

The Project Gutenberg eBook of The Social Gangster, by Arthur B. Reeve

This ebook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this ebook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: The Social Gangster

Author: Arthur B. Reeve

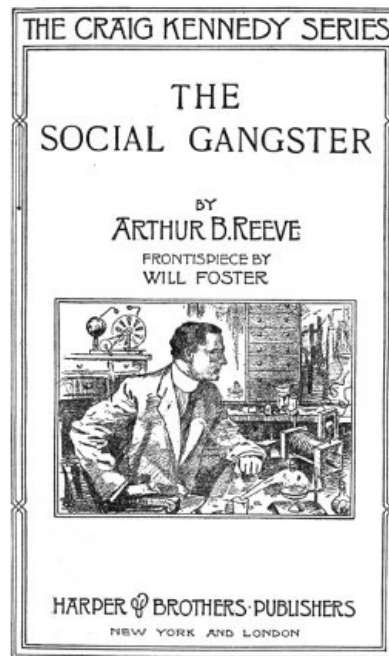
Illustrator: Will Foster

Release Date: August 19, 2010 [EBook #33466]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Suzanne Shell, Mary Meehan and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at <http://www.pgdp.net> (This file was produced from images generously made available by The Internet Archive/American Libraries.)

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE SOCIAL GANGSTER ***



THE SOCIAL GANGSTER

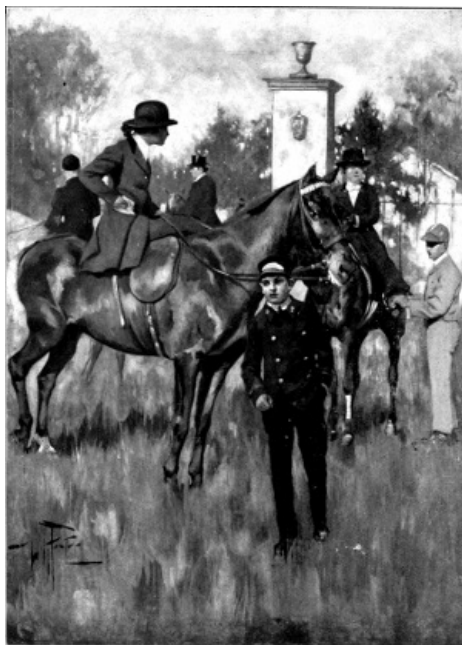
THE CRAIG KENNEDY SERIES

BY ARTHUR B. REEVE

**FRONTISPIECE BY
WILL FOSTER**

**HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON**

**Copyright, 1916, by HARPER & BROTHERS
Printed in the United States of America**



JUST BEFORE WE WERE OFF A TELEGRAM CAME TO HER, WHICH SHE READ AND HASTILY STUFFED INTO A POCKET OF HER RIDING HABIT

CONTENTS

[CHAPTER I. THE SOCIAL GANGSTER](#)
[CHAPTER II. THE CABARET ROUGE](#)
[CHAPTER III. THE FOX HUNT](#)
[CHAPTER IV. THE TANGO THIEF](#)
[CHAPTER V. THE "THÉ DANSANT"](#)
[CHAPTER VI. THE SERUM DIAGNOSIS](#)
[CHAPTER VII. THE DIAMOND QUEEN](#)
[CHAPTER VIII. THE ANESTHETIC VAPORIZER](#)
[CHAPTER IX. THE TWILIGHT SLEEP](#)
[CHAPTER X. THE SIXTH SENSE](#)
[CHAPTER XI. THE INFERNAL MACHINES](#)
[CHAPTER XII. THE SUBMARINE BELL](#)
[CHAPTER XIII. THE SUPER-TOXIN](#)
[CHAPTER XIV. THE SECRET AGENTS](#)
[CHAPTER XV. THE GERM OF ANTHRAX](#)
[CHAPTER XVI. THE SLEEPMAKER](#)
[CHAPTER XVII. THE INTER-URBAN HANDICAP](#)
[CHAPTER XVIII. THE TOXIN OF FATIGUE](#)
[CHAPTER XIX. THE X-RAY DETECTIVE](#)
[CHAPTER XX. THE MECHANICAL CONNOISSEUR](#)
[CHAPTER XXI. THE RADIOGRAPH WITNESS](#)
[CHAPTER XXII. THE ABSOLUTE ZERO](#)
[CHAPTER XXIII. THE VACUUM BOTTLE](#)
[CHAPTER XXIV. THE SOLAR PLEXUS](#)
[CHAPTER XXV. THE DEMON ENGINE](#)
[CHAPTER XXVI. THE ELECTROLYSIS CLEW](#)
[CHAPTER XXVII. THE PERPETUAL MOTION MACHINE](#)
[CHAPTER XXVIII. THE CANCER HOUSE](#)
[CHAPTER XXIX. THE QUACK DOCTORS](#)
[CHAPTER XXX. THE FILTERABLE VIRUS](#)
[CHAPTER XXXI. THE VODOO MYSTERY](#)
[CHAPTER XXXII. THE FLUORISCINE TEST](#)
[CHAPTER XXXIII. THE RESPIRATION CALORIMETER](#)
[CHAPTER XXXIV. THE EVIL EYE](#)
[CHAPTER XXXV. THE BURIED TREASURE](#)
[CHAPTER XXXVI. THE WEED OF MADNESS](#)

THE SOCIAL GANGSTER

CHAPTER I

THE SOCIAL GANGSTER

"I'm so worried over Gloria, Professor Kennedy, that I hardly know what I'm doing."

Mrs. Bradford Brackett was one of those stunning women of baffling age of whom there seem to be so many nowadays. One would scarcely have believed that she could be old enough to have a daughter who would worry her very much.

Her voice trembled and almost broke as she proceeded with her story, and, looking closer, I saw that, at least now, her face showed marks of anxiety that told on her more than would have been the case some years before.

At the mention of the name of Gloria Brackett, I saw that Craig was extremely interested, though he did not betray it to Mrs. Brackett. Already, with my nose for news I had scented a much bigger story than any that had been printed. For the Bracketts had lately been more or less in the news of the day.

Choking back a little suppressed sob in her throat, Mrs. Brackett took from a delicate gold mesh bag and laid on the desk before Kennedy a small clipping from the "Lost and Found" advertisements in the *Star*. It read:

"REWARD of \$10,000 and absolutely no questions asked for the return of a diamond necklace of seventy-one stones which disappeared from a house at Willys Hills, Long Island, last Saturday or Sunday.

"LA RUE & Co., Jewelers,
"— Fifth Avenue."

I recognized the advertisement as one that had occasioned a great deal of comment on the *Star*, due to its peculiar nature. It had been a great mystery, perhaps much more so than if the advertisement had been worded and signed in the usual way.

I knew also that the advertisement had created a great furore of excitement and gossip at the fashionable North Shore Hunt Club of which Bradford Brackett was Master of Fox Hounds.

"At first," explained Mrs. Brackett nervously, "La Rue & Co. were able to keep the secret. They even refused to let the police take up the case. But as public interest in the advertisement increased at last the secret leaked out—at least that part of it which connected our name with the loss. That, however, seemed only to whet curiosity. It left everybody wondering what was back of it all. That's what we've been trying to avoid—that sort of publicity."

She paused a moment, but Kennedy said nothing, evidently thinking that the best safety valve for her overwrought feelings would be to let her tell her story in her own way.

"Why, you know," she resumed rapidly, to hide her agitation, "the most ridiculous things have been said. Some people have even said that we lost nothing at all, that it was all a clever attempt at notoriety, to get our names in the papers. Some have said it was a plan to collect the burglary insurance. But we are wealthy. They didn't stop to think how inconceivable that was. We have nothing to lose, even if the necklace is never heard of again."

For the moment her indignation had got the better of her worry. Most opinions, I recalled, had been finally that the disappearance was mixed up with some family affairs. At any rate, here was to be the real story at last. I dissembled my interest. Mrs. Brackett's indignation was quickly succeeded by the more poignant feelings that had brought her to Kennedy.

"You see," she continued, now almost sobbing, "it is really all, I fear, my own fault. I didn't realize that Gloria was growing so fast and so far out of my life. I've let her be brought up by governesses and servants. I've sent her to the best schools I could find. I thought it was all right. But now, too late, I realize that it is all wrong. I haven't kept close enough to her."

She was rattling on in this disjointed manner, getting more and more excited, but still Kennedy made no effort to lead the conversation.

"I didn't think Gloria was more than a child. But—why, Mr. Kennedy, she's been going, I find, to these afternoon dances in the city and out at a place not far from Willys Hills."

"What sort of places?" prompted Kennedy.

"The Cabaret Rouge," answered Mrs. Brackett, flashing at us a look of defiance that really masked fear of public opinion.

I knew of the place. It had an extremely unsavory reputation. In fact there were two places of the same name, one in the city and the other out on Long Island.

Mrs. Brackett must have seen Kennedy and me exchange a look askance at the name.

"Oh, it's not a question of morals, alone," she hastened. "After all, sometimes common sense and foolishness are fair equivalents for right and wrong."

Kennedy looked up quickly, genuinely surprised at this bit of worldly wisdom.

"When women do stupid, dangerous things, trouble follows," she persisted, adding, "if not at once, a bit later. This is a case of it."

One could not help feeling sorry for the woman and what she had to face.

"I had hoped, oh, so dearly," she went on a moment later, "that Gloria would marry a young man who, I know, is devoted to her, an Italian of fine family, Signor Franconi—you must have heard of him—the inventor of a new system of wireless transmission of pictures. But with such a scandal—how can we expect it? Do you know him?"

"Not personally, though I have heard of him," returned Kennedy briefly.

Both Craig and myself had been interested in reports of his invention, which he called the "Franconi Telephote," by which he claimed to be able to telegraph either over wires or by wireless light and dark points so rapidly and in such a manner as to deceive the eye and produce at the receiving end what amounted to a continuous reproduction of a picture at the transmitting end. At least, in spite of his society leanings, Franconi was no mere dilettante inventor.

"But—the necklace," suggested Craig, after a moment, for the first time interrupting the rather rambling trend of Mrs. Brackett's story, "what has this all to do with the necklace?"

She looked at him almost despairingly. "I don't really care for a thousand such necklaces," she cried. "It is my daughter—her good name—her—her safety!"

Suddenly she had become almost hysterical as she thought of the real purpose of her visit, which she had not yet been able to bring herself to disclose even to Kennedy. Finally, with an effort, she managed to control herself and go on.

"You see," she said in a low tone, almost as if she were confessing some fault of her own, "Gloria has been frequenting these—*recherché* places, without my knowledge, and there she has become intimate with some of the fastest of the fast set.

"You ask about the necklace. I don't know, I must admit. Has some one of her friends taken advantage of her to learn our habits and get into the house and get it? Or, have they put her up to getting it?"

The last query was wrung from her as if by main force. She could not even breathe it without a shudder. "When the necklace was stolen," she added tremulously, "it must have been an inside job, as you detectives call it. Mr. Brackett and I were away at the time at a week-end party. We supposed Gloria was visiting some friends in the city. But since then we have learned that she motored out with some of her dance-crazed acquaintances to the Cabaret Rouge, not far from Willys Hills. It must have been taken then—by some of them."

The recital to comparative strangers, even though they were to be trusted to right the wrong, was more than she could bear. Mrs. Brackett was now genuinely in tears, her shoulders trembling under the emotion, as she bowed her head. Her despair and self-accusation would really have moved anyone, much less were needed to enlist Kennedy. He said nothing, but his look of encouragement seemed to nerve her up again to go on. She forced back her feelings heroically.

"We put the advertisement that way because—well, now you understand why," she resumed; then anticipating our question, added, "But there has been no response."

I knew from her tone that even to herself she would not admit that Gloria might have been guilty. Yet subconsciously it must have been in her mind and she knew it was in ours. Her voice broke again.

"Mr. Brackett has repeatedly ordered Gloria to give up her fast acquaintances. But she defies him. Even to my pleadings she has turned a deaf ear."

It was most pathetic to watch the workings of the mother's face as she was forced to say this of her daughter. All thought of the necklace was lost, now.

"I—I want my daughter back," she almost wailed.

"Who are these rapid youngsters?" asked Craig gently.

"I don't know all of them," she replied. "There is young Rittenhouse Smith; he is one. The Rittenhouse Smiths, you know, are a very fine family. But young 'Ritter,' as the younger set call him, is wild. They've had to cut his allowance two or three times, I believe. Another of them is Rhinelander Brown. I don't think the Browns have much money, but it is a good family. Oh," she added with a faint attempt at a smile, "I'm not the only mother who has heart-aches. But the worst of it is that there are some professionals with whom they go—a dancer, Rex Du Mond, and a woman named Bernice Bentley. I don't know any more of them, but I presume there is a regular organization of these social gangsters."

"Did Signor Franconi—ever go with them?" asked Craig.

"Oh, mercy, no," she hastened.

"And they can't seem to break the gang up," ruminated Craig, evidently liking her

characterization of the group.

She sighed deeply and wiped away another tear. "I've done what I could with Gloria. I've cut her allowance—but it has done no good. I'm losing my hold on her altogether. You—you will help me—I mean, help Gloria?" she asked eagerly, leaning forward in an appeal which must have cost her a great deal, so common is the repression of such feelings in women of her type.

"Gladly," returned Kennedy heartily. "I will do anything in my power."

Proud though she was, Mrs. Brackett could scarcely murmur her thanks.

"Where can I see Gloria?" asked Kennedy finally.

She shook her head. "I can't say. If you want to, you may see her tomorrow, though, at the drag hunt of the club. My husband says he is not going to take Gloria's actions without a protest. So he has peremptorily ordered her to attend the meet of the Hunt Club. We thought it would get her away, at least for a time, from her associates, though I must say I can't be sure that she will obey."

I thought I understood, partly at least. Bradford Brackett's election as M. F. H. had been a crowning distinction in his social career and he did not propose to have Gloria's escapades spoil the meet for him. Perhaps he thought this as good an occasion as any to use his power to force her back into the circle to which she rightfully belonged.

Mrs. Brackett had risen. "How can I ever thank you?" she exclaimed, extending her hand impulsively. "I know nothing has been changed—yet. But already I feel better."

"I shall do what I can; depend on me," reiterated Kennedy modestly. "If I can do nothing before, I shall be out at the Hunt Club tomorrow—perhaps I shall be there anyhow."

"This is a most peculiar situation," I remarked a few minutes later, as Mrs. Brackett was whisked away from the laboratory door in her motor.

"Indeed it is," returned Kennedy, pacing up and down, his face wrinkled with thought. "I don't know whether I feel more like a detective or a spiritual adviser." He pulled out his watch. "Half-past four," he considered. "I'd like to have a look at that Cabaret Rouge here in town."

CHAPTER II

THE CABARET ROUGE

It was a perfect autumn afternoon, one of those days when one who is normal feels the call to get out of doors and enjoy what is left of the fine weather before the onset of winter. We strode along in the bracing air until at last we turned into Broadway at the upper end of what might be called "Automobile Row." Motor cars and taxicabs were buzzing along in an endless stream, most of them filled with women, gowned and bonneted in the latest mode.

Before the garish entrance of the Cabaret Rouge they seemed to pile up and discharge their feminine cargoes. We entered and were quickly engulfed in the tide of eager pleasure seekers. A handsome and judicious tip to the head waiter secured us a table at the far end of a sort of mezzanine gallery, from which we could look down over a railing at the various groups at the little white tables below. There we sat, careful to spend the necessary money to entitle us to stay, for to the average New Yorker the test seems to be not so much what one is getting for it as how much money is spent when out for a "good time."

Smooth and glittering on the surface, like its little polished dancing floor in the middle of the squares of tables downstairs, the Cabaret Rouge, one could see, had treacherous undercurrents unsuspected until an insight such as we had just had revealed them.

The very atmosphere seemed vibrant with laughter and music. A string band played sharp, staccato, highly accentuated music, a band of negroes as in many of the showy and high-priced places where a keen sense of rhythm was wanted. All around us women were smoking cigarettes. Everywhere they were sipping expensive drinks. Instinctively one felt the undertow in the very atmosphere.

I wondered who they were and where they all came from, these expensively dressed, apparently refined though perhaps only veneered girls, whirling about with the pleasantest looking young men who expertly guided them through the mazes of the fox-trot and the canter waltz and a dozen other steps I knew not of. This was one of New York's latest and most approved devices to beguile the languid afternoons of ladies of leisure.

"There she is," pointed out Kennedy finally. "I recognize her from the pictures I've seen."

I followed the direction of his eyes. The music had started and out on the floor twisting in and out among the crowded couples was one pair that seemed to attract more attention than the rest. They had come from a gay party seated in a little leather cozy corner like several about the room, evidently reserved for them, for the cozy corners seemed to be much in demand.

Gloria was well named. She was a striking girl, not much over nineteen surely, tall, lissome, precisely the figure that the modern dances must have been especially designed to set off. I watched her attentively. In fact I could scarcely believe the impression I was gaining of her.

Already one could actually see on her marks of dissipation. One does not readily think of a girl as sowing her wild oats. Yet they often do. This is one of the strange anomalies of the new freedom of woman. A few years ago such a place would have been neither so decent nor attractive. Now it was superficially both. To it went those who never would have dared overstep the strictly conventional in the evil days when the reformer was not abroad in the land.

I watched Gloria narrowly. Clearly here was an example of a girl attracted by the glamor of the life and flattery of its satellites. What the end of it all might be I preferred not to guess.

Craig was looking about at the variegated crowd. Suddenly he joggled my elbow. There, just around the turn of the railing of the gallery, sat a young man, dark of hair and eyes, of a rather distinguished foreign appearance, his face set in a scowl as he looked down on the heads of the dancers. One could have followed the tortuous course of Gloria and her partner by his eyes, which the man never took off her, even following her back to the table in the corner when the encore of the dance was finished.

The young man's face at least was familiar to me, though I had not met him. It was Signor Franconi, quietly watching Gloria and her gay party.

After a few moments, Craig rose, paid his check, and moved over to the table where Franconi was sitting alone. He introduced himself and Franconi, with easy politeness, invited us to join him.

I studied the man's face attentively. Signor Franconi was still young, in spite of the honors that had been showered on him for his many inventions. I had wondered before why such a man would be interested in a girl of Gloria's evident type. But as I studied him I fancied I understood. To his serious mind it was just the butterfly type that offered the greatest relief. An intellectual woman would have been merely carrying into another sphere the problems with which he was more than capable of wrestling. But there was no line of approval in his fine face of the butterfly and candle-singeing process that was going on here. I must say I heartily liked him.

"What are you working on now?" asked Kennedy as a preliminary step to drawing him out against the time when we might become better acquainted and put the conversation on a firmer basis.

"A system of wireless transmission of pictures," he returned mechanically. "I think I have vastly improved the system of Dr. Korn. You are familiar with it, I presume?"

Kennedy nodded. "I have seen it work," he said simply.

That telephotograph apparatus, I remembered, depended on the ability of the element selenium to vary the strength of an electric current passing through it in proportion to the brightness with which the selenium is illuminated.

"That system," he resumed, speaking as though his mind was not on the subject particularly just now, "produces positive pictures at one end of the apparatus by the successive transmission of many small parts separately. I have harnessed the alternating current in a brand-new way, I think. Instead of prolonging the operation, I do it all at once, projecting the image on a sheet of tiny selenium cells. My work is done. Now the thing to do is to convince the world of that."

"Then you have the telephote in actual operation?" asked Kennedy.

"Yes," he replied. "I have a little station down on the shore of the south side of the island." He handed us a card on which he wrote the address at South Side Beach. "That will admit you there at any time, if I should not be about. I am testing it out there—have several instruments on transatlantic liners. We think it may be of use in war—sending plans, photographs of spies—and such things."

He stopped suddenly. The music had started again and Gloria was again out on the dancing floor. It was evident that at this very important time in his career Franconi's mind was on other things.

"Everyone seems to become easily acquainted with everyone else here," remarked Craig, bending over the rail.

"I suppose one cannot dance without partners," returned Franconi absently.

We continued to watch the dancers. I knew enough of these young fellows, merely by their looks, to see that most of them were essential replicas of one type. Certainly most of them could have qualified as social gangsters, without scruples, without visible means of support, without character or credit, but not without a certain vicious kind of ambition.

They seemed to have an unlimited capacity for dancing, freak foods, joy rides, and clothes. Clothes were to them what a jimmy is to a burglar. Their English coats were so tight that one wondered how they bent and swayed without bursting. Smart clothes and smart manners such as they affected were very fascinating to some women.

"Who are they all, do you suppose?" I queried.

"All sorts and conditions," returned Kennedy. "Wall Street fellows whose pocketbooks have been

thinned by dull times on the Exchange; actors out of engagements, law clerks, some of them even college students. They seem to be a new class. I don't think of any other way they could pick up a living more easily than by this polite parasitism. None of them have any money. They don't get anything from the owner of the cabaret, of course, except perhaps the right to sign checks for a limited amount in the hope that they may attract new business. It's grafting, pure and simple. The women are their dupes; they pay the bills—and even now and then something for 'private lessons' in dancing in a 'studio.'"

Franconi was dividing his attention between what Kennedy was saying and watching Gloria and her partner, who seemed to be a leader of the type I have just described, tall and spare as must be the successful dancing men of today.

"There's a fellow named Du Mond," he put in.

"Who is he?" asked Craig, as though we had never heard of him.

"To borrow one of your Americanisms," returned Franconi, "I think he's the man who puts the 'tang' in tango. From what I hear, though, I think he borrows the 'fox' from fox-trot and plucks the feathers from the 'lame duck.'"

Kennedy smiled, but immediately became interested in a tall blonde girl who had been talking to Du Mond just before the dancing began. I noticed that she was not dancing, but stood in the background most of the time giving a subtle look of appraisal to the men who sat at tables and the girls who also sat alone. Now and then she would move from one table to another with that easy, graceful glide which showed she had been a dancer from girlhood. Always after such an excursion we saw other couples who had been watching in lonely wistfulness, now made happy by a chance to join the throng.

"Who is that woman?" I asked.

"I believe her name is Bernice Bentley," replied Franconi. "She's the—well, they call her the official hostess—a sort of introducer. That's the reason why, as you observed, there is no lack of friendliness and partners. She just arranges introductions, very tactfully, of course, for she's experienced."

I regarded her with astonishment. I had never dreamed that such a thing was possible, even in cosmopolitan New York. What could these women be thinking of? Some of them looked more than capable of taking care of themselves, but there must be many, like Gloria, who were not. What did they know of the men, except their clothes and steps?

"Soft shoe workers, tango touts," muttered Kennedy under his breath.

As we watched we saw a slender, rather refined-looking girl come in and sit quietly at a table in the rear. I wondered what the official introducer would do about her and waited. Sure enough, it was not long before Miss Bentley appeared with one of the dancing men in tow. To my surprise the "hostess" was coldly turned down. What it was that happened I did not know, but it was evident that a change had taken place. Unobtrusively Bernice Bentley seemed to catch the roving eye of Du Mond while he was dancing and direct it toward the little table. I saw his face flush suddenly and a moment later he managed to work Gloria about to the opposite side of the dancing floor and, though the music had not stopped, on some pretext or other to join the party in the corner again.

Gloria did not want to stop dancing, but it seemed as if Du Mond exercised some sort of influence over her, for she did just as he wished. Was she really afraid of him? Who was the little woman who had been like a skeleton at a feast?

Almost before we knew it, it seemed that the little party had tired of the Cabaret Rouge. Of course we could hear nothing, but it seemed as if Du Mond were proposing something and had carried his point. At any rate the waiter was sent on a mysterious excursion and the party made as though they were preparing to leave.

Little had been said by either Franconi or ourselves, but it was by a sort of instinct that we, too, paid our check and moved down to the coat room ahead of them. In an angle we waited, until Gloria and her party appeared. Du Mond was not with them. We looked out of the door. Before the cabaret stood a smart hired limousine which was evidently Gloria's. She would not have dared use her own motor on such an excursion.

They drove off without seeing us and a moment later Du Mond and Bernice Bentley appeared.

"Thank you for the tip," I heard him whisper. "I thought the best thing was to get them away without me. I'll catch them in a taxi later. You're off at seven? Ritter will call for you? Then we'll wait and all go out together. It's safer out there."

Just what it all meant I could not say, but it interested me to know that young Ritter Smith and Bernice Bentley seemed on such good terms. Evidently the gay party were transferring the scene of their gayety to the country place of the Cabaret Rouge. But why?

We parted at the door with Franconi, who repeated his invitation to visit his shop down at the beach.

I started to follow Franconi out, but Kennedy drew me back. "Why did you suppose I let them

go?" he explained under his breath, as we retreated to the angle again. "I wanted to watch that little woman who came in alone."

We had not long to wait. Scarcely had Du Mond disappeared when she came out and stood in the entrance while a boy summoned a taxicab for her.

Kennedy improved the opportunity by calling another for us and by the time she was ready to drive off we were able to follow her. She drove to the Prince Henry Hotel, where she dismissed the machine and entered. We did the same.

"By the way," asked Kennedy casually, sauntering up to the desk after she had stopped to get her keys and a letter, "can you tell me who that woman was?"

The clerk ran his finger down the names on the register. At last he paused and turned the book around to us. His finger indicated: "Mrs. Katherine Du Mond, Chicago."

Kennedy and I looked at each other in amazement. Du Mond was married and his wife was in town. She had not made a scene. She had merely watched. What could have been more evident than that she was seeking evidence and such evidence could only have been for a court of law in a divorce suit? The possibilities which the situation opened up for Gloria seemed frightful.

We left the hotel and Kennedy hurried down Broadway, turning off at the office of a young detective, Chase, whom he used often on matters of pure routine for which he had no time.

"Chase," he instructed, when we were seated in the office, "you recall that advertisement of the lost necklace in the *Star* by La Rue & Co.?"

The young man nodded. Everyone knew it. "Well," resumed Kennedy, "I want you to search the pawnshops, particularly those of the Tenderloin, for any trace you can find of it. Let me know, if it is only a rumor."

There was nothing more that we could do that night, though Kennedy found out over the telephone, by a ruse, that, as he suspected, the country place of the Cabaret Rouge was the objective of the gay party which we had seen.

CHAPTER III

THE FOX HUNT

The next day was that of the hunt and we motored out to the North Shore Hunt Club. It was a splendid day and the ride was just enough to put an edge on the meet that was to follow.

We pulled up at last before the rambling colonial building which the Hunt Club boasted as its home. Mrs. Brackett was waiting for us already with horses from the Brackett stables.

"I'm so glad you came," she greeted us aside. "Gloria is here—under protest. That young man over there, talking to her, is Ritter Smith. 'Rhine' Brown, as they call him, was about a moment ago—oh, yes, there he is, coming over on that chestnut mare to talk to them. I wanted you to see them here. After the hunt, if you care to, I think you might go over to the Cabaret Rouge out here. You might find out something."

She was evidently quite proud of her handsome daughter and that anything should come up to smirch her name cut her deeply.

The Hunt Club was a swagger organization, even in these degenerate days when farmers will not tolerate broken fences and trampled crops, and when democratic ideas interfere sadly with the follies of the rich. In a cap with a big peak, a scarlet hunting coat and white breeches with top boots, Brackett himself made a striking figure of M. F. H.

There were thirty or forty in the field, the men in silk hats. For the most part one could not see that the men treated Gloria much differently. But it was evident that the women did. In fact the coldness even extended to her mother, who would literally have been frozen out if it had not been for her quasi-official position. I could see now that it was also a fight for Mrs. Brackett's social life.

As we watched Gloria, we could see that Franconi was hovering around, unsuccessfully trying to get an opportunity to say a word to her alone. Just before we were off a telegram came to her, which she read and hastily stuffed into a pocket of her riding habit.

But that was all that happened and I fell to studying the various types of human nature, from the beginner who rode very hard and very badly and made himself generally odious to the M. F. H., to the old seasoned hunter who talked of the old days of real foxes and how he used to know all the short cuts to the coverts.

It was a keen, crisp day. Already a man had been over the field pulling along the ground a little bag of aniseed, and now the hunt was about to start.

Noses down, sterns feathering zigzag over the ground, sniffing earth and leaves and grass, the

hounds were brought up. One seemed to get a good whiff of the trail and lifted his head with a half yelp, half whine, high pitched, frenzied, never-to-be-forgotten. Others joined in the music. "Gone away!" sounded a huntsman as if there were a real fox. We were off after them. Drag hounds, however, for the most part run mute and very fast, so that that picturesque feature was missing. But the light soil and rail fences of Long Island were ideal for drag hunting. Nor was it so easy as it seemed to follow. Also there was the spice of danger, risk to the hunters, the horses and the dogs.

We went for four or five miles. Then there was a check for the stragglers to come up. Some had fresh mounts, and all of us were glad of the breathing space while the M. F. H. "held" the hounds.

While we waited we saw that Mrs. Brackett was riding about quickly, as if something were on her mind. A moment she stopped to speak to her husband, then galloped over to us.

Her face was almost white. "Gloria hasn't come up with the rest!" she exclaimed breathlessly.

Already Brackett had told those about him and all was confusion. It was only a moment when the members of the hunt were scouring the country over which we had passed, with something really definite to find.

Kennedy did not pause. "Come on, Walter," he shouted, striking out down the road, with me hard after him.

We pulled up before a road-house of remarkable quaintness and luxury of appointment, one of the hundreds about New York which the automobile has recreated. Before it swung the weathered sign: Cabaret Rouge.

To our hurried inquiries the manager admitted that Du Mond had been there, but alone, and had left, also alone. Gloria had not come there.

A moment later sounds of hoofs on the hard road interrupted us and Ritter Smith dashed up.

"Just overtook a farmer down the road," he panted. "Says he saw an automobile waiting at the stone bridge and later it passed him with a girl and a man in it. He couldn't recognize them. The top was up and they went so fast."

Together we retraced the way to the stone bridge. Sure enough, there on the side of the road were marks where a car had pulled up. The grass about was trampled and as we searched Kennedy reached down and picked up something white. At least it had been white. But now it was spotted with fresh blood, as though someone had tried to stop a nose-bleed.

He looked at it more closely. In the corner was embroidered a little "G."

Evidently there had been a struggle and a car had whizzed off. Gloria was gone. But with whom? Had the message which we had seen her read at the start been from Du Mond? Was the plan to elope and so avoid his wife? Then why the struggle?

Absolutely nothing more developed from the search. An alarm was at once sent out and the police all over the country notified. There was nothing to do now but wait. Mrs. Brackett was frantic. But it was not now the scandal that worried her. It was Gloria's safety.

That night, in the laboratory, Kennedy took the handkerchief and with the blood on it made a most peculiar test before a strange-looking little instrument.

It seemed to consist of a little cylinder of glass immersed in water kept at the temperature of the body. Between two minute wire pincers or serres, in the cylinder, was a very small piece of some tissue. To the lower serre was attached a thread. The upper one was attached to a sort of lever ending in a pen that moved over a ruled card.

"Every emotion," remarked Kennedy as he watched the movement of the pen in fine zigzag lines over the card, "produces its physiological effect. Fear, rage, pain, hunger are primitive experiences, the most powerful that determine the actions of man. I suppose you have heard of the recent studies of Dr. Walter Cannon of Harvard of the group of remarkable alterations in bodily economy under emotion?"

I nodded and Kennedy resumed. "On the surface one may see the effect of blood vessels contracting, in pallor; one may see cold sweat, or the saliva stop when the tongue cleaves to the roof of the mouth, or one may see the pupils dilate, hairs raise, respiration become quick, or the beating of the heart, or trembling of the muscles, notably the lips. But one cannot see such evidences of emotion if he is not present at the time. How can we reconstruct them?"

He paused a moment, then resumed. "There are organs hidden deep in the body which do not reveal so easily the emotions. But the effect often outlasts the actual emotion. There are special methods by which one can study the feelings. That is what I have been doing here."

"But how can you?" I queried.

"There is what is called the sympathetic nervous system," he explained. "Above the kidney there are also glands called the suprarenal which excrete a substance known as adrenin. In extraordinarily small amounts adrenin affects this sympathetic system. In emotions of various kinds a reflex action is sent to the suprarenal glands which causes a pouring into the blood of adrenin.

"On the handkerchief of Gloria Brackett I obtained plenty of comparatively fresh blood. Here in this machine I have between these two pincers a minute segment of rabbit intestine."

He withdrew the solution from the cylinder with a pipette, then introduced some more of the dissolved blood from the handkerchief. The first effect was a strong contraction of the rabbit intestine, then in a minute or so the contractions became fairly even with the base line on the card.

"Such tissue," he remarked, "is noticeably affected by even one part in over a million of adrenin. See. Here, by the writing lever, the rhythmical contractions are recorded. Such a strip of tissue will live for hours, will contract and relax beautifully with a regular rhythm which, as you see, can be graphically recorded. This is my adrenin test."

Carefully he withdrew the ruled paper with its tracings.

"It's a very simple test after all," he said, laying beside this tracing another which he had made previously. "There you see the difference between what I may call 'quiet blood' and 'excited blood.'"

I looked at the two sets of tracings. Though they were markedly different, I did not, of course, understand what they meant. "What do they show to an expert?" I asked, perplexed.

"Fear," he answered laconically. "Gloria Brackett did not go voluntarily. She did not elope. She was forced to go!"

"Attacked and carried off?" I queried.

"I did not say that," he replied. "Perhaps our original theory that her nose was bleeding may be correct. It might have started in the excitement, the anger and fear at what happened, whatever it was. Certainly the amount of adrenin in her blood shows that she was laboring under strong enough emotion."

Our telephone rang insistently and Kennedy answered it. As he talked, although I could hear only one side of the conversation, I knew that the message was from Chase and that he had found something important about the missing necklace.

"What was it?" I asked eagerly as he hung up the receiver.

"Chase has traced the necklace," he reported; "that is, he has discovered the separate stones, unset, pawned in several shops. The tickets were issued to a girl whose description exactly fits Gloria Brackett."

I could only stare at him. What we had all feared had actually taken place. Gloria must have taken the necklace herself. Though we had feared it and tried to discount it, nevertheless the certainty came as a shock.

"Why should she have taken it?" I considered.

"For many possible reasons," returned Kennedy. "You saw the life she was leading. Her own income probably went to keeping those harpies going. Besides, her mother had cut her allowance. She may have needed money very badly."

"Perhaps they had run her into debt," I agreed, though the thought was disagreeable.

"How about that other little woman we saw?" suggested Kennedy. "You remember how Gloria seemed to stand in fear of Du Mond? Who knows but that he made her get it to save her reputation? A girl in Gloria's position might do many foolish things. But to be named as co-respondent, that would be fatal."

There was not much comfort to be had by either alternative, and we sat for a moment regarding each other in silence.

Suddenly the door opened. Mrs. Brackett entered. Never have I seen a greater contrast in so short a time than that between the striking society matron who first called on us and the broken woman now before us. She was a pathetic figure as Kennedy placed an easy chair for her.

"Why, what's the matter?" asked Kennedy. "Have you heard anything new?"

She did not answer directly, but silently handed him a yellow slip of paper. On a telegraph blank were written simply the words, "Don't try to follow me. I've gone to be a war nurse. When I make good I will let you know. Gloria."

We looked at each other in blank amazement. That was hardly an easy way to trace her. How could one ever find out now where she was, in the present state of affairs abroad, even supposing it were not a ruse to cover up something?

Somehow I felt that the message did not tell the story. Where was Du Mond? Had he fled, too,—perhaps forced her to go with him when Mrs. Du Mond appeared? The message did not explain the struggle and the fear.

"Oh, Mr. Kennedy," pleaded Mrs. Brackett, all thought of her former pride gone, as she actually held out her hands imploringly and almost fell on her knees, "can't you find her—can't you *do* something?"

"Have you a photograph of Gloria?" he asked hurriedly.

"Yes," she cried eagerly, reaching into her mesh bag and drawing one out. "I carry it with me always. Why?"

"Come," exclaimed Kennedy, seizing it. "It occurs to me that it is now or never that this device of Franconi's must prove that it is some good. If she really went, she wasted no time. There's just a bare chance that the telephote has been placed on some of these vessels that are carrying munitions abroad. Franconi says that he has developed it for its war value."

As fast as Mrs. Brackett's chauffeur could drive us, we motored down to South Side Beach and sought out the little workshop directly on the ocean where Franconi had told us that we should always be welcome.

He was not there, but an assistant was. Kennedy showed him the card that Franconi had given us.

"Show me how the machine works," he asked, while Mrs. Brackett and I waited aside, scarcely able to curb our impatience.

"Well," began the assistant, "this is a screen of very minute and sensitive selenium cells. I don't know how to describe the process better than to say that the tones of sound, the human voice, have hundreds of gradations which are transmitted, as you know, by wireless, now. Gradations of light, which are all that are necessary to produce the illusion of a picture, are far simpler than those of sound. Here, in this projector—"

"That is the transmitting part of the apparatus?" interrupted Kennedy brusquely. "That holder?"

"Yes. You see there are hundreds of alternating conductors and insulators, all synchronized with hundreds of similar receivers at the—"

"Let me see you try this photograph," interrupted Kennedy again, handing over the picture of Gloria which Mrs. Brackett had given him. "Signor Franconi told me he had the telephote on several outgoing liners. Let me see if you can transmit it. Is there any way of sending a wireless message from this place?"

The assistant had shoved the photograph into the holder from which each section was projected on the selenium cell screen.

"I have a fairly powerful plant here," he replied.

Quickly Kennedy wrote out a message, briefly describing the reason why the picture was transmitted and asking that any station on shipboard that received it would have a careful search made of the passengers for any young woman, no matter what name was assumed, who might resemble the photograph.

Though nothing could be expected immediately at best, it was at least some satisfaction to know that through the invisible air waves, wirelessly, the only means now of identifying Gloria was being flashed far and wide to all the big ships within a day's distance or less on which Franconi had established his system as a test.

The telephote had finished its work. Now there was nothing to do but wait. It was a slender thread on which hung the hope of success.

While we waited, Mrs. Brackett was eating her heart out with anxiety. Kennedy took the occasion to call up the New York police on long distance. They had no clew to Gloria. Nor had they been able to find a trace of Du Mond. Mrs. Du Mond also had disappeared. At the Cabaret Rouge, Bernice Bentley had been held and put through a third degree, without disclosing a thing, if indeed she knew anything. I wondered whether, at such a crisis, Du Mond, too, might not have taken the opportunity to flee the country.

We had almost given up hope, when suddenly a little buzzer on the telephote warned the operator that something was coming over it.

"The *Monfalcone*," he remarked, interpreting the source of the impulses.

"We gathered breathlessly about the complicated instrument as, on a receiving screen composed of innumerable pencils of light polarized and acting on a set of mirrors, each corresponding to the cells of the selenium screen and tuned to them, as it were, a thin film or veil seemed gradually to clear up, as the telephote slowly got itself into equilibrium at both ends of the air line. Gradually the face of a girl appeared.

"Gloria!" gasped Mrs. Brackett in a tone that sounded as if ten years had been added to her life.

"Wait," cautioned the operator. "There is a written message to follow."

On the same screen now came in letters that Mrs. Brackett in her joy recognized the message: "I couldn't help it. I was blackmailed into taking the necklace. Even at the hunt I received another demand. I did not mean to go, but I was carried off by force before I could pay the second demand. Now I'm glad of it. Forgive us. Gloria."

"Us?" repeated Mrs. Brackett, not comprehending.

"Look—another picture," pointed Kennedy.

We bent over as the face of a man seemed to dissolve more clearly in place of the writing.

"Thank God!" exclaimed Mrs. Brackett fervently, reading the face by a sort of intuition before it cleared enough for us to recognize. "He has saved her from herself!"

It was Franconi!

Slowly it faded and in its place appeared another written message.

"Recalled to Italy for war service. I took her with me by force. It was the only way. Civil ceremony in New York yesterday. Religious will follow at Rome."

CHAPTER IV

THE TANGO THIEF

"My husband has such a jealous disposition. He will never believe the truth—never!"

Agatha Seabury moved nervously in the deep easy chair beside Kennedy's desk, leaning forward, uncomfortably, the tense lines marring the beauty of her fine features.

Kennedy tilted his desk chair back in order to study her face.

"You say you have never written a line to the fellow nor he to you?" he asked.

"Not a line, not a scrap,—until I received that typewritten letter about which I just told you," she repeated vehemently, meeting his penetrating gaze without flinching. "Why, Professor Kennedy, as heaven is my witness, I have never done a wrong thing—except to meet him now and then at afternoon dances."

I felt that the nerve-racked society woman before us must be either telling the truth or else that she was one of the cleverest actresses I had ever seen.

"Have you the letter here?" asked Craig quickly.

Mrs. Seabury reached into her neat leather party case and pulled out a carefully folded sheet of note paper.

It was all typewritten, down to the very signature itself. Evidently the blackmailer had taken every precaution to protect himself, for even if the typewriting could be studied and identified, it would be next to impossible to get at the writer through it and locate the machine on which it was written among the thousands in the city.

Kennedy studied the letter carefully, then, with a low exclamation, handed it over to me, nodding to Mrs. Seabury that it was all right for me to see it.

"No ordinary fellow, I'm afraid," he commented musingly, adding, "this thief of reputations."

I read, beginning with the insolent familiarity of "Dear Agatha."

"I hope you will pardon me for writing to you," the letter continued, "but I find that I am in a rather difficult position financially. As you know, in the present disorganized state of the stock market, investments which in normal times are good are now almost valueless. Still, I must protect those I already have without sacrificing them.

"It is therefore necessary that I raise fifty thousand dollars before the end of the week, and I know of no one to appeal to but you—who have shared so many pleasant stolen hours with me.

"Of course, I understand all that you have told me about Mr. Seabury and his violent nature. Still, I feel sure that one of your wealth and standing in the community can find a way to avoid all trouble from that quarter. Naturally, I should prefer to take every precaution to prevent the fact of our intimacy from coming to Mr. Seabury's knowledge. But I am really desperate and feel that you alone can help me.

"Hoping to hear from you soon, I am,

"Your old tango friend,
"H. MORGAN SHERBURNE."

I fairly gasped at the thinly veiled threat of exposure at the end of the note from this artistic blackmailer.

She was watching our faces anxiously as we read.

"Oh," she cried wildly, glancing from one to the other of us, strangers to whom in her despair she had been forced to bare the secrets of her proud heart, "he's so clever about it, too. I—I didn't know what to do. I had only my jewels. I thought of all the schemes I had ever read, of pawning

them, of having paste replicas made, of trying to collect the burglary insurance, of—"

"But you didn't do anything like that, did you?" interrupted Craig hastily.

"No, no," she cried. "I thought if I did, then it wouldn't be long before this Sherburne would be back again for more. Oh," she almost wailed, dabbing at the genuine tears with her dainty lace handkerchief while her shoulders trembled with a repressed convulsive sob, "I—I am utterly wretched—crushed."

"The scoundrel!" I muttered.

Kennedy shook his head at me slowly. "Calling names won't help matters now," he remarked tersely. Then in an encouraging tone he added, "You have done just the right thing, Mrs. Seabury, in not starting to pay the blackmail. The secret of the success of these fellows is that their victims prefer losing jewelry and money to going to the police and having a lot of unpleasant notoriety."

"Yes, I know that," she agreed hastily, "but—my husband! If he hears, he will believe the worst, and—I—I really love and respect Judson—though," she added, "he might have seen that I liked dancing and—innocent amusements of the sort still. I am not an old woman."

I could not help wondering if the whole truth were told in her rather plaintive remark, or whether she was overplaying what was really a minor complaint. Judson Seabury, I knew from hearsay, was a man of middle age to whom, as to so many, business and the making of money had loomed as large as life itself. Competitors had even accused him of being ruthless when he was convinced that he was right, and I could well imagine that Mrs. Seabury was right in her judgment of the nature of the man if he became convinced for any reason that someone had crossed his path in his relations with his wife.

"Where did you usually—er—meet Sherburne?" asked Craig, casually guiding the conversation.

"Why—at the Vanderveer—always," she replied.

"Would you mind meeting him there again this afternoon so that I could see him?" asked Kennedy. "Perhaps it would be best, anyhow, to let him think that you are going to do as he demands, so that we can gain a little time."

She looked up, startled. "Yes—I can do that—but don't you think it is risky? Do you think there is any way I can get free from him? Suppose he makes a new demand. What shall I do? Oh, Professor Kennedy, you do not, you cannot know what I am going through—how I hate and fear him."

"Mrs. Seabury," reassured Craig earnestly, "I'll take up your case. Clever as the man is, there must be some way to get at him."

Sherburne must have exercised a sort of fascination over her, for the look of relief that crossed her face as Kennedy promised to aid her was almost painful. As often before, I could scarcely envy Kennedy in his ready assumption of another's problems that seemed so baffling. It meant little, perhaps, to us whether we succeeded. But to her it meant happiness, perhaps honor itself.

It was as though she were catching at a life line in the swirling current of events that had engulfed her. She hesitated no longer.

"I'll be there—I'll meet him—at four," she murmured, as she rose and made a hurried departure.

For some time after she had gone, Kennedy sat considering what she had told us. As for myself, I cannot say that I was thoroughly satisfied that she had told all. It was not to be expected.

"How do you figure that woman out?" I queried at length.

Kennedy looked at me keenly from under knitted brows. "You mean, do I believe her story—of her relations with this fellow, Sherbourne?" he returned, thoughtfully.

"Exactly," I assented, "and what she said about her regard for her husband, too."

Kennedy did not reply for a few minutes. Evidently the same question had been in his own mind and he had not reasoned out the answer. Before he could reply the door buzzer sounded and the colored boy from the lower hall handed a card to Craig, with an apology about the house telephone switchboard being out of order.

As Kennedy laid the card on the table before us, with a curt "Show the gentleman in," to the boy, I looked at it in blank amazement.

It read, "Judson Seabury."

Before I could utter a word of comment on the strange coincidence, the husband was sitting in the same chair in which his wife had sat less than half an hour before.

Judson Seabury was a rather distinguished looking man of the solid, business type. Merely to meet his steel gray eye was enough to tell one that this man would brook no rivalry in anything he undertook. I foresaw trouble, even though I could not define its nature.

Craig twirled the card in his fingers, as if to refresh his mind on a name otherwise unfamiliar. I

was wondering whether Seabury might not have trailed his wife to our office and have come to demand an explanation. It was with some relief that I found he had not.

"Professor Kennedy," he began nervously, hitching his chair closer, without further introduction, in the manner of a man who was accustomed to having his own way in any matter he undertook, "I am in a most peculiar situation."

Seabury paused a moment, Kennedy nodded acquiescence, and the man suddenly blurted out, "I—I don't know whether I'm being slowly poisoned or not!"

The revelation was startling enough in itself, but doubly so after the interview that had just preceded.

I covered my own surprise by a quick glance at Craig. His face was impassive as he narrowly searched Seabury's. I knew, though, that back of his assumed calm, Craig was doing some rapid thinking about the ethics of listening to both parties in the case. However, he said nothing. Indeed, Seabury, once started, hurried on, scarcely giving him a chance to interrupt.

"I may as well tell you," he proceeded, with the air of a man who for the first time is relieving his mind of something that has been weighing heavily on him, "that for some time I have not been exactly—er—easy in my mind about the actions of my wife."

Evidently he had arrived at the conclusion to tell what worried him, and must say it, for he continued immediately: "It's not that I actually know anything about any indiscretions on Agatha's part, but,—well, there have been little things—hints that she was going frequently to *thés dansants*, and that sort of thing, you know. Lately, too, I have seen a change in her manner toward me, I fancy. Sometimes I think she seems to avoid me, especially during the last few days. Then again, as this morning, she seems to be—er—too solicitous."

He passed his hand over his forehead, as if to clear it. For once he did not seem to be the self-confident man who had at first entered our apartment. I noticed that he had a peculiar look, a feeble state of the body which he was at times at pains to conceal, a look which the doctors call, I believe, cachectic.

"I mean," he added hastily, as if it might as well be said first as last, "that she seems to be much concerned about my health, my food—"

"Just what is it that you actually know, not what you fear?" interrupted Kennedy, perhaps a little brusquely, at last having seen a chance to insert a word edgewise into the flow of Seabury's troubles, real or imaginary.

Seabury paused a moment, then resumed with a description of his health, which, to tell the truth, was by no means reassuring.

"Well," he answered slowly, "I suffer a good deal from such terrible dyspepsia, Professor Kennedy. My stomach and digestion are all upset—bad health and growing weakness—pain, discomfort—vomiting after meals, even bleeding. I've tried all sorts of cures, but still I can feel that I am still losing health and strength, and, so far, at least, the doctors don't seem to be doing me much good. I have begun to wonder whether it is a case for the doctors, after all. Why, the whole thing is getting on my nerves so that I'm almost afraid to eat," he concluded.

"You have eaten nothing today, then, I am to understand?" asked Craig when Seabury had finished with his minute and puzzling account of his troubles.

"Not even breakfast this morning," he replied. "Mrs. Seabury urged me to eat, but—I—I couldn't."

"Good!" exclaimed Kennedy, much to our surprise. "That will make it just so much easier to use a test I have in mind to determine whether there is anything in your suspicions."

He had risen and gone over to a cabinet.

"Would you mind baring your arm a moment?" he asked Seabury.

With a sharp little instrument, carefully sterilized, Craig pricked a vein in the man's arm. Slowly a few drops of darkened venous blood welled out. A moment later Kennedy caught them in a sterile test tube and sealed the tube.

