have again to request the name of your lawyer, who will accept service on behalf of our client.

Very correct; very proper. He blotted the draft and summoned his typist to make a fair copy.

Two nights later came the Girl in the Brown Coat—punctually. Mr. Cheyne let her in.

"Do you mind a cold dinner? My maids have developed symptoms of influenza. Don't be alarmed!"

She smiled.

"I'm not a bit alarmed," she said.

He was afraid she would come in evening dress: bargain-basement evening dress might spoil her. Except that she wore a lighter frock and had a pair of new shoes obviously purchased for the occasion, she was the same exquisite lady of his recollection.

"I have been thinking a lot about you," he said.

"Like?"

"Well—these beastly mornings and nights, and the thought of you tramping through the slush with a herd of dirty people—and packed in stuffy cars. You don't belong to crowds. I've thought of what you said about crowds. How much do you earn a week?"

She named a sum as he relieved her of her coat. A ridiculously small sum it was.

"Absurd!"

He chucked the coat on the settee and led her to the fire, and when his arm went round her she did not so much as shiver. She even smiled up into his face.

"We are getting along," she said.

"Do you mind!"

She shook her head.

"No. I suppose I should if I were properly constituted. But it is rather easy to be made a fuss of, and one doesn't carry around the Girl Guides' Code of Conduct."

Stooping, he touched her lips with his, and then she pushed him gently away from her.

"Tell me something. Are you in the Temple?"

"No—City. I'm commercial. I've a bleak little office off Queen Victoria Street."

She made a little face.

"How uninteresting! I hoped at least you were a police lawyer. Crime is so awfully fascinating. We are Chancery lawyers; dull! I could scream sometimes. You do a lot of work here, don't your'

She pulled at the handle of the green wall-safe.

"How funny! That doesn't seem to go with the furniture, and you have wonderful taste."

"Come and eat," he replied, purring. He loved appreciation of his finer side.

There was wine on the table, but he offered her none until she pushed forward her glass.

"Bless your bright eyes!" He toasted her, and immediately afterwards: "I am going to make you rich," he said, and she laughed.

"That sounds like temptation," she said, and he admitted that it was. Women love directness. He knew all about women. Too great a subtlety silts up progress. Yet he was a delicate speaker and she listened without protest.

"I couldn't... I don't think I could. There would be awful trouble at the club. One is supposed to be in by twelve. And... no!

And yet it was an easy matter to send somebody for her belongings next day. She had a friend there who would pack them.

"Talk about something else. Where is the picture of the beautiful lady like me? Who is she—really?"

He poured her another glass of wine and then filled his own.

"She is the defendant in a case I am bringing on behalf of—an Undisclosed Client."

She wanted him to explain further, pleaded with him to bring the picture.

"A little alteration and you would be her double," he said, when he brought it back and laid it on the table before her.

She stared down at the photograph.

"Who was she?"

"She was the daughter of a disagreeable old soldier," he said carelessly. "But to the devil with her! Let us speak of really important things."

He was behind her as he spoke; both his arms went round her, meeting at the waist; the shingled head was against his cheek, the fragrance of hair and skin was a little heady, and he had his first heart-thump.

"Perhaps she has an Undisclosed Client too," she suggested, and he laughed softly.

"Even now you don't understand—and after all the trouble I took to explain! Only lawyers have clients—"

Her head turned—his lips sought hers.

"No... I couldn't. I was stupid to come here. Drink your wine."

She struggled out of his grasp, but not frantically. Surrender was in every gentle movement of her.

He lifted the glass.

"Here's to us!" he said.

"To the Undisclosed Client!" she mocked, and they drank together.

"Queer how you and I met," he said, and dabbed his lips with a silk handkerchief. "Out of all the millions that walk these greasy streets—you are terribly like her."

"Like?"



"Lady Alice—except for the way you dress your hair, you might be her double."

The girl had been looking down at the tablecloth, fiddling with the stem of her wine-glass. Now she raised her eyes and there was a queer smile in them.

"I suppose I am—I should be, you know. I am Lady Alice Farranay!"

His mouth opened in surprise and then he laughed.

"You took my breath away: your little joke, eh!"

She shook her head.

"I am Lady Alice. You see, you are a difficult man to fight. I had heard about you—Fay Keverling told me. Of course you had the letters and things from Mortlake—my butler? I see I am right."

"You're—Lady—Alice?"

He was numb with amazement—he had never felt quite as he felt now, so dazed, so peculiarly stupefied.

"I thought it would be easy—but not so easy as it was. And when you asked me here to a little dinner, I knew that you would be alone. I had to do it. I have an Undisclosed Client too—one worth fighting for," she said, and he smiled crookedly.

"By gad—you've a nerve... now suppose you go, Lady... Lady Alice..."

His forehead was wet, he was surprised to find when he put up his hand to it.

"What d'you expec' to get... coming here?"

Why was his speech so thick, and his heart bumping so?

"The letters... they are in your safe. I had to guess that. And the key is on the chain in your pocket. I put some stuff in your wine when you were out of the room. Morphia and something else—there is a dear old doctor who would have given me poison if I had wanted it.... Of course I knew you would be alone..."

He did not hear the rest very distinctly. Clutching the edge of the table and bringing all his will power to bear, he attempted to walk to the door. And

then his knees doubled under him and he found the floor very pleasant to lie upon and dream upon...

The girl watched him till he lay still, and then, leaning over him, she unfastened the golden key-chain he carried, examined the ring, and, choosing a key, walked to the safe. This she unlocked with a hand that did not tremble.

She took out the letters and read their beginnings... near the end of one a sentence arrested her eye.

"...I have a feeling something happened. You will tell me, beloved, won't you? And I'll stand by you..."

Lady Alice Farranay smiled faintly and dropped letters and photograph into the fire and watched them consumed to ashes. On the table was her photograph. It had been a shock to find herself confronted with that when she first entered the flat. But by drawing his attention to the resemblance she had stifled surprise before it had formed. This photograph went the way of its fellow; curled blackly in the flames, and was poked to fragments.

Relocking the safe, she fastened the keychain to the pocket of the unconscious man, picked up her overcoat, then she walked out into Northumberland Avenue and hailed a taxi.

Mr. Cheyne was in retirement at a little Italian town when he read the announcement in the Paris edition of an English paper. He knew, of course, that the old Duke and his impossible son had died in the same week, but this intelligence was both new and startling:

"Lady Alice Farranay gave birth yesterday to a son, and Billshire is rejoicing that the Dukedom is not, as was feared, extinct. Lady Alice is the daughter of the late General Sir Gregory Starmart, and comes of a famous fighting family."

"Humph!" said Mr. Cheyne—for very good reasons he called himself "Mr. Burton Smith," and he had shaved off his moustache. "Humph! Baby!... Undisclosed Client! I never thought of that!"

## 2. — MR. SIMMONS' PROFESSION

THE magistrate looked over his glasses at the prisoner in the dock, and the prisoner nodded in the friendliest way.

The clerk at his little desk before the magistrate jerked his head round in the direction of the dock.

"Were you drunk last night?" he asked pointedly. "I were in a manner of speakin' excited," said the prisoner carefully.

"You are charged with being drunk. Are you guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty," said the accused loudly.

The clerk nodded, and a constable made his way to the box.

A stolid-looking constable, who moved with surprising agility, and glanced at the resentful prisoner with a twinkling eye.

"P.C. Lee 333 'D'," he began, "I was on duty last night—"

"Hold hard," said the aggressive prisoner, "let's have all this took down in black an' white."

He fished out from the depths of his mud-stained overcoat a tattered memorandum book and the stump of pencil.

"Now then," he said sternly, "what did you say your name was, me man?"

"P.C. Lee, of 'D'," repeated the good-natured constable.

"Oh!"

Very deliberately the accused closed his book and replaced it. He looked benevolently round, then:

"Guilty," he said.

"Seven and six or five days," said the magistrate. "The fact of it is, sir," said the accused man later—he was sitting in the waiting room whilst his wife was collecting the necessary three half-crowns—"I didn't catch your name."

"I dessay," said P.C. Lee with a smile.

"I respect you, Mr. Lee," said the prisoner oratorically, "as if you was me own brother—hopin' there's no offence."

"None whatever," said P.C. Lee, "an' talkin' about brothers, where's your brother Elf?"

"Elf?" said the other wonderingly, "Elf? Why, he's in Orstralian."

"I don't knew a public house of that name," said P.C. Lee reflectively. "but I dessay I shall find him."

P.C. Lee lives quite close to me. We have met professionally when he was severely reticent and remarkably polite and respectful: we have met privately, when he was more communicative.

Inspector Fowler, to whom I mentioned the fact of our acquaintance, had nothing but praise for Lee.

"He's a remarkable chap," he said enthusiastically. "He's practically the last court of appeal in the Notting Dale district. They take him all their little disputes to settle and he holds an informal court at his lodgings."

For P.C. Lee lives in the heart of Notting Dale, in a tiny house near Arbuckle Street. and sometimes, when he's off duty, and when there is a slack time in his arbitration court, he comes to me to smoke a pipe and talk shop.

"Crime," reflected P.C. Lee, "ain't always murder, nor highway robbery, nor forgin' cheques for £10,000. That's the crimes authors—present company excepted—write about. It's generally a tale about how a detective with whiskers fails to discover the lost diamonds, an' a clean. shaven feller, who plays the fiddle, works it out on paper that the true robber was the Archbishop of Canterbury, But crime, as we know it in the 'D' Division, is mostly made up of 'bein' a suspected person' or 'loiterin' with intent' or 'being found on unoccupied premises for the purpose of committin' a felony'; or, as you have seen yourself,, 'drunk an' usin' abusive language'.

"I've done all kinds of duty, plain clothes an' otherwise, an' although I've had my share of big cases, an' have been to the Old Bailey scores an' scores of times, the gen'ral run of life has been takin' violent an' insultin' 'drunks' to the station, an' pullin' people in for petty larceny.

"One of the most extraordinary chaps I've had to deal with was a man by the name of Simmons. He moves into 64, Highfield Street, an' I got a tip from headquarters to look after him. A quiet little man, who smoked a briar pipe, an' went about his work sayin' nothing to anybody.

"He was a bachelor so far as I could find out, an' there was an old woman, who was his aunt, who kept house for him.

"The rum thing was that he didn't associate with any of the 'heads'.

"There was a nice lot of lads in my district. Nick Moss who did seven years for armed burglary; Teddy Gail, who did five for runnin' a snide factory\*; Arthur Westing, the tale-pitcher—Lord! I could fill a book with their names.

>[\* A counterfeit coin manufactory.]

"Somehow, they knew he was in a queer line of business, an' naturally they tried to be friendly with him—but he had nothin' to do with them, an' that made 'em wild. They tried to find out what his lay was, but he was as close as an oyster. They came to me, some of 'em, an' worked the conversation round innocently to Simmons.

"Nick Moss was the most curious.

"That's a queer chap in 64, Mr. Lee,' he says. 'Can't make him out.'

"Can't you?' says I.

"No,' says Nick, shakin' his head. 'Do you think he's quite straight, Mr. Lee?'

"I hope so,' says I. 'It'd be a dreadful thing if a dishonest feller came into this pure an' innercent neighbourhood corruptin' the morals of its upright citizens.'

"It would,' says Nick.

"To tell you the truth, I had no more idea of what Simmons' game was than they had. My instructions were worded rather curiously. 'Watch Simmons, but don't interfere with him.'

"I thought once that he must be a nark\*, but the station Inspector told me he wasn't on the books, an' none of our C.I.D. men knew him. All I knew about him was that from time to time he used to go away for two or three days at a time carryin' his little brown bag an' smokin' his pipe. My mate, who's an energetic young chap, stopped him one night when he was coming home an' asked to see inside of his bag.

[\* Police spy.]

"But there was nothin' except a paper of sandwiches an' a couple of short luggage straps. The sandwiches was wrapped up in a paper that bore the name of a Chelmsford confectioners, an' we watched for the Chelmsford report to see if there had been a burglary—but nothin' appeared. I 'don't know whether Simmons reported the matter; so far as we knew at the

station he didn't, but a few days afterwards my mate was transferred to 'R' Division, and got a nasty letter from the Yard tellin' him not to exceed his duty.

"One night, soon after this, I was standin' on duty at the corner of Ladbroke Grove, when a woman came to me sobbin'.

"I recognised her at once. She was the wife of Crawley Hopper, a chap well known to the police as a ladder larcernist.\*

[\* A "ladder larceny" is a definite form of housebreaking. Whilst a family is at dinner a ladder is placed against a bedroom window, the thief enters and clears the bedroom of portable valuables.]

"Mr. Lee,' she sobs, 'look at my eye...!'

"I wouldn't mind the beatin',' she says, 'but he's took up with another girl.'

"Go home to your mother, Mrs. Hopper,' I says, 'He's in drink an' he'll be sorry in the morning.'

"He'll be sorry to-night,' she says savagely, 'because he was the man that did the Highbury job last Wednesday.'

"Oh!' I says—we'd been on the lookout for the man who did the Highbury job—in that case I'll ask you for a few particulars.'

"The end of it was, I found Crawley in a little pub standin' drinks all round. He had his arm round the neck of his new girl an' I beckoned him outside.

"I want you, Hopper,' I says.

"What for?' says Hopper, as white as a sheet.

"The Highbury job. Come along quietly to the station.'

"It's a fair cop,' says Hopper, an' went like a lamb.

"Who gave me away?' he says.

"Information received,' I answered.

"He nodded his head.

"I think I know the lady's name,' he says, 'an' when I come out she'll know mine,' he says.

Crawley had lots of pals, an' as soon as they found e'd been pinched, they had a whip round to get the money together for a mouthpiece (as they call a lawyer), an' naturally they went to Simmons.

"From all accounts, Nick Moss an' a feller named Peter called on him one night.

"'We are making a collection, Mr. Simmons,' says Nick, 'for a friend of ours that got into a bit of trouble.'

"'What kind of trouble?' says the little man.

"He stood in the doorway in his shirtsleeves smokin' his pipe most furious.

"'To tell you the truth,' says Nick frankly, 'he's been pinched.'

"'By the police?' says Simmons.

"'By the police,' says Nick.

"Simmons shook his head.

"'It's no good comin' to me,' he says. 'I don't pay a single penny to help criminals,' he says, cool as a cucumber.

"'What?' says Nick wrathfully, 'you undersized little crook! For two pins I'd scruff you!'"

"An' with that he reached out a handy left—but somehow it never reached Simmons, an' before he knew what was what a pair of hands like steel clamps caught his arm, an' he found himself chucked into the street, an' the door banged.

Nick an' the feller Peter waited for ten minutes bangin' at the door an' askin' Simmons to be a man an' come out an' be smashed, but Simmons took no notice, an' just then I strolled up and cleared away the little crowd that had collected.

"Nick was so wild that he wouldn't go at first, but I persuaded him, first by kind words, an' then by a smack on the head. After that I got the tip that the boys were waitin' for Mr. Simmons to do him in, an' when I saw him I gave him a friendly warnin'. He smiled as though the idea of his being done in was an amusin' one, but knew our lads too well to see any joke in it.

"Sure enough they laid for him, six of the brightest boys in Nottin' Dale.

"The first I knew about it was from hearin' shouts of 'Murder!' an' 'Police!' an' I ran as fast as I could, blowin' my whistle.

"I found Simmons with his back to the wall, his head bleedin' but grinnin' cheerfully. He had a life preserver his han' an' two of the lads was sleepin' peacefully on the pavement.

"'Hullo,' says Simmons, 'just in time.'

"'Was that you shoutin'?' I says.

"'Not me,' says he, with a chuckle. 'I rather think it was a gent named Moss—you'll know him by the bump on his forehead.'

"They left Simmons alone after this. They used to scowl at him, an' he used to grin at them, but they never tried any more tricks. Nick Moss was rather bitter.

"'A little feller like that didn't ought to be strong—do he, Mr. Lee?' he says indignantly. 'It's deceitful, that's what I call it.'

"Failin' to get satisfaction in one way they tried another. They did their best to put him away. There wasn't a thief in London, nor a receivin' shop either, where they not did make inquiries to find out what Simmons' particular hobby was. But for a long time they worked without any result.

"One day this chap Peter I told you about was standin' on the arrival platform at Euston, an' he sees Simmons get out of the Manchester train. Peter was a bag-claimer an' used to do quite an extensive line of business at big railway stations, pickin' up other people's bags beggin' pardon if they found him at it, an' he was too busy to think much about Simmons till that night when he was talking things over to Nick at the little pub.

"'Manchester!' says Nick, quite upset. 'Lord love a duck! Why, ain't you heard the news?'

"'No,' says Peter.

"'The Manchester an' Salisbury Bank was cleared out last night—eight thousand pounds taken an' the chap got clear away.'

"Peter whistled.

"'He's one of the swell mob, that's what he is.' Says Nick excited, 'an' if I don't put him away my name's not Nick Moss.' Which as a matter of fact," commented P.C. Lee thoughtfully, "it wasn't.



"Go out an' get a late paper,' says Nick, tremblin' with excitement; 'perhaps there'll be a description of the feller that did it.'

"So Peter went out an' bought one, an' together they read it over.

"Here it is,' says Nick, who ain't much of a reader. "Thomas Cadaver was executed this mornin' at Manchester for—no, that ain't it—here we are—' an' he read in the late news: "Description of the suspected man: short, strongly built, clean shaven, wearing a black bowler hat—"

'That's him for a dollar,' says Nick, an' round they came to me with the paper. I was just goin' on duty at time.

"Mr. Lee,' says Nick, 'we've got a good thing for you.'

"Good,' I says. 'Did you buy it or find it?'

"It's the Manchester Bank bloke,' says Nick, very solemn, an' handed me the paper. I read it carefully.

"I'll take it down to the station,' I says.

"There was a lot of news in the paper that night, but the news that mostly interested the boys was that Crawley Hopper had been found not guilty. There was some technical mistake in framin' the indictment, an' the evidence was a bit contradictory an' between the two Crawley got off.

He was discharged at six o'clock, an' I met him at eight. He come up to me, an' I could see he'd been celebratin' the occasion, for he was what I'd call 'nasty drunk'.

"Hullo, P.C. Lee,' he says, 'seen my missis?'

"Which one?'' I says.

"You know which one, he says with an ugly look, 'the one that gave me away.'

"Don't talk foolish,' I says, 'nobody gave you away,'

"All right,' he says, turnin' to go, 'I'll know all about it very soon.'

"There are instincts that come to a man," said P.C. Lee gravely, "that oughtn't to be suppressed. My instinct told me to arrest him—on any charge. To give him a night at the station. But I hesitated. He'd just been released from prison an' was naturally excited. I didn't want to kick a man who was down, so I let him go.

"At eleven thirty I was in Pointer Street, when I saw him comin' towards me. There was somethin' in his air that I didn't like, an' I stopped him.

"Where are you goin', Crawley?' I says.

"He sort of hesitated before he answered; then he ran. But I caught him in a dozen yards.

"Let go!' he hissed an' he struck at me.

"It was a stingin' blow in the face, an' I felt somethin' warm an' sticky. I thought he must have used a knife me, so I took my stick to him an' that quietened him.

"With the help of another constable I got him to the station.

"My face was covered with blood, but I couldn't feel the cut, an' as soon as I got him into the steel pen the Station Inspector ordered one of the men to go for the divisional surgeon.

"Then Crawley spoke.

"It's all right,' he says in a matter-of-fact tone, 'he not wounded.'

"Where did the blood come from?' says the Inspector.

'Off my hands,' says Crawley, and showed us.

"I've done in my missis,' he says simply.

"An' it was the truth, for we found the poor creature stone dead in her mother's house. It was one of the most dreadful things that had ever happened in our division for a long time, but it wasn't what you'd call a paper murder, for there was no mystery about it. It was just a low down, sordid wicked murder, an' Crawley's trial lasted two hours, an' he was sentenced to death. There's always a lot of mad people who'll sign a petition to get a brute like Crawley reprieved an' there was the usual procession of old ladies walkin' about askin' people to sign papers to save the life of this 'poor creature'.

"All the boys did their best in the way of gettin' mouthpieces but when it came to signin' petitions they wouldn't.

"Nick put the situation to me.

"I'm a thief, Mr. Lee.' he says, quite serious; 'you know all about me. I was born a thief, an' will die a thief '—but I've got no use for a man who does a

thing like Crawley did. We did our best to prove him innercent, but now there's no doubt about his bein' guilty he's got to go through it.'

"I hadn't much bother with 'em on my beat durin' the weeks followin' the trial. Everybody was subdued an' upset, an' I had time to keep my eye on Simmons. I'd got a fuller account of the wanted man from the Manchester police, an' I must confess that it filled the bill so far as appearances went. We reported the matter to Scotland Yard, an' they sent one of their best men down to have a look at him.

"But he poured cold water on the idea—in fact, he was very much amused.

"Him!" he said. 'Don't you know who he is?'

"No, sir,' I says, an' I waited for him to tell me, but he didn't.

"I missed Simmons for a bit. With the Crawley business finished, an' almost forgotten, things began to liven up in our quarter, an' what with one thing an' another I didn't trouble about Simmons.

"I saw him one night. He was walkin' home briskly an' nodded to me. He passed me when suddenly he stopped an' walked back.

"I've got a message for you,' he says. 'Crawley told me to tell you that if he'd taken your advice he wouldn't have been where he was.'

"Crawley,' I says puzzled, 'Crawley's dead.'

"I know that,' he says quietly, 'but he told me just before he dies.'

"How could you see him?' I says.

"Oh, I saw him all right,' he says, turnin' away, 'I'm the hangman!'"

### 3. — CHANGE

"ONE of the rummiest fellers I've ever had to do with," said P.C. Lee, "is young Sigeo."

With some caution I inquired which one, for the Sigeo family is well known to me, and I have had occasion before now to refer to this extraordinary clan.

"It is Albert," said P.C. Lee with the faintest of smiles, and his amusement found reflection on my face, for Albert Sigeo I shall always regard as being one of the most interesting characters I have ever met.

Himself as honest as the day—he has a little fur and feather shop off Kensington High Street where you may buy white mice or badgers, ferrets or rabbits—his position in the family is unique, for there is not one of them but has seen the interior of the 'jug'.

I've never quite understood his relations. I know that he regards their peculiar habits with a certain amount of pride; I know, too, that he retails the exploits of his innumerable brothers, cousins and uncles with that modest reserve which may be taken as a sign of approval, yet notwithstanding these indications of his goodwill I have never yet met, in the little bird and beast shop over which Mr. Sigeo presides, a single member of the family other than Albert himself.

It would seem that ample opportunity exists, did Mr. Sigeo desire to employ an odd man or so.

Were he fired with the reformer's zeal and anxious to provide honest, if casual, employment for his larcenous relatives, he might set their minds on the dignity of labour at little cost to himself. For there are bird cages to be mended, hutches to be manufactured, aquaria to be tended, dogs to be cleaned, and a thousand and one odd tasks to be performed.

"I often see Albert," said P.C. Lee, "an' whilst he never gives any of his relations away, he's always willin' to tell you the inside story of things when they've given theirselves away.

"I was talkin' to him yesterday on the question of relations an' he told me about his uncle's laggin'."

P.C. Lee has amongst other accomplishments the gift of mimicry, and his voice instantly became Albert's tired, piping voice that I knew so well.

"Relations, Mr. Lee," said Albert, "are best apart."

"I've got an uncle. All this trouble is about my uncle.

"When I say 'uncle' he's a sort of first husband to my Aunt Bella—who's one of them fellers that's all for harmony.

"One of the pleasantest chaps the police have ever had to deal with is my uncle. You know that yourself, Mr. Lee.

"S'pose a couple of splits call at his house one night about twelve, down comes his daughter Em with a shawl over her, an' opens the door.

"'Hullo, Emma,' says the chief split, 'father in?'

"'Yes, sir,' says Em. 'Want him?'

"'Yes, Emma,' says the split, an' in they go, into the old man's room, sleepin' away as peaceful as a perfec' angel. He wakes up and sees the splits.

"'Good evenin',' he says as polite as can be. 'Do you want me, Mr. Simmons?'

"'A little matter of a pony and cart what was left outside the Blue Lion,' says the split.

"'Oh, that?' says my uncle, gettin' up an' dressin', 'I thought it was something serious.'

"All the time he's dressing he's as polite an' talkative as possible.

"'I'm afraid i've kep' you out of bed,' he says.

"'I wish I'd known, I'd have walked round to the station an' explained matters. Em,' he says, 'send my breakfast round to the station tomorrer, an' if I'm put away see that I get my tea before the van goes—six o'clock, ain't it, Mr. Simmons?'

'Five,' says the split.

"'You surprise me,' says my uncle. 'What changes we see goin' on all round, don't we, Mr. Simmons?'

'Hurry up, father,' says Em, 'I'm gettin' cold.'

"It got to be quite a sayin' in the 'D' Division that a child could take Ropey—that was my uncle's name at the time—an' they used to give the job to a young split who wanted gentle practice.

"He used to go so quietly that some of my cousins thought he wasn't quite right in his head, an' when he came out after doin' six muns for a ladder larceny, they got up a sort of friendly-lead to get him enough to go away, into the country.

"They arst me to go an' I went—that's why I say relations are better apart.

"The friendly-lead was held in a little pub called 'The Frozen Artichoke' in Camden Town, an' my brother Ern got some cards printed.

"Many can help one, but one can't help many' the card says, an' asked one an' all to rally round George Ropey (better known as 'Ginger') who had recently suffered a severe bereftment. What they didn't put on the cards, an' what they might have put, was: 'One can't help many, but he can help hisself'.

"For they helped themselves pretty handily to a silver watch an' chain that was give me by a seafarin' man in liquor.

"I won't go as far as to say that any of my relations did the 'click', but a few days after that my father got run for bein' in possession of a silver watch an' chain, an' not bein' able to give an account of where he got it from.

"I was in a manner of speakin' tore between love an' duty, for if I claimed the watch I'd own up to my father bein' a thief an' if I didn't he'd get a month.

"Honour thy father,' says I to meself, so I let him do the month. I'd have let him do six muns.

"Well, to go on about my uncle with the gentlemanly manner.

"About a year ago, he come roun' to see me about Emma. She's a nice, perky little girl, an' she knows just about as much as most respectable people know when they get to be a hundred.

"Bert,' says my uncle, 'I've been thinkin' about Em. She's a good girl.'

"You've been thinkin' too deep,' says I. 'In fact you've been dreamin'.'

"She's a good girl,' he says, very firm, 'an' she'll make a good wife.'

'I dessay,' I says, 'it's not for me to deny miracles.'

"What do you say?' he says.

"Nothin'," I says, 'except if I happen to see a likely, chap goin' cheap I'll buy him—there's nothin' in the monkey house just now except the baby chimpanzee, an' it struck me he was feelin' lonely.'

"What do you say to yourself?' he says.

"My prayers mostly,' I says, 'an' my private opinion of me pore relations.'

'Plain and plump,' says Uncle Ropey, 'will you marry my girl?'

"Not,' I says, 'so long as I keep from drink an' am responsible for my actions.'

"Well, lend us a shillin',' says my Uncle Ropey, an' we parted good friends—me an' the shillin'.

"I didn't see him again for a week or more, an' then him an' young Ern came in to see me.

"Thought we'd look you up, Bert,' says my brother. 'I don't think brothers ought to lose touch of each other,' he says.

"No more do I,' I says. 'but if you've come to touch me, it's me early closin' day an' I've just paid the rent.'

"Ern said he'd got a chance of makin' a couple of quid honest on a profitable deal, an' all he wanted was half a sovereign for stock money.

"What race does it run in?' I says. 'I've lent stock money to Ern before now an' seen the profitable deal stop to lick at the wrong side of the winnin' post. But Ern took his oath that this was real toil an' trouble business, buyin' an' sellin' a horse.

"I can buy it for half a sovereign,' he says. 'It belongs to a butcher who thinks it's got spavins.'

"He was so serious about it, an' told me so much about the butcher, an' the butcher's brother who got married to a girl down in Essex, an' what sort of a house the butcher lived in when he was at home, that I parted with the ten.

"I was a bit surprised the next day when Em came an' brought the money back in silver, an' offered me a couple of shillin's interest. But I'm not the sort of fellow to take interest from a brother, so I sold 'im a chaffinch for the two bob—it was worth two bob to a man who likes birds that don't sing.

"A few days after that him an' Uncle Ropey came again. It 'appens they'd seen a light kind of cart that they could buy for a pound an' sell for three pounds, an' would I be so kind?"

"I noticed that when they came the second time they stood at the door an' did most of their talkin' an' I had to ask 'em to come in, because I didn't want my shop to get a bad name. Although this place is only a little 'un, I do a big trade, an' it's a poor day when I don't take a couple of pounds. an' so I had the money to hand over. Next day punctual to the minute they brought hack the money—eight half-crowns—and asked me to have a drink.

"Three days later I saw Ern walk past the shop very quick, an' I gave him a bit of a nod an' he sort of hesitated.

"He didn't come in, but stood outside.

"'How's business?' says Ern.

"'So-so,' I says. 'Where's uncle?'

"'He's round the corner,' says Em, very eager. 'He's talkin' to a man about a set of 'arness he wants to buy— the chap won't take less than two pounds, but I know where we can sell it for five.'

"'Go an' see how he's got on,' I says, an' away he nipped, an' presently back he come with Uncle Ropey.

'It's all right, Bert,' says Ern, 'we can get it for two— can you lend us the money?'

"So I fished out two sovereigns an' Ern had tears in his eyes when he took 'em.

"'You're a true brother, Bert,' he says, 'an' you've helped me to get an honest livin'—ain't he, uncle?'

"'Yes,' says Uncle Ropey, 'I've always said that Bert was the pick of the bunch.'

"They went away, tellin' me how I'd saved 'em from sinkin' to the level of the rest of the family.

"About eleven o'clock Em come an' knocked me up.

"'Father's pinched,' she says, 'an' so's young Ern.'

'What for?' I says.



"For passin' counterfeit gold,' she says, 'two sovereigns.'

"She shook her head, very disgusted.

"It's father's own fault,' she says, 'an' it comes of not keepin' his word. He said he was goin' to pass all the snide money on to a mug. Borrer a good sov'reign an' return eight snide half-crowns, an' let the mug do the circulatin' act.

"What surprises me,' she says, 'is their tryin' to pass gold. Dad always works silver—he gets it from a man in Middlesex Street. Where d'ye think he got the bad quids from?' she asked.

"I dunno,' I says, 'probably from the mug.'"

#### 4. — A MAN OF NOTE

ONCE I hinted delicately to P.C. Lee that it was remarkable, considering his popularity not only with his superiors but with the man in the street equally with the man on the bench, that he had never achieved promotion. I did this with some trepidation because I feared that I might have disturbed a hornet's nest of grievances, and the best fellow in the world is a wearisome bore if he has a grievance. But P.C. Lee was very frank. With no false shame he told me that it was a matter of education with him, and he was content to remain a first class constable.

"The force gen'rally,' he said, "is filled with men who find no difficulty in passin' the stiffest educational examination you can set 'em. There isn't a better educated police force in the world, as I've heard, than the Metropolitan—unless it's the City.

"But I have not the patience to go in for schoolin'. I tried it once. Went to a private evenin' class, an' a chap wanted to teach me decimal fractions, but there didn't seem much sense in it to me, although I dessay I'm wrong. I can write a report, an' tell the truth, an' know enough about the law to know when to arrest a man, an' that's about as much as I'm anxious to know. The fact that the River Danube empties itself into the Arctic Ocean doesn't worry me, because the Arctic Ocean ain't on my beat.

"I never deny that education is a good thing—in spite of its difficulty. Lots of people think that education has increased the number of criminals, but I say it has reduced 'em. I once took a young fellow for embezzlement. He was a milkman, an' his mother cried an' carried on something dreadful.

"It's what a board school education has done for my poor boy,' she says, 'fillin' his head with stuff an' nonsense.'

"But my own opinion was that if he'd been better educated he'd have had more sense than try to alter the customer's account book so as to make it tally with his cash hook. It's ignorance that makes criminals, having no sense to look ahead, no imagination.

"There was a feller once," reflected P.C. Lee, who gave a lecture at the Police Institute, an' he said a very true thing: he said 'True happiness you pay for in advance, false happiness you pay for afterwards'; and if criminals knew this there'd be no criminals. It's because a chap doesn't bother to think about tomorrow an' the policeman who's waitin' round the corner to pinch him, that he finds the easiest way to make money is to take money. There are exceptions, of course, an' a case in point, that shows how education sometimes works the wrong end first, was the case of Albert Walker.

"When I first knew Albert he was a little bare-footed boy runnin' wild in Lambeth. I was in the 'L' Division at the time. His parents were a bad lot: his father was in and out of prison most of the time, an' his mother—well, got a livin'; it wasn't much in the food line at home, but knowin' how the poor help the poor, I should say that the neighbours kept him from starvin'. Then the School Board got hold of him, an' from what I've heard he was a rare boy for learnin', an' sucked up education like a sponge till he was the best writer in the school an' the best at arithmetic an' geography.

"He was a prime favourite with the schoolmaster, who got him some old cast-off clothes to wear in place of his rags, an' helped him in many ways. The school was on my beat, an' I've often spoke to the boy, just a word of encouragement now an' then. I never used to mention his father to him, because I didn't want the kid to think I had any other reason for takin' an interest in him. He wasn't a bit shy, an' would tell me how he'd taken prizes for reg'lar attendance an' for geometry.

"The only time he ever spoke about his people was just after his father had gone down for nine months for stealin' pewter pots.

"The boy was then well up in the school; he was a sort of pupil teacher now, an' had just won a scholarship, an' I was sayin' how pleased I was. I specially bought him a little book called 'A Man of Note' which was all about a boy who rose to a wonderful position through study.

"'Yes,' he says, after thankin' me, 'I'm glad I've got on so well at school, too. I don't want to be like father.'

"'Quite right,' I says.

"'Father is a strikin' example of unintelligent application,' he says—he was a rare one for usin' long words an' could spell 'Constantinople' before he was nine—he is the unskilled labourer, for whom no real need exists. Here's father doing nine months for stealing pewter. Another man, scarcely any more intelligent, will one day get two years for converting these pewter pots into spurious coin of the realm, yet another man will probably go to prison for passing the counterfeit coin—it is inevitable.'

"He sighed regretfully.

'With silver at its present price,' he went on, 'there is no need at all why the coins should not be made of silver an' a handsome profit made. The chances of detection would be reduced to a minimum.'

'That's against the law, Albert,' I says, sternly; 'It don't matter whether the coin is made of silver or made of pewter, it's coinin'.'

"He waved his hand with a lordly air, which looked curious in a boy of his age.

"I am not discussin' the ethical side of the question, he says.

"That conversation made me think a bit. What with his long words an' his ready tongue, I hadn't an answer ready for him, an' I had my misgivings.

"The next thing I heard about him was that he'd gone to a trainin' college, an' that he'd passed through that with every kind of honour.

"All this time his father was in an' out. Three month' for larceny, six months for robbery from the person, twelve months for felony.

"Then his mother died. 'Chronic alcoholism' was the verdict of the coroner's jury. Albert didn't go to the funeral, but sent a beautiful wreath with a Latin inscription which, properly translated, meant 'She was all right accordin' to her lights, but her lights were pretty bad.'

"One of the masters at the school translated it to me, an' shook his head.

"I saw Albert again soon after an' he gave me his views on the subject.

"'Bein' my mother was only an accident,' he said, very serious, 'she couldn't help it any more than me. Gen'rally speakin', I'm glad she's dead.'

"'That's not the way for a boy to speak about his mother, however bad she was,' I says reprovingly.

"'I'm speakin' less as a son than as a philosopher,' he says very thoughtful, then he added, 'Father looks very healthy, don't you think, Mr. Lee?'

"'Yes,' I says, for he'd just come out of the 'College'.

"Albert shook his head.

"'The short sentence system is wasted on father,' he says sadly, 'he'll last for ages.'

"I never saw Albert again for eight—nine—why, it must have been ten years.

"One day I was on duty in the Kensington Park Road—one summer day it was—when a cab drove up to one of the swaggerest houses an' out stepped—Albert! He was well-dressed, not showily dressed like one of the

'nuts' would have been, but quietly in dark grey, an' he recognised me instantly.

"Hullo, constable!" he said with a smile, 'I think we've met before?'

"Not Albert!" I says, astonished.

"He nodded. 'You can go on calling me Albert,' he says easy and affable. 'I don't want 'sir' from you.'

He told me he lived in the big house, was goin' to be married, and was makin' money.

"His father was dead, an' he'd forgotten about the old Lambeth life.

"It seems a nightmare,' he says.

"He told me how he'd left school-teaching an' had gone in for business at printin' in High Street, Kensington. Started in a small way, an' worked up until he was employin' over a hundred workmen.

"He was very enthusiastic about printin'—it was as much a hobby as anything else with him. I could see his heart was in his work, an' in my mind I marked him down as bein' a brand from the burnin'.

"He must have guessed my thoughts.

"'Honesty's the best policy, eh, Lee?' he says, smilin', 'especially in the case of the modern thief who endeavours to combat scientific safeguards with a half-digested education from which the very elements of science are absent.'

"I used to meet him occasionally, an' I got into the habit of touchin' my hat to him. At Christmas time he sent me a fiver with a little note askin' me to accept it in the spirit in which it was sent.

"He was very good to the poor, too; gave 'em dinner an' coal an' started a soup kitchen down Latimer Road way—in fact people got to look on him as a rich man, an' Nick Moss an' a pal of his named 'Copper' went down to Kensington Road an' had a look at the house. Nick told me afterwards there was twenty ways of gettin' into it.

There was a kitchen window without bars, an' a conservatory, an' a billiard room—in fact, it was the easiest crib he'd ever seen.

"So, accordingly, Nick an' his pal took their swag—nice little centre-bits an' glass cuttin' machines, an' drills—an' as we say in court 'effected an

entrance'. I happened to be strolling up Kensington Park Road at about 2 a.m. smokin' a pipe, contrary to all regulations, when passin' Albert's house I tried the front gate. It was fastened all right, but as I stepped up to it I trod on something soft. I stooped down an' picked it up. It was a thin cotton glove—a new one what had never been worn.

"Now I know that all up-to-date burglars carry cotton gloves because of the fear of leavin' finger prints, an' a policeman's mind being naturally a suspicious one, I nipped over the low gate an' walked quietly up to the house. I'd got my rubber heels on an' made no noise. I put the light of the lantern over the front door. It was not marked, so I walked round to the servants' entrance. There was no sign of chisel marks, then I put up my hand to the little window that opens from the pantry. 'Opens is a good word, for wide open it was.

"Very quietly I got back into the street again. I knew I should find P.C. Sampson at the corner of Kensington Park Square. He came to the 'point' to time an' I called him quietly, an' together we walked back to the house.

"To cut a long story short we took Nick Moss as he came out of the servants' entrance, an' a few minutes afterwards we took his pal. I put the irons on Nick, because he was a dangerous character. Then I left Sampson to guard the two whilst I knocked up Mr. Walker. At the second knock up went a window an' out came his head.

"Hullo,' says he, quietly. 'what do you want?'

"'Will you come down here for a moment?' says I.

"'What do you want?' he asked again, so in as few words as possible I told him that his house had been broken into, an' that we had caught the man. He came down, an' opened the door cautiously. To my surprise he had a revolver in his hand—not an ordinary revolver, but one of these automatic pistols that you sometimes find in the possession of foreign anarchists.

"'Come in,' says he, so me an' Sampson an' the two prisoners went in, an' he switched on the light of the dinin' room.

"It seemed to me that when they met face to face—the man who had been robbed an' the burglars—there a curious, eager look on Mr. Walker's face, an' a sort triumphant smile on the other's.

Copper, his pal, was an ordinary type of lag, an' scowled from one to the other of us.

"I shall want you to come to the station,' I says. 'an' charge these men.'.

"What for?' says Mr. Walker coolly.

"Burglary,' I says.

"There's some mistake,' he says, easily. 'I discovered late last night that I'd lost the key of my safe. It would take days to get the safe opened, so knowing our friend here'—he waved his hands to Nick—'is by way of being a—er—professional, I sent for him.'

"What's his name?' I says quickly.

"But Nick Moss was as quick as lighnin'.

"Nick Moss is my name,' he says, pretending the question was addressed to him, an' Walker took the cue.

"Moss, of course,' he says, 'everybody knows Nick Moss.'

"Between the two of 'em they were giving each other all the information they desired, an' I was sorely puzzled to know what to do.

"I didn't believe the story, but that was nothing to do with the case. Suppose I arrested the two men. A pretty figure I should cut in court when the man who was supposed to have been burgled stood up in the witness box an' swore that the burglars were friends of his. An' mind you, it's no uncommon thing for a merchant to seek out an ex-burglar to open a safe when the combination word has gone wrong, or the keys have been lost. So I was very reluctantly compelled to take the handcuffs off Nick—it was a fishy business, but it wasn't my business.

"As me an' my mate turned to go, Albert says: 'One moment, Constable Lee,' an' took me aside.

"I hope you won't report this matter,' he says, an' he slipped a banknote into my hand.

"Thank you,' I says, an' handed it back again. 'I've done nothing that deserves payment; as to reportin' the matter, you may be sure I shall report it. If I didn't my mate would, an' he's no more to be squared than I am.'

"With that I bid him good night an' left him sitting there, in his dressin' gown, talking affably an' friendly to the two lags.

"When we got outside I looks at Sampson, an' he looks at me.

"Well,' says he, 'they're a bit peas-in-the-pot.'

"Meanin' O.T. hot?' I says. 'What do you make it?'

"Blessed if I know,' says Sampson, who's not what I might call a rapid thinker.

Anyway, I reported the matter to the Station Inspector, an' he sent one of our smart young men down to make inquiries, but he learnt no more than I had.

"Then I had a little private inquiry on my own. I run across Copper an' put a few questions to him. He was close, of course, an' backed up the lie to the best of his ability. All I could get out of him was that after I'd left Walker an' Nick went into a private room an' had a bit a talk. He didn't know what they said, for Nick was an oyster in the way of givin' information.

"So you called at the house by invitation, eh?' I says.

"Yes,' says Copper.

"Then,' I says, 'what did you mean by sayin' when I arrested you "This is a laggin' stakes"?'

'Did I?' he says uneasily.

"You did,' I says. 'Now, Copper, I don't care what yarn you spin: you an' Nick went to that house to crack it, an' nobody was more surprised than you when the owner spoke up for you.'

"He made no reply.

"One of these days,' I says. 'you'll be sorry you was in this business,' and with that I left him.

"Soon after I saw Nick Moss. Got up to the nines, he was, with a brand new suit an' a diamond ring, an' his hat on the side of his head. Yaller gloves an' patent boots an' a pearl scarf-pin in his necktie.

"What ho, Lee,' he says insolently. 'How's the laggin' business?'

"About the same as usual, Nick,' I says; 'lots of crooks inside the bars, but a dashed sight more walkin' out in shiny boots an' dog-poisoner gloves.'

"You be careful,' he says, 'or I'll report you to your superiors.'



"An' you be careful,' I says, 'or I'll come down on you one of these fine evenin's when I'm off duty an' wipe that smile off your dial.'

"He laughed. 'Any time you are passin' my house come in an' have a glass of beer,' he says patronisingly.

"Just as I was goin' off duty the next night a motor car came dashin' up to Nottin' Hill station, an' out jumped Chief Inspector Toil from the Yard.

"With him was a foreign looking gentleman, an' they went into the Inspector's room, an' all three was talkin' together in a low tone when the constable on duty at the door said Atkins and Grant—two plain clothes men— were bringin' in a prisoner. They carried him in, for he'd collapsed in the last hundred yards, an' as they laid him on the floor of the charge room I recognised him. It was Nick. I thought at first he was dead, but he was only dead drunk.

"Search him, Lee.' says the Inspector, an' I put l hands over him. Besides his jewellery he had nearly twenty pounds in gold an' notes an' a print, an' I couldn't read it, but the moment Toil saw it he snatched it from my hand.

"A hundred rouble note—and new!' he cried.

"M'sieur,' he says to the foreign looking gentleman, 'what is this?'

"He hands it to the foreigner, an' he feels it carefully, then walks with it to the light.

"This is a forgery,' he says, 'like the others!'

"And then it came out that hundreds of thousands of pounds' worth of forged Russian notes had been put in circulation, an' that they had been traced to this district.

"After they had taken Nick Moss away to the cells a light suddenly dawned on me, an' I went into the Inspector's room an' told him all I knew about Albert Walker.

"A printer!' he says thoughtfully, 'that theory fits very well. You may be sure if he is the man he'd do his printing at home. A burglar breaks into his house an' discovers his secret, is bribed to keep silence an'—'

"He jumped up. 'We haven't time to lose,' he says.

"Give me another man, Inspector, an' the car shall drive us to the house.'

"But we were too late.

'The house had no tenant when we got there except for an old woman who acted as servant. She told us Nick was a frequent visitor, an' had called that evenin' a little the worse for drink.

"She heard Nick threatenin' Walker, but afterwards they must have parted good friends, for Walker rung for wine glasses.

"Her master had left a few minutes after Nick an' that's the last she saw of him.

"It was the last anybody else ever saw of him. For though we searched England, we never discovered Mr. Albert Walker. Nick got seven years as an accomplice after an' Copper got three years for nothin'.

"About five years later a Mr. Sangarro, a very wealthy Spanish gentleman, died an' left a quarter of a million to found an educational establishment for poor boys of London. A part of his will directed that great attention should be given to teachin' the Spanish language; 'a language,' says the will—I've got a copy of it cut from the newspapers somewhere—which is likely to be of considerable value to the hasty traveller.'

"I discovered who 'Mr. Sangarro' was when I got a legacy from his executors in the shape of a little book.

"I recognised it as one I'd once given as a present, although he'd altered the title with an ink mark into 'A Man of Notes'."

## 5. — FOR JEWELRY'S LAGGIN

"PEOPLE get queer notions about the police," said P.C. Lee philosophically, "but what people think doesn't matter very much. There's a gentleman who lives in Ladbroke Grove—gentleman in the auctioneerin' line of business — who was once summoned for his rates, an' has been very bitter since about police methods. He was talkin' to me the other night about undiscovered crimes."

"There's a murder here,' said he, 'an' a murder there. an' the police go walkin' about with their mouths open catchin' flies whilst ratepayers are shakin' in their beds—what's the remedy for that?' he said.

"Sleep on the floor,' I said. 'I put it to you, Mr. Sliggly, that you're a fairly 'cute gentleman?'

"I am,' he admitted.

"An' you walk about with your eyes open?'

"I do,' he said, 'except when I'm walkin' in me sleep.'