Before our second visitor could start again in retailing his suspicions which now seemed definitely, in his own mind at least, directed in some way against Mrs. Seabury, Kennedy skillfully closed the interview.

"I feel sure that the test I shall make will tell me positively, soon, whether your fears are well grounded or not, Mr. Seabury," he concluded briefly, as he accompanied the man out into the hall to shake hands farewell with him at the elevator door. "I'll let you know as soon as anything develops, but until we have something tangible there is no use wasting our energies."

CHAPTER V

THE "THE DANSANT"

I felt, however, that Seabury accepted this conclusion reluctantly, in fact with a sort of mental reservation not to cease activity himself.

The remainder of the forenoon, and for some time during the early afternoon, Craig plunged into one of his periods of intense work and abstraction at the laboratory.

It was, indeed, a most unusual and delicate test which he was making. For one thing, I noticed that he had, in a sterilizer, some peculiar granular tissue that had been sent to him from a hospital. This tissue he was very careful to cleanse of blood and then by repeated boilings prepare for whatever use he had in mind.

As for myself, I could only stand aside and watch his preparations in silence. Among the many peculiar pieces of apparatus which he had, I recall one that consisted of a glass cylinder with a siphon tube running into it halfway up the outside. Inside was another, smaller cylinder. All about him as he proceeded were glass containers, capillary pipettes, test tubes, Bunsen burners, and dialyzers of porous parchment paper whose wrappers described them as "permeable for peptones, but not for albumins."

Carefully set aside was the blood which he had drawn from Seabury's veins, allowed to stand till the serum separated out from the clot. Next he pipetted it into a centrifuge tube and centrifuged it at high speed, some sixteen thousand revolutions, until the serum was perfectly clear, with no trace of a reddish tint, nor even cloudy. After that he drew off the serum into a little tube, covered it with a layer of a substance called toluol from another sterile pipette, and finally placed it in an incubator at a temperature of about ninety-eight.

It was well along toward four o'clock when he paused as if some mental alarm clock had awakened him to another part of the plan of action he had laid out.

"Walter," he remarked, hastily doffing his stained old laboratory coat, "I think we'd better drop around to the Vanderveer."

Curious as I had been at the preparations he was making in the laboratory, I was still glad at even the suggestion of something that my less learned mind could understand and it was not many seconds before we were on our way.

Through the lobby of the famous new hostelry we slowly lounged along, then down a passage into the tea room, where, in the center of a circle of quaint little wicker chairs and tables, was a glossy dancing floor.

Kennedy selected a table not in the circle, but around an "L," inconspicuously located so that we could watch the dancing without ourselves being watched.

At one end of the room an excellent orchestra was playing. I gazed about, fascinated. At the dancing tea was represented, apparently, much wealth—women whose throats and fingers glittered with gold and gems, men whose very air exuded prosperity—or at least its veneer.

About it all was the glamor of the *risqué*. One felt a sort of compromising familiarity in this breaking down of old social restraints through the insidious influence of the tea room, with its accompaniments of music and dancing.

"I suppose," remarked Craig after we had for some time settled ourselves and watched the brilliant scene, "that, like many others, Walter, you have often wondered whether these modern dances are actually as stimulating as they seem."

I shrugged my shoulders non-committally.

"Well, there is what psychologists might call a real dance neurosis," he went on, contemplatively, toying with a glass. "In fact few persons can withstand the physical effect of the peculiar rhythm, the close contact, and the sinuous movements—at least where, so to speak, the surroundings are suggestive and the dance becomes less restrained and more sensuous, as it does often in circumstances like these, often among strangers."

The music had started again and one after another couples seemed to float past in unhesitating hesitation—dowager and débutante, dandy and doddering octogenarian.

"Why," he exclaimed, looking out at the whirling kaleidoscope, "here in the most advanced epoch, people of culture and intelligence frankly say they are 'wild' for something primitive."

"Still," I objected, "dancing even in the wild, stimulating emotional manner you see here need not be merely an incitement to love, need it? May it not be a normal gratification of the love instinct—eroticism translated into rhythm? Perhaps it may represent sex, but not necessarily badly."

Kennedy nodded. "Undoubtedly the effect of the dances is in direct ratio to the sexual temperament of the dancer," he admitted.

He paused and again watched the whirl.

"Does Mrs. Seabury herself understand it?" he mused, only half speaking to me. "I'm sure that this Sherburne is clever enough to do so, at any rate."

A hearty round of applause came from the dancers as the music ceased. None left the floor, however, but remained waiting for the encore eagerly, scarcely changing the positions in which they had stopped.

"To my mind," Kennedy resumed, with the music, "several things seem significant. Many people have noticed that after marriage women generally lose much of their ardor for dancing. I feel that it is an unsafe matter on which to generalize, but—well—Mrs. Seabury seems not to have lost it."

"Then," I inquired quickly, "you imply that—she is not really as much in love with her husband as she would have us think—or, perhaps, herself believes?"

"Not quite that," he replied doubtfully. "But I am wondering whether there is such a factor that must be considered."

Before I could answer Kennedy touched my arm. Instinctively I followed the direction of his eye and saw Mrs. Seabury step out on the floor across from us. Without a word from Craig, I realized that the man with her must be Sherburne, our "tango thief."

Fashionably dressed, affable, seemingly superficially, at least, well educated, tall, graceful, with easy manners, I could not help seeing at a glance that he was one of the most erotic dancers on the little floor.

As they passed near us, Mrs. Seabury caught Kennedy's eye in momentary recognition. Her face, flushed with the dance, colored perhaps a shade deeper, but not noticeably to her partner, who was devoting himself wholly and skillfully to leading her in a manner that one could see called forth frequent comment from others, less favored.

As they sat down after this dance and the encore, Craig motioned to the waiter at our table and whispered to him.

A few moments later, a man whom I had seen around the hotel on my infrequent visits, but did not know, slipped quietly into a seat beside Kennedy, even deeper in the shadow of the recess in which we were sitting.

"Walter, I'd like to have you meet Mr. Dunn, the house detective," whispered Kennedy under his breath.

The usual interchange of remarks followed, during which Dunn was evidently waiting for Kennedy to reveal the real purpose of our visit.

"By the way, Dunn," remarked Craig at length, "who is that fellow—over there with the woman in blue—the fellow with the heavy braided coat?"

Dunn craned his neck cautiously, then shrugged his shoulders. "I've seen him here with her before," he remarked. "I don't know him, though. Why?"

Briefly Kennedy sketched such facts of a supposedly hypothetical case as would be likely to secure an opinion from the house man. Dunn narrowed his eyes thoughtfully.

"That's rather a ticklish situation, Kennedy," Dunn remarked when Craig had stated the case, omitting all reference to Seabury's name as well as his suspicions. "Of course," he went on, "I know we've got to protect the name of the hotel. And I know we can't have men meeting our women patrons, doing a gavotte or two—and then fox-trotting them into blackmail."

Dunn stroked his chin thoughtfully. "You see, we can do a great deal to suppress card sharps, agents for fake mining stocks, passers of worthless checks, and confidence men of that sort. But it is not so simple to thwart the vultures who prey on the gullibility and passions of the so-called idle rich."

"There must be something you can do to get it on this fellow, though," persisted Craig.

"Well," considered the house man, "we have what might be called our hotel secret service—several men and women operating entirely apart from the hotel force of detectives who, like myself, are too well known to clever crooks. Nobody knows them, except myself. There's one—that girl over there dancing with that middle-aged man who has mail sent here but doesn't live here. Could they be of use?"

"Just the thing," exclaimed Craig enthusiastically. "Can't you have her get acquainted—just as a precaution—with that man? His name, by the way, I understand is Sherburne."

"I'll do it," agreed Dunn, rising unostentatiously.

Just then I happened to glance across the floor and over the heads of those seated at the tables at a door opposite us. It was my turn hastily to seize Kennedy's elbow.

"Good God!" I exclaimed involuntarily.

There, in the further doorway of the tea room, stood Judson Seabury himself!

Without a word, Craig rose and quickly crossed the dancing floor, stopping before Mrs. Seabury's table. Instead of waiting to be introduced, he sat down deliberately, as though he had been there all the time and had just gone out of the room and come back. He did it all so quickly that he was

able in a perfectly natural way to turn and see that Seabury himself had been watching and now was advancing slowly, picking his way among the crowded tables.

From around my corner I saw Craig whisper a word or two to Mrs. Seabury, then rise and meet Seabury less than halfway from the door by which he had been standing.

The tension of the situation was too much for Mrs. Seabury. Confounded and bewildered, she fled precipitately, passing within a few feet of my table. Her face was positively ghastly.

As for Sherburne, he merely sat a moment and surveyed the irate husband with calm and studied insolence at a safe distance. Then he, too, rose and turned deliberately on his heel.

Curious to know how Craig would meet the dilemma, I watched eagerly and was surprised to see Seabury, after a moment's whispered talk, turn and leave the tea room by the same door through which he had entered.

"What did you do?" I asked, as Craig rejoined me a few moments later. "What did you say? My hat's off to you," I added in admiration.

"Told him I had trailed her here with one of my operatives, but was convinced there was nothing wrong, after all," he returned.

"You mean," I asked as the result of Craig's quick thinking dawned on me, "that you told him Sherburne was *your* operative?"

Kennedy nodded. "I want to see him, now, if I can," he said simply.

CHAPTER VI

THE SERUM DIAGNOSIS

We paid our check and Kennedy and I sauntered in the direction Sherburne had taken, finding him ultimately in the cafe, alone. Without further introduction Kennedy approached him.

"So—you are a detective?" sneered Sherburne superciliously, elevating his eyebrows just the fraction of an inch.

"Not exactly," parried Kennedy, seating himself beside Sherburne. Then in a tone as if he were willing to get down, without further preliminary, to business, seemingly negotiating, he asked: "Mr. Sherburne, may I ask just what it is on which you base your claim on Mrs. Seabury? Is it merely meeting her here? If that is so you must know that it amounts to nothing—now."

The two men faced each other, each taking the other's measure.

"Nothing?" coolly retorted Sherburne. "Perhaps not—in itself. But—suppose—I—had—"

He said the words slowly, as he fumbled in his fob pocket, then cut them short as he found what he was looking for. Safely, in the palm of his hand, he displayed a latch-key, momentarily, then with a taunting smile dropped it back again into the fob pocket.

"Perhaps she gave it to me—perhaps I was a welcome visitor in her apartment," he insinuated. "How would she relish having that told to Mr. Seabury—backed up by the possession of the key?"

I could not help feeling that for the moment Kennedy was checkmated. Sherburne was playing a desperate game and apparently held the key, however he got it, as a trump card.

"Thank you," was all that Kennedy said, as he rose. "I wanted to know how far you could go. Perhaps we can meet you halfway."

Sherburne smiled cynically. "All the way," he said quietly, as we left the cafe.

In silence Kennedy left the hotel and jumped into a cab, directing the driver to the laboratory, where he had asked Mrs. Seabury to wait for him. We found her there, still much agitated.

Hastily Craig explained to her how he had saved the situation, but her mind was too occupied over something else to pay much attention.

"I—I can't blame you, Professor Kennedy," she cried, choking down a sob in her voice, "but I have just discovered—he has told me that it is even worse than I had anticipated."

We were both following her closely, the incident of the latch-key still fresh in mind.

"Some time ago," she hurried on, "I missed my latch-key. I thought nothing of it at the time—thought perhaps I had mislaid it. But today he told me—just after the dance, even while I was making him think I would pay him the money, because—because I liked him—he told me he had it. The brute! He must have picked my handbag!"

Her eyes were blazing now with indignation. Yet as she looked at us both, evidently the recollection of what had just happened came flooding over her mind, and she dropped her head in her hands in helpless dismay at the new development.

Craig pulled out his watch hastily. "It is about six, Mrs. Seabury," he reassured. "Can you be here at, say, eight?"

"I will be here," she murmured pliantly, realizing her own helplessness.

She had scarcely closed the door when Craig seized the telephone, and hurriedly tried to locate Seabury himself.

"Apparently no trace of him yet," he fumed, as he hung up the receiver. "The first problem is how to get that key."

Instantly I thought of Dunn's secret service girl. Kennedy shook his head doubtfully. "I'm afraid there is no time for that," he answered. "But will you attend to that end of the affair for me, Walter? I have just a little more work here at the laboratory before I am ready. I don't care how you do it, but I want you to convey to Sherburne the welcome news that Mrs. Seabury is prepared to give in, in any way he may see fit, if he will call her up here at eight o'clock."

Kennedy had already plunged back among his beakers and test tubes, and with these slender instructions I sallied forth in my quest of Sherburne. I had little difficulty in locating him and delivering my message, which he received with a satisfaction that invited assault and battery and mayhem. However, I managed to restrain myself and rejoin Craig in the laboratory, shortly after seven o'clock.

I had scarcely had time to assure Kennedy of the success of my mission, when we were surprised to see the door open and Seabury himself appear.

His face was actually haggard. Whether or not he had believed the hastily concocted story of Kennedy at the Vanderveer, his mind had not ceased to work on the other fears that had prompted his coming to us in the first place.

"I've been trying to locate you all over," greeted Craig.

Seabury heaved a sigh and passed his hand, with its familiar motion, over his forehead. "I thought perhaps you might be able to find out something from this stuff," he answered, unwrapping a package which he was carrying. "Some samples of the food I've been getting. If you don't find anything in this, I've others I want tested."

As I looked at the man's drawn face, I wondered whether in fact there might be something in his fears. On the surface, the thing did indeed seem to place Agatha Seabury in a bad light. At the sight of the key in Sherburne's possession I had grasped at the straw that he might have conceived some diabolical plan to get rid of Seabury for purposes of his own. But then, I reasoned, would he have been so free in showing the key if he had realized that it might cast suspicion on himself? I was forced to ask myself again whether she might, in her hysterical fear of exposure by the adroit blackmailer, have really attempted to poison her husband.

It was a desperate situation. But Kennedy was apparently ready to meet it, though he seemed to take no great interest in the food samples Seabury had just brought.

Instead he seemed to rely wholly on the tests he had already begun with the peculiar tissue I had seen him boiling and the blood serum derived from Seabury himself.

Without a word he took three tubes from the incubator, in which I had seen him place them some time before, and, as they stood in a rack, indicated them lightly with his finger.

"I think I can clear part of this mystery up immediately," he began, speaking more to himself than to Seabury and myself. "Here I have a tested dialyzer in which has been placed a half cubic centimeter of pure clear serum. Here is another dialyzer with the same amount of serum, but no tissue, such as Mr. Jameson has seen me place in this first one. Here is still another with the tissue in distilled water, but no blood serum. I have placed all the dialyzers in tubes of distilled water and all are covered with a substance known as toluol and corked to keep them from contamination."

Kennedy held up before us the three tubes and Seabury gazed on them with a sort of fascination, scarcely believing that in them in some way might be contained the verdict on the momentous problem that troubled his mind and might perhaps mean life or death to him.

Carefully Kennedy took from each tube a few cubic centimeters of the dialyzate and into each he poured a little liquid from a tiny vial which I noticed was labelled "Ninhydrin."

"This," he explained as he set down the vial, "is a substance which gives a colorless solution with water, but when mixed with albumins, peptones, or amino-acids becomes violet on boiling. Tube number three must remain colorless. Number two may be violet. Number one may approximate number two or be more deeply colored. If one and two are about the same I call my test negative. But if one is more deeply colored than two, then it is positive. The other tube is the control."

Impatiently we waited as the three tubes simmered over the heat. What would they show? Seabury's eyes were glued on them, his hand trembling in the presence of some unknown danger.

Slowly the liquid in the second tube turned to violet. But more rapidly and more deeply appeared the violet in number one. The test was positive.

"What is it?" gasped Seabury hoarsely, leaning over close.

"This," exclaimed Kennedy, "is the famous Abderhalden test—serum-diagnosis—discovered by Professor Emile Abderhalden of Halle. It rests on the fact that when a foreign substance comes into the blood, the blood reacts, with the formation of a protective ferment produced as a result of physiologic and pathologic conditions.

"For instance," he went on, "a certain albumin always produces a certain ferment. Presence in the blood stream of blood-foreign substances calls forth a ferment that will digest them and split them into molecules. The forces of nature form and mobilize directly in the blood serum.

"Let me get this clearly. Albumin cannot pass through the pores of an animal membrane, since the individual molecules are too large. If, however, the albumin is broken up by a ferment-action, then the molecules become small enough to pass through."

Seabury was listening like a man on whom a stunning blow was about to descend.

"Thus we can tell," proceeded Kennedy, "whether there is such a ferment in blood serum as would be produced by a certain condition, for when the ferment is there blood from the individual possessing it will digest a similar proteid in a dialyzing thimble kept at body temperature.

"Why," cried Kennedy, swept along by the wonder of the thing, "this test opens up a vista of alluring and extensive possibilities. The human organism actually diagnoses its own illnesses automatically. It is infinitely more exact, more rapid, and more certain than all that human art can attain. Each organ contains special ferments in its cells in the most subtle way attuned to the molecular condition of the particular cell substance and with complete indifference to other cells.

"Don't you see? It diagnoses at the very first stage. You take a small quantity of blood, derive the serum, then introduce a piece of tissue such as you wish to find out whether it is diseased or not. The thing is of overwhelming importance. One can discover a condition even before the organ itself shows it outwardly. It means a new epoch in medicine. As for me, I call it the new 'police service' of the organism—working with perfect, scientific accuracy."

"Wh-what do you find?" reiterated Seabury.

"I have made tests for about everything I can suspect," returned Kennedy, taking the tubes and pouring the liquid from number two into number one until they were equalized in color, thus testing them, while we watched every action closely.

"You see," he digressed, "to get the two the same shade I have to dilute the first by the second. Now, the dialyzers are not permeable to albumin. Therefore the violet color indicates that the blood serum in this case contains ferments which the body is making to split up some foreign substance in the blood, such as I suspected and obtained from the hospital. The test is positive. Mr. Seabury, how long have you felt as you say that you do?"

"Several weeks," the man returned weakly.

"That is fortunate," cried Kennedy, "fortunate that it has not been several months."

He paused, then added the startling statement, "Mr. Seabury, I can find no evidence here of poison. As a matter of fact, the wonderful Abderhalden test shows me that you have one of the most common forms of internal disease that occur for the most part in persons at or after middle life, about the age of fifty, more common in men than in women—a disease which taken in time, as it has been revealed by this wonderful test, may be cured and you may be saved—an incipient cancer of the stomach."

Kennedy paused a moment and listened. I fancied I heard someone in the hall. But he went on, "The person whom you suspect of poisoning you—"

There came a suppressed scream from the door, as it was flung open and Agatha Seabury stood there, staring with fixed, set eyes at Kennedy, then at her husband. Mechanically I looked at my watch. It was precisely eight. Kennedy had evidently prolonged the test for a purpose.

"The person whom you suspected," he repeated firmly, "is innocent!"

A moment Agatha stood there, then as the thing dawned on her, she uttered one cry, "Judson!"

She reeled as Kennedy with a quick step or two caught her.

Seabury himself seemed dazed.

"And I have—" he ejaculated, then stopped.

Kennedy raised his hand. "Just a moment, please," he interrupted, as he placed Mrs. Seabury in a chair, then glanced hastily at his watch.

She saw the motion and seemed suddenly to realize that it was nearing the time for Sherburne to call up. With a mighty effort she seemed to grip herself. She had just been shocked to know that she was charged unjustly. But had she been cleared from one peril only to fall a victim to another—the one she already feared? Was Sherburne to escape, after all, and ruin her?

The telephone tinkled insistently. Kennedy seized the receiver.

"Who is it?" we heard him ask. "Mr. Sherburne—oh yes."

Mrs. Seabury paled at the name. I saw her shoot a covert glance at her husband, and was relieved to see that his face betrayed as yet no recognition of the name. She turned and listened to Kennedy, straining her ears to catch every syllable and interpret every scrap of the one-sided conversation.

Quickly Craig had jammed the receiver down on a little metal base which we had not noticed near the instrument. Three prongs reaching upward from the base engaged the receiver tightly, fitting closely about it. Then he took up a watch-case receiver to listen through, in place of the regular receiver.

"Sherburne, you say?" he repeated. "H. Morgan Sherburne?"

Apparently the voice at the other end of the wire replied rather peevisly, for Kennedy endeavored to smooth over the delay. We waited impatiently as he reiterated the name. Why was he so careful about it? The moments were speeding fast and Mrs. Seabury found the suspense terrific.

"Must pay—we'll never get anything on you?" Craig repeated after a few moments further parley. "Very well. I am commissioned to meet you there in ten minutes and settle the thing up on those terms," he concluded as he clapped the regular receiver back on its hook with a hasty good-by and faced us triumphantly.

"The deuce I won't get anything. I've got it!" he exclaimed.

Judson Seabury was too stunned by the revelation that he had a cancer to follow clearly the maze of events.

"That," cried Kennedy, rising quickly, "is what is known as the telescribe—a new invention of Edison that records on a specially prepared phonograph cylinder all that is said—both ways—over a telephone wire. Come!"

Ten minutes later, in a cab that had been waiting at the door, we pulled up at the Vanderveer.

Without a word, leaving Judson Seabury and his wife in the waiting cab, Craig sprang out, followed by me, as he signaled.

There was Sherburne, brazen and insolent, in the cafe as we entered, from a rear door, and came upon him before he knew it, our friend, Dunn, whom we had met in the lobby, hovering concealed outside, ready to come to our assistance.

In a moment Kennedy was at Sherburne's elbow, pinching it in the manner familiar to international crooks.

"Will you tell me what your precise business is in this hotel?" shot out Craig before Sherburne could recover from his surprise.

Sherburne flushed and flared—then became pale with rage.

"None of your damned insolence!" he ground out, then paused, cutting the next remark short as he gritted, "What do you mean? Shall I send a wax impression of that key—"

Kennedy had quickly flashed the cylinder of the telescribe before his eyes and instinctively Sherburne seemed to realize that with all his care in using typewriters and telephones, some kind of record of his extortion had been obtained.

For a moment he crumpled up. Then Kennedy seized him by the elbow, dragging him toward a side door opposite that at which our cab was standing.

"I mean," he muttered, "that I have the goods on you at last and you'll get the limit for blackmail through this little wax cylinder if you so much as show your face in New York again. I don't care where you go, but it must be by the first train. Understand?"

A moment later we returned to the cab, where it had pulled up in the shadow, away from the carriage entrance.

"You—you'll forgive me—for my—unjust suspicions—Agatha?" we heard a voice from the depths of the cab say.

Kennedy pulled me back in time not to interrupt a muffled "Yes."

Craig coughed.

As he reached a hand in through the cab door to bid good-night to the reunited couple, I saw Mrs. Seabury start, then turn and drop into her handbag the key which Kennedy had extracted from Sherburne's pocket in the *mêlée* and now conveyed back to her in the handshake.

CHAPTER VII

THE DIAMOND QUEEN

"Meet *Sylvania* Quarantine midnight. Strange death Rawaruska. Retain you in interest steamship company. Thompson, Purser."

Kennedy had torn open the envelope of a wireless message that had come from somewhere out in the Atlantic and had just been delivered to him at dinner one evening. He read it quickly and tossed it over to me.

"Rawaruska," I repeated. "Do you suppose that means the clever little Russian dancer who was in the 'Revue' last year?"

"There could hardly be two of that unusual name who would be referred to so familiarly," returned Craig. "Curious that we've had nothing in the wireless news about it."

"Perhaps it has been delayed," I suggested. "Let me ring up the *Star*. They may have something now."

A few minutes later I rejoined Craig at the table. A report had just been received that Rawaruska had been discovered, late the night before, unconscious in her room on the *Sylvania*. The ship's surgeon had been summoned, but before he was able to do anything for her she died. That was all the report said. It was meager, but it served to excite our interest.

Renée Rawaruska, I knew, was a popular little Russian dancer abroad who had come to America the season previous and had made a big hit on Broadway. Beautiful, strange, fiery, she incarnated the mysterious Slav. I knew her to be one of those Russian dancers before whose performances Parisian audiences had gone wild with admiration, one who had carried her art beyond anything known in other countries, fascinating, subtle.

Hastily over the telephone Kennedy made arrangements to go down to Quarantine on a revenue tug that was leaving to meet the *Sylvania*.

It was a weird trip through the choppy winter seas of the upper bay and the Narrows, in the dark, with the wind cold and bleak.

The tug had scarcely cast off from the Battery, where we met it, when a man, who had been watching us from a crevice of his turned-up ulster collar, quietly edged over.

"You are Professor Kennedy, the detective?" he began, more as if asserting it than asking the question.

Craig eyed him a moment, but said nothing.

"I understand," he went on, not waiting for a reply, "that you are interested in the case of that little Russian actress, Rawaruska?"

Still Kennedy said nothing.

"My name is Wade—of the Customs Service," pursued the man, nothing abashed. Sticking his head forward between the corners of his high collar he added, in a lowered voice, "You have heard, I suppose, of the great amber diamond, 'The Invincible'?"

Kennedy nodded and I thought hurriedly of all the big stones I had ever heard—the Pitt, the Orloff, the Koh-i-noor, the Star of the South, the Cullinan, and others.

"The Invincible, you know," he added, "is the largest amber diamond in the world, almost the size of the famous Cullinan, over three hundred carats. It was found in the dry diggings of the Vaal River, a few miles from Kimberley. The dry diggings are independent of the De Beers combine, of course. Well, its owner has always been in the position of Mark Twain's man with the million-dollar bank-note who found it too large to cash. No one knows just what an amber diamond of that size is really worth. This one is almost perfect, resembles the huge top of a decanter stopper. It's a beautiful orange color and has been estimated at—well, as high as close to a quarter of a million, though, as I said, that is all guesswork."

"Yes?" remarked Kennedy, more for politeness than anything else.

Wade leaned over closer.

"The Invincible," he whispered, shielding his lips from the keen, biting gale, "was last known to belong to the De Guerres, of Antwerp. One of my special agents abroad has cabled me to look out for it. He thinks there is reason to believe it will be smuggled into America for safe keeping during the troubles in Belgium."

It seemed to make no difference to the customs man that Kennedy did not exactly welcome him with open arms. "The De Guerres are well-known dealers in diamonds, one of the leading houses in the 'city of diamonds,' as Antwerp has been called. One of the De Guerres is on the *Sylvania*, the junior partner—" he paused, then added,—"the husband, I believe, of Rawaruska. I thought perhaps you might be willing to try to help me."

"I should be glad to," replied Kennedy tersely, pondering what the officer had told us.

Nothing more was said on the trip and at last we came to the *Sylvania*, lying grim and dark of

hull off the little cluster of Quarantine buildings, with myriads of twinkling lights on her, far above but scarcely relieving the blackness of the leviathan form.

Thompson, the purser, a quiet, unexcitable Englishman, met us as we came over the side, and for the moment we lost sight of our new-found friend, Wade.

"Perhaps you didn't know it," informed Thompson as we made our way through the ship, "but Rawaruska was married—had been for some time."

"Who was her husband?" queried Kennedy, seeking confirmation of what we had already heard.

"Armand De Guerre, a Belgian, of Antwerp," was the reply, "one of the partners in a famous old diamond-cutting firm of that city."

Kennedy looked at the purser keenly for a moment, then asked, "Were they traveling together?"

"Oh, yes,—that is, he had engaged a room, but you know how crowded the boats are with refugees fleeing to America from the war. He gave up his room, or rather his share of it, to a woman, a professional saleswoman, well known, I believe, in Antwerp as well as the Rue de la Paix in Paris and Maiden Lane and Fifth Avenue of your city, a Miss Hoffman—Elsa Hoffman. She shared the room with Rawaruska, while De Guerre took his chances in the steerage."

As we walked down one of the main corridors we noticed ahead of us a seemingly very nervous and excited gentleman engaged apparently in a heated conversation with another.

"Monsieur De Guerre," whispered Thompson as we approached.

The two seemed to be just on the point of parting, as we neared them, and, I think, our approach hastened them. I could not hear what one of them said, but I heard De Guerre almost hiss, as he turned on his heel, "Well, sir, you were the last one seen with her alive."

A moment later the purser introduced us to De Guerre. There was something about him which I can hardly express on paper, a sort of hypnotic fascination. I felt instinctively that such a man would wield a powerful influence over some women. Was it in his eyes, or was it merely his ardent foreign grace?

"You *must* find out the truth," he cried eagerly. "Already they are saying that it was suicide. But I cannot believe it. It cannot be. No,—she was murdered!"

Kennedy ventured no opinion, but now, more than ever, hastened to signify to the purser that he wanted to look over the ground as quickly as possible before the ship docked.

Rawaruska, we found, had occupied Room 186, on the port side of one of the lower decks. Kennedy seemed to be keenly interested, as we approached the room in which the body still lay, awaiting arrival at the pier a few hours later.

The stateroom, apparently, ran to the very skin of the vessel and the ports opened directly on the water, not upon an outside deck, as with the rooms above it. It was an outside room at the end of a sort of cross alleyway, and it was impossible that anyone could have reached it except through the corridors.

Attached to it was a little bath and directly across from the bath, on the other side, was another small room which was occupied by her maid, Cecilie, a French girl.

In the main bedroom was a double bed, a couch, a wardrobe, and a small, thin-legged writing or dressing table.

On the white bed lay the now cold and marble figure of the once vivacious little dancer who had enchanted thousands in life—petite, brunette, voluptuous. Rawaruska was beautiful, even in death.

Her finely chiseled features, lacking that heaviness which often characterizes European women, were, however, terribly drawn and her perfect complexion on which she had prided herself was now all mottled and bluish.

As Kennedy examined the body, I could not help observing that there seemed to be every evidence that the girl had been asphyxiated in some strange manner.

Had it been by a deft touch on a nerve of her beautiful, soft neck that had constricted the throat and cut off her breath? I had heard of such things. Or had it been asphyxiation due to a poison that had paralyzed the chest muscles?

The purser, as soon as we came aboard, had summoned the ship's surgeon, and we had scarcely arrived at Rawaruska's room when he joined us. He was one of those solid, reliable doctors, not brilliant, but one in whom you might place great confidence, a Dr. Sanderson, educated in Edinburgh, and long a follower of the sea.

"Was there any evidence of a struggle?" asked Kennedy.

"No, none whatever," replied the doctor.

"No peculiar odor, no receptacle of any kind near her that might have held poison?"

"No, nothing that could have been used to hold poison or a drug."

Kennedy was regarding the face of the little dancer attentively. "Most extraordinary," he remarked slowly, "that congested look she has."

"Yes," agreed Dr. Sanderson, "her face was flushed and blue when I got to her—cyanotic, I should say. There seemed to be a great dryness of her throat and the muscles of her throat were paretic. Her pupils were dilated, too, and her pulse was rapid, as if from a greatly increased blood pressure."

"Was she conscious?" asked Kennedy, almost reverently turning over her rigid body and looking at the back of her neck and the upper spine. "Did she recognize anything, say anything?"

"She seemed to be in a state of amnesia," replied Sanderson slowly. "Evidently if she had seen anything she had forgotten or wouldn't tell," he added cautiously.

"Who found her?" asked Craig. "How was she discovered?"

"Why, Miss Hoffman found her," replied the purser quickly. "She called one of the stewards. She had been sitting in the library reading until quite late and Rawaruska had retired early, for she was not a good sailor, they tell me. It must have been nearly midnight when De Guerre and a friend, pausing at the library door on their way from the smoking room, saw Miss Hoffman, and all three stopped in the Ritz restaurant for a bite to eat.

"De Guerre walked down the corridor with Miss Hoffman afterwards," he continued, "and left her as she went into the room with his wife. Perhaps a minute later—long enough anyway so that he had reached the other end of the corridor—she screamed. She had turned on the light and had found Rawaruska lying half across the bed, unconscious. Miss Hoffman called to the steward to summon Dr. Preston, but he came to me first, instead."

"Dr. Preston?" repeated Kennedy.

"Yes, a young American physician, the friend who had been with De Guerre in the smoking room part of the evening, and later made up the party in the restaurant," vouchsafed Sanderson.

"The man De Guerre was talking to as we came down the hall," put in Thompson.

"H'm," mused Kennedy, evidently thinking of the remark we had overheard.

"I've talked with him now and then myself," admitted Sanderson; "a bright fellow who has been studying abroad and after many adventures succeeded in getting across the border into Holland and thence to England. He managed to squeeze into the steerage of the *Sylvania*, though, of course, like De Guerre, he was classed as a first-cabin passenger. He had become very friendly with Rawaruska and her party while they were waiting for bookings in London."

Thompson leaned over. "The steward in the corridor tells me," he said in a low tone, "that early in the evening Dr. Preston and Rawaruska were on the promenade deck together."

I tried vaguely to piece together the scraps of information which we had gleaned. Kennedy, however, said nothing, but was now leaning over the body of the little dancer, looking at the upper region of her spine attentively. Quietly, from a group of three or four little red marks on her back he squeezed out several drops of liquid, absorbing them on a piece of sterile gauze.

A moment later, De Guerre, who had quietly slipped away during the examination, as if unable to bear the sight of the tragedy, returned, and with him was a young woman.

"Miss Elsa Hoffman," he introduced.

Elsa Hoffman was of a fascinating type, tall, finely gowned, of superb poise, physically perfect. One could not help admiring her deep blue eyes and blonde radiance. Indeed, I felt that one must rely much on her attractions in pursuit of her business of selling gems to wealthy men and women. Still, in spite of her evident poise, the tragedy seemed to have oppressed and unnerved her.

She did not seem to be able to add much to the scanty stock of facts we had, even after repeating the story of her discovery of Rawaruska, which was substantially as the purser had already told it.

"I—I think perhaps Mr. Kennedy ought to question Cecilie," she suggested finally, turning toward De Guerre, who nodded his assent.

A sudden movement in the passageway followed, and the door opened quietly. A man entered, a youngish fellow of fine physique and attractive face. I recognized him immediately as Dr. Preston. His apparently usually debonair manner was visibly subdued by the presence of death.

Evidently he had just heard that someone was investigating the tragedy and had hastened to be present. Both De Guerre and Elsa nodded to him, a trifle coldly. Only a moment did he pause to look at the drawn face on the pillow, then stood apart, ill at ease until Kennedy had finished his minute examination.

As Kennedy moved away from the bed, Dr. Preston contrived to place himself near him and apart from the rest.

"Mr. Kennedy," he began in a husky undertone, "they tell me you have been engaged to investigate this—this awful affair."

Kennedy assented.

"If there is anything I can do to help you," Preston added anxiously, "I hope you will command me. In fact," he added as Kennedy nodded while Preston glanced covertly at De Guerre and Miss Hoffman, "I hope you'll get at the truth."

"Thank you," responded Kennedy, meeting his eye squarely this time; "I shall be glad to call on you if occasion arises."

I watched Preston closely, not quite making out just what he was driving at, nor the reason for the strained relations that now seemed to exist among the former friends. Still following Kennedy's every motion, Preston retired to the position of a more than interested spectator.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ANESTHETIC VAPORIZER

Craig had completed a hasty search of the room, with its little dressing table, two trunks, and a cabinet. Everything seemed to have been kept in a most neat and orderly manner by the attentive Cecilie, who was apparently a model servant.

The little white bathroom was equally immaculate, and Kennedy passed next to an examination of the little room of the French maid.

Cecilie was a pretty, dark little being, with snapping black eyes, the type of winsome French maid that one would naturally have expected Rawaruska, with her artist's love of the beautiful, to have picked out to serve her dainty self.

As I ran my eye over the group that was now intently watching Kennedy at work, I fancied I caught Elsa Hoffman eyeing Cecilie sharply, and I am sure that once at least those black eyes snapped back a wireless message of defiance at the penetrating eyes of blue. I could feel instinctively the atmosphere of hostility between the two women.

"The door was not locked, you say?" repeated Craig, following up one of the first of his own questions to Cecilie, which had resulted in unearthing this new fact.

"Non, monsieur," replied Cecilie in accented English which was charming. "Mam'selle—we all called her that, her stage name,—used to leave it open in case of fire or accident. She had a terrible fear of drowning. You know there have been some awful wrecks lately, and she was, oh, so nervous."

"But her valuables?" prompted Craig quickly, watching the effect of his question.

"All in the ship's safe, in care of the purser," replied Cecilie. "So were Miss Hoffman's."

"Yes," corroborated Thompson, "and, besides, the corridors and passageways are well patrolled by stewards at all times."

The search of Cecilie's room, which was smaller and more scantily furnished, took only a few minutes.

A suppressed exclamation from Craig served to divert my attention from the study of those around me to the study of Kennedy himself, and what he had discovered.

Hidden away in the back of a drawer in a small chiffonier, he had come across several articles that aroused interest if they did not whet the blade of suspicion.

"*Mon Dieu!*" exclaimed the maid as Kennedy suppressed a smile of gratification at the outcome of the search. "But that is not mine!"

Kennedy drew out from the back of the drawer, where it had been tucked, a little silken bag. He opened it. On the surface it seemed that the bag was empty. But as he brought it cautiously closer to his face to peer in, I could see that just a whiff of its contents was enough.

"What have you there?" I asked Kennedy, careful that no one else could overhear us.

"Cayenne pepper, snuff, and some other chemical," sneezed Craig. "Very effective to throw into the face of anyone," he commented, closing quickly the bag by its loose drawing strings, "that is, if you merely want to blind him and put him out temporarily."

I did not pay much attention to the protests of the maid, nor the look of triumph that crossed the face of Elsa Hoffman and surprise exhibited by Dr. Preston. For Kennedy had picked up from the same drawer a little toilet vaporizer, too, and was examining it minutely.

As he held it up, I could see, or rather I fancied that it was empty. He pressed the bulb lightly, then seemed to start back quickly.

"What's that?" I queried, mystified at his actions.

"Something the French secret service spies call the 'bad perfume,'" he returned frankly, "an anesthetic so incredibly rapid and violent that the spies, usually women, who use it wear a filter veil over their own mouths and noses to protect themselves."

The whole thing was so queer that I could only wonder what might be the explanation. Cecilie was protesting volubly, now in fair English, now in liquid French, that she knew absolutely nothing of the articles.

I wondered whether Rawaruska herself might not have placed them there. Might she not have been a spy, one of those clever little dancers who had wormed themselves by their graceful agility into the good graces of some of the world's leading men and made Russia a recognized diplomatic power?

Something like the same idea must have been suggested to Dr. Sanderson, who was standing next me, for he bent over and remarked to me in an undertone, with a significant glance at what Kennedy had discovered, "I suppose you realize that the position of the Russian government has undergone a marked change since the Russian dancers have won international popularity?"

I had not thought much about it before, but now that he mentioned it, I could not help a nod of assent.

"Why, I have heard," he continued with the air of a man who is imparting a big piece of information, "that the beautiful young women of the imperial ballet mingle in the society of the capitals of the world, make friends with politicians, social leaders, high officials, and exert a great influence in favor of their own country wherever they go. No doubt," he added, "they sometimes convey valuable information to the Foreign Office which could not be obtained in any other way."

I was not paying much attention to him, but still the doctor rattled on in an undertone, "Some of these dancers are past masters in the art of intrigue. Do you suppose Rawaruska and the rest have had the task set for them to win back the public opinion of your country, which departed from its traditional policy of friendliness during the Japanese war?"

I made no answer. I was engrossed in considering the primary question. Could it have been a suicide, after all? Surely she had removed the evidences of it much better than in any other case I had ever seen.

Or, had there been a "triangle," perhaps a quadrangle here? I could not persuade myself that De Guerre cared greatly for his wife, except perhaps to be jealous of anyone else having her. He was too attentive to Elsa Hoffman, and she, in turn, was not of the type to care much for anyone. As for Dr. Preston, although he seemed to have had a friendship for Rawaruska, I could not exactly fit him into the scheme of things.

We proceeded up the bay on the *Sylvania*, but were able to discover nothing further that night. As we left the ship at the dock in the morning we ran across Wade, who was quietly directing a dozen or so of his men.

"Any trace yet of the Invincible?" asked Craig, stopping in an unostentatious corner.

The customs man shook his head gravely. "Not yet," he replied. "But I'm not discouraged. If we miss it here in the customs inspection it will be sure to turn up later. There's a shady jeweler on Fifth Avenue, Margot, who knows these Antwerp people pretty well. I have a man working there, a diamond cutter, and other agents in the trade. Oh, I'll hear about it soon enough, if it is here. Only I'd like to have done something spectacular, something that would count for me at Washington. Have you found out anything?"

Briefly Kennedy told him some of the scattered facts we had discovered, just enough to satisfy him without taking him into our confidence.

"I'm going to be busy in the laboratory, Walter," remarked Kennedy as our taxicab extricated itself from the ruck of the river-front streets. "I don't know that there is anything that you can do—except—well, yes. I wish you'd try to keep an eye on some of these people—that maid, Cecilie, especially."

We had learned that De Guerre was to stop at the Vanderveer and, later in the morning, I dropped into the hotel and glanced over the register. De Guerre was registered there and Cecilie had a little room, also, pending the disposal he would make of her. Miss Hoffman had rooms of her own, which she had evidently re-engaged, with a family in a residential street not far from the hotel.

The clerk told me that De Guerre was out, but that the maid had returned after having been out alone, for a short time, also. The lobby of the Vanderveer was fairly crowded with people by this time, and I found no difficulty in keeping in the background and still seeing pretty much everything that went on.

It was rather tame, however, and I was still debating whether I should not do something active, when I happened to glance up and catch sight of a familiar face. It was Dr. Preston making inquiries for someone of the room clerk. I dodged back of a pillar and waited, covering myself with an early morning war extra that repeated the news of the night before.

A few moments later, Preston, who had received an answer from whomever he was calling, edged

his way toward one of the deserted little reception rooms near a side carriage entrance. Carefully, I trailed him.

It was some minutes before I could make up my mind to risk passing the door of the little parlor and being discovered, but I was growing impatient. As I glanced in I was astonished to see him talking earnestly to Cecilie. I did not dare stop, for fear one or the other might look up, but I could see that Preston was eagerly questioning her. Her face was averted from me and I could not read even her expression. The passageway was deserted, and if I paused I would inevitably attract attention. So I kept on, turning instinctively in the labyrinth and coming back to the lobby, where I found a position near the telephone booths which gave me a concealed view at least of the door of the parlor around an angle. I waited.

Perhaps five minutes passed. Then Cecilie and Dr. Preston suddenly emerged from the reception room. Evidently the maid was anxious to get away, perhaps afraid to be seen with him. With a word, she almost ran down the corridor in the direction of the rear elevators, and Preston, with a queer look on his face, came slowly toward me.

Instinctively I drew back into a telephone booth; then it occurred to me that if I emerged just as he passed he would not be likely to suspect anything, and I might have a chance to study him.

I did so, and was quite amused at the look of surprise on his face as I greeted him. Still, I do not think he thought I was shadowing him. We paused for a moment on the street, after a conventional exchange of remarks about the tragedy to poor little Rawaruska.

"That Miss Hoffman seems to be a very capable woman," I remarked, by way of dragging the conversation into channels into which it seemed unlikely to drift naturally.

"Y-yes," he agreed, as I caught a sidelong glance from the corner of his eye. "I believe she has had a rather checkered career. I understand that she was a nurse, a trained nurse, once."

There was something about the remark that impressed me. It was made deliberately, I fancied. What his purpose was, I could not fathom, but I felt that in the instant while he had hesitated he had debated and made up his mind to say it.

My face betraying nothing to his searching glance, he pulled hastily at his watch. "I'm going downtown on the subway—to clear up some of the muss that this European business has got me in with my bankers," he said quickly. "I'd be glad to have you call on me at any time at the Charlton, just up the avenue a bit. Good-day, sir. I'm glad to have met you. Drop in on me."

He was gone, scarcely waiting for me to reply, leaving me to wonder what was the cause of his strange actions.

Mechanically I looked at my own watch and decided that I had left Craig undisturbed long enough.

CHAPTER IX

THE TWILIGHT SLEEP

As I entered the laboratory I saw before him a peculiar, telescope-like instrument, at one end of which, in a jar of oxygen, something was burning with a brilliant, penetrating flame.

He paused in his work and I hastened to tell him of the peculiar experience I had had in the forenoon. But he said nothing, even at the significant actions of Dr. Preston.

"How about those things you found in the maid's room?" I asked at length. "Do they explain Rawaruska's death?"

"The trouble with them," he replied, thoughtfully shaking his head, "is that the effects of such things last only for a short time. They might have been used at first—but there was something used afterward."

"Something afterward?" I repeated, keenly interested, and fingering the telescope-like arrangement curiously. "What's this?"

"One of the new quartz lens spectroscopes used by Dr. Dobbie of the English Government laboratories," he answered briefly. "I think chemists, police officials, coroners and physicians are going to find it most valuable. You see, by throwing the ultra-violet part of the spectrum from a source of light as I obtain from the sparking of iron in oxygen through the lenses of a quartz spectroscope, the lines of many dangerous drugs, especially of the alkaloids, can be distinctly and quickly located in the spectrum. Each drug produces a characteristic kind of line. We use a quartz lens because glass cuts off the ultra-violet rays. Why, even the most minute particle of poison can be detected in this revolutionary fashion."

He had resumed squinting through the spectroscope.

"Well," I asked, "do you find anything there?"

He had evidently been using the piece of gauze on which he had preserved the liquid from the peculiar little marks on Rawaruska's spine.

"Narcophin," he muttered, still squinting.

"Narcophin?" I repeated. "What is that?"

"A derivative of opium—morphine. There's another poison here, too," he added.

"What is it?"

"Scopolamine," he answered tersely, "scopolamine hydrobromide."

"Why," I exclaimed, "that is the drug they use in this new 'twilight sleep,' as they call it."

"Exactly," he replied, "the *dämmerschlaf*. I suspected something of the kind when I saw those little punctures on her back. Some people show a marked susceptibility to it; others just the reverse. Evidently she was one of those who go under it quietly and quickly."

I looked at Kennedy in amazement.

"You can see," he went on, catching the expression on my face, "if it could be used for medical science, it could also be used for crime. That's the way I reasoned, the way someone else must have reasoned."

He paused, then went on. "Someone thought out this plan of using narcophin and scopolamine to cause the twilight sleep, to keep Rawaruska just on the borderland of unconsciousness, destroying her memory and producing forgetfulness. That is the *dämmerschlaf*; perception is retained but memory lost. You are acquainted with the test? They show an object to a patient and ask her if she sees it. Say, half an hour later, it is shown again. If she remembers it, it is a sign that a new injection is necessary.

"Only in this case the criminal went too far, disregarded the danger of the thing. Scopolamine in too great a quantity causes death by paralysis of respiration—a paralysis, by the way, against which artificial respiration and all means of stimulating are ineffective because of the rigidity of the muscles. And so, you see, in this case Rawaruska died."

I could not help thinking of Preston, the young doctor who had been studying in Germany. More than likely he had heard of and had investigated the Frieberg "twilight sleep" treatment. We had made some progress, even though we did not know why or by whom the drugs had been administered.

Wade, of the Customs Service, had, as I have said, told us that he had several secret agents about in the trade, constantly picking up bits of information that might interest the Treasury Department. It did not surprise Kennedy, therefore, late in the forenoon, to have Wade call up and tell him that among the early callers at Margot's, the jeweler, was the maid Cecilie.

"That was where she must have been before I reached the Vanderveer," I exclaimed.

Kennedy nodded. "But why did she go there?" he asked. "And why was she talking with Preston?"

Inasmuch as I couldn't answer the questions I didn't try, but waited while Craig reasoned out some method of attack on them.

"Since it's known that we're working on the case of Rawaruska," he ruminated half an hour later over an untasted lunch, "we might just as well take the risk of seeing Margot himself. Let's go down and look his shop over."

So in the middle of the afternoon, when Fifth Avenue was crowded with shoppers, we paused before Margot's window, looking over the entrancing display of precious stones gleaming out from the rich black velvet background, and then sauntered in, like any other customers.

Kennedy engaged the salesman in talk about necklaces and lavallieres, always leading the conversation around to the largest stones that he saw, and dwelling particularly on those that were colored. As I listened, trying to throw in a word now and then that would not sound absolutely foolish, I was impressed by a feeling that Margot's, even though it was such a fashionable place, was what might be called only a high-class shyster's. In fact, I recalled having heard that Margot had engineered several rather questionable transactions in gems.

"I'm much interested in orange stones," remarked Kennedy, casually turning up a flawless white diamond and discarding it as if it did not interest him. "Once when I was abroad I saw the famous Invincible, and a handsomer gem than it is I never hope to see."

The clerk, ever obliging, replaced the tray before us in the safe and retired toward the back of the shop.

"He suspects nothing, at least," whispered Kennedy.

A moment later he returned. "I'm sorry," he reported, "but we haven't any such stones in the house. But I believe we expect some in a few days. If you could—"

"I shall remember it; thank you," interrupted Kennedy brusquely, as I caught a momentary gleam of satisfaction in his eye. "That's most fortunate. I'll be in again. Thank you."

We turned toward the door. In an instant it flashed over me that perhaps they were recutting the big Invincible.

"Just a moment, please, gentlemen," interrupted a voice behind us.

A short, stocky man had come up behind us.

"I thought you did not look like purchasers, nor yet like crooks," he said defiantly. "Did I hear you refer to the Invincible?"

It was Margot himself, who had been hovering about behind us. Kennedy said nothing.

"Yes," he went on, "I am cutting a large diamond, but it is not like the Invincible. It is much handsomer—one that was discovered right here in this country in the new diamond fields of Arkansas. The diamond itself is already sold. And you would never guess the buyer, oh, never!"