"Now,' I said, 'how often have you, in the course of your life, seen a man commit a felony—actually seen it, not heard about it or read about it? How often have you seen a man pick a pocket, or smash a jeweller's window, or comin' from the scene of a murder?'

"Never,' he said, after a bit.

"An' very few have,' said I. 'You talk about undiscovered crime! Why, the wonder is, in a big city like London or Manchester or Southampton, how so much crime is detected, not how so much remains a mystery. Policemen have only got one pair of eyes, like you, an' they can only see just as much as you can see. The difference between the average policeman an' the average citizen is that the constable only believes a quarter of what he is told, an' the average citizen believes everythin'.

"An so it is," continued P.C. Lee. "There was a young feller who used to live in this neighbourhood who was always gettin' into trouble with the authorities. An' one day he was taken by a plain clothes man whilst in possession of a number of articles that it didn't seem natural somehow for him to have. Fancy soaps an' toothbrushes, an' things of that description. He was pulled in, as I say, into the local police station an' charged with 'unlawful possession'. To everybody's surprise he proved he'd bought these things at a sale. It came out when the case was before the magistrate, an'

the auctioneer was called to prove his statement—it was this same Mr. Sliggly I was tellin' you about. Sure enough he had bought the things an' he was discharged.

"There would have been the end of it only Sliggly started the idea that this young feller—Tom Coop was his name—was the victim of a police persecution, an' persuaded Coop to bring an action for false imprisonment. In addition to this one of the evenin' newspapers got hold of the story an' started agitatin' for a Royal Commission.

"In the thick of it I happened to see Mr. Sliggly. He Stopped me one mornin', laughin' an' rubbin' his hands.

"Ah, ha!' said he, 'I think we'll give the police a tyin' up this time! What do you think of your friends now?' he asked.

"The same as ever,' I said, 'they're few an' far between.'

"He went off that night to address a meetin' in Nottingham, called by the Anti-Police Persecution Association or somethin' of the sort, an' the reception he got gave him a bit of a swelled head, because when I saw him on his way back the next mornin' he only gave me a haughty nod an' was passin' on when I stopped him.

"Do you wish to see me, constable?' he said coldly.

"About Tom Coop,' said I, but he lifted up his hand.

"Nothin' you can say,' said he warningly, 'can alter my opinion. You have hounded this unfortunate man from pillar to post, you have hounded him from society, an' hounded him to—'

"What I was goin' to say, sir,' said I, 'is that last night I hounded him into the station, having caught him houndin' hisself out of your kitchen winder with a bagful of silver.'

"It dried up Mr. Sliggly in two twinks, an' next time I saw him was at the Police Fete at the Crystal Palace standin' drinks to our inspector. It's very rum how criminal the general public is—they're always in sympathy with the wrong 'un, an' it's quite usual when I'm takin' an obstreperous rough to the station to hear some mild old gentleman on the edge of the pavement shout 'Let the man alone, you brute!' without his knowin' anythin' of the reasons for the man's arrest.

"I've been reported a dozen times for ill-treating prisoners. Once a feller bit me in the leg as I was takin' him to the station. It took two of us five minutes

to make him lose bold, an' then he complained to the magistrate that owin' to our roughness we'd damaged his false teeth!

"A policeman, bein' human an' not bein' a natural born brute, likes to be as gentle as he can, an' it's a prisoner's own fault if he gets a rough house, an' the only genuine police persecution I've ever heard about was when Sam Golder an' Harry Trent—two of our young constables—caught Soapy. Soapy was a famous fit-faker—used to fall down suddenly in a crowded street foamin' at the mouth, an' when a sympathetic crowd brought him round an' had subscribed enough money to send him home in a cab, he used to stagger away to another crowded street an' go through the same performance. We called him Soapy for obvious reasons.

"One night Sam an' young Harry, bein' on plain clothes duty, made it up to follow Soapy. First of all they went to a chemist's an' got a quart bottle of stuff made up. I don't know what the stuff was, but it smelt like bad onions.

"They came upon Soapy at Notting Hill Gate in the midst of one of the most elegant fits he ever had. Everybody offerin' advice such as 'Give the man air' an' 'Bring some brandy', when Harry elbowed his way into the crowd an' said he was a medical man. Him an' Sam forced open Soapy's mouth.

"'Brandy!' moaned Soapy.

"'Have some of this, old feller,' says Sam, an' poured about half a pint down Soapy's throat.

"For half a second he didn't get the taste, then he jumped up with a yell an' ran like the wind.

"They follered him till he had another fit, an' the same thing happened all over again.

"The third time, the moment Soapy heard their voices he got up.

"'It's a fair cop,' he said. 'Don't give me any more of that stuff. I'd sooner do a month.'

"You can't get it out of your head quick enough that the police persecute people without reason. Persecution is better than prosecution any day of the week, an' it's better to nag a man a little than to put him into prison an' his wife into the workhouse.

"There are lots of folk who think the police welcome an opportunity of runnin' a man, but the truth of it is that for every arrest that is made there are a dozen 'chances' given.

"One night when I was on point duty at the corner of Westbourne Grove a man came up to me. I knew him by sight—a slinkin', sly chap, whose name was Hamming, but who was better known as Ginger.

"Evenin', Mr. Lee,' he said. 'Do you want a good cop?'

"I looks at him. 'Are you thinkin' of givin' yourself up?' I said.

"He shuffled uncomfortably. 'You must have your joke, Mr. Lee,' he grinned, 'but this is a real thing; it's a bloke with a "brief" who ain't reported.'

"What's his name?'

"What do I get for givin' information?' he asked cunnin'ly.

"A thick ear, if you're ever found out,' I said. 'What's his name?'

"Well, he wouldn't tell me, but kept hagglin' an' bargainin' as to what he'd get, an' though he didn't know it, all the time I was questionin' him I was getting some idea of who the chap was an' whereabouts he lived.

"Of course, it wasn't my duty to go into the matter; I should have sent him straight to the station to see the inspector, but I was curious to know who the poor devil was he was tryin' to send back to Portland, an' by an' by it came out. It was a decent quiet man who'd got five years for falsifyin' accounts, an' who had been released on ticket of leave more than a year before. Men on 'brief' have got to report to the nearest station periodically givin' their changes of address, an' the penalty for not reportin' is that they generally are sent back to prison to complete their sentences.

"Sometimes they don't report because they've got a job an' are afraid that if the story of their imprisonment comes to the ears of their new masters they will be thrown out of employment.

"My duty as an officer was to report what Ginger had told me, but sometimes a policeman uses his discretion, an' after I'd told the informer to see me next night I went along to the Burkley Head, which is on my beat, an' passed the word to Nick Moss, who was inside, that I wanted to see him.

"Nick is what I call a 'straight thief'. He wouldn't sell a man to save his life, an' all the information the police have ever got out of Nick wouldn't have convicted a man of vagrancy.

"Go round to that little carpenter feller that lives in Ogshott Street,' said I. 'He's out on a "brief". Tell him on the quiet that if he doesn't want a laggin' he'd better nip round to the station an' report his change of address.'

"Nick nodded an' went.

"From what I've heard, the little carpenter reported, an' got a good talkin' to from the inspector an' there was an end of it so far as he was concerned, for the police knew he was tryin' to go straight an' took no steps to worry him.

"But it wasn't the end with Ginger, who was terribly disappointed at losin' some blood money.

"He blamed me, you can be sure, an' soon after that he started gettin' up a little surprise party for my special benefit. It was winter time, an' a cold, wretched winter was, so when one mornin' about two o'clock Ginger came out of his house—it was on my beat—an' asked me civilly whether I'd like a cup of tea, I didn't think twice about it, bein' perished with cold, but said 'Yes.'

"'Would you come inside, Mr. Lee?' he said civilly.

"'I'll have it outside. You're early this morning, Ginger.'

"'Yes, Mr. Lee,' he said. 'I've got the promise of a job at Covent Garden Market, so I'm doin' the bright-an'-early act. Won't you come in?'

"I was tempted, I'll admit. It was terribly cold, an' the prospect of a cup of tea.... But I said 'No' an' Ginger went inside. By an' by he came back with a steamin' cup an' very good tea it was, as it ought to have been, seein' that it was probably stolen from some warehouse or other.

"I tasted it carefully, to see if he was up to any hanky-panky, but it was all right, an' I finished the cup.

"I had hardly handed it to him when the inspector on duty came round the corner, accompanied by the sergeant.

"'What's this, Lee?' said the inspector.

"'Takin' a cup of tea, sir,' I replied.

"'Me an' the constable have been havin' a quiet talk in front of my fire,' said Ginger. 'Don't be hard on him, sir, he hasn't been in my house more than an hour.'

"'Is this true?' asked the inspector.

"No, sir,' I said. I knew I could prove I'd met the constable on the next beat not ten minutes ago, but I was curious to hear what lie Ginger would tell next.

"If you expect that he told a plausible tale or that it was in any way ingenious, you'll be disappointed. Ginger was a very average type of a low down thief, an' his yarn was as bald as a baby's head.

"The inspector told me afterwards that he'd received an anonymous letter saying that P.C. Lee was in the habit of going into Ginger's house to loaf in the middle of the night, an' that was why he'd paid his surprise visit.

"This incident wouldn't be of any interest but for the events which followed.

"At four o'clock that mornin' Detective Sergeant Fallow came up to me.

"I want you to walk as far as Portobello Road—I'm going to "pull in" Jewey Isaacs,' he told me.

"Jewey Isaacs lives in a street off the road, an' is well known to us as a bad character. When I say 'bad character' I mean a man who has been 'inside' half a dozen times for serious offences, an' the particular crime for which he was wanted at present was an armed burglary down in Essex.

'He'll give us some trouble,' said the sergeant. 'This means a lifer for Jewey, so you can expect him to shoot. Have you got your stick?'

"Yes, sergeant,' I said, an' showed him the little private truncheon I always carry. It was given to me by a gentleman I helped once, an' is made of a thick, short length of rhinoceros hide. I've only had to use it half a dozen times in my life, an' I've never struck the same man twice with it.

"We got to Jewey's little house, an' was joined by another constable.

"In a case like this, it would be a fatal mistake to knock at the door, an' a worse to break the door down, so when Sergeant Fallow produced a bunch of skeleton keys an' unlocked it I wasn't very much surprised. He knew exactly where Jewey was sleeping, an' as we made our way up the stairs as noiselessly as possible, he whispered 'First floor front!'

"We'd got to the landing when we heard the thud of Jewey's feet as he jumped out of bed.

"Who's there?' he shouted, an' I sprang at the door the room an' burst it open.



"Just outside the house was a street lamp, an' by its light I saw our man standin' in the middle of the room with a revolver in his hand. He fired at me an' missed me, an' the next minute I caught him a welt on the head with my stick, an' he went down like a log. We got the handcuffs on him before we started to revive him, an' the other constable lit the lamp.

"In a dazed fashion Jewey looked round. He recognised me an' smiled.

"'Hullo, Lee,' he says, 'I wondered if it was you. Who gave me away?'

"I shook my head.

"'Oh, I daresay,' he sneered as we helped him to his feet, 'you don't know, do you? Innercent perisher! Where was you at two o'clock this mornin', you an' the inspector, gettin' information? I piped you. Tell Mr. Ginger What's-his-name to look out!'

"It wasn't part of my business to defend Ginger—especially as I was feelin' sore with him just about then, but I've often wished that I'd said a word to explain his conduct. Not that Jewey would have believed me.

"In course of time Jewey was brought up at the Old Bailey. He had two counsels, but that was to be expected because Jewey was a big man in his line an' had hundred of pals all over London. But all the lawyers in the world couldn't have got a verdict of 'Not Guilty', for in addition to the Essex case there was a new charge, 'Shooting with intent to murder P.C. Lee', and that was enough to put him away.

"The end of it was that the jury found him guilty, an' the judge, after talking about the duty he owed to society, said Jewey would be kept in penal servitude for the term of his natural life.

"Jewey took it smilin' and, when he was asked if he had anythin' to say, leant over the dock an' said, 'I advise the bloke who gave me away to say his prayers.'

"That was all he said, an' that was why the judge referred to him as a hardened ruffian.

"Now the rum thing was that Ginger didn't suspect that he was the gentleman Jewey spoke about. Ginger was still plannin' to get me into trouble, an' letters kept comin' to the station about my behaviour; how I used to get drink whilst I was on duty; how I was hand-in-glove with all the thieves of Notting Dale, an' similar interestin' discoveries.

Findin' this didn't act, he started spreadin' disagreeable stories about my morals, an' so when I was told off one evenin' by the inspector to go along to Ginger's house an' take him on a charge of 'stealin' from the person' I'd have been more than human if I hadn't been quietly pleased.

"I got to the house an' knocked, an' an old woman lodger who lived in the basement let me in an' showed me the room where Ginger lived. I tried the door an' opened it. All was dark inside, so I struck a match.

"I don't know how long he'd been dead, but whoever had the job must have done it quickly, for nobody in the house heard any noise. Probably it was a poker they used, but it looked to me as though he'd been throttled first an' bludgeoned to death afterwards.

"On the table was a newspaper, an' on the white edge of it was written in pencil: 'For Jewey's lagging.'

'The coroner's jury brought a verdict of 'Wilful murder against some person or persons unknown', an' it was added to the list of mysterious crimes.

'What struck me as being most remarkable was the mistake the murderers had made. For Jewey an' his pals had jumped to the conclusion that Ginger was the traitor because he'd been seen talkin' to me an' the inspector at two o'clock in the mornin'.

"I spoke to Detective Sergeant Fallow about it an' he rather surprised me.

"'The man who gave Jewey away,' he said, 'did it in such a manner that he could never have been discovered. No writin' passed, an' the whole of the conversation between me an' him was carried on by the telephone—he bein' in South London an' me in the North. The blood money was left under a stone on Wanstead Common an' nobody could possibly have found out who it was.'

"'Did you know?' I asked, an' he nodded.

"'That is the curious thing about it,' he said, 'for it was Ginger!'"

## 6. — PEAR-DROPS

P.C. LEE has never struck me as being a man of unusual prejudices and superstitions, and I must confess I was greatly astonished the other day when, removing my tall hat to take some papers from its interior, I found him contemplating me with a look in which alarm and disapproval were blended.

"That is one of the things I hate to see a man do, he said solemnly. "It makes me perspire."

In proof of which he mopped his brow with a snowy handkerchief and breathed loudly in his agitation.

"Two things I can't bear," he said, "that's one, an' the other is pear drops."

He said this with such an air of gravity that I did not laugh, for what there was in that succulent morsel to disturb him I could not guess.

He was unusually silent for a while, and appeared to be thinking deeply on some subject.

'England," said Police Constable Lee presently, "is the home of the free, an' the half-way house to liberty. That's how I size the situation. My view is a prejudiced view because I'm a policeman, but I'd like to say this: that we could do with about four penn'orth of freedom less than we've got.

"I used to know a gentleman once, in the writin' line like yourself, who used to have periods of bad luck, an' periods of rollin' in wealth. When he was out of luck, an' people pressed him for money, he took no more notice of 'em than you or me would take notice of a baby food advertisement.

"Used to invite the process servers to stay to breakfast an' tossed 'em for the conduct money. If you wanted money out of him you went through a regular routine.

"First you wrote to him; then you sent him a lawyer's letter; then you served him with a writ; then you got judgment an' served him with a judgment summons, then you got a pay-in-ten-days-or-go-to-prison committal—an' then, when the warrant officer came to arrest him, he paid.

"It saves me a lot of worry,' he said to me, 'to know exactly how far I can go—that's the beauty of the English law, it gives you rope.'

"It's a question to me how much rope a chap ought to have. There's a constable of ours by the name of Sankey, a highly religious man that runs a

class at the Ragged School when he's off duty on Sunday. A thing like that soon gets round, an' after Sankey had quoted a few texts to some of the gay-life contingent, they started to pay out rope to themselves an' Police Constable Sankey unwound it gladly. I have told you about Police Constable Sankey before—or else I've meant to tell you—an' if I have, you'll know that when he was lashin' out lengths of rope, an' cuttin' off chunks of fine an' large talk about brotherly love, he was, in a manner of talkin', layin' up treasures of various sorts for his persecutors.

"He didn't seem to mind the public house loafers whistlin' hymns when he walked along the street, or little mock meetin's bein' held for his benefit, but he drew a line one night when he met a feller named 'Poker' carryin' a heavy sack on his back at about twelve o'clock.

"Poker was one of the chaps who'd professed to be religious when Sankey was handy, an' he started workin' the 'Onward Christian Soldiers' racket.

"'Hullo, Poker,' said Police Constable Sankey, 'what have you got there?'

"'There, Brother Sankey?' said Poker innocently. 'Lord bless you, dear friend, I've only got a few bits of firewood wot I've picked up during the day. Times is very hard, but a Cheerful Countenance, an' a Meek Understandin'—'

"'Dry up,' said Police Constable Sankey, 'an' let's have a look at that sack.'

"'I assure you, Brother—' began Poker, very earnest.

"'Not so much of the brother,' said Police Constable Sankey short and sharp. 'Open the sack!'

"'Well, to tell you the truth,' said Poker, very frank, 'now that I come to think of it, the goods in this sack ain't firewood at all. I've been doin' a movin' job, takin' a few goods for me brother-in-law—'

"'Turn 'em out,' said Sankey.

"Poker hesitated.

"'Don't you trust me, Brother Sankey?' he said.

"'No, I don't,' said Brother Sankey.

"'Is that Christian?' said Poker, reproachful.

"The essence of Christianity,' said Sankey cheerfully, 'is common sense. Open that sack!'

"When it was opened there was everythin' in the sack except firewood. Little silver cruets, an' drawing room clocks, silver ink-stands, an' a few spoons.

"Police Constable Sankey looked at 'em in silence.

"Your brother-in-law's?' he said,

"Yes, sir,' said Poker.

"All right,' said Sankey, 'I'll take you down to the station first on a charge of 'unlawful possession', an' then I'll go along an' pinch your relation.'

"Do you think I'm a thief?' said Poker, very indignant.

"I'm sure,' said Police Constable Sankey. 'I don't think anythin' at all about it.'

"On the way to the police station Poker was very bitter.

"After the time I've wasted,' he said, 'goin' to your meetin's when I might have been earnin' an honest livin'. I'm surprised at you, Mr. Sankey. What about turnin' the cheek to the smiter?'

"The less of your cheek I have,' said Police Constab Sankey, 'the better I shall like it.'

"Poker's conviction got Sankey more respect than the good works he'd ever done, because it showed that you haven't got to be soft to be good, an' a chap can be a holy man without being an oily man. Moreover, it was a strikin' lesson of what a little rope will do, because the more Poker got to know Sankey the more liberties he took, an' the end of it was that he had the nerve to try to carry stolen property away under a policeman's nose.

"Of course, after that misguided people said that Sankey wasn't a true Christian, an' that he was a hypocrite an a wolf in sheep's clothing, but somehow Sankey bore his afflictions very well.

"Sankey was one of the few men I know who's had to do with anarchists. Not the ones you read about who spout on Tower Hill an' call on the police to protect 'em as soon as someone chucks a '92 egg at 'em, but the re gentlemen who come out of Russia because it's too cold to sleep there an' don't go back because it's too hot to live.

"The thing I'm telling you about occurred when I was in the 'L' Division, on one of the tastiest beats you can possibly imagine. It lay through some of the back streets in the vicinity of Lambeth Walk, an' in those days Lambeth could have given Notting Dale a stone an' a distance in the Sin Stakes. Sankey was on the next beat, an' we were supposed to meet every hour outside a pub called the 'Rising Moon'.

"It was about three in the mornin' when I turned up at the 'Rising Moon' as usual, but there was no Sankey—not a sign of him. I waited for about ten minutes. an' asked one of the night birds who came along if he'd seen a constable or heard any row. I wasn't very uneasy because in all probability Sankey was engaged in runnin' somebody in, so after givin' him five more minutes I walked back as far as the corner of Waterloo Road. That was a 'point' for me, an' at half past three I was to meet either the sergeant or the inspector, to report.

"They were late, too—they came together—an' the first question the inspector put to me was 'Have you seen Sankey?'

"Now, much as he would like to, a policeman cannot screen a comrade, if it is a case of screenin', because whilst by tryin' to you may save him from a reprimand, the same time you might be endangerin' his life; so I said at once that I hadn't seen Sankey since the two 'clock 'point'.

"With that the inspector ordered me to accompany him to Sankey's beat, an' we followed the streets he ought to pass through without findin' him until, passing under a railway arch off a little back street, I saw a man lyin' on the ground, an' puttin' my lantern over him I saw it was Sankey, his face covered with blood, an' unconscious.

"We carried him to a doctor's, an' rung the doctor up, an' managed to get him round. At first he couldn't tell us how he got the nasty wound in his head, but when we got him a little more collected, he told us what had happened.

"He was walkin' through Little Fisher Street—where the railway arch is—not thinkin' of anythin' particular, when a foreign-lookin' chap came towards him from the opposite direction. Sankey gave him 'Good mornin' , an' passed on a few yards when he heard the man stop an' turn. Sankey did the same, an' the man came up to him.

"'Oxscuse me,' said the feller, speakin' in very broken English, 'to which roat does this way go?'

"'Lambeth Walk,' said Sankey.

"The foreigner stood for a bit, not sayin' a word, an' then Police Constable Sankey heard footsteps behind him. He turned his head an' saw a man comin' from the same direction as the foreigner had, an' he carried a big bag in his hand. That was all Sankey remembered, for the next minute the first foreigner whipped out a life-preserver an' struck the constable.

"We took Sankey to the station an' sent him home, an' another man was put on his beat.

"The whole affair was a mystery to me, but long before mornin' came we had two of the smartest men down from the Yard an' they gave out a theory which proved to be correct. The second man, they said, was in league with the first, an' was carryin' somethin' that they didn't want Sankey to see. What that somethin' was, we guessed, for at three o'clock that afternoon a bomb was exploded the vicinity of the Home Office. What confirmed our suspicions was the fact that a man answerin' to the description supplied by Police Constable Sankey had been seen in the neighbourhood before the machine blew up.

"You may be sure that after that Lambeth was searched as thoroughly as any place can be searched, but without result. Every chap whose name ended in 'itch' or 'ski' was pulled in for identification, but Sankey shook his head to every one.

"Scotland Yard thought they had the man once. They took a known anarchist from Soho, and brought him down to our station for Sankey to see, an' for a moment it seemed to me that Sankey hesitated before replyin'.

"No,' he said, after a bit. 'I can't swear that is the man.'

"Mr. Shorter, the C.I.D. man, was rather annoyed. "I thought we'd got him,' he said. 'He's been seen in the vicinity of Lambeth, an' is a well known revolutionary. It's my belief that Sankey has got a theory of his own, an' is tryin' to work it out.'

"He rather hinted that it was like Sankey's cheek. The idea of a uniformed policeman havin' intelligence an' ingenuity naturally never occurred to a Scotland Yard man.

"Sankey talked to me about the matter after Mr. Shorter left.

"It isn't a question of findin' the chap who gave me a clout on the head,' he said. 'It's the bomb factory we want to find. Mr. Shorter says there's no doubt that somewhere in this division there's a little Woolwich Arsenal.'

"He paused for a minute, then took an old handkerchief out of his pocket. It was stained an' gummy.

"When I came to myself the other night,' he said, 'after the doctor had dressed me, I found that although my face had been washed nobody had thought of washin' my hands. They were a bit sticky, so I took my handkerchief and wiped 'em—smell that.'

"I smelt the handkerchief; there was a strong, sickly scent that was perfectly familiar to me, but which somehow or other I couldn't place.

"I must have caught hold of the chap when I fell,' said Police Constable Sankey, carefully folding up the handkerchief, 'an' I'm waiting now until I find another feller whose clothes smell like that—then I'll give him somethin' to nurse!'

"A week later I took over Sankey's beat, he still bein' on the sick list, an' much of my time was taken up by carryin' out instructions from headquarters. These, in a way, confirmed Sankey's words, for I was told to keep an eye on the little factories, an' report anything strange that came to my notice. At that time Lambeth was filled with little factories; it was the home of the struggling manufacturer. There were little saw mills and rubber works an' chemical works, an' sweetstuff works, every one of 'em struggling for existence.

"The rum thing was that all these factories were run by foreigners, except the sweetstuff works, which was owned by a man named Grahame, an' was in such a bad way that it only employed a couple of hands.

"I was strollin' along the road in which most of these factories are situated, wonderin' in my mind whether Gregowski, at the rubber factory, or Tilloni, at the chemical works, was the gentleman I was after, when I heard a smashin' of glass an' turned round.

"There were a number of empty houses in the road, an' it's usual for the young gentry and nobility of the neighbourhood, when they find time hangin' on their hands, to chuck a brick through a window.

"I don't know why they did it, unless it was by way of showin' their contempt for empty houses, but I sprinted after the boy that threw the stone an' caught him at the corner of the street.

"I gave him a cuff, an' asked him what he meant by it, an' he started snivelling.



"I was proceeding to get my notebook out of my pocket when somethin' about that boy made me stand stock still an' stare.

"It was the peculiar scent that Sankey had talked about!

"Yes, there it was as plain an' as distinct as though the kid had emptied a bottle of it over him; he positively reeked with it.

"'Boy,' said I, very sternly, 'where did you get that scent?'

"'What scent, sir?' he asked innocently.

"That horrible scent you've got on you,' I said, but he shook his head.

"I don't know what you mean, sir,' he whimpered.

All this time I was tryin' to think what the scent was; it was one of those scents I've known for years. It wasn't a perfume. I recognised that, but it was the smell of some familiar article, an' it made my mouth water.

"Then it half dawned on me.

"'What hay you been eatin'?' I asked.

"His reply staggered me.

"'Pear drops, sir,' he said.

"'Where did you get 'em?' I asked.

"'Please, sir,' said the boy, 'the gentleman at the sweet works gave 'em to me.'

"'What for?'

"'For takin' a parcel to a gentleman.'

"It was a toss up whether I'd got the right end of the stick, but I chanced it.

"'Was it a heavy parcel?'

"'Yes, sir; he told me to take a cab from Waterloo station, an' told me I mustn't drop the parcel or knock it because it was chocolates; an' he gave me a shillin' for myself an' a packet of sweets.'

"'Where did you take it to?'

"To a place called Greek Street, an' when I got there the gentleman who'd sent me was waitin' there for me. He said he'd forgotten somethin' an' wanted to put it in the parcel.'

"I saw the whole game. They'd funk'd carryin' the bomb an' had given it to the kid to take, followin' him at a safe distance in another cab.

"I rushed the boy down to the station as fast as I could, an' within twenty minutes we had surrounded the sweet factory; but when we got inside 'Mr. Grahame' was not present—the place was empty.

"We found all the machinery for makin' sweetstuffs, but, more important, we found the steel cylinders, the little sticks of dynamite, the tubes of fulminate of mercury, an' the pans of nitro-glycerine we came in search of.

"We did little damage in makin' our way in, an' we attracted no attention in raidin' the place, because wanted to surprise 'Mr. Grahame' when he came back.

"'You must be careful,' said the inspector, 'to search him as soon as you get him. He may have arms, and it's very likely he's got some explosives concealed about his person.'

Sankey an' me was left in charge, an' Sankey spent the greater part of the night tryin' to induce me to give a day's pay for the Salvation Army self-denial week, an' if I hadn't kept awake he'd have had it too!

"Soon after daylight we heard a key grate in the lock an' we stood by.

"The door opened an' in came a man, a tall, foreign looking chap in a top hat.

"Sankey waited till he recognised him, then:

"'Returned with thanks,' he said, an' struck at his head with his truncheon....

"I don't know exactly what happened, but when I recovered consciousness I was lyin' in one bed at Guy's Hospital an' Sankey was in the next.

"We weren't out of hospital in time to attend the inquest of Mr. Grahamestein, but we made a statement that was satisfactory to the Chief Commissioner.

"The first time I got the chance of speakin' to Sankey—it was on the day we were wheeled out into the hospital garden in our bath chairs—I asked him what he thought about the matter.

"I'm sorry for the chap in one way,' he said, 'but a man who carries explosives in his hat deserves all he gets.'"

## 7. — HOW HE LOST HIS MOUSTACHE

"LADIES," said P.C. Lee thoughtfully, "I know very little about bein' a bachelor, an' havin' no female relatives worth speakin' of, an' not havin' many opportunities for seein' an' talkin' in that respect. My education has been to some extent neglected in that respect. I see 'em in a professional way, an' that's all. There isn't a mornin' but what some woman doesn't call at my house and ask to see me.

"This mornin' it was Mrs. Flynn with a black eye.

"I want to know, Mr. Lee," says she. 'how long I've got to put up with that brute of mine?'

"Meanin' your lawful husband?' says I.

"Meanin' the man I work for,' she says, 'who takes the money I work hard for, an' blacks my eye. Can't I do anythin'?''

"You can summons him,' I said, an' she sort of sneered.

"Summons him!' says she. 'A fat lot of good that will do! Do you think I want to show myself up to the neighbours?'

"I looked at her eye.

"I should say they know all about it,' says I, 'without any assistance from a summons.'

But apparently she'd spun the usual cuffer about havin' fallen up against the bedstead an' she was under the impression, like all the people of her class are, that she was believed.

"But Flynn being a notorious woman beater, I thought it as well to caution him, so when I ran against him next time I gave him a bit of my mind.

"A big thick-set brute is Flynn, who has never been known to do a day's work in his life. He is the sort of man who has a fresh wife every two or three months, an' it's one of the standin' wonders of my life how he gets them. As you probably know, criminals are very conservative, an' men who are engaged in one kind of crooked mess very seldom go outside their own line.

'A man who spends his life stealin' the tills of small tradesmen doesn't pick pockets, an' the burglar never goes in for coinin'.

'Flynn's line of business was robbery from the person, an' the person was usually a woman. He was the lowest down criminal I've ever met; whether it was a blind beggar, or some poor creature of the streets hoardin' her few pennies, nobody was safe from him. His last conviction was for stealin' 2s. 9d. from an old lady who kept an apple stall in Portobello Road. So I had plenty of knowledge to go upon when I tackled Flynn. He was standin' outside the Elgin Arms when I came upon him. I beckoned him aside.

"Flynn,' says I, 'there's been a complaint laid against you for assault.'

"Oh,' says Flynn carelessly, 'who by—my wife?'

"I can't exactly say what relation the lady is to you,' I said, 'but that is nothin' to do with it. I've got to warn you to be careful.'

"Look here, Mr. Lee,' says Flynn insolently, 'I'm not in the habit of allowin' slops—'

"I beg your pardon?' I says politely.

"Coppers,' says Flynn.

"I didn't quite catch that,' says I.

"Constables,' says Flynn sullenly.

"That's better,' I says. 'I don't like you talkin' like that, Flynn—it's against the law, too.'

"Oh,' says Flynn, 'I didn't know there was anything against callin' a copper a slop.'

"There is!' says I. 'It's called "calculated to bring about a breach of the peace", which means incitin' a policeman to smack your head.'

"After I'd given him a few words of homely wisdom an' had told him what I would do to him if I ever had to take him to the station, an' had generally talked like Uncle George, I left him.

"I believe he went to the station an' reported me to Sergeant Lindon, and that he stopped P.C. Sankey an' told him too. Sankey threw three texts at him in rapid succession, an' followed it up by knockin' his hat over his eyes—this was in Kensington Park Gardens when nobody was about—an' Flynn went home an' took revenge upon his wife.

"I heard about this one mornin' when we paraded. It was one of the most interestin' days of my life for more reasons than one. It was the day I lost my moustache, an' it was the day I got the tip about old Miss Pilking."

Here P.C. Lee paused with an exaggeration of solemnity and ran his hands across his smoothly shaven face. Then he went on slowly:

"Old Mrs. Pilking—did I say Miss?—was a very rich old lady with eccentric habits. Used to walk about all over Kensington, very disreputably dressed, but always had ten to twenty pounds sewn up in her skirt. I was talkin' very affably to Tim Creeter—a great pal of Flynn's—about it. 'Do you know who old Mrs. Pilking is?' I asked.

"No, Mr. Lee,' says Tim, 'Does she live in our district?'

"That,' I says, 'I've never been able to find out. She oughtn't to be allowed to walk about with so much money.'

"At this Tim pricks up his ears.

"No, she oughtn't,' he says. 'What is she like, Mr. Lee?'

"A very stout old party,' I says, 'always carries an old sack on her back like a rag-picker. I thought you would have known her, you bein' such a favourite with all these queer people.'

"Tim grinned an' looked uncomfortable, as well he might, for he'd only been out of Wormwood Scrubs a week 'for being in suspected persons' company'.

"But Tim was interested in old Mrs. Pilking; wanted to know where she could be found, who went with her, what her usual beat was, an' I had more than a suspicion that he was collectin' information for Mr. Flynn—but there are times when it's a very good lay to help a man like Flynn.

"I heard no more from Mr. Tim direct, but one of our 'unofficials' reported that both Flynn and Tim had been most industriously searchin' for old Mrs. Pilking all through Kensington. I was on duty one mornin' about ten when I saw Flynn comin' along Kensington Park Road. He crossed to me, an' was marvellously polite—for Flynn. Bid me good mornin' and 'sir'd me, an' generally was amiable an' friendly.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Lee,' he says suddenly, 'but can you tell me if you have seen an old aunt of mine about?'

"What is she like?' I asked.

"A very stout old party, carries a sack over her back an' generally looks like a rag-picker."

"I thought for a bit.

"There was such an old lady—name of Pilking——"

"That's her!" says Flynn, very eagerly.

"She came past here about an hour ago."

"Which way did she go?" asked Flynn, an' I pointed out the road to Notting Hill Gate.

"Away flew Flynn, an' in about two hours I saw him again.

"Did you find her?" I asked.

"No, sir," says Flynn, and the 'sir' nearly choked him.

"That's queer," says I. "She's usually round here twice a day—once in the mornin' and once in the evenin'."

"What time at night?" asked Flynn carelessly, so I told him.

"I don't think he was as grateful for the information as he ought to have been, because from what I've heard he went back to Notting Dale an' said that now I'd lost my moustache I looked like a bladder of lard."

Again P.C. Lee stopped, and I thought there was something very sly in the glance he shot at me.

"To cut a long story short, that night Flynn car across old Mrs. Pilking as she was slinkin' through some mews at the back of the gardens. A wretched old woman, nearly bent double, but carryin' her money loose for Flynn could actually hear it chinkin' in her pocket

"Now I have told you about Flynn that his speciality was 'woman robbery', an' I've only known him to depart from that line once. That was when he tripped up a little boy that was goin' for his mother's beer an' pinched the money. So you might say that in tacklin' old Mrs. Pilking Flynn brought an expert knowledge to bear on the subject.

"She was ahead of him when he saw her; an' he moved rapidly to overtake her. She was standin' under a lamp countin' some money in her shakin' hand, an' Flynn's heart jumped, for he saw the flash of gold. In two strides he was on her, an' she turned to him, shakin' an' tremblin'.

"Now then!" said Flynn, very gruffly, 'what are you doin' with all that money?'

"If you please, sir—" she began in a quavering voice.

"Don't give us so much of it,' warned Flynn. 'Hand over the brass.'

"You wouldn't rob an old woman,' said old Mrs. Pilking.

"Wouldn't I?' says Flynn. 'That shows what a fat lot you know. Hand over!'

"With that Flynn made to catch hold of her an' then a curious thing happened, for she struck out in a wild way an' caught Flynn under the jaw, an' down he went.

"Oh dear, oh dear!' says the poor old lady, 'I do hope I haven't hurt you, sir.'

"Hurt me!' growls Flynn, pickin' himself up. 'I'll kill you for that.'

"Help!' screams the old lady, weakly startin' to run, an' along comes Flynn after her. In the darkest part of the mews she turns again.

"Don't hurt me,' she begs.

"I'll break every bone in your body,' roars Flynn, and came at her.

"It must have been the most remarkable accident in the world, for just as Flynn reached her she threw out her hands to ward off his blow an' caught him another terrible whack—an' down he went again. He got up this time a bit dazed.

"Please, sir, have I hurt you?' she says anxiously, but Flynn wasn't in a mood for conversation. He contented himself with cursin' her an' sayin' what he would do to her an' the old lady, after holdin' her hands to her ears as if to shut out Mr. Flynn's horrid conversation, started amblin' away as fast as she could.

"Flynn didn't follow her. He'd been hurt. This was the first time he'd ever handled a woman as awkward as oh Mrs. Pilking. Other ladies he had hit hadn't put up their hands to protect themselves, an' old Mrs. Pilking's carelessness had nearly dislocated his jaw.

"Although he was frightened that she might get nervous an' avoid that locality in the future, he took the risk of waitin' for her another night. They brought me the news but I took no notice. Curiously enough, I was quite confident that old Mrs. Pilking could look after herself. Not even when I got



the tip that Flynn was gatherin' two of his brightest pals to assist in the ceremony. I'm a great believer in lettin' certain kinds of trouble work themselves out their own way.

"I knew that they were watchin' for the old lady an' that Jack 'Snippy' was in it, an' 'Pig' Rawsons. I mentioned the matter in a confidential way to P.C. Sankey, an' he was a bit alarmed.

"'They'll kill the poor old woman,' he said, but I told him all that I knew about her, an' that quietened him down.

"That night it rained, an' was the very kind of evening for such a job as Flynn set out upon. Him an' his pals spotted the old lady in Ladbroke Grove an' followed her. She went under the railway arch, turned round in the direction of the Scrubs, an' they followed. They themselves didn't dare to hope that she'd go on to the Scrubs but to their delight she did, goin' up by the pathway an' striking across to the loneliest part. Just before she left the main road she was joined by another old lady.

"'There's two of 'em,' says Flynn to his pals. 'I'll bet they've both got money—we're in luck, Pig!'

"Even Flynn could see what a mad thing the old woman was doing crossing that patch of deserted land—an' Wormwood Scrubs are deserted on such a night as this. The men let them get well away out of earshot of anybody who happened to be on the road.

"'We'll get 'em before they reach the jug,' says Flynn, for he knew that outside the prison wall is a constable on point duty. At a word from Flynn the three broke into a run, an' the two old women turned an' huddled together.

"'Ah!' says Flynn, very jubilant. 'Here we are! Now then, turn over that money.'

"'Have mercy on two poor old women,' whined Mrs. Pilking.

"'I'll mercy you.' says Flynn between his teeth. 'At 'em, boys!'

"The three jumped forward together. Pig Rawsons went down with a punch on the jaw, an' Snippy went over all of a heap, an' then Mrs. Pilking reached out an' aught Flynn by the throat. 'Don't hurt me,' she says, shakin' him like a rat. 'Don't harm a poor old woman, you wife-beatin' thief!'

"'Let go,' gasped Flynn.

"Don't injure an unprotected female,' says old Mrs. Pilking, throwin' him down an' bangin' his head on the muddy ground, 'who's over eighty,' she says, smackin' his head till his teeth rattled.

"For the Lord's sake, missus, let me get up,' begged Flynn.

"Let you get up,' says Mrs. Pilking, 'an' me in terror of my life. Not me,' she says, kneeling on his chest, 'I'm afraid to.'

"Just then Snippy came back to life with a groan, an' the other old lady kicked him to his feet.

"Get out of this!' she says, an' Snippy got up.

"Then Pig got up, a bit shaky, an' was turned loose with a belt on his head that didn't do him any good at all.

"Suddenly Flynn looked up at Mrs. Pilking with a gasp. Her grey wig had got a bit crooked, an' in the faint light, such as it was, he could see her face.

"Let me get up,' he says sulkily. 'It's a fair cop, P.C. Lee—I ought to have known you didn't shave off your dashed beard for nothin'. Who's the other blighter— Sankey?'

"That's me,' says P.C. Sankey, taking off his skirt."

## 8. — SERGEANT RUN-A-MILE

"THE police force," said P.C. Lee, "is just as good and just as bad as the men make it. There's a popular idea that the police hang together, that they're a united family all engaged in tryin' to do one another a good turn, but whilst I'm willin' to admit the best friends policemen have are policemen, I must confess that the worst enemies they have are policemen too.

"It isn't the dangerous criminal that a policeman's afraid of; it isn't the armed burglar, or the rough with the iron bar in his trousers pocket. What sweats him an' troubles him, an' generally worries him to death, is some pig-minded sergeant anxious to bring himself to his superiors' notice, an' who doesn't mind goin' out of his way to do some low down thing so long as he can get a little credit for doin' it.

"This doesn't apply to the reg'lar run of sergeants an' superiors generally, but there are quite enough to be unpleasant, an' I doubt whether there's a single station throughout the Metropolis that isn't cursed by at least one officer whose one ambition in life is to make police work hell for the policemen.

"There was a sergeant in a certain division called Sergeant Runimill. It's a curious name for a London policeman to have, an' what's the most curious thing about it is the fact that he's English.

"We used to call him Sergeant Run-a-mile; an' that fitted him, for whilst he'd run a mile to get you into trouble, he'd run a mile to get out of the way of trouble himself.

"When I was put under him the other fellers warned me about him. He'd once got his name an' picture in the papers as 'an active an' intelligent officer', an' he'd never quite recovered from it. His hobby was to take the part of the public against the police.

"There's always a sort of 'police scandal' on—from the public point of view. Usually it takes the form of a 'persecution'.

"A constable arrests a ladylike woman for bein' too friendly disposed to the world at large, an' along comes her husband with her marriage lines in a gold frame to prove that she's a lady born an' bred, an' then there's a Royal Commission during the confusion of which the lady makes her escape.

"You could always bet your coat to your whistle, in a case like that, Run-a-mile would be the first to say that the constable had exceeded his duty.

"He was just achin' for pop'lar approval.

"Now there was a mate of mine named Gold—commonly called 'Ginger' Gold—a man of sixteen years' service, stout, slow an' not noticeably clever.

"But Ginger had one great line, an' that was children.

"You've seen a miserable couple trudgin' through the streets on a cold day. Blue-nosed father, shiverin' with cold, carryin' a pale baby, an' a couple of boxes of matches in his grimy hand; a wretched lookin' woman carryin' another baby, lookin' mighty sick; an' two dirty, unhappy little kids trudgin' along holdin' her skirt. They don't beg, they don't say a word to the passers-by; they just walk on through the fashionable part of the town lookin' extremely poor.

"These were the people Ginger used to specialise in.

"There isn't a kinder hearted man in the force than him, an' where children are concerned he's soft to the point of bein' foolish.

"Ginger was on point duty at Nottin' Hill Gate when along came a bunch of misery. Blue-nosed father, who hadn't shaved for a week, dressed like an agricultural labourer; sad an' sick-lookin' mother; two dirty little babies an' a tiny girl in rags runnin' alongside.

"They were walkin' on, takin' no notice of anybody. when Ginger stopped 'em.

"'Hullo,' he said, 'on the road?'

'Yessir,' said the man.

"'Where have you come from?'

"The man hesitated. 'Windsor,' he said.

"'These your children, ma'am?'

"'Yes, sir,' she whines.

"'How old are they?'

"He pointed to the babies, an' she didn't reply for a bit.

"'One's a year an' the other's eighteen months,' says she.

"'Ho?' says Ginger, 'what happened, a miracle?'

"The woman looked here an' there.

"How old is the little girl?' says Ginger.

"Five.'

"All your children?'

"The woman hesitated again. 'In a manner of speakin'.' she says.

"That's good enough for me,' says Ginger. 'You can come along with me to the station.'

"What for?'" says the man. 'We ain't beggin'.'

"Exposin' children,' says Ginger, an' he runs 'em in.

"Of course, it comes out when he gets 'em before the magistrate that the children aren't theirs. They've been borrered for the day at threepence a head from a lady who does quite a big business in that line.

"The magistrate sent the pair down for a month, there bein' certain previous convictions, an' Ginger was complimented. Worse than that, some of the newspapers published his picture with the title 'A Friend of Children' an' I suppose Run-a-mile got a bit stung over the notoriety Ginger was gettin', for he immediately began to take steps to take down a small packet of trouble from his private shelf an' hand out small doses to Ginger.

"There are hundreds of ways a sergeant can worry a policeman, an' Run-a-mile worked off ninety eight of 'em on my poor mate, till he began to seriously consider whether he should retire honourably an' quietly or go out in a blaze of glory, with the sergeant with a nice bandaged head givin' evidence against him before the Commissioner.

"As it turned out there was no necessity to do either.

"Run-a-mile had a young lady, one of the nicest little girls in the district. Pretty, demure, quietly dressed, a lady every inch, an' much too good for the sergeant—this was the verdict of our section.

"The sergeant might easily have become popular over that young lady if he'd given himself a chance, for she was always very nice an' 'polite to us. She hadn't been in the neighbourhood very long when Run-a-mile made her acquaintance.

"She lived in a little flat near Elgin Crescent, an' gave music lessons, an' had a bit of money of her own.

"From what we heard, she introduced the sergeant to her brother—a very gentlemanly man who lived in the south of London, an' this feller had a very high opinion of Run-a-mile, so high that he used to invite him to dinner an' talk to him by the hour.

"But these little outings were nipped in the bud when Colonel Bassy's home in Colville Gardens was burgled, an' that was followed up by the ransackin' of Corbells, the jewellers, an' the burglary at 905 Kensington Park Gardens.

"A regular epidemic of burglary set in, an' strangely enough it always happened on Ginger's beat, an' in the hours of the night when Ginger was on duty.

"They shifted him from beat to beat, but the burglar followed him, until Run-a-mile hinted pretty broadly that the burglar must be a pal of Ginger's if it wasn't Ginger himself.

"There was a private departmental inquiry after the third case, an' poor old Ginger was so upset that it was a toss-up whether he chucked the force or chucked himself in the canal.

"'It's somebody who knows all about me,' he said bitterly. 'somebody who knows exactly where I'll be every minute I'm on duty, an' uses his information to get away without comin' into contact with me or Jilks.' That was the constable who was on the adjoinin' beat at the time of the last burglary.

"Ginger's view was the view taken by Detective Inspector Jade, who came down from the Yard. He was one of those sensible, quiet men who'd risen to the top of the tree without gettin' a swollen head, an' when Sergeant Run-a-Mile started workin' off his theories about poor Ginger, he pooh-poohed 'em.

"'Don't talk nonsense, sergeant.' he said, 'an' don't be so ready to think ill of your comrades. By the way, where were you on the night of the burglary?'

"'In my office, sir,' says Run-a-mile, huffily. 'You don't think that I—'

"'Where were you on the night of the previous burglary?'

"'In my office, sir.' The sergeant got red an' angry.

"'An' the burglary before that?'

"In my office too,' says Run-a-mile. 'You don't suspect me, sir?' he says, horrified.