"No?" queried Kennedy.

"Never!" reiterated Margot.

"It could not be delivered to a woman who was once the maid of Rawaruska, the Russian dancer?" Craig asked abruptly.

Margot shot a quick and suspicious glance at us.

"Then you are, as I suspected, a detective?" he cried.

Kennedy eyed him sharply without admitting the heinous charge. Margot returned his look and I felt that of all sayings that about a dishonest man not being able to look you in the eye was itself the least credible. He laughed daringly. "Well, perhaps you are right," he said. "But whoever it is, he is lucky to have bought a stone like it so cheaply!"

The man was baffling. I could not figure it out. Had Margot been simply a high-class "fence" for the disposal and convenient reappearance of stolen goods?

We returned uptown to our apartment to find that in the meantime Wade had called up again. Kennedy got him on the wire. It seemed that shortly after we left Margot's Cecilie had called again and had gone off with a small, carefully wrapped package.

"A strange case," pondered Kennedy, as he hung up the receiver. "First there is a murder that looks like a suicide, then the sale of a diamond that looks like a fake." He paused a moment. "They have worked quickly to cover it up; we must work with equal quickness if we are to uncover them."

With almost lightning rapidity he had seized the telephone again and had our old friend First Deputy O'Connor on the wire. Briefly he explained the case, and arranged for the necessary arrests that would bring the principal actors in the little drama to the laboratory that night. Then he fell to work on a little delicate electrical instrument consisting, outwardly at least, of a dial with a pointer and several little carbon handles attached to wires, as well as a switchboard.

I know that Kennedy did not relish having his hand forced in this manner, but nevertheless he was equal to the emergency and when, after dinner, those whom O'Connor had rounded up began to appear at the laboratory, no one would ever have imagined that he had not the entire case on the very tip of his tongue, almost bursting forth an accusation.

De Guerre had complied with the police order by sending Cecilie alone in a cab, and later he drove up with Miss Hoffman. Dr. Preston came in shortly afterward, shooting a keen glance at Cecilie, and avoiding more than a nod to De Guerre. Margot himself was the last to arrive, protesting volubly. Wade, of course, was already there.

"I really must beg your pardon," began Kennedy, as he ignored the querulousness of Margot, the late arrival, adding significantly, "that is, of all of you except one, for monopolizing the evening."

Whatever might have been in their minds to say, no one ventured a word. Kennedy's tone when he said, "Of all of you except one," was too tense and serious. It demanded attention, and he got it.

"I am going to put to you first a hypothetical case," he continued quietly. "Let us say that the De Guerres of Antwerp decided to smuggle a great jewel into America for safe keeping, perhaps for sale, during the troublous times in their own country.

"Now, any man would know," he went on, "that he had a pretty slim chance when it came to smuggling in a diamond. Besides, everyone knew that the De Guerres owned this particular stone, of which I shall speak later. But a woman? Smuggling is second nature to some women."

Quickly he ran over the strange facts that had been unearthed regarding the death of the dainty Russian dancer.

"You were right, Monsieur De Guerre," he concluded, turning to the diamond merchant; "it was no suicide. Your wife was killed—unintentionally, it is true,—but killed in an attempt to steal a great diamond from her while she was smuggling it."

De Guerre made no answer, save a hasty glance at Wade that did not carry with it an admission

of smuggling.

"You mean to say, then, Mr. Kennedy," Margot demanded, "that while Rawaruska was smuggling in the big diamond of which you speak someone heard of it and deliberately *murdered* her?"

"Not too fast," cautioned Craig. "Think again before you use those words, 'deliberately murdered.' If it had been murder that was intended, how much more surely it might have been accomplished by more brutal methods—or by more scientific. No, murder was never deliberately intended."

He stopped, as if to emphasize the point, then slowly began to distribute to each of us one of the carbon handles I had seen him adjusting to the peculiar little electrical instrument.

"Let me reconstruct the case," he hurried on, giving a final twist or two to the instrument itself, now placed before him on a table, with its dial face away from us. "Rawaruska had retired for the night. Where had she placed the diamond? It would probably take a long search to find it. Well, the twilight sleep was chosen because it was supposed to be a safe and sure means to the end. Even if she retained some degree of consciousness, she would forget what happened. That is partly the reason for the treatment, anyhow,—the loss of memory.

"Someone believed this was a safe and sure anesthetic. First perhaps a whiff of the secret service 'bad perfume' to insure that she would not cry out—then an injection of narcophin and scopolamine—another—and the twilight sleep. A few minutes, and Rawaruska was unconscious.

"Then came the search. Perhaps she was restless. Another injection settled that. At last the great diamond was found. But the twilight sleep meant not forgetfulness but death to Rawaruska!"

Craig paused. It was almost as if one could see the word picture of the scene as he painted it.

"What was to be done? The diamond must be recut—anything to hide its identity, at once, and at any cost. And Margot? The story of the Arkansas diamond and the sale is a blind. The case is perfect!"

Kennedy raised his eyes for the first time from the study of the little electrical machine before him, and caught the eye of Cecilie, holding it, unwilling.

"Did you ever hear of the great diamond, the Invincible?" Kennedy smashed out.

I felt that it might not have been exactly chivalrous, but it was necessary.

Cecilie's breast, which had showed a wildly beating heart as Kennedy told of how her mistress had died, was calmer now. Her air of surprise at the mention of the diamond was perfect. Elsa Hoffman was gazing at her, too, in tense interest. De Guerre was outwardly cool, Margot openly cynical, Preston leaning forward in ill-suppressed excitement.

For a moment Kennedy paused again, as if allowing all to collect themselves before he took them by assault.

"I have lately been studying," he remarked casually, "the experiments of Dr. Von Pfungen of Vienna showing the protective resistance of the human skin against an electric current. Normally, this resistance averages from seventy to eighty thousand ohms. In the morning, owing to the accumulation of waste products, the resistance may mount to almost double. In persons suffering from nervous anxiety, it decreases to five thousand and even down to a thousand ohms in cases of hysteria. Von Pfungen has also measured a human being's emotional feelings by the electric current. I have a copy of his instrument here. There is one person who sits gripping the carbon electric handle connected with this galvanometer who, to begin with, had a resistance of over sixty thousand. But when I began to tell of how Rawaruska met her death, of the hypothetical case I have built up by my observations and experiments here in this very laboratory, the needle of the galvanometer started to oscillate downward. It went down until it reached thirty-eight thousand at the mention of murder. When I said the case was perfect, it had got as low as under twenty thousand, swinging lower and lower as the person saw hope depart!"

Kennedy was no longer paying any attention to the little instrument. As I followed him, I became more and more impatient. What was it he had discovered? Who was it?

"Preston," cried Kennedy, suddenly wheeling on the young doctor, "through your regard—honorable, I am sure—for Rawaruska you have let yourself be drawn into doing a little amateur detective work. Let me warn you. Instead of clearing up the case, you merely laid yourself open to suspicion. Fortunately the galvanometer absolves you. You should have known that Cecilie was only a tool. De Guerre, your black wallet, that all diamond dealers carry—thank you, Wade—that's it."

Kennedy had turned from Preston to Cecilie, then to De Guerre so suddenly that no one was prepared for the signal he gave to the customs officer.

Wade had covered the surprised dealer and was now emptying out the contents of the wallet.

There, on the table, gleaming in the light of the laboratory, lay a wonderful brilliant, some three hundred carats—perfect in its blazing crystalline orange beauty. There it lay, a jewel which might charm and arouse the cupidity of two hemispheres. It shone like a thing of life. Yet back of its orange fire lay a black tragedy.

Margot was on his feet instantly.

"That is not the—"

"Just a moment, Mr. Margot," interrupted Kennedy. "I think Mr. Wade will be able to show that it is the Invincible when he matches up the parts that have been hurriedly cut from—from the wonderful Arkansas diamond," Craig added sarcastically. "Miss Hoffman, Dr. Preston tells us that before you were a diamond saleswoman you had been a trained nurse!"

The look Elsa Hoffman flashed, as her calm exterior refused to conceal her emotions longer, was venomous.

Kennedy was the calmest one of us all as he tapped the little galvanometer significantly with his index finger.

"De Guerre," he exclaimed, leaning forward slightly, "you and your lover, Elsa Hoffman, planned cunningly to rob your own brothers. But, instead of robbers merely," he ground out, "you are murderers!"

CHAPTER X

THE SIXTH SENSE

"I suppose you have read in the papers of the mysterious burning of our country house at Oceanhurst, on the south shore of Long Island?"

It had been about the middle of the afternoon that a huge automobile of the latest design drew up at Kennedy's laboratory and a stylishly dressed woman, accompanied by a very attentive young man, alighted.

They had entered and the man, with a deep bow, presented two cards bearing the names of the Count and Countess Alessandro Rovigno.

Julia Rovigno, I knew, was the daughter of Roger Gaskell, the retired banker. She had recently married Count Rovigno, a young foreigner whose family had large shipping interests in America and at Trieste in the Adriatic.

"Yes, indeed, I have read about it," nodded Craig.

"You see," she hurried on a little nervously, "it was a wedding present to us from my father."

"Giulia," put in the young man quickly, giving her name an accent that was not, however, quite Italian, "thinks the fire was started by an incendiary."

Rovigno was a tall, rather boyish-looking man of thirty-two or thirty-three, with light brown hair, light brown beard and mustache. His eyes and forehead spoke of intelligence, but I had never heard that he cared much about practical business affairs. In fact, to American society Rovigno was known chiefly as one of the most daring of motor-boat enthusiasts.

"It may have been the work of an incendiary," he continued thoughtfully, "or it may not. I don't know. But there has been an epidemic of fires among the large houses out on Long Island lately."

I nodded to Kennedy, for I had myself compiled a list for the *Star*, which showed that considerably over a million dollars' worth of show places had been destroyed.

"At any rate," added the Countess, "we are burned out, and are staying in town now—at my father's house. I wish you would come around there. Perhaps father can help you. He knows all about the country out that way, for his own place isn't a quarter of a mile away."

"I shall be glad to drop around, if I can be of any assistance," agreed Kennedy as the young couple left us.

The Rovignos had scarcely gone when a woman appeared at the laboratory door. She was well dressed, pretty, but looked pale and haggard.

"My name is Mrs. Bettina Petzka," she began, singling out Kennedy. "You do not know me, but my husband, Nikola, was one of the first students you taught, Professor."

"Yes, yes, I recall him very well," replied Craig. "He was a brilliant student, too—very promising. What can I do for you?"

"Why, Professor Kennedy," she cried, no longer able to control her feelings, "he has suddenly disappeared."

"What line of work had he taken up?" asked Craig, interested.

"He was a wireless operator—had been employed on a liner that runs to the Adriatic from New York. But he was out of work. Someone has told me that he thought he saw Nikola in Hoboken around the docks where a number of the liners that go to blockaded ports are laid up waiting the

end of the war."

She paused.

"I see," remarked Kennedy, pursing up his lips thoughtfully. "Your husband was not a reservist of any of the countries at war, was he?"

"No—he was first of all a scientist. I don't think he had any interest in the war—at least he never talked much about it."

"I know," persisted Craig, "but had he taken out his naturalization papers here?"

"He had applied for them."

"When did he disappear?"

"I haven't seen him for two nights," she sobbed.

It flashed over me that it was now two nights since the fire that had burned Rovigno's house, although there was no reason for connecting the events, at least yet.

The young woman was plainly wild with anxiety. "Oh, can't you help me find Nikola?" she pleaded.

"I'll try my best," reassured Kennedy, taking down on a card her address and bowing her out.

It was late in the afternoon before we had an opportunity to call at the Gaskell town house where the Rovignos were staying. The Count was not at home, but the Countess welcomed us and led us directly into a large library.

"I'd like to have you meet my father," she introduced. "Father, this is Professor Kennedy, whom Alex and I have engaged to look into the burning of our house."

Old Roger Gaskell received us, I thought, with a curious mixture of restraint and eagerness.

"I hope you'll excuse me?" asked the Countess a moment later. "I really must dress for dinner. But I think I've told you all I can. I wanted you to talk to my father."

"I've heard of the epidemic of fires from my friend Mr. Jameson here, on the *Star*," remarked Kennedy when we were alone. "Some, I understand, have attributed the fires to incendiaries, others have said they were the work of disgruntled servants, others of an architect or contractor who hasn't shared in the work and thinks he may later. I've even heard it said that an insurance man may be responsible—hoping to get new business, you know."

Gaskell looked at us keenly. Then he rose and approached us, raising his finger as though cautioning silence.

"Do you know," he whispered so faintly that it was almost lost, "sometimes I think there is a plot against me?"

"Against *you*?" whispered back Kennedy. "Why, what do you mean?"

"I can't tell you—here," he replied. "But, I believe there are detectaphones hidden about this house!"

"Have you searched?" asked Kennedy keenly.

"Yes, but I've found nothing. I've gone over all the furniture and such things. Still, they might be inside the walls, mightn't they?"

Kennedy nodded.

"Could you discover them if they were?" asked Gaskell.

"I think I could," replied Craig confidently.

"Then there's another peculiar thing," resumed Gaskell, a little more freely, yet still whispering. "I suppose you know that I have a country estate not far from my daughter?"

He paused. "Of course I know," he went on, watching Kennedy's face, "that sparks are sometimes struck by horses' shoes when they hit stones. But the shoes of my horses, for instance, out there lately have been giving forth sparks even in the stable. My groom called my attention to it, and I saw it myself."

He continued looking searchingly at Kennedy. "You are a scientist," he said at length. "Can you tell me why?"

Kennedy was thinking deeply. "I can't, offhand," he replied frankly. "But I should like to have a chance to investigate."

"There may be some connection with the fire," hinted Gaskell anxiously as he accompanied us to the door.

At our own apartment, when we returned, we found our friend, Burke, of the Secret Service, waiting for us.

"Just had a hurry call to come to New York," he explained, "and thought I'd like to drop in on you first."

"What's the trouble?" asked Kennedy.

"Why, there's been a mysterious yacht lurking about the mouth of the harbor for several days and they want to look into it."

"Whose yacht do they think it is?"

"They don't know, but it is said to resemble one that belongs to a man named Gaskell."

"Gaskell?" repeated Craig, turning suddenly.

"Yes,—the *Furious*—a fast, floating palace—one of these new power yachts, run by a gas engine—built for speed. Why, do you know anything about it?"

Kennedy said nothing.

"The revenue cutter *Uncas* has been assigned to me," went on Burke. "If you have nothing better to do, I'd like to have you give me a hand in the case. You might find it a little different from the ordinary run."

"I shall be glad to go with you," replied Craig cordially. "Only, just now I've got a particular case of my own. I'll see you tomorrow at the Customs House, though, if I can."

"Good!" exclaimed Burke. "I don't think either of you, particularly Jameson, will regret it. It promises to be a good story."

Burke had scarcely left us when Kennedy decided on his next move. We went directly over to the Long Island Railroad station and caught the next train out to Oceanhurst, not a long run from the city.

Thus, early in the evening, Kennedy was able to begin, under cover, his investigation of the neighborhood of the Rovigno and Gaskell houses.

We entered the Gaskell estate and looked it over as we made our way toward the stable to find the groom. Out on the bay we could see the *Furious* at anchor. Nearer in shore were a couple of Count Rovigno's speedy racing motor-boats. Along the shore, we saw a basin for yachts, capable even of holding the *Furious*.

The groom proved to be a rather dull-witted fellow, and left us pretty much to our own devices.

"Ya-as—sparks—I saw 'em," he drawled in answer to Kennedy's question. "So did Mr. Gaskell. Naw—I don't know nawthin' about 'em."

He had lumbered out into another part of the stable when I heard a low exclamation from Craig, of "Look, Walter!"

I did look in amazement. There were indeed little sparks, in fact a small burst of them in all directions, where there were metal surfaces in close proximity to one another.

Kennedy had brought along with him a strange instrument and he was now looking attentively at it.

"What is that?" I asked.

"The bolometer," he replied, "invented by Professor Langley."

"And what does it do?"

"Detects waves," he replied, "rays that are invisible to the eye. For instance, just now it tells me that shooting through the darkness are invisible waves, perhaps infra-red rays."

He paused, and I looked at him inquiringly.

"You know," he explained, "the infra-red rays are closer to the heat rays than those of the upper end of the spectrum and beyond, the ultra-violet rays, with which we have already had some experience."

Kennedy continued to look at his bolometer. "Yes," he remarked thoughtfully, half to himself, "somewhere around here there is a generator of infra-red rays and a projector of those rays. It reminds me of those so-called F-rays of Ulivi—or at least of a very powerful wireless."

I was startled at the speculations that his words conjured up in my mind. Was the "evil eye" of superstition a scientific fact? Was there a baneful beam that could be directed at will—one that could not be seen or felt until it worked its havoc? Was there a power that steel walls could not hold, which, in fact, was the more surely transmitted by them?

Somehow, the fact of the strange disappearance of Petzka, the wireless operator, kept bobbing up in my mind. I could not help wondering whether, perhaps, he had found this strange power and was using it for some nefarious purpose. Could it have been Petzka who was responsible for the fires? But, why? I could not figure it out.

Early the next morning we called at the Gaskell town house again. Kennedy had brought with him

a small piece of apparatus which seemed to consist of two sets of coils placed on ends of a magnet bar. To them was attached a long flexible wire which he screwed into an electric light bulb socket. Then he placed a peculiar telephone-like apparatus, attached to the other end, to his ears. He adjusted the magnets and carried the thing carefully about the room.

At one point he stopped and moved the thing vertically up along the wall, from floor to ceiling.

"That's a gas pipe," he said simply.

"What's the instrument?" I asked.

"A new apparatus for finding pipes electrically, which I think can be just as well applied to finding other things concealed in walls under plaster and paper."

He paused to adjust the thing. "The electrical method," he went on, "is a special application of well-known induction balance principles. You see one set of coils receives an alternating or vibrating current. The other is connected with this telephone. First I established a balance so that there was no sound in the telephone."

He moved the thing about. "Now, when the device comes near metal-piping, for example, or a wire, the balance is disturbed and I hear a sound. That was the gas pipe. It is easy to find its exact location. Hulloa—"

He paused again in a corner, back of Gaskell's desk and appeared to be listening intently.

A moment later he was ruthlessly breaking through the plaster of the beautifully decorated wall.

Sure enough, in there was a detectaphone, concealed only a fraction of an inch beneath the paper, with wires leading down inside the partition in the direction of the cellar.

CHAPTER XI

THE INFERNAL MACHINES

He ripped the little mechanical eavesdropper out, wires and all, but he did not disconnect the wires, yet.

We traced it out, and down into the cellar the wires led, directly, and then across, through a small opening in the foundations into the next cellar of an apartment house, ending in a bin or storeroom.

In itself the thing, so far, gave no clew as to who was using it or the purpose for which it had been installed. But it was strange.

"Someone *was* evidently trying to get something from you, Mr. Gaskell," remarked Craig pointedly, after we returned to the Gaskell library. "Why do you suppose he went to all that trouble?"

Gaskell shrugged his shoulders and averted his eyes.

"I've heard of a yacht outside New York harbor," added Craig casually.

"A yacht?"

"Yes," he said nonchalantly, "the *Furious*."

Gaskell met Kennedy's eye and looked at him as though Craig had some occult power of divination. Then he moved over closer to us.

"Is that detectaphone thing out of business now?" he asked, hoarsely.

"Yes."

"Absolutely?"

"Absolutely."

Gaskell leaned over.

"Then I don't mind telling you, Professor Kennedy," he said in a low tone, "that I am letting a friend of mine from London use that yacht to supply some allied warships on the Atlantic with news, supplies and ammunition, such as can be carried."

Kennedy looked at him keenly, but for some moments did not answer. I knew he was debating on how he might properly dove-tail this with Burke's case, ethically.

"Someone is trying to find out from eavesdropping just what your plans are, then," remarked Craig thoughtfully, with a significant tap on the detectaphone.

A moment later he turned his back to us and knelt down. He seemed to be wrapping the detectaphone up in a small package which he put in his pocket and closing the hole in the wall as

best he could where he had ripped the paper.

"All I ask of you," concluded Gaskell, as we left a few minutes later, "is to keep your hands off that phase of things. Find the incendiary—yes; but this other matter that you have forced out of me—well—hands off!"

On our way downtown to keep the appointment Kennedy had made with Burke the night before, he stopped at the laboratory to get a heavy parcel which he carried along.

We found Burke waiting for us, impatiently, at the Customs House.

"We've just discovered that the liners over at Hoboken have had steam up for a couple of days," he said excitedly. "Evidently they are waiting to make a break for the ocean—perhaps in concert with a sortie of the fleets over in Europe."

"H-m," mused Kennedy, looking fixedly at Burke, "that complicates matters, doesn't it? We must preserve American neutrality."

He thought a moment. "I should like to go aboard the revenue cutter. May I?"

"Surely," agreed Burke.

A few moments later we were on the *Uncas*, Kennedy and Burke in earnest conversation in low tones which I did not overhear. Evidently Craig was telling him just enough of what he had himself discovered so as to enlist Burke's services.

The captain in charge of the *Uncas* joined the conversation a few moments later, and then Kennedy took the heavy package down below. For some time he was at work in one of the forward tanks that was full of water, attaching the thing, whatever it was, in such a way that it seemed to form part of the skin of the ship.

Another brief talk with Burke and the captain followed, and then the three returned to the deck.

"Oh, by the way," remarked Burke, as he and Kennedy came back to me, "I forgot to tell you that I have had some of my men working on the case and one of them has just learned that a fellow named Petzka, one of the best wireless operators,—a Hungarian or something—has been engaged to go on that yacht."

"Petzka?" I repeated involuntarily.

"Yes," said Burke, in surprise, "do you know anything about him?"

I turned to Kennedy.

"Not much," replied Craig. "But you can find out about him, I think, through his wife. He used to be one of my students. Here's her address. She's very anxious to hear from him. I'm sure that if you have any news she will be only too glad to receive it."

Burke took the address and a little while later we went ashore.

I was not surprised when Kennedy proposed, as the next move, to revisit the cellar in the apartment next to Gaskell's house. But I was surprised at what he said, after we had reached the place.

All along I had supposed that he was planning to wait there in hope of catching the person who had installed the detectaphone. That, of course, was a possibility, still. But in reality he had another purpose, also.

We had scarcely secreted ourselves in the cellar storeroom, which was in a dark corner where one might remain unobserved even if the janitor entered the cellar, provided he did not search that part, when Kennedy took the receiving headpiece of the detectaphone and placed it over his head, quite as if nothing had happened.

"What's the use of that?" I queried. "You ripped the transmitter out up above."

He smiled quietly. "While my back was turned toward you, so that you couldn't see," he said, "I slipped the thing back again, only down further where Gaskell wouldn't be likely to find it, even if he looked. I don't know whether he was frank with us, so I thought I'd try the eavesdropping game myself, in place of the man who put this thing in in the first place, whoever he was."

We took turns listening, but could hear not a sound. Nor did anyone come into the cellar.

So a good part of the afternoon passed, apparently fruitless.

My patience was thoroughly exhausted when, suddenly, a motion from Craig revived my flagging interest. I waited impatiently for him to tell me what it was that he heard.

"What was it?" I asked finally as he pulled the receivers off his head and stood for a moment, considering.

"At first I heard the sound of voices," he answered quickly. "One was the voice of a woman, which I recognized. It was the Countess. The other was the Count.

"Giulia," I heard him say, as they entered the room, "I don't see why you should want to go. It's dangerous. And besides, it's none of our business if your father lets his yacht be used for such a

purpose.'

"'But I want to go, Alex,' she said. 'I will go. I'm a good sailor. It's father's yacht. He won't care.'

"'But what's the use?' he expostulated. 'Besides—think of the danger. If it was our business, it might be different.'

"'I should think you'd want to go.'

"'Not I. I can get all the excitement I want in a motor-boat race without risking my precious neck pulling the chestnuts out of the fire for someone else.'

"'Well, I want the adventure,' she persisted, petulantly.

"'But, Giulia, if you go tonight, think of the risk—'

"That was the last I heard as they left the room, still arguing. Evidently, someone is going to pull off something tonight."

It did not take Kennedy long to make up his mind what to do next. He left the cellar hurriedly and in the laboratory hastily fixed up a second heavy and bulky package similar to that which he had taken down to the revenue cutter earlier in the day, making it into two parcels so as to distribute the burden between us.

That night we journeyed out to Oceanhurst again. Avoiding the regular road, we made our way from the station to the Gaskell place by a roundabout path and it was quite dark by the time we got there.

As we approached the basin we saw that there were several men about. They appeared to be on guard, but since Oceanhurst at that season of the year was pretty deserted and the Gaskell estate was out of the town, they were not especially vigilant.

Dark and grim, with only one light showing weakly, lay the yacht, having been run into the basin, now. A hawser had been stretched across the mouth of the basin. Outside was a little tender, while a searchlight was playing over the water all the time. Evidently whatever interference was feared was expected from the water rather than from the land.

We slunk into the shadow of a row of bath-houses, in order to get our bearings. On the opposite side from the road that led down from the house, it was not so likely that anyone would suspect that interlopers were hiding there.

Still, they were not neglecting that side of the basin, at least in a perfunctory sort of way.

Kennedy drew me back into the shadow, deeper, at the sound of footsteps on the boardwalk leading in front of the bath-houses.

From our hiding place we could now hear two voices, apparently of sailors.

"Do you know the new wireless operator who goes with us tonight?" asked one.

"No. They've been very careful of him. I guess they were afraid that someone might get wise. But there couldn't very well be any leak, there. One of those Englishmen has been with him every minute since he was engaged."

"They say he's pretty good. Who is he?"

"A Servian, he says, and his name sounds as if it might be so."

The voices trailed off. It was only a scrap of conversation, but Kennedy had not missed a word of it.

"That means Petzka," he nodded to me.

"What is he—a Hungarian or a Servian?" I asked quickly.

Kennedy had craned his neck out beyond the corner of the bath-houses and was looking at the *Furious* in the basin.

"Come on, Walter," he whispered, not taking time to answer my question. "Those fellows have gone. There's no one at all on this side of the basin and I just saw the men on deck go up the gangplank to the boat-house. They can't do any more than put us off, anyhow."

He had watched his chance well. As quickly as we could, burdened down by our two heavy packages, we managed to slip across the boardwalk to the piling that formed that side of the basin. The *Furious* had swung over with the tide nearer our side than the other. It was a daring leap, but he made it as lightly as a cat, landing on the deck. I passed over the packages to him and followed.

Kennedy scarcely paused to glance about. He had chosen a moment when no one was looking, and, bending down under the weight of the packages we dodged back of a cabin. A dim light shining into the hold told us that no one was there and we dived down. It was the work of a moment to secrete ourselves in the blank darkness behind a pile of boxes, aft.

A noise startled us. Someone was coming down the steep, ladder-like stairs. A moment later we heard another noise. There were two of them, moving about among the boxes. From our hiding

place we could overhear them talking in hoarse whispers, but could not see them.

"Where did you put them?" asked a voice.

"In every package of explosives and in as many of the boxes of canned goods as I had time. There wasn't much opportunity except while the stuff was in the boat-house."

I looked at Kennedy, wild-eyed. Was there treachery in the crew? He was leaning forward as much as our cramped quarters would permit, so as not to miss a word.

"All right," said the other voice. "No one suspects?"

"No. But the Secret Service has been pretty busy. They suspect something—but not this."

"Good. You are sure that you can detonate them when the time comes?"

"Positive. Everything is working fine. I've done my part of it. Changing wireless operators gave me just the chance I wanted."

"All right. I guess I'll go now."

"Remember the signal. As soon as the things are detonated I will get off, some way, by wireless the S O S—as if it came from the fleet, you understand?"

"Yes—that will be the signal for the dash. Good luck—I'm going ashore now."

As they passed up the ladder, I could no longer restrain myself.

"Craig," I cried, "this is devilish!"

I thought I saw it all now. In the cases of goods on the *Furious* were some terrible infernal machines which had been hidden, to be detonated by these deadly rays of wireless.

Kennedy was busy, working quickly putting together the parts he had taken from the two packages we had carried.

As I watched him, I realized that the burning of the Rovigno house was not the action of an incendiary, after all. It had been done by these deadly rays, probably by mere accident.

As nearly as I could make it out, there was a counterplot against the *Furious*. Somewhere was an infernal workshop, possibly hedged about by doors of steel which ordinary force would find hard to penetrate, but from which, any moment, this super-criminal might send out his deadly power.

The more I considered it, while Kennedy worked, the more uncanny it seemed. This man had rendered the mere possession of explosives more dangerous to the possessor than to the enemy.

Archimedes had been outdone!

The problem before us now was not only the preservation of American neutrality, but the actual safety of life.

Through the open hatch I could now hear voices on the deck. One was that of a woman, which I recognized quickly. It was Julia Rovigno.

"I'll be just as quiet as a mouse," she was saying. "I'll stay in the cabin—I won't be in the way."

I could not hear the man's voice in reply, but it did not sound like Rovigno's. It was rather like Gaskell's.

Still, we had heard enough to know that Julia Rovigno was on the yacht, had insisted on going on the expedition for the excitement of the thing, just as we had heard over the detectaphone.

"Hadn't we better warn her?" I asked Craig, who had paused in his work at the sound of voices.

Before he could answer we were plunged in sudden darkness. Someone had switched out the light that had been shining down through the hatchway. Before we knew it the opening to the hatchway had been closed.

CHAPTER XII

THE SUBMARINE BELL

Kennedy groped about for a light, stumbling over boxes and bags.

"For heaven's sake, Craig," I entreated. "Be careful. Those packages are full of the devilish things!"

He said nothing.

At least we had a little more freedom to move and I managed to find my way over to a little round porthole and open it.

As I looked out, I almost fainted at the realization. The *Furious* was under way! We were locked in the hold—virtual prisoners—our only company those dastardly infernal machines, whose very nature we did not know!

Helplessly I gazed around me. There seemed to be only this one porthole, open, looking out over the dark and turbulent water, which slipped ominously past as we gained speed.

Why had Kennedy not foreseen this risk? I glanced at him. He had found an electric light, connected with the yacht's dynamo, and, before turning it on, closed and covered the port so that it threw no reflection out.

Far from being disconcerted, on the contrary, he seemed rather pleased than otherwise at the unexpected turn of events.

As I looked at our scant and cramped quarters I could see absolutely no way of getting word to anyone off the *Furious* who might help us.

What he was working on I did not know, but if it was some sort of wireless, even if we were able to send a message, what hope was there that it would get past the delicate wireless detector which this criminal must have somewhere near for tapping messages that were being flashed through the air? Had we not heard him say that the signal was to be an S O S sent, as it were, from the fleet far out on the ocean?

I could well have believed that Kennedy could rig up some means of communication. But, if the possessor of this terrible infra-red ray, or wireless wave, secret should learn that we, too, knew it, the only result that he would accomplish would be to insure our destruction immediately.

It was a foggy night and a drizzle had set in. The *Furious* could not under such circumstances make such good speed as she was accustomed to make. Fortunately, also, the waves were not running high.

Craig had taken a desperate chance. How would he meet it? I watched him at work, fascinated by our peril.

Finishing as quickly as he could, he put out our sole electric light, unscrewed the bulb and attached to the socket a wire which he had connected with the instrument over which he had spent so many precious moments.

Through the little porthole he cast a peculiar disk, heavy, such as I had seen him place so carefully aboard the *Uncas*.

It sank in the water with a splash and trailed along beside the yacht, held by a wire, submerged, perhaps, ten or twelve feet.

He made a final inspection of the thing as well as he could by the light of a match, then pressed a key which seemed to close a circuit.

I could feel a dull, metallic vibration, as it were.

"What are you doing?" I asked, looking curiously also at an arrangement, like a microphone, which he had placed over his ears.

"It works!" he cried excitedly.

"What works?" I reiterated.

"This Fessenden oscillator," he explained. "It's a system for the employment of sound for submarine signals. I don't know whether you realize it, but great advance has been made recently since it was suggested to use water instead of air as the medium for transmitting signals. I can't stop to explain this apparatus just now, but it is composed of a ring magnet, a copper tube which lies in an air gap of a magnetic field, and a stationary central armature. The magnetic field is much stronger than that in the ordinary dynamo.

"The copper tube, which has an alternating current induced in it, is attached to solid disks of steel which in turn are attached to a steel diaphragm an inch thick. In the *Uncas* I had a chance to make that diaphragm practically a part of the side of the ship. Here I have had to hang it overboard, with a large water-tight diaphragm attached to the oscillator."

I listened eagerly, even if I were not an electrical engineer.

"The same oscillator," he went on, "is used for sending and receiving, for, like the ordinary electric motor it is also capable of acting as a generator, and a very efficient one, too. All I have to do is to throw a switch in one direction when I want to telegraph or telephone under water, and in the other direction when I want to listen in."

I could scarcely credit what I heard. Craig had circumvented even the spectacular wireless. He was actually talking through water. Craig had virtually endowed himself with a sixth sense!

I watched him spellbound. Would he succeed in whatever it was that he was planning? I waited anxiously.

"There's the answer!" he exclaimed in sudden exultation. "Burke is on the *Uncas*. He tells me that he went to see Mrs. Petzka and she is with him—insisted on going, when she heard that her

husband had been engaged by the *Furious*."

He waited a moment.

"You see, Walter," he resumed, "what I am doing is to send out signals by which the *Uncas* can locate and follow us. She is fast, but, thank heaven, this yacht has to go slow tonight. Sound travels in water at a velocity of about four thousand feet a second. For instance, I find that I get an echo in about one-twentieth of a second. That is the reflected sound wave from the bottom, and indicates that we are in water of about one hundred feet depth. Then I get another echo in something over two seconds. That is the waves reflected from the *Uncas*, which has been hovering about, waiting for something to happen. They can't be much more than a mile and a half away, now. I had expected to signal them from the shore, a dock or something of the sort, using this oscillator to get around that fellow's wireless. But we're much better off on the boat."

I looked at him in amazement. "Surrounded by all this junk that may blow us to kingdom come any second?" I demanded.

"Burke says steam is still up on all the ships tied up in the harbor so that they can make a dash for it. They are evidently waiting for that S O S signal."

"That's all right," I said in desperation, "But suppose they blow us up, first?"

"Blow us up first?" he repeated. "Why, don't you understand? It is not the *Furious* that they are after. The whole war fleet that is hanging around in this part of the Atlantic is to be blown up in mid-ocean, as part of the plan to aid the escape of the interned ships in New York."

"Oh," I breathed, with a sigh of relief, "that's it, is it?"

"Yes. We'll get in bad all around if we can't stop it—Burke with the Secret Service and ourselves with Gaskell, who doesn't dream that his yacht is being used for the exact opposite of the purpose for which he thinks he has lent it—to say nothing of the mess that our government will have to face for letting these precious schemers play ducks and drakes with our neutrality."

We waited eagerly, Kennedy sending out and receiving the submarine signals, and I peering out anxiously into the almost impenetrable fog.

Suddenly, apparently from nowhere in the shifting mist, lights seemed to loom up. Instead of stopping, however, the *Furious* put on a sudden burst of reckless speed.

The *Uncas* was no match for her at that game. Would she escape finally, after all?

A sharp report rang out. The *Uncas* had sent a shot across our bows, so dangerously close that it snapped one of the cables that held the mast.

The vibration of our engine slowed, and ceased, and we lay, idly wallowing in the waves as the revenue cutter, bearing our friend Burke and help, came up.

A couple of boats put out from the cutter and in almost no time we could hear the tread of feet and the exchange of harsh words as the government officers swarmed up the ladder to our deck.

It was only a moment later that the hatch was broken open and we heard the welcome brogue of Burke, calling, "Kennedy—are you and Jameson all right?"

"Right here," sang out Craig, detaching the oscillator and replacing the electric bulb, which he lighted.

The commotion on deck was too great for anyone to make much of finding us, two stowaways. The Countess was surprised, however, and, I felt, rather glad to see us at a time when we might, possibly exert some influence in her favor if matters came to a more serious pass.

There was scarcely time for a word. Burke's men were working quickly. They had entered the hold, after a word from Kennedy, and far out into the ocean they were casting the boxes and bags overboard, one at a time, as fast as they could. They worked feverishly, as Burke spurred them on, and I must say that it was with the utmost relief that I saw the things thrown over.

The boxes sank, but rose again and floated, bobbing up and down, at least some of them, perhaps a third above water and two-thirds below.

It was not for several minutes that I noticed that with those who had come aboard the *Furious* from the cutter stood Bettina Petzka. A moment later she caught sight of Kennedy.

"Where is my husband?" she demanded, running to him.

Kennedy had no chance to reply.

Suddenly a series of flashes shattered the darkness. A terrific roar seemed to rise from the very ocean, while a rain of sparks lighted up great spurts of water and then fell back, to perish in the dark waves. The *Furious* trembled from end to end.

We looked, startled, at each other. But we were all safe. The things had been detonated in the water.

"Only the fact that he would have blown himself up prevented him from blowing up the yacht and all the evidence against him, now that we have discovered his plot," cried Burke, excitedly,

dashing down the deck.

Recovered scarcely from our surprise at the explosion and the queer actions of the Secret Service man, we rushed after him as best we could, Craig leading.

He led the way to the little wireless room. The door was bolted on the inside, but we managed soon to burst it open.

I shall never forget the surprise which greeted us. In a chair, bound and gagged, as though he had been overcome only after a struggle, sat Petzka.

Mrs. Petzka threw herself frantically on him, tearing at the stout cords that held him.

"Nikola—what is the matter?" she cried. "What has happened?"

Through his gag, which she had loosened a bit, he made a peculiar, gurgling noise. As nearly as I could make out, he was struggling to say, "He came in—surprised me—seized me—locked the door."

Julia Rovigno stood rooted to the spot—utterly speechless.

There, surrounded by electric batteries, condensers, projectors, regulators, resonators, reflectors, voltmeters, and ammeters, queer apparatus which he had smuggled secretly on the *Furious*, before a strange sort of device, with a wireless headgear still over his ears, stood the owner of at least two of the liners of the belligerents which were to have made the dash for the ocean after he had succeeded by his new wireless ray device in removing the hostile fleet—Count Rovigno himself.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SUPER-TOXIN

"I've got to make good in this Delaney case, Kennedy," appealed our old friend, Dr. Leslie, the coroner, one evening when he had dropped unexpectedly into the laboratory, looking particularly fagged and discouraged.

"You know," he added, "they've been investigating my office—and now, here comes a case which, I must confess, completely baffles us again."

"Delaney," mused Craig. "Let me see. That's the rich Texas rancher who has been blazing a trail through the white lights of Broadway—with that Baroness Von Dorf and——"

"And other war brokers," interrupted Leslie.

"War brokers?" queried Craig.

"Yes. That's what they call them. They're a new class—people with something to sell to or with commissions to buy for belligerent governments. In Delaney's case it was fifty thousand or so head of cattle and horses, controlled by a syndicate of which he was the promoter. That's why he came to New York, you know,—to sell them at a high price to any European power. The syndicate stands to make a small fortune."

"I understand," nodded Kennedy, interested.

"Just as though there wasn't mystery enough about Delaney's sudden death," Leslie hurried on, "here's a letter that came to him today—too late."

Kennedy took the note Leslie handed him. It was postmarked "Washington," and read:

DEAR DALEY:

I intended writing to you sooner but haven't felt well enough since I came here. The strangest thing about it is that the doctors I have consulted seem to be unable to tell me definitely what is the matter.

I can tell you I have been badly frightened. I seemed to have a lot of little boils on my face and new ones kept coming. I felt weak and chilly and had headaches that almost drove me crazy. Perhaps the thing, whatever it is, has made me insane, but I cannot help wondering whether there may not be something back of it all. Do you suppose someone could have poisoned me, hoping to ruin my beauty, on which, to a great measure, depends my success in my mission to America during the war?

Since I came here I have been wondering, too, how you are. If there should be anything in my suspicions, perhaps it would be safest for you to leave New York. There is nothing more I can say, but if you feel the least bit unwell, do not disregard this warning.

If you will meet me here, we can arrange the deal with those I represent at almost any price you name.

Try hard to get here.

As ever,
LOUISE.

Craig looked up quickly. "Have you communicated with the Baroness?" he asked.

Dr. Leslie leaned forward in his chair. "The fact is," he replied slowly, "the woman who calls herself the Baroness Von Dorf has suddenly disappeared, even in Washington. We can find no trace of her whatever. Indeed, the embassy down there does not even admit that she is a war buyer. Oh, the newspapers haven't got the whole Delaney story—yet. But when they do get it"—he paused and glanced significantly at me—"there's going to be *some* sensation."

I recalled now that there had been an air of mystery surrounding the sudden death of Daley Delaney the day before. At least one of the papers had called it "the purple death"—whatever that might mean. I had thought it due to the wild career of the ranchman, perhaps a plain case of apoplexy, around which the bright young reporters had woven a slender thread of romance. Kennedy, however, thought otherwise.

"The purple death," he ruminated, turning the case over in his mind. "Have you any idea what the papers mean by that?"

"Why, it's one of the most grewsome things you ever heard of," went on Leslie eagerly, encouraged. "In some incomprehensible way the hand of fate seems to have suddenly descended on the whole Delaney entourage. First his Japanese servant fell a victim to this 'purple death,' as they call it.

"He had scarcely been removed to a hospital where, after fighting a brave fight, he succumbed to the unknown peril, when the butler was stricken. Delaney himself packed up, to leave, in panic, when suddenly, apparently without warning, the purple death carried him off. In three days three of them have died suddenly. Then came this letter from the Baroness. It set me thinking. Perhaps it *was* poison—I don't know."

Craig read the letter of the Baroness again. "Most interesting," he exclaimed energetically as Dr. Leslie finished. "I shall be only too glad to help you if I can. Could you take us up to Delaney's rooms? Is the body still there?"

"No, it has been removed to a private undertaking establishment and the apartment is guarded by police. We can stop at the undertaker's on the way over to the apartment."

There could be no doubt that Leslie was considerably relieved to think that Craig would consent to take the case. As for Kennedy, I could see that the affair aroused his interest to the keenest point.

"Was anyone associated with Delaney in the syndicate here?" inquired Craig as we settled ourselves in Dr. Leslie's car.

"Yes," answered the coroner, hurrying us along, "another member of the syndicate was his friend, Dr. Harris Haynes."

"Who is he?" asked Kennedy.

"Haynes has been a veterinary, but found that there was more money in the cattle business than in practicing his profession. The needs of European war seemed to offer just the opportunity they needed to reap a quick fortune."

"I've heard," nodded Craig, "that conditions abroad have led to a great influx of adventurers with other people's money."

"Yes. According to all accounts, Delaney and Haynes have been leading a rather rapid existence since they came to New York. It's quite right. The city is full of queer and mysterious characters, both men and women, who profess to be agents for various foreign governments, often unnamed. Delaney and Haynes have met about all of this curious army, I suppose."

"I see," prompted Craig. "Among them, I take it, was this stunning woman who calls herself the Baroness Louise Von Dorf. How friendly were they?"

"Well, she spent a great deal of time, when she was in the city, up at the apartment Delaney had rented."

Leslie and Kennedy exchanged a significant glance. "Who is she?" asked Craig. "Do you know?"

"No one seems to know. Yet she is always plentifully supplied with money and they tell me she talks glibly of those whose 'influence' she can command in Washington."

"But she has disappeared," mused Kennedy. "Were there any others?"

"Haynes hasn't been proof against their wiles," answered the coroner. "I have found out that he was introduced by one of the 'war brokers' to a Madame Daphne Dupres."

"And she?"

Leslie shook his head. "I don't know anything about her, except that she lives at the Hotel St.

Quentin—the same place, by the way, where Haynes makes his headquarters."

Our car pulled up at the private morgue of the burial company to which Delaney's body had been taken.

We entered, and Kennedy wasted no time in making a careful examination of the remains of the unfortunate victim.

"I couldn't make anything out of it, even after an autopsy," confessed Dr. Leslie. "It seemed as though it were something that had been conveyed by the blood all over the body, something that blocked the capillaries and caused innumerable hemorrhages into organs and tissues, and especially nerve centers."

The body seemed to be discolored and variegated in color, with here and there little marks of boils or vesicles.

"It looks like something that has depleted the red corpuscles of oxygen," continued Leslie, noticing that Kennedy had drawn off a little of the body fluids, evidently for future study. "As nearly as I could make out there had been a cyanosis in a marked degree. He had all the appearance of having been asphyxiated."

"Which seems to have been enough to suggest to some imaginative mind the 'purple death,'" remarked Kennedy dryly.

Still, I could not help noticing that it was really no exaggeration to call it the purple death.

One of the morgue attendants had called Dr. Leslie aside and a moment later he rejoined us.

"They tell me Haynes has been here," he reported. "I left word that any visitors were to be carefully watched."

"Strange," muttered Kennedy, absorbing Dr. Leslie's latest information and then looking back at the body, puzzled. "Very strange. Let us go up to the apartment right away."

Kennedy stowed the little tube in which he had placed the body fluid safely in his pocket and led the way out again to our waiting car.

Delaney had picked out a fashionable neighborhood in which to live. As we entered the bronze grilled door and rode up in the elevator, Kennedy handed each of us a cigar and lighted one himself. I lighted up, too, thinking that perhaps there might be some virtue in tobacco to ward off the unseen perils into which we were going.

The wealthy ranchman, evidently, on his arrival in New York had rented an apartment, furnished, from a lawyer, Ashby Ames, who had gone south on account of his health.

We entered and found that it was a very attractive place that Ames had fitted up. At one side of a library or drawing-room opened out a little glass sun-parlor or conservatory on a balcony. Into it a dining-room opened also. In fact, the living rooms of the whole suite could be thrown into one, with this sun-parlor as a center.

Everything about the apartment was quite up-to-date, also. For instance, I noticed that the little conservatory was lighted brilliantly by a mercury vapor tube that ran around it in a huge rectangle of light.

Dr. Leslie and the police had already ransacked the place and there did not seem to be much likelihood that anything could have escaped them. Still, Kennedy began a searching examination after his own methods, while we waited, gazing at him curiously.

By the frown on his forehead I gathered that he was not meeting with much encouragement, when, suddenly, he withdrew the cigar from his mouth, looked at it critically, puffed again, then moved his lips and tongue as if trying to taste something.

Mechanically I did the same. The cigar had a peculiar flavor. I should have flung it away if Kennedy himself had not given it to me. It was not mere imagination, either. Surely there had been none of that sweetishness about the fragrant Havana when I lighted it on the way up.

"What is the matter?" I asked.

"There's cyanogen in this room," Craig remarked keenly, still tasting, as he stood near the sun-parlor.

"Cyanogen?" I repeated.

"Yes, there are artificial aids to the senses that make them much keener than nature has done for us. For instance, if air contains the merest traces of the deadly cyanogen gas—prussic acid, you know—cigar smoke acquires a peculiar taste which furnishes an efficient alarm signal."

Dr. Leslie's face brightened as Kennedy proceeded.

"That is something like my idea," he exclaimed. "I have thought all along that it looked very much like a poisoning case. In fact, the very first impression I had was that it might have been due to a cyanide—or at least some gas like cyanogen."

Kennedy said nothing, and the coroner proceeded. "And the body looked cyanotic, too, you recall.

But the autopsy revealed nothing further. I have even examined the food, as far as I can, but I can't find anything wrong with it."

There was a noise at the door, outside in the hall, and Dr. Leslie opened it.

"Dr. Haynes," he introduced, a moment later.

Haynes was a large man, good-looking, even striking, with a self-assertive manner. We shook hands, and taking our cue from Craig, waited for him to speak.

"It's very strange what could have carried Delaney off so suddenly," ventured Haynes a moment later. "I've been trying to figure it out myself. But I must admit that so far it has completely stumped me."

He was pacing up and down the room and I watched him more or less suspiciously. Somehow I could not get the idea out of my head that he had been listening to us outside. Now and then, I fancied, he shot a glance at us, as if he were watching us.

"They tell me at the burial company that you were there today," put in Dr. Leslie, his eyes fixed on Haynes' face.

Haynes met his gaze squarely, without flinching. "Yes. I got thinking over what the papers said about the 'purple death,' and I thought perhaps I might have overlooked something. But there wasn't—"

The telephone rang. Haynes seized the receiver before any of the rest of us could get to it. "That must be for me," he said with a brusque apology. "Why—yes, I am here. Dr. Leslie and Professor Kennedy are up here. No—we haven't discovered anything new. Yes—I shall keep the appointment. Good-by."

The conversation had been short, but, to me at least, it seemed that he had contrived to convey a warning without seeming to do so.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SECRET AGENTS

Dr. Leslie looked at Haynes searchingly. "Who was it?" he asked. "Madame Dupres?"

Haynes did not hesitate. "Yes," he nodded. "I had an appointment with her and told her that if I was late it would probably be that I had stopped here."

The answer came so readily that I must confess that I was suspicious of it.

"Did Madame Dupres know the Baroness Von Dorf?" asked Craig quickly.

"Yes, indeed," returned Haynes, then stopped suddenly.

"But they didn't travel in the same circle, did they?" asked Dr. Leslie, with the air of the cross-examiner who wished to place on record a fact that might later prove damaging.

"Not exactly," answered Haynes, with some hesitation.

"You knew her, of course?" added Craig.

Haynes nodded.

"I wonder if you could locate the Baroness," pursued Kennedy.