"The Inspector smiled. 'I would just as soon suspect you as I would the constable,' he says.

"Now there were certain features about these crimes that struck me at the time as bein' curious, an' I think they struck the Detective Inspector the same way.

"In the first place they'd all happened within a radius of half a mile; secondly, the burglar wasn't seen by any constable, an' nobody who looked as though he might have been the burglar had been seen. This pointed to the fact that he lived close handy, an' could get home without bein' seen. Thirdly, none of our own lads had anythin' to do with it.

"I spoke to Nick Moss, an' I was sure of this. If it had been one of Nick's friends he wouldn't have given him away, of course, but he would have told me so with a stolid face that would have betrayed his knowledge. But Nick was most earnest.

"It's none of our chaps, Mr. Lee,' he said. 'It's too high-class for any of the fellers that live in this part of London. It's swell-mob work. Why, they pinched a valuable picture at Colonel Bassy's; no chap of ours would' do that.'

"He told me somethin' that interested me.

"There's an old lag livin' near me who says that it's Cannett's work—him that got a laggin' for the Streatham job. But Cannett's in America by all accounts, so it can't be him.'

"The next time I met the Inspector I repeated this.

"That's queer,' he said thoughtfully, 'it struck me, too, that it looked like Cannett. Do you remember the case, constable?'

'No, sir,' says I.

"Cannett used to do the same sort of thing. Receive mysterious information regardin' police movements. Had a sort of timetable made of all the beats, an' knew to a second how long he could afford to take over any job. It came out afterwards that his wife, a very pretty girl, had bamboozled a young constable into tellin' her these things—pretended she was single, an' got him to fall in love with her.'

"Good Lord, sir!" said I suddenly, 'I wonder if it's Run-a-mile's girl?'

"I must say that I didn't really suspect her, but the coincidence was strange, an' the Inspector listened, an' after I'd finished he sent for the sergeant.

"From all the knowledge of life I've ever got from books I should have suspected Run-a-mile to have been indignant, to have defended his girl against all corners, to have told the Inspector to go to blazes, an' generally to have cut up rough.

"But that wasn't his way.

"His first consideration was to be thought well of by the Yard. He wanted promotion, an' it didn't matter a dab to him who suffered so long as he got on. An' like the dog he was, his first thoughts were about himself an' his chance of makin' the rank of Inspector. He admitted he had told the girl a lot about police work, though he couldn't remember havin' given her any tips about the time of the beats. He gave a description of her brother, an' generally laid himself out to trap her.

"If there was any excuse for him it lay in the fact that he'd been fooled an' wanted to get back on her.

"The brother was comin' to the sister's flat that night, an' Run-a-mile arranged that it should be a case of walk-into-my-parlour.

"I hope, sir,' said Run-a-mile eagerly, 'that you'll make plain to the Commissioner that I've been an innocent dupe, an' that my first thoughts are for the public service—'

"An' Sergeant Runimill,' says the Inspector dryly.

"That night the sergeant, in plain clothes, went to the flat. A few minutes later a gentleman drove up in a car an' entered an' went upstairs, an' then a strong force of police closed round the house. Run-a-mile we upstairs an' the little maid of all work admitted him.

"He was burstin' with importance, was Run-a-mile; he was out to play a part, an' he played it, bein' quite affectionate to the young lady an' cordial to her 'brother' when he came in.

"Then he started to get official.

"By the way, Janet,' he says carelessly, 'do you remember me tellin' you about that thick-headed of constable ours—Ginger?'



"Yes,' she says.

"Tellin' you about his beat?"

"Yes—I remember askin' what the poor men do for shelter on those cold nights,' says she, innocently.

"You asked me that at tea one afternoon?" he says impressively.

"I did,' says she, 'I remember it; Mary Ann was handin' round the bread an' butter, an'—'

"Never mind about Mary Ann,' says Run-a-mile in tone that made the girl an' her brother open their eyes. 'You've told me that when I married your sister, you'd set me up with five hundred pounds?'

"I did,' says the brother.

"Well,' says Run-a-mile sarcastically, 'I'm afraid you'll have to put off that weddin', Cannett, because I'm going to take you into custody on a charge of burglary, an' as to you, miss,' he says politely to the white-faced girl, 'I shall take you as an accessory.'

"With that he blew his whistle an' we came in an' took 'em.

"I never saw people more surprised in my life. The girl was in a state of collapse, but we got them both to the station an' put them in the steel dock.

"As we did so in came the Inspector—Jade.

"Hullo,' he says in astonishment, 'this isn't Cannett!'

"What!' says the sergeant.

"An' it isn't the burglar,' says the Inspector, an' just then two of our men brought a strange man into the station. 'Here he is,' says the Inspector cheerfully, 'caught in the act.'

"The girl in the dock leaned forward. 'Why, it's Mary Ann's sweetheart!' she says.

"The Inspector nodded. 'Yes, miss—it's your servant's sweetheart,' he said, 'who got all the information from Mary Ann; an' she got it from you, sergeant,' he says to Run-a-mile, who stood with his mouth wide open.

"Me?' he gasped.

"Yes,' says the Inspector. 'If you go courtin' again, do not speak so openly before your fiancé's servants.'

"But Sergeant Run-a-mile didn't go courtin' again—at any rate, not with the pretty little music teacher."

## 9. — THE SENTIMENTAL BURGLAR

I WAS wondering in my mind whether P.C. Lee would say as policemen are popularly supposed to say, "I arrest you in the name of the law" or whether he would get very angry (as I should have done) and bang the annoying Mr. Jarvis on the head.

Police methods have always interested me, so I waited, and listened to the dialogue that ensued.

Mr. Jarvis (defiantly): 'I've et better men than you, Lee.'

P.C. Lee (suavely); 'I dessay—but you'd better go home now an' eat something that'll agree with you.'

Mr. Jarvis (more defiantly): 'I shall go home when I think.'

P.C. Lee (coaxingly); 'Now be a sensible fellow an' go away.'

Mr. Jarvis (noisily): 'I'll see you...!'

P.C. Lee, (to crowd): 'Pass away, please—now, Jarvis, off you go!'

Mr. Jarvis (striking a pugilistic attitude)... !——!

P.C. Lee (grabbing him by the scruff of his neck and his arm): 'All right—if you won't go home, I'll take you to my home!'

Mr. Jarvis (struggling): 'Leggo!' (Violently) 'Leggo, you perishin' slop!'

P.C. Lee: 'Are you goin' quietly?'

Mr. Jarvis at this point aims a well-intentioned kick, which is skilfully avoided; the next minute there is the sound of a mighty 'smack!' and Mr. Jarvis goes down to the ground.

Voice in crowd: 'Shime! You ought to know better than hit a man, p'liceman!'

P.C. Lee: 'Are you going to be sensible, Jarvis?'

Mr. Jarvis (feebly): 'You hit me unawares.'

P.C. Lee: 'Are you comin' quietly?'

Mr. Jarvis (meekly): 'Certainly, sir.'

I followed the little crowd to the station, and stood by the inspector's desk whilst Mr. Jarvis was 'charged' in the conventional terminology of the force.

Later in the evening, I was to witness yet another violent assault by P.C. Lee. The incident, commonplace as it was, is worth recording.

It began when a group of loudly-talking men and women assembled outside a little beer-shop in the Portobello Road. When hasty and bitter recriminations followed, a loud, aggressive voice said, "Hit him, Bill!" several times, and then two men detaching themselves from the group took the middle of the road, striking wildly.

At an inopportune moment a woman forced her way between the two men, and was instantly knocked down by one of the combatants, who thoughtfully kicked her as she lay. I did not see P.C. Lee arrive at a run, nor did the kicker. I saw a policeman come from nowhere in particular; I saw his leg of mutton fist dealing punishment discriminately, heard somebody yell "Copper!" as he fled, and heard a shrill whistle. Later, in a calmer moment, I came upon P.C. Lee standing at the corner of Elgin Crescent, reflectively chewing a match stalk.

"Did you see that feller I clouted?" he asked me reflectively. "Name of Moker, commonly called 'Artful Mo', although he's not of that religious persuasion, or any other so far as I know."

He paused, as is his wont before beginning one of his interesting biologies, and stared blankly along the deserted length of Ladbroke Grove.

"Artful Mo," he began slowly, "is so called because of his great artfulness in gettin' out of trouble an' gettin' other fellows into it. This is the first time, in a manner of speakin'," said P.C. Lee carefully, "that Mo has properly given himself away, because just at this very particular minute he's 'inside' wonderin' how it happened.

"Artful Mo's lay is very simple; he's an 'egger'; that is to say, he eggs people on to do things they wouldn't otherwise do. You heard someone say 'hit him, Bill'?— well, that was Mo.

"Mo isn't one of the criminal classes—that would be a bit too high class for him; the only charge you could put against him is the charge of 'being in suspected company', which is always an unsatisfactory charge to bring against a man, an' may mean anythin' or nothin'. Yet Mo has been in more big cases than you'd imagine, for he's a highly ingenious chap who reads the newspapers, an' is always in touch with all the big jobs goin'.

"I've seen him sittin' on his chair in front of his house on nice sunny mornings with his spectacles perched on his nose, a-readin' the Mornin' Post like a gentleman. He used to keep an old exercise book, an' paste little

cuttin's in. His great line was weddin's, an' as soon as he saw 'A marriage has been arranged' he read day by day most careful until he found out what day the people were goin' to pull it off. Then, in a way, his work was done, an' he used to pass the information on. He never worried about the big West End weddin's where there would be lashin's of presents, an' special detectives to watch 'em day an' night, but what he liked best was the little country weddin's, such as: 'A marriage has been arranged between Muriel, eldest daughter of Major O. Smitter (late Wagshires) and Henry Arthur Somper, youngest son of the late Gabriel Somper of Somper, Custer and Jones, wine merchants.'

"Nice little jobs where the presents would be worth say a couple of hundred pounds, an' they'd be all nicely laid out on a couple of tables, with little cards: 'Fish knives, with Mrs. Smith-Tanker's best wishes.' 'Cruet, with Miss Pipkin's hopes and fears of the future,' an' things like that.

"Every mornin' you'd see Mo goin' carefully through the paper—a penny a day it used to cost him, too—snippin' out a bit here, an' a bit there, an' pastin' it in his little copy book.

"Now you can't charge a man with readin' the Mornin' Post; it isn't sense, an' besides the Mornin' Post people might object an' have you up for libel, so although we very well knew what the little game was, we couldn't stop him doin' what he was doin'.

"That was his artfulness.

"I remember once he had the impudence to offer the book to me for my inspection.

"It's a nobby, Mr. Lee,' says he innocently. 'I get my pleasure in life out of doin' a little thing like this.'

"What did you cut this out for?' I asked, an' pointed to a bit about the Lady Augusta Sharloes, whose father had given her a tiara as a birthday present.

"I don't know how that crept in,' he says thoughtful. As a rule I'm only interested in the unitin' of young 'arts, bless 'em!

"About a week after that the Lady Augusta's tiara was stolen, taken by means of a 'ladder larceny' whilst the family was at dinner at their country residence, 'High Meath'.

"When I read this, I thought it was an excellent chance of connectin' Mo with the robbery; but bless you, you might as well have tried to connect the Archbishop of Canterbury.

"If you think,' he says, 'that i'd demean myself by associatin' with low, pinchin' people, you're a bit out of focus, Mr. Lee.'

"Those were his very words, an' I put their classiness down to the fact that he was always readin' the fashionable newspapers.

"I could never be sure who was the man who worked on the information supplied by Mo, but I've got an idea that Nick Moss was one, an' of one thing I'm certain, an' that is that Mo got his full share of the swag without, as you might say, in any way sharin' the danger. Well, he did so well, so remarkably well, that he got a lot of people jealous of him, an' one of these was a feller named Len Cox—one of the most conceited criminals I've ever been brought into contact with. Len was a stoutish young feller with a big face an' a tiny moustache, he always wore his hair parted in the middle, an' what completed his attractiveness, he wrote a beautiful fist. Like print, his writin' was, an' if his spellin' had only been up to sample, he might have made a fine lawyer's clerk.

"Len was always a great man with the ladies, an' he had a way of raisin' his hat to housemaids that always made a job—he was a housebreaker by trade—very easy. To carry the reference to ladies further, I might say that the only two laggin's Len ever got was through his perliteness to women.

"I believe that when the idea of runnin' an opposition show to Mo's occurred to Len, was when he was sharin' out the benefits of a little job at Croydon—a master builder's daughter had recently married, an' the weddin' had been rather lavish.

"You get your money easy,' says Len to Mo.

"Think so?' says Mo, clinkin' the gold.

"I do,' says Len, 'it's the snuggest an' easiest lay I've ever struck. i'm goin' to try it myself.'

"Do,' says Mo, who's a rare one for eggin' people on to destruction. 'I'll tell you how I do it.'

"But Len didn't want any advice. He'd got an idea of his own, an' I might say like a good many other people who take a lot for granted, he thought because he wrote a copperplate hand he'd got copper-plate brains, an' that

was where he fell into all kinds of trouble. In the first place, after he established his education bureau, he decided that readin' the papers took too long, so he wrote off to a press cuttin' agency whose advertisement he'd read ('Cuttin's supplied on every conceivable subject') an' asked to he supplied—but I've got his letter: this is how it runs:

"Respected Sir, Having seen your bit in the paper about sending cuts from papers, please send about 100 cuts about jobs near London, where mostly silver— Yours respectfully, Len Cox.'

"He sent along a post office order for five shillin's, an' by reply he got back about a hundred cuttin's an' a letter. It said:

"Dear Sir, We have your favour. Although we do not know what you mean by 'mostly silver', we do not doubt that employers would be willing to pay in silver if so desired. 100 jobs herewith.'

"Len looked at the cuttin's.

"Some of 'em began 'Respectable man wanted—used to cows', an' others 'Man wanted for work on farm', an' it began to dawn on Len that his letter didn't quite express all that he had wanted.

"By the aid of a lady friend, Len wrote another letter in another name, an' managed to get the cuttin's he wanted, an' it really looked as though he was goin' to put Mo out of business, for some of the weddin's that Len got to know about Mo had never heard of. There was one about a weddin' that was to take place from the bride's house at Mowbray—'Groot Haus' was the name of the house—an' it seemed snug. So Nick Moss an' a pal went down to Melton Mowbray an' spent two days lookin' for the place, without success. They had a narrow escape of gettin' pinched for bein' suspicious persons in possession of housebreakin' instruments, an' then came back to Len very wild.

"'Hullo,' he says, when he saw 'em at his little house in Ransom Street. 'Got the stuff?'

"'No,' says Nick shortly.

"'Why?'

"'There ain't no such house in Mowbray,' says Nick.

"Len smiled in a superior way an' dug out the cuttin'.

"'Here you are,' he says. 'newspapers can't lie,' an' handed it over to Nick.

"Nick looked at it.

"Why, you fool!" he roars. 'this is cut from the Cape Times—it's Mowbray in South Africa!'

'An' so it was. It nearly broke up Len's business, an' would have too, only Len by a great stroke of luck managed to put the brothers Ely on to a rich crib down in Streatham—an' that sort of revived the industry, an' it wasn't long before Mo began to feel the pinch of competition.

"There was a young woman who was very much gone on Len. She was one of those big-built girls of the gipsy type, an' it so happened that she met Mo one night near Latimer Road Station, an' began chippin' him about how Len was gettin' on.

"Mo was most polite, an' said he wished Len all the luck in the world.

"The only thing, Mrs. Cox,' says Mo, regretfully, 'the only thing about it is, I'm afraid bein' so interested in marriages won't do him any good.'

"What d'ye mean?' she says, quick.

"Well,' says Mo, carefully, 'so far as I'm concerned, it don't worry me, for I always was a woman hater, an' readin' about marriages don't put ideas into my head—'

"If you means to say,' she flames, 'you miserable little lob-crawler, that my Len—'

"I don't mean to say anythin',' says Mo.

"He's married to me already.' she says.

"I dessay,' says Mo politely. 'You know your own business best.'

"After that, Mo had a sort of horrible fascination for the girl, an' she used to go out of her way to meet him an' tell him what she thought of him, an' all the time Artful Mo was gettin' in a word here an' there about the danger of readin' too much about marriages. Mo knew women—especially women like her—and it began to leak out that Mr. and Mrs. Cox wasn't as happy as they might have been.

"One night Len was lookin' over his cuttin's an' saw an account that pleased him very much. A little weddin' in Guildford. Soon after that, he got his tools from the coal hole an' began pickin' out his kit.



"What's the game?' says Mrs. Cox.

"This one's too good to give away,' says Len. 'I'm goin' to do it myself.'

"She tried to persuade him, but he was a difficult man to persuade, an' off he started.

"Now the curious thing about Len was his sentimental character. He was a great chap for songs about angels, an' orphans, an' when he's been at a friendly-lead he's been so affected after a couple of drinks that he's had to be assisted home.

"Therefore this story of what happened to Len is quite understandable to me. Of course, at the time I knew nothin' whatever about his plans, you may be sure, but by all accounts he was back again in London the evenin' after he started, empty handed. He met Mo an' told him about it, an' Mo, bein' a very artful feller, advised him to tell his missis.

"So home sailed Len, mightily pleased with himself, an' got into his house just as Mrs. Cox was sittin' down to tea.

"Hullo!' she says. 'Did you get the swag?'

"No,' says Len, with a beautiful smile.

"Didn't you get in?'

"I did,' says Len.

"Wasn't the stuff there?'

"It was,' says Len, 'it was in the bride's room, an' I nearly took it when,' he says, almost cryin', 'I saw her lyin' there, like an innercent snowdrop with her childlike face on the pillar, more like a beautiful angel she was! I says to myself: What! rob that fair child, on what I might call the threshold of life! No, I says, Len Cox may be a burglar but he's got an 'art.'

"I see,' says Mrs. Cox quietly.

"When I thought.' Len went on dreamily, 'of the happiness of bein' properly married, when I thought of—'

"She left him thinkin', for she got up an' took her shawl an' came to me.

"Mr. Lee,' she says, 'do you want a cop?'

'I do,' says I.

"There's one at 64 Ransom Street,' she says, bitterly. 'it's time he had a laggin'—he's got some silly ideas in his head.'"

## 10. — CONTEMPT

SIX years ago I sat in the stuffy, little Old Bailey Court throughout a trial for murder. I sat there from the very beginning—from the moment when an official chanted monotonously to the jury a rhymeless verse that ran:

You will well and truly try,

And true deliverance make

In this case before the Court

Between our Sovereign Lord the King

And the prisoner at the Bar,

And a true verdict give

In accordance with the evidence,

So help you God—

Until the judge adjusted with some deliberation a square of dull black silk upon his wig, and looking over his spectacles at the stricken man in the dock said, "After a patient trial ...guilty ...only sentence that the law allows...You shall be taken hence to the place from which you came, and from thence to a place of execution, and you shall be hanged by the neck until you are dead, and your body shall afterwards be buried within the precincts of the gaol...."

I saw the warders close round the huddled man, saw them vanish down the narrow stairway that led to the cells—to oblivion, and shivered a little, because I was one of the twelve men who had sent him to his death.

I was speaking to P.C. Lee on the responsibilities of jurymen and he accepted my comments without prejudice.

Perhaps I rhapsodised over the system, for P.C. Lee smiled—a large and amused smile that dawned slowly as I warmed to the subject.

"Coincidences," he said solemnly, when I had finished "are things I never care to talk about, because, truth bein' stranger than fiction, people who get their idea of life out of story books aren't too willin' to believe in the life that goin' on under their noses.

"What is a coincidence? Well, if you happened to be locked up at Lee in Kent, an' the constable's name's Lee, an' the magistrate is a Mr. Lee—that

constitutes what I might call an unbelievable coincidence that no author would dare put in his book. There's no real reason, for instance, why the hero of a story shouldn't be named Smith, an' the villain be named Smith, an' the girl too, but it would be too monotonous an' lifelike.

"I should call the Sobbity case one of the most remarkable instances of coincidences that ever happened.

"Chimmy Sobbity was a crook, an' one of the worst. A hard, tough, sour man who was known to be a dangerous character. He'd been run in once or twice, but somehow we never managed to get a conviction. It was the usual charge, 'a suspected person', but the evidence we mostly relied on wasn't there when we wanted it.

"Outwardly, Sobbity was a most respectable feller. He lived in a nice, clean-lookin' house, paid some thirty pounds a year rent, had the best of everythin' on his table—an' did no work.

"Me an' Sobbity were always on good terms, an' he'd give me 'good mornin'" civilly, an' would stop an' have a chat whenever he got the opportunity.

"Well, Chimmy,' says I one evenin' I happened to run across him, 'I hear they pulled you in the other night.'

"Yes, Mr. Lee,' he says with a hard little laugh, 'on information received.'

"I knew what he meant.

'You have heard about there bein' honour amongst thieves—well, so there is to a certain extent. But generally speakin' there's less loyalty in that profession than in any I know.

"Chimmy, as I've said, wasn't a popular man in our district, neither with the police nor with the lads. He was too ready with his fists for one thing, an' too close with his money for another, an' there were certain people waitin' to spot Chimmy's 'click' in order to introduce him to the simple life at Portland.

The man who hated him worst was a feller called Tiddly Parkes. Tiddly was a rotten bad lot, an' that's the only way to describe him. He'd got a dozen convictions against him, an' not all for the same class of offence—breakin' an' enterin'—it was all one to Tiddly.

"The real feud started one night at the Nottall Arms, when Chimmy dropped in for his evenin' pint an' Tiddly, tried to chum up with him.

"He'd got as far as sayin' that pals ought to stick together, when Chimmy put out his big hand an' pushed Tiddly away.

"Break away, you,' says Chimmy, 'an' the next time you lay your dirty paws on me, I'll tread on you.'

"This annoyed Tiddly.

"Ain't I as good as you?' he says.

"Not,' says Chimmy, 'by a jugful, so don't get silly ideas in your head.'

"He also said other things about Tiddly's way of earnin' a livin', and the evenin' ended unpleasantly.

"Now, I knew 'from information received' that Tiddly set to work to trap Chimmy Sobbity, an' I wasn't surprised when one night Tiddly came round to see me at any lodgin's an' asked me whether I wanted a fine cop.

"It appeared from what Tiddly said that the other feller was one of a gang of South London burglars, an' that they'd done up a place at Clapham an' got away with a regular cartload of stuff.

"What's more,' says Tiddly impressively, 'he's got the stuff in his house.'

"Of course I reported this, but our people didn't like movin' in the matter. It was only a month before that we'd taken Chimmy on a similar charge, an' it didn't do us any good when the magistrate said that there wasn't any justification whatever for his arrest.

"But we got a search warrant an' raided his house, an' to our surprise we found, underneath a sack in the back garden, quite a little stock of articles that Chimmy couldn't have had any use for whatever.

"Of course we snaffled Chimmy, an' likewise of course he said, he knew nothin' about the matter an' was just as much surprised as we was.

"As a matter of fact, Mr. Lee,' he says quietly, 'burglary ain't my line at all. I'm a pickpocket.'

"I didn't take any notice of this. Chimmy was in for a laggin', an' it didn't matter to him what lie he told to get out of it.

"The feller who was most interested in the arrest was Tiddly. He was absolutely beside himself with joy, though I couldn't understand why this

was' so. I knew him to be a mean little skunk, but I didn't know how mean he was.

"The one thing that puzzled me most was his constant questions about the trial.