Haynes seemed to express no surprise at the obvious implication that she was missing. "I have no objection to trying," he answered simply; then, with a glance at his watch, he reached for his hat and stick and excused himself. "I'm afraid I must go. If I can be of any assistance," he added, "don't hesitate to call on me. Delaney and I were pretty closely associated in this deal and I feel that nothing is too much to ask of me if it is possible to clear up the mystery of his death, if there is any."

He departed as quickly as he had come.

"I wonder what he dropped in for?" I remarked.

"Whatever it was, he didn't get it," returned Leslie.

"I'm not so sure of that," I said, remembering the brief telephone conversation with Madame Dupres.

Kennedy did not appear to be bothering much about the question one way or the other. He had let his cigar go out during Haynes' visit, but now that we were alone again he continued his minute search of the premises.

He opened a closet which evidently contained nothing but household utensils and was about to shut the door when an idea occurred to him. A moment later he pulled from the mystic depths an

electric vacuum cleaner and dragged it over to the sun-parlor.

Without a word we watched him as he ran it over the floor and walls, even over the wicker stands on which the plants stood, and then over the floor coverings and furniture of the other rooms that opened into the conservatory. What he was after I could not imagine, but I knew it was useless to ask him until he had found it or had some reason for telling it.

Carefully he removed the dust and dirt from the machine and wrapped it up tightly in a package.

We parted from Dr. Leslie at the door of the apartment, promising to keep in touch with him and let him know the moment anything happened.

At the first telegraph office Kennedy entered and sent off a long message to our friend Burke of the Secret Service in Washington, asking him to locate the Baroness, if possible, in that city, and to give any information he might have about either Haynes or Madame Dupres.

"It's still early in the evening," remarked Kennedy as we left the telegraph office. "Suppose we drop around to the St. Quentin. Perhaps we may run into our friends there."

The St. Quentin was a favorite resort of foreigners in New York, and I, at least, entered prepared to suspect everyone.

"Not all these mysterious-looking men and women," laughed Kennedy, noticing me as we walked through the lobby, "are secret agents of foreign governments."

"Still they look as if they might give you the 'high sign,'" I replied, "particularly if you flashed a bankroll."

"I don't doubt it," he agreed, his eye roving over the throng. "I suspect that Scotland Yard and the Palais de Justice might be quite pleased to see some faces here rather than on the other side of the Atlantic."

He drew me into an angle and for some moments we studied the passing crowd of diplomats and near-diplomats.

A moment later I saw Kennedy bow and, following the direction of his eyes, looked up to a sort of mezzanine gallery. There were Haynes and a most attractive woman, talking earnestly.

"Madame Dupres," Craig whispered to me, aside.

She was tall, slender, gowned in the most modish manner, and had a foreign way about her that would have fascinated one even more cosmopolitan than a Texas veterinary.

Now and then someone would stop and chat with them and it seemed that they were on very good terms, at least with a certain group at the St. Quentin.

Kennedy moved out further into the lobby where he was more noticeable; then, with a sudden resolution, mounted the steps to the mezzanine floor and approached Haynes.

"Let me introduce Professor Kennedy, Madame Dupres," presented Haynes.

Kennedy bowed.

Whatever one's opinion of madame, he was forced to admit that she was clever. It was evident, also, that she and Haynes were on very intimate terms, also.

"I hope that you will be able to clear up the mystery that the newspapers have found in Mr. Delaney's death," she remarked. "Mr. Haynes has told me that he met you tonight with Dr. Leslie. By the way, has he told you his own theory?" she asked.

"We shall do our best," replied Kennedy, meeting her eye in as impersonal a manner as it was possible, for it is always difficult to dissociate a beautiful woman from a case like this and judge her not as a beautiful woman but on the merits of the case. "No, Mr. Haynes has not told me his theory—yet."

"I'm very glad to have met you," she added, extending her daintily gloved hand to Kennedy, "and you may be sure that if there is any way in which I can be of service I shall expect you to call on me. Just now I hope you will excuse me. I have some letters to get off—and I will leave you men to discuss Mr. Haynes' theory without being hampered by a mere woman. Never mind, Harris," she added as Haynes made as if to escort her to the ladies' writing room.

As Madame Dupres passed down the steps there was no denying that she made a splendid impression. Haynes watched her with a glance that was almost ravenous. There could be no doubt of her influence over him.

As she passed through the lobby she paused at the telegraph desk a moment, then went into the writing room.

"Yes, I think I have an explanation," began Haynes, when she was out of sight. "I've been trying to figure out what could have killed Delaney. Of course I can only guess, but I don't think it is such a bad guess."

"What is it?" asked Craig.

"You remember the mercury vapor light?"

Kennedy nodded.

"Mercury vapor lights of that sort are a pretty good source of ultra-violet rays sometimes," went on Haynes. "Well, doubtless you know that various plants belonging to different families produce free prussic acid. They are really cyanogenetic plants. Light and the assimilation processes depending on light exert a favorable influence on cyanogenesis. For instance, a mixture of citric acid with a much smaller amount of potassium nitrite and a trace of bicarbonate of iron, if exposed to light, will generate hydrocyanic acid. That, I believe, is what actually happens in some plant tissues. Animals rarely touch such plants. I believe that such a process might be aided rather than retarded by ultra-violet rays. What do you think of it?"

Craig was following Dr. Haynes keenly. As for me, I was astounded by his frankness. I recalled what Kennedy had already said up in Delaney's apartment, and watched his face covertly.

"Your explanation is plausible," was all that Craig said. "By the way, have you found out anything about the Baroness?"

"Not a word, yet," replied Haynes unhesitatingly. "She seems to be out of town."

"And madame—has she any idea where she is?"

Haynes shook his head. "You may rest assured," replied Haynes in a tone that was meant to carry conviction, "that if we can find out we shall be only too happy to do so—ourselves."

There was nothing to be gained by further inquiry here, and I could imagine that Kennedy was burning with anxiety to get at work on his own line of inquiry at the laboratory. After a few minutes of conversation we excused ourselves and left the hotel.

Craig's air of abstraction was not such as to invite further questioning, and I left him an hour or so later in the laboratory surrounded by his microscopes, slides, and innumerable test-tubes which he had prepared for some exceedingly minute investigation in which his exact soul delighted.

How late he worked I do not know, for I did not hear him come into our apartment. But he was up very early, in fact woke me up stirring around the living room.

I had scarcely completed dressing, while he scanned the morning papers in a vain hope that some stray news item might shed some light on the mystery in which we were now involved, when the whirr of our door buzzer announced that we had an unusually early caller.

Kennedy opened the door and admitted a stranger. He was one of those well-groomed middle-aged men whose appearance denotes with what care they seek by every means to retain youth that is fast passing. I could imagine him calmly calculating even his vices.

"My name is Ames—Ashby Ames," he introduced. "Dr. Leslie, the coroner, has suggested that I see you."

Ames looked as if he had been traveling all night and had not had a chance to freshen himself up in his haste.

"I've just heard about that trouble down at my apartment," he continued, "and, though I had planned a trip for my health to the southern resorts, I thought it best for me to come right back to New York. It's a beastly mess."

He had thrown his hat vindictively on the table, though his manner to us was rather that of one seeking advice. "Why," he stormed, "this affair is the limit! I rent my apartment to an apparently reputable person. And what do I find? It is not even a mere scandal. It is worse. The place is closed and guarded—quarantined, as it were. I can't get back into my own rooms!"

Kennedy smiled. "I can't blame you for feeling vexed, Mr. Ames," he soothed, "but I'm sure I don't know what I can do for you more than I am doing. We are making every effort to clear the thing up—and I have been on the case, you must remember, less than twelve hours."

"Oh, I've no criticism of you," rejoined Ames, somewhat mollified. "I didn't come here to criticize. I came only because I thought you might like to know that I was back in town, and because Dr. Leslie mentioned your name. No, indeed—no criticism. Only," he added, "now that my vacation is spoiled and I am back in town, there is going to be some action—that's all."

"It can't come too swiftly for me," encouraged Craig.

"I'm going to jump right into this beastly row," pursued Ames aggressively. "This morning I'm going to look these people up. They tell me that Baroness has been spending a good deal of time at my place. Pine business—eh? She's disappeared. But I'll get after that Haynes and the Madame Dupres they tell me about—and I'll let you know if I find out anything."

He had not given Kennedy a chance to say anything, and in fact Kennedy did not seem to want to say anything yet.

"Just thought I'd drop in," concluded Ames, who hadn't taken a chair, but now extended his hand to us; "I think I'll drop into a Turkish bath and freshen up a bit. Keep in touch with me."

We shook hands and Ames departed, bustling out as he had bustled in.

Kennedy looked at me and laughed as the door closed. "If we have many more people cooperating with us," he exclaimed, "we may resign and let this case solve itself."

"I don't think that is likely," I replied.

"Not unless we hear from Burke," he agreed. "There is plenty for me to do in the laboratory—but I do wish Burke would wire."

The morning passed, and still there was no word from Burke.

"I think we might drop around to the St. Quentin for lunch," suggested Kennedy in the forenoon. "We might pick up some news there."

We had scarcely entered when we met Haynes pacing up and down the lobby furiously.

"What's the matter?" inquired Craig, eyeing him searchingly.

"Why," he replied nervously, sticking his thumbs into his waistcoat pockets and then plunging them into his trousers pockets as if it was with the utmost difficulty he controlled those unruly members from doing violence to somebody, "that fellow Ames from whom Delaney hired the apartment had just returned suddenly to town. I saw him talking to Madame Dupres in the hotel parlor. She seemed a bit nervous, so I went in to speak to her. But she said everything was all right and that she'd meet me out here in a few minutes. It's quarter of an hour now. I think he's threatening her with something."

Haynes was evidently worried. I wondered whether he was afraid that Ames might worm from her some secret common to the two, for I did not doubt that Ames was a clever and subtle attorney and capable of obtaining a great deal of information by his kind of kid-glove third degree.

"I should like to see both of them," decided Craig quickly.

Before Haynes could say anything more, he strode into the hotel parlor. Haynes and I followed a short distance behind.

There was an air of tense, suppressed excitement in the group, but of all of us, I felt that Madame Dupres was the coolest.

"I see you've lost no time in getting busy," nodded Craig to Ames.

"No," he replied easily. "This is certainly a very interesting situation which madame here has just outlined to me."

Haynes came up just in time to catch the last words.

"I say, Ames," he almost roared, "you may be a clever lawyer, but you must remember that you are also expected to be a gentleman. There are limits to questioning a woman when she has not the advantage of having a friend to advise her."

For a moment I thought there was going to be a fight, but Kennedy moved unobtrusively between the two men. As for Madame Dupres, I felt that really she was a match for both of them.

Instead of getting mad, however, Ames merely laughed.

"Why, Haynes," he said quietly, "I don't think you ought to complain. I understand that you, now representing Delaney's Texas syndicate, have already signed the final contract for the deal with those whom Madame Dupres represents and have received a certified check from them as a first payment to bind the bargain."

Haynes turned almost livid, then recovering himself, glanced at Madame Dupres.

"Why, Harris, I didn't think there was any secrecy about it now," she said, seeing the change in him. "If there is, I'm sorry."

"There isn't," replied Haynes, quickly recovering his composure. "Only I just didn't like to see a lawyer, an outsider, quizzing you, that's all."

Jealousy was stamped in every line of Haynes' face. Ames said nothing, but it was impossible to escape the look of gratification which he shot at Kennedy as he brought out the startling new development.

Madame Dupres was clever enough to see that no good could come of prolonging an interview for which now there was an excuse to break up.

"Take me in to lunch, Harris," she said, slipping her arm familiarly into his. "Good-morning, gentlemen."

Somehow I felt that she would have liked to add, "And if you see the Baroness, tell her I have beaten her to it."

Ames watched them depart with an air of cynical satisfaction, paused a moment, then in turn excused himself from us.

What did it mean? What was behind all this intrigue. Was it merely to get this cattle contract, big as that was?

We lunched together at the St. Quentin, and it was evident that Madame Dupres was doing her best to smooth over the ruffled feelings of her lover.

Luncheon over, Kennedy plunged with redoubled energy into his laboratory investigation. He said little, but I could tell from his manner that he had found something that was very fascinating to him.

CHAPTER XV

THE GERM OF ANTHRAX

It was not until the middle of the afternoon that there came a sudden, brief message from the Secret Service in Washington:

Mr. Craig Kennedy,
New York.

I have located the Baroness Von Dorf in a private sanitarium here and will have her in New York tonight by eight o'clock.

BURKE.

"In a private sanitarium—will have her in New York tonight," reread Craig, studying the message. "Then it wouldn't seem that there could be much the matter with her."

For a few moments he paced the laboratory floor, alternately studying the boards and the yellow telegram. At last, his face seemed to light up as if he had reasoned something out to his satisfaction. Quickly he reached for the telephone and called Dr. Leslie.

"I shall have the Baroness here tonight at eight, Leslie," I heard him say. "Don't tell a soul about it. But I'd like to have you make all the arrangements to secure the attendance of Haynes, Ames, and Madame Dupres here just a bit ahead of that time."

There was nothing that I could do to aid Craig more in the hours that remained than to efface myself, and I did it in the most effectual way I could think of, compatible with my interest in the case. I rode down to Dr. Leslie's office and dined hurriedly with him. The only new information I gleaned was that Haynes had visited him during the afternoon and had outlined his theory of cyanogen, which certainly seemed to me to fit in quite readily with the facts.

When we reached the laboratory, early, Kennedy was still absorbed in studying his microscope. He said nothing, but apparently had gained an air of confidence which he lacked the night before.

The Baroness had not yet arrived, but a few minutes after us came Ashby Ames, still complaining about the closing of his apartment and the inconvenience the whole affair had put him to. Haynes arrived and Ames cut short his tirade, glancing resentfully at the veterinarian as though in some way he were responsible for his troubles. Madame Dupres arrived shortly, and I could not help noticing that Haynes was patently jealous of even the nod of recognition she gave to Ames.

"I don't think I need say that this is one of the most baffling cases that we have ever had," began Kennedy, with a glance at Dr. Leslie.

"It certainly is," chimed in the coroner, as though he had been appealed to for corroboration.

"In the first place," resumed Kennedy, "I discovered in the air up there in Delaney's room just a trace of cyanogen."

Haynes nodded approvingly, glancing from one to the other of us.

"But," added Craig, as if he had built up a house of cards merely to demolish it, "I don't think that cyanogen was the cause of Delaney's death—although it furnished the clew."

"What could it have been, then?" demanded Haynes, his face clouding.

Kennedy looked at him calmly. "You've heard of anthrax?" he asked simply.

"Y-yes," replied Haynes, meeting his eye fixedly. "Murrain—the cattle disease."

"That is so deadly to human beings sometimes," added Craig. "Well, I've found something very much like anthrax germs in the sweepings that I took up with the vacuum cleaner up there."

Dr. Leslie was listening intently.

"I can't see how it could have been anthrax," he put in, slowly shaking his head. "Why, Kennedy, the symptoms were entirely different."

"No, this was a poisoning of some kind," added Dr. Haynes. "Dr. Leslie himself tells me that you

found traces of cyanogen in the air—and you have just said so, too."

Kennedy indicated the microscope. "Take a look at that slide under the lens," he said simply.

I was nearest and as he evidently meant each of us to look, I did so. Under the high-power lens I could see some little roundish dots moving slowly through the field.

Haynes looked next. "But, Professor Kennedy," he objected, almost as soon as he had time for a good look, "the bacilli of anthrax have normally the form of straight bars strung together in a row."

"Yes, rod bacilli," added Dr. Leslie, also looking. "Like long rows of hyphens, slender cylindrical, non-motile chains joined end to end."

We looked at Craig inquiringly.

"Like that," he indicated, substituting another slide.

We looked again. The field had somewhat the appearance of an exaggerated war map with dark units of supposed troops.

"That's it," nodded Haynes.

Kennedy removed the slide. "Those are some anthrax germs I obtained here in the city from a pathologist," he said, turning a switch that threw on in a lamp a peculiar, purplish light. "This is a machine for the propagation of ultra-violet rays."

He placed the second slide, with its germs of anthrax, in the light, allowing it to play over the slide.

"Now look," he said.

We did. Something had evidently happened. The chains were broken and smaller units were moving.

"If anthrax germs are exposed for a few seconds, even, to ultra-violet light, they change more or less," Kennedy proceeded. "These new forms are not stable. They quickly change back again into their original form."

For about ten minutes we sat in silence while the weird light played as if with ghostly fingers on the deadly invisible peril on the little glass microscope slide.

"But if the action of the ultra-violet rays is continued," went on Craig, "the microbe changes into a coccus, and then into a filiform bacillus. This form is stable. And the germ is changed in other respects than mere shape. It has entirely new characteristics. It is a true mutation. It produces a disease entirely different from that of the anthrax bacillus from which it is derived. I have tried it on a guinea pig—and it has died in forty-eight hours."

Startled as I was by this remarkable discovery, I yet had time to watch Haynes. He had not taken his eyes off Kennedy once since he began to speak.

"In anthrax," continued Craig, "an autopsy reveals an enormous serous swelling, about the point of inoculation, with a large gathering of microbes which are formed in the blood and spleen. Death seems to be due to septic poisoning. But this new microbe—super-toxicus, I think it might well be named—produces no swelling and scarcely any microbes are to be found in the blood.

"The lungs are inflamed, with innumerable small abscesses. That is the internal form of the disease from breathing in the spores of these microbes. It has an external form, also, but that is by no means so deadly. One would say that death from the internal form of the disease was due to poisoning. The toxin of this microbe produces a sort of asphyxiation, cutting off and eating up the supply of oxygen.

"Such a condition is called cyanosis. That is why in Delaney it had the appearance of cyanogen poisoning. The effect was the same. But the trace of cyanogen in the air was merely a coincidence, Haynes. It wasn't cyanogen that killed. But it was something quite as deadly—and far harder to trace—a new germ!"

We listened, fascinated.

"A French scientist, a woman, Madame Victor Henri, a student at the Pasteur Institute in Paris, has shown that a new microbe can actually be created from anthrax germs by the use of ultra-violet rays. It is not like anthrax, but may be quite as deadly, perhaps more so.

"This discovery," he added earnestly, "proves for the first time that a living organism can be changed suddenly and artificially into an organism of a new and entirely different species. One can scarcely appreciate the importance of it. If the germs of different diseases can be transformed, the germ of one being changed into the germ of another, it will be a first step toward finding a way to change deadly germs into others that will be quite innocuous."

Kennedy paused impressively to let the horror of the thing impress itself on our minds. "But this criminal has been working for evil purposes in the wrong direction—creating a disease in order to cover up his tracks!"

One could almost feel the net closing.

"Delaney has fallen a victim to a new germ of which someone learned in Paris," Craig raced on, inexorably, "a germ that would never, in all probability, be discovered by American doctors, a germ that poisoned safely, surely, and swiftly by its deadly super-toxin."

A few moments before there had been a noise of a car outside the laboratory window, but in the excitement of Craig's startling revelation we had paid no attention.

A hasty tap at the door interrupted him. Before he could open it a very beautiful woman burst in, followed by a thick-set Irishman.

It was the Baroness Von Dorf and our friend Burke.

For a moment the two women fairly glared at each other.

"I've heard what Professor Kennedy just said," cried the Baroness, her eyes snapping fire. "Fortunately, I had to go to Washington and was able to protect myself by seeming to disappear. If I had stayed in New York another day, there is no telling what might have happened to me. Probably I should have got this disease internally instead of externally. As it was, I thought it would come near ruining my beauty."

Burke tossed a yellow slip of paper on the table near Kennedy. "That is something one of our special agents found and brought me today," he exclaimed.

Kennedy picked it up and read it, while Burke faced us.

The Secret Service man fixed his eyes on Madame Dupres. "As for you, my dear lady," he challenged, "how do you happen to be in New York with one of the greatest international crooks that ever troubled the police of five continents?"

"I—in New York?" she shrugged coolly. "Monte Carlo, Paris, Vienna, London—all were dead. I had to come here to make a living."

The Baroness drew herself up as if to speak.

"You scoundrel—you will give my apartment a bad name with your dirty cattle plague—will you!" ground out a voice harshly at my side.

I turned quickly. Ames had clutched Haynes by the throat. We were all on our feet in a moment, but there was no need of separating them. The veterinary was more than a match for the hot-headed little lawyer.

"Someone," shot out Kennedy, wheeling quickly, "figured that the cattle deal could be brought about quite naturally if Delaney were dead and the Baroness out of the way. Later he could reap the profit and carry off Madame Dupres into the bargain. And if anything were ever discovered, what more natural than to throw the suspicion on a veterinary who was supposed to know all about anthrax?"

Just then a half circle of nickled steel gleamed momentarily in Kennedy's hands. I recognized it as a pair of the new handcuffs that uncoiled automatically, gripping at a mere touch.

I saw it all in a flash, as I picked up the paper that Burke had tossed to Kennedy.

It was a telegram, and read:

A. A., The New Stratfield, Washington.

Return immediately. Coroner has Craig Kennedy on case.

D. D.

"It was a devilish scheme," snapped Kennedy, as the handcuffs circled the fake lawyer's wrists, "but it didn't work, Ames."

CHAPTER XVI

THE SLEEPMAKER

"Perhaps race-horses may be a little out of your line, Mr. Kennedy, but I think you will find the case sufficiently interesting to warrant you in taking it up."

Our visitor was a young man, one of the most carefully groomed and correctly dressed I have ever met. His card told us that we were honored by a visit from Montague Broadhurst, a noted society whip, who had lavished many thousands of dollars on his racing-stable out on Long Island.

"You see," he went on hurriedly, "there have been a good many strange things that have happened to my horses lately." He paused a moment, then continued: "They have been losing

consistently. Take my favorite, Lady Lee, for instance."

"Do you think they have been doped?" asked Kennedy quickly, eager to get down to the point at issue, for I had never known Craig to be interested in racing.

"I don't know," replied the young millionaire, drawing his eyelids together reflectively. "I've had the best veterinary in the country to look my stable over, and even he can't seem to find a thing that's wrong."

"Perhaps a visit out there might show us something," cut in Kennedy, as though he were rather favorably impressed, after all, by the novelty of the case.

Broadhurst's face brightened.

"Then you will take it up—you are interested?" he queried, adding, "My car is outside."

"I'm interested in anything that promises a new experience," returned Craig, "and I think this affair may be of that sort."

Broadhurst's stable was out on central Long Island, not far from the pretty and fashionable town of Northbury. As we passed down the main street, I could see that Broadhurst was easily the most popular of the wealthy residents of the neighborhood. In fact, the Broadhurst racing stables were a sort of local industry, one of the show-places of Northbury.

As we swung out again into the country, we could see ahead of us some stable-boys working out several fine thoroughbreds on Broadhurst's private track, while a group of grooms and rubbers watched them.

The stable itself was a circular affair of frame, painted dark red, which contrasted sharply with the green of the early summer trees. Broadhurst's car pulled up before a large office and lounging-room at one end, above which Murchie, his manager and trainer, had his suite of rooms.

The office into which Broadhurst led us was decidedly "horsey." About the place were handsomely mounted saddles, bridles, and whips, more for exhibition than for use. In velvet-lined cases were scores of glittering bits. All the appointments were brass-mounted. Sporting prints, trophies, and Mission easy chairs made the room most attractive.

Before a desk sat Murchie. As I looked at him, I thought that he had a cruel expression about his eyes, a predatory mouth and chin. He rose quickly at the sight of Broadhurst.

"Murchie, I would like to have you meet my friends, Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Jameson," introduced Broadhurst. "They are very much interested in horses, and I want you to show them about the place and let them see everything."

We chatted a moment, and then went out to look at the horses.

In the center of the circular group of stalls was a lawn. The stalls of the racers in training were large box stalls.

"You have certainly trained a great horse in Lady Lee," remarked Kennedy casually, as we made our way around the ring of stalls.

Murchie looked up at him quickly.

"Until the last few races, I thought so," he replied, stopping before the stall of the famous racer and opening the door.

Lady Lee was a splendid three-year-old bay, a quivering, sensitive, high-strung animal. Murchie looked at her a moment, then at us.

"A horse, you know," he said reflectively, "is just as ambitious to win a race as you are to win success, but must have hard training. I keep horses in training eight or nine months out of the year. I get them into shape in the early spring and am very careful what they eat. If they get a vacation, they may eat green foods, carrots, and grass in open field; but when we prepare them for the ring or a race, they must have grain, bran, and soft foods. They must have careful grooming to put the coats in first-class condition, must be kept exquisitely clean, with the best ventilation."

"How about exercise?" asked Kennedy.

"Well," replied Murchie, "I work out horses according to age, with the distance for fast work gradually increased."

Our trip through the wonderful stable over, we returned to the office, Murchie walking ahead with Broadhurst. As we reached the door, Broadhurst turned to us.

"I hope you will pardon me," he said, "but there is some business up at the house that I must attend to."

"Oh, Mr. Broadhurst," interjected Murchie, "before you go back to town, I want to talk over with you some of the changes that ought to be made about the boys here, as well as their food and quarters."

"All right," returned Broadhurst; "jump into the car and ride with me. We can talk on the way,

and you can come right back. I'll pick you gentlemen up later."

Kennedy nodded, quick to perceive the cue that Broadhurst had given him to watch the stables without Murchie watching us.

We sat down in the office, and I looked about at the superb fittings.

"Do you think it is possible for an owner to make a financial success of racing without betting?" I asked Kennedy.

"Possible, but highly improbable," returned Craig. "I believe they consider that they have an excellent year whenever they clear expenses. I don't know about Broadhurst, but I believe that a good many owners don't bet on their horses. They have seen the glaring crookedness of the thing, especially if they have happened to be officers of jockey clubs or stewards of various race-meets. Personally, I should think a man of Broadhurst's stamp would not permit himself to be made a victim of the leeches of the turf—although he may wager a bit, just to give zest to the race. American racing has often been called a purely gambling affair, and I think, before we get through, that we shall see the reason for much of the public opposition to it."

Just then a small man entered the office, and, seeing us, asked for Mr. Murchie. His face was pinched and thin. He wore the latest cut of clothes, but was so very slight that his garments hung loosely on him. One could well imagine that he had tried all sorts of schemes to keep himself down toward the hundred-and-ten-or-twelve-pound mark. He was the very type of jockey. He introduced himself to us as Danny McGee, and I recognized at once the famous twenty-five-thousand-dollar-a-year rider, who had so often successfully defended the Broadhurst colors.

"Mr. Murchie has gone up to the house," replied Kennedy to his inquiry.

McGee looked us over a minute.

"Friends of his?" he asked, in a confidential tone. Kennedy smiled.

"Of Mr. Broadhurst's," he said quietly.

There was a noticeable change in McGee's manner.

"Just out here to look the stable over," went on Kennedy; "a wonderful place."

"Yes; we think so," assented McGee.

"It seems strange," ventured Kennedy, "that, with all this care, Lady Lee should not be keeping up to her record."

McGee glanced at us keenly.

"I don't understand it myself," he said. "I suppose lots of people must think it is the fault of the jockey, but I have certainly earned my salary lately with that filly. I don't know what's the matter. I've done the best I can, but in spite of it there's something wrong."

He spoke with an air of genuine worry, and, although I tried hard, I must confess that I found it impossible to fathom him.

"The filly," he added, "has her regular work-out and the regular feed, and yet she seems to be all tired out most of the time. Even the veterinaries can't seem to find out what's the matter."

An awkward silence followed, during which both Kennedy and myself endeavored to conceal our ignorance of horses by saying nothing about them. Finally McGee rose and excused himself, saying that he would be back soon.

There were still a few minutes before Murchie would be likely to return. Without saying a word, Kennedy rose and opened the door which led into the stable. Across the lawn in the center we could see a man's figure rapidly retreating through the main entrance, and, somehow or other, I felt that at the sound of the opening of our door he hastened his pace.

Kennedy walked quickly around the circle of box stalls until he came again to Lady Lee. He entered the stall and looked the famous racer over carefully. I was wondering what, if anything, he expected to find, when, almost before I knew it, I saw him jab a little hypodermic needle into her neck and withdraw a few drops of blood.

Lady Lee reared and snorted, but Kennedy managed to quiet her. He returned the hypodermic, with these few drops of blood, carefully into its case again, and we made our way back to the office.

A few minutes later, the drone of Broadhurst's car told us that Murchie had returned. We resumed the talk about horses, upstairs in Murchie's own apartment, which consisted of living-rooms, a library, and bath. It was a luxuriously appointed place, in keeping with the tastes of its occupant. We sat down in the library.

I was quite interested in looking about me. For one thing, Murchie's idea of art seemed to be a curious blending of horse and woman. There were pictures of all the string of Broadhurst winners, interspersed with Venuses and actresses.

On a little table I noticed, at length, a colored photograph in an oval gilt frame. It was of a very

beautiful girl. She was something over medium height, with a fine figure, golden hair, and deep-blue eyes. Somehow, I recalled that I had seen that face before, and when I caught Kennedy looking at it from time to time, I was certain of it.

Suddenly it flashed over me that the picture had been published in the *Star*. It was Cecilie Safford. I remembered having read of Murchie's escapades, one of which was his elopement with a pretty young stenographer whom he had met at the horse show a couple of years before.

The talk ran along about horses still, but I noticed that Kennedy was even more interested in Murchie's pictures, now, than in his conversation. In the place of honor, over the mantel, hung a portrait, in an artistic panel, of a slender girl with dark hair and hazel eyes, with a soft, swanlike throat and neck, and a somewhat imperious manner of carrying her head.

I followed Craig's glance across the room. There, in a frame upon the wall in a corner, hung an enlargement of a group photograph. It was of a middle-aged woman, a little boy, and a little girl. Then I remembered the whole story.

At the time of his elopement, Murchie had a wife living. Since then he had been divorced. Although he had promised to marry Cecilie when the divorce was obtained, he was now engaged to marry a wealthy girl, Amélie Guernsey.

Broadhurst returned shortly for us, and we made another tour of the stable, on the outside, including the quarters of the innumerable employees. Finally, at a hint from Kennedy that we had seen enough for the present, Broadhurst motored back to the city with us.

CHAPTER XVII

THE INTER-URBAN HANDICAP

That night, instead of going to the laboratory, we walked down Broadway until we came to a hotel much frequented by the sporting fraternity.

We entered the restaurant, which was one of the most brilliant in the white-light region, took a seat at a table, and Kennedy proceeded to ingratiate himself with the waiter, and, finally, with the head waiter. At last, I saw why Kennedy was apparently wasting so much time over dinner.

"Do you happen to know that girl, Cecilie Safford, that Broadhurst's trainer, Murchie, eloped with?" he asked.

The head waiter nodded.

"I used to know her," he replied. "She used to come in here a good deal, but you won't find her in the Broadway places any more these days. She's more likely to be over on Eighth Avenue." He mentioned the name of a cabaret saloon.

Kennedy paid the check and again we started out. We finally entered a place, down in a basement, and once more Kennedy began to quiz the waiter.

This time he had no trouble. Across the room, the waiter pointed to a girl, seated with a young fellow at a round table. I could scarcely believe what I saw. The face had the same features as that of the photograph in the oval gilt frame in Murchie's apartment, but it was not the same face.

As I studied her, I could imagine her story without even hearing it. The months of waiting for Murchie to marry her and his callous refusal had been her ruin. Cecilie had learned to drink, and from that had gone to drugs.

Her mirror must have told her that she was not the same girl who had eloped with Murchie. Her figure had lost its slim, beautiful lines. Her features were bloated. Her eyes were smaller, and her lips were heavy. Her fresh color had disappeared. She had a gray, pasty look. All she had—her beauty—had vanished.

Murchie had been divorced, and was about to marry—but not Cecilie. It was to a young and lovely girl, with such a face of innocence as Cecilie had when Murchie had first dictated a letter to her in the office at the horse show, and had fascinated her with his glittering talk of wealth and ease. The news of his engagement had driven her frantic.

Curiously enough, the young fellow with her did not seem to be dissipated in the least. There was, on the contrary, an earnestness about him that one was rather sorry to see in such a place. In fact, he was a clean-cut young man, evidently more of a student than a sport. He reminded me of some one I had seen before.

I was getting rather interested in an underworld cabaret when, suddenly, Kennedy grasped my arm. At the same moment, a shot was fired.

We jumped to our feet in time to see a young tough, with a slouch like that of the rubbers and grooms at Broadhurst's. The fellow who had been seated with Cecilie was struggling with him for the possession of a pistol, which had been discharged harmlessly. Evidently the tough had been

threatening him with it.

The waiters crowded around them, and the general *mêlée* about Cecilie's table was at its height when a policeman came dashing in on the run.

The arrest of the gunman and his opponent, as well as of Cecilie as a witness, seemed imminent. Kennedy moved forward slowly, working his way through the crowd, nearer to the table. Instead of interfering, however, he stooped down and picked up something from the floor.

"Let's get out of this as quickly as possible, Walter," he whispered, turning to me.

When we reached the street, he stopped under an arc-light, and I saw him dive down into his pocket and pull out a little glass vial. He looked at it curiously.

"I saw her take it out of her pocketbook and throw it into a corner as soon as the policeman came in," he explained.

"What do you think it is?" I asked. "Dope? That's what they all do if they get a chance when they are pinched—throw it away."

"Perhaps," answered Kennedy. "But it's worth studying to see what drug she is really using."

Late as it was, Craig insisted on going directly to the laboratory to plunge into work. First, he took the little hypodermic needle with which he had drawn several drops of blood from the race-horse, and emptied the contents into a test tube.

Finding that I was probably of more use at home in our apartment asleep than bothering Kennedy in the laboratory, I said good-night. But when I awoke in the morning, I found that Kennedy had not been in bed at all.

It was as I expected. He had worked all night, and, as I entered the laboratory, I saw him engaged in checking up two series of tests which he had been making.

"Have you found anything yet?" I asked.

He pointed to a corner where he kept a couple of guinea-pigs. They were sound asleep, rolled up in little fluffy balls of down. Ordinarily, in the morning, I found the little fellows very frisky.

"Yes," he said; "I think I have found something. I have injected just a drop of blood from Lady Lee into one of them, and I think he's good for a long sleep."

"But how about the other one?" I asked.

"That's what puzzles me," ruminated Kennedy. "Do you remember that bottle I picked up last night? I haven't finished the analysis of the blood or of the contents of the bottle, but they seem to contain at least some of the same substances. Among the things I find are monopotassium phosphate and sarcolactic acid, with just a trace of carbon dioxide. I injected some of the liquid from the bottle into the other fellow, and you see what the effect is—the same in both cases."

The telephone bell rang excitedly.

"Is there a Mr. Kennedy there?" asked Long Distance, adding, without waiting for an answer, "Hold the wire, please."

I handed the receiver to Kennedy. The conversation was short, and as he hung up the receiver, Craig turned to me.

"It was Broadhurst at the Idlewild Hotel," he said quickly. "Today is the day of the great Interurban Handicap at Belmore Park with stakes of twenty-five thousand dollars. Usually they take the horse over to the track at least a week or two before the race, but as Broadhurst's stable is so near, he didn't do it—hoping he might keep a better watch over Lady Lee. But she's no better. If the horse is being tampered with, he wants to know who is doing it and how."

Kennedy paused a moment, then went over to a cabinet and took from it a bottle and a very large-sized hypodermic.

We must have been among the first on the field at Belmore Park that day. Lady Lee had been sent over there after we left Northbury the day before, under the care of Murchie and McGee, and had been stabled in the quarters on the track which had been assigned to Broadhurst.

With Broadhurst, who was waiting for us, we lounged across the field in the direction of the stables. There was no doubt about it, Lady Lee was not in prime condition. It was not that there was anything markedly wrong, but to the trained observer the famous race-horse seemed to lack just a trifle of the *élan* which meant a win.

While Murchie and the jockey were talking outside to Broadhurst, Kennedy slipped into the stall to look at the racer.

"Stand over by that side of the door, Walter," he muttered. "I'll be through in just a minute. I want you to act as a cover."

Quickly he jabbed the hypodermic into the horse and pressed down the plunger.

Lady Lee reared and snorted as she had done before when he extracted the blood, and instantly

Murchie and McGee were crowding past me. But the instant had been long enough for Kennedy. He had dropped the hypodermic into his pocket and was endeavoring to soothe the horse.

"I guess she's not very much used to strangers," he remarked coolly. No one thought any more of it, apparently.

A few minutes later, Broadhurst rejoined Kennedy and myself. I could see that his face showed plainly he was greatly worried.

"I don't understand it," he kept repeating. "And what is worse, the news seems to have leaked out that Lady Lee isn't fit. The odds are going up."

Kennedy looked at him fixedly a moment.

"If you want to win this race, Mr. Broadhurst," he remarked in a low tone, "I should advise you to watch Lady Lee every minute from now until the start."

"What do you mean?" whispered Broadhurst hoarsely.

"I can't say yet—only watch."

While Broadhurst and Kennedy hovered about the stall on one pretext or another, watching both Murchie and McGee as they directed the rubbers and others who were preparing for the race, I watched the trainer and the jockey minutely. They certainly did nothing, at least now, to excite suspicion. But might not the harm have already been done? Was it too late?

When the bell sounded the paddock call, McGee led the racer out of the stall and to the paddock. Presently the field, Lady Lee at the fore, walked past the grandstand and cantered slowly down the course to the starting-post.

Meanwhile, following Broadhurst, we had already made our way over to the club-house enclosure.

It was not like the old days when there was money everywhere, thousands of dollars in plain sight, in the cash-boxes of the bookmakers, when men rushed wildly about with handfuls of bills of large denomination and bets were made with frequent rapidity. And yet there was still a certain maelstrom of the betting-ring left; but the bookmakers had to carry everything in their heads instead of setting it down on paper. I knew the system, and knew that, in spite of the apparent ease with which it seemed possible to beat it, welshing was almost unheard of.

The grandstand was crowded, although it was quite a different crowd from that at race meets of former times and on other tracks. Belmore Park lay within motoring distance of the greatest aggregation of wealth and fashion in the country. It was a wonderful throng. The gay dresses of the women mingled kaleidoscopically with the more somber clothing of the men.

Every eye in that sea of moving humanity seemed to be riveted on Lady Lee and her rider. It was a pretty good example of how swiftly inside news at the race-track may become public property. Ill news, on this occasion, seemed to have traveled apace. Field-glasses were leveled at the horse which should have been the favorite, and one could tell, by the buzz of conversation, that this race was the great event of the season. As the jockeys maneuvered for position, one could almost feel that some wonderful feats of memory were being performed by the bookmakers. The odds, during the morning, had gradually lengthened against Lady Lee.

Like all thoroughbreds, Lady Lee had a most delicate organism, and the good rider, in such a case, was the one who understood his mount. McGee had, in the past at least, that reputation. He had reached pretty near the top of his profession by knowing how to deal with horses of all types. All this and more I had picked up from the gossip of the track.

The barrier was sprung and the flag dropped. They were off! The grandstand rose in a body.

For a moment, it seemed to me that McGee had lost his nerve. Alertness at the post is an important factor. He had not got away from the barrier ahead of the field. Another rider, too, had got the rail, and hence the shortest route. I wondered whether, after all, that had been the trouble all along, for nothing can win or lose a race quicker or better than those little failures of the jockey himself.

Lady Lee, I had heard it said, was one of those horses that do not require urging, but go to the front naturally. Just now, it did not seem that she was beaten, but that she lacked just the power to lead the field. Did McGee figure that the horses ahead of him were setting such a fast clip that they would drop back to him before the race was over?

Cleverly, however, he avoided being pocketed, as those ahead of and beside him tried to close in and make him pull up.

Around they went until the horses looked to the naked eye like toys strung on wires. Only the tension of the crowd made one feel that this was no play; it was deadly serious sport. On they sped, watched in a lull of deathly stillness. Surely, I felt, this was indeed a great sight—this acid test of the nerves of men and animals pitted against one another.

They were coming into the stretch now!

Suddenly, it seemed that, by some telepathic connection, both the horse and the rider caught the

electric tension which swayed us in the club-house enclosure.

I myself was carried away by the frenzied spirit of the race. Broadhurst was leaning forward, oblivious of everything else in the world, straining his eyes through a field-glass. Murchie was watching the race with a supercilious air, which I knew was clearly assumed.

On they came!

I could not help wondering whether McGee had not really planned to throw the race. Would he, perhaps at the last moment, lose his nerve?

Lady Lee suddenly shot through the field. A mighty shout rose from the entire grandstand.

It was over in a matter of seconds. She had finished first by a half-length! She had won the classic and the rich stakes.

Pandemonium seemed to reign in the club-house inclosure. Broadhurst slapped Murchie over the back with a blow of congratulation that almost felled him. As for McGee, they nearly carried him off the field on their shoulders. Only Kennedy seemed to be calm. The race had been won—but had the problem been solved?

Broadhurst seemed to have forgotten all about his previous appeal to Kennedy in the unexpected joy of winning.

We paused awhile to watch the frantic crowd, and once, I recall, I caught sight of a stunning, dark-haired woman grasping Murchie's both hands in an ecstasy of joy. Instantly I recognized Amélie Guernsey.

As Kennedy and I motored back to the city alone, he was silent most of the way. Only once did he make a remark.

"The Belmore Inn," he said, as we passed a rather cheap road-house some distance from the track. "That's where I heard one of the rubbers say the former Mrs. Murchie was living."

That night, Craig plunged back again into work in the laboratory, and I, having nothing else to do, wrote a feature story of the great race for the *Star*.

Kennedy made up for the rest he had lost and the strain of the day by a long sleep; but early in the morning the telephone bell rang insistently. Kennedy bounded out of bed to answer it.

I could gather nothing from the monosyllables which he uttered, except that the matter under discussion was profoundly serious. Finally, he jammed down the receiver.

"Good God, Walter," he exclaimed, "Murchie's been murdered!"

CHAPTER XVIII

THE TOXIN OF FATIGUE

He gave me no time for questions, and I had no ability to reconstruct my own theory of the case as we hustled into our clothes to catch the early morning train.

"Broadhurst is at the Idlewild Hotel," Kennedy said, as we left the apartment, "and I think we can make it quicker by railway than by motor."

The turfman met us at the station.

"Tell me just what happened," asked Kennedy.

"No one seems to understand just what it was," Broadhurst explained, "but, as nearly as I remember, Murchie was the lion of the Idlewild grillroom all the evening. He had 'come back.' Once, I recall, he was paged, and the boy told him someone was waiting outside. He went out, and returned, considerably flushed and excited.

"'By George,' he said, 'a man never raises his head above the crowd but that there's somebody there to take a crack at it! There must have been some crank outside, for before I could get a look in the dark, I was seized. I managed to get away. I got a little scratch with a knife or a pin, though,' he said, dabbing at a cut on his neck."

"What then?" prompted Kennedy.

"None of us paid much attention to it," resumed Broadhurst, "until just as another toast was proposed to Lady Lee and someone suggested that Murchie respond to it, we turned to find him huddled up in his chair, absolutely unconscious. The house physician could find nothing wrong apparently—in fact, said it was entirely a case of heart failure. I don't think any of us would question his opinion if it had not been for Murchie's peculiar actions when he came back to the room that time."

Murchie's body had been removed to the local undertaking establishment. As Broadhurst drove

up there and we entered, Kennedy seemed interested only in the little jab and a sort of swelling upon the neck of the dead man. Quickly he made a little incision beside it, and about ten or a dozen drops of what looked like blood-serum oozed out on a piece of gauze which Craig held.

As we turned to leave the undertaker's, a striking, dark-haired girl, with the color gone from her cheeks, hurried past us and fell on her knees beside Murchie's body. It was the woman who had congratulated him the day before, the woman of the panel—Amélie Guernsey.

I had not noticed, up to this point, another woman who was standing apart in the crowd, but now I happened to catch her eye. It was the woman whose picture with the two children hung in Murchie's apartment. Kennedy drew me back into the crowd, and there we watched the strange tragedy of the wife that was and the wife that was to have been.

Craig hurried back to the city after that, and, as we pushed our way up the ramp from the station, he looked hastily at his watch.

"Walter," he said, "I want you to locate Cecilie Safford and let me know at the laboratory the moment you find her. And perhaps it would be well to start at the police station."

It seemed to me as though the girl whom we had found so easily the evening before had now utterly disappeared. At the police station she had not been held, but had given an address which had proved fictitious. At the cabaret saloon no one had seen her since the incident of the fight.

As I left the place, I ran into Donovan, of the Tenderloin squad, and put the case to him. He merely laughed.

"Of course I could find her any time I wanted to," he said. "I knew that was a fake address."

He gave me the real address, and I hurried to the nearest telephone to call up Craig.

"Have Donovan bring her over here as soon as he can find her," he called back.

When I arrived at the laboratory, I found Kennedy engrossed in his tests.

"Have you found anything definite?" I asked anxiously.

He nodded, but would say nothing.

"I've telephoned Broadhurst," he remarked, a moment later. "You remember that the former Mrs. Murchie was at Belmore Inn. I have asked him to stop and get her on the way down here in the car with McGee, and to get Amélie Guernsey at the Idlewild, too." He continued to work. "And, oh yes," he added: "I have asked Inspector O'Connor to take up another line, too."

It was a strange gathering that assembled that forenoon. Donovan arrived soon after I did, and with him, sure enough, was Cecilie Safford. A few moments later Broadhurst's car swung up to the door, and Broadhurst entered, accompanied by Amélie Guernsey. McGee followed, with the former Mrs. Murchie.

"I don't want another job like that," whispered Broadhurst to Kennedy. "I'm nearly frozen. Neither of those women has spoken a word since we started."

"You can hardly blame them," returned Kennedy.

Mrs. Murchie was still a handsome woman. She now carried herself with an air of assumed dignity. Amélie Guernsey had regained her color in the excitement of the ride and was, if anything, more beautiful than ever. But, as Broadhurst intimated, one could almost feel the frigidity of the atmosphere as the three women who had played such dramatic parts in Murchie's life sat there, trying to watch and, at the same time, avoid each other's gaze.

The suspense was relieved when O'Connor came in in a department car. With him were the young man who had been seated with Cecilie at the table the night of the fight and also the gunman.

"The magistrate in the night court settled the case that night," informed O'Connor, under his breath, laying down two slips of paper before Kennedy, "but I have their pedigrees. That fellow's name is Ronald Mawson," he said, pointing to Cecilie's companion, then indicating the gunman, "That's Frank Giani—Frank the Wop."

I watched Mawson and Cecilie closely, but could discover nothing. They scarcely looked at each other.

McGee, however, glared at both Mawson and the gunman, though none of them said a word.

"They used to be out there as stable-boys at Broadhurst's," I heard O'Connor continue, in a whisper. "I think they had a run-in and were fired. Each says the other got him in wrong."

A moment later Kennedy began:

"When you came to my laboratory the other day, Mr. Broadhurst," he said, "you remarked that perhaps this case might be a little out of my line, but that I might find it sufficiently interesting. I can assure you that I have not only found it interesting, but astounding. I have seldom had the privilege of unraveling a mystery which was so cleverly rigged and in which there are so many cross-currents of human passion."

"Then you think Lady Lee was doped?" asked Broadhurst.

"Doped?" interjected McGee quickly. "Why, Mr. Broadhurst, you remember what the veterinary said. He couldn't find any signs of heroin or any other dope they use."

"That's the devilish ingenuity of it all," shot out Kennedy suddenly, holding up a little beaker in which there was some colorless fluid. "I am merely going to show you now what can be done by the use of one of the latest discoveries of physiological chemistry."

He took a syringe and, drawing back the plunger, filled it with the liquid. With a slight jab of cocaine to make the little operation absolutely painless, he injected the fluid into the livelier of our two guinea-pigs.

"While you and Murchie were absent the first day that I went out to your stable, I succeeded in drawing off some of the blood of Lady Lee," Craig resumed, talking to Broadhurst. "Here, in my laboratory, I have studied it. Lady Lee, that day, had had no more than the ordinary amount of exercise, yet she was completely fagged."

By this time the little guinea-pig had become more and more listless and was now curled up in a corner sound asleep.

"I have had to work very hurriedly this morning," Craig continued, "but it has only been covering ground over which I have already gone. I was already studying a peculiar toxin. And from the fluid I obtained from Murchie's body, I have been able to calculate that a deadly dose of that same powerful poison killed him."

Kennedy plunged directly from this startling revelation into his proof.

"Perhaps you have heard of the famous German scientist, Weichardt, of Berlin," he resumed, "and his remarkable investigations into the toxin of fatigue. Scientists define fatigue as the more or less complete loss of the power of muscles to respond to stimulation due to their normal activity. An interval of rest is usually enough to bring about their return to some degree of power. But for complete return to normal condition, a long interval may be necessary.

"As the result of chemical changes which occur in a muscle from contraction, certain substances are formed which depress or inhibit the power of contraction. Extracts made from the fatigued muscles of one frog, for instance, when injected into the circulation of another frog bring on an appearance of fatigue in the latter. Extracts from unfatigued muscles give no such results. More than that, the production of this toxin of fatigue by the exercise of one set of muscles, such as those of the legs in walking, greatly diminishes the amount of work obtainable from other unused muscles, such as those of the arms."

Kennedy went on, looking at the sleeping guinea-pig rather than at us:

"Weichardt has isolated from fatigued muscles a true toxin of a chemical and physical nature, like the bacterial toxins, which, when introduced into the blood, gives rise to the phenomena of fatigue. This is the toxin of fatigue—kenotoxin. Those who have studied the subject have found at least three fatigue substances—free sarcolactic acid, carbon dioxide, and monopotassium phosphate, which is so powerful that, after the injection of one-fifteenth of a gram, the poisoned muscle shows signs of fatigue and is scarcely able to lift a weight easily lifted in normal conditions. Other fatigue products may be discovered; but, if present in large quantity or in small quantity for a long time, each of the substances I have named will cause depression or fatigue of muscles.

"Further than that," continued Kennedy, "the depressing influence of these substances on what is known as striated muscle—heart muscle—is well known. The physician at the Idlewild might very well have mistaken the cause of the relaxation of Murchie's heart. For German investigators have also found that the toxin of fatigue, when injected into the circulation of a fresh animal, may not only bring on fatigue but may even cause death—as it did finally here." Kennedy paused. "Lady Lee," he said, looking from one to the other of his audience keenly, "Lady Lee was the first victim of the fiendish cunning of this—"

A shrill voice interrupted.

"But Lady Lee won the race!"

It was McGee, the jockey. Kennedy looked at him a moment, then tapped another beaker on the table before him.

"Weichardt has also obtained, by the usual methods," he replied, "an antitoxin with the power of neutralizing the fatigue properties of the toxin. You thought Lady Lee was not friendly with strangers that morning at the track. She was not, when the stranger jabbed a needle into her neck and pumped an extra large dose of the antitoxin of fatigue into her just in time to neutralize, before the race, the long series of injections of fatigue toxin."

Kennedy was now traveling rapidly toward the point which he had in view. He drew from his pocket the little bottle which he had picked up that night in the cabaret saloon.

"One word more," he said, as he held up the bottle and faced Cecilie Safford, who was now trembling like a leaf ready to fall: "If one with shattered nerves were unable to sleep, can you imagine what would be a most ideal sedative—especially if to take almost any other drug would

be merely to substitute that habit for another?"

He waited a moment, then answered his own question.

"Naturally," he proceeded, "it might be, theoretically at least, a small dose of those products of fatigue by which nature herself brings on sleep. I am not going into the theory of the thing. The fact that you had such a thing is all that interests me."

I watched the girl's eyes as they were riveted on Kennedy. She seemed to be fascinated, horrified.

"This bottle contains a weak solution of the toxin of fatigue," persisted Kennedy.

I thought she would break down, but, by a mighty effort, she kept her composure and said nothing.

"Someone was trying to discredit and ruin Murchie by making the horses he trained lose races—somebody whose life and happiness Murchie himself had already ruined.

"That person," pursued Kennedy relentlessly, "was defeated in the attempt to discredit Murchie when, by my injection of the antitoxin, Lady Lee finally did win. In that person's mind, Murchie, not the horse, had won.

"The wild excitement over Murchie's vindication drove that person to desperation. There was only one more road to revenge. It was to wait until Murchie himself could be easily overpowered, when an overwhelming dose of this fatigue toxin could be shot into him—the weapon that had failed on the horses turned on himself. Besides, no one—not even the most expert physician or chemist—would ever suspect that Murchie's death was not natural."

"That—that bottle is mine—mine!" shouted a wild voice interrupting. "I took it—I used it—I—"

"Just a moment, Miss Safford," entreated Kennedy. "That person," he rapped out sharply, picking up the pedigrees O'Connor had handed him, "that person gave the toxin to a poor dope fiend as a sleeping-potion in one strength, gave it to Lady Lee in still another strength, and to Murchie in its most fatal strength. It was the poor and unknown pharmacist described in this pedigree whose dream of happiness Murchie shattered when he captivated Cecilie Safford—her deserted lover, Ronald Mawson."

CHAPTER XIX

THE X-RAY DETECTIVE

"I want to consult you, Professor Kennedy, about a most baffling case of sudden death under suspicious circumstances. Blythe is my name—Dr. Blythe."

Our visitor spoke deliberately, without the least perturbation of manner, yet one could see that he was a physician who only as a last resort would appeal to outside aid.

"What is the case, Doctor?" queried Craig.

The Doctor cleared his throat. "It is of a very pretty young art student, Rhoda Fleming, who returned to New York from France shortly after the outbreak of the war and opened a studio in the New Studio Apartments on Park Avenue, not far from my office," began Dr. Blythe, pausing as if to set down accurately every feature of the "case history" of a patient.

"Yes," prompted Craig.

"About a week ago," the Doctor resumed, "I was called to attend Miss Fleming. I think the call came from her maid, Leila, but I am not sure. She had suddenly been taken ill about an hour after dinner. She was cyanotic, had a rapid pulse, and nausea. By means of stimulants I succeeded in bringing her around, however, and she recovered. It looked like acute gastritis.

"But last night, at about the same time, I was called again to see the same girl. She was in an even more serious condition, with all the former symptoms magnified, unconscious, and suffering severe pains in the abdominal region. Her temperature was 103. Apparently there had been too great a delay, for she died in spite of everything I could do without regaining consciousness."

Kennedy regarded the Doctor's face pointedly. "Did the necropsy show that she was—er—"

"No," interrupted the Doctor, catching his glance. "She was not about to become a mother. And I doubt the suicide theory, too." He paused and then after a moment's consideration, added deliberately, "When she recovered from the first attack she seemed to have a horror of death and could offer no explanation of her sudden illness."

"But what other reason could there have been for her condition?" persisted Kennedy, determined to glean all he could of the Doctor's personal impressions.

Dr. Blythe hesitated again, as if considering a point in medical ethics, then suddenly seemed to allow himself to grow confidential. "I'm very much interested in art myself, Professor," he

explained. "I suppose you have heard of the famous 'Fête du Printemps,' by Watteau?"

Kennedy nodded vaguely.

"The original, you know," Dr. Blythe went on hurriedly, "hung in the château of the Comtesse de la Fontaine in the Forest of Compiègne, and was immensely valuable—oh—worth probably a hundred thousand dollars or more."

A moment later Dr. Blythe leaned over with ill-suppressed excitement. "After I brought her around the first time she confided to me that it had been entrusted to her by the Comtesse for safe-keeping during the war, that she had taken it first to London, but fearing it would not be safe even there, had brought it to New York."

"H'm," mused Kennedy, "that is indeed strange. What's your theory, then,—foul play?"

Dr. Blythe looked from Kennedy to me, then said slowly, "Yes—but we can't find a trace of poison. Dr. Leslie—the Coroner—I believe you know him—and I can find nothing, in fact. It is most incomprehensible."

I noticed that Kennedy was watching Dr. Blythe rather keenly and, somehow, I fell to trying to fathom both his story and himself, without, I confess, any result.

"I should like to look her apartment over," remarked Craig with alacrity, needing no second invitation to take up a mystery that already promised many surprises.

The New Studio Apartments were in a huge twelve-story ornate Renaissance affair on upper Park Avenue, an example of the rapidly increasing co-operative idea which the impractical artistic temperament has proved soundly practical.

It was really a studio building, too, designed for those artists who preferred luxury and convenience to the more romantic atmosphere of the "Alley"—which is the way the initiated refer to the mews back of Washington Square, known as Macdougall's Alley, famous in fact and fiction.

Rhoda Fleming's was a most attractively arranged suite, with a large studio commanding the north light and having a ceiling twice as high as the ordinary room, which allowed of the other rooms being, as it were, on two floors, since their ceilings were of ordinary height. On every side, as we entered, we could see works of art in tasteful profusion.

Since the removal of the body of the beautiful but unfortunate young art student, no one had been left there, except the maid, Leila. Leila was herself a very pretty girl, one of those who need neither fine clothes nor expensive jewels to attract attention. In fact she had neither. I noticed that she was neatly and tastefully dressed, however, and wore a plain gold band on the ring finger of her left hand. She seemed to be heartbroken over the death of her mistress, but how much of it was genuine, I could not say, though I am frank to admit that even before I saw her I had determined that she was worth watching.

"Show me just how you discovered Miss Fleming," asked Kennedy of Dr. Blythe, getting down to work immediately.

"Why," he replied, "when I got here she was lying half across that divan, as if she had fallen there, fainting. Each time a little table had been set for a light dinner and the dinner had been eaten. The remains were on the table. And," Blythe added significantly, "each time there was a place set for another person. That person was gone."

Kennedy had turned inquiringly to Leila.

"I was engaged only for the day," she answered modestly. "Evenings when Mademoiselle had a little party she would often pay me extra to come back again and clean up. She liked to prepare little chafing-dish dinners—but disliked the cleaning."

Dr. Blythe nodded significantly, as though that accounted for the reason why it had seemed to be Leila who had called him in both times.

Kennedy and I had found the little pantry closet in the kitchenette where the maid kept the few housekeeping utensils. He took a hasty inventory of the slender stock, among which, for some reason, I noted a bottle of a well-known brand of meat sauce, one of those dark-colored appetizers, with a heavy, burnt-grain odor.

Craig's next move was to ransack the little escritoire in the corner of the studio room itself. That was the work of but a few moments and resulted in his finding a packet of letters in the single drawer.

He glanced over them hastily. Several of an intimately personal nature were signed, "Arnold Faber." Faber, I knew, was a young art collector, very wealthy and something more than a mere dilettante. Other letters were of business dealings with well-known Fifth Avenue art galleries of Pierre Jacot & Cie., quite natural in view of Miss Fleming's long residence in France.

The letters had scarcely been replaced when the door of the studio opened and I caught sight of a tastefully gowned young woman, quite apparently a foreigner acclimated to New York.

"Oh, I beg pardon," she apologized. "I heard voices and thought perhaps it was some of Rhoda's relatives from the West and that I could do something."

"Good-evening, Miss Tourville," greeted Dr. Blythe, who was evidently well-known to this colony of artists. A moment later he introduced us, "This, by the way, is Miss Rita Tourville, an intimate friend of Miss Fleming, who has the studio above."

We bowed, exchanged the conventional remarks that such a tragedy made necessary, and Rita Tourville excused herself. Somehow or other, however, I could not resist the impression that she had come in purposely to see what was going on.

On our way out, after promising Dr. Blythe to meet him later in the night at the office of the Coroner, Kennedy, instead of going directly to the street, descended to the basement of the apartment and sought the janitor, who lived there.

"I'd like very much to see the rubbish that has come down from Miss Fleming's apartment," he asked, slipping into the janitor's hand a large silver coin.

"It's all mixed up with rubbish from all the apartments on that side of the house," replied the janitor, indicating a bulging burlap bag.

"Miss Tourville's, also?" queries Craig.

The janitor nodded assent.

Kennedy surely obtained his money's worth of junk as the janitor spread the contents of the bag on the cellar floor. With his walking stick he pawed over it minutely, now and then stooping to examine something more or less carefully. He had gone through somewhat more than half of the rubbish that had come from the apartments when he came upon what looked like the broken remains of a little one-ounce dark-colored, labelless bottle.

Kennedy picked it up and sniffed at it. He said nothing, but I saw his brow knit with thought. A moment later he wrapped it in a piece of tissue paper, thanked the janitor, and we mounted the cellar steps to the street.

"I think I'll try to see Faber tonight," he remarked as we walked down the avenue. "It will do no harm at any rate."

Fortunately, we found the young millionaire art connoisseur at home, in a big house which he had inherited from his father, on Madison Avenue, in the Murray Hill section.

"The death of Miss Fleming has completely upset me," he confessed after we had introduced ourselves without telling too much. "You see, I was quite well acquainted with her."

Kennedy said nothing, but I could feel that he was longing to ask questions leading up to whether Faber had been the mysterious diner in the Fleming Studio the night before.

"I suppose you are acquainted with Watteau's 'Fête du Printemps'?" shot out Craig, after a few inconsequential questions, watching Faber's face furtively.

"Indeed I am," replied the young man, apparently not disconcerted in the least.

The fact was that he seemed quite willing, even eager to discuss the painting. I could not make it out, unless it might be that any subject was less painful than the sudden death of Miss Fleming.

"Yes," he continued voluntarily, "I suppose you know it represents a group of dancers. The central figure of the group, as everyone believes, is reputed to be the passionate and jealous Madame de Montespan, whom the beautiful Madame de Maintenon replaced in the affections of Louis XIV.

"Why, no one thinks of Watteau, with his delightful daintiness and many graceful figures on such masterfully disposed backgrounds as a portrait painter. But the Fête shows, I have always contended, that he drew on many real faces for his characters. Yes, he could paint portraits, too, wonderfully minute and exact little miniatures."

Faber had risen as he discoursed. "I have a copy of it," he added, leading the way into his own private gallery, while Craig and I followed him without comment.

We gazed long and intently at the face of the central figure. Small though it was, it was a study in itself, a puzzle, distracting, enigmatical. There was a hard, cruel sensuousness about the beautiful mouth which the painter seemed to have captured and fixed beneath the very oils. Masked cleverly in the painted penetrating dark eyes was a sort of cunning which, combined with the ravishing curves of the cheeks and chin, transfixed the observer.

Something in the face reminded me of a face I had once seen. It was not exactly Rita's face, but it had a certain quality that recalled it. I fancied that there was in both the living and the painted face a jealousy that would brook no rivalry, that would dare all for the object of its love.

Faber saw that we had caught the spirit of the portrait, and seemed highly gratified.

"What crimes a man might commit under the spell of a woman like that!" exclaimed Craig, noticing his gratification. "By the way, do you know that Miss Fleming was said to have had the original—and that it is gone?"

Faber looked from one to the other of us without moving a muscle of his face.

"Why, yes," he replied steadily. I could not make out whether he had expected and been prepared for the question or not. At any rate he added, half serious, half smiling, "Even for her portrait someone was ready to risk even life and honor to kidnap her!"

Evidently in his ardor he personified the picture, felt that the thief must have been moved by what the psychologists call "an imperative idea" for the mere possession of such a treasure.

"Still," Craig remarked dryly, "the wanderings of the lost Duchess by Gainsborough for a quarter of a century stuffed into a tin tube, to say nothing of the final sordid ending of the capture of Mona Lisa, might argue a devotion among art thieves a bit short of infatuation. I think we'll find this lady, too, to be held for ransom, not for love."

Faber said nothing. He was evidently waiting for Kennedy to proceed.

"I may photograph your copy of the Fête?" queried Craig finally, "so as to use it in identifying the real one?"

"Surely," replied the collector. "I have no objection. If I should happen to be out when you came, I'll leave word with my man to let you go ahead."

Just then the telephone rang and Faber reached for it before we could thank him and say good-night.

"Hello—oh, Miss Tourville, how do you do? Why—er—yes—yes, I'm listening."

They chatted for several minutes, Faber answering mostly in monosyllables. Perhaps it was my imagination, but I thought the conversation, at least at his end of the line, constrained. As he hung up the receiver, I fancied, too, that Faber seemed to look on us with a sort of suspicion. What was his connection with Rita, I wondered? What had Rita told him?

A moment later we had said good-by and had gained the street, Kennedy still making no comment on the case.

"There's nothing more that we can do tonight," remarked Craig, looking at his watch finally as we walked along. "Let us go over to the City Laboratory and see Dr. Leslie, as I promised Blythe."

CHAPTER XX

THE MECHANICAL CONNOISSEUR

Dr. Leslie, the Coroner, was an old friend of ours with whom we had co-operated in several cases. When we reached his office we found Dr. Blythe there already, waiting for us.

"Have you found anything yet?" asked Dr. Blythe with what I felt was just a trace of professional pique at the fact that neither physician had been able to shed any light on the case so far.

"I can't say—yet," responded Craig, not noticing Blythe's manner, as from the piece of tissue paper in which he had wrapped them he produced the broken bits of bottle.

Carefully he washed off the jagged pieces, as though perhaps some of the liquid the bottle had contained might have adhered to the glass.

"I suppose you have animals here for experiment?" he asked of Leslie.

The Coroner nodded.

"Chickens?" asked Craig with a broad smile at the double meaning.

"A Leghorn rooster," returned Dr. Leslie with a laugh.

"Good—bring him on," replied Craig briskly.

Quickly Kennedy shot a small quantity of the liquid he had obtained by washing the bits of glass into the veins of the white Leghorn. Then he released the rooster, flapping about.

In a corner chanticleer stood, preening his feathers and restoring his ruffled dignity, while we compared opinions.

"Look!" exclaimed Kennedy a few minutes later, when we had almost forgotten the rooster.

His bright red comb was now whitish. As we watched, a moment later it turned dark blue. Otherwise, however, he seemed unaffected.

"What is it?" I asked in amazement, turning to Craig.

"Ergot, I think," he replied tersely. "At least that is one test for its presence."

"Ergot!" repeated Dr. Leslie, reaching for a book on a shelf above him. Turning the pages hurriedly, he read, "There has been no experience in the separation of the constituents of ergot from the organs of the body. An attempt might be made by the Dragendorff process, but success is doubtful."

"Dragendorff found it so, at any rate," put in Dr. Blythe positively.

Running his fingers over the backs of the other books, Dr. Leslie selected another. "It is practically impossible," he read, "to separate ergot from the tissues so as to identify it."

"Absolutely," asserted Dr. Blythe quickly.

I looked from one physician to the other. Was this the "safe" poison at last?

Kennedy said nothing and I fell to wondering why, too, Dr. Blythe was so positive. Was it merely to vindicate his professional pride at the failure he and the Coroner had had so far with the case?

"I suppose you have no objection to my taking some of this sample of the contents of the organs of her body, have you?" asked Craig at length of Dr. Leslie.

"None in the world," replied the Coroner.

Kennedy poured out some of the liquid into a bottle, corked it carefully, and we stood for a few moments longer chatting over the developments, or rather lack of developments of the case.

It was late when we returned to our apartment, but the following morning Kennedy was up long before I was. I knew enough of him, however, to know that I would find him at his laboratory breakfastless, and my deduction was correct.

It was not until the forenoon that Craig had completed the work he had set himself to do as he puzzled over something in the interminable litter of tubes and jars, bottles and beakers, reagents, solutions, and precipitates.

"I'm going to drop in at Jacot's," he announced finally, laying off his threadbare and acid-stained coat and pulling on the clothes more fitted for civilization.

Having no objection, but quite the contrary, I hastened to accompany him. Jacot's was a well-known shop. It opened on Fifth Avenue, just a few feet below the sidewalk, and Jacot himself was a slim Frenchman, well preserved, faultlessly dressed.

"I am the agent of Mr. Morehouse, the Western mine-owner and connoisseur," introduced Kennedy, as we entered the shop. "May I look around?"

"Certainement,—avec plaisir, M'sieur," welcomed the suave dealer, with both hands interlocked. "In what is Mr. Morehouse most interested? In pictures? In furniture? In—"

"In almost anything that is rare and beautiful," confided Craig, looking Jacot squarely in the eye and adding, "and not particular about the price if he wants a thing, either. But I—I am particular—about one thing."

Jacot looked up inquiringly.

"A rebate," Kennedy went on insinuatingly, "a commission on the bill—you understand? The price is immaterial, but not my—er—commission. Comprenez-vous?"

"Parfaitement," smiled the little Frenchman. "I can arrange all that. Trust me."

We spent an hour, perhaps, wandering up and down the long aisles of the store, admiring, half purchasing, absorbing facts about this, that and the other thing that might captivate the fictitious Mr. Morehouse.

Not satisfied with what was displayed so temptingly in the front of the store, Kennedy wandered back of a partition apparently in search of some more choice treasures, before Jacot could stop him. He turned over a painting that had been placed with its face toward the wall, as if for protection. I recognized the subject with a start. It was Watteau's Fête!

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Kennedy in well-feigned ecstasy, just as Jacot came up.

"Ah, but, M'sieur," interposed the art dealer, "that is only a copy—and not for sale."

"I believe my friend, Mr. Faber, has a copy," ventured Craig.

"By a Miss Fleming?" asked Jacot quickly, apparently all interest now.

Kennedy shrugged his shoulders. Was Jacot hinting at something known in the trade?

"Might I photograph some of the things here to show Mr. Morehouse?" asked Craig a moment later. "I see several things in which I think he might be interested."

"Surely," answered Jacot, then, after consideration, in which his beady eye seemed to size up Kennedy, he added, sotto voce, craftily, "Would Mr. Morehouse be—er—interested in Watteau's Fête?"

My heart almost stopped beating. Were we really on the right track at last?

Jacot leaned over confidentially to Kennedy and added, "Why not sell as an original, not this, but another copy—a—a—what you call it?—a fake?"

I understood. Kennedy, having invited crooked dealing by his remark about the rake-off, was being approached about another crooked deal.

"A fake Watteau?" he asked, appearing to meet Jacot halfway.

Jacot nodded. "Why not? You know the same Botticelli belongs to collectors in Philadelphia and Boston; that is, each has a picture and if one is genuine the other must be a fake. Possibly the artist painted the same picture twice. Why, M'sieur, there are Rubens, Hals, Van Dycks, Rembrandts galore in this country that hang also at the same time abroad." Jacot smiled. "Did you never hear of a picture with a dual personality?"

Kennedy seemed to consider the idea. "I'll think it over," he remarked finally, as we prepared to leave, "and let you know when I come back to snap some of the things for my principal."

"Well—of all brazen crooks!" I sputtered when we had gained Fifth Avenue.

Kennedy shook his head. "We can't be sure of anything in this game. Does it occur to you that he might perhaps think he was playing us for suckers, after all?"

My mind worked rapidly. "And that that picture of Faber's is the real original, after all?" I asked. "You mean that somehow a copy by Miss Fleming has come really to Jacot with instructions to palm it off on some gullible buyer?"

"Frankly, Walter," he said, as we walked along, "I don't know what to think. You know even the greatest experts sometimes disagree over questions like this. Well, Walter, art is long and time is fleeting. If we are ever to settle where that real Watteau is, we shall have to resort to science, I think."

That afternoon after a trip up to the laboratory, where Craig secured a peculiar and cumbersome photographic outfit, we at last found ourselves around at Faber's private gallery. Faber was out, but, true to his promise, he had left word with his man, who admitted us.

Kennedy set to work immediately, before the painting, placing an instrument which certainly was not like a regular camera. I was further astonished, moreover, when Craig set up something back of the canvas, which he moved away from the wall. As nearly as I could make it out it consisted of a glass bulb of curious shape. A moment later he attached the bulb to a wire that connected with a little rheostat or resistance coil and thence, in turn, to an electric-light socket.

He switched on the electric current and the apparatus behind the picture began to sputter. I could not see very well what it was, but it looked as if the bulb was suffused with a peculiar, yellowish-green light, divided into two hemispheres of different shades. The pungent odor of ozone from the electric discharge filled the room.

While Kennedy was working, I had noticed a little leather party box lying on a table, as though it had been forgotten. It was not just the thing one would expect in Faber's rooms and I looked at it more closely. On it were the initials "R. T." Had Rita Tourville visited him?

Craig had scarcely finished and was packing up his apparatus when we heard a noise outside. A second later, Faber himself entered, with Rita, evidently looking for something.

"Oh, yes, Rita,—here it is. Why, Kennedy—how are you? Did you get your photograph?"

Kennedy replied that he had, and thanked him.

It was easy to see Rita's pleasure at being with the young connoisseur, but at the sight of Craig I fancied for a moment that I saw a flash of that passionate resentment which had caused me to find a resemblance between the expression of her face and that of De Montespan in the painting, a hint at what she would do or dare to protect the object of her affections.

We departed shortly, leaving Rita and Faber deep in the discussion of some art topic.

It was not until late in the afternoon that we were able to revisit Jacot's. He received us cordially, but Craig, by a whispered word or two, was able to postpone the answer to the clever proposal which might have been a trap prepared for us.

Craig, with a regular camera which he had brought also, set to work snapping pictures and objects of art with reckless profusion, moving them about to get a better light and otherwise consuming time.

At last came the opportunity he had been awaiting, when Jacot had a customer in the front of the store. Quickly he set up the peculiar apparatus which he had used at Faber's before the copy of the Watteau in the rear of the shop, switched on the electricity, and amid the suppressed sputtering duplicated the work I had seen him do before.

As he was packing the apparatus up, I happened to glance toward the front of the store. There were Leila and Jacot in earnest conversation. I whispered to Kennedy, and, a moment later, she caught sight of me, appeared not to recognize me, and left.

Jacot sauntered back to us, I thought, concealing his haste.

Before he could speak, Kennedy asked, "Who was that woman?"

He had finished packing up the apparatus and even if Jacot had heard something that caused him to change his mind, it was now too late to stop Kennedy.

"Why," hastened Jacot, apparently frank, "that is the maid of the Miss Fleming, the artist who has

just died. She has come to me to see whether I can get her a position with another artist."

"I thought I recognized her," remarked Kennedy. "I remember when I saw her once before that she had on a wedding ring. Doesn't her husband support her?"

Jacot shrugged his shoulders. "She is looking for another position—that is all I know," he said simply.

Kennedy picked up his apparatus.

"You will think over my proposition?" asked Jacot, as we left.

"And let you know in a day or two," nodded Kennedy.

As we walked up Fifth Avenue, I confess to have felt all at sea. Who had the real masterpiece? Was it Faber, or Jacot, or was it someone else? If Rita had warned Faber against us, and Leila had warned Jacot, which had copy and which original? Or were they both copies and had the original been hidden? Had it been stolen for money or had some fiend with a knowledge of this mysterious ergot stolen it simply for love of art, stopping not even at murder to get it?

CHAPTER XXI

THE RADIOGRAPH WITNESS

It was apparent that quick action was necessary if the mystery was ever to be solved. Kennedy evidently thought so, too, for he did not wait even until he returned to his laboratory to set in motion, through our old friend, Commissioner O'Connor, the machinery that would result in warrants to compel the attendance at the laboratory of all those interested in the case. Then he called up Dr. Leslie and finally Dr. Blythe himself.

Back again in the laboratory, Kennedy employed the time in developing some plates of the pictures he had taken, and by early evening, after a brief study of them, his manner indicated that he was ready.

Dr. Leslie, whom he had asked to come a little before the rest, arrived early, and a few moments later Dr. Blythe, very much excited by the message he had received.

"Have you found anything?" he asked eagerly. "I've been trying all sorts of tests myself, and I can't prove the presence of a thing—not a thing."

"Not ergot?" asked Kennedy quietly.

"No," he cried, "you can't prove anything—you can't prove that she was poisoned by ergot."

Dr. Leslie looked helplessly at Kennedy, but said nothing.

"Not until recently, perhaps, could I have proved anything," returned Kennedy calmly. "Evidently you didn't know, Dr. Blythe, that the first successful isolation of an alkaloid of ergot from the organs in a case of acute ergotism had been made by two Pittsburgh scientists. True, up to the present toxicologists had to rely on the physical properties of this fungus of rye for its identification. That may have made it seem like a safe poison to someone. But I have succeeded in isolating ergotin from the sample of the contents of the organs of the poor girl."

Without pausing, he picked up a beaker. "Here I have the residue left from an acid solution of an extract of the organs, treated with chloroform. It is, as you see, crystalline."

In his other hand he held up another beaker. "Next I got the residue obtained by extraction of the acid aqueous liquid with ether. That, too, is crystalline."

Kennedy displayed something in the shape of long needles, the sides of which were not quite parallel and the ends replaced by a pair of faces.

Quickly he dissolved some of the crystals in sulphuric acid. Then he added another chemical from a bottle labeled ferro chlorid. The liquid, as we bent over it, changed quickly to a brilliant orange, then a crimson, next a green, and finally became a deep blue.

"What he has derived from the body responds to all the chemical tests for ergotin itself," remarked Dr. Leslie, looking quickly across at Dr. Blythe.

Dr. Blythe said nothing.

I smelt of the stuff. Odors with me, as, I suppose, with other people, have a psychological effect, calling up scenes associated with them. This odor recalled something. I strove to recollect what it was. At last it came with a rush.

"The meat sauce!" I exclaimed involuntarily.

"Exactly," replied Kennedy. "I have obtained that bottle. There was ergot in it, cleverly concealed by the natural smell and taste of the sauce. But who put it there? Who had the knowledge that

would suggest using such a poison? Who had the motive? Who had been dining with her that fatal evening?"

Kennedy had no chance to answer his questions, even if he had intended to do so.

The door of the laboratory opened and Rita Tourville, in charge of one of O'Connor's men, who looked as if he might have enjoyed it better if the lady had not been so angry, entered. Evidently O'Connor had timed the arrival closely to what Craig had asked, for scarcely a moment later Faber came whirling up in one of his own cars. Not a word passed between him and Rita, yet I felt sure that they had some understanding of each other. Leila arrived shortly, and it was noticeable that Rita avoided her, though for what reason I could not guess. Finally came Jacot, blustering, but, having made the officer the safety-valve of his mercurial feelings, quickly subsiding before us. Dr. Blythe appeared amazed at the quickness with which Kennedy moved now.

"In ordinary times," began Kennedy, noting as he spoke the outward attitude of our guests toward each other, "the world would have stood aghast at the disappearance of such a masterpiece as the *Fête* by Watteau. It would have ranked with the theft of Gainesborough's Duchess of Devonshire, Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, the brown-skinned Madonna of the Mexican convent, Millet's *Goose-girl*, and the *Shepherd and Flock*, the portrait of *Saskia* by Rembrandt, and other stolen masterpieces.

"But today the vicissitudes of works of art in war time pass almost unnoticed. Still there is a fascination exercised over the human mind by works of art and other objects of historic interest, the more so because the taking of art treasures seems to have become epidemic in northern Europe."

He laid down what looked more like two rough sketches than photographs, yet they were photographs, though the relative brightness of color in photographs was quite different. Outlines were displaced, also. Ugly spots and bands marred the general effect. They were peculiar.

"They are X-ray images or radiographs of two oil paintings, both claimed to be copies of Watteau's famous *Fête*," explained Kennedy, picking up one of them.

"In a radiograph of the body," he continued, "the difference of brightness that distinguishes the heart from the lungs, bones from flesh, is due to the different densities of tissues. In these pictures the same effect is produced by the different densities of the pigments, especially of their principal and heaviest elements."

He paused and laid down a chart. "For anyone who doubts what I am about to prove, I have made a scale of oil colors arranged in accordance to their transparency to Roentgen rays by applying standard pigments to canvas in patches of equal thickness.

"I think you can see what I am driving at. For instance, a design drawn in a heavy pigment will show through a layer of a less dense pigment, under the influence of the X-ray—just as bones show through flesh. In other words, an ordinary photograph reproduces only the surface of a painting. A radiograph represents all the pigments underneath, also producing effects in proportion to their densities.

"Let me show you the practical result of all this in studying such radiographs, as worked out by a German student. I have made several very interesting and conclusive discoveries which these radiographs I have taken illustrate."

He paused a moment, for the sake of emphasis. "You will notice," he resumed carefully, "the lace frill above the bodice on the figure of *Madame de Montespan*, in this radiograph. In the painting the frill is sharply defined and can be clearly distinguished from the bodice. But look at this radiograph. It appears tattered. It overflows the bodice.

"That led me to suspect that the bodice was widened as an afterthought—perhaps to diminish the area of white. That is the reason why the white shows through the bodice in the radiograph. But in this other one the bodice and the frill are substantially as they must be in the original."

Again he paused, as if taking up a new point. "This radiograph,—number one, I may call it—shows a broad light band on the right hand of the figure, of which not a trace is to be found either in the other radiograph or the painting itself. It represents the first rough sketch of an arm and hand.

"Again, in this first radiograph the ring and little fingers are close together and a sixth finger appears between the index and middle fingers. From that I infer that the hand hung limp with the fingers nearly in contact in the first sketch and that the fingers were afterward separated. But in this second radiograph the arm, hand and fingers are perfect."

It was fascinating to listen to Kennedy as he delved down into the invisible beneath the very oils and dug out their hidden mystery.

"Take the head and shoulder," he continued. "Radiograph number one clearly shows flaking of the painting which has been painted over to conceal it. Ordinary light reveals no trace, either, of a long crack on the shoulder which evidently was filled with a thick mass of pigment containing too little white lead to obliterate the crack in the radiograph. White spots above the ear, in the radiograph, probably indicate an excess of white lead used in retouching. At any rate, radiograph

number two contains no such defects."

Kennedy paused before drawing the conclusion. "The radiograph of an original picture reveals changes made by the artist in the course of his work. The counterfeiter, like other copyists, reproduces as accurately as possible the final result. That is all he can see. He makes errors and corrections, but of a different kind. There are no serious changes.

"So, a radiograph of even a part of a picture shows the layers of pigment that are hidden from the eye and the changes made during the composition of the work. One can easily distinguish the genuine from the spurious copies, for it is absolutely impossible for an imitator to make a copy that will stand the X-ray test.

"You see," he went on enthusiastically, "the most striking feature of these radiographs is their revelation of details of the first sketch, which have been altered in the finished picture. We actually obtain an insight into the methods of an artist—" he paused, adding—"who has been dead for centuries."

It was wonderful what Kennedy was getting out of those, to us, blurred and indistinct skiagraphs. I studied the faces before me. None seemed to indicate any disposition to break down. Kennedy saw it, too, and evidently determined to go to the bitter end in hammering out the truth of the mystery.

"One moment more, please," he resumed. "The radiograph shows even more than that. It shows the possibility of detecting a signature that has been painted over, in order to disarm suspicion. The detection is easier in proportion to the density of the pigment used for the signature and the lack of density of the superposed coat."

He had laid the radiographs on the table before him, with a finger on the corner of each, as he faced us.

"At the bottom of each of the paintings in question," he shot out, leaning forward, "you will find nothing in the way of a signature. But here, in radiograph number two, for instance, barely discernible, are the words, "R. Fleming," quite invisible to the eye, but visible to the X-ray. These words have been painted over. Why? Was it to prevent anyone from thinking that the owner had ever had any connection with Rhoda Fleming?"

I was following Kennedy, but not so closely that I missed a fearful glance of Rita from Faber to Jacot. What it meant, I did not know. The others were too intent on Kennedy's exposure to notice. I wondered whether someone had sought to conceal the fact that he had a copy of the famous Watteau, made by Miss Fleming?

"Look at the bottom of the other radiograph, number one, further toward the left," pursued Kennedy resistlessly. "There you will discover traces of an 'A' and a 'W,' which do not appear on the painting. Between these two are marks which can also be deciphered by the X-ray—'Antoine Watteau.' Perhaps it was painted over lightly so that an original could be smuggled in as a copy. More likely it was done so that a thief and murderer could not be traced."

As Kennedy's voice rang out, more and more accusatory, Rita Tourville became more and more uncontrollably nervous.

"It was suggested," modulated Kennedy, playing with his little audience as a cat might with a mouse, "that someone murdered Rhoda Fleming with the little-understood poison, ergot, because of an infatuation for the picture itself. But the modern crook has an eye for pictures, just as for other valuables. The spread of the taste for art has taught these fellows that such things as old masters are worth money, and they will even murder now to get them. No, that radiograph which I have labeled number one is not a copy. It is of the genuine old master—the real Watteau.

"Someone, closely associated with Miss Fleming, had found out that she had the original. That person, in order to get it, went even so far as to—"

Rita Tourville jumped up, wildly, facing Craig and crying out, "No, no—his *is* the copy—the copy by Miss Fleming. It was I who told him to paint over the signature. It was I who called him away—both nights—on a pretext—when he was dining with her—alone—called him because—I—I loved him and I knew—"

Faber was on his feet beside her in a moment, his face plainly showing his feelings toward her. As he laid his hand on her arm to restrain her, she turned and caught a penetrating glance from Jacot's hypnotic eye.

Slowly she collapsed into her chair, covering her face with her hands, sobbing. For a moment a look of intense scorn and hatred blazed in Leila's face, then was checked.

Craig waved the radiograph of the real Watteau as he emphasized his last words.

"In spite of Rita Tourville's unexpected love for Faber, winning him from your victim, and with the aid of your wife, Leila, in the rôle of maid, the third member of your unique gang of art thieves, you are convicted infallibly by my X-ray detective," thundered Craig as he pointed his finger at the now cowering Jacot.

CHAPTER XXII

THE ABSOLUTE ZERO

"Isn't there some way you can save him, Professor Kennedy? You *must* come out to Briar Lake."

When a handsome woman like Mrs. Fraser Ferris pleads, she is irresistible. Not only that, but the story which she had not trusted either to a message or a messenger was deeply interesting, for, already, it had set agog the fashionable country house colony.

Mrs. Ferris had come to us not as the social leader now, but as a mother. Only the night before her son, young Fraser, had been arrested by the local authorities at Briar Lake on the charge of homicide. I had read the meager dispatch in the morning papers and had wondered what the whole story might be.

"You see, Professor Kennedy," she began in an agitated voice as soon as she arrived at the laboratory and introduced herself to us, "day before yesterday, Fraser was boxing at the Country Club with another young man, Irving Evans."

Kennedy nodded. Both of them were well known. Ferris had been the All-America tackle on the University football team a couple of years previous and Evans was a crack pitcher several years before.

"Irving," she continued, adding, "of course I call him Irving, for his mother and I were schoolgirls together—Irving, I believe, fell unconscious during the bout. I'm telling you just what Fraser told me.

"The other men in the Club gymnasium at the time carried him into the locker-room and there they all did what they could to revive him. They succeeded finally, but when he regained consciousness he complained of a burning sensation in his stomach, or, rather, as Fraser says, just below the point where his ribs come together. They say, too, that there was a red spot on his skin, about the size of a half-dollar.

"Finally," she continued with a sigh, "the other men took Irving home—but he lapsed into a half-comatose condition. He never got better. He—he died the next day—yesterday."

It was evidently a great effort for Mrs. Ferris to talk of the affair which had involved her son, but she had made up her mind to face the necessity and was going through it bravely.

"Of course," she resumed a moment later, "the death of Irving Evans caused a great deal of talking. It was natural in a community like Briar Lake. But I don't think anything would have been thought about it, out of the way, if the afternoon after his death—yesterday—the body of one of the Club's stewards, Benson, had not been found jammed into a trunk. Apparently, it had been dumped off an automobile in one of the most lonely sections of the country.

"In fact," she went on, "it was the sort of thing that might have taken place, one would say, in the dark alleys of a big city. But in a country resort like Briar Lake, the very uncommonness of such a case called added attention to it."

"I understand," agreed Craig, "but why did they suspect your son?"

"That's the ridiculous part of it, at least to me," hastened the mother to her son's defense. "Both Irving and my son, as you know, were former University athletic stars, and, as in all country clubs, I suppose, that meant popularity. Irving was engaged to Anita Allison. Anita is one of the most beautiful and popular girls in the younger set, a splendid golfer, charming and clever, the life of the Club at the dances and teas."

Mrs. Ferris paused as though she would convey to us just the social status of everyone concerned.

"Of course," she threw in parenthetically, "you know the Allisons are reputed to be quite well off. When old Mr. Allison died, Anita's brother, Dean, several years older than herself, inherited the brokerage business of his father and, according to the will, assumed the guardianship of his younger sister."

She seemed to be considering something, then suddenly to make up her mind to tell it. "I suppose everyone knows it," she resumed, "and you ought to know it, too. Fraser was—er—one of Anita's unsuccessful suitors. In fact, Anita had been sought by nearly all of the most eligible young fellows of the Club. I don't think there were many who had not at some time or other offered her his whole heart as well as his fortune.

"I didn't encourage Fraser—or try to discourage him. But I could see that it lay between Fraser and Irving."

"And the rather strange circumstances of the death of Evans, as well as of the steward, occasioned a good deal of gossip, I suppose," chimed in Kennedy.

"Yes. Somehow, people began to whisper that it was revenge or hate or jealousy that had prompted the blow,—that perhaps the steward, Benson, who was very popular with the young men, knew or had seen something that made him dangerous.

"Anyhow, gossip grew until it seemed that, in some way which no one has ever said definitely, a deliberate attempt was made on Irving Evans's life, and finally the local authorities, rather glad to take up a scandal in the Club set, took action and arrested my Fraser—under a charge of homicide."

She blurted the words out fiercely and defiantly, but it was all assumed. Underneath, one could see the woman fighting loyally with every weapon for her son, keenly alive to the disgrace that even the breath of scandal unrefuted might bring to his name.

"How about the other admirers?" asked Craig quickly.

"That's another queer thing," she replied eagerly. "You see, they have all suddenly become very busy and have made perfect alibis. But there was Allan Wyndham—he's a friend of the Allison,—why shouldn't they suspect him? In fact, there was quite a group of young fellows closely associated with Dean Allison in speculation. Irving Evans was one. But," she added, with a glance at Kennedy as if she realized that it was like catching at a straw, "with Fraser, of course,—there is that blow. We can't deny that."

"What does Miss Allison think?" queried Craig.

"Oh, I believe Anita is all broken up by the tragedy to her fiancé. She was at the Club at the time—in the tea room. No one dared to tell her until Irving had been taken home. Then her brother, who was in the gymnasium when the thing happened and had been one of those to carry Irving into the locker-room, was naturally chosen by the rest, after they had done all they could to revive Irving, to break the news as gently as he could to his sister. She took it calmly. But I think it would have been better if she had given way to her real feelings. They say she has secluded herself in the Allison house and won't see a soul."

Kennedy's brow puckered in thought.

"You can't imagine what a terrible shock this thing has been to me," pleaded Mrs. Ferris. "Oh, the horror of it all! You *must* come out to Briar Lake with me!"

There was, naturally, no doubt of the poignancy of her feelings as she looked from Kennedy to myself, imploringly. As for Craig, he did not need to betray the sympathy he felt not only for the young man who had been arrested and his mother, but for the poor girl whose life might be blasted by the tragedy and the unhappy victim who had been snatched away so suddenly almost on the very eve of happiness.

It was not half an hour later, that, with a very grateful mother, we were on our way out to Briar Lake in Mrs. Ferris's touring car.

As we whirled along past the city limits, Kennedy leaned back on the cushions and for some minutes seemed absorbed in thought.

"Of course it is possible," he remarked at length, noticing that both Mrs. Ferris and I were watching him nervously, "that Miss Allison may know something that will throw some light on the affair. But it may be of an entirely private nature. I don't know how we'll get her to talk, but we must—if she knows anything. I'd like to stop at the Allison house, first."

"Very well," agreed Mrs. Ferris, leaning forward and directing the chauffeur to turn off before we reached Briar Lake on the main road.

We sped along and I could not help feeling that the young man who was driving the car was quite as eager as anyone else to bring help to his young master.

The Allison house proved to be a roomy, old-fashioned place on a rise of ground just this side of Briar Lake, for the Allisons had been among the first to acquire estates at the exclusive colony.

Mrs. Ferris remained in the car, while Kennedy and I went in to introduce ourselves.

We found the young society girl evidently now in full possession of her nerves. She was slender, fair, with deep blue eyes, not merely pretty, but with a face that showed character.

Anita Allison had been seated in the library, and, as we entered, I could see that she had hastily shoved some papers, at which she had been looking, into a drawer of the desk.

"Miss Allison," began Kennedy, "this is a most unfortunate affair and I must beg your pardon—"

"Yes," she interrupted, "I understand. As if I didn't feel badly enough—oh—they have to make it all so much harder to bear by arresting Fraser—and then all this notoriety,—it is awful."

I confess that I had not expected that we would see her so easily. Yet I felt that there was some constraint in her manner, in spite of that.

"I want to speak frankly with you, Miss Allison," went on Craig gently. "Is there anything about the matter—of a personal nature—that you haven't told? I want to appeal to you. Remember, there is another life at stake, now."

She looked at us searchingly. Did she suspect that we knew something or was she herself seeking information?

"No, no," she cried. "There isn't a thing—not a thing that I know that I haven't told—nothing."

Kennedy said nothing himself, but watched her, apparently assuming that she would go on.

"Oh," she cried, "if I could only *do* something—anything. It might get my mind off it all. But I—I can't even cry!"

Plainly there was little except a sort of mental vivisection of her grief to be gained from her yet—even if she suspected something, of which I was not entirely sure.

We excused ourselves and left her, sunk deeply into a leather chair, her face buried in her hands, but not weeping.

"Is Mr. Allison at home?" inquired Craig as we passed out through the hall, meeting the butler at the door.

"No, sir," he replied. "He went to New York this morning, sir, and said he'd be at the Club later this afternoon."

We climbed into the car and Kennedy looked at his watch. "It's getting well along in the afternoon," he remarked. "I think I'll go over to the Club. We may find Allison there now."

As we turned out into the main road our driver had to swerve for a car which turned off, coming from the city, as we had come a few minutes before. He looked around at it blackly, as it went up the road to the Allison house, for he had had to stall his own engine to avoid a collision. There was no one in the other car but a driver with a visored hat.

"Whose car was that?" asked Craig quickly.

"Allan Wyndham's," answered our driver, starting his engine.

"H'm," mused Craig. "Wyndham must have sent her a message from town. Too bad we hurried so to get up here."

At last, as we turned a bend in the main road, the broad chimneys, white columns and wide balustrades of the Briar Lake Country Club loomed in sight.

The Country Club was a most pretentious building, yet, unlike many such clubs, had a very hospitable air in spite of its aristocratic and handsome appearance.

There was something very inviting about its wide sweep of roof and ample piazzas, some enclosed in glass, as we approached by the broad graveled driveway that swung in from the highway between the gentle curves of green lawns whose expanse was broken by the tall pines through which we caught a glimpse of the hills. It was indeed a beautiful country.

We entered a wide hall and came to the reception room crowded with luxurious armchairs and cozy corners. In a glass case stood the usual trophies.

Grouped about a huge deep fire was a knot of people, and here and there others were talking earnestly. One could feel that this was one of those social institutions not to be in which argued that one was decidedly out of things. I could almost visualize the close scrutiny that new applicants would undergo, not so much as men among men, but through the eyes of the women folk, dissecting the wives and daughters of the family.

Founded originally because of the interest of the older members in horses and the hunt, the Club had now extended its activities to polo and motors, golf, tennis, squash, with a fine old English bowling green and ample shooting traps.

I could not blame Mrs. Ferris for not wishing to enter the Club just yet. She had left us at the door, promising to send the car back for our disposal.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE VACUUM BOTTLE

Fortunately, Dean Allison was at the Club, as we hoped, having just arrived by the train that left New York at the close of the banking day. Someone told us, however, that Wyndham had probably decided to remain in town over night.

Allison was perhaps a little older than I had imagined, rather a grave young man who seemed to take his club responsibilities on the Council very seriously.

"I'd like to talk to you about this Evans case," began Craig when we had been introduced.

"Glad to tell you all I know," he responded cordially. "It isn't much, I'm afraid. It's terrible—terrible. We don't know what to think. My sister is all broken up by it, poor girl."

He led the way over to a corner, in a sort of bow window, and we sat down on the hard leather cushions.

"No, there isn't much I can say," he resumed. "You see, one of the recreations of the younger set

at the Club is boxing—that's about all there was to it—not the amateurish thing one usually sees, but real scientific boxing.

"Fraser had adopted the so-called Fitzsimmons shift—you know, the right foot forward, while the left hand shoots out from somewhere near the hip, plunging at close range into the pit of the stomach."

Allison rose to illustrate it. "Irving, on the other hand, had been advocating the Jeffries crouch as the only safeguard to meet it,—like that."

He threw himself into position and went on, "The bout had been arranged, accordingly, and it was *some* bout, too. Most of us here are fond of boxing to keep fit.

"Well, at last Fraser got under his guard, I suppose you'd call it. He landed. For an instant, Irving stood up straight, his hands helplessly extended. Most of us thought he was fooling and Fraser jumped back, laughing at the way his contention had worked out. Then, slowly, struggling as if against the inevitable, Irving bent forward and toppled over on his face.

"That's where we woke up. We rushed forward and picked him up, apparently unconscious, and carried him to the locker-room. There was a good deal of excitement. Someone telephoned for a doctor, but couldn't seem to find one at home."

"Did you see anything peculiar take place in the locker-room?" asked Kennedy, following keenly.

"Anything peculiar?"

"Yes—anyone near him, perhaps—another blow—while he was unconscious."

"No—and I think I would have seen anything that was out of the way. I was there almost all the time—until someone told me my sister was upstairs and suggested that I was the best one to break the news to her."

"I'd like to look over the gymnasium and locker-room," suggested Craig.

Dean Allison led the way downstairs quickly. Craig did not spend more than a minute in the gymnasium, but the locker-room he examined carefully.

It was a long room. Each locker bore the name of its owner and he hastily ran his eye over them, getting their location.

I don't know that even he had, yet, any idea that he would find anything, but it was just his habit to go over the ground of a tragedy, in hope of picking up some clew.

He looked over the floor very carefully, now and then bending down as if to discover spots. Once he paused a moment, then continued his measured tread down the long row of lockers until he came to a door at the other end of the room. We went out and Kennedy looked about closely.

"Oh,—about Benson, the steward," he said, looking up quickly and stroking his chin as if an idea had occurred to him. "Is there anyone here who might know something about him—his habits, associates,—that sort of thing?"

"Why—yes," considered Allison slowly, "the chef might know. Wait, I'll call him."

As Allison disappeared in the direction of what was evidently the kitchen, we stood outside by the door, waiting.

Kennedy's eye traveled back and forth about us and finally fell on a row of rubbish barrels a few feet away. He moved over to them.

He had half turned away, retracing his steps back to me thoughtfully, when his eye must have been attracted by something gleaming. He turned back and poked at it with his stick. Peeping from the rubbish was a dented thermos bottle, the lining of which was cracked and broken.

He was about to turn away again when his eye fell on something else. It was the top of the bottle, the little metal cap that screws over it, or rather it was what was left of the cap.

"That's strange," he muttered to himself, picking it up.

The cap, which might have been used as a cup, was broken in the most peculiar manner, in spite of the fact that it was metal. If it had been of glass I should have said that someone had dropped it.