"Do you think they'll settle the matter this week?' he says anxiously, referrin' to the police court proceedin's.

"I think so, Tiddly,' says I. "'There won't be no more remands?'

"I don't suppose so, but why are you worryin' about that—you're not a witness.'

"But Tiddly wouldn't give me any information on the subject an' left me to draw my own conclusions—which were wrong.

"As it happened Chimmy's case was settled, so far as the police court was concerned, at the next hearin', when he was committed to take his trial at the North London Sessions.

"When Tiddly heard this he was overjoyed.

"He rubbed his hands.

"Now that's not the sort of conduct I like to see a man indulge in, so I spoke a bit severe.

"Tiddly,' says I, 'I'm surprised to see you go on like this. Don't you know that it's not by any means certain that Chimmy will be convicted?'

"Oh, Mr. Lee,' says Tiddly, very interested, 'why not?'

"Because,' I says, 'there's no owner been found for the stuff; you can't convict a man on the evidence we've got.'

"Tiddly was a bit upset by what I said, an' went away lookin' very thoughtful.

"Just about then, I might say, Tiddly was on the books as a Reformed Character. It was more than five years since he'd had a conviction, an' he was now a householder an' so far as I knew quite respectable.

"I was therefore a bit surprised when our inspector asked me to keep a friendly eye on him.

"The inspector said this with a quiet smile, an' I was puzzled.

"What's he been doin', sir?' I asked.

"Nothin', Lee,' said the inspector, 'but I've got an idea that this last lay of his is the limit to his respectability.'

"I didn't want to plague him with questions so I just waited to see what the game was, but I didn't tumble to it till I attended North London Sessions.

"The jury was bein' called.

"Thomas Parkes,' called the clerk, an' into the jury box walked Mr. Tiddly in a clean collar an' a virtuous smile.

"Then I tumbled. As a respectable householder he'd been summoned on this jury, an' his anxiety to know whether Chimmy would be committed in time to come before him was explained.

"I was still gaspin' in my astonishment when he kissed the book with a smack you could hear throughout the court. The judge took his seat, an' the first case was called—the Crown against Sobbity.

"I saw Chimmy's eyes range the jury, an' saw his lips twitch when he caught sight of Tiddly's grinnin' mug, an' then the case went on.

"The gentleman who appeared for the Crown was half way through his address when Tiddly, who'd been fidgetin' in his seat, leant over an' said:

"All right, me lord—he's guilty, ain't he, mates?"

"The judge was quite taken aback, an' so was counsel.

'Be quiet, sir,' said his lordship sternly.

"What for?' says Tiddly, very indignant. 'What's the good of bein' on the jury if I can't say he's guilty?'

"The other jurymen got him quiet an' the judge havin' said that he'd commit Tiddly to prison if he had any more of his lip, the case proceeded.

"It appears from a statement recently made by the prisoner,' counsel went on, 'that the silver articles found on his premises are things he bought cheap at the Caledonian Market, an' not knowin' the value of them, he left them in his garden.'

"Don't you believe it, me lord!' said Tiddly. Getting' up in the box in a state of great agitation, 'Don't you believe one word of it.'

"Will you be quiet, sir?" thunders the judge. 'I have never seen such extraordinary conduct in my life!'

"Tiddly's interruption nearly stopped the case, but after some kind of order was restored I went into the box an' gave my evidence.

"Then the inspector gave evidence, an' said that no owner had been found for the goods.

"Then Chimmy called a witness—a feller who sells odds and ends at the Caledonian Market.

"This chap said he remembered sellin' a few odds an' ends to Chimmy about a year before, but he could not swear what they were. He thought they were brass candlesticks, or it might have been that they were carriage lamps.

"But he couldn't say for certain.

"All the time he was givin' evidence Tiddly wriggled in his seat, an' just as he was leavin' the box Tiddly says:

"Here, hold hard! Can I ask this young feller a few questions, me lord?"

"Yes,' says the judge, very shortly.

"Very well,' says Tiddly, 'now I'd like to ask you how much Chimmy Sobbity has paid you to come here an' tell lies.'

"Stop, sir!' says the judge, very angry. 'You must not ask such a question. I have never met such a biased juryman—never. Gentlemen,' he says to the jury, 'you will return a verdict of "Not guilty",'

"What!' yells Tiddly, dancin' about on first one leg an' then the other. 'What! I'll see you—'

"They got him out to the retirin' room, an' I don't know what argument they used, but at the end of half an hour the jury returned with Tiddly's nose bleedin' an' returned a verdict of 'not guilty'.

"You are discharged,' says the judge to Chimmy.

"I beg pardon, me lord,' says Chimmy from the dock, but may I have my property back?"

"What property?"

"The silver,' says Chimmy.



"Certainly,' says the judge.

"This was too much for Tiddly. He jumped up. "Your silver!' he roars. 'Why, you perjurin' hound, it's my silver! I put it in your back yard with me own hands to get you a laggin'!"

"I shall commit you to prison for twenty one days for contempt of court,' says the judge. 'You can settle the ownership of the silver when you come out. Swear in another juryman.'"

## 11. — THE CHRISTMAS CUP

ILLUSTRATED BY STANLEY LLOYD

COLONEL DESBORO was an easy-going man, and, for himself, did not greatly object to patched carpets, an odd-handled knife or two, and chintz covers that had faded and thinned through over-much washing. But he had no desire that Joan should go through life in an environment of patches and makeshifts.

"He's a very nice fellow, Martin, but—" He shook his head.

The big "but" about the Great Sham of Sunna Lodge was put more definitely by Miss Ethel Morsel later in the day, when Joan Desboro called at Matte Hall, a little too early for the "club," but in nice time to absorb from experienced twenty-six the wisdom so vitally necessary to twenty-one and three months.

"Men," said Æthel, with an air of finality, "are naturally children. They boast and they lie, and mean no harm by it. Children. They never grow up." She said this in the manner of one who had wrapped a clever thought in a gossamer of paradox.

The girl who was perched on the fender of Æthel Morsel's sitting-room sighed and knit her forehead in a tremendous frown. She was more than pretty even in the searching light of a March morning. Her figure was slim, every movement revealed a new and pleasing grace; but she was no philosopher, and her views about men were too concentrated to be of any use in a broad and general conspectus of their merits.

To rich people like Æthel philosophy comes as natural as purring to a cat, but with the poor, philosophy is a painful exercise, and the Desboros were so poor that they could not afford to hide the fact.

"Mark is a little difficult," she admitted reluctantly, but I don't think you quite understand him, Æthel."

"He's American," said Æthel significantly, and when Joan murmured "Canadian," she ignored the distinction.

"He's a boaster and, of course, quite impossible," said Æthel. "We don't even know that he has any money. And he's not 'county.' We had better be very careful." She nodded ominously.

"Why?"

But the warning obliquely flung was not amplified, and there was really no reason why it should have been.

"Martin must be well off—he paid a thousand pounds for a horse," said Joan with some spirit. A thousand pounds was an awful lot.

"Money for horses means nothing," said the practical Æthel. "Quite dreadful people buy horses. Of course he must have money—he does no work. Papa says he is probably living on his capital. And that can end only in bankruptcy."

Not by candlelight or moonlight could Æthel Morsel be described as pretty. She had been "Ethel" in the baptismal register, and "Ethel" she would have been to the end of her days but for the advent of Ælfred Burdenlast, a young man of considerable musical attainments, but with no especial gift for earning his daily bread.

The association was of a transitory kind. He came, made love with a certain delicacy, was figuratively thrown on to the ash-pit by Mr. Morsel, and faded from human ken. Some say that he went to Hollywood and became a cinema star. He left an additional vowel in Æthel's name, and a heart which never again glowed to the music and banners of romance.

The Morsels were the Morsels of Braystone, in the county of Westshire. There was another branch in Northumberland, but nobody knew anything about them; how they ever got to Northumberland is a mystery.

Arthur Persimmin Morsel was very rich, an owner of ten thousand acres, a deer forest, a trout stream, a tract of territory in Angola, a ranch in Canada, and a flat in Park Lane. He was a large pink man, who rode to hounds with the greatest care, and knew every gate and safety path in Westshire. He had never seen a live fox, except at the Zoological Gardens, for he was rather short-sighted. Nevertheless, his picture appeared in certain illustrated weeklies with great regularity as "Mr. Morsel, the well-known fox-hunter." Thus he was depicted on his horse and off, or else with a very black face (flashlight photographs produce that effect sometimes), in a very white shirt and his pink jacket (which also photographed black), at the annual hunt ball.

It is a copybook axiom that riches do not necessarily bring content, and this was the case with Mr. Morsel. He was a hard bargainer, a shrewd buyer, and the sight of money flowing past his golden reservoir, untrapped by the many channels which maintained its height, made him a very unhappy man. And money came easily to him: his luck was phenomenal. He invariably returned from Monte Carlo with an addition to his capital; he

never played at the Paddock (of which exclusive club he was one of the most respected—or, at least, one of the oldest members) without rising from the table a winner, though it was uncharitably suggested that he chose his table judiciously, preferring the society of callow and monied youth to the competition of hard-faced men to whom the playing of poker was a natural instinct. And when he had a house-party at Matte Hall the male guests were chosen as carefully. He once won four thousand pounds at a sitting from a youth named Jones, and derived great satisfaction from his coup, for by so doing, as he said, he "knocked the infernal nonsense out of the young cub."

All foolish young men were "young cubs" to Mr. Morsel, just as all gentlemen who never went beyond half-crown bridge were "old foxes."

Jones is a very usual name, sometimes borne by unusual people. Ferdie Jones, for example, was an unusual youth. He had been desperately in love with Æthel, and had advanced the impossible suggestion that with the four thousand pounds left over from his patrimony he should turn Sunna Lodge into a poultry farm, marry Æthel, and live happily ever after.

Long days had passed since Æthel lost her heart to an impecunious violinist. She had acquired balance and a sense of what was due to wealth. Important people had looked wistfully at her, a rackets peer had once kissed her. She consulted her father about Ferdie. Mr. Morsel frowned at his cigar and invited Ferdie to spend a week-end at the Hall.

It was a fair game, if anything is fair when one player of écarté had learnt the game only a few weeks before, and the other could draw cards in his sleep.

So Ferdie Jones went away, and Sunna Lodge appeared in the back page of The Times as:

"A desirable hunting box in a good hunting district. Two packs. Company's water, own electric plant. A bargain...."

Once a week during the winter it was the usual thing to drop in at Matte Hall for tea. Nobody knew how the practice started, but Matte Hall on Thursday afternoon became a sort of county club.

The big oak-lined banqueting hall, with its huge fireplace piled with blazing logs in the colder weather, was crowded with people between the hours of five and six-thirty. They sat on the ancient settles, or (if they were young and "rheumatics" was one of the missing words of their bright lexicons) they perched on the window seats or leant against the panelled walls, adding new lustre to the polish.

And everybody talked at once.

"We got on to a new scent at Figgerty Farm—a vixen, and she gave us a run for two and a half hours, my boy! Killed at Reverly Copse... went to earth near Crawford's place.... He's a half-brother to Bachelor's Fancy—a fine 'lepper' with legs as sound as a bell of brass.... You can't do better than go to Critchfords; the breeches I bought there four years ago are like new...."

They all talked at once—all except Mr. Mark Martin, who drifted from group to group, listening with a smile on his good-looking face.

Nobody took much notice of Mark. They were too polite to roast him, too satisfied with the possession of his guilty secret to pursue inquiries any further. And when he found an opening, as he sometimes did, they listened with extraordinary courtesy.

"You don't get hunting in this county that any way approaches the sport we have in Canada. I remember an old hunter of mine...."

They listened, not looking at one another, interjecting in the proper places a conventional expression of their surprise and wonder. But everybody knew that he couldn't ride!

Whether Mark Martin was an American, a Canadian, or plain English, he was certainly an amiable man. His age was something under thirty, but not very far under, and it was he who purchased, from the agents of the departed Jones, Sunna Lodge, that desirable residence. He was not "county" in the strict sense. You could not be "county" unless you had an immediate interest in a family vault, or could claim part proprietorship in one of those commemorative tablets which adorn the walls of so many parish churches, and which usually start off with a coat-of-arms and end with:

Also the wife of the above

Sir Thos. Smithington, Kt.

But hunting breeds a sort of democracy. Stout men and women, hard-riding and wind-bitten (as they are described by local reporters), grow tender towards one mother in the common bond which unites all who go forth on horses to the destruction of vulpes alopex.

Mr. Martin had a stable of horses in training, and was a member of the hunt, and he had often appeared in the field, but generally on foot. Sometimes he would come to a meet in his expensive car, but never had he appeared on horseback. It was regrettable, he explained, but he had kicked

an ankle, or he had bruised a knee, or he had one of those fearful headaches which made riding a positive torture.

He had also been photographed in hunting pink, and his picture had appeared alongside of Mr. Morsel's. He had been photographed at the hunt ball sitting side by side with Lady Mary Seprals (that hard-riding, wind-bitten woman). But nobody had ever seen him riding a horse.

There was an occasion when he turned up at the Highcliffe Point-to-Point wearing jockey's breeches and top boots, and it had been announced, not only in the local newspaper, but in those stately metropolitan organs devoted to the sport of kings, that he would ride his own horse, Ripple Along, in the Highcliffe Handicap.

But this time he had a sprained shoulder, and with great regret handed over his mount to a professional rider, who won. Indeed, many of Mr. Martin's horses won races, though in other hands than his.

When it was given out that he would ride Lumber in the Hunt Gold Cup, people remembered the sprain and gave him another chance. But this time he cut his finger (and there was the hugely bandaged digit in proof). Some talk there was of asking him to resign from the hunt, but nothing came of it.

And then came the supreme bluff of the Great Sham. He entered Lumber in the Christmas Cup at Wolverston Races. The Christmas Cup is to hunting people the blue ribbon of steeplechasing. It is the "paramount and Olympic prize" which brings the shires in full force to Wolverston.

Moreover, it was publicly announced that Lumber would be ridden by Mr. Martin himself. Colonel Desboro heard this news at first hand, and wriggled uncomfortably in the deep and none-too-comfortable arm-chair.

"What a weird beggar you are, Martin!" he said, becoming frank in his irritation. "Enter the horse by all means, but why tell people you're going to ride it?"

Mark looked at him thoughtfully. "I don't know. I thought I would," he said. He tapped his long riding-boots with his hunting-crop—he never went abroad without this evidence of his horsemanship. "I rather like to see fellows riding their own horses."

"But, Mark, is it necessary you should ride at all?" broke in Joan. Her voice was troubled, and that frown of hers had become almost immovable in the past few days. "People are so horrid about—things."

His look of astonishment was badly simulated.

"And the Wolverston course wants an awful lot of riding, Mark. Captain Burnley, who won the race last year, told me there wasn't a course in England, not even the National course, that took so much out of a horse and a rider."

"In Canada—" began Mark.

"This isn't Canada," interrupted the Colonel shortly. "This is Wolverston, and the Christmas Cup isn't a point-to-point affair. You'll have to compete against men like Ridley and Burnley and other fellows who are as good as the best professionals. I think your horse has a big chance—I was telling Joan just before you came—and I suppose in the end it will win. But why on earth commit yourself to the statement that you will ride?"

He glanced across at his daughter and signalled her to leave the room, and when they were alone he said: "I'm going to talk straight to you, Martin. Joan and you have developed rather a friendship in the past six months. What is there in it?"

The younger man eyed him steadily. "There's a lot in it, Colonel," he said quietly. "I love Joan and I'm hoping that you will give her to me—one of these days."

Colonel Desboro filled his pipe with great deliberation.

"It comes down to a question of your prospects, my young friend," he said gruffly.

It required a physical and spiritual effort on his part to mention so mundane a subject as money, but he braced himself.

"You have an income, I suppose?" Mark Martin nodded, "I have three thousand a year," he said.

The Colonel looked up quickly in surprise and fingered his chin. "That's a pretty good income," he admitted.

"So Mr. Morsel seems to think," replied the other gravely.

"Morsel? What has he to do with it?"

The young man studied the bone crook of his crop as though he had only just discovered its use.

"He's been making inquiries about my position, fortunately through a friend of mine in London. He happens to be a commercial agent, and inquiries of that character come to him."

The Colonel sat upright, pipe in hand. "The dickens he has!" he said softly. "Do you play cards, Martin?"

Mark Martin shook his head. "No," he said. "I like an occasional gamble, but not on cards. Why do you ask, Colonel?"

But Colonel Desboro was too charitable to give expression to his thoughts. Instead: "Do you mind if I speak plainly to you, my friend?"

Mark shook his head, guessing what was coming.

"You are not really a very good rider, are you?"

Gently as the question was put, it was blunt enough, and the young man resumed his study of the hunting-crop.

"I'm one of the best riders in Canada," he said doggedly, and the Colonel smiled.

"We've all got our little weaknesses, my boy," he said kindly. "I remember when I was a kid I distressed my poor dear mother—who'd rather have died than tell a lie—by describing a dog-fight that I hadn't seen!"

He waited.

"I've never seen a dog-fight, either," said Mark simply. "If you want me to say that I am a bad rider, I'm afraid I must disappoint you. I'm really awfully good. And, Colonel—I'm very fond of Joan and everything, but I've not asked her to marry me—yet."

Colonel Desboro looked at him sharply. "Is there my special reason?" The other nodded. "A very good reason. Nothing discreditable to me, but—well, I don't know. Would you mind very much if nothing was definitely settled until after the Christmas Cup?"

Colonel Desboro considered this matter. "No," he said slowly, "there is no desperate hurry. But why the Christmas Cup?"

"Until after I've won it."

Mark was avoiding the questioning eyes of the older man.



"Till after you've won it, eh? " The Colonel pursed his lips, and then: "All right, let it go at that. Jackson trains the horse, doesn't he?"

Mark nodded.

"I'll come over one morning and see you do an exercise gallop," said the Colonel, not without malice, and had the satisfaction of seeing the young man start.

"I'd rather you didn't," he said; "I'm really fearfully nervous—that's my only weakness. If I knew anybody was looking on, I should feel terrible. It's a sort of stage-fright," he explained lamely. "I don't know whether you ever had it?"

"I've never been on the stage." The Colonel was unusually blunt that morning. "In fact, I've never pretended to be anything else but what I am, and I think other people would be happier if they followed my example."

"I must tell Morsel that," said Mark innocently, "for he is pretending that he has taken a violent liking to me!"

Mr. Arthur Persimmin Morsel was a gentleman who had many of the attributes of the eagle. He could hover on extended pinions and, to the uninitiated eye, appear to be motionless, when in reality he was planning a devastating swoop.

It was the news in The Westshire Gazette that made him hover a little more tensely.

"Lumber is a certain runner in the Christmas Cup. He will be ridden by his owner, Mr. Mark Martin, the wealthy young Canadian who a year ago purchased Sunna Lodge, which has been unoccupied since Mr. Ferdinand Jones went abroad. Mr. Martin is an enthusiastic fox-hunter, and is certain to take a lot of beating in the Cup."

Amongst the many channels which drained into the golden pit of Mr. Morsel was one labelled Westshire Gazette, of which he was the principal shareholder and chairman of directors. He rang up the editor, a civil and obliging man.

"Where did you get that paragraph about Martin?" he asked.

The editor begged him to wait one moment whilst he interviewed the chief reporter, who was also the chief sub-editor and all the other sub-editors there were. After a while he came back.

"It was written by Mr. Martin himself," he said. Morsel smiled into his trim white moustache. "I thought so," he said.

The training of Lumber for the Christmas Cup was taken in hand during the month of November. Every morning Mr. Martin could be seen driving in the direction of his trainer's stables, and invariably he was attired in riding breeches and most businesslike leggings. And every day, a few hours later, he would alight from his car at the end of the village, and come walking briskly up the street, his boots splashed with mud. And at that hour there were quite a number of people to be met with in the village. Joan met him twice. Mr. Morsel saw him on several occasions and was rather amused. To Æthel one evening he said:

"What are you doing about Christmas, my dear?" Æthel was doing nothing about Christmas.

"You might ask the Desboros to dinner, and ask that fellow Martin over. And, in case I forget it, I'd like you to put the Desboro girl next to this young cub."

"Good heavens—why?" asked Æthel.

Mr. Morsel was lighting a cigar, and she had to wait till he stopped to breathe. "A whim of mine."

"Is he, really training his horse?" asked Æthel.

"The vicar told me that he had seen him come in, his boots and breeches splashed with mud."

"He does that half-way between here and Jackson's place," said Mr. Morsel, without smiling. " Breaks off a twig, dips it into the nearest puddle and flicks it round. I've had a man watching him for a week."

"But has he been riding the horse?" insisted Æthel.

"He hasn't been near the horse," replied her father. All the riding has been done by Jenkins, the stable boy."

"Is he mad?" demanded Æthel, who could find no other explanation.

"No, my dear—vanity, just vanity. Not a had fellow apart from that infernal nonsense of his. I suppose these Americans like to be thought well of, and cut a dash with their money. Don't forget the Christmas Eve dinner. Write pretty soon in case they make another engagement."

It was the practice of Mr. Morsel to go to London once a week to a board meeting. He was methodical in his habits. He usually walked from the terminus to Piccadilly, where his town car was waiting for him. This walk supplied the constitutional which was denied him by his early departure from Matte Hall. He knew Priggins's Riding School very well, and passed its gates every morning he came to London. Indeed, he had a friendly feeling for Priggins's Riding School, because over the office entrance, by the side of the gate, was a small sign, supported on wrought-iron brackets, depicting a noble-looking fox-hunter in a beautifully-fitting pink coat, jumping a huge fence with a confident smile on his handsome face. Once he had taken Æthel that way and had pointed out the curious resemblance between the handsome, smiling gentleman and himself.

He had turned into the street which holds Priggins's establishment, when ahead of him he saw a familiar figure, It was Mr. Mark Martin, and he was hurrying along, evidently having left the taxi which was turning as Mr. Morsel came into the street. He moved furtively and, with a nervous glance round, disappeared through the gates of the riding school. Mr. Morsel's jaw dropped in astonishment, and then a curious gleam came to his eyes. He stopped opposite the open gates and looked into the sand-covered courtyard. It was empty. Without hesitation he turned into the little office, and gathered that the gentleman in riding breeches and highly-polished boots who was writing a letter as he came in was either Mr. Priggins himself or some one in authority. It proved to be both.

"Oh yes, Mr. Morsel," said Priggins respectfully when the visitor had cautiously revealed himself, with e request that the object of his call should be treated confidentially. "I know your name very well, sir; I saw a photograph of you in County Sport the other day."

"Very likely, very likely," said Mr. Morsel, with a grand air of indifference. "Now, I want you to tell me, Mr. Priggins, in the strictest confidence, do you know that young man who came into your yard a few minutes ago?"

There was a little window above the desk which commanded a view of the courtyard, and Mr. Priggins had duly noted the arrival.

"Oh, he?" He chuckled as at a good joke. "He's a gentleman from the country—Martin by name."

"What does he do here?"

Again Mr. Priggins smiled. "Well, to tell you the truth, he's rather a source of income to me, Mr. Morsel. He's been taking riding lessons off and on for the past month, but I've never been able to get him out of the school."

A slow smile dawned on Mr. Morsel's pink face.

"A good rider, is he?" he asked almost joyfully.

"Good rider! If I only could get him to sit on a horse properly, I'd be happy! I've given up trying, and have handed him over to one of my assistants. There are some people you can never teach to ride: they haven't the gift for it."