Kennedy frowned and dropped the pieces into his pocket, turning to wait for Allison to return with the chef.

"I can't seem to find him," reported Allison a moment later. "But he'll be here soon. He'll have to be—or lose his job. How would after dinner do? I'll have him and all the other employés, then."

"Good!" agreed Kennedy. "That will give me time to go into the town first and get back."

"I'd be glad to have you dine with me," invited Allison.

"Thank you," smiled Kennedy. "I'm afraid I won't have time for dining tonight. I'll be back after dinner, though."

Mrs. Ferris's car had returned and Craig's next step was to go on into the town of Briar Lake.

On the way he decided first to stop at the Evans house, which took us only a little bit out of our way. There he made a minute examination of the body of the young man.

Irving Evans had been a handsome fellow and the tragedy of his death had been a sad blow to his family. However, I shall not dwell on that, as it is no part of my story.

Kennedy was eager to see the red spot in the pit of the stomach of the dead man of which everyone had spoken.

He looked at it closely, as I did also, although I could make nothing of it. Evans had complained of a burning, stinging sensation, during his moments of consciousness and the mark had had a flushed, angry look. It seemed as though a sort of crust had formed over it, which now was ashen white.

Craig did not spend as long as I had anticipated at the Evans house, but, although he said nothing, I could tell by the expression of his face that he was satisfied with the conclusions which he drew from the examination. Yet I could not see that the combination of circumstances looked much better for Fraser Ferris.

We went on now to the town and there we had no trouble in meeting the authorities and getting them to talk. In fact, they seemed quite eager to justify themselves.

As we passed down the main street, Mrs. Ferris's chauffeur mentioned the fact that a local physician, Dr. Welch, was also the Coroner of the county. Kennedy asked him to stop at the doctor's office, and we entered.

"A most unfortunate occurrence," prefaced the doctor as we seated ourselves.

"You assume, then, that it was the blow that killed Evans?" asked Kennedy pointedly.

The doctor looked at him a moment. "Of course—why not?" he demanded argumentatively, as though we had come all the way from the city for the sole purpose of impugning his medical integrity. "I suppose you know the classical case of the young man who was coming out of the theater, when some of the party began indulging in rather boisterous horse play? One bent another quietly over his arm and tapped him a sharp blow with the disengaged hand on the stretched abdomen. The blow fell right over the solar plexus and, to the surprise of everyone, the young man died."

The Coroner had risen and was pacing the room slowly. "I could cite innumerable cases. Everyone understands that a blow may be fatal because of shock to the solar plexus. In such a case no post-mortem trace might be found and the blow could even be a light one.

"For instance, in a fight a blow might be struck and the recipient fall dead. If the medical examiner should find nothing on holding the autopsy which would have caused sudden death, he can testify that a shock to the solar plexus will cause death and that the post-mortem examination will give no evidence to support or disprove the statement. The absolute absence, however, of any reason or of injury to the other organs will add weight to his testimony, evidence of the blow being present."

"And you think this was such a case?" asked Kennedy, with just a trace of a challenge in his tone.

"Certainly," replied the Coroner. "Certainly. We know that a blow was struck—in all probability hard enough to affect the solar plexus."

It was evident, in his mind at least, that young Ferris was guilty and Kennedy rose to go, refraining from antagonizing him by further questions.

We next visited the county court house, which was not far from the doctor's office. There, the sheriff, a young man, met us and seemed willing to talk over the evidence which so far had been unearthed in the case.

In his office was a trunk, a cheap brown affair, in which the body of the unfortunate steward, Benson, had been found.

"Quite likely the trunk had been carried to the spot in a car and thrown off," the sheriff explained. "A couple of boys happened to find it. They told of their find and one of the constables opened the trunk, then called us up here. In the trunk was the body of a man, crouched, the head forced back between the knees."

"I'd like to see Benson's body," remarked Kennedy.

"Very well, I'll go with you," returned the sheriff. "It's at the undertaker's—our only local morgue."

As we walked slowly up the street, the sheriff went on, just to show that country as well as city detectives knew a thing or two. "There are just two things in which this differs from the ordinary barrel or trunk murder you read about."

"What are they?" encouraged Craig.

"Well, we know the victim. There wasn't any difficulty about identifying him. We know it wasn't

really a Black Hand crime, although everything seems to have been done to make it look like one, and the body was left in the most lonely part of the country.

"And then the trunk. We have traced it easily to the Club House. It was Benson's own trunk—had been up in his own room, which was locked."

"His own trunk?" repeated Craig, suddenly becoming interested. "How could anyone take it out, without being seen? Didn't anyone hear anything?"

"No. Apparently not. None of the other servants seem to have heard a thing. I don't know how it could have been got out, especially as his door was locked and we found the keys on him. But—well, it was. That's all."

We had reached the undertaker's.

The body of Benson was horribly mangled about the head and chest, particularly the mouth. It seemed as if a great hole had been torn in him, and he must have died instantly. Kennedy examined the grewsome remains most carefully.

What had done it, I wondered? Could the man have been drugged, perhaps, and then shot?

"Maybe it was a dum-dum bullet," I suggested, "one of those that mushrooms out and produces such frightful wounds."

"But assuming it entered the front, there is no exit in the back," the sheriff put in quickly, "and no bullet has been found."

"Well, if he wasn't shot," I persisted, "it must have been a blow, and it seems impossible that a blow could have produced such an effect."

The sheriff said nothing, evidently preferring to gain with silence a reputation for superior wisdom. Kennedy had nothing better than silence to offer, either, though he continued for a long time examining the wounds on the body.

Our last visit in town was to Fraser Ferris himself, to whom the sheriff agreed to conduct us. Ferris was confined in the grim, dark, stone, vine-clad county jail.

We had scarcely entered the forbidding door of the place when we heard a step behind us. We turned to see Mrs. Ferris again. She seemed very much excited, and together we four, with a keeper, mounted the steps.

As she caught sight of her son, behind the bars, she seemed to gasp, then nerve herself up to face the ordeal of seeing a Ferris in such a place.

"Fraser," she cried, running forward.

He was tall, sunburned, and looked like a good sportsman, a clean-cut fellow. It was hard to think of him as a murderer, especially after the affecting meeting of the mother and son.

"Do you know what I've just heard?" she asked at length, then scarcely pausing for a word of encouragement from him, she went on. "Why, they say that Benson was in town early that evening, drinking heavily and that that might account—"

"There—there you are," he cried earnestly. "I don't know what happened. But why should I do anything to him? Perhaps someone waylaid him. That's plausible."

"Of course," warned Kennedy a few minutes later, "you know that anything you say may be used against you. But—"

"I *will* talk," interrupted the young man passionately, "although my lawyer tells me not to. Why, it's all so silly. As for Irving Evans, I can't see how I could have hit him hard enough, while, as for poor Benson,—well, that's even sillier yet. How should I know anything of that? Besides, they were all at the Club late that night, all except me, talking over the—the accident. Why don't they suspect Wyndham? He was there. Why don't they suspect—some of the others?"

Mrs. Ferris was trying to keep a brave face and her son was more eager to encourage her than to do anything else.

"Keep up a good heart, Mother," he called, as we finally left, after his thanking Kennedy most heartily. "They haven't indicted me yet, and the grand jury won't meet for a couple of weeks. Lots of things may turn up before then."

It was evident that, next to the disgrace of the arrest, his mother feared even more the shame of an indictment and trial, even though it might end in an acquittal. Yet so far we had found no one, as far as I knew, who had been able to give us a fact that contradicted the deductions of the authorities in the case.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE SOLAR PLEXUS

It was after the dinner hour that we found ourselves at the Country Club again. Wyndham had not come back from the city, but Allison was there and had gathered together all the Club help so that Kennedy might question them.

He did question them down in the locker-room, I thought perhaps for the moral effect. The chef, whom I had suspected of knowing something, was there, but proved to be unenlightening. In fact, no one seemed to have anything to contribute. Quite the contrary. They could not even suggest a way in which the trunk might have been taken from the steward's room.

"That's not very difficult," smiled Kennedy, as one after another the servants asserted that it would be impossible to get it around the turns in the stairs without making a noise. "Where was Benson's room?"

The chef led the way to the door, that by which we had gone out before when we had seen the rubbish barrels.

"Up there," he pointed, "on the third floor."

There was no fire escape, nor were there any outside balconies, and I wondered how Craig would account for it.

"Someone might have lowered the trunk from the window by a rope, might they not?" he asked simply.

"Yes," returned the chef, unconvinced. "But his door was locked and he had his keys in his pocket. How about that?"

"It doesn't follow that he was killed in his room, does it?" asked Craig. "In fact it is altogether impossible that he could have been. Suppose he was killed outside. Might not someone have taken the keys from his pocket, gone up to the room without making any noise and let the trunk down here by a rope? Then if he had dropped the rope, locked the door, and returned the keys to Benson's pockets—how about that?"

It was so simple and feasible that no one could deny it. Yet I could not see that it furthered us in solving the greater mystery.

We went up to the steward's room and searched his belongings, without finding anything that merited even that expenditure of time.

However, Craig was confident now, although he did not say much, and by a late train we returned to the city in preference to using Mrs. Ferris's car.

All the next day, Kennedy was engaged, either in his laboratory or on an errand that took him downtown during most of the middle of the day.

When he returned, I could tell by the look on his face that his quest, whatever it had been, had been successful.

"I found Wyndham—had a long talk with him," was all he would say in answer to my questions, before he went back to whatever he was studying at the laboratory.

I had made some inquiries myself in the meantime, especially about Wyndham. As nearly as I could make out, the young men at Briar Lake were afflicted with a disease which is very prevalent—the desire to get rich quick. In that respect Fraser Ferris was no better than the rest. Nor was Irving Evans. Allan Wyndham had been a plunger almost from boyhood, and only the tight rein that his conservative father held over him had checked him. Sometimes the young men succeeded, and that had served only to whet their appetites for more easy money. But more often they had failed. In most cases, it seemed, Dean Allison's firm had been the brokers through whom they dealt, particularly Wyndham.

In fact, with more time on my hands during the day than I knew what to do with, in the absence of Kennedy I had evolved several very pretty little theories of the case which involved the recouping of dissipated fortunes by marriage with the popular young heiress.

It was late in the afternoon that the telephone rang, and, as Craig was busy, I answered it.

"Oh, Mr. Jameson," I heard Mrs. Ferris's voice calling over long distance from Briar Lake anxiously, "is Mr. Kennedy there? Please let me speak to him."

I hastened to hand over the receiver to Kennedy and waited impatiently until he finished.

"A special grand jury has been empanelled for ten o'clock tomorrow morning," he said as he turned from the wire and faced me, "and unless we can do something immediately, they are sure to find an indictment."

Kennedy scowled and shook his head. "It looks to me as if someone were mighty anxious to railroad young Ferris along," he remarked, hurrying across to the laboratory table, where he had been at work, and flinging off his stained smock.

"Well, are you ready for them?" I asked.

"Yes," he replied quickly. "Call up and find out about the trains to Briar Lake, Walter."

I found that we could easily get a train that would have us at the Country Club not later than eight o'clock, and as I turned to tell Kennedy, I saw him carefully packing into a case a peculiar shaped flask which he had been using in some of his experiments. Outside it had a felt jacket, and as we hurried over to the station Kennedy carried it carefully in the case by a handle.

The ride out to Briar Lake seemed interminable, but it was better than going up in a car at night, and Mrs. Ferris met us anxiously at the station.

Thus, early in the evening, in the little reception room of the Country Club, there gathered a large party, not the largest it had seen, but certainly the most interested. In fact no one, except young Ferris, had any legitimate reason for staying away.

"Dead men tell no tales," remarked Kennedy sententiously, as he faced us, having whispered to me that he wanted me to take a position near the door and stay there, no matter what happened. "But," he added, "science opens their mute mouths. Science has become the greatest detective in the world.

"Once upon a time, it is true, many a murderer was acquitted and perhaps many an innocent man hanged because of appearances. But today the assassin has to reckon with the chemist, the physicist, the X-ray expert, and a host of others. They start on his track and force him to face damning, dispassionate scientific facts.

"And," he went on, raising his voice a trifle, "science, with equal zeal, brings facts to clear an innocent man protesting his innocence, but condemned by circumstantial evidence."

For a moment he paused, and when he began again it was evident that he was going straight to the point at issue in the case.

"Various theories have been confidently proposed in this unfortunate affair which resulted in the death of Irving Evans," he proceeded. "One thing I want clear at the start. The fact is, and I am not running counter to it, that we have what might very well be called two brains. One is in the head, does the thinking. The other is a sort of abdominal brain, controls nutrition and a host of other functions, automatically. It is the solar plexus—the epigastric, sympathetic nervous system.

"It is true that the knot of life is situated at the base of the cranial brain. One jab of a needle and it might be quickly extinguished. Yet derangement of the so-called abdominal brain destroys life as effectually, though perhaps not so quickly. A shock to the abdominal brain of young Evans has been administered—in a most remarkable manner."

I could see Mrs. Ferris watching him with staring eyes, for Kennedy was doing just what many a lawyer does—stating first the bad side of one's case, and seeming to establish the contention of the opposite side.

"It was an unfortunate blow," he admitted, "perhaps even dangerous. But it was not deadly. What happened downstairs in the gymnasium must be taken into account with what happened afterwards in the locker and both considered in the light of the death of the steward, Benson, later.

"The mark on the stomach of Irving Evans was due to something else than the blow. Everyone has noticed that. It was a peculiar mark and no mere blow could have produced it.

"Weird in conception, horribly cunning in its execution was this attempt at murder," he added, taking from the case the peculiar flask which I had seen him pack up.

He held it up so that we could see. It was evidently composed of two flasks, one inside the other, the outer encased in felt, as I had seen, the inner coated with quicksilver and a space between the two. Inside was a peculiar liquid which had a bluish tinge, but was odorless. From the surface a thin vapor seemed to rise.

It was not corked, but from the neck he pulled out a light cotton stopper. As he agitated the liquid slightly, it had the appearance of boiling. He turned over the bottle and spilled some of it on the floor. It evaporated instantly, like water on a hot stove.

Then he took from his pocket a small tin cup and poured out into it some of the liquid, letting it stand a few moments, smoking.

He poured back the liquid into the flask and dropped the cup on the hardwood floor. It shattered as if it had been composed of glass.

One of the men in the front row moved forward to pick up the pieces.

"Just a minute," interferred Kennedy. "If you think anything of your fingers, let that be. In the rubbish, just outside the locker-room, yesterday, I discovered the remains of a thermos bottle and of a metal cup like this which I have dropped on the floor. I have examined the cup, or rather the pieces.

"These two murders were committed by one of the least known agencies—freezing, by liquid air."

I could hear a gasp from the auditors and I knew that someone's heart must be icy at the discovery of the portentous secret.

"I have some liquid air in this Dewar flask," continued Kennedy. "That is what liquid air is usually kept in. But it may be kept in an ordinary thermos bottle quite well, also.

"If I should drop just a minute bit on my hand, it would probably boil away without hurting me, for it evaporates so quickly that it forms a layer or film of air which prevents contact of the terribly cold liquid air and the skin. I might thrust my finger in it for a few seconds and it would not hurt me. But if I kept it there my finger would become brittle and actually break off, so terrible is the cold of one hundred and ninety degrees below zero, Centigrade. It produces an instantaneous frost bite, numbing so quickly that it often is hardly felt. Placed on the surface of flesh this way, it changes it to a pearly-white, solid surface. The thawing, however, is intensely painful, giving first a burning sensation, then a stinging, flushed feeling, exactly as Irving Evans described what he felt. The part affected swells and a crust forms which it takes weeks to heal, supposing the part affected is small.

"Someone, in that locker-room," continued Craig, "placed a piece of cotton soaked in liquid air on the stomach of the unconscious boy. Instantly, before anyone noticed it, it froze through to the solar plexus. Ultimately that was bound to kill him. And who would bear the blame? Why, Fraser Ferris, of course. The accident in the bout afforded an opportunity to use the stuff which the criminal in his wildest dreams could not have bettered."

"How about Benson, the steward?" spoke up a voice.

We turned. It was the Coroner, loath even yet to give up the official theory.

"That was a pure accident," returned Kennedy. "The club, as you know, is a temperance club. But the members, or at least some of them, keep drinks in their lockers. The steward, Benson, knew this. It has been shown that Benson had been in town that evening, had imbibed considerably.

"He had observed one of the members of the club take from his locker something which he thought was to revive young Evans. What more natural, then, than for him to visit that locker when he returned from town, open it?

"He found a thermos bottle. Instead of the regular cork, it had a light cotton stopper. In his muddled state, the steward did not stop to think—even if he had, he would have seen no reason for carefully corking something that was not designed to keep in a thermos bottle.

"But instead of whiskey, the bottle contained what had not yet evaporated of the liquid air. You may not know it, but liquid air can be easily preserved in open vessels with a stopper which allows the passage of the evaporated air. However paradoxical it may seem, it cannot be kept in closed vessels, for enormous pressures are at once brought into play.

"Benson opened the bottle and poured out some of the contents in the metal cup-cap of the bottle. He raised it to his lips—swallowed it—or that much of it that did not paralyze him. It expanded, boiled, exploded—producing the ghastly wound by almost literally blowing him up.

"The owner of the liquid air, who must have had it there waiting a chance to use it, was probably waiting up in the club rooms now, for a chance to get rid of it as evidence. He must have heard a noise down in the locker-room. What if he had been observed and someone were down there investigating?

"He hurried down there. To his horror, in the darkness, he found Benson, already dead, the locker open, the thermos bottle broken and the cup smashed.

"It was a terrible clew. He must get that body away from the locker-room. He could throw the bottle out; no one could suspect anything when the air had evaporated, as it soon would, now. But the body—that was different. The method he employed in getting rid of the body, I think you all must already know."

I had been watching Wyndham's face keenly. As Craig proceeded, I fancied that I saw in it a look of startled surprise.

"Was it one of Anita Allison's many admirers who did this thing?" Craig asked suddenly.

I turned from Wyndham to Craig, wondering. What did he mean? Everyone had accepted that theory of the case so far. No one had questioned it. But, with his words, it suddenly dawned on me that it was by no means the only theory.

Before Craig could go on, there came a startled cry from one of the ladies.

"Oh—he did it—he did it!"

Anita Allison had fainted.

Dean Allison was at his sister's side in a moment.

"Here—let me get her out into the fresh air," he cried.

Wyndham had started up at the words and the two men were facing each other over the girl who had already discovered the secret, but had kept it locked in her breast.

"Walter—lock that door," rang out Craig's voice mercilessly.

I backed up, my whole weight against it, and turned the key.

"I know the gossip of Wall Street now," shot out Kennedy hurriedly, facing the crowd who were all on their feet. "Today I have visited a number of speculative young gentlemen of Briar Lake, including Mr. Wyndham.

"The truth is that Miss Allison's fortune was gone—dissipated in an unsuccessful bear raid on the market in which others have shared—and lost.

"If she had married, it meant an accounting and surrendering of her full control of her fortune. You have done this dastardly crime, Dean Allison, to keep your sister in ignorance of the loss and to save your own miserable reputation!"

CHAPTER XXV

THE DEMON ENGINE

"Perpetual motion sounds foolish, I'll admit. But, Professor Kennedy, this Creighton self-acting motor does things I can't explain."

Craig looked perplexed as he gazed from Adele Laidlaw, his young and very pretty client, to me. We had heard a great deal about the young lady, one of the wealthiest heiresses of the country. She paused a moment and looked at us, evidently thinking of the many schemes which people had devised to get her money away from her.

"Really," she went on, "I haven't a friend to whom I can go, except Mr. Tresham—no one on whom I can rely for advice in a case of this kind."

Several times, I recollected, there had been rumors that she was engaged to Leslie Tresham, who had been the lawyer for her father before his death. The rumors had always been denied, however, though I am sure it was not Tresham's fault.

"You see," she continued, as Craig still said nothing, "father was of a mechanical turn of mind; in fact so was the whole family, and I suppose I have inherited it. I'm just crazy over cars and boats. Anyhow, I was introduced to Mr. Creighton and he seemed so earnest and his work was so interesting that I bought a little of his stock. Now he needs more money to perfect his motor. Perhaps the thing is all right, but,—well, what do I really know about it?"

One could not help feeling a great deal of sympathy for her. She was not the type of woman who would be easily misled, yet I could imagine that she must constantly be on her guard against schemers of every sort lurking to take advantage of every whim.

"H'm," mused Kennedy, with a smile, eyeing our visitor keenly. "I've been consulted on about everything from pickpockets to the fountain of youth. Now it's perpetual motion. I must say, Miss Laidlaw, your case has a decided scientific interest for me, anyhow, as well as personal. I'd like to look at this wonderful machine, if you can arrange it."

"I can do that," she answered confidently with a glance of thanks to Kennedy for his help. "May I use your telephone?"

She had to wait some time for an answer to her call, but finally she got Creighton on the wire.

"He had just come in," she said, hanging up the receiver. "He'll be there if we come down right away."

Adele Laidlaw drove us downtown in her own high-powered car, which, true to her mechanical instincts, she handled herself. She drove it very well, too. In fact, I felt safer than with Kennedy, who, like many drivers, was inclined to take chances when he was at the wheel himself and could see what he was up against, though he balked severely when anyone else did it.

"How did you become interested in this perpetual motion machine, Miss Laidlaw?" he asked as we threaded our way through the dense traffic.

"Well, I suppose everyone knows that I'm interested in engines," she replied, as we waited for the signal from a policeman at a cross-street. "I've spent a good deal on them in speed-boats and in racing cars, too. An acquaintance, a friend of Mr. Creighton's, a Mrs. Barry,—Mr. Tresham knows her,—thought perhaps I might use the motor somehow and told me of it. I went down to see it and—I must confess that it fascinated me."

I had not yet quite got myself accustomed to a girl who was interested in such things, though, in these days, I must confess, saw no reason why she should not be. Kennedy was dividing his attention between the admirable manner in which she handled the car and her very expressive face. Was it really, I wondered, that Creighton, more than his motor, has fascinated her?

She drew up before the Consolidated Bank Building, a modern steel and concrete structure in the uptown business section.

"The laboratory is next door," she said, as she let the car slide ahead a few feet more. "Mr. Tresham's office is in the Bank Building. I've had to go there so often since father died that I stopped through force of habit, I suppose."

Mindful of Kennedy's admiration for Freud, his theory of forgetting occurred to me. Was there any significance in the mistake? Had the unconscious blunder betrayed something which perhaps she herself consciously did not realize? Was it Tresham, after all, whom she really admired and wanted to see?

Creighton's workshop was in an old two-story brick building, evidently awaiting only the development of the neighborhood before it was torn down. Meanwhile the two buildings were in marked contrast. Which of them typified Creighton? Was he hopelessly out of date, or really ahead of his time? I must confess to having had a lively curiosity to meet the inventor.

The entrance to the laboratory from the street was through a large door into a room in which was a carpenter's bench. On one side were some powerful winches and a large assortment of tools. In the back of the room a big door led to another room on the ground floor to the rear.

"Mr. Creighton's is upstairs," remarked Miss Laidlaw, turning past the locked door and going up a worn flight of steps.

"Whose shop is that?" asked Kennedy, indicating the door.

"I don't know who rents these rooms down here," she replied.

Up the stairway we went to the second floor. On the top landing stood some old machinery. In a little room on one side was a big desk, as well as books, instruments, and drawings of all sorts. Opposite this room was another little room, with many bits of expensive machinery on shelves and tables. Back of these two, and up a step, was a large room, the full width of the building, the workshop of the inventor, into which she led us.

"I've brought a couple of friends of mine who may be interested in the vibrodyne motor," Miss Laidlaw introduced us.

"Very pleased to meet you, gentlemen," Creighton returned. "Before we get through, I think you'll agree with me that you never dreamed of anything more wonderful than this motor of mine."

He was a large, powerfully built man, with a huge head, square jaw with heavy side whiskers, and eyes that moved restlessly under a shock of iron-gray hair. Whether it was the actual size of his head or his bushy hair, one got the impression that his cranium housed a superabundant supply of brains.

Every action was nervous and quick. Even his speech was rapid, as though his ideas outstripped his tongue. He impressed one as absorbed in this thing which he said frankly had been his life study, every nerve strained to make it succeed and convince people.

"Just what is this force you call vibrodyne?" asked Craig, gazing about at the curious litter of paraphernalia in the shop.

"Of course, I'm willing to admit," began Creighton quickly, in the tone of a man who was used to showing his machine to skeptical strangers but must be allowed to explain it in his own way, "that never before by any mechanical, electrical, thermal, or other means has a self-moving motor been made."

He paused apparently to let us grasp the significance of what he was about to say. "But, is it impossible, as some of the old scientists have proved to their own satisfaction it must be?" he went on, warming up to his subject. "May there not be molecular, atomic, even ionic forces of which we have not dreamed? You have only to go back a few years and study radioactivity, for instance, to see how ideas may change.

"Today," he added emphatically, "the conservation of energy, in the old sense at least, has been overthrown. Gentlemen, all the old laws must be modified by my discovery of vibrodyne. I loose new new forces—I create energy!"

I watched him narrowly as he proposed and rapidly answered his own questions. He was talking quite as much for Miss Laidlaw's benefit, I thought, as ours. In fact, it was evident that her interest in the machine and in himself pleased him greatly.

I knew already that though the search after perpetual motion through centuries had brought failure, still it captivated a certain type of inventive mind. I knew also that, just as the exact squaring of the circle and the transmutation of metals brought out some great mathematical discoveries and much of modern chemistry, so perpetual motion had brought out the greatest of all generalizations of physics—the conservation of energy.

Yet here was a man who questioned the infallibility of that generalization. Actually taking the ultra-modern view that matter is a form of energy, he was asserting that energy in some way might be created or destroyed, at least transformed in a manner that no one had ever understood before. To him, radioactivity which had overthrown or amplified many of the old ideas was only a beginning.

"Here is the machine," he pointed out at last, still talking, leading us proudly across the littered floor of his laboratory.

It seemed, at first glance, to consist of a circular iron frame, about a foot and a half in diameter, firmly bolted to the floor.

"I have it fastened down because, as you will see, it develops such a tremendous power," explained the inventor, adding, as he pointed above it, "That is all the power is developed from, too."

On a shelf was a Daniell battery of four cells. In the porous cup was bichromate of potash and in the outer vessel dilute sulphuric acid.

"Let me show you how I get two and a half horsepower out of three ounces of zinc for nine hours," went on Creighton proudly. "As you doubtless know, the usual thing is one horsepower per pound of zinc per hour. Ultimately, I expect to perfect the process until I get a thousand horsepower from an ounce in this vibrodyne motor."

He started the engine by attaching the wires from the comparatively weak Daniell cells. Slowly it began to move, gaining speed, until finally the very floor shook from the great power and the rapidity of the motion.

It seemed incredible that the small current from the battery should develop such apparent power and I looked at Kennedy in amazement.

"There's a carelessly—or purposely—ill-balanced flywheel, I suspect," whispered Craig to me surreptitiously.

"Yes, but the power," I persisted.

He shook his head. Evidently he was not convinced, but had no theory, yet.

Adele Laidlaw looked at Craig questioningly, as though to read what he thought of it. Before her he betrayed nothing. Now and then she would look earnestly at Creighton. It was evident that she admired him very much, yet there seemed to be something about him that she did not quite understand.

Just then the telephone rang. Creighton stopped his machine and left us for a moment to answer the call, while the engine slowed down and came to rest.

Quickly Kennedy pulled out his watch and pried the crystal off the face. He walked over to a basin and filled the crystal with a few drops of water. Then he set it down on the table.

I looked at it closely. As nearly as I could make out, there seemed to be a slight agitation on the surface of the thin film of water in the glass. Craig smiled quietly to himself and flicked the water into the sink, returning the crystal to his watch.

I did not understand just what it was that Craig was after, but I felt sure that there was some kind of vibration that he had discovered.

Meanwhile, we could hear Creighton telephoning and I noticed that Miss Laidlaw was alertly listening, too.

"Why, no," I heard him answer monosyllabically but in a tone that was carefully modulated, "not alone. Let me call you up—soon."

The conversation ended almost as abruptly as it had begun. Somehow, it seemed evident to me that Creighton had been talking to a woman. Though he apparently had not wanted to say anything before us, he could not disguise the fact. From his quick, nervous manner with us, I had concluded that no mere man could have commanded so deferential a tone from him.

A moment later he rejoined us, resuming his praises of his motor. By this time I had come to recognize that he was a master in the manipulation of fantastic terms, which I, at least, did not understand. Therein, perhaps, lay their potency, though I doubt whether Kennedy himself knew what Creighton meant when he talked of "polar sympathy," "inter-atomic ether," "molecular disintegration," and "orbital chaos."

I saw that Adele Laidlaw was watching Creighton narrowly now. Was it on account of the telephone call? Who had it been? Perhaps, it occurred to me, it was Mrs. Barry. Was Creighton afraid of arousing the jealousy of Adele Laidlaw?

There seemed to be nothing more of importance that Craig could learn at present and we soon bade Creighton good-by, leaving with Miss Laidlaw. I noticed that he locked the door after us as we went out.

"I'd like to meet this Mrs. Barry," remarked Craig as we passed out of the building.

He said it evidently to see just how Miss Laidlaw would take it. "I think I can arrange that," replied Adele Laidlaw colorlessly. "I'll ask her to visit me this afternoon. You can call casually."

We accompanied her to her car, promising to report as soon as possible if we discovered anything new.

"I'm going in to call on Tresham," remarked Craig, turning into the Bank Building.

THE ELECTROLYSIS CLEW

As Kennedy walked through the corridor of the building, he paused and bent down, as though examining the wall. I looked, too. There was a crack in the concrete, in the side wall toward the Creighton laboratory.

"Do you suppose vibration caused it?" I asked, remembering his watch crystal test.

Craig shook his head. "The vibrations in a building can be shown by a watch glass full of water. You saw the surface of the liquid with its minute waves. There's vibration, all right, but that is not the cause of such cracks as these."

He stood for a moment regarding the crack attentively. On the floor on which we were was the Consolidated Bank itself. Beneath us were the Consolidated Safety Deposit vaults.

"What did cause them, then?" I asked, mystified.

"Apparently escaping currents of electricity are causing electrolysis of the Bank Building," he replied, his face wrinkled in thought.

"Electrolysis?" I repeated mechanically.

"Yes. I suppose you know how stray or vagrant currents affect steel and concrete?"

I shook my head in the negative.

"Well," he explained as we stood there, "I believe that in one government test at least it was shown that when an electric current of high voltage passes from steel to concrete, the latter is cracked and broken. Often a mechanical pressure as great as four or five thousand pounds a square inch is exerted and there is rapid destruction due to the heating effect of the current."

I expressed my surprise at what he had discovered. "The danger is easily overestimated," he hastened to add. "But in this case I think it is real, though probably it is a special and extreme condition. Still it is special and extreme conditions which we are in the habit of encountering in our cases, Walter. That is what we must be looking out for. In this instance the destruction due to electrolysis is most likely caused by the oxidation of the iron anode. The oxides which are formed are twice as great in volume as the iron was originally and the resulting pressure is what causes the concrete to break. I think we shall find that this condition will bear strict watching."

For a moment Kennedy stopped at the little office of the superintendent of the building, in the rear.

"I was just wondering whether you had noticed those cracks in the walls down the corridor," remarked Kennedy after a brief introduction.

The superintendent looked at him suspiciously. Evidently he feared we had some ulterior motive, perhaps represented some rival building and might try to scare away his tenants.

"Oh, that's nothing," he said confidently. "Just the building settling a bit—easily fixed."

"The safety vault company haven't complained?" persisted Kennedy, determined to get something out of the agent.

"No indeed," he returned confidently. "I guess they've got troubles of their own—real ones."

"How's that?" asked Craig, falling in with the man's evident desire to change the subject.

"Why, I believe their alarm system's out of order," he replied. "Some of the fine wires in it burnt out, I think. Defective wiring, I guess. Oh, they've had it patched up, changed about a little,—it's all right now, they say. But they've had a deuce of a time with the alarm ringing at all sorts of hours, and not a trace of trouble."

I looked quickly at Craig. Though the superintendent thought he had been very clever in changing the topic of conversation, he had unwittingly furnished us with another clew. I could not ask Craig before him and I forgot to do so later, but, to me at least, it seemed as if this might be due to induction from the stray currents.

"No one here seems to have suspected the Creighton motor, anyhow," commented Craig to me, as we thanked the superintendent and walked across to the elevators.

We rode up to Tresham's office, which was on the third floor, on the side of the building toward Creighton's laboratory. In fact one of the windows opened almost on the roof of the brick building next door.

We found Tresham in his office and he received us affably, I thought. "Miss Laidlaw told me she was going to consult you," he remarked as we introduced ourselves. "I'm glad she did so."

Tresham was a large, well-built fellow, apparently athletically inclined, clean shaven with dark hair that was getting very thin. He seemed quite at ease as he talked with us, yet I could tell that he was weighing us all the time, as lawyers will do.

"What do you think of Creighton's motor?" opened Kennedy. "You've seen it, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes," he replied quickly and jerkily. "Since Miss Laidlaw became interested he's been in here

to have me look over his application for a patent. You know, I used to be a patent lawyer for a number of years until I decided to branch out into general practice. Legally Creighton seems to be sound enough. Of course, you know, the patent office won't grant a patent on a machine such as he claims without a rigid demonstration. He needs money, he says, for that. If his idea is sound, I don't see any reason why he shouldn't get a basic patent."

Tresham paused. I was conscious that he was furtively watching the face of Kennedy as though he hoped to learn as much from him as Craig did on his part.

"It's the mechanical end of it that I don't understand," continued Tresham, after a pause. "Creighton claims to have discovered a new force which he calls vibrodyne. I think it is just as well that Miss Laidlaw has decided to consult a scientist about it before she puts any more money into the thing. I can't say I approve of her interest in it—though, of course, I know next to nothing about it, except from the legal standpoint."

"Who is that Mrs. Barry of whom Miss Laidlaw spoke?" asked Kennedy a moment later.

"I believe she is a friend of Creighton's. Somehow she got acquainted with Miss Laidlaw and introduced her to him."

"You know her?" queried Craig casually.

"Oh, yes," came the frank reply. "She has been in to see me, too; first to interest me in the motor, and then to consult me about various legal points in connection with it."

I felt sure that Tresham was more than just a bit jealous of his pretty client. Certainly his tone was intended to convey the impression that he wished she would leave her affairs in his hands entirely.

"You don't know anything more about her—where she came from—her connections?" added Craig.

"Hardly more than you do," asserted Tresham. "I've only seen the woman a few times. In fact I should be glad to know more about her—and about Creighton, too. I hope that if you find out anything you'll let me know so that I can protect Miss Laidlaw's interests."

"I shall do so," promised Kennedy, rising.

"I'll do the same," agreed Tresham, extending his hand. "I see no reason why we shouldn't work together for—my client."

There was no mistaking the fact that Tresham would have liked to be able to say something more intimate than "client." Perhaps he might have been nearer to it if her interest in him had not been diverted by this wonderful motor. At any rate I fancied he had little love for Creighton. Yet, when I reflected afterward, it seemed like a wide gulf that must separate a comparatively impecunious lawyer from a wealthy girl like Adele Laidlaw.

Kennedy was not through with his effort to learn something by a thorough investigation of the neighborhood yet. For some time after we left Tresham's office, he stood in the doorway of the Bank Building, looking about as though he hated to leave without establishing some vantage point from which to watch what was going on in Creighton's laboratory.

"Of course I can't very well get into the safety vault under the bank," he mused. "I wish I could."

He walked past Creighton's without seeing anything happen. The next building was a similar two-story brick affair. A sign on it read, "Studios and Offices For Rent."

An idea seemed to be suggested to him by the sign. He wheeled and entered the place. Inquiry brought out a caretaker who showed us several rooms unoccupied, among them one vacant on the first floor.

Kennedy looked it over carefully, as though considering whether it was just the place he wanted, but ended, as I knew he intended, in hiring it.

"I can't move my stuff in for a couple of days," he told the caretaker. "Meanwhile, I may have the key, I suppose?"

He had paid a good deposit and the key was readily forthcoming.

The hiring of the ground floor room accomplished without exciting suspicion, Kennedy and I made a hasty trip up to his own laboratory, where he took a small box from a cabinet and hurried back to the taxicab which had brought us uptown.

Back again in the bare room which he had acquired, Craig set to work immediately installing a peculiar instrument which he took from the package.

It seemed to consist of two rods much like electric light carbons, fixed horizontally in a wooden support with a spindle-shaped bit of carbon between the two ends of the rods. Wires were connected with binding screws at the free ends of the carbon rods.

First Craig made a connection with an electric light socket from which he removed the bulb, cutting in a rheostat. Then he attached the free wires from the carbons to a sort of telephone headgear and switched on the current.

"What is it?" I asked curiously.

"A geophone," he replied simply.

"And what is a geophone?" I inquired.

"Literally an earth-phone," he explained. "It is really the simplest form of telephone, applied to the earth. You saw what it was. Any high school student of physics can make one, even with two or three dry batteries in circuit."

"But what does it do?" I asked.

"It is really designed to detect earth vibrations. All that is necessary is to set the carbon stick arrangement, which is the transmitter of this telephone, on the floor, place myself at the other end and listen. A trained ear can readily detect rumblings. Really it is doing in a different and often better way what the seismograph does. This instrument is so sensitive that it will record the slamming of a cellar door across the street. No one can go up those stairs next door without letting me know it, no matter how cautious he is about it."

Craig stood there some minutes holding the thing over his ears and listening intently.

"The vibrodyne machine isn't running," he remarked finally after repeated adjustments of the geophone. "But someone is in that little room under Creighton's workshop. I suspected that something was down there after that watch crystal test of mine. Now I know it. I wonder what the man is doing?"

There was no excuse yet, however, for breaking into the room on the other side of the wall and under Creighton's. Kennedy went out and watched. Though we waited some time nobody came out. He went back to our own room in the rear of the first floor. Though we both listened some time, neither of us could now hear a sound through the geophone except those made by passing trolleys and street vehicles.

Inquiry about the neighborhood did not develop who was the tenant or what was his business. In fact the results were just the reverse. No one seemed to know even the business conducted there. The room back of the locked door which Miss Laidlaw had passed was shrouded in mystery.

Nothing at all of any value was being recorded by the geophone when Kennedy glanced quickly at his watch. "If we are to see Miss Laidlaw and meet that Mrs. Barry, we had better be on our way," he remarked hurriedly.

Miss Laidlaw was living in a handsome apartment on Central Park, West. We entered and gave our cards to the man at the door of her suite, who bowed us into a little reception room. We entered and waited.

Suddenly we were aware that someone in the next room, a library, was talking. Whether we would or not we could not help overhearing what was said. Apparently two women were there, and they were not taking care how loud they spoke.

"Then you object to my even knowing Mr. Creighton?" asked one of the voices, pausing evidently for a reply which the other did not choose to make. "I suppose if it was Mr. Tresham you'd object, too."

There was something "catty" and taunting about the voice. It was a hard voice, the voice of a woman who had seen much, and felt fully capable of taking care of herself in more.

"You can't make up your mind which one you care for most, then? Is that it?" pursued the same voice. "Well, I'll be a sport. I'll leave you Creighton—if you can keep him."

"I want neither," broke in a voice which I recognized at once as Adele Laidlaw's.

She spoke with a suppressed emotion which plainly indicated that she did want one of them.

Just then the butler entered with our cards. We heard no more. A moment later we were ushered into the library.

Mrs. Barry was a trim, well-groomed woman whose age was deceptive. I felt that no matter what one might think of Miss Laidlaw, here was a woman whose very looks seemed to warn one to be on his guard. She was a woman of the world, confident in her own ability to take care of herself.

Adele was flushed and excited, as we entered, though she was making a desperate effort to act as though nothing had happened.

"My friend, Professor Kennedy, and Mr. Jameson," she introduced us simply, making no pretense to conceal our identity.

Mrs. Barry was, in addition to her other accomplishments, a good actress. "I've heard a great deal about you, Professor," she said, extending her hand, but not taking her eyes off Craig's face.

Kennedy met her gaze directly. What did she mean? Had she accepted Miss Laidlaw's invitation to call in order to look us over, knowing that we had come to do the same?

"Mr. Creighton tells me that you have been to see his new motor," she ventured, even before any

of us could open the subject.

She seemed to enjoy making the remark for the specific purpose of rousing Miss Laidlaw. It succeeded amply, also. The implication that Creighton took her into his confidence was sufficient to cause Adele Laidlaw to shoot an angry glance at her.

Mrs. Barry had no objection to sticking a knife in and turning it around. "Of course I don't know as much about such things as Miss Laidlaw," she purred, "but Mr. Tresham tells me that there may be some trouble with the patent office about allowing the patent. From all I have heard there's a fortune in that motor for someone. Wonderful, isn't it?"

Even the mention of Tresham's name in the studied familiarity of her tone seemed to increase the scarcely latent hostility between the two women. Kennedy, so far, had said nothing, content merely to observe.

"It appears to be wonderful," was all he said, guardedly.

Mrs. Barry eyed him sharply and Miss Laidlaw appeared to be ill at ease. Evidently she wanted to believe in Creighton and his motor, yet her natural caution forbade her. The entrance of Kennedy into the case seemed to have proved a disturbing factor between the two women, to have brought matters to a head.

We chatted for a few minutes, Kennedy deftly refusing to commit himself on anything, Mrs. Barry seeking to lead him into expressing some opinion, and endeavoring to conceal her exasperation as he avoided doing so.

At last Kennedy glanced at his watch, which reminded him of a mythical appointment, sufficient to terminate the visit.

"I'm very glad to have met you," he bowed to Mrs. Barry, as she, too, rose to go, while he preserved the fiction of merely having dropped in to see Miss Laidlaw. He turned to her. "I should be delighted to have both you and Mr. Tresham drop in at my laboratory some time, Miss Laidlaw."

Miss Laidlaw caught his eye and read in it that this was his way, under the circumstances, of asking her to keep in touch with him.

"I shall do so," she promised.

We parted from Mrs. Barry at the door of her taxicab.

"A very baffling woman," I remarked a moment later. "Do you suppose she is as intimate with Creighton as she implies?"

Kennedy shook his head. "It isn't that that interests me most, just now," he replied. "What I can't figure out is Adele Laidlaw's attitude toward both Creighton and Tresham. She seems to resent Mrs. Barry's intimacy with either."

"Yes," I agreed. "Sometimes I have thought she really cared for both—at least, that she was unable to make up her mind which she cared for most. Offhand, I should have thought that she was the sort who wouldn't think a man worth caring much for."

Kennedy shook his head. "Given a woman, Walter," he said thoughtfully, "whose own and ancestral training has been a course of suppression, where she has been taught and drilled that exhibitions of emotion and passion are disgraceful, as I suspect Miss Laidlaw's parents have believed, and you have a woman whose primitive instincts have been stored and strengthened. The instincts are there, nevertheless, far back in the subconscious mind. I don't think Adele Laidlaw knows it herself, but there is something about both those men which fascinates her and she can't make up her mind which fascinates her most. Perhaps they have the same qualities."

"But Mrs. Barry," I interrupted. "Surely she must know."

"I think she does," he returned. "I think she knows more than we suspect."

I looked at him quickly, not quite making out the significance of the remark, but he said no more. For the present, at least, he left Adele Laidlaw quite as much an enigma as ever.

"I wish that you would make inquiries about regarding Mrs. Barry," he said finally as we reached the subway. "I'm going down again to the little room we hired and watch. You'll find me at the laboratory later tonight."

CHAPTER XXVII

THE PERPETUAL MOTION MACHINE

I tried my best, but there was very little that I could find out about Mrs. Barry. No one seemed to know where she came from, and even "Mr. Barry" seemed shrouded in obscurity. I was convinced, however, that she was an adventuress.

One thing, however, I did turn up. She had called on Tresham at his office a number of times, usually late in the afternoon, and he had taken her to dinner and to the theater. Apparently he knew her a great deal better than he had been willing to admit to us. I was not surprised, for, like a good many men of his class, Tresham was better known in the white light district than one might suspect. Mrs. Barry had all the marks of being good company on such an excursion.

On the way uptown, I stopped off in the neighborhood of Longacre Square in the hope of picking up some more gossip at one or another of the clubs. Tresham was a member of several, though as near as I could find out, used them more for business than social reasons. On Broadway it was different, however. There he was known as a liberal spender and lover of night life. Like many others he now and then accumulated quite large bills. I wondered whether Mrs. Barry had not found out and taken advantage of his weakness.

It was, as I have said, comparatively little that I had been able to discover, yet when I met Kennedy again, later in the evening, at his laboratory, he listened eagerly to what I had to report.

"Did anything happen downtown?" I asked when I had finished.

"Nothing much," he returned. "Of course, listening over the geophone, I couldn't watch the Bank Building, too. There's something very queer about Creighton. I could hear him at work in the room upstairs until quite late, making a lot of noise. If I don't find out anything more definite soon, I shall have to adopt some other measures."

"You didn't do anything more about that electrolysis clew?" I queried.

"Nothing," he replied briefly, "except that I inquired of the electric light company and found out that Creighton, or someone in his building, was using a good deal of power."

"That looks bad," I ventured, remembering the claims made for the engine and the comparatively weak batteries that were said to run it.

Kennedy nodded acquiescence, but said nothing more. We walked over in silence to our apartment on the Heights and far into the night Craig sat there, shading his eyes with his hand, apparently studying out the peculiar features of the case and planning some new angle of approach at it tomorrow.

We were surprised the next day to receive an early visit from Miss Laidlaw at the laboratory. She drove up before the Chemistry Building, very much excited, as though her news would not bear repeating even over the telephone.

"What do you think?" she exclaimed, bursting in on us. "Mr. Creighton has disappeared!"

"Disappeared?" repeated Kennedy. "How did you find it out?"

"Mr. Tresham just telephoned me from his office," she hurried on. "He was going into the Bank Building when he saw a wagon drive off from the place next door. He thought it was strange and instead of going on up to his own office he walked into Creighton's. When he tried to get in, the place was locked. There's a sign on it, too, 'For Rent,' he says."

"That's strange," considered Kennedy. "I suppose he didn't notice what kind of wagon it was?"

"Yes, he said it looked like a junk wagon—full of stuff."

I looked from Miss Laidlaw to Kennedy. Plainly our entrance into the case had been the signal for the flitting of Creighton.

Quickly he reached for the telephone. "You know Mrs. Barry's number?" he asked.

"Yes, it's the Prince Edward Hotel."

He called up, but the conversation was over in a moment. "She didn't return to the hotel last night," he announced as he hung up the receiver.

"She's in this thing, too," exclaimed Adele Laidlaw. "Can you go down with me now and meet Mr. Tresham? I promised I would."

Though she repressed her feelings, as usual, I could see that Adele Laidlaw was furious. Was it because Creighton had gone off with her money, or was it pique because Mrs. Barry had, perhaps, won him? At any rate, someone was going to feel the fury of her scorn.

We motored down quickly in Miss Laidlaw's car and met Tresham, who was standing in front of the Bank Building waiting for us.

"It just happened that I came down early this morning," he explained, "or I shouldn't have noticed anything out of the way. The junk wagon was just driving away as I came up. It seemed to be in such a hurry that it attracted my attention."

It was the first time we had seen Tresham and Miss Laidlaw together and I was interested to see how they would act. There was no mistaking his attitude toward her and Adele was much more cordial to him than I had expected.

"While I was waiting I got a key from the agent," he explained. "But I didn't want to go in until you came."

Tresham opened the door and led the way upstairs, Miss Laidlaw following closely. As we entered Creighton's shop, everything seemed to be in the greatest disorder. Prints and books were scattered about, the tools were lying about wherever they happened to have been left, all the models were smashed or missing and a heap of papers in the fireplace showed where many plans, letters and other documents had been burned.

We hurried into the big room. Sure enough, the demon motor itself was gone! Creighton had unbolted it from the floor and some holes in the boards had been plugged up. The room below was still locked and the windows were covered with opaque paper on the inside.

"What do you suppose he has done with the motor?" asked Adele.

"The only clew is a junk dealer whom we don't know," I replied, as Kennedy said nothing.

We looked about the place thoroughly, but could find nothing else. Creighton seemed to have made a clean getaway in the early hours.

"I wish I could stay and help you," remarked Tresham at length. "But I must be in court at ten. If there's anything I can do, though, call on me."

"I'm going to find that engine if I have to visit every junk dealer in New York," declared Miss Laidlaw soon after Tresham left.

"That's about all we can do, yet, I guess," remarked Kennedy, evidently not much worried about the disappearance of the inventor.

Together we three closed up the workshop and started out with a list from a trade publication giving all those who dealt in scrap iron and old metal. In fact we spent most of the day going from one to another of the junk shops. I never knew that there were so many dealers in waste. They seemed to be all over the city and in nearly every section. It was a tremendous job, but we mapped it out so that we worked our way from one section to another.

We had got as far as the Harlem River when we entered one place and looked about while we waited for someone in charge to appear.

I heard a low exclamation from Kennedy, and turned to look in the direction he indicated. There, in a wagon from which the horse had been unhitched, was the heavy base of the engine into which so many dollars had been turned—sold as so much scrap!

Kennedy examined it quickly, while I questioned a man who appeared from behind a shed in the rear. It was useless. He could give no clew that we already could not guess. He had just bought it from a man who seemed anxious to get rid of it. His description of the man tallied with Creighton. But that was all. It gave us no chance to trace him.