Morsel considered. "Is it possible to get a peep at him?" he suggested.

Mr. Priggins nodded, took down a key from the board-lined wall, and, leading the way through a door, traversed 1 harness-room and conducted the inquirer up a steep and narrow flight of dark stairs. At the top he paused, his hand on a door.

"If you don't want him to know you're here, you'd better not speak," he said, and Mr. Morsel nodded.

The riding-master opened the door cautiously. They were on a small wooden balcony overlooking the school, which was a fairly large hall, its door covered deep with peat moss. Riding at a jog-trot was Mr. Mark Martin. His back was towards the observer, but even if he had faced the other way it seemed doubtful whether he would have noticed anything but the extreme unsteadiness of the large roan horse he was riding. He swayed in the saddle like a drunken man, and bumped up and down at the psychologically wrong moment in a manner which was curious to see. And all the time there was an exchange of instruction and protest between the rider and a sad young man in gaiters who directed the lesson.

"Keep your elbows down, sir. Your toes in, sir. Put your shoulders back, sir. No, sir, don't hold him by the mane. Walk!"

"Can't walk! Beastly thing jolts. Whoaa, you brute! Am I doing any better to-day?"

Even the riding instructor, inured as he was to the habit of praise, would not answer in the affirmative. Mr. Morsel shook with laughter and his face grew purple.

"Now, sir, just try trotting again. Keep your elbows down by your side. Your hands up—that's right, sir. Now, sir...."

The indignant horse broke into a steady trot. Mr. Mark Martin rolled like a ship in a heavy gale. He lost an iron and clutched at the mane. He slipped forward on the horse's withers, he pushed himself back on to the horse's

quarters, and finally he slipped ungracefully from the horse's neck to the tanned floor.

"Good heavens! Phew?"

A touch on Mr. Morsel's elbow and he withdrew through the door and down the stairs. A few minutes later he was walking away, swinging his umbrella, a beatific smile upon his face.

Christmas Eve at Matte Hall: the countryside still white with the heavy snows that had fallen on the Monday; cedar logs burning in the great fireplace: holly wreaths decorously hung on the panelled walls; and a gay company about the generous board of Mr. Persimmin Morsel.

And everybody (except one) was happy, for the very season was as a vintage wine, and Mark found himself, to his comfort, placed next to Joan Desboro. There was a whisper that Æthel's engagement to Lord Winderley was to be announced, but this proved to be premature, though his lordship (who was a fawn-coloured man with a heavy yellow moustache) was seated next to her, and from time to time they looked at one another understandingly.

There was no talk but of the Wolverston races and the Cup. The redoubtable Captain Burnley was there, an apple-faced man who regarded all public meals as tiresome preliminaries to the consumption of old brandy, and Lady Mary, who had bought a new hunter at Tattersalls' and had discovered unsuspected values in her purchase. The Rev. Walter Affelow, the famous hunting parson, who was famous rather for his prowess over a country than for his other Christian qualities, was there, and Gonnington-Drake, one of the leading lights of the Paddock Club; even Boulby Malcolm, the hunting banker, and, facing Mark, Colonel Desboro, a very uneasy man, but not quite so uneasy as the nervous girl who sat by Mark's side.

"Oh, there'll be racing all right," said Burnley confidently. "The course dries up easily and gets most of the sun that is going. I went round the track this morning. By Jove, those fences will take some jumping! A horse has only got to touch them and you're down— stiff as a park wall!"

"The water kills them," said the Rev. Walter Affelow complacently. "After weather like this the take-off will be like batter pudding!"

"Riding yours?"

It was Mr. Morsel's careless inquiry that cut through the conversation.

Mark nodded with a smile. "Yes, I shall be riding mine. What is more, I shall win. Don't any of you people miss Lumber! I went down into Wolverston yesterday and had a look at the Cup—it's a beauty! Of course, I've got dozens of 'em," he went on, and with one accord the whole table stopped talking, "but, curiously enough, I've never had a gold cup."

"I don't remember seeing them on your sideboard," said the vicar.

"I've got a packing-case full of 'em. I haven't troubled to get them out," said Mark carelessly.

"How's the horse?" asked Burnley.

"Never better," replied Mark complacently, as he sipped his wine. "He gave me a wonderful ride this morning. I'm a little worried about the water jump, too, but I think I can get over that. The wretched people who bet at Wolverston would scream if you asked them for the odds to fifty pounds."

Everybody agreed as to this, for the poverty, or parsimony, of Wolverston bookmakers was notorious. The girl by his side was groaning inwardly. She tried ineffectually to turn the conversation in another direction.

"I thought of keeping Lumber for the National," Mark rattled on. "One could win a fortune there."

"You can win a fortune at Wolverston," said Mr. Morsel slowly. "Come now, Martin, to oblige you I will turn bookmaker for your especial benefit!"

There were eight people at that table who saw the fly thrown and waited breathlessly for the fish to rise. And he rose nobly.

"By Jove, would you?" said Mark.

"He will be at least six to one against," said Morsel, "especially if you ride him yourself. Now, I'll make you an offer. I'll lay you twelve thousand to two that Lumber doesn't win the Cup."

"I'll take you," said Mark, half rising from his seat.

"Wait a moment. This is the only condition—that you are the rider."

They saw the change that came to the younger man's face. The girl was looking at him appealingly, and her heart sank as she saw the smile fade.

"That-er-that isn't necessary, is it?" he asked. "I mean, suppose anything happened to me—and I had rather a twinge of rheumatism this morning."

"You say you're going to ride the horse, you're the best rider in Canada, and I'm offering you a wager that you couldn't get and will not get on the course."

And now the company knew just why Mr. Mark Martin had been invited to dinner, and why the girl had been placed by him. He must either refuse, humiliate her hopelessly, and be completely and finally exposed, or he must save his face at the cost of two thousand pounds. He looked left and right as though seeking a way of escape.

"I'll take your wager, Mr. Morsel," he said loudly.

"You can make it eighteen thousand to three thousand, if you like," suggested Morsel.

He leaned back in his chair, his eyes never moving from the face of the Great Sham.

"I'll take that!"

"There you are," Mr. Morsel beamed, "there you are, my boy! You've made eighteen thousand pounds! If I don't pay you," he said jovially, "you can post me at the Paddock Club.

And that, for the girl, was the tragedy of the evening.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mark drove her back in his car to the little cottage. Colonel Desboro sat behind and brooded on the vanity of youth. As for Joan, she did not speak until he helped her to alight from the machine.

"Why did you do it, Mark?" she asked, and he knew from her voice that she was really hurt.

"I am awfully sorry, but I had to do it, my dear."

When Colon Desboro had gone in, she lingered. "Mark, why did you tell father—" She did not finish the sentence.

"About not asking you until the Cup was run?"

She nodded; her face in the moonlight was very pale, and he thought he had never seen her look so eerily beautiful.

"Is there some reason why I should not—bear your name?" she asked.

"There is—yes," he answered awkwardly. "But I think that reason will not exist after Boxing Day."

The authorities invariably drafted large forces of police to Wolverston for Boxing Day, and they were needed to control the crowd which flocked up to Knights' Field, where the races were held. An unclouded blue sky, an invigorating, frosty morning, and the little stands and paddock were crowded; the field where the motors were parked was black with shining roofs.

Joan did not see The Sham until after the second race, and then, with a groan, she noted that, although he was wearing his jockey breeches and boots, he walked with a limp.

"It's nothing," he said almost savagely. "I knocked my knee getting into the car."

"You won't be able to ride?"

"I think so." He was almost brusque.

Mr. Morsel, in his big tweed coat with the fur collar, was also an amused observer of the limp. He saw Mark disappear into the stewards' room, and laughed softly.

Æthel was never at her best on a cold day—her nose had a tendency to redden in the northern breezes— but there was a very good reason why she, who never went even to point-to-point meetings because of this disability, which even a powder-puff would not overcome, should have an interest in the Christmas Cup. For Mr. Mark Martin was to give her an additional wedding present. It is true he did not know that his three thousand pounds would be invested in the most luxurious and expensive of motor-cars. but that, indeed, was its destination. Moreover, she had a very natural and proper desire to be present on the occasion of the great exposure.

"He has gone in to tell the stewards he can't ride, and, by Jove, he's only just in time!" said Morsel, for already the riders were coming from the weighing-room, their gaudy caps showing incongruously above heavy overcoats and turned-up collars.

But Mr. Martin said nothing to the stewards about his inability to ride. He interviewed the three stewards, and they accepted certain alterations which he suggested.



"It's too late to alter it on the card or even on the number-board. You'll have to go out as you are," said the senior steward. "Have you notified the change, in accordance with the rules, to the Hunt Committee?"

"Yes," said Mark, and showed the letter he had received from the august secretary of National Hunt.

"That's all right," said the steward. "You'd better hurry up: the saddling bell will be ringing in a few minutes. Have you weighed out?"

Mark smiled. "Yes, I've weighed out," he said, and, to the everlasting amazement of Mr. Morsel, he came out from the weighing-room swinging his whip, limping a little, but showing no other sign of perturbation.

Mr. Morsel watched like a man in a dream, and saw him get up on to the back of the big chestnut. He cantered down to the post and did not fall off. When the flag fell he was the first away, heading his field by half a length. The preliminary fence was an easy one, but it was sufficiently difficult to make an inexperienced rider fall. So far from falling, Mark seemed part of the horse. He overleapt his antagonists at every fence, and took the water jump in his stride.

Joan stood by her father on a farm waggon, open-mouthed, amazed, dreaming, she thought, so that she pinched herself. But she was wide awake. Lumber was leading by a field. He hopped the two last fences like a bird and cantered up the straight, an easy winner by a distance.

Mr. Morsel said nothing. He was incapable of speech. He could only stare, in a mad kind of way, as, with a smile on his brown face, Martin touched his hat to the applauding fox-hunters, and then he said hollowly:

"I've been caught."

But he sent his cheque that night. The cheque had been cleared when he met Mark Martin, and would have passed him with a glare, but Mark stopped him.

"I think you ought to know, Mr. Morsel," he said, "that I raced in an assumed name."

"Eh?" said Morsel, suddenly alert. "That isn't allowed under the rules."

"The horse was not nominated in my name, but the name of my trainer," said Mark quietly, "and at the last minute I notified the Hunt Committee that I was not Mark Martin, but Mark Martin Jones, and received permission to ride."

"Jones!" The name had a familiar ring.

"You knew a brother of mine—Ferdie. He's on my ranch now in Canada, Morsel. He had the effrontery to fall in love with your daughter, and you cleared up that entanglement by taking four thousand pounds from him at a card game he knew nothing about. I'm not saying it wasn't a straight game: I'm merely stating a fact. I am sending him four out of the eighteen thousand you so kindly gave me." He emphasised "gave." "And it was a gift, Mr. Morsel." There was a smile in the eyes that met the glare of the infuriated man. "You see, I am the best amateur rider in Canada. By the way, did you enjoy your morning in the riding school? That was the fourth occasion on which I tried to lure you in—you hadn't noticed me before. Four is my lucky number!"

Mr. Morsel waved his hands wildly, gurgled something, and passed on.

"I still don't realise," said Joan that night, "What was the dreadful secret you had to tell me. Why shouldn't I bear your name?"

He shook his head with gentle melancholy.

"Jones!" he said.

"And a very nice name," she said with conviction.

## 12. — THE LITTLE GREEN MAN

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### I

An understanding, disturbed or terminated, has a more tragic aspect than a broken contract. For understandings are without the foundations of pledge and promise written or spoken.

There was an understanding between Molly Linden and Thursby Grant. Neither was important, because they were young; they were as yet nebulae, hoping to be worlds. He was poor in the sense that he could afford no more than a Kensington flat and the lightest of light cars; he was (Molly thought) very handsome and very, very nice.

Mr. Fathergill amused her—fascinated her by reason of his great age and romantic past. He was forty, and his immense riches were common knowledge. But that did not count with Molly. She much preferred riding in his smooth-running limousine to being buffeted and rattled in Thursby's two-seater. Mr. Fathergill's little dinners at the Ritz had a comfort which was not afforded by the solid restaurant where table-cloths were only changed when absolutely necessary.

Still, there was a sort of understanding. If the matter had been allowed to remain where Charles Fathergill left it, that warm night in June when they paced the scented dusky garden, Thursby Grant might have become a tender memory or a bitter disappointment, according to the way he accepted his congé. Unhappily, Molly's father had been a little tactless.

She carried the news to him in his study; she was fluttered, a little tearful. One nice word about Thursby would have swung her definitely to the side of Charles Fathergill.

Instead, Mr. Linden said:

"Thank God for that, Molly! You had better write to young Grant and tell him he need not call again."

There was no reason in the world why he should not have called again; why he should not have appeared with a sad, brave smile and a hearty, "Good luck, old girl!"

But Mr. Linden had been brought up in the Victorian tradition. Then and there Thursby Grant was martyred for love; became a radiant figure of

persecution. Worse, he himself accepted the martyr's rôle, and indited severe and haughty letters to Molly's father, to Molly's fiancé.

One evening he walked fiercely down Pall Mall, entered the sublime portals of the Disraeli Club and, thrusting his hat at an inoffensive page-boy, was ushered into the smoke-room. For the greater part of an hour he sat in a sort of trance, listening to Mr. Charles Fothergill, who was never averse from talking....

Just beyond Fothergill's chair was a high marble pillar of a rich red, broken by white spots and minute serpentines. Thursby Grant had been staring at that pillar for twenty minutes with a painful intensity, some place in his brain busy with the baffling quest for the exact part of the world where such marble may be quarried. Rosso antico—that was its technical description. He remembered a big house in Marlborough with a fireplace. Rosso antico. That was it.

Behind the pillar, half concealed, was a hatchet-faced little waiter, whose livery hung upon him in folds. He was staring out of the window at the white façade of the Auto Club.

A big room, rather over decorated, with red paper and dingy gildings. Scores of well-used, cozy chairs about round tables, where middle-aged men sat smoking over their coffee and told one another of the queer thing that happened to them, twenty?—no, it must be twenty-five—years ago.

Rosso antico....

A buzz of talk as even as an asphalt pavement lay on the club smoking-room. Fothergill's voice, pitched on an infinitesimally higher plane, rippled along its surface.

All Thursby's brain which was not occupied by rosso antico was at Fothergill's disposition.

"... hundred, two hundred years ago, quite a lot of people would have hired a bravo to cut me up. Possibly you would not have descended to hiring an assassin. A quarrel in a coffee-house, chairs to Leicester Gardens, and a few passes with our swords would have settled the matter. Satisfactory—in a way. It would depend entirely upon who was pinked. Now we take no risks, carry no swords, do nothing stupid, and only a few things that are vulgar. Slay and heal with currency; the age of reason."

Fothergill's head was long and narrow. He had a dark face and black, abundant hair brushed back from his forehead. He affected a tiny black

moustache, an adequate occupation for his long fingers in moments of abstraction. His lank body was doubled up in a low chair, and he lay back so that his knees were level with his chin. When he spoke he waved one hand or the other to emphasize a point.

With the free part of his mind Thursby found himself wishing that the man did not wear diamond studs in his dress shirt.

"I asked you to dinner tonight—you preferred to come in for coffee. I appreciate your feelings. You are hurt. You are saying to yourself: 'Here am I, a struggling engineer, who has found a nice girl who likes me'—I grant that—and here is a fellow worth millions who comes along and cuts me out, not because he's more attractive, but because he has enough money to order life as he wishes it."

"It isn't much to boast about, is it?" asked Thursby, his voice husky from a long, dry-mouthed silence.

Charles Fathergill shook his head.

"I am not boasting. You have suddenly found the door of a nice house on Wimbledon Common closed to you—or only opened as far as is necessary to tell you that Miss Molly Linden is not at home. All this is unexpected—rather staggering. Your letters are returned, your telephone messages not delivered. You know I am a friend of the family, and you ask me if I can explain. I bring you to my club, and I tell you plainly and honestly that I intend within the next twelve months marrying Molly Linden, that her father has agreed, and that she—seems reconciled. Could I be fairer?"

Thursby drew a long breath. It almost seemed that he had suddenly awakened from a heavy, ugly sleep.

"Money could not have been the only inducement," he said.

Fathergill shrugged one shoulder, silently inserted a cigarette in the end of a long holder, and lit it with deliberate puffs.

"The key to all power is knowledge," he said—"and ruthlessness."

Throughout the interview his tone, his manner, had been most friendly. The wrath of this good-looking young guest, who had come with murder in his heart, had been blanketed under the unconscious friendliness of one whom Thursby Grant so little regarded as a host that he had not sipped the coffee that had filmed itself cold under his eyes.

"I started life as a bricklayer's assistant"—Fathergill watched the ragged wisps of smoke dissipating with an air of enjoyment—"and at an early stage of my career I began to know. I knew that we were cheating the Borough Surveyor. The Borough Surveyor gave me ten shillings for my information. He took me into his office. He had a love affair with his typist. I knew—I was assistant store-keeper at eighteen."

"That sounds almost like blackmail to me," frowned Thursby.

Mr. Fathergill smiled slowly.

"Never label things," he warned. "Know them, but never commit yourself to labels."

"You mean you have some hold over Linden?"

"Melodrama," murmured the other, closing his eyes wearily. "How terribly young you are! No. I know that John Linden wants to marry again. He is fifty, and young for fifty. A good-looking man, with an ineradicable sense of adventure. You would not be able to marry Molly for three years—at least I would marry at once; she asks for a year. Molly must have an establishment of her own before John Linden makes his inevitable blunder and brings his inevitably youthful bride to Wimbledon!"

Again Thursby discovered that he was breathing heavily through his nose, and checked his rising anger.

"I think that is about all I wanted to know," he said, and rose awkwardly.

"You know: that is important," said Fathergill, and offered a lifeless hand.

As much of this interview as he deemed necessary went forward to Wimbledon.

John Linden, gray and red-faced, read scraps of the letter written on club notepaper to his daughter. Over his glasses he looked to see how she took the news. Her face was expressionless.

"I really think that a year will make all the difference," he told her—and himself. "I like Thursby, but, my dear, I have to consider you."

She raised her eyes from the plate. She was not especially beautiful: she was distinctly pretty—the kind of cultivated-garden prettiness which youth brings, and good, simply cut clothes adorn.

"Are you very rich, father?"

She had never asked him such a question before.

"Why, my dear? I'm not rich in money and not particularly rich in property. Why?"

She looked past him through the leaded casement window.

"Only... Charles never made the least suggestion that he wanted to marry me until he came back from Roumania."

He laughed loudly at this.

"What a romantic little devil you are!" he said good-humoredly. "I see how your queer little mind is working. Fathergill went to Roumania and discovered my oil property is worth a fortune; he kept the knowledge to himself and came back to propose to my daughter".

If she had not thought this, she should not have gone scarlet. He did not add to her embarrassment.

"I should be glad to get back the money I have sunk in Roumanian oil," he said. "You seem to forget that I have an agent in Bukharest who keeps me au fait with all that is happening."

"Thursby says you can buy any Roumanian agent for a thousand lei," she protested, and he shook his head.

"You seem to forget that Charles Fathergill is a millionaire—"

"He says so. Thursby says—"

Mr. Linden consigned Thursby to the devil.

"I really am in love with Thursby," she said haltingly.

Mr. Linden said nothing. Soon after she got up from the table hurriedly. She was rather young.

It could not be said that Charles Fathergill was well known in the City. The obvious is accepted without analysis: that is the deadly danger of the obvious. One knows that Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square is built of stone. Nobody knows or cares who built it or what stone was employed. Everybody knew that Mr. Charles Fathergill was immensely rich. He had a flat in Carlton House Gardens, and paid a twenty-thousand-pounds premium to secure it. The cabmen he tipped, the club servants, the policeman on the beat—who else matters?—could all testify to his wealth

and generosity. He grew richer by being rich. When interested people inquired as to his stability, Stubbs pointed out the fact that he had never had a judgment recorded against him; his lawyers certified him as a desirable client or customer to any person who wished him as a client or customer; one of his bank managers—he employed several bankers—seconded the reference. There is only one peculiarity which need be mentioned—each of his bankers was under the impression that they were carrying his smallest account, and often hinted to him that they would like to carry one of his heavier balances.

As has been remarked before, he was not known in the City, for he did not speculate or engage in commerce. And not being known in the City has this advantage, that nothing is known to your disadvantage.

Mr. Linden met his prospective son-in-law at the club a few days later.

"Going to Roumania?" Mr. Fathergill's eyes opened. "Good heavens!—why? I haven't been back four months."

Mr. Linden tossed down a cocktail and wiped his mouth busily.

"I thought I'd go... may meet the girl of my dreams, eh?" A long chuckle: John Linden was old enough not to be ashamed of dreams.

"When do you think of leaving? I am going as far as Budapest. I have some big interests there."

A rapid calculation produced the assurance that Mr. John Linden's many directorships and annual general meetings would make it impossible to leave before another month. Charles pursed his lips thoughtfully. He must go before then, he said.

He left London within a week.

Thursby Grant was at Victoria Station saying good-bye to a friend who was traveling to the Near East. He acknowledged Fathergill's smiling nod without effort, being helped to toleration by a letter which crashed all solemn promises made by the writer.

"Good Lord!" said Thursby's friend. "Do you know Charles Fathergill? They say he is a millionaire five times over."

"Six times," said Thursby, suddenly sour. "Why damn his reputation for a million?"



## II

Mr. Linden's agent in Bukharest was a lawyer, one Bolescue. He was a stout man, with a large, damp face, who loved food and music and baccarat. Otherwise he had discretion and probity might have walked hand in hand. As it was, he vociferated refusals, his countenance growing moister, talked wildly of "committees," fearfully of engineers, but never once of the majestic law, soon to be flaunted.

Charles Fathergill had a letter of credit for many thousands of pounds. His French was not too good; the money spoke with the purest accent. M. Bolescue, with his light heart fixed upon the gambling tables at Cinta, agreed that certain reports might be postponed, an engineer's emphatic opinion suppressed, borings now in progress slowed till the coming of Mr. John Linden, and then suspended.

"After six months' more time all subterfuges is impossibility," said M. Bolescue, who occasionally tried to speak good English.

"After six months nothing matters," replied the lank man.

His plan was to stay a fortnight in Bukharest, leaving for Constantinople to avoid John Linden. But a fortnight is a long time, and the joys of motoring in hired machines are too easily exhausted. Nor had beautiful Cinta in the hills, with its glorious surroundings of mountain and forest, any attraction for him.

On the eighth night he sent for the hall porter of the Petite Splendide, and the official came quickly, Mr. Fathergill being a lordly dispenser of tips. A short man, square-shouldered, bow-legged, resplendent in gold lace, he came, hat in hand—would have crawled.

"I'm bored, Peter," said Mr. Fathergill.

His half-eaten dinner was on the table. He had scarcely touched his wine.

"Ah!" said Peter, and beamed.

"I want amusing: somebody who can talk or sing. God! I'm sick of Bukharest."

He was justified, for into Bukharest seem to have seeped the dregs of ancient Rome—dregs that have gained a little foulness from Turk and Slav. A rococo Rome.

"Talk... seeng... hum!"

Peter's stumpy hand caressed two of his blue-black chins.

"The book I can bring... some beautiful ones—no? Talk and seeng—ah! Gott of Gotts!"

He resolved into a windmill of waving palms; noises of pride and exultation came from him.