"Look," exclaimed Kennedy eagerly, bending closer over the motor. "This is one of the neatest perpetual motion frauds I ever heard of."

He had turned the heavy base of the motor upward. One glance left me with little wonder why Creighton had so carefully bolted the machine to the floor. In the base were two rectangular apertures to allow a belt to run over a concealed pulley on the main shaft of the machine in the case. Evidently, when the circuit from the Daniell cells was closed, the pulley, somehow, was thrown into gear. It was loose and the machine began to revolve slowly at first, then faster and with great show of power. The pounding, as Kennedy had surmised, was due to the flywheel not well balanced.

"Well," I remarked, "now that we have found it, I don't see that it does us much good."

"Only that we understand it," returned Craig. "I left that geophone down there in the room next door which I hired. I think, if Miss Laidlaw will take us down there, I'd like to get it."

He spoke with a sort of easy confidence which I knew was hard to be assumed in the face of what looked like defeat. Had Craig deliberately let Creighton have a chance to get away, in order that he might convict himself?

In silence, with Miss Laidlaw at the wheel, we went downtown again to the room which Craig had hired next to Creighton's workshop. As we approached it, he leaned over to Miss Laidlaw.

"Stop around the corner," he asked. "Let's go in quietly."

We entered our bare little room and Kennedy set to work as though to detach the geophone, while I explained it to our client.

"What's the matter?" she interrupted in the middle of my explanation, indicating Kennedy.

He had paused and had placed the receivers to his ears. By his expression I knew that the instrument was registering something.

"Someone is in the lower room of the shop next door," he answered, facing us quickly. "If we hurry, we'll have him cornered."

Miss Laidlaw and I went out and around in front, while Craig dashed through a back door to cut off retreat that way.

"What's that? Hurry!" exclaimed Miss Laidlaw.

Plainly there was a muffled scream of a woman as we entered the street door. I hurried forward. It was the work of only a few seconds to batter down the locked door in the room under Creighton's old workshop, and as the door gave way, I heard the sound of shattered glass from the rear which told that Kennedy had heard the scream, too, and had gained an entrance.

Inside I could make out in the half-light a man and a woman. The woman was running toward me, as if for help.

"Mrs. Barry!" gasped Adele Laidlaw.

"He got me here—to kill me!" she cried hysterically. "I am the only one who knows the truth—it was the last day—tonight he would have had the money—and I would have been out of the way. But I'll expose him—I'll ruin him. See—he came in from the roof—"

A blinding flash of light greeted us, followed by a scream from Adele Laidlaw, as she ran past us and dropped on her knees beside a body that had fallen with a thud in the flame before a yawning hole in the side wall.

Mrs. Barry ran past me, back again, at almost the same moment. It was a strange sight—these two women glaring at each other over the prostrate figure of the man.

"Here's the real demon engine," panted Craig, coming up from the back and pointing to an electric motor as well as other apparatus consisting of several series of coils. "The perpetual motion machine was just a fake. It was merely a cover to an attempt to break into the bank vaults by electrolysis of the steel and concrete. Creighton was a dummy, a fiction—to take the blame and disappear when the robbery was discovered."

"Creighton," I repeated, looking at the man on the floor, "a dummy?"

"Oh—he's dead!" wailed Adele Laidlaw. "He's dead!"

"Electrocuted by his own machine rather than face disgrace and disbarment," cut in Craig. "No wonder she was in doubt which of the two men fascinated her most."

I moved forward and bent over the contorted form of the lawyer, Tresham, who was wearing the whiskers and iron gray wig of his alter-ego, Creighton.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE CANCER HOUSE

"You've heard of such things as cancer houses, I suppose, Professor Kennedy?"

It was early in the morning and Craig's client, Myra Moreton, as she introduced herself, had been waiting at the laboratory door in a state of great agitation as we came up. Just because her beautiful face was pale and haggard with worry, she was a pathetic figure, as she stood there, dressed in deep mourning, the tears standing in her eyes merely because we were a little later than usual.

"Well," she hurried on as she dropped into a chair, "that is what they are calling that big house of ours at Norwood—a cancer house, if there is such a thing."

Clearly, Myra Moreton was a victim of nervous prostration. She had asked the question with a hectic eagerness, yet had not waited for an answer.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "you do not, you cannot know what it means to have something like this constantly hanging over you. Think of it—five of us have died in less than five years. It haunts me. Who next. That is all I can think about. Who next?"

Her first agitation had been succeeded by a calmness of despair, almost of fatalism, which was worse for her than letting loose her pent-up emotions.

I had heard of cases of people in whom there was no record of hereditary predisposition to cancer, people apparently in perfect health, who had moved into houses where cancer patients had lived and died and had themselves developed the disease. Though I had, of course, never even remotely experienced such a feeling as she described, I could well fancy what it must be to her.

Kennedy watched her sympathetically. "But why do you come to me?" he asked gently. "Don't you think a cancer specialist would be more likely to help you?"

"A specialist?" she repeated with a peculiar hopelessness. "Professor Kennedy, five years ago, when my Uncle Frank was attacked by cancer, father was so foolish as to persuade him to consult a specialist whose advertisement he saw in the papers, a Dr. Adam Loeb on Forty-second Street here in New York. Specialist! Oh, I'm worried sick every time I have a sore or anything like this on my neck or anywhere else."

She had worked herself from her unnatural calm almost into a state of hysterics as she displayed a little sore on her delicate white throat.

"That?" reassured Kennedy. "Oh, that may be nothing but a little boil. But this Dr. Loeb—he must be a quack. No doctor who advertises—"

"Perhaps," she interrupted. "That is what Dr. Goode out at Norwood tells me. But father has faith in him, even has him at the house sometimes. I cannot bear the sight of him. Since I first saw him my uncle, his wife, another aunt, my cousin have died, and then, last week, my—my mother."

Her voice broke, but with a great effort she managed to get herself together. "Now I—I fear that my father may go next. Perhaps it will strike me—or my brother, Lionel—who can tell? Think of it—the whole family wiped out by this terrible thing. Can it be natural, I ask myself? Is there not something back of it?"

"Who is this Dr. Loeb?" asked Kennedy, more for the purpose of aiding her in giving vent to her feelings than anything else.

"He is a New York doctor," she reiterated. "I believe he claims to have a sure cure for cancer, by the use of radium and such means. My father has absolute confidence in him—visits him at his office and, as I told you, even has him at Norwood. In fact they are quite friendly. So was Lionel until lately."

"What happened to shake your brother's faith?" asked Craig.

"Nothing, I imagine, except that Lionel began thinking it over after someone told him about cancer houses. You must admit yourself that it is—at least strange. I wish you could see Lionel. He knows more about it than I do. Or Dr. Goode. I think he has made some kind of test. He could tell you much better than I can all the strange history. But they don't agree—Lionel and Gail. Oh—it is more than I can stand. What shall I—"

She had fainted. In an instant I was at her side, helping Kennedy bring her around.

"There, there," soothed Kennedy several minutes later as her deep eyes looked at him appealingly. "Perhaps, after all, there may be something I can do. If I should go out to Norwood with you as soon as you feel better, wouldn't that be all right?"

"Oh—will you?" she cried, overjoyed. "If you would—how could I ever thank you? I feel better. No—don't stop me. I've been living on nerve. I can do more. Please—let me telephone Lionel that we are coming."

Kennedy humored her, although I knew he had several important investigations going on at the time. It was scarcely an hour before we were on the train and in the early forenoon we were met by her brother at the station in a light car.

Through the beautiful streets of the quaint old Connecticut town we rode until at last we stopped before a great stone house which had been the Moreton mansion for several generations.

It was a double house, a gloomy sort of place, surrounded by fir trees, damp and suggestive of decay. I could not help feeling that if ever there were a house about which I could associate the story which Myra had poured forth, this was it. Somehow, to me at least, it had all the mystery of being haunted.

Darius Moreton, her father, happened to be at home to lunch when we arrived. He was a man past middle age. Like his father and grandfather, he was a manufacturer of optical goods and had increased the business very well. But, like many successful business men, he was one of those who are very positive, with whom one cannot argue.

Myra introduced Kennedy as interested in cause and treatment of cancer, and especially in the tracing down of a definite case of a "cancer house."

"No," he shook his head grimly, "I'm afraid it is heredity. My friend, Dr. Loeb, is the only one who understands it. I have the most absolute confidence in him."

He said it in a way that seemed to discourage all argument. Kennedy did not antagonize him by disagreeing, but turned to Lionel, who was a rather interesting type of young man. Son of Darius Moreton by his first wife, Lionel had gone to the scientific school as had his father and, graduating, had taken up the business of the Moreton family as a matter of course.

Myra seemed overcome by the journey to the city to see Kennedy and, after a light luncheon, Lionel undertook to talk to us and show us through the house. It was depressing, almost ghastly, to think of the slow succession of tragedies which these walls had witnessed.

"This is a most unusual case," commented Craig thoughtfully as Lionel went over briefly the family history. "If it can be authenticated that this is a cancer house, I am sure the medical profession will be interested, for they seem to be divided into two camps on the question."

"Authenticated?" hastened Lionel. "Well, take the record. First there was my Uncle Frank, who was father's partner in the factory. He died just about five years ago at the age of fifty-one. That same year his wife, my Aunt Julia, died. She was just forty-eight. Then my other aunt, Fanny, father's sister, died of cancer of the throat. She was rather older, fifty-four. Not quite two years afterward my cousin, George, son of Uncle Frank, died. He was several years younger than I,

twenty-nine. Finally my step-mother died, last week. She was forty-nine. So, I suppose we may be pardoned if, somehow, in spite of the fact, as you say, that many believe that the disease is not contagious or infectious or whatever you call it, we believe that it lurks in the house. Myra and I would get out tomorrow, only father insists that there is nothing in it, says it is all heredity. I don't know but that that's worse. That means that there is no escape."

We had come down the wide staircase into the library, where we joined Myra, who was resting on a chaise-longue.

"I should like very much to have a talk with Dr. Goode," suggested Craig.

"By all means," agreed Myra eagerly. "I'll go over to his office with you. It is only next door."

"Then I'll wait here," said Lionel, rather curtly, I thought.

I fancied that there was a coolness that amounted to a latent hostility between Lionel and Dr. Goode, and I wondered about it.

Across the sparse lawn that struggled up under the deep shade of the trees stood a smaller, less pretentious house of a much more modern type. That was where Dr. Goode lived.

We crossed with Myra through a break in the hedge between the two houses. As we were about to pass between the two grounds, Kennedy's foot kicked something that seemed to have rolled down from some rubbish on the boundary line of the two properties, piled up evidently waiting to be carted away.

Craig stooped casually and picked the object up. It was a queer V-shaped little porcelain cone. He gave it a hasty look, then dropped it into his pocket.

Dr. Goode, into whose office Myra led us, was a youngish man, smooth-shaven, the type of the new generation of doctors. He had come to Norwood several years before and had struggled up to a very fair practice.

"Miss Moreton tells me," began Kennedy after we had been introduced, "that there is a theory that theirs is one of these so-called cancer houses."

The doctor looked at us keenly. "Yes," he nodded, "I have heard that theory expressed—and others, too. Of course, I haven't had a chance to verify it. But I may say that, privately, I am hardly prepared to accept it, yet, as a case of cancer house."

He was very guarded in his choice of words, but did not succeed in covering up the fact that he had a theory of his own.

I was watching both the young doctor and Myra. She had entered his office in a way that suggested that she was something more than a patient. As I watched them, it did not take one of very keen perception to discover that they were on very intimate terms indeed and thought very highly of each other. A glance at the solitaire on Myra's finger convinced me. They were engaged.

"You don't believe it, then?" asked Craig quickly.

The young man hesitated and shrugged his shoulders.

"You have a theory of your own?" persisted Craig, determined to get an answer.

"I don't know whether I have or not," he replied non-committally.

"Is it that you think it possible to produce cancer artificially and purposely?" shot out Craig.

Dr. Goode considered. I wondered whether he had any suspicions of which he would not speak because of professional ethics. Kennedy had fixed his eyes on him sharply and the doctor seemed uneasy under the scrutiny.

"I've heard of cases," he ventured finally, "where X-rays and radium have caused cancerous growths. You know several of the experimenters have lost their lives in that way—martyrs to science."

I could not help, somehow or other, thinking of Dr. Loeb. Did Dr. Goode refer indirectly to him? Loeb certainly was no martyr to science. He might be a charlatan. But was he a scientific villain?

"That may all be true," pursued Craig relentlessly, evidently bound to draw the young man out. "But it is, after all, a question of fact, not of opinion."

Myra was looking at him eagerly now and the doctor saw that she expected him to speak. It was more pressure than he could resist.

"I have long suspected something of the sort," he remarked in a low, forced tone. "I've had samples of the blood of the Moretons examined. In fact I have found that their blood affects the photographic plate through a layer of black paper. You know red blood cells and serum have a distinct power of reducing photo-silver on plates when exposed to certain radiations. In other words, I have found that their blood is, apparently, radioactive!"

Myra looked at him aghast. It was evidently the first time he had said anything about this new suspicion, even to her. The very idea was shocking. Could it be that someone was using these new forces with devilish ingenuity?

"If that's the case, who would be the most likely person to do such a thing?" shot out Craig.

"I wouldn't like to say," he returned, dodging, though we were all thinking of Dr. Loeb.

"But the motive?" demanded Craig. "What motive would there be?"

"Darius Moreton is very intimate with a certain person," he returned enigmatically. "It is even reported in town that he has left that person a large sum of money in his will in payment for his services, if you call them so, to the family."

He had evidently not intended to say so much and, although Craig tried in every way, he could not get the doctor to amplify what he had hinted at.

We returned to the Moreton house, Kennedy apparently much impressed by what Dr. Goode had said.

"If you will permit me," he asked, "I should like to have a few drops of blood from each of you."

"Goode tried that," remarked old Mr. Moreton. "I don't know that anything came of it. Still, I am not going to refuse, if Myra and Lionel agree."

Craig had already taken from his pocket a small case containing a hypodermic and some little glass tubes. There seemed to be no valid objection and from each of them he drew off a small quantity of blood. As he worked, I thought I saw what he had in mind. Could there be, I wondered, an X-ray outfit or perhaps radium concealed about the living rooms of the house? First of all, it was necessary to verify Dr. Goode's observations.

We chatted a few moments, then took leave of Myra Moreton.

"Keep up your courage," whispered Craig with a look that told her that he had seen the conflict between loyalty to her father and to her lover.

Lionel drove us back to the station in the car alone. Nothing of importance was said by any of us until we had almost reached the station.

"I can see," he said finally, "that you don't feel sure that it is a cancer house."

Kennedy said nothing.

"Well," he pursued, "I don't know anything about it, of course. But I do know this much—those doctors are making a good thing out of father and the rest of us."

The car had pulled up. "I've got no use for Loeb," the young man went on. "Still, I'd rather not that we had trouble with him. I'll tell you," he added in a burst of confidence, "he has a little girl who works for him, his secretary, Miss Golder. She comes from Norwood. I should hate to have anything happen to queer her. People used to think Goode was engaged to her before he took that office next to us and got ambitious. Father placed her with Dr. Loeb. If it's necessary to do anything with him, I wish you'd think whether she couldn't be kept out of it in some way."

"I'll try to do it," agreed Craig, as we shook hands and climbed on the early afternoon train back to the city.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE QUACK DOCTORS

Kennedy's first move was to go downtown to the old building opposite the City Hall and visit the post-office inspectors.

"I've heard of the government's campaign against the medical quacks who are using the mails," he introduced when we at last found the proper inspector. "I wonder whether you know a Dr. Adam Loeb?"

"Loeb?" repeated the inspector, O'Hanlon, who was in charge of the investigation which was then in progress. "Of course we know Loeb—a very slippery customer, too, with just enough science at his command to make the case against him difficult.

"I suppose," went on O'Hanlon, "you know that in Europe the popular furore about radium and its applications appeared earlier than it did here. But now we have great numbers of dishonest and fake radium cure establishments. Usually they have neither radium nor knowledge. They promise a cure, but they can't even palliate the trouble. Loeb has some radium, I guess, but that's about all."

"I think I'd like to visit the 'doctor' and his 'medical museum,'" ventured Kennedy when O'Hanlon had finished describing the case to us.

"Very well," agreed O'Hanlon. "Our cases against the quacks are just about completed. I've heard a great deal about you, Mr. Kennedy. I think I may trust you."

The inspector paused. "Tomorrow," he added, looking at us significantly, "we have planned a simultaneous raid of all of them in the city. However, there's no objection to your seeing Dr. Loeb, if you'll be careful to give no hint that something is about to be pulled off. I'm sure any new evidence we may get against him will be quite welcome."

"I'd like to see him in action before the raid," hastened Craig.

"Well, I think the best way, then, for you to get at him," advised the inspector, "would be to adopt the method my investigators use with these fakers. I mean for one or the other of you to pose as a prospective patient. Only don't let him treat you too much with any of those electrical things of his."

Craig glanced over at me whimsically.

"Oh," I said good-humoredly, "I'll be the goat, if that's what you're going to ask me."

Craig laughed.

"Come in tomorrow," called the inspector as we left. "I'd like to hear what happens and I may be able to add something to what you find out."

We found Dr. Loeb established in a palatial suite of offices in an ultra-modern office building. Outside was what he called his "medical museum." It was a grewsome collection of wax figures and colored charts well calculated to prepare one for the worst. At the end of the room was a huge sign bearing his name and the words, "Positive Cure for Cancer Without Caution or the Knife."

There were no cappers or steerers about the place, though I have no doubt he had them working for him outside to bring in business. Instead, we were met by a very pretty, fluffy-haired girl, evidently the doctor's secretary. She, I gathered, was the Miss Golder whom Lionel had mentioned. In fact, I felt that she was really much above the level of such a position.

Loeb's office was elaborately equipped. There were static machines, electric coils, high frequency appliances, X-ray outfits, galvanic and faradic cabinets, electric light reflectors of high power, light bath cabinets, electric vibrators, high pressure nebulizers and ozonizers—everything, as Craig expressed it later, to impress the patient that Loeb could cure any disease the flesh was heir to. I know that it impressed me.

The doctor himself was a pompous man of middle age, with a very formidable beard and a deep voice that forbade contradiction.

"I've come to you on the recommendation of a patient of yours," began Craig, adding hastily, "not for myself, but for my friend here, whom I'm afraid isn't very well."

The doctor eyed me through his gold-rimmed spectacles. Already I began to feel shaky.

"Who recommended you?" he asked casually.

"My friend, Mr. Darius Moreton of Norwood. I suppose you remember him?"

"Oh, very well, very well. A most peculiar case, that of the Moretons. I have succeeded in prolonging their lives beyond what anyone else could have done. But I fear that they haven't all followed my treatment. You know, you must put yourself entirely in my hands, and there is a young doctor out there, I believe, whom they have also. That isn't fair to me. I wonder whether you are acquainted with my methods of treatment?"

Kennedy shook his head negatively.

"Miss Golder," the doctor called, as the fluffy-haired secretary responded quickly, "will you give these gentlemen some of my booklets on the Loeb Method."

Miss Golder took from a cabinet several handsomely printed pamphlets extolling the skill and success of Dr. Loeb. Like everything else about him, no expense had been spared to impress the reader.

As Miss Golder left the office, Dr. Loeb began a rapid examination of me, using an X-ray machine. I am sure that if I had not received a surreptitious encouraging nod from Craig now and then, I should have been ready to croak or cash in, according to whichever Dr. Loeb suggested—probably the latter, for I could not help thinking that a great deal of time was spent in mentally X-raying my pocketbook.

When he finished, the doctor shook his head gravely. Of course I was threatened. But the thing was only incipient. Still, if it were not attended to immediately it was only a question of a short time when I might be as badly, as the wax figures and charts outside. I had fortunately come just in time to be saved.

"I think that with the electrical treatment we can get rid of that malignant growth in a month," he promised, fixing a price for the treatment which I thought was pretty high, considering the brief time he had actually spent on me, and the slight cost of electric light and power.

I paid him ten dollars on deposit, and after a final consultation we left the doctor's office. I was to return for a treatment in a couple of days.

We turned out of the entrance of the office building just as scores of employes were hurrying home. As we reached the door, I felt Kennedy grasp my arm. I swung around. There, in an angle of the corridor, I caught sight of a familiar figure. Dr. Goode was standing, evidently waiting for someone to come out. There were several elevators and the crowd of discharging passengers was thick. He had been so intent on looking for someone he expected, apparently, that he had missed us.

Kennedy drew me on into the doorway of the building next door, from which we could observe everyone who went in and out of the skyscraper in which Dr. Loeb had his offices.

"I wonder what he's down here for," scowled Kennedy.

"Perhaps he's doing some detective work of his own," I suggested.

"Lionel Moreton said that Miss Golder and he used to be intimate," ruminated Kennedy. "I wonder if he's waiting for her?"

We did not have long to wait. It was only a few minutes when Kennedy's surmise proved correct. Miss Golder and Dr. Goode came out, and turned in the direction of the railroad station for Norwood. He was eagerly questioning her about something, perhaps, I imagined, our visit to Dr. Loeb. What did it mean?

There was no use and it was too risky to follow them. Kennedy turned and we made our way uptown to the laboratory, where he plunged at once into an examination of the blood specimens he had taken from the Moretons and of the peculiar porcelain cone which he had picked up in the rubbish pile between the two houses.

Having emptied the specimens of blood in several little shallow glass receptacles which he covered with black paper and some very sensitive films, he turned his attention to the cone. I noted that he was very particular in his examination of it, apparently being very careful to separate whatever it was he was looking for on the inside and the outside surfaces.

"That," he explained to me at length as he worked, "is what is known as a Berkefeld filter, a little porous cup, made of porcelain. The minute meshes of this filter catch and hold bacteria as if in the meshes of a microscopic sieve, just like an ordinary water filter. It is so fine that it holds back even the tiny bacillus fluorescens liquefaciens which are used to test it. These bacilli measure only from a half to one and one-and-a-half micromillimeters in diameter. In other words 130,000 germs of half a micromillimeter would be necessary to make an inch."

"What has it been used for?" I ventured.

"I can't say, yet," he returned, and I did not pursue the inquiry, knowing Kennedy's aversion to being questioned when he was not yet sure of his facts.

It was the next day when the post-office inspectors, the police and others who had been cooperating had settled on the raid not only of Dr. Loeb's but of all the medical quacks who were fleecing the credulous of the city out of hundreds of thousands of dollars a year by one of the most cruel swindles that have ever been devised.

For the time, Kennedy dropped his investigations in the laboratory and we went down to O'Hanlon's office, where a thick batch of warrants, just signed, had been received.

Quickly O'Hanlon disposed his forces so that in all parts of the town they might swoop down at once and gather in the medical harpies. Dr. Loeb's stood first on the list of those which O'Hanlon decided to handle himself.

"By the way," mentioned O'Hanlon as we hurried uptown to be ready in time, "I had a letter from Darius Moreton this morning threatening me with all kinds of trouble unless we let up on Dr. Loeb. It's pretty hard to keep a big investigation like this secret, but I think we've planned a little surprise for this morning."

With the post-office inspector we climbed into a patrol wagon with a detail of police who were to make a general round-up of the places on Forty-second Street.

As the wagon backed up to the curb in front of the building in which Loeb's office was, the policemen hopped out and hurried into the building before a crowd could collect. Unceremoniously they rushed through the outer office, headed by O'Hanlon.

Quickly though the raid was executed, it could not be done without some warning commotion. As we entered the front door of the office, we could just catch a glimpse of a man retreating through a back door. There was something familiar about his back, and Kennedy and I started after him. But we were too late. He had fled without even waiting for his hat, which lay on Miss Golder's desk, and had disappeared down a back stairway which had been left unguarded.

"Confound it," muttered O'Hanlon, as we returned, "Loeb hasn't been here today. Who was that?"

"I don't know," replied Craig, picking up the hat, underneath which lay a package.

He opened the package. Inside were half a dozen Berkefeld filters, those peculiar porcelain cones such as we had found out at Norwood.

Quickly Craig ran his eye over the mass of papers on Miss Golder's desk. He picked up an

appointment book and turned the pages rapidly. There were several entries that seemed to interest him. I bent over. Among other names entered during the past few days I made out both "Moreton" and "Dr. Goode." I recalled the letter which O'Hanlon had received from Moreton. Had he or someone else got wind of the raids and tipped off Dr. Loeb?

Above the hubbub of the raid I could hear O'Hanlon putting poor little Miss Golder through a third degree.

"Who was it that went out?" he shouted into her face. "You might as well tell. If you don't it'll go hard with you."

But, like all women who have been taken into these get-rich-quick swindles, she was loyal to a fault. "I don't know," she sobbed, dabbing at her eyes with a bit of a lace handkerchief.

Nor could all of O'Hanlon's bulldozing get another admission out of her except that it was a "stranger." She protested and wept. But she even rode off in the patrol wagon with the rest of the employés unmoved.

Whom was she shielding? All we had was the secretary, a couple of cappers, and half a dozen patients, regular and prospective, who had been waiting in the office. We had a wagon-load of evidence, including letters and circulars, apparatus of all kinds, medicines, and pills. But there was nothing more. Craig did not seem especially interested in the mass of stuff which the police had seized.

In fact the only thing that seemed to interest him was the man who had disappeared. We had his hat and the package of filters. Craig picked up the hat and examined it.

"It's a soft hat and consequently doesn't tell us very much about the shape of his head," he remarked. Then his face brightened. "But he couldn't have left anything much better," he remarked complacently, as he went over to one of the little wall cabinets which the towel service companies place over wash-basins in offices. He took from it a comb and brush and wrapped them up carefully.

I looked at the hat also. There was no name in it, not even the usual initials. What did Craig mean?

Other raids in various parts of the city proved far more successful than the one in which we had participated and O'Hanlon quickly forgot his chagrin in the reports that soon came piling in. As for ourselves we had no further interest except in the disposition of this case, and Craig decided shortly to go back to work again in the laboratory among his test-tubes, slides, and microscopes.

"I will leave you to follow the cases against the quacks, particularly Dr. Loeb and Miss Golder, Walter," he said. "By the way, you saw me take that hair brush. I wish I had a collection of them. In some way you must get me a hair brush from Dr. Goode. You'll have to take a trip out to Norwood. And while you are there, get the brushes from Darius Moreton and Lionel. I don't know how you'll get Goode's, but Myra will help you with the others, I'm sure."

He turned to his work and was soon absorbed in some microscopic studies, leaving me no chance to question him about his strange commission.

CHAPTER XXX

THE FILTERABLE VIRUS

I was surprised to run into O'Hanlon himself in the train out to Norwood. The failure to get Dr. Loeb troubled him and he had reasoned that if Darius Moreton took the trouble to write a letter about his friend he might possibly know more of his whereabouts than he professed. We discussed the case nearly the whole journey, agreeing to separate just before we reached the station in order not to be seen together.

It took me longer to carry out Kennedy's request than I had expected. I found Myra at home alone, very much excited.

"Someone called me up from New York this morning," she said, "and asked whether father and Lionel were at home. I thought they were at the factory, but when I called there, the foreman told me they hadn't been there. And Dr. Goode is out, too—hasn't seen any of his patients today. Oh, Mr. Jameson, what does it all mean? Where have they gone?"

I was a poor one to comfort her, for I had no idea myself. Still, I did my best, and incidentally secured the brushes, though I must confess I had to commit a little second-story work to get into Dr. Goode's.

It seemed heartless to leave the poor girl all alone, but I knew that Kennedy was waiting anxiously for me. I promised to make inquiries all over about her father, Lionel, and Dr. Goode, and, I think, the mere fact that someone showed an interest in her cheered her up, especially when I told her Kennedy was working hard on the case.

As I waited for the train that was to take me back to the city, the train from New York pulled in. Imagine my surprise when I saw Miss Golder step off nervously and hurry up the main street.

I watched her, debating what to do, whether to let Kennedy wait and follow her, or not.

"Someone, they don't know who, bailed her out," I heard a voice whisper in my ear.

I turned quickly. It was O'Hanlon. "She put up cash bail," he added under his breath. "No one knows where she got it. I'm waiting until she turns that corner—then I'm going to shadow her. I can't seem to find anyone in this town just now. Perhaps she knows where Loeb is."

"If you get on the trail, will you wire me?" I asked. "Here's my train now."

O'Hanlon promised, and as I swung on the step I caught a last glimpse of him sauntering casually in the direction Miss Golder had taken.

I handed Kennedy the brushes I had obtained, but he gave me no opportunity to satisfy my curiosity. Instead, he started me out again to keep in touch with the progress made in the cases of the quacks, particularly the search for Dr. Loeb, which seemed to interest him quite as much as the bailing out of Miss Golder.

It was after dinner and I was preparing to follow the cases on into the night court, if necessary, when one of O'Hanlon's assistants hurried up to me.

"We've just had a wire from Mr. O'Hanlon," he cried excitedly, handing me a telegram.

I read:

"Loeb captured Norwood. Darius Moreton hiding him in vacant house outside town. Advise Kennedy."

I dashed for the nearest telephone and called up Craig.

"Fine, Walter," he shouted back. "I am ready. Meet me at the station and wire O'Hanlon to wait there for us."

We made the journey to Norwood as impatiently as any two passengers on the accommodation at that hour of night, Craig carrying his evidence in the case in a little leather hand satchel.

Already, out at the old house, O'Hanlon had gathered the Moreton family, Dr. Goode, who had turned up with the rest, Dr. Loeb, and Miss Golder. Myra Moreton was even more agitated than she had been when I left her during the afternoon. In fact the secrecy maintained by both her family and Dr. Goode, to say nothing of the presence of Dr. Loeb in the house under arrest, had all but broken her down. She greeted Kennedy almost as though he had been a life-long friend.

"I want you to look after Miss Moreton, Walter," he said in a low tone as we three stood in the hall. "And you, Miss Moreton, I want to trust me when I tell you I am going to bring you safely out of this thing. Be a brave girl," he encouraged, taking her hand. "Remember that Mr. Jameson and I are here solely in your interest."

"I know it," she murmured, her lip trembling. "I will try."

A moment later we entered the Moreton library. Dr. Loeb was glaring impartially at everybody. I am sure that if he had been able to get at any of his formidable electrical apparatus he would have made short work of us "without cautery or knife." Darius Moreton was indignant, Lionel supercilious, Dr. Goode silent.

Kennedy lost no time in getting down to the business that had brought him out to Norwood, for this was not exactly a sociable gathering.

"Of course," he began, laying his leather case on the table and unlocking, but not opening it, "references to cancer houses abound in medical literature, but I think I am safe in saying that nothing has been conclusively proved in favor either of the believers or the skeptics. At least, it may be said to be an open question, with the weight of opinion against it. Such physicians as Sir Thomas Oliver have said that the evidence in favor is too strong to be ignored. Others, equally brilliant, have shown why it should be ignored.

"In the absence of better proof—or rather in the presence of other facts—perhaps, in this case, it would be better to see whether there is not some other theory that may fit the facts better."

"Dr. Goode thought that the cancers might have been caused artificially by X-rays or radium," I ventured.

Craig shook his head. "I have taken a piece of filter paper saturated with a solution of potassium iodide, starch paste, and ferrosulphate and laid it over a sample of blood, not four millimeters away. The whole I have kept in the dark.

"Now, we know that blood gives off peroxide of hydrogen. Peroxide of hydrogen is capable of attacking photographic plates. The paper can be permeated by a gas. No, that was not a case of photo-activity observed by Dr. Goode. It was the emission of gas from the blood that affected the plates."

"But suppose that is the case," objected Dr. Goode hastily. "There are the deaths from cancer.

How do you explain them? It is not a cancer house, you say. Is it mere chance?"

"Anyone may be pardoned for believing that cancer houses or even cancer districts exist," reiterated Craig. "Indeed some observations seem to show it, as I have said, though the opponents of the theory claim to have found other causes. Here, as you hint, five people, living in close association, have died in five years."

He paused and drew from the satchel the little porcelain cone which he had picked up between the Moreton and Goode houses.

"I have here," he resumed, "what is known as a Berkefeld filter. Its meshes let through none of the germs that we can see with a microscope. It is bacteria-proof. Only something smaller than these things can pass through it, something that we cannot see, a clear watery fluid. That something in this case is a filterable virus."

Kennedy paused again, then went on, "Although the filterable viruses have only recently come to attention, it is known that they are of very diverse character. Here we have opened up the world of the infinitely little—the universe that lies beyond the range of the microscope. The study of these tiny particles is now one of the greatest objects in scientific medicine.

"Are they living? It seems so, for a very little of the virus gives rise to growths from which many others start. It may, of course, be chemical, but it looks as if it were organic, since it resists cold, although not heat, and can be destroyed by phenol, toluol, and other antiseptics. Perhaps the virus may be visible, but not by any means yet known. Still, we do know that these things which no eye can see may cause some of the commonest diseases."

Kennedy paused. As usual he had his little audience following him breathlessly. Even Dr. Loeb forgot to glower.

"In recent experiments with cancer in chickens," continued Craig, "tumor material ground fine and treated in various ways has been filtered through these filters. Cancers have been caused by this agent which has passed through the filter.

"On the inside of the filter which I picked up back of this very house, near the boundary of Dr. Goode's, I have found the giant cells of cancer. On the outside was something which I have been able to develop into a virus, these micro-organisms that belong to the ultra-invisible. I do not pretend to know just how this bacteriological dwarf has been used. But I know enough to say that someone has, without doubt, been using some sort of filterable virus to induce cancers, just as the experimenters at the Rockefeller Institute have done with animals.

"Naturally, in the Moreton family, this person found a fertile soil. Perhaps he waited until he saw what looked like a favorable wound, or traumatism. It is well-known that cancer often can be traced to a wound. Perhaps he introduced this virus surreptitiously into a cut, now and then. For, experiments show that the virus is strikingly dependent for its action on the derangement of the tissues with which it is brought in contact.

"This person must have had a high percentage of failures in his attempts to inoculate the virus successfully. But by persistence and taking advantage of every predisposition afforded by nature, he succeeded. At any rate, this person must have been intimately acquainted with the family, must have had some motive for seeking their deaths,—for instance the family fortune.

"It makes no difference whether the victims might have had cancer sooner or later, anyway. Even if that were so, this cold-blooded villain was at least hastening the development, if not actually causing the frightful and fatal disease."

Myra Moreton shuddered, and looked at Dr. Goode anxiously as Kennedy proceeded. He seemed about to interrupt, but managed to check himself. Craig reached over and picked out from the satchel the hat which we had found on a desk at the office of the cancer quack.

"In the raid of Dr. Loeb's," he explained, changing tone, "a man disappeared. I have here a soft hat which he left behind in his hurry to escape, as well as some of the filters he was carrying."

He turned the hat inside out. "You will see," Craig pointed out, "that on the felt of the inside there are numerous hairs, from the head of the wearer."

I leaned forward, breathlessly. I began to see the part I had played in building up his case.

"Human hair," he remarked, "differs greatly. Under the microscope one may study the oval-shaped medulla, the long pointed cortex, and the flat cuticle cells of an individual hair. The pigment in the cortex can be studied also.

"I have taken some of the hairs from the inside of this hat, examined, photographed, and measured them. I have compared them with a color scale perfected by the late Alphonse Bertillon. In fact, in France quite a science has been built up about hair by the so-called 'pilologists.' The German scientific criminalists have written minute treaties on the hair and astounding results have been obtained by them in detection.

"I have been able to secure samples of the hair of everyone in this case and I have studied them also. These hairs in the hat which was left over the package of filters have furnished me with a slender but no less damning clew to a veritable monster."

One could have heard a pin drop, as if Kennedy were a judge pronouncing a death sentence.

"Dr. Loeb is guilty of being one of the most heartless of quacks, it is true," Kennedy's voice rang out tensely, as he faced us. "But the slow murders, one by one, bringing the family estate nearer and nearer—they were done by one who hoped to throw the blame on Dr. Loeb, by the man whose hair I have here—Lionel Moreton."

CHAPTER XXXI

THE VOODOO MYSTERY

"Everybody's crazy, Kennedy. The whole world is going mad!"

Our old friend, Burke, of the Secret Service, scowled at the innocent objects in Craig's laboratory as he mopped his broad forehead.

"And the Secret Service is as bad as the rest," he went on, still scowling and not waiting for any comment from us. "Why, what with these European spies and agitators, strikers and dynamiters, we're nearly dippy. Here, in less than a week I've been shifted off war cases to Mexico and now to Hayti. I don't mean that I've been away, of course,—oh, no. You don't have to go to them. They come to us. Confound it, New York is full of plots and counterplots. I tell you, Kennedy, the whole world is crazy."

Craig listened with sympathy mixed with amusement. "Can I help you out?" he asked.

"If you don't I'll be dippy, too," returned Burke with a whimsical grimace.

"What's the trouble with Hayti, then?" encouraged Kennedy seriously.

"Trouble enough," answered Burke. "Why, here's that Caribbean liner, *Haytien*, just in from Port au Prince. She's full of refugees—government supporters and revolutionists—you never saw such a menagerie since the ark."

I watched Burke keenly as he cut loose with his often picturesque language. Somehow, it seemed rather fascinating to have the opera bouffe side of the Black Republic presented to us. At least it was different from anything we had had lately—and perhaps not at all opera bouffe, either. Kennedy, at least, did not seem to think so, for although he was very busy at the time, seemed prepared to lay aside his work to aid Burke.

"You haven't heard about it yet," continued the Secret Service man, "but on the *Haytien* was a man—black of course—Guillaume Leon. He was a friend of the United States—at least so he called himself, I believe—wanted a new revolution down there, more American marines landed to bolster up a new government that would clean things up, a new deal all around."

Burke paused, then added by way of explanation of his own attitude in the matter, "That may be all right, perhaps,—may be just what they need down there, but we can't let people come here and plot revolutions like that right in New York. They're sore enough at us without our letting them think in Latin America that we're taking a hand in their troubles."

"Quite right," agreed Kennedy. "About Leon."

"Yes, Leon," resumed Burke, getting back to the subject. "Well, I was told by the Chief of the Service to look out for this fellow. And I did. I thought it would make a good beginning to go down the bay on a revenue tug to meet the *Haytien* at Quarantine. But, by Jingo, no sooner was I over the side of the ship than what do you suppose I ran up against?"

He did not pause long enough to give us a guess, but shot out dramatically, "Leon was dead—yes, dead!"

Kennedy and I had been interested up to this point. Now we were eager to have him go on. "He died on the voyage up," continued Burke, "just after passing the Gulf Stream, suddenly and from no apparent cause. At least the ship's surgeon couldn't find any cause and neither could they down at Quarantine. So after some time they let the ship proceed up the bay and placed the whole thing in the hands of the Secret Service."

"Is there anyone you suspect?" I asked.

"Suspect?" repeated Burke. "I suspect them all. The *Haytien* was full of niggers—as superstitious as they make 'em. The ship's surgeon tells me that after the body of Leon was discovered there was such a scene as he had never witnessed. It was more like bedlam than a group of human beings. Some were for putting the body over into the sea immediately. Others threatened murder if it was done. Most of them didn't know what it was they wanted. Then, there was a woman there. She seemed to be nearly crazy—"

There came a knock at the laboratory door.

"If you'll just go into the next room with Walter," said Craig to Burke, "I'll see you in a few minutes. Sit down, make yourself at home."

I went in with him and Burke dropped into a chair beside my typewriter. The laboratory door

opened. From where we were sitting we could see in a mirror on the opposite wall that it was a girl, dark of skin, perhaps a mulatto, but extremely beautiful, with great brown eyes and just a trace of kinkiness in her black hair. But it was the worried, almost haunted, look on her face that attracted one's attention most.

I happened to glance at Burke to see whether he had noticed it. I thought his eyes would pop out of his head.

Just then Kennedy walked across the laboratory and closed our door.

"What's the matter?" I whispered.

But before Burke could reply, a draught opened the door just a bit. He placed his finger on his lips. We could not close the door, and we sat there in our corner unintentional but no less interested eavesdroppers.

"Mademoiselle Collette Aux Cayes is my name," she began, with a strangely French accent which we could just understand. "I've heard of you, Professor Kennedy, as a great detective."

"I should be glad to do what I can for you," he returned. "But you mustn't expect too much. You seem to be in some great trouble."

"Trouble—yes," she replied excitedly. "My name isn't really Aux Cayes. That is the name of my guardian, a friend of my father's. Both my father and mother are dead—killed by a mob during an uprising several years ago. I was in Paris at the time, being educated in a convent, or I suppose I should have been killed, too."

She seemed to take it as a matter of course, from which I concluded that she had been sent to Paris when she was very young and did not remember her parents very well.

"At last the time came for me to go back to Hayti," she resumed. "There is nothing that would interest you about that—except that after I got back, in Port au Prince, I met a young lawyer—Guillaume Leon."

She hesitated and looked at Craig as though trying to read whether he had ever heard the name before, but Kennedy betrayed nothing. There was more than that in her tone, though. It was evident that Leon had been more than a friend to her.

"Hayti has been so upset during the past months," she went on, "that my guardian decided to go to New York, and of course I was taken along with him. It happened that on the ship—the *Haytien*—Monsieur Leon went also. It was very nice until—"

She came to a full stop. Kennedy encouraged her gently, knowing what she was going to tell.

"One night, after we had been out some time," she resumed unexpectedly, "I could not sleep and I went out on the deck to walk and watch the moonlight. As I walked softly up and down, I heard voices, two men, in the shadow of one of the cabins. They were talking and now and then I could catch a word. It was about Guillaume. I heard them say that he was plotting another revolution, that that was the reason he was going to New York—not because he wanted to be on the boat with me. There was something about money, too, although I couldn't get it very clearly. It had to do with an American banking house, Forsythe & Co., I think,—money that was to be paid to Guillaume to start an uprising. I think they must have heard me, for I couldn't hear any more and they moved off down the deck, so that I couldn't recognize them. You see, I am not a revolutionist. My guardian belongs to the old order."

She stopped again, as though in doubt just how to go on. "Anyhow," she continued finally, "I determined to tell Guillaume. It would have made it harder for us—but it was he, not his politics, I loved." She was almost crying as she blurted out, "But it was only the next day that he was found dead in his stateroom. I never saw him alive after I overheard that talk."

It was some moments before she had calmed herself so that she could go on. "You know our people, Professor Kennedy," she resumed, choking back her sobs. "Some said his dead body was like Jonah, and ought to be thrown off to the sea. Then others didn't even want to have it touched, said that it ought to be embalmed. And others didn't want that, either."

"What do you mean? Who were they?"

"Oh, there was one man,—Castine," she replied, hesitating over the name, as though afraid even to mention it.

"He wanted it thrown overboard?" prompted Craig.

"N—no, he didn't want that, either," she replied. "He urged them not to touch it—just to leave it alone."

She was very much frightened, evidently at her own temerity in coming to Craig and saying so much. Yet something seemed to impel her to go on.

"Oh, Professor Kennedy," she exclaimed in a sudden burst of renewed feeling, "don't you understand? I—I loved him—even after I found out about the money and what he intended to do with it. I could not see his dear body thrown in the ocean."

She shivered all over at the thought, and it was some time before she said anything more. But

Kennedy let her do as she pleased, as he often did when deep emotion was wringing the secrets from people's hearts.

"He is dead!" she sobbed wildly. "Was he poisoned? Oh, can't you find out? Can't you help me?"

Suddenly her voice in wild appeal sank almost to a hoarse whisper. "You must not let anybody know that I came to you," she implored.

"Why not?"

"Oh—I—I am just afraid—that's all."

There was real fear in her tone and face now, fear for herself.

"Where is the body?" asked Kennedy, to get her mind off whatever hung like an incubus over it.

"Down on the *Haytien*, at the pier, over in Brooklyn, still," she replied. "They kept us all interned there. But my guardian had enough influence to get off for a time and while he is arranging for quarters for our stay after we are released, I slipped away to see you."

"You must go back to the boat?"

"Oh, yes. We agreed to go back."

"Then I shall be down immediately," Craig promised. "If you will go ahead, I will see you there. Perhaps, at first you had better not recognize me. I will contrive some way to meet you. Then they will not know."

"Thank you," she murmured, as she rose to go, now in doubt whether she had done the best thing to come to Craig, now glad that she had some outside assistance in which she could trust.

He accompanied her to the door, bidding her keep up her courage, then closed it, waiting until her footsteps down the hall had died away.

Then he opened our door and caught sight of Burke's face.

"That's strange, Burke," he began, before he realized what the expression on his face meant. "There's a woman—what? You don't mean to tell me that you knew her?"

"Why, yes," hastened Burke. "There was a rich old planter, Henri Aux Cayes, aboard, too. She's his ward, Mademoiselle Collette."

"That's right," nodded Craig in surprise.

"She's the woman I was telling you about. She may be a little dark, but she's a beauty, all right. I heard what she said. No wonder she was so frantic, then."

"What do you know of the bankers, Forsythe & Co.?" asked Craig.

"Forsythe & Co.?" considered Burke. "Well, not much, perhaps. But for a long time, I believe, they've been the bankers and promoters of defunct Caribbean islands, reaping a rich harvest out of the troubles of those decrepit governments, playing one against the other."

"H-m," mused Kennedy. "Can you go over to Brooklyn with me now?"

"Of course," agreed Burke, brightening up. "That was what I hoped you'd do."

Kennedy and I were just about to leave the laboratory with Burke when an idea seemed to occur to Craig. He excused himself and went back to a cabinet where I saw him place a little vial and a hypodermic needle in his vest pocket.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE FLUORISCINE TEST

Our trip over to the other borough was uneventful except for the toilsome time we had to get to the docks where South and Central American ships were moored. We boarded the *Haytien* at last and Burke led us along the deck toward a cabin. I looked about curiously. There seemed to be the greatest air of suppressed excitement. Everyone was talking, in French, too, which seemed strange to me in people of their color. Yet everything seemed to be in whispers as if they were in fear.

We entered the cabin after our guide. There in the dim light lay the body of Leon in a bunk. There were several people in the room, already, among them the beautiful Mademoiselle Collette. She pretended not to recognize Kennedy until we were introduced, but I fancied I saw her start at finding him in company with Burke. Yet she did not exhibit anything more than surprise, which was quite natural.

Burke turned the sheet down from the face of the figure in the bunk. Leon had been a fine-looking specimen of his race, with good features, strong, and well groomed. Kennedy bent over

and examined the body carefully.

"A very strange case," remarked the ship's surgeon, whom Burke beckoned over a moment later.

"Quite," agreed Craig absently, as he drew the vial and the hypodermic from his pocket, dipped the needle in and shot a dose of the stuff into the side of the body.

"I can't find out that there is any definite cause of death," resumed the surgeon.

Before Craig could reply someone else entered the darkened cabin. We turned and saw Collette run over to him and take his hand.

"My guardian, Monsieur Aux Cayes," she introduced, then turned to him with a voluble explanation of something in French.

Aux Cayes was a rather distinguished looking Haytian, darker than Collette, but evidently of the better class and one who commanded respect among the natives.

"It is quite extraordinary," he said with a marked accent, taking up the surgeon's remark. "As for these people—" he threw out his hands in a deprecating gesture—"one cannot blame them for being perplexed when your doctors disagree."

Kennedy had covered up Leon's face again and Collette was crying softly.

"Don't, my dear child," soothed Aux Cayes, patting her shoulder gently. "Please, try to calm thyself."

It was evident that he adored his beautiful ward and would have done anything to relieve her grief. Kennedy evidently thought it best to leave the two together, as Aux Cayes continued to talk to her in diminutives and familiar phrases from the French.

"Were there any other people on the boat who might be worth watching?" he asked as we rejoined Burke, who was looking about at the gaping crowd.

Burke indicated a group. "Well, there was an old man, Castine, and the woman he calls his wife," he replied. "They were the ones who really kept the rest from throwing the body overboard."

"Oh, yes," assented Kennedy. "She told me about them. Are they here now?"

Burke moved over to the group and beckoned someone aside toward us. Castine was an old man with gray hair, and a beard which gave him quite an appearance of wisdom, besides being a matter of distinction among those who were beardless. With him was Madame Castine, much younger and not unattractive for a negress.

"You knew Monsieur Leon well?" asked Kennedy.

"We knew him in Port au Prince, like everybody," replied Castine, without committing himself to undue familiarity.

"Do you know of any enemies of his on the boat?" cut in Burke. "You were present when they were demanding that his body be thrown over, were you not? Who was foremost in that?"

Castine shrugged his shoulders in a deprecatory manner. "I do not speak English very well," he replied. "It was only those who fear the dead."

There was evidently nothing to be gained by trying on him any of Burke's third degree methods. He had always that refuge that he did not understand very well.

I turned and saw that Collette and Aux Cayes had come out of the cabin to the deck together, he holding her arm while she dabbed the tears away from her wonderful eyes.

At the sight of us talking to Castine and the other woman, she seemed to catch her breath. She did not speak to us, but I saw the two women exchange a glance of appraisal, and I determined that "Madame" Castine was at least worth observing.

By the attitude of the group from which we had drawn them, Castine, it seemed, exercised some kind of influence over all, rich and poor, revolutionist and government supporter.

The appearance of Collette occasioned a buzz of conversation and glances, and it was only a moment before she retreated into the cabin again. Apparently she did not wish to lose anything, as long as Kennedy and Burke were about.