"One who never came to the books! New—a princess, Mr. Fat'ergill! No! I swear by Gott"—he put his hand on his heart and raised his eyes piously to the ceiling—"I would not lie. You will say, Peter says this of all. But a veritable princess. Russian... from—I don't know—the Black Sea somewhere. You say yes?" He nodded in anticipation, and then his face fell. "You must be rich for this princess... wait!"

He rummaged in the tail pocket of his frock coat and found a packet of letters, fixed steel-rimmed pince-nez, and sought for something, his lips moving in silent speech—a comical, cherubic bawd of a man.

"Here—it is in French... I read. From she—to me!" He struck an attitude. "Irene... listen...."

He read rapidly. Charles could not understand half the letter: the important half was intelligible.

"All right; tell her to come up and have a glass of wine with me."

"I shall telephone," said Peter....

Ten struck when Irene came. Charles, reading a week-old Times, looked up over the newspaper at the click of the lock and saw the door opening slowly. She stood in the doorway, looking at him. Very slim and lithe and white. Her black hair dressed severely, parted in the center and framing her face. Clear-skinned, no art gave her aid there. The exquisite loveliness of her caught him by the throat. He rose instinctively, and then the faintest smile twitched the corner of her blood-red mouth.

Regal... and Russian. Russia was in her dark eyes—the inscrutable mystery of the Slav... a million æons removed from Western understanding.

"May I come in?"

Her voice was as he had expected—rather low and rich. There was a sort of husky sweetness in it that made his slow pulses beat the faster. Her English was faultless.

"May I have a cigarette?"

She was at the table, looking down at him, one hand already in the silver box.

"Sit down, won't you?" He found his voice.

He drew up a chair so that he faced her.

"Do you want me to sing—really? I'm afraid my voice isn't awfully good. Or don't you?"

He shook his head.

"What are you doing... here?" His gesture embraced not only the material part of Bukharest, but the place she occupied in its social life.

Again that faint smile.

"One must live... singing and... and talking to people. I have not really begun my career as... an entertainer. You are my first audience. It may prove to be very amusing after all."

"Very amusing," he repeated mechanically.

"So many things have seemed—impossible." She blew ring after ring of smoke between her words. "So many nights I have sat on my bed and looked at The Little Green Man and wondered... and wondered. Then I have put The Little Green Man under my pillow and said: 'Let me see tomorrow—it may be fun.'"

She was smiling at his perplexity, reached for the black velvet handbag that she had laid on the table, and, opening it, took out a small green bottle. It was fashioned like a squat Russian moujik, wearing a heavy overcoat belted at the waist. The hat was the stopper. As she held it up to the light, Fathergill saw that it was three parts filled with a fluid.

"In other words, poison. That's rather theatrical, isn't it?"

"Is it?" She was interested. "I don't know. Professor Bekinsky gave it to me the week before he was arrested. He was a Jew and a good man. They blew his brains out in front of the house where I was staying in Kieff."

Charles Fathergill was chilled: this was not amusing.

"Has it any special properties—arsenic... aconite...?"

She shook her head.

"I don't know. He called it 'knowledge'—he had a sense of humor." She made a wry little face at him, then laughed softly. It was one of those delicious chuckling laughs that are so beautiful when heard from a woman. "You would rather I sang?"

"No... only it is rather depressing, isn't it?"

She asked him who he was. On the subject of Mr. Fathergill he could be eloquent. To talk of himself without exposing his theory of life was difficult. She listened gravely. He felt that it was impossible that she could be startled.

Lovely, he thought as he talked—amazingly lovely. The contours of her face had some indefinable value that he had not found in any other. In a pause she asked:

"But you are ruthless!" (He rather liked that.) "You would stop at nothing to reach your end?"

"Nothing. Knowledge is power only when it can be utilized for the benefit of its holders."

She shook her head.

"That is strange—because it seems you have no objective. You wish to get nowhere, only somewhere better at all costs. I could understand if it was for a definite place."

He was flattered by her disapproval.

"Have you any objective?" he asked.

She nodded.

"Happiness... security. The security that a peasant workman could give his wife."

"In fact, marriage?" he smiled.

She nodded slowly and mushroomed the red end of her cigarette in the silver ash-tray.

"Yes... I would fight like a devil to retain that. It is my idea of heaven. I have a little sister—here in Bukharest."

She looked up at him slowly.

"A sister is like a baby: one does things and puts The Little Green Man under the pillow for her sake."

She seemed to shake herself as though she were throwing off an unpleasant garment. When she spoke her voice was almost gay.

"We are getting tedious. Shall I sing, or shall we talk?"

"We have talked too much," said Fathergill.

He walked to the window and pulled the curtains together.

### III

A few months later an eminent firm of lawyers wrote to Mr. Linden to the effect that they had a client who wished to acquire oil land. They understood he had a property, etc.

Mr. Linden, a very happy and cheerful man, wrote asking that the offer should be reduced to sterling.

There were many reasons why adventures in Roumanian oil should have no further appeal, and why he wished to convert a property of dubious value into something which paid six per cent with monotonous regularity.

Mr. Fathergill, who had reached Paris, received the lawyers' intimation with mild interest. It was curious, he mused, how much labor, how many hours of anxiety are involved needlessly and uselessly because one cannot foresee the end. In the months that had elapsed between his going to Roumania and his return to Paris he had become a millionaire, and every one of his banks believed that they carried his heaviest account.

He had met a man in Constantinople, an international financier, who bought properties for a song and talked them into cantatas. Dog does not eat dog except in Constantinople. Mr. Fathergill was unaware of this exception. He acquired a tract of wild mountain-land, and a concession sealed and signed by the Turkish Government. And on the day his check was honored and the vendor was on his way, per Orient Express, to acquire a timber concession in Sofia, a miracle happened. A forgotten and unpaid prospector made a discovery. Mr. Fathergill believed in quick profits, particularly if they were big profits. The syndicate which took over his holding and his concession offered him a head-reeling sum.

The oil proposition was now an amusing sideline... but there was Molly.

"That may be awkward," said Charles, and pulled at his nose thoughtfully.

For Mr. Linden was married again. Molly had mentioned the fact in one of her cold, proper letters. She did not tell him that John Linden had become de-Victorianized and that Thursby Grant was a frequent visitor at Wimbledon Common.

John Linden wrote. The letter was awaiting the wanderer on his arrival at the Meurice. Would he come over and spend Christmas with the family?

"I am getting rid of my oil lands—some foolish man wishes to buy and has offered me a good price."

Charles left for London on the next day: he would have preferred to have spent Christmas in Paris. The boat train was crowded, the sea choppy. Mr. Fothergill arrived in London a very ruffled man. Paris would have been ideal at Christmas—or Bukharest. Irene! A most unsubstantial dream. The fragrant memory of her caught at his heart. A week after he had left Bukharest he had gone back to find her. Peter contorted himself apologetically. The lady had left Bukharest: he had inquired for her; some other guest had desired speech and song. It was a thousand pities. She was a veritable princess. But (here he brightened) there was a beautiful little girl, a veritable lady....

Charles Fothergill had shaken his head. He looked for her in Budapest; caused inquiries to be made in Vienna... no.

He stalked up and down his beautiful drawing-room, his hands in his pockets. Wimbledon... roast turkey... plum pudding... Molly Linden... he shuddered.

Snow was falling heavily when his car pulled up under the portico, and there was John Linden, rufous and white, and there were holly wreaths hanging on the panelled walls of the hall, and Molly, gauche and awkward, and an uncomfortable Thursby Grant—Charles could have fallen on his neck. And there too was a stranger—a pretty, slim child in white, with a clear skin and dark hair and eyes, and....

"You haven't met Mrs. Linden, old boy." John was very jovial, very excited. "I told you I would get my romance. We met on the train just outside of Trieste... Irene, darling!"

Irene, darling!

There she was, her calm, glorious self, framed in a doorway, as he had seen her before. Only now she wore purple... it suited her better than black, completed her regality.

Her eyes met his. Only the faintest hint of recognition lit and died within their unfathomable depths. Had she been prepared, he would not have seen even that.

"Glad to meet you... Mrs. Linden."

He took her hand in his; the pressure was just as firm as, and no firmer than, one would expect in a hostess.

"Come along to my study—the man will take the suitcase to your room."

In the study Charles drank a little port and listened.

"Um... about Molly. I've been thinking—you don't mind if we have this out right away?"

Fathergill shook his head. He preferred that the matter of Molly should be disposed of.

"My wife—by the way, she was the Princess Irene Dalruski—had a terrible time in the revolution; I will tell you all about it one of these days—my wife thinks it would be a mistake for Molly to marry except where her heart is. Old-fashioned, eh?—By the way, did you see Vera—my wife's sister, a dear kid...."

How curiously futile everything was, Charles Fathergill thought. All his scheming—the Roumanian lawyer with a moist face. Suppose now he had put no spoke in the wheel, had let the reports go forward, and John Linden had entered into his minor riches, and instead had fastened to himself with hooks of iron this find of Peter's....

He was very silent at dinner; scarcely looked at the glorious being at the head of this suburban table; permitted himself the fatuity of wearing a paper cap. Molly thought he was sorrowing over a lost bride and cried herself to sleep that night.

"Have a talk with Irene. I'd like you to know her," said John Linden.

There was a little drawing-room that was half conservatory, and was in consequence a place that smelt faintly of the earth. Hostess and guest detached themselves from the noisy group about a Christmas tree.

"Well, my dear?" Charles Fathergill closed the door. His heart was beating a shade faster than usual, a sense of exhilaration made him feel a little drunk.

"Well?"

She did not sit down. Curiously was the scene reminiscent of another meeting—eighteen hundred miles away.

"You have reached your objective?" he said, and, when she slowly nodded: "I have searched Europe for you."

She looked at him steadily.

"Why?"



He was nonplussed for a moment.

"Why do you think?" he asked, and went on quickly: "We're going to be very good friends, aren't we?"

"I hope so. You won't come here again, of course?"

"Why not? Linden's a great friend of mine."

She nodded.

"That is the reason. I have heard a great deal about you, without realizing who you were."

He smiled at this; the hinted disparagement pleased him. She had aroused that kind of emotion once before.

"You still believe that knowledge is power?"

He still believed that. This was the moment he would have chosen to hammer home the guiding principle of his life.

"And The Little Green Man?" he bantered. "Has he been smashed?"

She shook her head.

"No. Once or twice I thought I would bury him, with all that belongs to his day. Something prevented me."

A very long, uncomfortable silence followed. The sound of laughter came faintly from the larger drawing-room.

"I have rather a nice apartment in Carlton House Gardens. I hope you will come along and see me. Often."

She made no reply. He repeated the invitation.

"You mean that I should enter a new bondage for an indefinite period?"

She looked round.

"It needs Peter to smooth over the crudities."

He thought she was being very sensible and was relieved.

"And if I cannot find time to see your beautiful flat? Will you grow reminiscent some day when you meet John Linden?"

He did not hesitate.

"Yes. You may say: 'What purpose will that serve?' You asked me that before. I reply now, as I replied then: 'Knowledge is of value so long as it is used. A threat of its use, unless it is backed by the will to use it, is so much foolish talk.' It is because you believe, rightly, that not in a spirit of revenge, but as a logical consequence...."

"I see."

She half turned towards the door.

"I wanted to be sure. Come and be festive... have you seen my little sister?"

"A lovely child," he said conventionally.

That was all that passed between them: they did not speak again. He asked for a glass of milk to be sent to his room, and this was done.

When he went upstairs to bed he looked for her, but she had already retired. The servant who knocked at his door the next morning could not make him hear. She went in and drew up the blinds, put down the tray, and did not notice that the glass she had taken up the previous night was gone.

"Your tea, sir," she said.

Even John Linden did not believe that Fathergill was dead until the doctor came.

"I am sorry your Christmas has been spoilt," said Irene gravely, and looked from him to the big fire which burnt in her bedroom. The Little Green Man had already melted out of sight.

### 13. — THE GOVERNOR OF CHI-FOO

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IN Chi-Foo, as in the Forbidden City, the phrase Iang-knei- tsi, which means "foreign devil," was one seldom employed, for Colin Hemel, who in the days of the Manchu dynasty had the august and godlike ear of the Daughter of Heaven, was as terribly quick to punish now that he served a democratic president. As for Chi-Foo, Augustus Verrill sat there, and, brute as he was, he had still enough of the white man in him to resent Iang-knei-tsi.

So it was Iang-ren that people said, meaning (so we persuade ourselves) "honorable foreign."

What they call foreigners in Chi-Foo nowadays I do not know, for Augustus Verrill is not there, and for this reason.

On a bright spring morning the interested but fearful people of Chi-Foo, straining their ears for the sound, were rewarded with the word they awaited. It was the word "shul!" which means "kill!"

A Chinaman with a thick padded coat of blue, his hands concealed in his sleeves, was picking a delicate way along the untidy street which leads to the Gate of a Thousands Regrets, when he heard the guttural whisper, and saw the crazy door of a house come flying outward.

He spun round on the heel of his felt boot, his eyes blinking in the strong sunlight, his lean brown face tense, and a grin of expectancy showing the white even rim of his teeth.

"Kill!" said the dog-faced leader.

The blue-coated Chinaman squared his elbow and a straight splinter of fire leaped from his hand.

The dog-faced man, with a grimace like one who swallows a noxious draught, went lurching against the white wall of the house, leaving it smeared and disfigured when he finally collapsed to his knees.

This was against all arrangement, for the Devil in Blue had left the inn outside the city gates, and in a second's space the Street of Going Forth was deserted save for the bluecoated Chinaman and the gurgling thing that was huddled in the mud by the wall. The blue Chinaman looked down, frowning.

"Insensate Chink," said he. "Blind and prejudiced instrument of fate —quo vadis?"

He took a white handkerchief from the fold of his sleeve and blew his nose, never removing his eyes from the dying man.

"Better you than me, by gad," he said earnestly, "from all over the world to die like a pig in a wallow of mud? That's no death for a gentleman."

All the time he spoke aloud in English, yet so cleverly was he made up, so scrupulous was the attention he had devoted to his toilette and the *et ceteras* of his character that none in the city of Chi-Foo knew him for any other than Li Wan, a small-piece mandarin charged by the Daughter of Heaven to inquire into certain irregularities at the Court of Mandarin Wen-Ho Hong, Governor of the Province of Chi-Foo.

He waited until the man was dead, then looked up and down the deserted street. The Gate of a Thousand Regrets was closed, though it was long before sunrise. The Captain of the Guard would explain the unusual happening, would also swear by his domestic gods that he saw no sight of brawling and heard no sound of shot.

At the other end of the street a little knot of small boys had gathered with folded arms, frowning curiously, and relaxing their attitude from time to time to point out, with their thin little arms stretched stiffly, the tragic consequences of the attack.

These melted as the man in blue, twirling his long-barreled Browning, walked slowly back the way he had come. The bazaar was alive with people—the bazaar which ran to the right from the street end to the very gates of the Yamen.

But even this crowd, silent and watchful, stepped on one side to give him a free passage. Once he heard a half-hearted "Shul!" and his quick ears caught the rustle of movement which is so ominous a sequence to such an urgent suggestion. Then a jagged stone whistled past his ear, and he heard the "Ugh!" of the man who threw it.

He was half-way to the Yamen, and did not turn until another stone caught him in the middle of his well-padded back.

He whipped round as the thrower was stooping for further ammunition, and covered him.

"Oh, man," said he, in the queer dialect of the river province, "I wish you a safe journey."

The thrower dropped his stone as if he had been shot.

"Come nearer to me," commanded the Blue Man, and the coolie shuffled forward through the mud, staring without expression into the gray eyes of the other.

"There is a wind on the river tonight," said the man with the pistol.

"I sail my sampan in the wind," stammered the other; and then, "Let me die if I have offended your honorable body."

"Walk behind me, brother," said the blue Chinaman, and continued on his way. The trembling coolie who had followed him did not see him grin, or know that the Devil in Blue was armed. He had used the password of the Mournful Owls—not for the first time—and here was a member of the secret society humbly serving him, though Chung-Win-Ti, the local head of the Order, lay stiffening in the mud not a stone's throw away.

The man in blue passed hastily through the gates of the Yamen, and entered the outer Court of Justice.

He swept aside an imploring secretary full of murmurs about the Mandarin's indisposition, and came without ceremony to the presence of the Governor.

Wen-Ho-Hong looked up as the Blue Man entered, and started.

"It is an honorable happening that you condescend to come to my hovel," he murmured. "Does your graciousness desire something?"

"My miserable carcass has come," said the Blue Man, a snarl on his lips, "despite the fact that your honorable assassins endeavored to send me on the journey; also, my noble prince, I fear that I have villainously slain an honorable servant of yours, Chung-Win-Ti, in the Street by the Gate."

The aesthetic face of the other did not so much as twitch.

"If you had brought your nobleness with the other honorable members of your Commission," he said gently, "I, unworthy as I am, would have sent forth my miserable guard to bring your felicity to the Yamen."

For a moment they sat, two Chinamen with shaven heads and plaited queues, their hands upon their knees, watching one another; then the Governor spoke:

"Will your lordship deign to enter my poverty-stricken inner room?"

The stranger hesitated a moment, then rose without a word and followed the Mandarin through the great lacquered door, which the Mandarin closed carefully behind him.

"Now, Mr. Hemel," he said, in English, "we can talk—what is the idea?"

Colin Hemel, the President of China's Secret Service, lit a cigarette.

"A few slight irregularities, Augustus," he said slowly, between his puffs. "Robbery of troops' pay—"

"That's nothing," said the other lightly. "Betrayal of the Government to the rebels—membership of a secret society."

"That's nothing either," snarled the Mandarin. "Isn't there anything else?"

Colin Hemel looked up at the beautiful carved ceiling of the sanctuary.

"When we were very young men," he said slowly, "long before you went Chinese—I suppose the fact that we were both born in the land makes our jobs natural—there was a girl at Shanghai; do you remember?"

The other licked his lips.

"I was rather fond of her, and so were you," Colin went on, "and when Li Hang took you up, made you his English secretary, and finally gave you a province to rule, I was jolly glad—it sort of left the way open to me."

The other smiled faintly, but Colin seemed not to see him.

"I heard all about your wonderful success at Peking, how you had pleased the Daughter of Heaven, and your fine new appointment—the only American to hold such a job, aren't you?"

The Mandarin nodded.

"I used to talk about it to her, and she was a little wistful. One day she disappeared."

The man before him averted his gaze.

"She disappeared," repeated the Secret Service man, blowing out a cloud of smoke, "and she came here."

There was a dead silence, which the Mandarin broke.

"Well?" he asked defiantly.

"Well," said the other, "I have added to your crimes—that."

The man he called Augustus—he was an Augustus Verrill before his Chinese days—nodded.

"I somehow fancied you were on the track when I heard the Commission was appointed," he said; "naturally I tried—to stop you. I am rather a big chap with the Owls, and they do, well—they do things for me."

"Naturally," said the blue-coated man dryly.

"As for Miss—er—Mrs. Verrill, for, of course, I married her—you are quite mistaken if you think she is unhappy. You shall see her if you care—after this trial. I suppose it is a trial?"

Colin nodded. "The Commission will arrive in an hour. I came on ahead for reasons of my own."

"To secure news of her?" The Mandarin's eyes narrowed.

"Exactly. Can't I—can't I see her now?"

The Mandarin shook her head.

"Be reasonable, my dear fellow," he said suavely. "She is in the very best of health—lives like a princess and all that sort of thing—servants—and she's awfully happy."

Colin rose, and paced the parquetted floor of the room, his hand on his breast.

"That is all I want," he said, a little huskily. "I wronged you, Verrill—I'm sorry." He held out his hand. "I always thought there was a beast in you. Somehow I never thought of her as being happy. That—that was conceit, I suppose. I'll arrange the Commission for you."

Later he was to remember the attempt on his life, and wonder why—if the man had nothing to fear. But perhaps he feared for her, that this masterful officer, who now enjoyed the confidence of the Daughter of Heaven, would carry her back to her people perhaps.

He went to the sitting of the Commission with a light heart.

\* \* \* \* \*

He who was called Wen-Ho-Hong swore by all his domestic gods, and by every sacred thing save his dead father—he was too much of a gentleman to so perjure himself—that he knew nothing of the world of the Owls, nor of any other secret society. He was charged also with having been the cause of a mutiny in the army by withholding his soldiers' pay for a year, but here he saved himself without difficulty.

The Owls' business was more difficult to explain away to the commissioners from Peking. Though he thrust responsibility upon a smallpiece mandarin named Ho-shi-lai, though he arrayed witnesses by the thousand—producing a sample hundred in the flesh before the grave Commission who sat, hands on knees, spectacled and impassive, in the court-house to testify to his innocence, neither Li-hung-sao nor the teak-faced Mandarin with the winking eye, who sat at the end of the row of judges, were visibly impressed.

"The Daughter of Heaven" (they still preserve the faction of Royal Government in China), murmured Li-hung-sao apologetically, "is disturbed, and miserable sycophant as I am, and unworthy to discuss such high matters with Your Excellency, yet I must humbly ask for a better story to carry to the gate of the Celestial City."

"Prince," said the Governor lightly, and he glanced meaningly at Colin Hemel, "I have sworn by the Noble Dead, and I have brought witnesses to prove that I know nothing of the killing of the Sesu folk—I can do no more."

Li-hung-sao had glanced from time to time at the third member of the Commission.

"What does Your Excellency say to this?" he asked timidly, for president though he was, the last word was with the blue-coated man at the least important place.

Colin Hemel twisted round.

"I am unworthy to give an opinion," he said, and he was occupied in his mind with the important question—how little could he with decency fine this peccant Mandarin, before he delivered a mild admonition?

For he was anxious to have done with this farce of a trial—a farce which he had planned so tragically—and go to some place where he could see her over again and for the last time. How strange she would seem in the Chinese costume she would wear! She with her flaxen hair and gray eyes.



"Your Excellency knows," he began, when there was a stir in the crowd, a howl like the howl of a beast, and a figure dived head down between the soldiers. It fell on its knees before the grave court.

"Mercy, O judges!" the thing on the floor mumbled and blubbered in Chinese, and raised its head and caught the staring eyes of the Mandarin in blue. He saw the cropped hair, the gray eyes, the wasted face, the skinny arms stretched in supplication.

"Mr.—Mr. Hemel!" sobbed the wreck, and collapsed.

"Let this woman be taken to my chair," said Hemel softly; "in the name of the Daughter of Heaven, let no man harm her."

The court was very still; only the shuffling feet of the man who lifted the figure and the heavy breathing of the Governor of Chi-Foo were the sounds heard.

Then Hemel, white as death, leaned forward, consulting no man, and struck a gong with his bare knuckles. Through the side door curtained with gold and black tapestries came a man bare to the waist, dull-eyed and brown. He ran forward and sank on his knees before the judge, sweeping his lithe body till his shaven forehead touched the ground.

"Go, Fa-ti-sing," said Colin Hemel huskily, "taking with you His Excellency Wen-Ho-Hong, the Governor. Outside the city gate, near by the Plain of Ten Thousand Sorrows, you shall strike the head of Wen-Ho-Hong from his body. In the name of the Daughter of Heaven, tremble and obey."

So they took Augustus Verrill to the appointed place, and snicked off his head before an incurious crowd, and the members of the Commission went back to Peking in their chairs.

All except the teak-faced Mandarin, who, with three soldiers at his back, rode out of the Gate of Great Assistance, and took the bumpy road for the hospital at Foo-sang, riding beside a palanquin wherein lay a Chinese kitchen-wench who was all the world to him.

**THE END**