Kennedy did not seem to be so much interested in quizzing Castine just yet, now that he had seen him, as he was in passing the time profitably for a few minutes. He looked at his watch, snapped it back into his pocket, and walked deliberately into the cabin again.

There he drew back the cover over Leon's face, bent over it, raised the lids of the eyes, and gazed into them.

Collette, who had been standing near him, watching every motion, drew back with an exclamation of horror and surprise.

"The voodoo sign is on him!" she cried. "It must be that!"

Almost in panic she fled, dragging her guardian with her.

I, too, looked. The man's eyes were actually green, now. What did it mean?

"Burke," remarked Kennedy decisively, "I shall take the responsibility of having the body transferred to my laboratory where I can observe it. I'll leave you to attend to the formalities with the coroner. Then I want you to get in touch with Forsythe & Co. Watch them without letting them know you are doing so—and watch their visitors, particularly."

A private ambulance was called and, with much wagging of heads and tongues, the body of Leon was carried on a stretcher, covered by a sheet, down the gangplank and placed in it. We followed closely in a taxicab, across the bridge and uptown.

For some days, I may say, Kennedy had been at work in his laboratory in a little anteroom, where he was installing some new apparatus for which he had received an appropriation from the trustees of the University.

It was a very complicated affair, one part of which seemed to be a veritable room within the room. Into this chamber, as it were, he now directed the men to carry Leon's body and lay it on a sort of bed or pallet that was let down from the side wall of the compartment.

I had been quite mystified by the apparatus which Kennedy had set up, but had had no opportunity to discuss it with him and he had been so busy installing it that he had not taken time, often, for meals. In fact, the only way I knew that he had finished was that when Burke had called he had seemed interested in the call.

Outside the small chamber I have spoken of, in the room itself, were several large pieces of machinery, huge cylinders with wheels and belts, run by electric motors. No sooner had the body been placed in the little chamber and the door carefully closed than Kennedy threw a switch, setting the apparatus in motion.

"How could Leon have been killed?" I asked, as he rejoined me in the outside laboratory. "What did Collette mean by her frightened cry of the 'voodoo sign'?"

The incident had made a marked impression on me and I had been unable quite to arrive at any sensible explanation.

"Of course, you know that voodoo means literally anything that inspires fear," remarked Kennedy after a moment's thought. "The god of voodoo is the snake. I cannot say now what it was that she feared. But to see the eyeballs turn green is uncanny, isn't it?"

"I should say so," I agreed. "But is that all?"

He shook his head. "No, I don't believe it is. Hayti is the hotbed of voodoo worship. The cult has inaugurated a sort of priesthood—often a priest and a priestess, called 'papaloi' and 'mammaloi'—papa and mamma, probably with a corruption of the French word, 'roi,' king. They are, as it were, heads of the community, father and mother, king and queen. Some of the leading men of the communities in the islands of the Caribbean are secret voodooists and leaders. Just what is going on under the surface in this case, I cannot even hazard a guess. But there is some devilry afoot."

Just then the telephone rang and Craig answered it.

"It was from Burke," he said as he hung up the receiver. "Confidential agents of his have been about. No one from the ship seems to have been down to see Forsythe, but Forsythe has had people over at the ship. Burke says someone is sending off great bunches of messages to Hayti—he thinks the powerful wireless apparatus of the *Haytien* is being used."

For a moment Kennedy stood in the center of the laboratory, thinking. Then he appeared to make up his mind to something.

"Has that taxicab gone?" he asked, opening a cabinet from which he took several packages.

I looked out of the window. The ambulance had gone back, but the driver of the car had evidently waited to call up his office for instructions. I beckoned to him, and together Kennedy and I placed the packages in the car.

Thus we were able quickly to get back again to the wharf where the *Haytien* was berthed. Instead of going aboard again, however, Kennedy stopped just outside, where he was not observed and got out of the car, dismissing it.

In the office of the steamship company, he sought one of the employés and handed him a card, explaining that we were aiding Burke in the case. The result of the parley was that Kennedy succeeded in getting to the roof of the covered pier on the opposite side from that where the ship lay.

There he set to work on a strange apparatus, wires from which ran up to a flag pole on which he was constructing what looked like a hastily improvised wireless aerial. That part arranged, Kennedy followed his wires down again and took them in by a window to a sort of lumber-room back of the office. Outside everyone was too busy to watch what we were doing there and Craig could work uninterrupted.

"What are you doing?" I asked. "Installing a wireless plant?"

"Not quite," he smiled quietly. "This is a home-made wireless photo-recording set. Of course,

wireless aerials of amateurs don't hum any more since war has caused the strict censorship of all wireless. But there is no reason why one can't receive messages, even if they can't be sent by everybody.

"This is a fairly easy and inexpensive means by which automatic records can be taken. It involves no delicate instruments and the principal part of it can be made in a few hours from materials that I have in my laboratory. The basis is the capillary electrometer."

"Sounds very simple," I volunteered, trying not to be sarcastic.

"Well, here it is," he indicated, touching what looked like an ordinary soft glass tube of perhaps a quarter of an inch diameter, bent U-shaped, with one limb shorter than the other.

"It is filled nearly to the top of the shorter limb with chemically pure mercury," he went on. "On the top of it, I have poured a little twenty per cent sulphuric acid. Dipping into the acid is a small piece of capillary tube drawn out to a very fine point at the lower end."

He filled the little tube with mercury also. "The point of this," he observed, "is fine enough to prevent the mercury running through of its own weight—about as fine as a hair."

He dipped the point and held it in the sulphuric acid and blew through the capillary tube. When the mercury bubbled through the point in minute drops, he stopped blowing. It drew back for a short distance by capillary attraction and the acid followed it up.

"You can see that connections are made to the mercury in the arm and the tube by short pieces of platinum wire," he continued. "It isn't necessary to go into the theory of the instrument. But the most minute difference of potential between the two masses of mercury will cause the fine point at the junction of the liquids to move up and down.

"Connected to the aerial and the earth, with a crystal detector in series, it is only a matter of applying an ordinary photo-recording drum, and the machine is made."

He had been setting up a light-tight box, inside of which was a little electric lamp. Opposite was a drum covered with bromide paper. He started the clockwork going and after a few moments' careful observation, we went away, and left the thing, trusting that no one was the wiser.

Nothing further occurred that day, except for frequent reports from Burke, who told us how his men were getting on in their shadowing of Forsythe & Co. Apparently, the death of Leon had put a stop to revolutionary plots, or at least had caused the plotters to change their methods radically.

The time was shortening, too, during which Burke could keep the passengers of the *Haytien* under such close surveillance, and it was finally decided that on the next morning they should be released, while all those suspected were to be shadowed separately by Secret Service agents, in the hope that once free they would commit some overt act that might lead to a clew.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE RESPIRATION CALORIMETER

It was early the next morning, about half an hour after the time set for the release of the passengers, that our laboratory door was flung open and Collette Aux Cayes rushed in, wildly excited.

"What's the matter?" asked Kennedy anxiously.

"Someone has been trying to keep me on the boat," she panted. "And all the way over here a man has been following me."

Kennedy looked at her a minute calmly. We could understand why she might have been shadowed, though it must have been a bungling job of Burke's operative. But who could have wanted her kept on the boat?

"I don't know," she replied, in answer to Kennedy's question. "But somehow I was the only one not told that we could go. And when I did go, one of the Secret Service men stopped me."

"Are you sure it was a Secret Service man?"

"He said he was."

"Yes, but if he had been, he would not have done that, nor let you get away, if he had. Can't you imagine anyone who might want you detained longer?"

She looked at us, half frightened. "N—not unless it is that man—or the woman with him," she replied, clasping her hands.

"You mean Castine?"

"Yes," she replied, avoiding the use of his name. "Ever since you had the body removed, he has

been in great fear. I have heard him ask fifty times, 'Where have they taken him?' and 'Is he to be embalmed?'"

"That's strange," remarked Kennedy. "Why that anxiety from him? I remember that it was he who wanted the body left alone. Is it for fear that we might discover something which might be covered up?"

Kennedy disappeared into the anteroom and I heard him making a great fuss as he regulated the various pieces of machinery that surrounded the little chamber.

Some minutes later, he emerged.

"Meet us here in an hour," he directed Collette, "with your guardian."

Quickly Craig telephoned for a tank of oxygen to be sent over to the laboratory, then got Burke on the wire and asked him to meet us down at the dock.

We arrived first and Craig hurried into the lumber-room, where fortunately he found everything undisturbed. He tore off the strip of paper from the drum and held it up. On it was a series of marks, which looked like dots and dashes, of a peculiar kind, along a sort of base line. Carefully he ran his eye over the strip. Then he shoved it into his pocket in great excitement.

"Hello," greeted Burke, as he came up puffing from the hurried trip over from the Customs House, where his office was. "What's doing now?"

"A great deal, I think," returned Kennedy. "Can you locate Castine and that woman and come up to the laboratory—right away?"

"I can put my finger on them in five minutes and be there in half an hour," he returned, not pausing to inquire further, for, like me, Burke had learned that Kennedy could not be hurried in any of his revelations.

Together, Craig and I returned to the laboratory to find that Collette Aux Cayes was already there with her guardian, as solicitous as ever for her comfort and breathing fire and slaughter against the miscreants who had tried to detain her, without his knowledge.

Some minutes later Castine and "Madame" Castine arrived. At sight of Collette she seemed both defiant and restless, as though sensing trouble, I thought. Few words were spoken now by anyone, as Burke and I completed the party.

"Will you be so kind as to step into the little anteroom with me?" invited Craig, holding open the door for us.

We entered and he followed; then, as he led the way, stopped before a little glass window in the compartment which I have described. Collette was next to me. I could feel the tenseness of her senses as she gazed through the window at the body on the shelf-like pallet inside.

"What is this thing?" asked Aux Cayes, as Collette drew back, and he caught her by the arm.

For the moment Kennedy said nothing, but opened a carefully sealed door and slid the pallet out, unhinging it, while I saw Castine trembling and actually turning ashen about the lips.

"This," Kennedy replied at length, "is what is known as a respiration calorimeter, which I have had constructed after the ideas of Professors Atwater and Benedict of Wesleyan, with some improvements of my own. It is used, as you may know, in studying food values, both by the government and by other investigators. A man could live in that room for ten or twelve days. My idea, however, was to make use of it for other things than that for which it was intended."

He took a few steps over to the complicated apparatus which had so mystified me, now at rest, as he turned a switch on opening the carefully sealed door.

"It is what is known as a closed circuit calorimeter," he went on. "For instance, through this tube air leaves the chamber. Here is a blower. At this point, the water in the air is absorbed by sulphuric acid. Next the carbon dioxide is absorbed by soda lime. Here a little oxygen is introduced to keep the composition normal and at this point the air is returned to the chamber."

He traced the circuit as he spoke, then paused and remarked, "Thus, you see, it is possible to measure the carbon dioxide and the other respiration products. As for heat, the walls are constructed so that the gain or loss of heat in the chamber is prevented. Heat cannot escape in any other way than that provided for carrying it off and measuring it. Any heat is collected by this stream of water which keeps the temperature constant and in that way we can measure any energy that is given off. The walls are of concentric shells of copper and zinc with two of wood, between which is 'dead air,' an effective heat insulator. In other words," he concluded, "it is like a huge thermos bottle."

It was all very weird and fascinating. But what he could have been doing with a dead body, I could not imagine. Was there some subtle, unknown poison which had hitherto baffled science, but which now he was about to reveal to us?

He seemed to be in no hurry to overcome the psychological effect his words had on his auditors, for as he picked up and glanced at a number of sheets of figures, he went on: "In the case of live persons, there is a food aperture here, a little window with air locks arranged for the passage of

food and drink. That large window through which you looked admits light. There is also a telephone. Everything is arranged so that all that enters, no matter how minute, is weighed and measured. The same is true of all that leaves. Nothing is too small to take into account."

He shook the sheaf of papers before us. "Here I have some records which have been made by myself, and, in my absence, by one of my students. In them the most surprising thing that I have discovered is that in the body of Leon metabolism seems still to be going on."

I listened to him in utter amazement, wondering toward what his argument was tending.

"I got my first clew from an injection of fluoriscine," he resumed. "You know there are many people who have a horror of being buried alive. It is a favorite theme of the creepy-creep writers. As you know, the heart may stop beating, but that does not necessarily mean that the person is dead. There are on record innumerable cases where the use of stimulants has started again the beating of a heart that has stopped.

"Still, burial alive is hardly likely among civilized people, for the simple reason that the practice of embalming makes death practically certain. At once, when I heard that there had been objections to the embalming of this body, I began to wonder why they had been made.

"Then it occurred to me that one certain proof of death was the absolute cessation of circulation. You may not know, but scientists have devised this fluoriscine test to take advantage of that. I injected about ten grains. If there is any circulation, there should be an emerald green discoloration of the cornea of the eye. If not, the eye should remain perfectly white.

"I tried the test. The green eye-ball gave me a hint. Then I decided to make sure with a respiration calorimeter that would measure whatever heat, what breath, no matter how minute they were."

Collette gave a start as she began to realize vaguely what Craig was driving at.

"It was not the voodoo sign, Mademoiselle," he said, turning to her. "It was a sign, however, of something that suggested at once to me the connection of voodoo practices."

There was something so uncanny about it that my own heart almost skipped beating, while Burke, by my other side, muttered something which was not meant to be profane.

Collette was now trembling violently and I took her arm so that if she should faint she would not fall either on my side or on that of her guardian, who seemed himself on the verge of keeling over. Castine was mumbling. Only his wife seemed to retain her defiance.

"The skill of the voodoo priests in the concoction of strange draughts from the native herbs of Hayti is well known," Kennedy began again. "There are among them fast and slow poisons, poisons that will kill almost instantly and others that are gauged in strength to accumulate and resemble wasting away and slow death.

"I know that in all such communities today no one will admit that there is such a thing still as the human sacrifice, 'the lamb without horns.' But there is on record a case where a servant was supposed to have died. The master ordered the burial, and it took place. But the grave was robbed. Later the victim was resuscitated and sacrificed.

"Most uncanny of the poisons is that which will cause the victim to pass into an unconscious condition so profound that it may easily be mistaken for death. It is almost cataleptic. Such is the case here. My respiration calorimeter shows that from that body there are still coming the products of respiration, that there is still heat in it. It must have been that peculiar poison of the voodoo priests that was used."

Racing on now, not giving any of us a chance even to think of the weird thing, except to shudder instinctively, Kennedy drew from his pocket and slapped down on a table the photographic records that had been taken by his home-made wireless recording apparatus.

"From Mr. Burke," he said, as he did so, "I received the hint that many messages were being transmitted by wireless, secretly perhaps, from the *Haytien*. I wanted to read those messages that were being flashed so quietly and secretly through the air. How could it be done? I managed to install down at the dock an apparatus known as the capillary electrometer. By the use of this almost unimaginably delicate instrument I was able to drag down literally out of the air the secrets that seemed so well hidden from all except those for whom they were intended. Listen."

He took the roll of paper from the drum and ran his finger along it hastily, translating to himself the Morse code as he passed from one point to another.

"Here," cried Craig excitedly. "'Leon out of way for time safely. Revolution suppressed before Forsythe can make other arrangements. Conspiracy frustrated.' Just a moment. Here's another. 'Have engaged bridal suite at Hotel La Coste. Communicate with me there after tomorrow.'"

Still holding the wireless record, Kennedy swung about to Burke and myself. "Burke, stand over by the door," he shouted. "Walter—that tank of oxygen, please."

I dragged over the heavy tank which he had ordered as he adjusted a sort of pulmotor breathing apparatus over Leon. Then I dropped back to my place beside Collette, as the oxygen hissed out.

Castine was now on his knees, his aged arms outstretched.

"Before God, Mr. Kennedy—I didn't do it. I didn't give Leon the poison!"

Kennedy, however, engrossed in what he was doing, paid no attention to the appeal.

Suddenly I saw what might have been a faint tremor of an eyelid on the pallid body before us.

I felt Collette spring forward from my side.

"He lives! He lives!" she cried, falling on her knees before the still cataleptic form. "Guillaume!"

There was just a faint movement of the lips, as though as the man came back from another world he would have called, "Collette!"

"Seize that man—it is his name signed to the wireless messages!" shouted Kennedy, extending his accusing forefinger at Aux Cayes, who had plotted so devilishly to use his voodoo knowledge both to suppress the revolution and at the same time to win his beautiful ward for himself from her real lover.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE EVIL EYE

"You don't know the woman who is causing the trouble. You haven't seen her eyes. But—Madre de Dios!—my father is a changed man. Sometimes I think he is—what you call—mad!"

Our visitor spoke in a hurried, nervous tone, with a marked foreign accent which was not at all unpleasing. She was a young woman, unmistakably beautiful, of the dark Spanish type and apparently a South American.

"I am Señorita Inez de Mendoza of Lima, Peru," she introduced herself, as she leaned forward in her chair in a high state of overwrought excitement. "We have been in this country only a short time—my father and I, with his partner in a mining venture, Mr. Lockwood. Since the hot weather came we have been staying at the Beach Inn at Atlantic Beach."

She paused a moment and hesitated, as though in this strange land of the north she had no idea of which way to turn for help.

"Perhaps I should have gone to see a doctor about him," she considered, doubtfully; then her emotions got the better of her and she went on passionately, "but, Mr. Kennedy it is not a case for a doctor. It is a case for a detective—for someone who is more than a detective."

She spoke pleadingly now, in a soft musical voice that was far more pleasing to the ear than that of the usual Spanish-American. I had heard that the women of Lima were famed for their beauty and melodious voices. Señorita Mendoza surely upheld their reputation.

There was an appealing look in her soft brown eyes and her thin, delicate lips trembled as she hurried on with her strange story.

"I never saw my father in such a state before," she murmured. "All he talks about is the 'big fish'—whatever that may mean—and the curse of Mansiche. At times his eyes are staring wide open. Sometimes I think he has a violent fever. He is excited—and seems to be wasting away. He seems to see strange visions and hear voices. Yet I think he is worse when he is quiet in a dark room alone than when he is down in the lobby of the hotel in the midst of the crowd."

A sudden flash of fire seemed to light up her dark eyes. "There is a woman at the hotel, too," she went on, "a woman from Truxillo, Señora de Moche. Ever since she has been there my father has been growing worse and worse."

"Who is this Señora de Moche?" asked Kennedy, studying the Señorita as if she were under a lens.

"A Peruvian of an old Indian family," she replied. "She has come to New York with her son, Alfonso, who is studying at the University here. I knew him in Peru," she added, as if by way of confession, "when he was a student at the University of Lima."

There was something in both her tone and her manner that would lead one to believe that she bore no enmity toward the son—indeed quite the contrary—whatever might be her feelings toward the mother of de Moche.

Kennedy reached for our university catalogue and found the name, Alfonso de Moche, a post-graduate student in the School of Engineering, and therefore not in any of Kennedy's own courses. I could see that Craig was growing more and more interested.

"And you think," he queried, "that in some way this woman is connected with the strange change that has taken place in your father?"

"I don't know," she temporized, but the tone of her answer was sufficient to convey the impression that in her heart she did suspect something, she knew not what.

"It's not a long run to Atlantic Beach," considered Kennedy. "I have one or two things that I must finish up first, however."

"Then you will come down tonight?" she asked, as Kennedy rose and took the little white silk gloved hand which she extended.

"Tonight surely," answered Craig, holding the door for her to pass out.

"Well," I said, when we were alone, "what is it—a romance or a crime?"

"Both, I think," he replied abstractedly, taking up the experiment which the visit had interrupted.

"I think," he remarked late in the afternoon, as he threw off his acid-stained smock, "that I will go over to the University library before it closes and refresh my mind on some of those old Peruvian antiquities and traditions. The big fish or *peje grande*, as I remember it, was the name given by the natives to one of the greatest buried treasures about the time of Pizarro's conquest. If I remember correctly, Mansiche was the great cacique, or something of that sort—the ruler in northern Peru at that time. He is said to have left a curse on any native who ever divulged the whereabouts of the treasure and the curse was also to fall on any Spaniard who might discover it."

For more than an hour Kennedy delved into the archeological lore in the library. Then he rejoined me at the laboratory and after a hasty bite of dinner we hurried down to the station.

That evening we stepped off the train at Atlantic Beach to make our way to the Beach Inn. The resort was just springing into night life, as the millions of incandescent lights flooded it with a radiance which we could see reflected in the sky long before our train arrived. There was something intoxicating about the combination of the bracing salt air and the gay throngs seeking pleasure.

Instead of taking the hotel 'bus, Kennedy decided to stroll to the inn along the boardwalk. We were just about to turn into the miniature park which separated the inn from the walk when we noticed a wheel chair coming in our direction. In it were a young man and a woman of well-preserved middle age. They had evidently been enjoying the ocean breeze after dinner, and the sound of music had drawn them back to the hotel.

We entered the lobby of the inn just as the first number of the evening concert by the orchestra was finishing. Kennedy stood at the desk for a moment while Señorita Mendoza was being paged, and ran his eye over the brilliant scene. In a minute the boy returned and led us through the maze of wicker chairs to an alcove just off the hall which later in the evening would be turned into a ballroom.

On a wide settee, the Señorita was talking with animation to a tall, clean-cut young man in evening clothes, whose face bore the tan of a sun much stronger than that at Atlantic Beach. He was unmistakably of the type of American soldier of fortune. In a deep rocker before them sat a heavy-set man whose piercing black eyes beetled forth from under bushy eyebrows. He was rather distinguished looking, and his close-cropped hair and mustache set him off as a man of affairs and consequence in his own country.

As we approached, Señorita Mendoza rose quickly. I wondered how she was going to get over the awkward situation of introducing us, for surely she did not intend to let her father know that she was employing a detective. She did it most cleverly, with a significant look at Kennedy which he understood.

"Good-evening. I am delighted to see you," she greeted. Then, turning to her father, she introduced Craig. "This is Professor Kennedy," she explained, "whom I met at the reception of the Hispano-American Society. You remember I told you he was so much interested in our Peruvian ruins."

Don Luis's eyes seemed fairly to glitter with excitement. They were prominent eyes, staring, and I could not help studying them.

"Then, Señor Kennedy," he exclaimed, "you know of our ruins of Chan-Chan, of Chima—those wonderful places—and have heard the legend of the *peje grande*?" His eyes, by that time, were almost starting from their sockets, and I noticed that the pupils were dilated almost to the size of the iris. "We must sit down," he went on, "and talk about Peru."

The soldier of fortune also had risen as we approached. In her soft musical voice, the Señorita now interrupted her father.

"Professor Kennedy, let me introduce you to Mr. Lockwood, my father's partner in a mining project which brings us to New York."

As Kennedy and I shook hands with the young mining engineer, I felt that Lockwood was something more to her than a mere partner in her father's mining venture.

We drew up chairs and joined the circle.

Kennedy said something about mining and the very word "mine" seemed to excite Señor Mendoza still further.

"Your American financiers have lost millions in mining in Peru," he exclaimed excitedly, taking

out a beautifully chased gold cigarette case, "but we are going to make more millions than they ever dreamed of, because we are simply going to mine for the products of centuries of labor already done, for the great treasure of Truxillo."

He opened the cigarette case and handed it about. The cigarettes seemed to be his own special brand. We lighted up and puffed away for a moment. There was a peculiar taste about them, however, which I did not like. In fact, I think that the Latin-American cigarettes do not seem to appeal to an American very much, anyhow.

As we talked, I noticed that Kennedy evidently shared my own tastes, for he allowed his cigarette to go out, and after a puff or two I did the same. For the sake of my own comfort I drew out one of my own cigarettes as soon as I could do so politely.

"We are not the only ones who have sought the *peje grande*," resumed Mendoza eagerly, "but we are the only ones who are seeking it in the right place, and," he added, leaning over with a whisper, "I am the only one who has the concession, the monopoly, from the government to seek in what we know to be the right place. Others have found the little fish. We shall find the big fish."

He had raised his voice from the whisper and I caught the Señorita looking anxiously at Kennedy, as much as to say, "You see? His mind is full of only one subject."

Señor Mendoza's eyes had wandered from us and he seemed all of a sudden to grow wild.

"We shall find it," he cried, "no matter what obstacles man or devil put in our way. It is ours—for a simple piece of engineering—ours! The curse of Mansiche—pouf!"

He snapped his fingers almost defiantly as he said it in a high-pitched voice. There was an air of bravado about it and I could not help feeling that perhaps in his heart he was not so sure of himself as he would have others think. It was as though some diabolical force had taken possession of his brain and he fought it off.

Kennedy quickly followed the staring glance of Mendoza. Out on the broad veranda, by an open window a few yards from us, sat the woman of the wheel chair. The young man who accompanied her had his back toward us for the moment, but she was looking fixedly in our direction, paying no attention apparently to the music. She was a large woman, with dark hair, and contrasting full red lips. Her face, in marked contradiction to her Parisian costume and refined manners, had a slight copper swarthiness about it.

But it was her eyes that arrested and held one's attention. Whether it was in the eyes themselves or in the way that she used them, there could be no mistake about the hypnotic power that their owner wielded. She saw us looking at her, but it made no difference. Not for an instant did she allow our gaze to distract her in the projection of their weird power straight at Don Luis himself.

Don Luis, on his part, seemed fascinated.

He rose, and, for a moment, I thought that he was going over to speak to her, as if drawn by that intangible attraction which Poe has so cleverly expressed in his "Imp of the Perverse." Instead, in the midst of the number which the orchestra was playing, he turned and, as though by a superhuman effort, moved away among the guests out into the brighter lights and gayety of the lobby.

I glanced up in time to see the anxious look on the Señorita's face change momentarily into a flash of hatred toward the woman in the window.

The young man turned just about that time, and there was no mistaking the ardent glance he directed toward the fair Peruvian. I fancied that her face softened a bit, too.

She resumed her normal composure as she said to Lockwood, "You will excuse me, I know. Father is tired of the music. I think I will take him for a turn down the boardwalk. If you can join us in our rooms in an hour or so, may we see you!" she asked, with another significant glance at Kennedy.

Craig had barely time to reply that we should be delighted before she was gone. Evidently she did not dare let her father get very far out of her sight.

We sat for a few moments smoking and chatting with Lockwood.

"What is the curse of Mansiche?" asked Kennedy at length.

"Oh, I don't know," returned Lockwood, impatiently flicking the ashes from his cigar, as though such stories had no interest for the practical mind of an engineer. "Some old superstition. I don't know much about the story; but I do know that there is treasure in that great old Chimu mound near Truxillo, and that Don Luis has got us the government concession to bore into it, if we can only raise the capital to carry it out."

Kennedy showed no disposition to leave the academic and become interested in the thing from the financial standpoint, and the conversation dragged.

"I beg pardon," apologized Lockwood at length, "but I have some very important letters that I must get off before the mail closes. I'll see you, I presume, when the Señorita and Don Luis come back?"

Kennedy nodded. In fact, I think he was rather glad of the opportunity to look things over unhampered.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE BURIED TREASURE

Señora de Moche—for I had no doubt now that this was the Peruvian Indian woman of whom Señorita Inez had spoken—seemed to lose interest in us and in the concert the moment Don Luis went out. Her son also seemed restive. He was a good-looking fellow, with high forehead, nose slightly aquiline, chin and mouth firm, in fact the whole face refined and intellectual, though tinged with melancholy.

We strolled down the wide veranda, and as we passed the woman and her son I was conscious of that strange feeling (which psychologists tell us, however, has no foundation) of being stared at from behind.

Kennedy turned suddenly and again we passed, just in time to catch in a low tone from the young man, "Yes, I have seen him at the University. Everyone knows that he—"

The rest was lost.

It was quite evident now that they thought we were interested in them. There was, then, no use in our watching them further. Indeed, when we turned again, we found that the Señora and Alfonso had risen, gone through the long, open window inside, and were making their way slowly to the elevator.

The door of the elevator had scarcely closed when Kennedy turned on his heel and quickly made his way back to the alcove where we had been sitting. Lying about on the ash tray on a little wicker table were several of Mendoza's half-burned cigarettes. We sat down a moment and, after a hasty glance around, Craig gathered them up and folded them in a piece of paper.

Leisurely Kennedy strolled over to the desk, and, as guests in a summer hotel will do, looked over the register. The Mendozas, father and daughter, were registered in rooms 810 and 812, a suite on the eighth floor. Lockwood was across the hall in 811.

Turning the pages, Kennedy paused, then nudged me. Señora de Moche and Señor Alfonso de Moche were on the same floor in 839 and 841, just around an "L" in the hall. The two parties must meet frequently not only downstairs in the inn, but in the corridors and elevators.

Kennedy said nothing, but glanced at his watch. We had nearly three-quarters of an hour to wait yet until our pretty client returned.

"There's no use in wasting time or in trying to conceal our identity," he said finally, drawing a card from his pocket and handing it to the clerk. "Señora de Moche, please."

Much to my surprise, the Señora telephoned down that she would see us in her own sitting-room, and I followed Kennedy into the elevator.

Alfonso was out and the Señora was alone.

"I hope that you will pardon me," began Craig with an elaborate explanation, "but I have become interested in an opportunity to invest in a Peruvian venture and they tell me at the office that you are a Peruvian. I thought that perhaps you could advise me."

She looked at us keenly. I fancied that she detected the subterfuge, yet she did not try to avoid us. On closer view, her eyes were really remarkable—those of a woman endowed with an abundance of health and energy—eyes that were full of what the old phrenologists used to call *amativeness*, denoting a nature capable of intense passion, whether of love or hate. Yet I confess that I could not find anything especially abnormal about them, as I had about Mendoza's.

"I suppose you mean that scheme of Señor Mendoza and his friend, Mr. Lockwood," she returned, speaking rapidly. "Let me tell you about it. You may know that the Chimu tribes in the north were the wealthiest at the time of the coming of the Spaniards. Well, they had a custom of burying with their dead all their movable property. Sometimes a common grave or *huaca* was given to many. That would become a cache of treasure.

"Back in the seventeenth century," she continued, leaning forward eagerly as she talked, "a Spaniard opened a Chimu *huaca* and found gold that is said to have been worth a million dollars. An Indian told him of it. After he had shown him the treasure, the Indian told the Spaniard that he had given him only the little fish, the *peje chica*, but that some day he would give him the big fish, the *peje grande*.

"The Indian died," she went on solemnly, flashing at Craig a glance from her wonderful eyes. "He was poisoned by the other members of his tribe." She paused, then flashed, "That is my tribe, my family."

She paused a moment. "The big fish is still a secret—or at least it was until they got it from my

brother, to whom the tradition had been intrusted. They drove him crazy—until he talked. Then, after he had told the secret, and lost his mind, he threw himself one day into Lake Titicaca."

She stopped dramatically in her passionate out-pouring of the tragedies that had followed the hidden treasure.

"I cannot tell you more than you probably already know," she resumed, watching our faces intently. "You know, I suppose, that the treasure is believed to be in a large mound, a tumulus I think you call it, visible from our town of Truxillo. Many people have tried to open it, but the mass of sand pours down on them and they have been discouraged. But Señor Mendoza believes that he knows just where to bore and Mr. Lockwood has a plan for a well-timbered tunnel which can be driven at the right point."

She said it with a sort of quiet assurance that conveyed the impression without her saying it that the venture was somehow doomed to failure, that these desecrators were merely toying with fate. All through her remarks one could feel that she suspected Mendoza of having been responsible for the downfall and tragedy of her brother, who had betrayed the age-old secret.

Her eyes assumed a far-away, dreamy look as she went on. "You must know that we Peruvians have been so educated that we never explore ruins for hidden treasure—not even if we have the knowledge of engineering to do so."

Apparently she was thinking of her son and his studies at the University. One could follow her thoughts as they flitted from him to the beautiful girl with whom she had seen us.

"We are a peculiar race," she proceeded. "We seldom intermarry with other races. We are as proud as Señor Mendoza, as proud of our unmixed lineage as your 'belted earls.'"

She said it with a quiet dignity quite in contrast with the nervous, hasty manner of Don Luis. There was no doubt that the race feeling cut deep.

Kennedy had been following her closely and I could see that the cross currents of superstition, avarice and race hatred in the case presented a tangle that challenged him.

"Thank you," he murmured, rising. "You have told me quite enough to make me think seriously before I join in any such undertaking."

She smiled enigmatically and we bowed ourselves out.

"A most baffling woman," was Craig's only comment as we rode down again in the elevator to wait for the return of Don Luis and the Señorita.

Scarcely had their chair set them down at the inn than Alfonso seemed to appear from nowhere. He had evidently been waiting in the shadow of the porch for them.

We stood aside and watched the little drama. For a few minutes the Señorita talked with him. One did not need to be told that she had a deep regard for the young man. She wanted to see him, yet she did not want to see him. Don Luis, on the contrary, seemed to become quite restive and impatient again and to wish to cut the conversation short.

It was self-evident that Alfonso was deeply in love with Inez. I wondered whether, after all, the trouble was that the proud old Castilian Don Luis would never consent to the marriage of his daughter to one of Indian blood? Was he afraid of a love forbidden by race prejudice?

In any event, one could easily imagine the feelings of Alphonso toward Lockwood, whom he saw carrying off the prize under his very eyes. As for his mother, we had seen that the Peruvians of her caste were a proud old race. Her son was the apple of her eye. Who were these to scorn her race, her family?

It was a little more than an hour after our first meeting when the party, including Lockwood, who had finished his letters, gathered again up in the rooms of the Mendozas.

It was a delightful evening, even in spite of the tension on which we were. We chatted about everything from archeology to Wall Street, until I could well imagine how anyone possessed of an imagination susceptible to the influence of mystery and tradition would succumb to the glittering charm of the magic words, *peje chica*, and feel all the gold hunter's enthusiasm when brought into the atmosphere of the *peje grande*. Visions of hidden treasure seemed to throw a glamour over everything.

Kennedy and the Señorita had moved over to a window, where they were gazing out on the fairyland of Atlantic Beach spread out before them, while Lockwood and Don Luis were eagerly quizzing me on the possibilities of newspaper publicity.

"Oh, Professor Kennedy," I heard her say under her breath, "sometimes I fear that it is the *mal de ojo*—the evil eye."

I did not catch Craig's answer, but I did catch time and again narrowly observing Don Luis. Our host was smoking furiously now, and his eyes had even more than before that peculiar, staring look. By the way his veins stood out I could see that Mendoza's heart action must be rapid. He was talking more and more wildly as he grew more excited. Even Lockwood noticed it and, I thought, frowned.

Slowly the conviction was forced on me. The man was mad—raving mad!

"Really, I must get back to the city tonight," I overheard Craig say to the Señorita as finally he turned from the window toward us.

Her face clouded, but she said nothing.

"If you could arrange to have us dine with you tomorrow night up here, however," he added quickly in a whisper, "I think I might be prepared to take some action."

"By all means," she replied eagerly, as though catching at anything that promised aid.

On the late train back, I half dozed, wondering what had caused Mendoza's evident madness. Was it a sort of auto-hypnotism? There was, I knew, a form of illusion known as ophthalmophobia—fear of the eye. It ranged from mere aversion at being gazed at, all the way to the subjective development of real physical illness out of otherwise trifling ailments. If not that, what object could there be for anyone to cause such a condition? Might it be for the purpose of robbery? Or might it be for revenge?

Back in the laboratory, Kennedy pulled out from a cabinet a peculiar apparatus. It seemed to consist of a sort of triangular prism set with its edge vertically on a rigid platform attached to a massive stand.

Next he lighted one of the cigarette stubs which he had carried away so carefully. The smoke curled up between a powerful light and the peculiar instrument, while Craig peered through a lens, manipulating the thing with exhaustless patience and skill.

Finally he beckoned me over and I looked through, too. On a sort of fine grating all I could see was a number of strange lines.

"That," he explained in answer to my unspoken question as I continued to gaze, "is one of the latest forms of the spectroscope, known as the interferometer, with delicately ruled gratings in which power to resolve the straight close lines in the spectrum is carried to the limit of possibility. A small watch is delicate, but it bears no comparison to the delicacy of these detraction spectroscopes.

"Every substance, you know, is, when radiating light, characterized by what at first appears to be almost a haphazard set of spectral lines without relation to one another. But they are related by mathematical laws and the apparent haphazard character is only the result of our lack of knowledge of how to interpret the results."

He resumed his place at the eye-piece to check over his results. "Walter," he said finally with a twinkle of the eye, "I wish you'd go out and find me a cat."

"A cat?" I repeated.

"Yes—a cat—*felis domesticus*, if it sounds better that way, a plain ordinary cat."

I jammed on my hat and, late as it was, sallied forth on this apparently ridiculous mission.

Several belated passers-by and a policeman watched me as though I were a house-breaker and I felt like a fool, but at last by perseverance and tact I managed to capture a fairly good specimen of the species and transported it in my arms to the laboratory without an undue number of scratches.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE WEED OF MADNESS

In my absence Craig had set to work on a peculiar apparatus, as though he were distilling something from several of the other cigarette stubs.

I placed the cat in a basket and watched Craig until finally he seemed to be rewarded for his patient labors. It was well along toward morning when he obtained in a test-tube a few drops of a colorless, almost odorless liquid.

I watched him curiously as he picked the cat out of the basket and held it gently in his arms. With a dropper he sucked up a bit of the liquid from the test-tube. Then he let a small drop fall into the eye of the cat.

The cat blinked a moment and I bent over to observe it more closely. The cat's eye seemed to enlarge, even under the light, as if it were the proverbial cat's eye under a bed.

What did it mean? Was there such a thing as the drug of the evil eye?

"What have you found?" I queried.

"Something very much like the so-called 'weed of madness,' I think," he replied slowly.

"The weed of madness?" I repeated.

"Yes, something like that Mexican toloache and the Hindu datura which you must have heard about," he continued. "You know the jimson weed—the Jamestown weed? It grows almost everywhere in the world, but most thrivingly in the tropics. They are all related in some way, I believe. The jimson weed on the Pacific coast of the Andes has large white flowers which exhale a faint, repulsive odor. It is a harmless looking plant with its thick tangle of leaves, a coarse green growth, with trumpet-shaped flowers. But, to one who knows its properties, it is quite too dangerously convenient.

"I think those cigarettes have been doped," he went on positively. "It isn't toloache that was used. I think it must be some particularly virulent variety of the jimson weed. Perhaps it is in the preparation of the thing. The seeds of the stramonium, which is the same thing, contain a higher percentage of poison than the leaves and flowers. Perhaps they were used. I can't say."

He took a drop of the liquid he had isolated and added a drop of nitric acid. Then he evaporated it by gentle heat and it left a residue which was slightly yellow.

Next he took from the shelf over his table a bottle marked alcoholic solution, potassium hydrate, and let a drop fall on it. Instantly the residue became a beautiful purple, turning rapidly to violet, then to dark red and finally disappeared.

"Stramonium all right," he nodded with satisfaction. "That was known as Vitali's test. Yes, there was stramonium in those cigarettes—datura stramonium—perhaps a trace of hyocyamino. They are all, like atropine, mydriatic alkaloids, so-called from the effect on the eye. One one-hundred-thousandth of a grain will affect the cat's eye. You saw how it acted. It is more active than even atropine. Better yet, you remember how Don Luis's eyes looked."

"How about the Señora?" I put in.

"Oh," he answered quickly, "her pupils were normal enough. Didn't you notice that? This concentrated poison which has been used in Mendoza's cigarettes does not kill, at least not outright. It is worse. Slowly it accumulates in the system. It acts on the brain. Of all the dangers to be met with in superstitious countries, these mydriatic alkaloids are among the worst. They offer a chance for crimes of the most fiendish nature—worse than the gun or the stiletto, and with little fear of detection. It is the production of insanity!"

Horrible though the idea was I could not doubt it in the face of Craig's investigations and what I had already seen. In fact, it was necessary for me only to recall the peculiar sensations I myself had experienced after smoking merely a few puffs of one of Mendoza's cigarettes in order to be convinced of the possible effect of the insidious poison contained in the many that he smoked.

It was almost dawn before Craig and I left the laboratory after his discovery of the manner of the stramonium poisoning. I was thoroughly tired, though not so much so that my dreams were not haunted by a succession of baleful eyes peering at me from the darkness.

I slept late, but Kennedy was about early at the laboratory, verifying his experiments and checking over his results, carefully endeavoring to isolate any other of the closely related mydriatic alkaloids that might be contained in the noxious fumes of the poisoned tobacco. Though he was already convinced of what was going on, I knew that he considered it a matter of considerable medico-legal importance to be exact, for if the affair ever came to the stage of securing an indictment, the charge could be sustained only by specific proof.

Early in the forenoon Kennedy left me alone in the laboratory and made a trip downtown, where he visited a South American tobacco dealer and placed a rush order for a couple of hundred cigarettes, duplicating in shape and quality those which Señor Mendoza doza preferred, except, however, the deadly drug which was in those he was smoking.

I had some writing to do and was busily engaged at my typewriter when I suddenly became conscious of that feeling of being watched. Perhaps I had heard a footstep outside and did not remember it, but at any rate I had the feeling. I stopped tapping the keys suddenly and wheeled about in my chair just in time to catch a glimpse of a face dodging back from the window. I don't think that I would be prepared to swear just who it was, but there was just enough that was familiar about the fleeting glimpse of the eyes to make me feel uncomfortable.

I ran to the door, but it was too late. The intruder had disappeared. Still, the more I thought about it, the more determined I was to verify my suspicions, if possible. I put on my hat and walked over to the registrar's office. Sure enough, Alfonso de Moche was registered in the summer school as well as in the regular course. I was now fully convinced that it was he who had been watching us.

Not satisfied, I determined to make further inquiries about the young man. He had been at the University that morning, I learned from one of his professors, and that convinced me more than ever that he had employed at least a part of the time in spying on us. As I had expected, the professor told me that he was an excellent student, though very quiet and reserved. His mind seemed to run along the line of engineering and mining, especially, and I could not help drawing the conclusion that perhaps he, too, was infected by the furore for treasure hunting, in spite of his Indian ancestry.

Nothing further occurred, however, during the day to excite suspicion and Craig listened with

interest, though without comment, when I related what had happened. He divided his time during the rest of the day between some experimental work of his own and fits of deep reverie in which he was evidently trying to piece together the broken strands of the strange story in which we were now concerned.

The package of cigarettes which he had ordered was delivered late in the afternoon. Kennedy had already wrapped up a small package of a powder and filled a small atomizer with some liquid. Stowing these things away in his pockets as best he could, with a little vial which he shoved into his waistcoat pocket, he announced that he was ready at last to take an early train to Atlantic Beach.

We dined that night, as Craig had requested, with the Mendozas and Lockwood up in the sitting-room of Don Luis's suite. It was a delightfully situated room, overlooking the boardwalk and the ocean, and the fresh wind that was wafted in from the water made it quite the equal of a roof garden.

Dinner had been ordered but not served, when Craig maneuvered to get a few minutes alone with Inez. Although I could not hear, I gathered that he was outlining at least a part of his plans to her and seeking her co-operation. She seemed to understand and approve, and I really believe that the dinner was the first in a long time that the distracted girl had really enjoyed.

While we were waiting for it, I suddenly became aware that she had contrived to leave Kennedy and myself alone in the sitting-room for a moment. It was evidently part of Craig's plan. Instantly he opened a large case in which Mendoza kept cigarettes and hastily substituted for those in it an equal number of the cigarettes which he had had made.

The dinner itself was more like a family party than a formal dinner, for Kennedy, when he wanted to do so, had a way of ingratiating himself and leading the conversation so that everyone was at his ease. Everything progressed smoothly until we came to the coffee. The Señorita poured, and as she raised the coffee pot Kennedy called our attention to a long line of colliers just on the edge of the horizon, slowly making their way up the coast.

I was sitting next to the Señorita, not particularly interested in colliers at that moment. From a fold in her dress I saw her hastily draw a little vial and pour a bit of yellowish, syrupy liquid into the cup which she was preparing for her father.

I could not help looking at her quickly. She saw me, then raised her finger to her lips with an explanatory glance at Kennedy, who was keeping the others interested in colliers. Instantly I recognized the little vial that Kennedy had shoved into his vest pocket.

More coffee and innumerable cigarettes followed. I did my best to aid in the conversation, but my real interest was centered in Don Luis himself, whom I could not help watching closely.

Was it a fact or was it merely imagination? He seemed quite different. The pupils of his eyes did not seem to be quite so dilated as they had been the night before. Even his heart action appeared to be more normal. I think the Señorita noticed it, too.

Dinner over and darkness cutting off the magnificent sweep of ocean view, Inez suggested that we go down to the concert, as had been their custom. It was the first time that Kennedy had not seemed to fall in with any of her suggestions, but I knew that that, too, must be part of his preconcerted plan.

"If you will pardon us," he excused, "Mr. Jameson and I have some friends over at Stillson Hall whom we have promised to run in to see. I think this would be a good opportunity. We'll rejoin you—in the alcove where we were last night, if possible."

No one objected. In fact I think Lockwood was rather glad to have a chance to talk to Inez, for Kennedy had monopolized a great deal of her attention.

We left them at the elevator, but instead of leaving the Inn Kennedy edged his way around into the shadow of a doorway where we could watch. Fortunately the Señorita managed to get the same settee in the corner which we had occupied the night before.

A moment later I caught a glimpse of a familiar face at the long window opening on the veranda. Señora de Moche and her son had drawn up chairs, just outside.

They had not seen us and, as far as we knew, had no reason to suspect that we were about. As we watched the two groups, I could not fail to note that the change in Don Luis was really marked. There was none of the wildness in his conversation, as there had been. Once he even met the keen eye of the Señora, but it did not seem to have the effect it had had on the previous occasion.

"What was it you had the Señorita drop into his coffee?" I asked Craig under my breath.

"You saw that?" he smiled. "It was pilocarpine, jaborandi, a plant found largely in Brazil, one of the antidotes for stramonium poisoning. It doesn't work with everyone. But it seems to have done so with Mendoza. Besides, the caffeine in the coffee probably aided the pilocarpine. Did you notice how it contracted his pupils almost back to normal again?"

Kennedy did not take his eyes off the two groups as he talked. "I've got at the case from a brand-new angle, I think," he added. "Unless I am mistaken, when the criminal sees Don Luis getting better, it will mean another attempt to substitute more cigarettes doped with that drug."

Satisfied so far with the play he was staging, Kennedy moved over to the hotel desk, and after a quiet conference with the head clerk, found out that the room next to the suite of the Mendozas was empty. The clerk gave him several keys and with a last look at the Señora and her son, to see whether they were getting restive, I followed Craig into the elevator and we rode up to the eighth floor again.

The halls were deserted now and we entered the room next to the Mendozas without being observed. It was a simple matter after that to open a rather heavy door that communicated between the two suites.

Instead of switching on the light, Kennedy first looked about carefully until he was assured that no one was there. Quickly he sprinkled on the floor from the hall door to the table on which the case of cigarettes lay some of the powder which I had seen him wrap up in the laboratory before we left. Then with the atomizer he sprayed over it something that had a pungent, familiar odor, walking backwards from the hall door as he did so.

"Don't you want more light?" I asked, starting to cross to a window to raise a shade to let the moonlight stream in.

"Don't walk on it, Walter," he whispered, pushing me back. "First I sprinkled some powdered iodine and then ammonia enough to moisten it. It evaporates quickly, leaving what I call my anti-burglar powder."

He had finished his work and now the evening wind was blowing away the slight fumes that had risen. For a few moments he left the door into the next room open to clear away the odor, then quietly closed it, but did not lock it.

In the darkness we settled ourselves now for a vigil that was to last we knew not how long. Neither of us spoke as we half crouched in the shadow of the next room, listening.

Slowly the time passed. Would anyone take advantage of the opportunity to tamper with that box of cigarettes on Mendoza's table? Who was it who had conceived and executed this devilish plot? What was the purpose back of it all?

Once or twice we heard the elevator door clang and waited expectantly, but nothing happened. I began to wonder whether if someone had a pass-key to the Mendoza suite we could hear them enter. The outside hall was thickly carpeted and deadened every footfall if one exercised only reasonable caution.

"Don't you think we might leave the door ajar a little?" I suggested anxiously.

"Sh!" was Kennedy's only comment in the negative.

I glanced now and then at my watch and was surprised to see how early it was. The minutes were surely leaden-footed.

In the darkness and silence I fell to reviewing the weird succession of events which had filled the past two days. I am not by nature superstitious, but in the darkness I could well imagine a staring succession of eyes, beginning with the dilated pupils of Don Luis and always ending with those remarkable piercing black eyes of the Indian woman with the melancholy-visaged son.

Suddenly I heard in the next room what sounded like a series of little explosions, as though someone were treading on match-heads.

"My burglar powder," muttered Craig in a hoarse whisper. "Every step, even those of a mouse running across, sets it off!"

He rose quickly and threw open the door into the Mendoza suite. I sprang through after him.

There, in the shadows, I saw a dark form, starting back in retreat. But it was too late.

In the dim light of the little explosions, I caught a glimpse of a face—the face of the person who had been craftily working on the superstition of Don Luis, now that his influence had got from the government the precious concession, working with the dread drug to drive him insane and thus capture both Mendoza's share of the fortune as well as his daughter, well knowing that suspicion would rest on the jealous Indian woman with the wonderful eyes whose brother had already been driven insane and whose son Inez Mendoza really loved better than himself—the soldier of fortune, Lockwood.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE SOCIAL GANGSTER ***

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of

this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE

THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE

PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the

work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”
- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.
- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.
- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you 'AS-IS', WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™'s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations (\$1 to \$5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the

solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.